

# Simon Konover's Legacy: Generosity, Remembrance

By **Editorial** · **Contact Reporter**

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Simon Konover endured history's worst genocide, became a philanthropist

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**T**hat Simon Konover endured the greatest evil known to history to become so charitable — building the Hole in the Wall Gang Camp in Ashford for free, for example — is a testament to the human spirit.

Mr. Konover, 93, passed away on Oct. 20. As he and other Holocaust survivors die, so goes the living memory of a massacre that must never be forgotten. And so go many remarkable people whose response to the world's worst genocide was to show kindness toward others.

Mr. Konover's story is more amazing than can be conveyed in this short space. But the bare essentials are this: He was only 16, living in a shtetl in Poland, when he was sent to a Nazi labor camp. He escaped and eventually made his way to Stalingrad, where he was drafted into the Russian army, which made him drive supplies to the front line during the Battle of Stalingrad. He was sent to a Siberian hard-labor camp and when released at the end of the war, returned home to find his town's 6,000 Jews gone, including his parents.

In 1948, Mr. Konover came to Hartford to work in his brother's flooring business. In the decades that followed, he built a real estate empire.

*Article continues below* ↓

He could have stopped there and gone down in local history as an American success story. But he used his good fortune to make the world better — and to make sure the Holocaust couldn't be denied.

He and his wife, Doris, were founders of the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington and founding supporters of the Center for Judaic Studies and Contemporary Jewish Life at UConn. At the University of Hartford, they donated the Konover Campus Center, among other buildings and

programs in the community that bear the family name. Mr. Konover's company also champions affordable housing.

Mr. Konover once told the Jewish Ledger that his father's last words to him were, "Simon, remember who you are and where you come from.' I knew he meant to be good, to help where you can and be charitable and nice."

And so he did and was, despite the horrors he experienced. How fortunate Connecticut was to have been his home.

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