On July 27 we lost our dear George Rabb—a board member for the Center, a conservation leader known for his extraordinary work worldwide, a beloved Chicago elder and mentor.

Much of the Center’s staff was able to be with George right before he went into the hospital for heart surgery on July 7. At that point, George was in a wheelchair and his hands were shaky. We gathered with George outside. As we got ourselves settled on the patio, George pulled a folder from his wheelchair. “I’ve got reading material for you!,” he said.

I know this will give many of you a laugh, as George was always handing out the papers and books his colleagues needed to carry work forward. He had an unbelievable handle on literature spanning many disciplines. And this was no small task. This time, his reading suggestions included a book called Behave: The Biology of Humans at Our Best and Our Worst. He handed us a review, written by Frans de Waal, which promised: “Rarely does an almost 800-page book keep my attention from start to finish...” We will get the book, dear George, and we will read it.
In these weeks since the surgery, George fought as long as he could, often giving us “thumbs up” and, though confined to his bed, paddling his feet back and forth—a steady sign of his effort to keep his blood flowing and his body moving in recovery. But, at some point, at 87 and post-surgery, George’s body could no longer keep up with his mind. To those who knew him, this likely comes as no surprise.

I was at his bedside with George when he passed. He died about as peacefully as I can imagine anyone dying. It was an honor to be with him during these last weeks and days—and, especially, these last moments.

He leaves behind multitudes inspired by his dedication to conservation as caring, the importance of global citizenship and, yes, the dream of a world environment organization that cares for the whole community of life.

Gavin Van Horn, the Center’s Director of Cultures of Conservation, leaves us with the poem below to honor George.

**For George**

His feet shuffle—wanting other roads
likely Carolina country lanes
thick with humidity, adventure, dust, cricket clicks

Curling toes between yellow prickly grass,
leftover warmth through the soles,
sinking heels into oyster-rich mudflats,
calves covered in taupe, sunbaked into delta jigsaws

His feet shuffle—in and out of a dreamscape, short on breath—
unregulated, they paddle him away
from the tubes, tests, undefended indignities

Flutter him to known shores—and unknown
into a breeze salted in dusk, chitter and fuss of sandpipers,
ricochet of expectation and need—there, he may see

Mary at last—
his feet, sprinkled in pelican-white sand,
stop running
they need not carry anything beyond this shore