

VICTOR ATIYEH
June 23, 1993
Tape 39, Side 1

C.H.: This is an interview with Governor Victor Atiyeh at his office in Portland, Oregon. The interviewer for the Oregon Historical Society is Clark Hansen. The date is June 23, 1993, and this is Tape 39, Side 1.

Continuing on in the 1983 session, I noticed you continued to have your regular weekly press conferences, and those are what you referred to as press availability?

V.A.: Media availability, right.

C.H.: And going into some of the issues of that session, the paper said that the legislature failed in its main mission, which was enactment of a comprehensive property tax relief program. What were they trying to accomplish?

V.A.: Well, actually I was trying to work very hard with them in coming up with an - and I say "acceptable," obviously acceptable to me, and with some hope of success in the legislature - of a method of property tax relief. I had insisted that we do something like that, and we just kept going. And I told them that if they didn't, I'd call them back. And to make a long story short, they didn't, and I did - that is, they didn't do anything, and I called them back. But we can get to that after we finish this session.

C.H.: There was also a proposal to return SAIF to its old status as a state agency, which was applauded the Senate by cancelled by a House committee, and you strongly opposed making it a full-fledged state agency, didn't you?

V.A.: I agree. That's exactly right. We worked too hard to get that job done.

This was something labor wanted, and somehow or other they figured they'd get a better deal. You know, they kept talking about private carriers closing out accounts and taking advantage of the injured worker and that sort of thing; that was their argument. And yet to me, back to competition, competition is really healthy. And I do recall, as I've said several interviews ago that there was no dividend from SAIF at all ever until it looked like what we called the three-way bill was going to pass, three-way meaning state, private, self-insured.

So sure, I opposed it. And the AFL/CIO was unsuccessful.

C.H.: Legislators did endorse a measure extending the filing dates for some workers' compensation claims, strengthening the position of firefighters and obtaining benefits and increasing the workday tax paid by employers and employees. Was there a special situation with firefighters?

V.A.: Well, they always contend that, and I don't disagree. Police and firefighters are always considered in a sort of a different category, life-threatening, stressful. When you think of firefighters - well, the same thing with police - but firefighters are sitting around waiting for a fire, and then it hits, and all of sudden their adrenalin has to go up and they have to rush out there. And of course they're always subject to smoke inhalation and injury, and the law enforcement obviously somebody can take a shot at them, so they always put firefighters and police in a separate category, and I would not disagree with that.

C.H.: There was new legislation making manufacturers liable for replacing a vehicle or refunding the purchase price of a defect covered under warranty which can't be fixed in four tries or puts the car out of service more than 30 business days per year, or 12,000 of purchase?

V.A.: Yeah, that's an ongoing thing. If you recall, there was one term they called that a "lemon law."

C.H.: That's right.

V.A.: And so this is all part of it. I think we've all gone through it. You take your car in, and it's sometimes worse when they're finished than when you took it in. Matter of fact, that exactly happened to me one time.

My first brand-new car was a 1946 Plymouth. I took a great deal of pride in that automobile, took very good care of it, and I had it for four years. But - oh, I'm thinking about the third year, I was going up with my friend, we were going up to Redmond and then go up to ^{PAULINA} ~~Polino~~ Lake and go fishing. And there was just a little tiny leak in the radiator. Nothing that bothered anything, but it just leaked a little bit.

So being meticulous, I took it in, and I said, "Gee, would you fix this?" before I took my trip. I'll give you a quick version of it: We went up there, went up to the lake, came back from the lake, and I really wasn't paying any attention; the car was running real well. All of a sudden I looked at the heat gauge, and you couldn't even see the needle.

I stopped the car. We did get on Highway 26. I got towed back to Bend, and a friend of mine who was in the dairy business, he fixed it well enough so I could drive it home. But what had actually happened is ^{they} ~~he~~ took the radiator out to fix this little tiny thing, put it back and put the thermostat in upside down, and so the car boiled over. So you see, I could have gone forever without doing anything about that little tiny leak, and as it was it ruined the whole motor.

So, you know, things like that occur.

C.H.: Did they replace it for you?

V.A.: Well, it was a very contentious thing. I think they paid for the labor and I paid for parts or something like that. But I shouldn't have had to pay for anything.

C.H.: Is Oregon fairly aggressive in its pursuit of consumer legislation?

V.A.: Consumer protection, yeah. Going back to again my general philosophy is that - remember I talked about no laws protecting people from those rascals that they elect, and I'm getting back to some kind of people being responsible for themselves. Then I got to be into the retail rug business and understand what goes on in that field, and I'm generally of the feeling that let's not have laws on that; this is the way people learn. You know, if something bad happens, then you just won't do business with that person anymore because you have that choice.

