

Who Is Jess Fisher?

Real estate developer stressed importance of science and mathematics

by Brian Stelter
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Jess Fisher was enrolled at Towson University more than 70 years ago, but his classes left a lasting impression.

Fisher, whose foundation announced a \$10.2 million gift to the University on Monday, believed the study of science and mathematics was a vital component of education.

Fisher established the Robert M. Fisher Memorial Foundation to honor his son Robert, who died in 1969. The foundation supports local organizations, offers scholarships and provides research funding.

Fisher was a Baltimore native. He attended TU in the early 1930's, when it was known as the State Normal School. He was a member of the basketball and football teams.

Fisher attended classes in Stephens Hall, but didn't complete his degree. He would have been a member of the class of 1934, University spokeswoman Susanna Craine said.

"Mr. Fisher's interest in supporting Towson University has also been enduring," John Schofield, president of the foundation, said in a press release. "He thought it particularly important to encourage students in the study of mathematics and the sciences."

The College of Science and Mathematics already offers several scholarships in Fisher's name. Fisher was the president of Jess Fisher & Company, a real estate and development corporation he founded in Washington, D.C. in the 1960s. "Over the years, his company developed and operated residential and commercial properties," the Washington Post reported in 2003. Before founding the company, "he was a beer salesman in Washington."

The entrepreneur's daughter, Cecilia Fisher Rudman, was treasurer of Jess Fisher & Company for eight years, before passing away in 2002.

The \$10.2 million gift will be used, in part, to establish scholarship endowments in memory of Robert and Cecilia.

Fisher served in local and national real estate industry organizations, and was a member of the Board of Advisors for the National Bank of Washington for many years.

He was an active member of Jewish charitable organizations. He served as international treasurer of the B'nai B'rith Youth Commission and international chairman of the B'nai B'rith Israel Commission, according to the Post. The real estate developer was also involved in Technion, the Israel Institute of Technology. He was the president of the American Technion Society's Washington chapter, and served on the organization's national and international boards. He was presented Technion's "Albert Einstein Award" in 1991.

He also served with the Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington and chaired the adviser's board of the Georgetown Visitation School and Convent.

He passed away on June 27, 2003, at the age of 89, three days after his wife Mildred died of a heart attack.

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