



Paul and Evelyn Cassat background

Evelyn Cassat and her husband, Paul, lived in Abilene, Kan., for many years. She graduated from Florence Memorial High School in 1929 and received a Bachelor of Journalism degree from the University of Missouri in 1933 and a Bachelor of Science in education from the Kansas State Teachers College of Emporia in 1938. She was a high school teacher in Florence, Chapman and Abilene.

A neighbor of her parents offered to finance a legal education for Evelyn, given her quick wit and obvious intelligence. She was interested but said that her parents did not consider law a good career option for women, so she did not pursue it.

Paul Cassat attended Kansas Wesleyan University, but his educational work was interrupted by his success in working with the United Telephone Co. in Abilene. Southwestern Bell took over the company in 1939. He was a troubleshooter and key man for Southwestern Bell for many years until his retirement in the mid-1970s. Paul often talked about stringing private lines from General Dwight D. Eisenhower's train to his mother's Abilene home when he visited during World War II. Paul Cassat was known as a kind and gentle man.

His father, Carl, was an auto mechanic until his death in 1926, and Paul Cassat demonstrated an avid interest in this emerging industry. The year his father passed away, Cassat submitted a patent application concerning the functioning of the internal combustion engine and was awarded a patent for his idea in 1929. He was only 20. In 1944, he developed a plan for a fluid clutch in automobiles and regularly talked about improvements in automobiles he envisioned.

The Cassats' quality of life in their later years was severely compromised by hearing loss. Evelyn Cassat also had macular degeneration and glaucoma, impeding her vision, which had a marked affect on her investment work. These factors led her to a growing interest in aging, which eventually became the focus of her gift.