

# THE REUTER CENTER

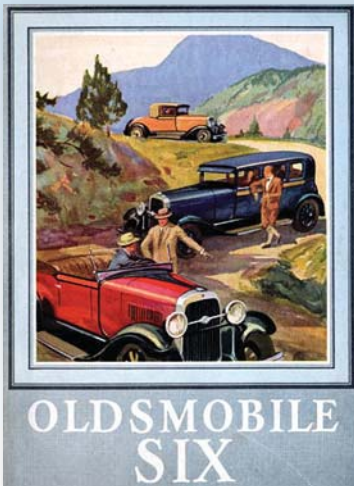
This facility is named in honor of Irving J. Reuter, a former General Motors executive who established the Janirve Foundation, and his wife Jeannette Graham Reuter.

## Irving Reuter: Man of Curiosity and Ambition

“While journeying through life, live by the way” was the quote by Irving Reuter in the 1907 Purdue University Yearbook, *The Debris*. Live he did, achieving financial success which allowed him to retire at the young age of 48 to enjoy life with his wife Jeannette. They moved from Michigan to Florida, and then Asheville. Having previously traveled through Western North Carolina, they were drawn to the area because of its natural beauty, friendly people and less complicated lifestyle. Coming from a highly mechanical background, Irving admired the local crafts made by artisans using simple hand tools.



Irving J. Reuter at Purdue University



Irving was the President and General manager of the Oldsmobile Division from 1925-1933.



Jeannette (1886-1984) and Irving (1885-1972) Reuter were both from Indiana. Jeannette gave up a career in opera when she married Irving in 1909. Their only daughter, Wilma Pearl, died from influenza at the age of 11 in 1923.



Irving Reuter in a circa 1921 Apperson automobile.

After graduating college with an engineering degree, Irving went to work for the Overland Motor Company in Indianapolis, Indiana. Two years later he joined the Remy Electric Company in Anderson, Indiana, where he served as chief engineer, factory manager and then general manager. Remy became part of General Motors (GM) in 1918. In 1922 Irving Reuter was one of ten investors of the General Motors Investment Corporation which was said to have revived the faltering automotive industry. Trusted by upper management, between 1925 and 1937 Irving was president and general manager of the Oldsmobile, Oakland and Buick Divisions and managing director of the Opel Motor Works in Germany, and the vice president of General Motors (1929-1933). In 1942 he was appointed to assist Ernest C. Kanzler, chief of the automotive division of the war production board, to retool the auto industry for war production. Kanzler was quoted as saying: "Everyone in the industry... agreed that there was not a better qualified man in the business for this work." Along the way he owned six patents which included inventions related to an electric generator, an ignition apparatus and coil, a system for electrical supply, a roadster rear seat and an engine starting device.

## The Janirve Foundation

The Reuters saw great need among the people of the Asheville area. At first they donated anonymously to various charities and causes, yet their generous and kind nature enabled them to do more. Irving established the Janirve Foundation in 1954, naming it with a combination of his and Jeannette's first names. The foundation focused on grants to colleges and universities as well as student scholarships and provided support for human services, including family services, child welfare and housing. It also gave to hospitals, health associations and projects involving community development. Janirve dissolved in 2012 after distributing more than 150 million dollars. The Janirve Legacy Fund Grant program, administered by the Community Foundation of Western North Carolina, will continue to award money to regional nonprofits serving people in need.



The Reuters' 1926 Cadillac. They traveled extensively cross country and all over the world, always interested in learning and exploring new places. Irving had been sent abroad by General Motors to help foreign automakers like Opel improve their production techniques.



Meadovue was the lavish country estate the Reuters built in Eaton Rapids, Michigan. Here they entertained the elite of American businesses between 1928 and 1936. Irving retired abruptly in 1936, when the Reuters moved to Florida and in 1937 to Asheville. Among their many hobbies were golf, horseback riding, boating and attending performing arts programs.



The Reuter Center built as home of the North Carolina Center for Creative Retirement now houses the Osher Life Long Learning Institute of UNC Asheville.



The Reuter Center, headquarters for the NC Center for Creative Retirement now the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at UNC Asheville, opened its doors in the summer of 2003 after a five year planning, fund raising, and building campaign. The Janirve Foundation was a major donor. Photo: left to right Beth Lazer, co-chair of the member-led capital campaign, James H. Mullen Jr., chancellor of UNC Asheville at the time, Ronald Manheimer, executive director of the NC Center for Creative Retirement, James Heggliund, a member of the fundraising committee and the UNC Asheville Foundation Board and Molly Corbett Broad, then president of the UNC system.

