

Morrie Markoff, oldest man in US, dies at 110

His brain will be donated to science for research on super-aging.



Morrie Markoff and his wife, the former Betty Goldmintz, were married for 81 years. Credit: Courtesy of the family.

(June 13, 2024 / JNS) Morrie Markoff, considered to be the oldest man in the United States, died on June 3 in downtown Los Angeles. He was 110 years old.

He attributed his long life to regular walks—he and his wife would stroll three miles a day into their 90s—simple eating and generally avoiding alcohol, as well as water from plastic bottles, which he believed were “poison,” according to his daughter Judith Markoff Hansen.

Markoff was born in New York City on Jan. 11, 1914, six months before the start of World War I, *The New York Times* reported in its obituary.

People who live to the age of 110 or older are “supercentenarians.” The Gerontology Research Group lists more than 150 such people around the world.

Markoff became the oldest living man in America after the death of Francis Zouein in January at the age of 113.

His daughter said that when he learned he was on the top of the list, “He just smiled and said, ‘Well, someone’s got to be there.’”

Markoff was noteworthy not only for his long life but for his mental health. He read *The Los Angeles Times* daily, talked about world events and posted on his blog, according to news reports.

His brain has been donated for research on “super-aging.”

His mental acuity at such an advanced age makes his brain of value to science, said Tish Hevel, chief executive of the Brain Donor Project, a Florida nonprofit affiliated with the National Institutes of Health.

“There is a critical need for this tissue for neuroscience research,” Hevel said. “One in five of us now has some kind of neurological disease or disorder, so many of which develop late in life. Scientists stand to learn so much from Mr. Markoff’s tissue about remaining healthy far into old age. It is an incredible gift he gives us.”



Morrie Markoff at his 109th birthday celebration. Credit: Courtesy of the Markoff family.

Married for 81 years

Markoff was born in a tenement in East Harlem, N.Y., one of four children of Russian Jewish immigrants Max and Rose Markoff.

The family of six lived in a 400-square-foot (37-square-meter) apartment with no closets, hot water or toilet. It was infested with vermin and bed bugs. “The burning of bed springs was a yearly ritual among tenement dwellers,” he wrote in his 2017 autobiography, *Keep Breathing: Recollections From a 103-Year-Old*.

He survived the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic, which took the life of a brother.

Markoff moved to Los Angeles in the late 1930s to work for a vacuum-cleaner company. His girlfriend, Betty Goldmintz, joined him from New York. They wed on Nov. 4, 1938, and their marriage lasted 81 years until her death in 2019.

In 1943, he worked as a machinist for a defense contractor that made artillery shells. He eventually opened a series of small-appliance businesses in Los Angeles with a partner, the *Times* reported.

Markoff started sculpting in 1960, a passion he discovered while fixing a toilet when he realized the broken fixture resembled a ballerina's tutu. At 100, he had his first gallery exhibition in Los Angeles.

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