There are times, however, where it's a very expensive fix, like the one I just described to you. I was able to deal with it, deal with part of it, although it was touch and go in those early days to pay my mortgage and things like that, and having a child - but others, you know, are not able to do that. So you say okay, you know, you've got to protect at least some people, and I don't know how you make that separation, so you protect everybody.

But my general theory is you can't learn. If you think you're protected, you'll never learn. You'll just keep going and figure the State's going to take care of you, and that's not a healthy thing. That's not healthy for the person in terms of their maturity.

C.H.: There was a proposal to restore interest rate limits on credit cards and retail charge accounts which fell flat. Is this another thing to protect the consumer, then, sort of along the same lines?

V.A.: The answer is yes, but it's really strange. Because, you know, the interest rates were running pretty high - incidentally, they still do, and nobody seems to complain too much about it. I mean, they can run as high as 17, 18 percent, depends on where your credit card is. And people advertise "our rates are lower than yours," or whatever, part of their competitive advantage.

Out of all of this - and I get it; you do, too - in the mail, these little inserts with fine print, and this is all done for consumer protection. Now, I can read very well, and you can, too, I can with my glasses, but I don't read that stuff; I throw it away.

When we're writing contracts I recall down at the store, I mean, all these forms, this is all for consumer protection, and I don't read any of that stuff. I throw it away. My personal view is if I don't trust the people I'm dealing with, I'm not going to do business with them. I don't have to read through all this junk.

So these are the things that some bureaucrat figures is a good idea. Well, I'll bet you not one percent of the people read it, and maybe the one percent that read it don't understand it, half of them don't understand it. So you wonder how much do you do.

C.H.: It goes back to what you were saying before about the illusion of protection.

V.A.: That's right. That's a good word, "the illusion" is exactly right. You actually go through thinking that you're being protected.

Back now to my business today, I have agreements with several companies, some of which I'm on a retainer. The longest agreement that I have, and I'm dealing with companies like Fujitsu and Seiko Epson - you know, big companies, the longest one I have is about a page and a quarter long. You know, one was just a letter.

Because you know, if they don't like what I'm doing or I don't like - I don't feel I can represent them, we can always cut it off.

One of the agreements, incidentally, in all these - I call them contracts; you would hardly call them a contract - and I got that actually from Sony, and obviously they write a lot of contracts, but he always has one provision in there that says if we have any disagreements, we agree to talk to each other and settle it. And I know what that all means, and I said, "Hey, that's a good idea," and that's in all mine. Because once you get lawyers talking to lawyers then you can't talk with whomever you're fighting with, and you never get the darn thing settled, and in the meantime the lawyers get all the money.

But it all comes to trust with me. Some say it's naive. It's not naive. I've got a choice, and whoever I'm dealing with has a choice. I can say, "Yeah, I'll be glad to represent you," or "No, I don't want to represent you."

And of course they have the same choice: "No, we don't want you to represent us," or "Yes, we do." And even if you write - and I think about this - if you write the most meticulous 30-page contract, there's still a moment of truth, split second of truth. Let's say it's a contract to buy something. You know, at what point when you hand them the money, and they hand you the keys, who lets go first? You know, there's still that moment of trust. I don't care how many pages you have.

C.H.: Also in the consumer area a measure was killed to set up a Citizens Utility Board to represent consumers in utility rate cases. What was that about?

V.A.: There's this group called Fair Share. I had some real bumpy rides with them. They wanted a Citizens Utility Board to represent the consumer. Well, in the back of my head I'm saying, "What consumer? Who? Are they going to represent me? They don't

represent me. I'm a consumer." There's a whole lot of consumers out there; who are they going to represent? What it really comes down to is they represent their narrow interest, their own narrow interest.

C.H.: Which is -?

V.A.: Whatever it may be. Well, normally, it's that you're charging too much, and "If I can't pay, don't kick me out, don't turn it off, whether I'm responsible or not." I'm a little rough on them because I had some real contentious periods of time. They wanted to meet with me. I'll tell you a couple of stories.

They're kind of pushy people. I guess that's what I sort of resent. Their way is the only way, and there's no real reasonable discussion back and forth.

Anyway, they wanted to meet with me. It was their request to meet with me. Finally I arranged for Room 50, which is a large room downstairs in the basement of the capital building, for a Saturday morning. I went down and met with them. These are normally non-productive meetings, and I don't recall the meeting itself, but I do recall that they figured I should pay - because they charged rent for this place.

I'm saying, "Wait a minute. It's not a meeting that I wanted to have; it's a meeting you wanted to have."

Anyway, I finally said, "Oh, the hell with it. I'll pay for the sucker." So anyway, I did.

