



VILLAGER BACKSTORY

You may know Bob Roswell from his frequent walks, bike rides or rounds of golf, but what you may not know is that he held many positions in the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and had three presidential appointments.



Bill Mitchell | Daily Sun

GETTING TO KNOW BOB ROSWELL

Age: 72
Village: Osceola Hills
Spouse: Cheryl
Family: Three children, one granddaughter
Moved here: 2017
Moved here from: Edmond, Oklahoma
Favorite Villages activities: Walking, biking, golfing, cooking and making crafts



Kristen Fiore

THE VILLAGES DAILY SUN

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Bob Roswell jokingly describes himself as both a “total nerd” and an “opportunist,” but these qualities have taken him far in life.

Roswell made it to the international science fair every year of high school and won several awards. In his senior year, he won an award from the U.S. Navy and was offered summer employment at the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard’s aerospace crew equipment laboratory.

There, the now-Village of Osceola Hills resident worked in the Apollo program two years before the first moon landing, researching life support systems for astronauts that would be critical to ensure a sufficient oxygen supply for their trip to the moon.

Roswell was interested in science and biology and decided to pursue a career in the medical field. He went

into the Army under a health profession scholarship program that provided a stipend to get through medical school and then worked in the army at Fort Benning, Georgia, for two years.

After that, he transferred from active to reserve duty. After 36 years of active and reserve service, he retired as a colonel.

But a lot happened in between.

Roswell graduated from medical school at the University of Oklahoma and went on to work at that university, starting as an assistant professor and retiring as a dean.

He also worked at the University of South Florida, University of Alabama and the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center. Roswell’s initial focus was endocrinology, but it eventually broadened into research

and efforts on how to improve health care as a whole. He penned many publications on the matter.

At the University of Texas, he got involved in the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs through the Dallas VA Medical Center and assumed leadership roles in that facility and eventually with the VA nationally.

He chaired the VA’s National Advisory Committee while the VA was developing one of the first systems for electronic medical records. This led to Roswell chairing the Oklahoma Health Information Exchange Trust.

“Oklahoma was one of the first states to implement that vision by putting in a statewide infrastructure that allowed sharing electronic information,” Roswell said.

Roswell was brought to Florida in the mid-’90s, when he was made the first person to

serve as network director for VA Healthcare throughout Florida, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

And this doesn’t even include three different presidential appointments.

In the early ’90s, he was appointed to the Presidents National Health Care Reform Task Force, which was chaired by then-first lady Hillary Clinton.

About a year later, then-President Bill Clinton appointed him the executive director of the Persian Gulf Veterans Coordinating Board.

Veterans were concerned about Gulf War exposure, as a lot of chemicals, toxins and pesticides were used during the war. Roswell’s group worked to research treatments and make sure they were available.

“It was a tremendous effort and a controversial topic,”

Roswell said.

For that reason, he was usually the person sent to do interviews with national media outlets like CBS and attend congressional hearings.

Finally, from 2002-04, he served as under secretary for health for the VA, appointed by then-President George W. Bush.

It was certainly a busy and sometimes stressful career, but Roswell enjoyed the effort of making the health care system better for Americans and veterans.

“It was always about making health care better,” he said.

Now in The Villages, Roswell is getting to enjoy some other activities, like shooting airguns, fishing and hiking.

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