

**NAME:** Bob Bell  
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**PLACE:** At his home on Lake Owasso  
**INTERVIEWER:** Mary Bakeman

**PROJECT SERIES:** Remembering Roseville  
**BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION:**

A: I came to Roseville - I grew up near Como Park, so I never got very far from home. We moved to Roseville in 1955 - rented a home from Emil Cedarholm on Lake Owasso, paid \$60 a month for a house on the lake and have been there every since.

Q: You've been city attorney

A: For more years than I want to admit - actually our office is the attorney now. People in the office do most of the work. Occasionally I'll go to a Council meeting.

Q: Why don't you tell us about some of the legal challenges that have faced the city over the years.

A: We've had a lot of fun over the years. Years ago, one of the first things that pops to my mind was the dispute we had with Sunset Memorial Park. That's a cemetery in the western part of the city. A lot of people don't recognize this, but they owned a lot of land in what is now the Roseville industrial area, and the City of Roseville wanted industry in there, because obviously they paid taxes. Cemeteries are nice to have, they're necessary, but they don't pay taxes. And the city to raise the issue, was going to condemn a road thru their property. And of course Sunset Memorial said you can't condemn a road thru a cemetery, that's the law. The City of Roseville argued that it was not a cemetery, so we can. That ended up in the Supreme Court. Finally it was resolved and the Sunset Memorial Park ends at the boundary of Roseville, so that as you drive down County Road C, just as you leave Roseville, the land to your south would have been Sunset Memorial Cemetery. Now part of the industrial area of Roseville.

Q: I heard that they were actually going to move some bodies there, and that they were caught.

A: That was alleged, I don't know that I have any solid evidence of that, but everybody had a lot of fun, everyone was excited. There were other problems with the cemetery, too. Just before I became attorney, the Roselawn Cemetery, the old City Council at that time tried to spread an assessment against Roselawn. And it was obviously a cemetery - you can't tax them, you can't take their land for condemnation, they've got primary rights more than anyone else has for their land. So the City of Roseville tried to spread an assessment against the City of Roseville [he means Roselawn Cemetery], that was the attorneys just before we took over. The Supreme Court told Roseville, no, you can't spread any assessments on Roselawn Cemetery. That case went to the Supreme Court. Some of the old archives.

And then we had some private water companies. The Old Minnesota Water Company and the Roseville Water Company, and when the City decided to build a municipal water system, we didn't know what to do about these private water companies. The private water companies -- but where is Roseville going to get the money for them? Normally we got the

money for water service by assessing all the property owners, so if we put a water main in front of your house, you paid so many dollars to pay for the water main. But we couldn't assess these people from the private water companies because they'd say "Hey look, we already got public water. Why should we have to pay an assessment?" If we were going to pay the water company some money for their system, where were we going to get the money? We couldn't assess the people, "Hey, don't assess us. We already paid. We bought our houses, and they said water was in and paid for." We went to court and we battled that out long and hard. The old law firm of Briggs and Morgan represented the old Minnesota Water Company and it was finally resolved and worked out fairly well that the people on the private water company paid a lesser assessment, about a third of what everybody else paid, and then the Roseville Water Company - that was owned by George Reiling. Everybody knows George Reiling. He should be interviewed, too, because he's probably got more history than most.

Q: We're trying to get him

A: Well George owned the Roseville Water Company and the same problems were there. George says, "I've got a going business. Pay me for my water company. But don't assess the houses that are on the water company." But who else is going to pay for it? Well those problems finally got resolved and the water companies are long since gone and Roseville is now served by a very good municipal water system.

Q: Where did these companies work? What part of the city did they cover.

A: The Minnesota Water Company was along Rice St., just west of Rice St. When the Kroiss Construction Company built a lot of the houses over there, and rightly so, the Kroiss Construction Company didn't want to drill a well for every house. They drilled practically a municipal well, water mains down the streets, for all those streets that parallel to Rice St., west of Rice St., north of 36. Maybe a lot of people remember when those Kroiss houses were built. And the old Roseville Water Company was just across from the City Hall. In fact the old well for the Roseville Water Company would be on what is now Woodhill, used to be County Road C, a block east of Lexington. The old building is still there, but I remember when they took over that water company, nobody wanted that well to be used again, and the engineers filled it with concrete to be sure that no one would use the well again.