Later on I recall this in an open house, they again marched in, a bunch of them, and they were demanding a meeting with me. So you know, I'd meet with anybody, that was not normally a problem, although I didn't like these people. So anyway, I asked Glenda Hayden, who was then my secretary, I said, "Well, go get the appointment book and we'll see what we can work out."

She went back to the office. In the meantime, they got me angrier. I don't recall what triggered it. And this is something I never did before, never did after, while they're standing in the room she comes in the room now with the book in her hand, "Glenda, forget it. I'm not going to meet with these people. I'm not going to meet with them at any time in any way. Forget it." And they're all there in the room, and I'm telling her that: "Just forget it. I'm not going to meet with them."

So that's Fair Share.

C.H.: What did they do to provoke that?

V.A.: I don't recall. They're pushy. They're demanding. they're unreasonable. You know, you'd say, "Well, let's talk about it." No, there's no talking. This is the way it's going to be or no other way. And I don't like that.

The Citizens Utility Board, though, that they were talking about, when I say, "Do they represent me," that's basically my opposition; it doesn't relate to me personally. Whose view are they going to represent? How are they going to determine what my view is? Well, they're not going to determine that. They're not even interested in that. It's whatever their view is. So anyway, I opposed that.

I would also tell you, now that we're somewhat on the subject, I would never meet, ever, with these demonstrators. You know, they'd come up and they would demand to meet with the Governor. "The Governor won't meet with us," that kind of thing. And my answer was always the same. You know: "Come down to the front of the capital building. We want to meet with you." My answer always was the same: "I'm very happy to meet with you. I'm not going to meet with the whole mob. You pick two or three people, and we'll sit down and we'll have a discussion." But you know, you have no rational discussion with a mob. I know that. It's a waste of my

time. It's good for the media, but it's a waste of my time. Gets you nowhere.

And so that was my policy, and I just wouldn't do it. I'd say, "Hey, you know, there's people that schedule appointments two, three weeks in advance. You can't march down today and say, 'We want to meet with you now.'"

C.H.: Going to a predecessor of yours, Tom McCall, would he have done the same thing basically, or would he use that as a situation to create a media event that would be to his advantage?

V.A.: He liked media events. I think he'd pick and choose. You know, if it was some people he liked and liked their cause, he'd be down there. If he thought he was going to get a lot of shots, I don't think he would go down.

A lot of the public officials feel they're obliged because "The Senator, the House member, the Governor, whoever, won't meet with us," you know, and they don't want to stand the heat from that kind of thing.

But I just - you know, you make your policy, and I believed in it. "Okay. I'm willing to talk with you. I'm willing to discuss your problem where we can rationally discuss it."

But you know, after all the years in the legislature, and when you get into committees and debates on the floor, I realized long ago that once the emotions are all worked up, there is no reasonable or logical discussion. It just does not take place, and so what's the point of it?

C.H.: Well, going back to what you were saying about Fair Share, you did sign legislation to prevent utilities from shutting off services throughout the year if the action would jeopardize the customer's health?

V.A.: That's right. That's not unreasonable. See, but there was a measuring stick. You can't just say, "Well, I can't afford

it." You know, you may go out and buy a car, and you may go to the movie or buy packaged meals or - you know. You can afford that, but you can't afford to pay your utility bill.

When you have the matter of health, that's a measuring stick. You can measure that.

C.H.: Was this mostly people that were older?

V.A.: Well, oftentimes, or those that were really needy and didn't have much money, or hit on hard times, and it's tough, it really is. And I appreciate and understand it. I'm not callous to these things.

But you have to understand all along we're taking money from a taxpayer - they call it redistribution of wealth - and giving it to somebody for some reason. So you have to do that wisely, not capriciously, and not without some kind of a measuring stick to know how much, you know, you're getting into. You wouldn't do anything open-ended, where you don't know how much it's going to cost. "Whatever it is, just send me a bill." I wouldn't do that; you wouldn't do that. Why should government do it with your tax dollar?

C.H.: Right. There was also legislation for landlords that would be liable for damages if they knowingly rent premises posted by authorities as being unfit to occupy. They were prohibited from retaliating against tenants who complain about alleged violations of rental agreements, but they can cancel the rental agreement if the tenant moves out and allows someone else to move in without permission.

Were you involved in any of this legislation?

V.A.: Yeah, I've been - these are called landlord-tenant laws.

While I was in the legislature, we were dealing with the question. Here again - and I'm giving you how I approached it - I

don't want to discourage anyone from providing housing for people. So this now is the landlord, and we had a lot of laws on the books that were discouraging because there were a lot of people that would just trash a place and leave, or you couldn't kick them out. You had to go to court. It was a messy deal altogether. So they say, "Why should I buy this? I'm not going to put up an apartment house. I'm not going to put my money in apartments." You know, "I don't need this kind of thing."

