

## Should I (help) prepare my own obituary? YES!

(A few thoughts from Judy Sly Herrero – Nov. 5, 2017)

### What is the purpose of an obit?

1. Death notice
2. To announce funeral arrangements/memorial requests
3. To thank caregivers
4. A tribute/love note to a recently deceased family member
5. To leave an accurate record of an important life
6. Some combination of the above.

### What form can or should an obit take?

1. Printed newspaper obituary. Will be saved digitally so available for future generations. The Modesto Bee currently will provide a very brief death notice for free. Paid obit starts at \$84 but can easily run \$400 or more. It will be online for a year, so can be read by folks outside our area. When to run—Sunday, which has the highest readership.
2. A written narrative published elsewhere or in small numbers.
3. Another form: a video obituary that will be shared at any kind of service or for future family gatherings. Or you could ask it to be posted on Facebook after your death.

### How to write an obituary:

1. Assemble all the basics, including the correct spellings of all family members, places where you resided, institutions you were affiliated with, employers, etc. *This will be a gift to your surviving family if you do this in advance regardless of whether you are going to write the actual obit.*
2. A news obituary focuses on the public aspect of a person's life, with very little or no attention to the personal side. You'll see that in the movie "Obit." A self-prepared obituary can cover all elements. The obituary of Arthur Glatke is long but does an excellent job of covering all elements.
3. Chronological approach is easy and logical. However, you might want a "lead" or introduction that is more general. Currently popular: Someone died surrounded by his loving family.
4. Be sure to include the details that help bring a person's character to life. I.e. He liked dogs. Or, he always had a black Labrador by his side.
5. Touchy points: Family estrangements, illnesses, etc. Yours to decide what and whether to include. An ex-spouse can be a very important person in the person's life. Let your family know your wishes about what is to be published, but in the end... you won't be there to decide.
6. Once you have written your obituary (it will take days or weeks) let it simmer, review it and then ask someone else for suggestions to make it more clear and concise. You can save \$ \$ and make it more interesting.
7. Photos - Choose your favorites from throughout your life.

**To consider**

What is most important in our life right now may not be the most important elements from the long-term perspective. This is especially true if someone has been dealing with a prolonged illness or who died in a particularly tragic way.