

# Robert O. Naegele, Jr

November 23, 1939 - November 7, 2018



On November 7, 2018, Robert Otto Naegele, Jr.'s life on earth ended peacefully. He was surrounded by his loving family after a short fight with cancer. He was 78 years old. Bob was born on November 23, 1939 in Minneapolis, MN to Robert Otto Naegele, and Harriet Edwards Naegele.

His father was the founder of Naegele Outdoor Advertising of the Twin Cities. Bob graduated from Minnetonka High School in 1957, where he played hockey, football and tennis and later graduated from Dartmouth College ('61) in New Hampshire.

He married his high school sweetheart Ellis Jean Fitzimons in 1961. For more than twenty years, he worked for and ultimately purchased (with brother Bill Naegele) and led Naegele Outdoor Advertising.

In 1984, he invested in a hockey training product company, Ole's Innovative Sports, later renamed, Rollerblade, Inc. Under his leadership, Rollerblade and the sport of inline skating became a national and international pastime. When he sold the company in 1995, he and Ellis made national news by sharing a percentage of the proceeds with every Rollerblade employee.

In 1997, Bob and his family successfully led a group of MN investors in pursuing an NHL Expansion franchise, to bring professional hockey back to the state of Minnesota. In October of 2000, the Minnesota Wild was officially born, with Bob as lead investor and Chairman. The Wild found its home in the state-of-the-art, Xcel Energy Center, the centerpiece to the revitalization of downtown St. Paul. His vision and passion for what the sport of hockey means to Minnesotans helped cement the branding of Minnesota as THE "State of Hockey". To commemorate the Wild's dedication to the great hockey fans throughout the state, the Wild raised and retired sweater number one on opening night. The name on the sweater

reads, WILD FANS. Players will wear a jersey patch with his initials for the remainder of the season, and a moment of silence will be held before Minnesota's next home game on Tuesday night against Washington.

"A piece of his heart and soul will remain forever as a part of the Wild," said current owner Craig Leipold, who bought the club from Naegele in 2008. "We will honor that. My family and I are so fortunate to have the chance to build on the great foundation he established here."

In 2008, he was one of the winners of the Lester Patrick Trophy for service to the sport.

But the real legacy of Bob's life began in 1973 when he recognized that his broken self was in need of a Savior. His name, Jesus. He would later say, "Jesus was the Good News I'd been searching for my entire life." Knowing how much God loved him, changed everything for Bob. His life passion from that point on was to share the Good News through his life, deeds and words with everyone he encountered.

He is survived by his childhood sweetheart and wife of 58 years, Ellis Fitzimons Naegele, daughters, Jennifer Jean Naegele, Jill Naegele Trautz, Trisha Naegele Hoyt, and son, Robert Otto Naegele III. Sons in law, John Trautz, Greg Hoyt and daughter in law, Karen Naegele and 10 grandchildren. Brother, William Otto Naegele, brother-in-law, Michael W. Fitzimons as well as, sisters-in-laws, Stephanie Naegele, and Susan Fitzimons.

A celebration of his life will take place at 1:00pm on November 19, 2018 at Grace Church of Eden Prairie. A future celebration will be held in Naples, FL in early 2019. The family requests that in lieu of flowers, gifts be made to one of the following places that Bob loved and supported: Hope Academy ([hopeschool.org](http://hopeschool.org)), Dinomights Inner-City Hockey ([dinomights.com](http://dinomights.com)), or MN Adult and Teen Challenge ([mntc.org](http://mntc.org)).

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