Well, then you're not in a position of providing housing, you know, because that's where it comes from. At the same time, you surely don't want to have the landlord take advantage of the tenant. Later on, you know, there were bills that were going to control the amount of increase in rents. There's always this rent control business because some irresponsible landlords are raising rents for no reasonable or logical reason just to make a little bit more money on the deal.

C.H.: But then can't the people go elsewhere?

V.A.: Yes, but that's a costly affair.

C.H.: Right.

V.A.: And so these laws keep cropping up. This little bit of agitation between segments in society, they just crop up, and these are answers, in this case the landlord-tenant deal.

C.H.: It must be a difficult line for government to walk that balances between the various interest groups.

C.H.: Well, this is going to sound awful partisan, but it's not difficult for Democrats because usually their answer is government will take care of this. That's their general philosophy. It's more difficult for a Republican, whose general philosophy is, "Yeah, government's got to be there, but let's keep it minimum." So there's a degree of difficulty.

It's just a matter of personal philosophy. Democrats believe very strongly in what they believe, and I, a Republican, feel very strongly the way I believe. And so that's the kind of a contest you've got going on. Now, this is in the broadest sense, you know, because you've got some very liberal Republicans and some very conservative Democrats, you know. But I'm just taking it as a whole rather than individual by individual.

C.H.: Another area of protection by the State was requiring that seatbelts be used by children while riding in cars. Of course that later got expanded to adults?

V.A.: Yes, it finally passed, and that is now Oregon law.

But a long time ago when we started talking about fallout shelters and you get a discount, and I said, "Hey, you're going to build one just because you get a discount on your property taxes? Is that why you do it?" You know, you do it for protection. You do it for the protection of your seatbelts. Do you have to have somebody tell you it's a law before you do it, or are you worried about your children getting injured in an accident? You know, which is the most prevalent thought?

C.H.: There was also money set aside to open up a trade office in the Far East, probably at this point in Japan, and of course later on you went to Japan, and we'll talk considerably about that. But you went with Frank Ivancie, didn't you, who was the Mayor of Portland? Were you planning on going with him?

V.A.: Well, we may have gone at the same time. I always plan my own trips. Frank may have gone. I like Frank; I think he was a good mayor, in spite of the criticism he's gotten. I think he did a good job. He may have gone.

But back to the fact of opening an office, again I'm going back to my retail days. I realize that if you're trying to get people in Japan to do business - first of all to find out where

Oregon is, and second do business with them, you can't do it on a hit-and-run deal, go there for two or three days and come home and expect anything to happen. Because as a rug man, the people we did business with were salesmen that would call on us, you know, routinely. We'd get to know them. And there's a lot of carpet companies, but we'd only buy some of them.

So I knew that, and I said, "Okay, we've got to have some kind of a continuing presence." Even when a governor goes - and he obviously can't go there for six or seven months. You go on a trip, and you come back, but we still have a continuing presence. So it was that concept that we wanted to have an office in Japan.

C.H.: Did you initiate that, that approach?

V.A.: Yes. And I opened the office finally in - 1984, I think it was.

C.H.: The budget also doubled the tax dollars going to the Department of Economic Development. That was for changing the tourism office location and setting up small business centers at community colleges, financing educational programs in technology, loans to small businesses. Was that something that your administration was pushing?

V.A.: Yeah. That's part of the continuing effort.

The one thing we didn't touch on, and I don't recall which special session, and it may have been the first one - or the second; I don't recall. But at the time I was cutting budgets - this is 1982 now - I well recall that I asked for and got increases in two: One was economic development; the other was higher education.

But back to economic development, that was a continuing, persistent effort through my entire eight years. And it isn't just opening an office in Japan. It isn't just approving the budget of economic development. It included pushing hard to get plans

acknowledged, land use plans acknowledged. It included in the Department of Commerce to have one stop permit and licensing. So things that were not entirely visible, by that I mean what you would think of as directly economic development, to my mind were. And it included having my Economic Action Council, I called it, and these were department heads that all worked - and it wasn't just economic development - that when we had prospects we would sit with that prospect.

So there was a lot of things involved in laying the groundwork for the diversification which I wanted to accomplish as governor. So this is a piece of it.

C.H.: So it was a piece of a much larger program?

V.A.: It was a continuing program, and that's why I say in one of the special sessions in '82 where I was cutting budgets I asked for an increase in economic development.

C.H.: The legislature also passed a new \$95 million budget for the State Police, which was up 16 percent?

