Fred Segal, designer and founder of the iconic Los Angeles-based fashion store chain that bears his name, passed away at the age of 87 on Thursday, February 25, due to complications related to a stroke.

"To the very end, he inspired us to never give up. He will be forever loved and celebrated," said Segal's family in a statement. "He was a true artist who dedicated his life to evolving as a human being in every aspect. He challenged us to expand our minds and our hearts, to go deeper and to do better. He was an innovator, a forward thinker, a rule breaker, a mentor to so many, such a lover of life and a humanitarian."

Born in Chicago in 1933, Segal worked at HIS Sportswear, where he would ultimately serve as sales manager, before founding his own eponymous store in West Hollywood, in 1960.

The 350-square-foot location initially focused on jeans, spearheading the concept of premium denim. Indeed, when Segal opened his next location, it was a jeans-only store on Melrose at Crescent Heights, where he created the first "Jeans Bar."

At a time when jeans were usually priced around $3.00, his $19.95 models flew off the shelves, proving to be so popular that they even caused traffic jams.
The retailer’s ivy-covered Melrose location transformed into an LA fashion hot spot, redefining West Coast style and attracting fans including Diana Ross, Farah Fawcett, Elvis Presley and The Beatles. The store’s restaurant, Mauro’s, became known as the place to catch a glimpse of Hollywood celebrities.

Segal also pioneered the shop-in-shop retail format, as his stores grew, and he began asking associates to take care of their own areas. Both Ron Herman and Ron Robinson had spaces in the Melrose location, with the store also helping to launch brands including Juicy Couture, Guess Jeans and Hard Candy to new levels.

The business’ expansion saw Fred Segal stores pop up around the world – the chain still operates stores in Taipei and Bern, Switzerland – but the Melrose flagship remained the brand’s spiritual home, a fashion mecca referenced in films including Clueless and Legally Blonde, and which continued to draw the likes of Paris Hilton and Lindsay Lohan well into the 2000s.

However, following the sale of the business, the iconic flagship eventually moved to a new location on Sunset Boulevard in 2017.

Brand licensing company Global Icons has owned the Fred Segal brand since 2019. The group, which has closed a number of the chain’s international locations, recently revealed plans to open a new Fred Segal flagship in Las Vegas.

“We are deeply saddened by the passing of our founder and original curator of cool, Fred Segal, who created a retail scene that continues to be the heart of LA pop culture,” said the brand’s current CEO, Jeff Lotman. “We’ll continue to honor Fred’s legacy by always offering an unparalleled retail experience, searching out new brands, bringing LA style and culture to people around the world, and loving one another.”

Segal is survived by his wife, five children, 10 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. He did not want a funeral, according to his family, who are planning to honor his life with a celebration in the future.

By Robin Driver