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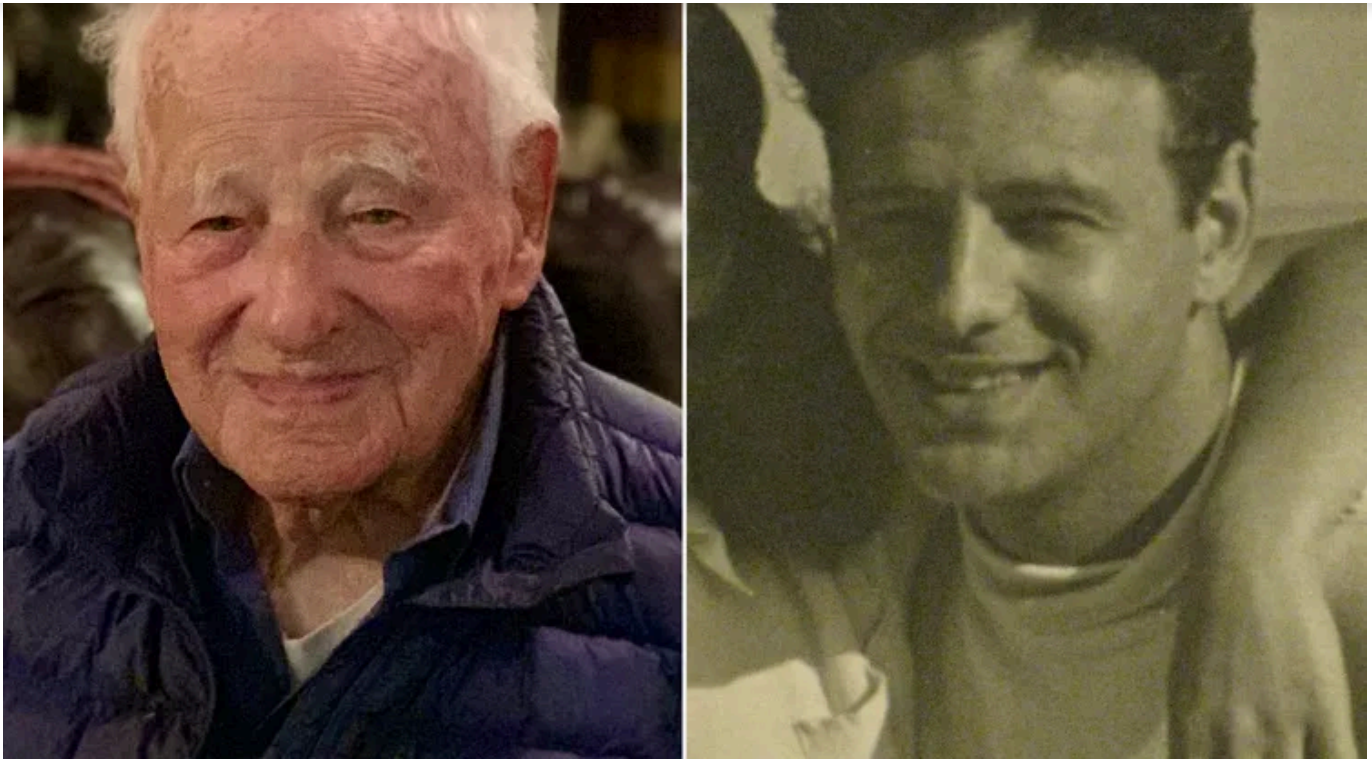
Oldest Man in U.S. Dies at 110 After Walking Daily and Avoiding Bottled Water — Now Scientists Will Study His Brain (Exclusive)

Morrie Markoff followed a mostly vegetarian diet, didn't use plastic and didn't have any neurological disorders like dementia or Alzheimer's

By [Cara Lynn Shultz](#) | Published on June 21, 2024 03:39PM EDT



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Morrie Markoff. PHOTO: COURTESY JUDITH MARKOFF HANSEN

The oldest man in America, Morrie Markoff, died in June at age 110 — and his family has donated his brain to science via the Brain Donor Project

His brain is the “oldest cognitively healthy brain that’s ever been donated,” Tish Hevel, CEO of the Brain Donor Project, tells PEOPLE

Markoff’s daughter, Judith Hansen Markoff, tells PEOPLE her father and mother — who lived to 103 — ate largely vegetarian meals, stayed mentally and physically active, and avoided bottled water

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remarkable.

At the time of his death on June 3, Markoff hadn't suffered any cognitive decline from illnesses like [dementia](#) or [Alzheimer's disease](#), which are linked to aging.

"I didn't think too much about it until he was dying," his daughter, Judith Markoff Hansen, 83, tells PEOPLE. "I woke up and I thought, 'What's going to happen to dad's brain? This fabulous brain?' "

She shared that her dad joked he couldn't donate his organs — "No one would want them because they were too old" — but she hadn't thought about suggesting that he donate his brain before.



Morrie Markoff. PHOTO: COURTESY JUDITH MARKOFF HANSEN

An online search led her to the [Brain Donor Project](#), which facilitates the pairing of donated brains with researchers.

“This is the oldest cognitively healthy brain that’s
SKIP TO CONTENT Tish Hevel, CEO of the Brain Donor Project,

Hansen pointed to her father's healthy lifestyle, sharing that he and her mother, Betty, ate largely vegetarian meals, rarely drank alcohol, stayed active — and were constantly learning.

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"He was just an incredibly curious person," Hansen tells PEOPLE about her father, who was born in the Bronx but moved to Silver Lake, Calif., for work as a salesman and machinist.

"He was very interested in science. He at one time subscribed to *Scientific American* and this is a man with an eighth grade education."