V.A.: Yes. There was a real problem both in parks and state police because in previous years highway funds could legally go to parks and state police. And then again I can't remember the year, there was a vote which eliminated them. So they put them now into the general fund budget, and it was very disruptive. And that's why parks had a problem, why I as a Governor during this period of time had a problem, you know, doing maintenance in parks and things like that.

Highway has dedicated funds, and they've got plenty of it. So within reason you could continue to do the job. Matter of fact, I think that's why Oregon parks are as good and as noted as they are.

[End of Tape 39, Side 1]

VICTOR ATIYEH
June 23, 1993
Tape 39, Side 2

C.H.: So Bob Smith was concerned that the way it was set up that Eastern Oregon might not get ...

V.A.: Well, he wanted to make sure that there was enough money so that all parts of the state got their highways fixed and didn't want anybody bleeding off anything, and he didn't think the state police and parks were proper in there.

And so actually it was constitutional provision that had to be passed to eliminate them, and the people passed it, which I'm sorry to say they did, but they did.

C.H.: You didn't want the funds to be separated?

V.A.: No, I liked it the way it was.

C.H.: Also, lawmakers approved a 27 percent increase in the Oregon Arts Commission's budget. Was that something that you were pushing for?

V.A.: Do you have the tape running?

C.H.: Yes, I do.

V.A.: Okay. I'm laughing because they have the Advocates for the Arts, and they're a very strong group. And I'm being kind.

One of the things that I remember - incidentally, they're also fairly liberal and not necessarily supportive of me as a ^{REPUBLICAN} ~~politician~~ - again, as sort of a general observation rather than specific.

I want to bounce back briefly to 1982. I was speaking before the Advocates for the Arts. And I must tell you that I really am somewhat testy about some of these people - I'll use those words - some of these people who think that unless you appreciate art like they appreciate art, and the kind of art they appreciate, you're not very couth. To me, art is whatever stimulates that emotion.

Having said that, I went to speak to them. This was in Eugene. I remember it. And I had to presume that they were more supportive of Ted Kulongoski than me and had good reason for that. But the text of my speech was: What is art? And what I was basically saying was art is whatever gets that emotional reaction to art. And I asked questions like, you know, is art the rayon rug that you see on the corner of the street with the lion or the Nubian, you know? Is that art, or is art just Van Gogh and Degas? Is art a picture out of a calendar, or is art the more exotic originals? And then I got into, of course, drama, books, symphonies, that sort of thing.

But the thing I'm getting at is that, you know, I started listing. I said, you know, "Is art just Rembrandt, Van Gogh and Manet and Degas and Monet and Bustamante," and I listed, you know, a whole bunch of them. And I have to tell you to be very honest is that I threw in Bustamante; that was my son-in-law.

C.H.: I was wondering. Bustamante, I have not heard of Bustamante.

V.A.: I threw in my son-in-law, and I just chuckled to myself and they said, ^{TO THEMSELVES} ~~you know~~, "Who's Bustamante?" But they also are the kind of people who say, "Well, I should really know, so I'm not going to ask the question."

C.H.: Did anybody ask?

V.A.: Nobody asked, no.

C.H.: You wonder how many people went running home to their art resources trying to look up who Bustamante was.

V.A.: Yeah. I've saved that speech because I knew darn well that they'd say, "Gosh, I should know who that is," and they wouldn't even ask the people on either side of them.

C.H.: "Maybe Governor Atiyeh knows more about art than I think."

V.A.: So I don't know where we branched off on that discussion. Oh, the arts.

And so I increased the budget. They were pushing hard. I don't disagree. Going way back when I was chairman of the Senate Education Committee, we were describing basic education, and we included music and art as basic education. Now, some might call it frivolous, but we made the determination that that was basic because that's part of being civilized and cultured. And so it goes way back there. So I increased it.

I'll jump ahead a little bit because 1985 I increased significantly the Oregon Historical budget and only minimally the arts, and the arts took great offense at that. Great offense. They were indignant about that.

So you know, you can't please them. I told you the story about the grandmother, about you can't please everybody, that joke. I've told that many times because it does relate to being a public official, certainly Governor, that you can't please people, you know, all the time.

And the story was of a grandmother walking the beach with her grandson.

C.H.: Yes. He had a hat.

V.A.: Okay. Well, these folks are the "he had a hat" kind of people.

C.H.: Did your speech or did you ever get into the issues that are now much more popular than John Frohnmayer had to deal with in terms of obscenity in the arts and all that? Was that an issue then or not?

V.A.: No. But I can't disagree. By that I mean - I'm trying to figure out how to describe what I'm saying. That, you know, all of us are not first-class completely knowledgeable about art. That doesn't mean that they don't have some emotional reaction to it.

