

Morris “Morrie” MARKOFF



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January 11, 1914 - June 3, 2024 Morris “Morrie” Markoff, the oldest man living in the U.S. on the day he passed, left his home at Bunker Hill in Los Angeles and joined his wife, Betty Markoff (Rebecca Goldmintz), who had passed away in 2019. The couple was married over 80 years. Morrie, born in NYC, lived with his parents, Max and Rose, and his siblings (Joe, Yetta and Harry) in a crowded tenement in the Bronx. He went to school until the 8th grade, when he began to live life his own way. He met his wife-to-be, Betty, in New York. Morrie subsequently drove across country to see and live in Los Angeles. Soon after arriving in L.A., he sent Betty a bus ticket to join him. They were married in Los Angeles in 1938 but soon moved to the Bay Area until 1941, but then returned to L.A.. Throughout Betty and Morrie’s life together, they held hands as they rode the buses, wandered through the diverse neighborhoods in L.A. and in cities around the world, making new friends everywhere they went.

Morrie was always curious, especially about people and how they lived. His strong passion and curiosity for life brought him a multitude of jobs and interests: businessman, salesman, photographer, traveler, and even historian. He sold appliances, including sewing machines and vacuum cleaners door-to-door, and started a successful air conditioning business. Morrie welded sculptures and developed his photographs at home in his self-made “dark room.” Morrie and Betty traveled much of the world on their own at their own pace, by plane, car, bus and train. Throughout their travels, Morrie took photographs, with Betty as his faithful companion and scribe. Together they were an alert team, wandering and questioning, and interacting with almost anyone.

At the age of 100, Morrie had his first art show of his metal sculptures at The Red Pipe Gallery in Chinatown. Later “April Doll,” Morrie’s assistant for the last six years of his life, helped with humor and competence keeping up Morrie’s blog, to which he continually added his thoughts which he wrote in beautiful longhand. Morrie Markoff published his memoir, “Keep Breathing,” at the age of 103. Throughout the years, he sent scores of letters to the L.A. Times, always offering opinions and suggestions for a better world. Through one of his letters, he met Steve Lopez, an L.A. Times columnist, and they connected over a shared story of experiencing death during a medical procedure; an odd beginning to a lasting friendship. Sonja Bertucci, a dear friend, started to record her interviews with Morrie and Betty in 2014. Ms. Bertucci produced an award-winning film about them in 2024 titled “The Diamond Couple.”

Morrie and Betty, who identified as Jewish, produced a family that includes spouses from Denmark, Poland, Ethiopia and China. Morrie leaves behind His two children: Judith Markoff-Hansen (Raymond) and Steven Markoff (Jadwiga); grandchildren: Christopher Markoff (Joanna), Jeannie Gorman, Ellen Chestnut (Brian), Thomas Markoff (Nancy), and Emily Markoff-Yirga (Ha’ile); great-grandchildren: Michael Markoff, Aidan and Josh Chestnut, and Stephanie and Ella Yirga, as well as an extended family including Don Price (Wilkie), Amy Jurewicz (Steve), Sophia Jurewicz, Lauri Coltri (Alan), Robin Qualls (Brian), Julia Barton (Joe), Mark Schalit (Maria) and Erik, Gregory and Theresa Hansen.

Morrie held those around him close to his heart, and he offered special thanks and accolades to his beloved caregiver, Rosario (“Charito”) Reyes Urrutia, who loved and cared for him in his last years like he was her own father.

Morrie will be missed by family, friends and many others who have had their lives brightened by his

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