Q: Where did that cover? North of 36 also?

A: Both water companies were north of 36. George Reiling's water company called the Roseville Water Company was primarily east of Lexington, between Lexington and Dale. George actually, I understand that George actually laid some of the water mains himself and ran the company.

Q: Any other major issues?

A: Of course we had all the zoning disputes and so forth. I remember Control Data wanted to come into the City at one time. And that was a big issue. Emil Cederholm was mayor in those days, and Emil wanted a Control Data to come in, and the land was actually rezoned for them, but there was so much commotion about it, that Control Data didn't want to get involved in any more disputes and ended up building out in Bloomington.

Q: Now this Control Data - that was for their office.

A: Yeah, for their office, I'm not sure what all they were going to build. Would have been their main headquarters, they later on built it in Bloomington, but the land was rezoned for Control Data and they almost came in.

Q: Where was it?

A: The exact location would be about Fairview and County Road B, just south of the Rosedale Shopping Center there.

Q: So where the old Gluek Farm?

A: No, where that kind of commercial area, north of B, south of 36, and just east of Fairview.

Q: OK where there's a Children's Learning Center, and something

A: Exactly, exactly - yeah that was almost the headquarters of Control Data, but it didn't happen.

Q: What about the other utilities that came in?

A: Sewer actually came before water. And when I first became associated with the City, we were just finishing up the sewers, and then the first hearings for the water. I believe that they first hearings for the water system were held over in the old Alexander Ramsey High School, and they had 2-300, oh more than that, probably 5 or 600 people there to decide if we wanted to go build a water system. I think those hearings were held in about 1961. perhaps 62. Of course at that time everything was controversial in those days, because everyone had their own individual well, and they'd say "Why should I have to pay for a water system? I've got a good water system." But those wells weren't working very good, they were jamming up and so water was a lot better. Probably not quite as critical as the sewer because the sewer - so many houses were being built the areas were becoming polluted with sewage.

Q: The sewer came in first, you say?

A: The sewer came in first, although I'm sure that by the time the sewers were finished up then the water was started, but that was generally completed during the 60s.

Q: What about the power lines and the gas

A: Well one time Northern States Power Company wants to build a 345,000 volt line through the City of Roseville. It's in existence today. That was a big dispute, and it's kind of interesting that they wanted to build these huge erector set kinds of towers, and there are a few of them, and the City said "No, we want you to build more attractive towers." And if you look at the power lines today, along the railroad tracks from Rice St. across the City, look at most of the poles today, they are single poles, holding the line up, which is unique for Roseville, because Roseville didn't want to have all those big erector set type towers across the City. And if my recollection is right, Roseville was really the first city that backed the power company down and made them put in more attractive type towers. Some of the erector set towers are in existence today, primarily in the industrial area, because they were cheaper for the power company and a couple places where the lines turned, because where the lines turned, there's more pressure on the towers. But if you look at the towers today, it was a big dispute in those days, you can see what Roseville thought were more attractive

towers because of the backbone of the city and standing up to Northern States Power Company.

Q: Other disputes or issues that have come up?

A: Well, we had a lot of them. Of course when they built Rosedale and Har Mar, obviously that caused a lot of excitement in the City, but I think that both of them worked out well. But when they were planning Har Mar, I think there was more excitement when they were planning HarMar than when they were planning Rosedale. Rosedale, that area where Rosedale is, had been set aside for a shopping center for many years before Rosedale was built. I remember the old signs out there at Snelling and 36 "Coming soon - the Golden Rule with 50 shops." In those days the Golden Rule was a store downtown St. Paul and that was subsequently transferred ownership to what is now Rosedale, although the ownership has changed many, many times, but that was signs that came up at Snelling and 36 - "Coming soon - the Golden Rule and 50 shops." That sign I'm sure that sign sat there for 10 years before any dirt was moved, and I remember it was just a big open field, and everybody said "Oh the Golden Rule is coming." Well the sign was there for 5 years, and the Golden Rule hasn't shown up yet. Today Rosedale sits there. I really think that Har Mar was built, because I think there was more excitement about Har Mar and Har Mar preceded the Rosedale Shopping Center.

Q: Why do you think there was more about Har Mar?

