Dr. Thomas J. Reimers passed away on January 23, 2019 at the Ithaca Hospicare Residence with his friends at his bedside. Tom chose to write his own obituary, which is presented below followed by comments by some of us who knew him.

“Thomas J. Reimers, professor emeritus of endocrinology at Cornell University, was born on June 26, 1945, in West Point, Nebraska, and grew up on the family farm near there. A distinguished scholar in animal endocrinology, Dr. Reimers joined the Cornell faculty in 1978 and retired in 1999. He served as director of the Endocrinology Laboratory in the Diagnostic Laboratory at the College of Veterinary Medicine. He was also director of the Office of Research and Development Services in the college. His research efforts centered on thyroid, adrenal, pancreatic, and reproductive function and dysfunction in animals. Dr. Reimers obtained the B.S. degree in 1967 from the University of Nebraska, the M.S. degree in 1969 from the University of Illinois, and the Ph.D. degree in 1974 from the University of Illinois. He was a post-doctoral fellow and a research associate at Colorado State University from 1974 to 1978. In 1998, he received the Award for Outstanding Contributions to Animal
Clinical Chemistry granted by the Division of Animal Clinical Chemistry of the American Association for Clinical Chemistry.

Dr. Reimers had a great love for the outdoors of New York State. He spent much of his time hiking, backpacking, snowshoeing, birding, and enjoying wildflowers, snakes, salamanders, wild mushrooms, trees, ferns, and other local flora and fauna. Dr. Reimers helped build and maintain several sections of the Finger Lakes Trail, North Country National Scenic Trail, and Cayuga Trail. He was president of the Cayuga Trails Club, Inc., for six years, the Finger Lakes Trail Conference, Inc., for three years, and the North Country Trail Association, Inc., for three years. He also served as president of the Finger Lakes Land Trust for one year and was on the Land Trust’s board of directors for nine years. He received the Wallace D. Wood Distinguished Service Award in 1998 and the Howard S. Beye Lifetime Achievement Award in 2008 from the Finger Lakes Trail Conference. He was named Conservationist of the Year by the Finger Lakes Land Trust in 2006. Tom received the Richard B. Fischer Award for Environmental Conservation from the Town of Ithaca in 2009. He was also active in his Ithaca neighborhood having served as president of the Eastwood Commons Residents Association for nine years.

Dr. Reimers was predeceased by his parents, Perry and Mildred Reimers and brother Jerry. Survivors include his sister-in-law Cecelia Reimers, nephew Daniel Reimers, nieces Janet Essman and Linda Reimers, and the center of his life, Suzie the cat.

Tom was hired in 1978 to create an endocrinology laboratory in what is now known as the Animal Health Diagnostic Center. As with all Cornell endeavors there were high hopes for Tom and the laboratory; those hopes were met. When Tom retired as director of the Diagnostic Endocrinology Laboratory, in November 1999. He had a staff of six. He must have been skilled at identifying and recruiting talent, because five of those six people are still employed in the laboratory, which now has a staff of 16 and is one of the most important, respected, and busiest veterinary endocrinology laboratories in the country. At the last laboratory winter holiday party that Tom attended he mentioned how remarkably large the lab
had become. Much of that success was due to Tom, thanks to the strong foundation he laid when starting the laboratory from scratch including the development and validation of diagnostic endocrine tests in non-human species, early adaptation of new technology, and computerization of laboratory processes and diagnostic tests. His efforts were the basis for the established quality-assurance program in the Animal Health Diagnostic Center and also have been the foundation for other quality assurance initiatives in the veterinary college. Tom was a giant in the field of veterinary diagnostic endocrinology.

Tom was friendly and popular, but enjoyed solitude in his beloved outdoors. For many years, he owned land in West Danby which he called Tallow Hill. The land and the small cabin he built there served as a kind of oasis for him. He later donated Tallow Hill to the Finger Lakes Land Trust. Tom never married and had no children, and after careful financial calculations he was able to take early retirement at age 54 to be able to spend more time in the natural world. He particularly loved the Finger Lakes region, which he hiked in all kinds of weather, often with a camera with which he took professional-level photographs. His knowledge of the local flora, fauna, and landscape was prodigious, a walk with him was an enjoyable eye- and ear-opening education. He liked teaching young and old about nature; the Earth Day hike he led for years is now designated by Cornell Botanic Gardens as the Tom Reimers Earth Day Hike on the Cayuga Trail. As a member of many trail organizations he played a pivotal role in the development and maintenance of many of the beautiful trails that surround Ithaca, work for which he received numerous honors and awards. The Thayer Nature Preserve in the Town of Ithaca was one of Tom’s favorites; in September of 2019 the Finger Lakes Land Trust dedicated its loop trail in his memory. In many ways, he was Ithaca’s Henry David Thoreau.

Tom's interests were narrowly-focused but deep. As is clear, his primary interest was the natural world. A Nebraska native, he read the Omaha newspaper online each day and kept up with the University of Nebraska's Cornhuskers football team, whose games he had attended as an undergrad. Tom had an extensive library of
fact-based books on subjects such as science, nature, history, and politics. He said he had read just one novel in his life, but when he learned that Willa Cather's great novel "My Antonia" is set in early Nebraska he purchased it and that book was next to his chair when he passed away. He avidly followed current events and politics, with views that were decidedly left of center. Tom was an award-winning photographer, primarily of nature. He had a love of cameras and all kinds of gadgets, including electronic gadgets, many of which adorned his house. Another great love was music, particularly classical music, especially opera, with Pavarotti at the top of his list.

The prostate cancer, which ended his life, came by stealth. There had been no symptoms and by the time it was discovered it was widespread. Treatment was futile, and harmed his quality of life, so Tom chose to stop treatment in order to enjoy his remaining time to the best of his ability. The dignity and grace with which he carried himself during his final years were nothing short of remarkable. He was able to live at home until the day before his death, and when he passed away at the Hospicare Residence he was accompanied by the voice of his beloved Pavarotti. In keeping with his environmental ethos, he chose to be buried in the Greensprings Natural Cemetery Preserve, Newfield, New York.

Written by Maurice White, Steve Lamb, Ned Place, and Tom Reimers