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## Herb Kohl rose to heights of power. You could run into him at George Webb diner. | Opinion

*Wisconsin was fortunate to have Herb Kohl, who died last month, and we may never be so lucky to get another public figure like him again.*



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If you've never heard about the legendary [Herb Kohl](#), who died at the age of 88 last month, allow me to tell you just a fraction of what made him a [Wisconsin original](#). We may never get another one like him. Consider:

Kohl was Wisconsin's best performing statewide election candidate ever. Not only did we win [four U.S. Senate campaigns](#), he didn't lose a single election. In his last campaign in 2006, he clinched all 72 counties and won by 38 points.

He is inextricably linked to the [Milwaukee Bucks](#). Kohl helped bring the team to Milwaukee in 1968. In 1985, he bought the team to keep them in Milwaukee. And when he sold the team in 2014, he took a less profitable deal from buyers who promised to keep the team in Milwaukee.

Kohl gave a lot of money away. Like... a lot. He put [Kohl in the Kohl Center](#) at his alma mater, the University of Wisconsin-Madison, by donating \$25 million to get it built. Twenty years later, he put up \$100 million to build a new stadium for the Bucks, now known as the Fiserv Forum. And he gave over \$50 million in grants and scholarships to teachers, schools and programs throughout Wisconsin.

His family embodied the American Dream. It started with his Polish immigrant father who opened a small grocery store on Lincoln and Kinnickinnic in the late 1920s. Herb joined the family business in 1959 when there were only a dozen Kohl's supermarkets. By 1979 when the company was sold, there were 74, including 10 department stores, 13 drug, beverage and bakery stores and a substantial amount of real estate.

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He never forgot his roots. Reading all the [tributes made to this man since his passing](#), what shines through is that Herb Kohl was kind, principled and humble. Despite all this success, he was a still guy you would run into at the George Webb diner in Downtown Milwaukee.

Wisconsin was really fortunate to have him, and we may never be so lucky to get another [public figure like him](#) again. Herb Kohl's life will be celebrated during a [public memorial at noon on Friday](#) at Fiserv Forum, you can access it through the main entrance on, of course, Herb Kohl Way.

*Kristin Brey is the "My Take" columnist for the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel.*