Monte Factor dies at 94; Beverly Hills men's clothier, arts patron
Haberdasher-to-the-stars Monte Factor also was an arts patron and co-founded the
End Hunger Network and a groundbreaking child-care center.
By Valerie J. Nelson, Los Angeles Times

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Monte Factor, a Beverly Hills clothier and arts patron who co-founded the End
Hunger Network and a groundbreaking Los Angeles child-care center, died Dec. 5
at Kaiser Permanente West Los Angeles Medical Center, his daughter Diane
announced. He was 94.

With actor Jeff Bridges and others in the entertainment industry, Factor started
the nonprofit End Hunger Network in 1983 to raise awareness of childhood hunger
and help end it. He happened to live next door to Ted Danson, another actor
involved with the organization, the Toronto Star noted in 1989.

In 1977, Factor and his wife, Betty, established the Mar Vista Family Center
near the Mar Vista Gardens housing project to provide low-income families with
quality early childhood education. The center came to be regarded as a national
model for early childhood development.

The couple were significant supporters of contemporary art in Los Angeles, often
trading men's clothes for artwork. In 1947, they started what became known as
Monte Factor/Jerry Rothschild, a men's clothing business in Beverly Hills. They
owned it for more than 40 years.

The Pasadena Museum of Modern Art staged an exhibit in 1973 of 124 works owned
by the Factors. The majority of the 55 artists represented were Californians.
Major patrons of Ed Kienholz, the Factors pulled together a small amount of
cash, an old boat and some clothes in the 1960s to purchase "The Illegal
Operation," a controversial sculpture by the artist, Monte later recalled. The
work is an indictment of back-street abortion and features a floor lamp, a
chromium chair and a wood stool surrounded with the instruments of amateur
surgery.

The piece by Kienholz is now considered one of the most important postwar
sculptures in Los Angeles.

"It was the most deeply affecting work of art I had ever seen," Monte told The
Times in 2008 when he sold it to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art for an
estimated $1 million. His wife had died in 2006, and he wanted "to leave as much
as I can for our four children," he said.

Monte Montefiore Factor was born in 1917 in St. Louis. He was the son of Nathan
Factor, an immigrant from Poland, and the nephew of makeup entrepreneur Max
Factor. Monte Factor moved to Los Angeles with his family in the 1920s.

During World War II, he served on a submarine chaser in the Navy and
participated in the invasion of Normandy, according to his family.

He attended UCLA but dropped out to earn money to pay for his mother's cancer
treatment, his family said. Eventually, he apprenticed in the clothing business
and opened his own store two years after getting married in 1945.

The store was a full-service men's haberdashery with a barbershop and bookie
upstairs. Among his clients were many movie stars and gangsters, his family
said, including the Marx brothers and Mickey Cohen.
Factor's survivors include his four children and five grandchildren.