

William R. Irr Memorial Cruise

His Legacy...

Born in 1930 and growing up in Buffalo and Williamsville NY, Mr. Irr by the of age 22, took over the family business, The Irr and Son Contracting Business. For the next 8 years he worked alongside his father, both Master Plumbers. Early in 1960 he sold the contracting business to his brother-in-law and entered the wholesale plumbing supply business. Thus begins the journey of the Irr Supply Company.

Starting with one location, he began to build the company. He moved on to buying and adding more stores, over the next years reaching nearly 6 stores across Western New York. Mr. Irr was becoming a very influential and growing businessman.

In 1977, he opened the North Tonawanda store located at 75 Main Street in the City of North Tonawanda.

During 1978, Mr. Irr, Ancor Industrial Plastics and Applied Design, jointly purchased the Wurlitzer building from the City of North Tonawanda as a tax foreclosure purchase. And so, the work began.

As Mr. Irr continued to grow the Irr Supply Company, he managed to begin restoring the Wurlitzer building from its very deteriorated state. Still growing by 1980, Irr Supply Company now had 14 stores across the Western New York.

Around 1980, Irr Supply Company moved their business offices to the first floor beneath the tower of 908 Niagara Falls Boulevard, North Tonawanda, New York. In 1981 or shortly thereafter, the 75 Main Street North Tonawanda store was closed and moved to the rear of the Wurlitzer Building and became the new North Tonawanda location. Where it remains today.

By 1982, Irr Supply Company through acquisitions added another 8 locations. Still while resurrecting the Wurlitzer Building.

Late 1980's Irr Supply Company opened their main distribution center in the middle section of the old Wurlitzer plant. Today, that same distribution center now services 34 stores across New York State and Pennsylvania.

Over time, Mr. Irr. had now personally owned the 3-story section of the Wurlitzer Building. In 1992, he sold the 3-story tower section to his son-in-law Tom Austen, who continued to grow the Wurlitzer Industrial Park. Irr Supply Company moved their business offices from the tower location to their newly constructed office buildings adjacent to the main distribution center.

National Grinding Wheel and Remington Rand, both located in North Tonawanda and the Dresser Industrial Park, in Depew, New York, all were now under the ownership of Mr. Irr. Turning these properties in valued pieces of real-estate and creating business opportunities for others.

Through the growth of the Irr Supply Company, Mr. Irr began to seek others to take over the reins. Having placed key people within his company, Mr. Irr as Chairman, and his Board of Directors passed the "Baton of President of Irr Supply Company over to Michael Stetter, a long-time experienced employee of the Irr Supply Company. Following Mr. Stetter's retirement, the Board appoints Michael Duffy, the son-in-law of Mr. Irr. Today, from moving through the corporation to General Manager, Patrick Duffy currently holds the position of President of Irr Supply Centers.

As Mr. Irr, entered his retirement years, he still managed the pulse of the corporation, providing a lifetime of business experience, offering quiet direction, subtle ques, questioning actions, guiding decisions, meeting almost daily with the corporations' key people, all with the most humbleness of pride. Always praising those who now run and operate one of Western New York's strongest businesses.

How did Cruisin the Wurlitzer affect Mr. Irr? Tremendously... When he began see the crowds of cruisers and the hundreds of visitors come to a once foreclosed piece of history of the Wurlitzer Plant of the 1930's, he couldn't be prouder of what his family, his businesses, his employees, his tenants have created.

Over the 93 years of his life, he touched so many people. To all those who ever had the chance or even a moment to be face to face and speak with Mr. Irr. he would always, always say, "Count your Blessings." A philosophy he lived by..

RIP Mr. William R. Irr

On June 3, 2024, here at Cruisin' the Wurlitzer 2024, we will be honoring Mr. Irr with the William R. Irr Memorial Cruise. All Irr Supply Center employees, business associates, Irr Supply vendors and contractors, friends and cruisers are encouraged to attend.

