For years Tom Dyer has been a familiar face at the Zoological Society, especially at Platypus Society events. He was, after all, on the Board of Directors for 14 years. He and his wife, Mary Ann, chaired Zoo Ball 2003. He received the Emu Egg, the Platypus Society’s most prestigious award, in 2005. And for years the Dyers have been patron members of the Platypus Society and have made generous donations to our capital campaign to improve the Milwaukee County Zoo.

You might think that in retirement they would back away from the Zoological Society. Tom retired in 2006 as vice president of corporate services at Northwestern Mutual, where he had worked for 36 years. Yet the Dyers were back at the Zoo in June celebrating the 25th anniversary of Zoo Ball, where they were photographed (see picture). Their enthusiasm for the Zoo and the Zoological Society hasn’t waned. Memories of taking their young sons to the Zoo decades ago – son Michael is now 39 and Jeffrey is 36–are still fresh.

“Who doesn’t remember the first time you rode the train? Who doesn’t remember the first time you walked through the aviary? Who doesn’t remember the first time you stood by the elephant exhibit and watched them pick up dirt and throw it on their backs?” says Tom, who still loves to visit the Lake Wisconsin aquarium in the Aquatic & Reptile Center. And Mary Ann was at the Zoo again in July to show a friend her favorite animals: the big cats. Some of their love for wildlife may have rubbed off on son Jeffrey, who now works in the Grand Canyon for the National Parks Service.

The Dyers’ personal love for the Zoo combines well with their view of its value. “I support the Zoological Society because I think the Zoo is an important part of the cultural fabric of Milwaukee,” says Tom. “I support organizations that make Milwaukee a great place to live and raise a family. The Zoological Society is the private partner with Milwaukee County in maintaining and enhancing the Zoo.” Plus, he said, the Zoological Society of Milwaukee (ZSM) has excellent conservation and education programs. He should know because he served on the ZSM’s education committee for many years and, in 1999, received the Platypus Society’s Bubo virginianus award for his service to ZSM educational programs.

For years Tom was a representative to the ZSM from Northwestern Mutual, which has a corporate Platypus Society membership, holds an annual picnic for 7,000 employees and financial representatives at the Zoo, and has been a major contributor to our capital campaign. The Zoo’s wonderfully remodeled farm, one of nine projects of the New Zoo II Capital Campaign, came about thanks to Northwestern Mutual Foundation, for which the farm is named. The foundation also supports the ZSM’s annual Playhouse Raffle, entertainment at Zoo Ball, ZSM education programs, Annual Appeals and more.

Tom and Mary Ann personally have supported the ZSM in big ways and small, with their time and their financial help. Mary Ann, who came up with the name for Zoo Ball 2003 (The Roaring 20th Zoo Ball), has hand-crocheted afghans as Zoo Ball auction items. “That baby-afghan pattern of hers was an award winner years ago at the Wisconsin State Fair,” adds Tom. It’s obvious that he’s proud of her and of their joint commitment to an organization that helps make a trip to the Zoo, as he says, “a first-class visitor experience.”

By Paula Brookmire
Stunning pink birds and swimming sea creatures were the stars at the May 22 Platypus Society/VIP premiere of two Milwaukee County Zoo exhibits. Caribbean flamingos strutted around their new exhibit including a yard, pond and building, all called the Idabel Wilmot Borchert Flamingo Exhibit and Overlook. Alex Waier, the Zoo’s new bird curator, gave tours of the flamingos’ quarters. Meanwhile, in the Otto Borchert Family Special Exhibits Building (an earlier gift from the same donor who made possible the flamingo permanent exhibit), the 258 premiere attendees got a preview of the special summer exhibit Sting Ray & Shark Reef, sponsored by Sundance Vacations. Here you could touch and feed harmless sting rays and small, non-aggressive sharks. The exhibit is open to the public on weekends through Sept. 28, at $2 per person.
Welcome to Flamingos & Sharks & Rays

Platypus Society member Andy Sawyer reaches out to touch a live sting ray. Sawyer serves on the Zoological Society’s Board of Directors.

