

Tape 17, Side 2

CH This is an interview with Governor Atiyeh. This is Tape 17, Side 2.

Well, looking back at your 1974 run for governor, in retrospect are you at all thankful that Bob Straub won and filled that intervening period between you and Governor McCall to help provide that kind of a buffer so you wouldn't be so compared and have to live up to that kind of reputation?

VA No. I never had - on that count, no, absolutely. I felt that the state was ready to kind of piece things together, to strengthen the things that we had done - and, as I've said many times, we did some very important things environmentally - and that that time was the time to do it. Whether I had been elected in '74, I still would have the same comment: I'm not Tom McCall, I'm Vic Atiyeh. So I wouldn't have felt the burden of a Tom McCall even if I had been elected in '74. I really do wish I had been elected in '74, only in the sense that you recall I had eight years, and they were a pretty tough eight years economically. There were a lot of things I would like to have done which I wasn't able to achieve, and that was because we didn't have money to do it. We can get into that when I get to my years as governor. So I'd like to have had at least four good years economically. Actually, it turned out to be five, because '79 wasn't too bad a year. It began to slide in '80, and, then, '81 and '82 was the worst of it. It would have been kind of nice to have four good economic years, but that's not the way it came down.

CH The Oregonian also had another quote here. This is the last quote I saw on your - well, one of the last ones. That, The votes poured in for the candidate who preached calm, not crisis;

who had voted for the 1973 land-use planning bill but then tried mightily to limit bigger government's control over individual landowner's property. So when they're referring to your preaching calm and not crisis, what was that in reference to?

VA Well, we always seemed to be at a point of crisis. As we went into our environmental work - I suppose controversy as well as crisis. Now we enter into the field of controversy. We went into land use; very controversial. I kind of chuckled when I just said that to you because I told that - the DEQ was created, the Department of Environmental Quality, and they were getting all kinds of static; then the LCDC, land conservation. So I told them over at DEQ, Aren't you glad for LCDC? Now the heat's shifted over to LCDC and off of you. And we did go through the gasoline; that was a crisis. And, of course, a bigger-than-life crisis was the American Legion convention. So there was some of that.

CH The article on McCall referred to that crisis where he helped sponsor a party. They referred to it in the paper as the biggest pot party sponsored by the state, with the state police protecting the party goers from the feared rednecks of the Estacada area. Was that - of course, he was trying to avert what looked like it could have been a major crisis with the veterans committee during the meeting here in Portland during the middle of the Vietnam War. Do you think that what he did was appropriate?

VA Yeah, I do. It comes even more personal than that. You talked about the redneck American Legionnaires. There were some of them. From our store on Tenth and Alder Street, there was a <sup>Manning's</sup> ~~Manny's~~ (?) on Tenth and Morrison, and my - we asked my son to go get coffee for - or somebody asked him. Anyway, he's there.

getting coffee. He was working for us. At that time he had a beard, and he's got very dark hair. He was just standing on the corner, having gotten the coffee, and some Legionnaires started beating up on him, presuming he was a hippy. So if you had a whole vortex of people, there would have really been a fight, because if they're going to pick on my son, who was just going to get some coffee and looked - didn't look all that great, with a beard, you can imagine what might have happened. So they beat...

CH Was this just a verbal confrontation?

VA Oh no, no, no, physical. They beat him. They hammered on him. As a matter of fact, I just recently threw away a letter to the editor. I was pretty mad about it, because they talked about "alleged." You know, he was allegedly beat up. Allegedly? He was awful sore for getting allegedly beat up. He got beat up. But it was one of those things I wrote and, then, never mailed in. Maybe I saved it, I don't know. Maybe my son will find it some day. So you can imagine, in that microcosm what might have happened if there was a whole bunch of them down here. It was an interesting part of history.

Give me the quote again, what they said, altogether.

CH The votes poured in for the candidate who preached calm, not crisis; who had voted for the 1973 land-use bill but then tried mightily to limit bigger government's control over individual landowner's property.

VA Okay, now, there's a bias right there. Now, if you were to read it like I think it should have read, you'd put an and instead of a but. Now read it.

CH And then tried mightily to limit bigger government's control over individual...

VA See the bias right there?

CH Uh-huh.

VA That's all I wanted to point out [laughter].

CH I'm not sure if this was by Harry Bodine or not, but how did you feel about his commentaries?

VA I would use the word and, and I think it's most legitimate. Getting back to how many times do we say, government closest - remember I told you about the regional body running our land use, and I thought that was terrible. So, it's all back to what I was - the consistency of my own views in regard to what - going way back to our early tapes, set a principle, and common sense. It makes governance very easy.

CH Well, here's another quote for you: The GOP went for the candidate who favored restoring capital punishment for certain selected crimes and who opposed abortion, who opposed lowering the drinking age because of the impact he feared on accident rates.

