



CLASS OF

1936

A. M. "MARC" CHRISTIANSON

Marc Christianson, the son of ND Supreme Court Justice A.M. and Christianson Edith Christianson, was born and raised in Bismarck. Marc's love of animals began at an early age and eventually resulted in the creation of the Dakota Zoo.

Following graduation from BHS in 1936, Marc attended Jamestown College and ND State School of Science in Wahpeton, where he learned about flying airplanes. By 1939 he was Chief Pilot and Instructor at Bismarck Flying Service. One of the school's first woman pilots was Betty Barnes, BHS Class of 1933, who would become his wife. When the U.S. entered World War II, Marc joined the Army Air Transport Command and flew all over the world.

After the war, Marc and Betty started a mink ranch in NW Bismarck that grew into a hobby farm with dozens of "pets," including monkeys, ocelots, boa constrictors, mountain lions, wolves and much more. By 1960 it was apparent to Marc that Bismarck needed a zoo (and he needed a place for his menagerie), so he set about building Dakota Zoo, with the help of a willing and generous community.

Marc served as Executive Director of the zoo until retiring in 1987, along with his good friend, Clyde the Bear. By then Dakota Zoo had grown from his personal collection of "critters" to a nationally accredited zoo with more than 500 specimens and 125 species.

Dakota Zoo remains one of the state's most popular attractions, a living testimony to Marc Christianson's love of animals, visited by more than 150,000 people each year.