A: Well, I think there were more houses around Har Mar than around Rosedale site. And also the old Rosedale site had those old Golden Rule signs up for I'm sure at least 10 years before any dirt was moved, so everybody knew that something was going to happen there. In fact, people were beginning to wonder, the Golden Rule is *never* going to come.

Q: Did the Slawiks own all the property where Har Mar is?

A: Well where HarMar is now used to be the old Harkins Driving Range. and obviously the Slawiks bought it from the Harkins. the Harkins Driving Range originally was at Como and Snelling, and people went down there and hit golf balls, and then the Harkins moved out to Har Mar site. I remember going out there and hitting golf balls. Where Har Mar is now.

Q: And then they moved further out, I imagine.

A: I don't know where they are now. I suppose there are some driving ranges around with various places - whatever happened to Harkins people, I don't know.

Q: Any other issues as the City Attorney - most of what you've talked about is land use issues.

A: Well I remember we had a dispute. We had municipal liquor stores. The old state law was that if you had municipal liquor stores, you could not issue private licenses. So we had several municipal liquor store, the main store in Har Mar, in fact in Har Mar we had a liquor store. Roseville made more money off that HarMar store than any other store, and they had a couple of others scattered around, too. But as Roseville was beginning to develop, people wanted to build restaurants in Roseville, and the restaurants wanted, of course, to have liquor licenses, can't have liquor licenses, we've got municipal liquor. So we wanted the law to change to allow you to have a municipal store still issue private licenses, and that was - the rule given for that was called split liquor. The watchword in the Legislature. I remember the

City Council passing Resolution to the Legislature. In fact I was in the Legislature when that battle took place. Some of the liquor dealers in St. Paul were not so anxious to give Roseville split liquor, because that meant if you built restaurants in Roseville, you're competing with St. Paul. And of course if you had a liquor license in St. Paul, you weren't too anxious for competition. That battle was fought out and finally this so-called split liquor bill was passed. In fact, I'll even tell you a funny story about that split liquor bill. I was in the Legislature at the time, representing Roseville, so I authored the bill to amend the law, the so-called split liquor bill. We had meetings out here and the City Council said, yeah we want to get some restaurants out here with liquor licenses. The core cities were a little bit cool to it because they didn't want more competition. So there was opposition to it. And besides the liquor industry itself was somewhat against it - the industry wanted to get rid of the municipal stores anyway. If you get rid of the municipal store, fine, have your restaurants, so there was a lot of opposition. And when we were counting votes in the Legislature, it was pretty close as to whether we could get it passed or not. I remember old Leonard Dickinson from northern Minnesota came to me at the same time the bounty bills were being discussed. He said, "Listen Bell, I'll help you out on split liquor - you gotta help me out on the bounty bills." The only deal I ever made in the Legislature. I said "Leonard, I can't vote for an idiot bounty bill." Well, he said "Do you want some help on the split liquor bill?" I said, "Well I'm not going to help on the bounty bill - that's ridiculous." "Well he said, I'll tell you something. There's going to be a vote in the House, it's not going to be a recorded vote. You just have to stand up or not, nobody will know how you voted. But I want that vote to get that bounty bill sent to another committee." And so I said, "All right Leonard, I'll go that far, as long as the vote isn't recorded." As I say, when I was in the Legislature, that was the only dirty deal I ever made, to get split liquor. But I remember when they took the vote to send the bounty bill to another committee that Leonard thought was more friendly, I stood up. Leonard came over - well how do you want us to vote on the split liquor bill? Split liquor was eventually passed, Roseville got its restaurants, and all the restaurants in Roseville got - of course later on we got rid of our municipal stores anyway, so it didn't make any difference, but initially when Roseville starting building restaurants and issuing liquor licenses because of the split liquor bill.

Q: I wanted to follow up on the municipal stores, because the profits from those stores were also used to Roseville's benefit.

A: They went into the General Fund for the City of Roseville. They did make money on them for a while. In fact, Roseville even had a municipal lounge, where most had off-sale stores, we had an on-sale store, which means you can drink the booze on the premises. Off-sale, you drink the booze off the premises. It's like a package store. They had a lounge on Snelling Avenue, which is now right next to the Countryside Restaurant. The building was originally built by the City for a lounge. I remember all the deals that were made over there - you want to work out something, you'd go over to the Municipal Lounge and have a drink and discuss business. Somebody said there would be so many contractors in the Municipal Lounge on Friday nights, that any job you wanted to get a bid on, just hold it up in the Municipal Lounge and there would be some contractor there that would bid on it.