VA That's right.

CH You feel that's pretty accurate?

VA Absolutely.

CH And do you feel that the GOP was really behind you on these

issues, then?

VA Well - but it's only part of it. An election is never that simple, the result of an election is never that simple. So in a whole myriad of issues, they were right about that, but that's not why I got nominated.

CH Well, an Oregonian editorial said, Atiyeh appears to have become more conservative since he entered the legislature sixteen years ago as a somewhat unpredictable young Turk. Here we go back to that conservative label again [laughter]. Do you have a reaction to this?

VA I was asked about, you know, have I changed, and my answer was, No, I haven't changed; people have changed. They're coming closer to my views [laughter]. You know, we all change in ways, but fundamentally, from January, I think, 12, 1959, to January 12, 1987, my basic philosophy didn't change, nor has it changed today, nor was it changed from when I started, because it was my own personal philosophy, what I believed in, how I felt. But you don't see anything in there about asking Ways and Means for daycare. You don't see any of that stuff in there. So all of this is selective. They're going to design a person as they see it in their eyes.

CH I notice that during the campaign that the nation's youngest governor, Christopher Bond of Missouri, came out and campaigned for you. How did you establish that relationship with him prior to your being governor?

VA I didn't, in the sense that the national Republican governors, they would try to assist governors they thought might have a chance to win. At the same time, I was invited back to

the White House - and you may have that in there, I don't know - by President Ford. Again, it was only a select few - I've forgotten now, five or six or seven or something like that - they thought might win, so they invited them back to do whatever, so that's all part of that same picture.

CH What was that experience like for you? That was in 1974?

VA Yeah. Which one?

CH Going back to Ford.

VA Oh, I remember that very well; very well. I don't know where you have it in your chronology, but we might as well, as long as we're talking about it - I was asked to go back, and, again, it was a matter of some candidates who they thought might win. My first reaction was, there are no votes in Washington, D.C. I've got to stay here. But then I thought, well, gosh, when am I going to get another chance to go back to the White House and see a president. So anyway, I went back. I flew back in a private jet plane. Dan Hanna's plane, of Hanna's Car Wash. We left at five o'clock in the morning - this was in September. The reason I know that is because you'll see by the end of my story - flew to Washington, D.C., got there early for the meeting, so I went in to see Wendell Wyatt, who was then our congressman, and who I knew. Then we went to the White House, had a briefing, and then President Ford came in and briefed us. And then, after that, they started taking us in to the Oval Office. The intent was, come on back, you can do what you want. If you want to use it in your campaign, fine, if you don't, that's okay too, but do whatever you want. So I went in, I was the first one in, chatted with the president while pictures were begin taken, then sat down at the desk, and I had something I

wanted to talk to him about, and we had <sup>A B O C F I N G B O O K</sup> ~~the~~ open [?], and we finished; I went out, got a taxicab, which was not easy - this was on a Friday afternoon in Washington, D.C. - drove out to the airport, got on the plane, flew back. At nine o'clock that night I am sitting in the Happy Canyon Pageant in Pendleton, Oregon, and I'm saying, What did I just do? From five o'clock in the morning till nine o'clock that night I've done all of that: Back to Washington, D.C., Wendell Wyatt, briefing, president of the United States, back again, and I'm sitting there watching the Happy Canyon Pageant. It was - you know, you just - and I'd done enough reading about the pioneers and about the - you know, I did this all in one day, and I still think of it today when I'm flying across the country. If you get - you know, if your plane is fifteen minutes late, you really get real upset, and it took these folks four and a half to six and a half months to make the trip, and not from the East Coast. They started in St. Louis or Independence, Missouri, or somewhere. But this was absolutely amazing.

The other story - this is a true story. You know, I grew up in the rug business, and Dolores said to me, "Is that office really oval?" And I said, "Gosh, I don't know." You know, here you are, you're with the president. "I don't know, but," I said, "I can tell you what the rug looks like" [laughter].

CH Do you have a tendency to do that, to go into somebody's house and...?

VA Well, you know, you just look [laughter].

CH Well, it must be something for, say, a presidential candidate who's doing these whirlwind tours around the country, and stopping off at dozens of places each day. You'd think they would get dizzy from all this movement.

VA You just have to remember where you are.

CH During this campaign in 1974, Governor McCall suggested that he might support Bob Straub. How did you react to this?

VA I didn't like that. I went to see him, showed him all of the measures that I assisted him on. They made some kind of a study, my staff did. But this was almost a lose thing. If he - well, obviously, if he supported Bob Straub publicly, that was pretty well known, but if he didn't support either one of us, he was still supporting Bob Straub. So I - it was a two-to-one deal, and I didn't like that. I didn't think it was fair, I didn't think it was right, but, you know, you can't force people to do what they're not going to do. It would have been nice; it didn't happen.

