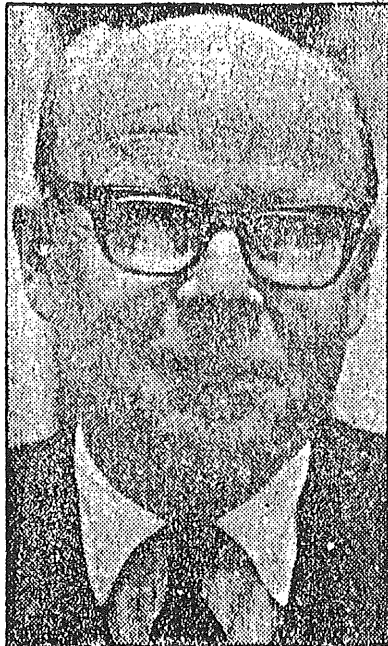


# Two former state senators arrested



Gordon Rosenmeier  
1968 photo

By Eric Black  
Staff Writer

Two former state senators, including one of the most influential Minnesota legislators of modern times, were arrested in Cass County Thursday night.

Former Sen. Gordon Rosenmeier, 75, of Little Falls, was charged with drunken driving. A Breathalyzer test indicated a blood alcohol level of .19, according to the arresting officer. It is illegal to drive with a level above .10.

Former Sen. Baldy Hansen, 73, of Austin, a passenger in Rosenmeier's car, allegedly raised such a ruckus while a state trooper was arresting Rosenmeier that he was charged with disorderly conduct and obstructing legal process.

According to State Patrolman Arthur May of Walker, who made the arrests, Hansen refused to produce his

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driver's license, insisted on being handcuffed, grappled with May, had to be put forcibly in the patrol car and behaved so obnoxiously that he was held overnight in Cass County Jail.

Hansen says all he did was try to question the patrolman about why he was arresting Rosenmeier. Rosenmeier declined to comment on the incident.

Hansen said he and Rosenmeier were part of a fishing party with about 20 other current and former state senators at a resort on Leech Lake. He said he and Rosenmeier had done some drinking, but not much.

May said in an interview that he noticed Rosenmeier's car moving slowly and erratically, and saw it weave across the center line and onto the shoulder of Hwy. 200 just west of Whipholt, Minn., at about 10:10 p.m. Thursday.

When May pulled the car over, he said, he smelled alcohol on Rosenmeier's breath and noted that Rosenmeier's speech was slurred and his eyes were red. When he asked Rosenmeier to walk back to the patrol car, May said, Rosenmeier walked unsteadily.

While he was trying to read Rosenmeier the implied consent law which governs alcohol testing, Hansen came to the patrol car and began shouting, claiming that no one was drunk and that no arrest should be made, May said.

When a service vehicle arrived for Rosenmeier's car, May said, Hansen said he would drive the car. May said that when he asked Hansen to produce his driver's license, Hansen refused and continued to argue in a loud voice. When he told Hansen he was under arrest for obstructing legal process, May said, Hansen insisted.

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# Arrests

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ed that he be handcuffed. But when May reached for his handcuffs, he said, Hansen "grabbed both of my arms and we had a little struggle."

May said he had to pin Hansen on the trunk of the car to subdue and handcuff him. When Hansen still refused to get in the car, May said, he put him in forcibly.

Hansen's account of the events was quite different from the officer's.

"I don't know why I was arrested," he said. "I was just standing there, talking to the officer and he told me to keep quiet and I said, 'I don't have to keep quiet. This is America. I can talk if I want to.' And he said, 'I'm going to arrest you.' Then he wanted to put me in the car, and I didn't want to go in the car, so he shoved me in the car."

At Cass County Jail, May said, Hansen, who had refused to identify himself previously, produced a state Senate identity card and stated that as a former senator he deserved better treatment than he was getting.

Through all of this, May said, Rosenmeier was cooperative and claimed no special privileges.

As a senator, Rosenmeier had often argued that laws requiring drivers to submit to sobriety tests violated their rights against self-incrimination. But May said that Rosenmeier raised no objections to the administration of the Breathalyzer test, although he did express surprise at the test results.



Baldy Hansen  
1975 photo

Rosenmeier was released into the custody of a friend, May said, but Hansen had continued to behave so "obnoxiously" that he was held overnight.

Asked about that experience, Hansen said: "I guess it was like any other night in jail. I don't know. I've never done it before."

Rosenmeier, who still practices law in Little Falls, served in the state Senate from 1940 to 1970 and was regarded as the most powerful member of the Legislature during his final years in office.

At a dinner in his honor in 1974, former Gov. Harold LeVander said "no legislator in the history of the state has ever been more respected, has ever been more powerful, has ever known his work better" than Rosenmeier. LeVander also said of Rosenmeier: "I happen to be one of eight governors who served under him."

As a senator from 1940 to 1970, Rosenmeier caucused with the Conservatives, but once called himself a "flaming liberal." His power derived not only from his chairmanship of key committees, his large and able staff and his extensive network of legislative allies, but also from the respect that he commanded with his knowledge, eloquence, intelligence, dignity and cutting wit.

He was chief sponsor of bills creating the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and the Metropolitan Council, and had a hand in creating the regional development commissions, the state planning agency, the county court system and anti-discrimination agencies. He sponsored much of the state's legislation on watersheds, pollution control and reapportionment during his era. He was defeated for reelection in 1970 after angering many of his constituents with a pro-choice vote on the abortion issue.

His reputation included heavy drinking and he once admitted that some of his best ideas came during con-

versations in the bar of The St. Paul hotel.

Hansen (whose given name is Charles, but who refused to answer Senate roll calls unless the clerk called him "Baldy") was mayor of Austin in the 1950s and '60s, and a senator from 1966 to 1976, when he was defeated in a DFL primary.

Although he considered himself a DFLer, he was politically conservative. As chairman of the Senate's Labor and Commerce Committee from 1973 to 1976, he singlehandedly killed so many bills backed by organized labor that the committee got the nickname "Forest Lawn," after the California cemetery. Since leaving the Senate, Hansen has been president of the State Bank of Rose Creek and the State Bank of Lyle.

Although Hansen had opposed the law that created the state Ethical Practices Board, Gov. Al Quie tried to appoint him to the board in 1982, but the Legislature refused to confirm the appointment.