Q: I understand that some of the profits from those Municipal Stores went to support the parks.

A: Obviously some did - that was up to the City Council. They went to the General Fund and the City Council could spend it anyway they saw fit. But I think the parks were helped by the old stores. But that's history now - we no longer have any municipal stores.

Q: I always thought that was neat, the parks where you have to have to have special permission to carry a bottle of beer in were supported by the liquor stores.

A: That's right - that's right.

Q: Any other interesting things about the city -

A: There were a lot of issues in those days.

Q: Let's talk about the streets - I know that where County Road C is in front of the City Hall was not County Road C.

A: No, County Road C was now where Woodhill was.

Q: Was that a City decision or a County decision.

A: The County decided to locate County Road C, and they had the decision to do that. Although when the County condemned the land for the present location of County Road C, between Lexington and Hamline, the old County Road C when north of there, the City also condemned some land in conjunction with the site for the City Hall so the same proceeding the City and the County jointly acquired the land to build County Road C, and also get the land for the City Hall.

Q: When you were in the Legislature, you represented the City of Roseville.

A: Well, the District was Falcon Heights, a little bit of Lauderdale, and about 75% of Roseville, not the entire city, the district has changed a little, but every time, all the time I was there, 80% of Roseville was in my district.

Q: And you were there from

A: I was elected in 1967, and in 1974 I did not run for re-election.

Q: I'm curious about the sort of joint products and projects that occurred not only with the Legislature but with the County - the City's cooperative efforts.

A: Well, obviously the County maintains the county road system in the city of Roseville, and the City of Roseville also maintains the road system. Incidentally, you know the City of Roseville has the power to rename the County Roads, but we never have. Except Larpenteur would be County Road A, but the City of St. Paul and Roseville renamed it Larpenteur. But Larpenteur is County Road A historically. Roselawn was County Road A-2, but the City and the County named Roselawn, Roselawn. County Road B lines up almost with Broadway in Minneapolis, and the old timers out here still call County Road B Broadway because if you follow County Road B past Paper Calmenson, it runs into Broadway. I remember years ago "Why don't we rename County Road B Broadway?" and then B-2 and C could have been renamed. But I guess everyone lost interest in it and so we still have County Road B and B-2, and when they were renaming streets we got Larpenteur and Roselawn which were renamed. We did have a project back in the 60s to start renaming streets, but after they had a plan to rename the streets, everybody got excited, because if you had an address on County Road C, "Hey, why should I have to change my address to something else?"

Q: County Road B was going to be Fairchild, and Crosley Road,

A: They had names for all of them but they never went through. We still have County Road B, B-2, C

Q: You talked about the effort of the liquor. Were there other bills that you authored for Roseville when you were in the Legislature?

A: Answers phone----

A: Probably nothing quite as exciting as split liquor. We had a lot of fun with that. There were bills for the old Firemen's Relief Association, and so forth. The Fire Department in Roseville historically was a volunteer fire department, it still is a volunteer fire department, except it's operated by Roseville today, and the firemen have a pension fund, that's called the Firemen's Relief Association. In the old days, a special bill was passed constantly to determine what the pension would be of the firemen after you'd been on the department so long, so those bills were written in the Legislature from time to time. Although now you have a state law regulating the whole matter. And just off hand - what other bills were involved for Roseville? There were the old laws on whether you could pass special legislation or not. That was always a question the Legislature could pass a law that would apply only to Roseville. Historically, you know that was kind of frowned upon - "Wait a minute - the Legislature passes laws that go statewide, you can't pass one law that applies to Roseville, one that applies to Arden Hills, etc." They made some exceptions to that - kind of kicked around in the 60s. And in those days in the 60s the Metropolitan Council was being formed, and Roseville and all the other communities were very interested in that. And in those days the big issue was should the Metropolitan Council be elected or appointed by the Governor. And in Roseville that was a big issue. Today everybody has kind of forgotten about that.

Q: I don't know, they are still talking about that.