CH It must be an awkward situation when people of opposing parties have close working relationships. I guess I'm thinking in particular in this most recent election of the close relationship between Senator Hatfield and Congressman AuCoin, both working on appropriations in the Senate and in the House, respectively, and, then, Les AuCoin runs against Sen. Bob Packwood. And even though Hatfield and Packwood are both senators in the Republican party, and obviously must have some kind of a working relationship, it - I think he remained fairly neutral through that campaign. I don't know if you...

VA Well, he didn't do an awful lot, but it's clear he didn't support AuCoin. And it was not presumed that he supported him by not - by being maybe less of an impact in the campaign. But, you know, the, I'm going to say, professional politicians, somebody that's been around and knows about it, you know, it's very, very hard - and they understand - for particularly someone of the

stature of Mark Hatfield, Republican and all, to be endorsing a Democrat, or for the problems that might be involved in endorsing their fellow Republican. They understand that. That's why, for instance, in 1978 it was so important that Edith Green supported me publicly, because here was a very prominent, highly regarded, and really a very wonderful woman, Edith Green, Democrat all her life, supporting a Republican against a Democrat, Bob Straub.

CH How did Bob Straub react to that?

VA I don't know. I'm sure he didn't particularly like it, but I was never aware of any comments or anything he may have said about it.

CH Were you able to dissuade Tom McCall from endorsing Bob Straub?

VA I don't think he ever endorsed him, I think he just stayed out, but the effect was the same; he was endorsing Bob Straub. It was not a pleasant period of time. I didn't care for it, didn't understand it, but, then, it happened. And I don't know what effect it would have had, if it would have changed much of anything. Again, back to those days, that was the year that Ford did pardon Nixon, Nixon resigned and Ford pardoned him, and it was a tough year on Republicans.

CH Do you feel that part of your loss can be blamed on events that were happening nationally, a reaction against Republicans?

VA I'm sure it had some effect. I think it's fair to say I don't know whether I would have won or lost had that not happened. I don't know. I really don't know, and I think that is fair. I do know that John Dellenback lost for Congress, a

good congressman; Lynn Newbry in the state senate lost, a very good guy, represented - you know, good people lost. I only pick those two, but there's a lot of them around the country. So how much effect it had on my race, I don't know. It's hard to tell. I'd still say, though, that President Ford did the right thing. I really believe that. As a matter of fact, I had a chance to tell him that, oh, about two and a half months ago. I was down in Palm Springs. It was the tenth anniversary of the Betty Ford Hospital, and a friend of mine invited me down. I stayed at his house, and we played golf Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. Friday I had breakfast with and rode with the president. He was my partner, and I got a great photograph. I'll show it to you, as a matter of fact. I have it. On the eighteenth green, I'm bent over putting, and the president's holding the flagstick. Now, you can't get a more expensive caddy than that. But I told him the same thing. I said, "You know, I was involved, I was running at the time, and I lost, but in spite of all of that," I told him, "in my mind, you did the right thing," and I believe it; I strongly believe it. The country had some awful domestic problems, and Congress - every congressman and senator, they were just bent on having meetings. They were all wearing red ties and blue shirts, and they were all investigating, and they weren't paying attention to the problems that the country had. As soon as it happened - there was a lot of anger, of course, but as soon as it happened, things calmed down and we got about the business of the United States. So I think he did the right thing.

CH When you're playing golf with the president, do you intentionally lose gracefully, or...?

VA We were partners. We won.

CH Oh, that's right, you were partners.

VA Heck, yeah. We won.

CH Of course, he's quite a golfer, isn't he?

VA Yeah, he's a good golfer, he is a good golfer. Just a real nice guy. I think I have mentioned he's one of those that I would pick out as one of the great presidents, which is not the way history is going so far, to my knowledge, but I still believe in the kinds of things that I happen to believe in, he was a great president.

CH Going on, then, in the general election, what kinds of debates did you have with Bob Straub, and what was your strategy in that campaign?

VA We weren't quite as sophisticated in that campaign as in succeeding campaigns, but - by that, I mean in terms of strategy, what we want to do and how we want to accomplish it. I was just on the same phase that I had mentioned before: Here I am, this is who I am, Bob wants to be governor, I want to be governor, I'm not running against him, he's running for governorship and I'm running for governorship, and we had several of them. I do remember, though - again, back to, oh, discrimination, in a sense. I remember it very clearly. We were at the Robinson Jewish Center up at Hillsdale, Beaverton-Hillsdale, candidate Straub and candidate Atiyeh. The question was asked, What's your views on the Commission for Women? Bob Straub answered first - and now you'll know in a minute why I remember it so well. I can't give you all the words, but he was doing the right thing. Women are great, they're wonderful, they're - whatever he said, and he thought that the Women's Commission was a great thing. And then he said, "And I'm going to have a man on my staff to see this happens." And I heard this. Now, wait a minute. You're

going to have a man on your staff to see that this happens?  
After all these great words. Well, they still supported him.

