

# FISHER HOUSE



**Zachary Fisher**  
**Founder, Fisher House Program**

September 26, 1910 – June 4, 1999

Zachary Fisher was a prominent figure in the New York real estate community and a major philanthropic benefactor for the men and women in the United States Armed Forces, as well as numerous other not-for-profit organizations.

A native of Brooklyn, New York, Mr. Fisher began working in construction at the age of 16. Shortly thereafter, he and his brothers, Martin and Larry, joined forces to form Fisher Brothers, which has grown into one of the real estate industry's premier residential and commercial developers, owning more than five million square feet of office space.

From the earliest days of his construction career, Mr. Fisher was a strong supporter of the U.S. Armed Forces. Prevented from active service in World War II due to a leg injury, Mr. Fisher drew on his building skills to assist the U.S. Coastal Service in the construction of coastal fortifications. His patronage of the Armed Forces became an ongoing concern from that time, evolving to occupy increasing amounts of his energies.

In the 1970s, while remaining active in Fisher Brothers, Mr. Fisher's commitment to both the Armed Forces and other philanthropic causes intensified still further through his leadership role in a number of major projects.

In 1978, he founded the Intrepid Museum Foundation to save the historic and battle-scarred aircraft carrier *INTREPID* from the scrap yard. Four years of involvement with the foundation resulted in his spearheading the opening of the Intrepid Sea-Air-Space Museum in New York City, now the world's largest naval museum.

In 1982, the same year as the museum's opening, Mr. Fisher established the Zachary and Elizabeth M. Fisher Armed Services Foundation. Through the foundation, he made significant contributions to the families of the victims of the bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut in 1983. Since then, the Armed Services Foundation has made contributions of \$25,000 to numerous military families who have lost loved ones under tragic circumstances.

Mr. Fisher made similar donations to the families of New York City firefighters who lost their lives in the line of duty. His Armed Services Foundation also provides scholarship funds to active and former service members and their families.

In 1990, Mr. and Mrs. Fisher began the Fisher House program, dedicating more than \$20 million to the construction of comfort homes for families of hospitalized military personnel. With the establishment of Fisher Houses throughout the United States and in Landstuhl, Germany, the program has provided thousands of lodging days, saving families millions of dollars each year, a service invaluable to these Armed Forces families.

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In 1994, Mr. Fisher, in partnership with David Rockefeller, established the Fisher Center for Alzheimer's Research Foundation, which funds Alzheimer's disease research with the goal of finding a cause and cure. The foundation operates the nation's largest and most modern Alzheimer's research laboratory, housed at The Rockefeller University in New York City.

Throughout his life, Mr. Fisher held a number of posts on a variety of charitable and arts organizations and military charities throughout the country. He served as Honorary Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Marine Corps - Law Enforcement Foundation and was a supporter of the Coast Guard Foundation, the Navy League and other military charities. Mr. Fisher also established the annual Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Award for Excellence in Military Medicine.

He was a major supporter of the Metropolitan Opera, Temple Israel, the Jewish Institute of National Security Affairs, the George C. Marshall Foundation, the Margaret Thatcher Foundation, the Reagan Presidential Library, the United Jewish Appeal and many other organizations. Mr. Fisher also served on the boards of Carnegie Hall and several other institutions and received honorary doctorate degrees from the Massachusetts Maritime Academy and the Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences.

In 1998, Mr. Fisher received the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Bill Clinton in honor of his wide-ranging contributions on behalf of the young men and women in the US Armed Forces. He also received the Horatio Alger Award, the Volunteer Action Award, the Presidential Citizens Medal, the Senior Civilian Award from the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Secretary of Defense, as well as the top awards a civilian can receive from each branch of the military.

Separately, Presidents Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, George Bush and Bill Clinton, as well as Margaret Thatcher and the late Yitzak Rabin, recognized Mr. Fisher for his support of charitable organizations throughout the United States.

In December, 1999, President Clinton signed Public Law 106-161 conferring upon Zachary Fisher the status of an honorary veteran in the U.S. Armed Forces. He was recommended for this honor prior to his death on June 4, 1999.

Three words, etched in the marble of Zachary Fisher's tomb, speak to his legacy:

**Builder...Philanthropist...Patriot**