I like opera, but I don't like all opera. I like symphony, but I don't like all symphonic works. I don't buy tickets to the symphony because they play some of these really way-out things, and I don't need to spend an evening listening to that sort of thing.

And I think of what they call a pops concert. Now, when I mean pops, obviously I know that they could play 100 hours, more than 100 hours of things that are generally known about in terms of the symphonic world and the various composers. Why don't you do that, so you broaden the scope of people that would go?

C.H.: But how many times have you listened to music or gone to the symphony or a concert or whatever and they played something that you didn't know but you found out that you liked, and you wouldn't have known that otherwise?

V.A.: That would be rare. It's not that it hasn't happened.

C.H.: And as you were saying before, everybody's interests and tastes vary, so how do they appeal - should they appeal right down to the middle, or should they appeal primarily to the middle and a little bit on either side?

V.A.: Well, the middle is pretty wide is what I'm really saying. We know that the art museum, the symphony - regrettably our city theater closed. And so what they really need is a lot of interest and participation.

I know a lot of music. Music is very important to me. I would also fairly say there's a lot of people who don't know that much. I'm talking about symphonic works or pieces from operas and things of that kind. And so when they would go, maybe they would be in a position where I'm talking about some of the stuff that I don't like. You know, who knows? I don't know that. But I do know that there's enough of that out there that you would broaden the participation. They have an occasional pops, but even when they have a pops they'll throw in something that I haven't even

heard of before. And I say, well, you know, why not broaden it? Why not make it so people want to go listen to it? You're going to have more people there; you'll have less problem in terms of funding.

For a long time I felt about the art museum, they really don't want too many people around, like almost an exclusive club. That's not the way you get people to appreciate what art's all about. How do you learn?

I did go - talking about the art museum, one time there was an opening. ^{Delores} Delores was very much involved in it, and she was chair of the Women's Committee, and she was on the board of the art museum. And she went to college ^{MAJORING} in art. Matter of fact, my daughter graduated and went to graduate school, and she's a ~~M~~ Master of ~~F~~ Fine Arts, my daughter is.

So I don't come at it - and of course I dealt with art all my life with the oriental rugs. You know, so I don't come at it just as someone that's just off the streets and hasn't given it a great deal of thought.

But I went to an opening, and they had one collection from a collector in Seattle, and they had this showing, so we went. And, you know, I'm looking at it - you know, here's this painting, this sort of a circle in black and white that was on the wall. Another one had the back of an old chair glued on there. There was another one, it was just a gray box on a stand, and you'd push a button and you could hear the sounds of the guy making this box. And a bunch of other stuff like that.

So then going through it, Delores said, "Well, they're going to open some more at 9 o'clock upstairs. Do you want to go, or stick around and wait and go to that?"

And I said, "No." I said, "Somebody's got to be kidding here. The collector's kidding, or the art museum is kidding, or the

artists are going to be kidding. But somebody's got to be kidding. They cannot really believe that this is really art."

And when I look at some things, and I say, "Hey, I can do that," and if I say, "Hey, I can do that," then - and I haven't been trained as an artist - if I can do that, then it's not art. You know, art in the classic, it's worth some money, kind of sense.

I remember going back - I'm taking more time than necessary on this - in *Life* magazine, many years ago, they were showing some artist, and it was one of these splash-on kind of artists, and for some reason, and I don't usually do it, I think I was in a barber chair or something. I had a *Life* magazine, and in the letters to the editor I was reading - this was a month or two later - some guy's writing about that section that was in *Life* magazine about this artist, and I don't even remember his name. And the guy said, "I've got a barn door that I've been cleaning paint brushes on for the last 30 years, and the highest bidder takes it." You know, that was his reaction to what he saw.

But coming back now, I don't like these rayon rugs that are hanging out there; I wouldn't have it anywhere. But if that's appealing and gets an emotional reaction from people, I'm perfectly happy about that. I mean, the whole point is you get an emotional reaction for something, and that's okay. I have no problem with that. I don't like the little gnomes, cement gnomes, or the cement deer or whatever that people have in their yard. I don't like that, but, you know, if it gives them an emotional reaction, that's fine. It doesn't have to be Rembrandt. It doesn't have to be all these other well-known, you know, painting names.

C.H.: But are you suggesting, then, that even though it doesn't have to be, that maybe we don't necessarily have to support it with public money, either? Is that what you're saying?

V.A.: Well, no, I think you still have to support it. In spite of everything I told you, I upped their budget, the Arts Commission budget, because I still believe that, you know, we need to move forward, we need to continue to press, we need to make sure it's there, we can't take any chance.