A: I guess so, there was probably basically an uncomfortable feeling between many municipalities about how much power are you going to give the Metropolitan Council, what that's going to do to local cities, and of course, the argument was "My gosh, in the 7-county metropolitan area, what do you have? about 250 governments? Why do we need that many governments?" and so, but I suppose each of the governments said "I don't know - give that power to the Metropolitan Council and put us out of business?" And that was kind of discussed. I think to some extent that some people feared that by making the Metropolitan Council elective, that people feel freer to give elective officials power than appointed officials. I suppose with the elected official we can vote the SOB out, but you can't do that to some appointed one. There was friction in the 60s and 70s and maybe even today about how much power the Metropolitan Council have, and what is that going to do to the power of local communities. I don't think people worry about it quite as much today as they did back in the 60s and 70s. But the Metropolitan Council was formed.

Before the Metropolitan Council was formed, it used to be known as the Metropolitan Planning Commission. In other words, that was established in the early 60s, maybe even the late 50s. Called a Planning Commission. And they practically had no power. And they were converted into the Metropolitan Council. And of course there are Metropolitan Agencies, the Metropolitan Airports Commission, Metropolitan Sports Commission, Metropolitan Transit Authority, there was a thought at one time that we were going to take all these Metropolitan functions, the transit authority, the airport, the sports authority, and also the sewer board, now the waste control the metropolitan function that takes care of the sewers, make that all one government and have these people elected though that never happened,

but I suspect that it was because everyone was treading on everyone else's turf in those days. Metropolitan Airport Commission didn't want to give up their power, the Transit Authority didn't want to give up their power. But you know to me those things were discussed and probably more heatedly than they are today. At least I haven't seen much heated debate today. But those were big things in the 60s and 70s when all those things were being discussed.

Q: Have there been any joint project between the County and City, other than road and snowplowing, and things to do with roads?

A: I suppose the County parks, is all. I think that all the park commisions and the county operates parks and the City operates parks. The County parks are a lot bigger than the city parks, but the in the early 70s the County appropriate \$15,000,000, and \$15,000,000 was a lot of money in the 70s, still is, and they were going to use that money to buy a lot of park. And they did buy a lot of parks. A big park in New Brighton was acquired, all that land along Rice Creek, all that land in Shoreview where all the TV towers, the County acquired that property. And they acquired other properties too. The County wanted to acquire all the land in Roseville in the area between West Owasso Blvd and Victoria. There's a big valley there, and the County had laid all that area out, in fact were going to take land all the way up to Lake Owasso, but that park never got going, the County abandoned it. That was discussed in the 70s, whether or not that would be park. Since then we've seen some development in there, some very nice houses, but all the land between Victoria and West Owasso Blvd, all the way up to County Road D, that big valley in there was proposed and laid out to become a county park. It never happened.

Q: That might have been when Langton was purchased.

A: Yeah, Langton Lake was being discussed at that time too,

Q: The County did buy some land

A: That's right, yeah.

Q: Any other joint projects or issues.

A: Well there were so many of them. In fact, I remember one of the old St. Paul legislators every session would introduce a bill to abolish all the governments in Ramsey County and make one government for Ramsey County. And that was old Senator Novak, and I think his father had introduced it for some time. That was the proposal - to have one government in Ramsey County, abolish the City of St. Paul, City of Roseville, City of Falcon Heights, Shoreview - have one government, the Ramsey County Government. I think they did try that in Florida - Dade County Florida was going to take over a lot of the things from Miami and Miami Beach and so forth, to prevent duplication. That never happened. As far as I know that's a dead issue today, and nobody ever talks about that anymore. There was discussion, and those bills were introduced. To have one municipal government, I suppose the City of Ramsey, it would have been.

Q: I've asked everybody this question, and I'll ask you too. What change that you've seen in your time here in Roseville is the best change?

A: Well, obviously, today we're a city with a center by ourselves. When Roseville started, we were just an adjunct to the City of St. Paul. If you - Those that first moved out into Roseville in the late 40s and 50s, and even the 60s until our shopping centers were built, that

if you shopped, you shopped in St. Paul. If you went to a movie, you went to a movie in St. Paul. If you went to any cultural thing, you went to the City of St. Paul or the City of Minneapolis. There was nothing in Roseville. Since then, of course, Roseville is - now you no longer go to St. Paul to shop, in fact people from St. Paul come to Roseville to shop. You don't go to St. Paul to a movie any more, you go to a theater in Roseville. Roseville has become far more self-sufficient, not just an adjunct to ST. Paul any more. And the cities, rightly or wrongly, perhaps tragic for the cities, it causes some deterioration in the city, but the cities don't have the centers that they once were.