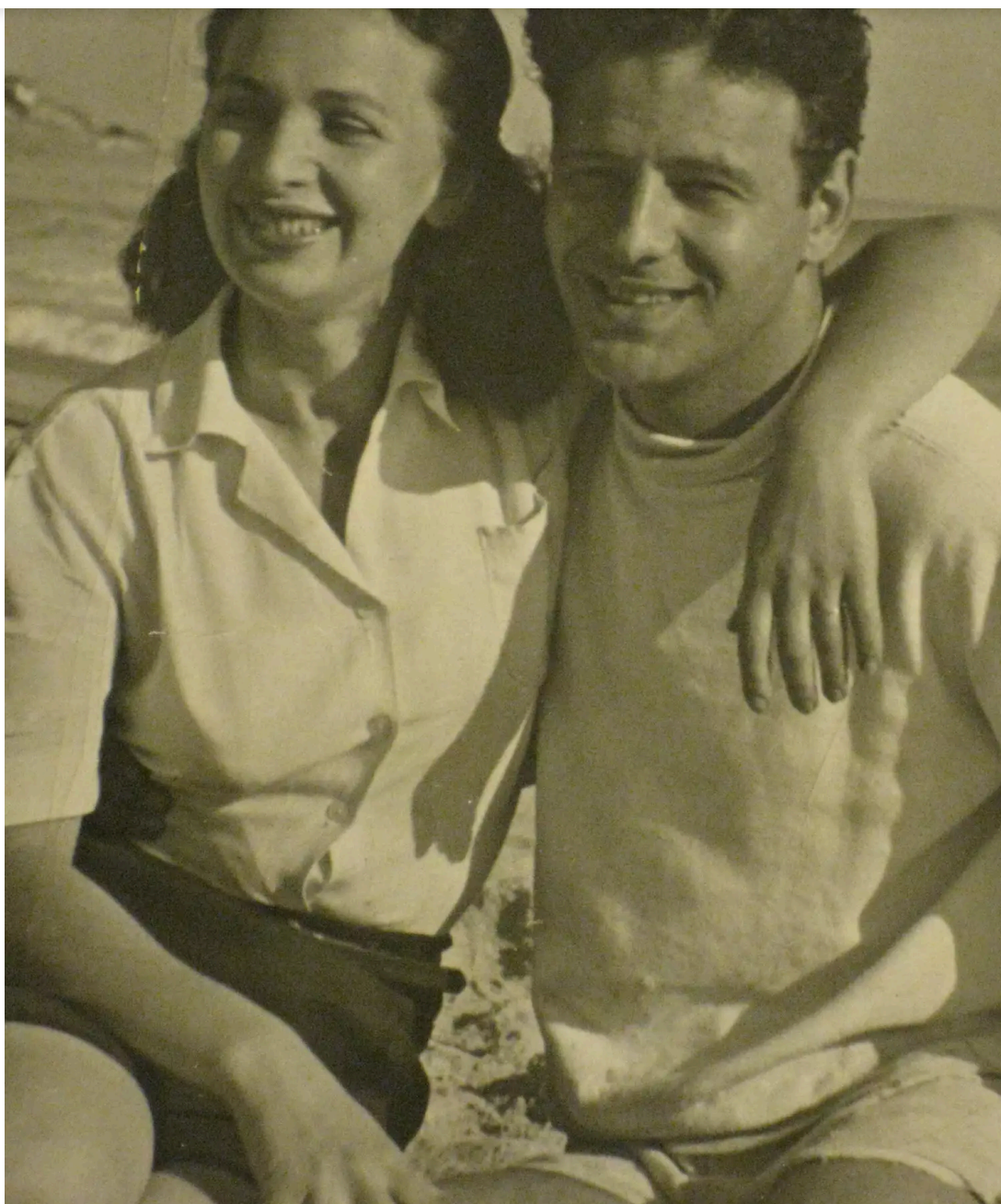
She said that her father and late mother, who died at age 103, "walked three miles a day, late into their 90s. And I know that it was three miles a day because they went down their hill and then they walked around a lake. And you can't cheat, you know, [when] you're going around the lake."

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They ate very simply, she says, adding that they didn't eat fast food, "Never had any soda, no junk food at all," she tells PEOPLE.

"Even store-bought cookies were a little hard to come by."

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Betty (left) and Morrie Markoff. PHOTO: COURTESY JUDITH MARKOFF HANSEN

Hansen is also quick to point out that “mom shunned that whole fad of bottled water.” She continued, “They drank a lot of water but always from the tap,” explaining that her father trusted science —

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ne testing of Los Angeles county’s water supply.

[250,000 pieces of plastic](#), “My dad called me. He said, ‘J, mama was right. We were right. They should have listened to us.’ ”

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He was also an artist, Hansen says, explaining that “the story goes that he was fixing a toilet, he took a piece of the toilet, it looked like a ballerina’s dress on her skirt. And he made that into a sculpture.”

“He was just an incredibly creative person,” she shared about her father, who often posted his artwork and musings on his blog — which made him the [oldest living blogger](#). “Hopefully the brain will find a large area of creativity. I don’t know what it’s going to find. It’s going to be interesting.”

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That’s for certain: Hevel tells PEOPLE that “they’re hoping they can learn what allowed this man to live so long at such a high-functioning level, in case there are things that we can do.”

“Just for example, maybe there’s a certain kind of protein or enzyme that was more prevalent in his brain than most people. And



One of Morrie Markoff's sculptures. PHOTO: JUDITH MARKOFF HANSEN

he published when he was 103.

“He always joked about the ‘keep breathing,’ ” Hansen tells PEOPLE, adding that on a more serious note, her father would say “be interested in things and walk a lot.”

And, she adds, “My mother would say, ‘Don’t drink bottles [of water].’ ”

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