Maybe right now, you know, there's stuff out there that most people don't like. I like representational. Fine. I'm perfectly happy with that. Some people like abstract, contemporary. That's fine. I don't understand it. I don't understand it. Matter of fact, I asked my daughter about some of this stuff. You know, "What is it I'm supposed to be seeing here? What is it?" I'm still trying even now today trying to figure out what is it that I'm supposed to see? I don't know the answer to it.

C.H.: But of course people said that same thing about Degas and Monet and Manet and Van Gogh ...

V.A.: But you can at least see something. Now, there's a painting somewhere, I don't recall where it is, but it's a painting quite - well, it's not abstract at all, but it is not finally representational. It's sort of a splash, and it does look like - genuinely, and it's quite amazing - some home with some trees out there in Eastern Oregon. You know, because the splashes of light and shadow, although it's not finally representational. Doesn't have to be that, but all these others you and I just mentioned, you can begin to see something. Actually, I can see it. I can understand it, and matter of fact I marvel at it because what they've accomplished in this sort of splash is really an effect of something you can see. Oh, the Polynesian paintings, you know, where the light is kind of jacked around a little, but it's not precise.

I went and enjoyed - gosh, I shouldn't have even started. *Sunday in the Park*, there was a play here about that.

C.H.: [indiscernible]

V.A.: I enjoyed that very much. That was not entirely representational.

But then when you see this splotch, you know, "What is this?"

I'm really diverting today. This is wasting tape.

Did you see the picture *Taxi*?

C.H.: Wasn't that Robert DeNiro?

V.A.: Yeah, and a few others. And they had this spaced-out cab driver. The guy was really kind of spaced out, and he was a cab driver. That was the part that he had to play. Well, what's her name, now? She's the wife of *Evening Shade*'s Burt Reynolds in the program now. But anyway, she was a cab driver, but she also had worked in an art dealer's place. And she was talking to these fellows: "Don't gamble. Put your money in art." And these taxicab drivers - not DeNiro, what's the little guy? *Other People's Money* ...

C.H.: Danny DeVito.

V.A.: Danny DeVito, that's right. Anyway, "Put your money in that. And if the artist dies, you know, the price is going to go up. This is pretty good stuff."

So anyway, she finally got them all to go to this art auction. So here are these cab drivers, and they're going to an art auction. And here's this spaced-out guy. So one of the paintings comes up, and it's one of these really weird - you know, just really weird. And the auctioneer is saying something like, "Nude at Noon," or something like that. And this spaced-out guy stands up and he says, "Hey, I know her!"

Well, we've spent a lot of time on the subject. What really got to me - and again, these are the things that - you know, there's a perception of who Vic Atiyeh is. The Art Committee rarely had someone that had - I've spoken quite emotionally about art - that really had a feeling for it. Whether you like it or

not, the fact is that I had same feeling for it. My family is involved in it, has been. Dolores has, and I've been around it all my life. Where others pretend to have a feeling, they say the right things, but they really don't have any emotional feelings toward it. It just sounds good and, you know, "I'm for you." And the cynics, these people, and then the group will gravitate towards those phonies and cast aside one that really has a feeling, who may not agree with what they believe in but nonetheless has a feeling for it.

C.H.: Well, going on ...

V.A.: Oh, yes. Let's not divert so much next time.

C.H.: Legislators allowed paid dealers into social gambling at bars and restaurants. I didn't realize that that had gone through the legislature. Is that something that you also signed?

V.A.: I don't think I vetoed it, but I never supported any gambling. I think this was a matter of regulating something that presently existed. I voted against every gambling bill that ever came, and I opposed the lottery bill.

C.H.: They also put clamps on bingo operations for charities and created a commission to regulate bingo games. We've already talked about that.

V.A.: Yes.

C.H.: But a variety of measures to create a state lottery quietly disappeared.

V.A.: Yeah. It was finally referred and as we know became law. I opposed it.

C.H.: And the legislature approved a bill restricting enrollment in the senior citizen homestead referral program to those earning \$70,500 a year or less because wealthier retirees were taking advantage of what amounted to a low-cost state loan?

V.A.: Exactly right. I hated to see them do that because I figured when I left office, that's what I was going to do. That's what I tried to convince the seniors, that it was a whale of a deal. But I think we've already talked about that. And they said, "Well, we don't want charity, but we want an exemption." To me, an exemption was charity and a deferral was not.

But anyway, they reduced it. And I thought, "That's too bad." When I moved back home, I was going to take advantage of that.

C.H.: So this wasn't something that you were pushing, then?

V.A.: No. It wasn't anything I pushed, but you know, I signed it. You know, that's legitimate. That's okay.

C.H.: One of the things that the legislature defeated was a tax on soda pop. What would that have been for? Was that a dedicated tax?

V.A.: I don't recall what that would have been for. I don't remember that.