CH Did you make any comment in regards to that?

VA No.

CH Why?

VA Well, it was so patent to me. I said, Whoa, wait.  
Everybody's going to hear this.

CH But what an opportunity.

VA I know, but, you know, you're right there at the same time.  
No, I did have something. I said I'd have a woman on my staff  
take care of this. That was the extent of it. I did say that.  
And we had some other debates that I don't think are particularly  
memorable. We were together, just stating our position and how  
we felt and what we needed to do. Debates really are not very  
useful. I've told any number of people a number of times,  
particularly the media, you know, all debates are, people come to  
debates and listen to debates for the same reason they go to the  
Indianapolis 500. They want to see a crash at the fifth turn.  
That's the only reason they're there. They want to see that  
crash when it happens, or hear it. That's the only reason. They  
really aren't useful. Those aren't good forums for trying to  
decide who you want to be...

CH But, then, in a campaign, now many forums do you have where  
you're with your opponent?

VA Not too many, but you don't - why do you have to be with

your opponent, is what I'm really saying.

CH I guess some people that don't necessarily see both candidates during the course of the campaign have an opportunity to - or even if they do - to see them side by side.

VA Well, if you want us to come out and model, that's okay [laughter]. Anyway, I really don't see the merit. They use such esoteric words and say great things, and this is good for the system, and it's wonderful democracy, and I say nonsense. You're just waiting for somebody to crash and burn at the fifth turn. That's all this really amounts to. But you can't escape. It just seems to be part of what you've got to do.

And jumping ahead, you know, when I won in the primary of '82, primary night - before that I told my staff, I don't want to go through this same nonsense. Is Atiyeh going to debate, isn't he going to debate, is he going to do, you know, all this other stuff? I challenged Kulongoski to a debate on the primary night. I challenged him. I've got to get this whole thing out of the way. I challenged him. And when we get to it, I'll tell you about some of my cynicism in regard to how elections are handled. But to me, debates, they're interesting. You'll probably get - you will get to '78 and the debates that McCall, Martin, and I had, and we'll talk about that. Let me just give you one story in relation to it. A young lady who I knew said to me, "Are you nervous?" This was the first debate at the City Club. And I said to her, "Well, I'll try not to be." And she said, "Well, look at it this way: You've got to have lunch somewhere." "Yeah, you're right. You've got to have lunch somewhere."

CH Well, going into that election, did you know that you were behind Bob Straub, just prior to the election?

VA I will tell you that in these campaigns that I've run statewide - well, I guess so to a lesser degree, but it wasn't quite as important - I had a sense of where I was. I had a sense of where I was in '78, I had a sense of where I was in '82, and I had a sense of where I was in '74. I had to presume, and it didn't bother me, that I was behind because he was an incumbent governor. Here I was as a little state senator that had never run statewide. There was quite a boost having won a primary over someone that was supposed to win, so I had a good boost in that direction, but, still, the fact that a sitting governor was ahead was not a bothersome thing. I would tell you that I was fully aware that I was going to lose, I don't know, maybe three weeks out, satisfied there was nothing I could really do to win. I didn't, in my demeanor or any other way, show, certainly to my staff or anyone else, but I knew. And when the election came out that I didn't win, I wasn't surprised. But, I was not surprised with any of my succeeding elections. And, as a matter of fact, in '82 I did not see my polls. Never.

CH In 1982?

VA In 1982. We had a major poll, and, then, we tracked it. I never saw it, not once, except on election day, and when I finally looked at it, I said to Denny Miles, who was then my campaign chairman, I was just about two weeks ahead of my poll. When I finally saw it and knew how I felt when I felt, I could look at that and I could tell I was just about two weeks ahead of my poll. So when you ask me about this whole thing, I wasn't alarmed that I was behind to begin with - I just figured that was the nature of things - and campaigned real hard. We ran a good campaign in spite of our lack of professionalism, starting from, really, scratch to run a statewide campaign through the primary and into the general, and I ended it by - well, two things in

regard to it. Bob Ingalls, of the Corvallis newspaper, who was a member of the legislature, a week before, I was down there speaking, I think to a Rotary. Anyway, he said to me, "Vic, is it worth it?" And I said to him, "Well, I'll let you know on election day," knowing what I already told you, in my mind. "No, no," he said, "whether you win or lose." "Bob," I said, "I'll have to think about that." So the election came and I did lose, and it was, to me, what you thought was going to happen now was a reality. And a month later, I think it was...

[End of Tape 17, Side 2]