Christine Santell (right) and her daughter, Katherine, 13, meet the Milwaukee County Zoo’s flamingo flock. The Santell family is a patron member of the Platypus Society.

Sundance Vacations representatives reach out to touch live sting rays. From left are sales associate Wayne Schuth of Greenfield and Sundance director Duane Curtis of Brookfield.

Ken and Linda Footland of New Berlin attended the Platypus Society/VIP premiere on a beautiful spring evening. The Footlands are longtime patron members of the Platypus Society.

Representatives of Centec Security, a corporate Platypus Society member, were photographed after a tour of the flamingo exhibit. They are (from left) Centec president Mark Strunsee, sales manager Paul Briggs, and vice president/controller Rob Nennig.

Platypus Society member Andy Sawyer reaches out to touch a live sting ray. Sawyer serves on the Zoological Society’s Board of Directors.

Christine Santell (right) and her daughter, Katherine, 13, meet the Milwaukee County Zoo’s flamingo flock. The Santell family is a patron member of the Platypus Society.
Zoological Society Development Office
1421 N. Water Street
Milwaukee, WI 53202
(414) 276-0843

Please remember the Zoological Society in your will or estate plan.

New-Member Profile

Patron Member: Susan Batten
Career: Human resources manager at GE Healthcare at the main office in Waukesha; has worked there 17 years
Address: N33W23057 Ridgecrest Court, Pewaukee, WI 53072
E-mail: sbatten@wi.rr.com

Reason you joined the Platypus Society last spring?
I think the main reason is that I’ve always been a huge supporter of the Zoo. When I looked at the different causes I have contributed to, I decided that I wanted to do just one. And I wanted to contribute in a bigger way than just membership.

Your personal history with the Zoological Society? I’ve been a member for more than 15 years. I was a co-chair of Zoo Ball 2004. We’ve contributed to the capital campaign to improve the Milwaukee County Zoo. I’ve participated in fund-raisers such as the former road rally. And my 13-year-old daughter, Stephanie, and I have done numerous animal sponsorships over the years. The cheetahs and the snow leopards are my favorites. Her favorite animal is the African lion.

Why the Platypus Society is important: I felt that it gives me a better insider’s view. It’s a good way to open doors to get more involved in the Zoological Society. In our everyday lives, we get so involved in things that are not as meaningful. Yet the Zoological Society is involved in conservation, in educating people about wildlife and our environment, and in supporting a zoo that’s helping save endangered animals. When it comes to the Zoo, it’s such an incredibly important cause. Think about it. Everybody I know goes to the Zoo. Even with our exchange student who just came this summer from France, the first thing she wanted to do was go to the Zoo. She loved it! My teenage daughter still loves it.

Calendar of Events

Now through-Sept. 7; weekends Sept. 13-28
Summer special exhibit at the Zoo: Sting Ray & Shark Reef, sponsored by Sundance Vacations; $2 entry fee

Sept. 6 & 7
Family Farm Weekend, sponsored by GG Golden Guernsey Dairy® & the Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board.*

Sept. 14
Ride on the Wild Side Family Bike Ride, sponsored by Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare-Wauwatosa and The Wisconsin Heart Hospital.*

Sept. 20
ZSM members’ field trip to Chicago’s Field Museum*

Oct. 2
Platypus Society Awards Dinner, 6 p.m., Peck Welcome Center; look for your invitation in the mail.

Oct. 4
Polar Bear Awareness Day at the Zoo

Oct. 18
Wolf Awareness Day at the Zoo

Oct. 23
How You Can Help Birds, free program by Vicki Piaskowski, Zoological Society bird expert; 7 p.m., Milwaukee County Zoo

Oct. 24 & 25
Halloween Trick-or-Treat Spooktacular, sponsored by Sentry Foods; Oct. 24, 6-9 p.m.; Oct. 25, 9 a.m.-9 p.m.*

Nov. 1 & Dec. 6
Family Free Day at the Zoo, sponsored by North Shore Bank and FOX 6, 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

*For more information, call (414) 258-2333 or go online at www.zoosociety.org.