Content of obituary

* **NAME / ANNOUNCEMENT**
  + **Full name of the deceased, including nickname, if any**
  + **Age at death**
  + **Residence (for example, the name of the city) at death**
  + **Day and date of death (remember to include the year)**
  + **Place of death**
  + **Cause of death**
* **LIFE**
  + **Date of birth**
  + **Place of birth**
  + **Names of parents**
  + **Childhood: siblings, stories, schools, friends**
  + **Marriage(s): date of, place, name of spouse**
  + **Education: school, college, university and other**
  + **Designations, awards, and other recognition**
  + **Employment: jobs, activities, stories, colleagues, satisfactions, promotions, union activities, frustrations,**
  + **Places of residence**
  + **Hobbies, sports, interests, activities, and other enjoyment**
  + **Charitable, religious, fraternal, political, and other affiliations; positions held**
  + **Achievements**
  + **Disappointments**
  + **Unusual attributes, humour, other stories**
* **FAMILY**
  + **Survived by (and place of residence):**
    - **Spouse**
    - **Children (in order of date of birth, and their spouses)**
    - **Grandchildren**
    - **Great-grandchildren**
    - **Great-great-grandchildren**
    - **Parents**
    - **Grandparents**
    - **Siblings (in order of date of birth)**
    - **Others, such as nephews, nieces, cousins, in-laws**
    - **Friends**
    - **Pets (if appropriate)**
  + **Predeceased by (and date of death):**
    - **Spouse**
    - **Children (in order of date of birth)**
    - **Grandchildren**
    - **Siblings (in order of date of birth)**
    - **Others, such as nephews, nieces, cousins, in-laws**
    - **Pets (if appropriate)**
* **SERVICE**
  + **Day, date, time, place**
  + **Name of officiant, pallbearers, honorary pallbearers, other information**
  + **Visitation information if applicable: day, date, time, place**
  + **Reception information if applicable: day, date, time, place**
  + **Other memorial, vigil, or graveside services if applicable: day, date, time, place**
  + **Place of interment**
  + **Name of funeral home in charge of arrangements**
  + **Where to call for more information (even if no service planned)**
* **END**
  + **Memorial funds established**
  + **Memorial donation suggestions, including addresses**
  + **Thank you to people, groups, or institutions**
  + **Quotation or poem**
  + **Three words that sum up the life**

The Fillmore Loses a Neighbor

Longtime Fillmore resident William W. Whitney, an art historian and former executive director of the California Historical Society, died January 13, 2004, at age 88. He was active until the last week of his life, living -- as he had for nearly 50 years -- in his art-filled Victorian and taking long walks around the neighborhood every afternoon.

Professor Whitney had lifelong ties to the neighborhood, which he sometimes referred to as "this little village we call the Fillmore."

He was born in San Francisco in 1915 and played in Lafayette Park, near his home, as a child. After the attending the University of Southern California and serving in World War II, he became an academic, teaching art history and design theory at colleges in Southern and Northern California.

He longed to return to San Francisco, and in 1958 he did, joining the staff of the California Historical Society, which was then located in the neighborhood in the Whittier Mansion at Jackson and Laguna. He would later head the organization as executive director from 1966 until his retirement in 1970.

While walking to work at the Society one day, he spotted a Victorian for sale on Buchanan Street. He bought it, and it was his home for the rest of his life.

William Whitney never met a stranger, and he never lost his sense of wonder. A fallen leaf on the sidewalk would spur a memory of an Emily Dickinson poem, long reams of which would flow forth from memory. A chance encounter in the produce section at the Grand Central Market could prompt an invitation for drinks and conversation, if he thought you might be interesting.

The conversation in the Whitney salon -- evenings between 7:00 and 8:00 ("time to be going now) -- was always good. He had a new book from the library ("a marvelous biography"), and he wanted to know what you were reading. He had seen a new exhibition at one of the museums, or been outraged by something in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, which might prompt a pungent letter to the Datebook section of the paper.

One of his last, headlined, &quot;The toilet thing has been done," came after a band was pictured in front of a urinal.

*It is so heartwarming that Imperial Teen gathers around the urinal to relax from arduous rehearsals and is so avant-garde as to place it front and center in its promo photos. Wake up, kids! Duchamp did it in 1914. At 88, I am trying to muster shock, but all I can manage is a yawn.*

He had a connoisseur's appreciation of history, but he was decidedly a modern, with a discriminating eye. He was a regular visitor and an enthusiastic supporter of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco and made bequests from his collection. But that didn't temper his opinions.

Newspaper columnist Herb Caen reported in 1992:

*There was a gala banquet at the Legion of Honor museum Monday night, honoring art patron Katharine Hanrahan, during which William Whitney, also a donor, said to museum director Harry Parker, "I'm so glad you removed that dreadful sculpture from the front of the building -- it was so terribly out of place." Smiled Parker, "I'd like you to meet the owner of that piece -- John Rosekrans, whose grandmother, you'll recall, gave this museum to the city." Rosekrans shrugged, Whitney reddened, Parker went on beaming.*

Professor Whitney joined forces with the Legion of Honor on one of his key projects in retirement. He had inherited the artistic estate of his cousin, the artist Mac Harshberger, who was active in Paris and New York at the height of the Art Deco era. With Professor Whitney's encouragement, the Legion held a solo exhibition of Harshberger's work titled "Art Deco Americain" in 1989. Exhibitions of Harshberger's work also were held at the Honolulu Academy of Art and the Wolfsonian Museum in Miami. His work is in the permanent collections of all three museums.

Professor Whitney wrote *An Elegance of Line*, a 1996 book about Harshberger's graphic art and design. In 1999 he published a book of sonnets, *This, the Tropic Sea*. He had written the sonnets while aboard ship in the South Pacific during World War II and rediscovered them while cleaning out an old trunk.

"They hold up amazingly well," he told an interviewer. "Young poetry can be so misguided."

Professor Whitney was a regular contributor to several art magazines. His final article was published the week he died, appearing in *The Sophisticate*, the journal of the Art Deco Society. In it, he told of a gallery apprentice on the Sunset Strip in the 1940s -- a young William Whitney himself -- and the day he sold a painting to the actress Joan Fontaine and delivered it to the bedroom of her Beverly Hills mansion.

He left behind a number of manuscripts and works in progress, including one on crop circles, which fascinated him.

His death came without illness or pain. He simply ran out of steam on Tuesday morning, January 13. He died at California Pacific Medical Center, a few doors up Buchanan Street from his home.