C.H.: And permission for Coors beer to market in Oregon. They weren't allowed to because it was unpasteurized; is that right?

V.A.: Well, yeah, that's right. But actually, it was not unhealthy beer. We had pasteurized in our law. And what it mainly was - it had nothing to do with pasteurized or non-pasteurized, it was the union fight that the union had with Coors. That was what the problem was. Nothing to do with whether it was healthy or not healthy. It was, "This is one way we're going to get at the union in Colorado." That's what it was all about. Had nothing to do with our health.

C.H.: Also defeated was a citizens' board to represent the public in rate hearings before the Public Utility Commissioner?

V.A.: Yes. But any citizen can go. You don't need an organized - when I say legal, to put a law to create that. It isn't as if they were closed. They were all open meetings.

And the whole thing, incidentally, is pretty mathematical. The way the law was created initially was that, "We will regulate the utility," meaning the State of Oregon. But in order to be able to raise money - that is, sell stock, sell bonds - so that they could build power plants, was that we said to them, okay, by law you can make up to - and I think it was 12 percent profit. It didn't guarantee a 12 percent profit. It just said you can make up to that. And so whenever there were these rate hearings and increases, they had to prove that they weren't making that, or this wasn't going over that amount. So there got to be all sorts of actuarial and mathematical and accounting, and you know, it's a pretty - but that's how it happens.

So the rate increases were not capricious: "I want some." "Oh, okay, you can have it." No way. And as a matter of fact, they would say, "You can have eight percent, you can have nine percent, not twelve percent." This is the way it went.

John Lobdell, who did a fine job, they would make a - "they" being the utilities - would make an application for a rate increase, and as they would go through it initially, some of it clearly was legitimate, then there was an amount that was being argued. "No, we think it ought to be higher," and the PUC would say, "No, it ought to be lower."

And so while they were arguing this, which might take a year of a year and a half, the need became greater. And so sometimes, you know, after they would finally agree, there would be almost immediately another application.

So John Lobdell said, "Hey, why don't we do this? Why don't we just approve what we agree on, and then we'll let the rest hang out and debate that part?" Makes good sense.

Well, I think he was taken to court, and the court says, "No, you can't do that," which I am sorry about because this was good business practice and actually benefitted the ratepayers a lot more by not arguing. You know, "Okay, we agree on this part, but we don't agree with the rest you're asking for," and that was much better for us.

But Fair Share wouldn't see it that way. Maybe they took them to court; I don't remember. But anyway, it lost. It was a good idea, makes good sense. It was good for the ratepayers, but didn't prevail.

C.H.: We've already talked about investments in South Africa.

V.A.: Yes.

C.H.: Also a measure failed concerning stricter controls on working conditions for employees who sit all day at video display terminals?

V.A.: Mm-hmm. You know, it's even almost today a continuing problem, whether it's getting tendinitis from the board or eye-strain, that kind of thing. But I don't think it's ever really been proven. Some things can be improved upon: The clarity of the screen, whether you can make them light or dark, or the position of the screen. ^{RUSANNE}~~Roseanne~~ just bought a ...

C.H.: Your secretary?

V.A.: Yes. ... a little something to raise the keyboard because she was getting a bit of tendinitis. So those things do happen, but I don't know if you really need a law. If someone is really interested in their employees and concerned about them, it just makes good sense to take care of them.

C.H.: Also failed was permission for restaurants to sell hard liquor. What was your view on that? I guess we really haven't talked too much about the OLCC or ...

V.A.: No, we haven't. There's always been a threat to take the State out of the business. I don't support it. I think, you know, it's liquor, and I don't mind the regulation of it. Again, for those that want to buy it, there's some assistance in terms of keeping the prices down.

But then you have always the continuing argument, those that have bars, are able to sell, it's a pretty good asset in terms of how much your restaurant's worth. But if you make it just broadly, everybody, everywhere, first of all those that have it really don't want any more people doing it, so that would be the lobby on that side, and the other lobby was, you know, if you've got it everywhere, it gets to be where you can't control it.

C.H.: Also suggested was the closure of the Hillcrest School for juvenile delinquents and the State School for the Blind in Salem. Why did they want those closed? Is it financial reasons?

V.A.: I can't remember. The blind and the deaf schools have always been questioned, but the lobby's pretty strong, and I think they're talking about it even today. I think they're appropriate. It's not something I would initiate.

C.H.: But some people feel that it's not involved for the State to be involved in those kinds of activities?

V.A.: That's right. That's the blind and the deaf.

Hillcrest, however, there's Hillcrest and MacLaren; Hillcrest is for the girls, and MacLaren for the boys.

[End of Tape 39, Side 2]