**The Fillmore Loses a Neighbor - Sample Newspaper Obituary**

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.