Q: What about on the other side of the coin? What would you have liked to retain from the old Roseville to today?

A: Well, I suppose nostalgia would say, we'd like to see less traffic, because if you bring more and more in, you've got more automobiles and more traffic, and if you ask people what they don't like about Roseville, there's too much automobile traffic. But whether we like it or not, the suburbs were built on automobiles, the suburbs were built to accommodate automobiles, cities were built to accommodate street cars, in other words, transportation systems built the cities, to a large extent. That's why you had a downtowns - people took the streetcars downtown. Nobody rides public transportation any more. You go automobile. So today if you build something, you have to have a big parking lot, where you didn't have big parking lots - they weren't necessary. So whether we like it or not, the suburbs were built around the automobile, and the old cities around public transportation. If it's good or bad, other people can debate, but if you are going to use your car, you have to go to the suburbs, because you have a place to park. If you go to the downtown in the cities, there's no place to park, so you don't go and you don't ride public transportation.

Q: One of the reasons they're dying, probably

A: Well, there's no place to park. Obviously when they built Rosedale and Har Mar, 3/4s of the land is set aside for parking. Whether that's good or bad, other people can debate, but that's a fact of life.

Q: Anything else we should talk about?

A: I think we've covered quite a bit already.

Q: Carmen, is there anything you think we should talk about, that we didn't?

A: No - background - changes how people live

Q: Let's talk about that - we are here, at your home, overlooking the lake, so let's talk about what your neighborhood was like when you first moved out here and how it's changed.

A: Well, I first moved out to Lake Owasso in 1955. rented a house from Emil Cedarholm who was later on Mayor of the City of Roseville, paid \$60 a month, lived there a couple of years, and then we built a house on Heint Drive. Our old address was 737 Heint Drive. We built it on the lake. Someone told me, "You know, they're selling lots on the Lake Owasso." I like the lake, I was renting a house on the lake, going to cost you \$3500 for a lot. OO - \$3500 is a lot of money, I don't know where we are going to get it, but we did scrape it together and bought a lot and built a house. Then after 10 years we built another house, and we've been on the lake ever since. When we first moved out here, obviously there was farms,

my wife is telling me what about Shubring's farm, yeah you'd look across the street, and of course today it's all been built up. It's inevitable.

Q: How many houses were out here when you rented on the lake?

A: Rented on the lake - there were summer cottages. I remember on the north there was old Patnode's Resort - people have probably forgotten about that. I mean they had little shacks - we'd call them shacks today - and today they are all gone, and very nice homes built in that area. Boat rentals on the lake that no longer exist - used to come out to the lake, rent a boat and row around the lake. All gone. In fact, there were, years and years ago, Lake Owasso was called Bass Lake, and I'm told back in the bootleg days, that the bootleggers lived on Lake Owasso. And that all kinds of illicit things were going on up on South Owasso Blvd. I remember the guy's name - Freddie, that ran a place - he rented out rooms on Lake Owasso for what people thought were very suspicious reasons, but he was quiet and nothing ever happened, but I'm told that old timers could go in there, and for \$1 you could get whatever you wanted. He never had a liquor license but you could get a martini, whatever you want. A buck that's what Freddie charged everybody to drink in there. He had no liquor license, he had nothing, but he was very quiet, and never made too much noise, no close neighbors, and I guess there was a Hawaiian Inn out there, I'm told, that was, by people even older than I am, about the bootlegger days on Lake Owasso, but that's long before there was a City or there was a suburb.

Q: And now there are regulations on the boats.

A: There's regulations on the boats, there's controversy there, the people who like peace and quiet and the motor boat enthusiasts. I think it's a pretty good compromise that's worked out over the years, but there's that are you a motorboater, or do you want quiet? Motor boats unfortunately make noise and disturb the peace and quiet that some want, but you have to have a compromise in everything, and I think there's a pretty good compromise that's been worked out.

Q: Anything else we should talk about?