

Victor Atiyeh Interview with Jim Moore, March 26, 2014

An interview of former Oregon Governor Victor Atiyeh, recorded on March 26, 2014. The interviewer, James Moore, was a professor of political science at Pacific University and was Atiyeh's biographer. This was one of several interviews Moore conducted with Governor Atiyeh.

Note on the recording and transcript: Atiyeh was 91 years old at the time of this recording; he died about four months afterwards. His voice is relatively faint and thin compared to earlier recordings. This impacted the quality of the transcript, which was made through AI in 2025. The transcript has been provided in order to facilitate research, but the text does contain errors and inaccuracies. Users should check the transcript against the recording before quoting the speakers.

[Recording begins mid-conversation; Moore and Atiyeh are discussing teaching and classrooms.]

Victor Atiyeh 0:00

So Well, he's sitting there looking at this class blackboard here, and there's a student up there working a problem.

And then he says to us,

what's wrong with it?

I don't even understand.

He had his back to this thing, and he knew what is the problem. So you have to see it, but he didn't even have to see it. I don't know what the problem was, even if it was explained, I probably didn't understand it, yeah, and but I still remember

now, what's the problem with that?

Well, how many students in your class? In my

James Moore 0:50

class, I've got 40. This is an introductory class, yeah, and we want that many because purely in terms of mercenary reasons. That means I'm going to get probably 10 of them are going to clear a major,

so we kind of get them. And

it's also,

I like the challenge of a bigger class. They do a lot of writing. But then I pedagogically, have to figure out how that's going to happen, and so what I do is I have them sign up for when their papers are due. They each have to write three, five to 10 page papers, but they choose when they're due. So in any given week, I never have more than 10 papers, but I always have to grade 10 papers in a week, but that way I don't get, yeah, 40 papers at once.

Yeah, yeah. That helps, yeah, yeah.

And then it's basically, it's three days a week. So one day is lecture, you know, here's the topic, here's how to think about it, here's ways make sense. And then the next two days, I divide them up into groups of about four or five, and I give them projects. And so one day will be you go to the library and you work on this project. So just before it's spring break right now, last week the project, we learned about different types of power in international relations. So we've done military power, economic power and propaganda. So send them to the library. Find an example of World War One,

propaganda, World War Two, propaganda, communist propaganda. And here's questions to ask about it. And then find something since 2000

and then on Friday, they present their findings.

Victor Atiyeh 2:45

That sounds interesting.

James Moore 2:46

One of the people in the class is an Iraq war veteran. Is what is an Iraq war veteran? She was in Iraq in 2009 2010 okay? And she was in psychological operations, so she her group, you know, they did the World War One, World War Two, communist and then they played the awful hard rock music that they just play really, really loud when they're driving around in their Jeeps to drive people off the streets, because That way you can control the streets or safely get in and out or do these things. And so it was, it was great. I mean, it was her experience. This is modern propaganda. It's designed to make people do something or think in a certain way. And then they, you know, there are pictures and things. So it's, it's good fun.

Victor Atiyeh 3:41

Yeah, God, that sounds interesting.

I would find that interesting. Many classes at Oregon,

our class

and I would go, usually lecture, and I'd sit there, and every once in a while, the professor would say something. I'd write it down, right? But if I boiled it all down, he could have done the whole thing in 10 minutes, at least for me, yeah? And in other words, I wasn't that excited about it, yeah,

I did have something interesting.

I didn't run into that before or hear about it since I took

math related county wasn't a county, no one in the county. Anyway, it was the net, and I just was really, really behind, yeah, so come in for our finals, and we had the room. Well, we're doing our final at the fraternity. We have former final papers. Who knows what the finals Exactly? So I struggled myself through what the professor said, Look, you only have to answer what you want to answer, and you'll be graded on that answer.

That was kind of interesting

when it was all said and done. What happened was that they right now, row in front of me and the row and back of me was different than my exam. And the row in front of me and the row and back of me had the fraternity exam. I didn't I barely. I mean, this is what you call a low D, yeah.

James Moore 6:03

But you know, as we say, they're still breathing.

Victor Atiyeh 6:10

There was a lot of

grading on curve. Yeah, our English teacher,

English com,

he did, he graded on what you deserve to get, and it was probably interesting man. And he kept, we write these weekly

papers, or whatever they were, and he kept

correct me in my punctuation.

Finally, I went to see me. I said, Look,

I took English in Washington High School from a woman who wrote a book on punctuation. His answer was, you're in my class now. But he was kind enough to say, Now look, once you leave my class, you can punctuate any way you want. And went on to explain, there were some writers known that not hardly punctuate at all so. But he said, when you're here, you're here, yeah,

James Moore 7:20

okay, yeah, it's a tough thing when you're teaching, because I'm really a stickler for clarity in writing. You know, if you're gonna do that, then you need a comma there. You need to, you know, do these things. But in effect, you have to know the rules before you can break them. Yeah, and the students don't show any evidence that they know what the rules are. They're just sloppy. They're just not thinking about it. And so you get a good one, you know, freshman year, someone like you, who knows punctuation, who comes in, I'll see that, and it's like, fantastic. You can fly. So we'll come up with different assignments for you. Great, go fly. But, but you it's a pretty high threshold to be able to do that.

Victor Atiyeh 8:04

We did one of those you did years. What you said four or five major papers is do one major paper, and it has to be in before the last class, and for every day after you, it went way down, you betcha. And so, you know, students being as they are. I took that in and almost and incidentally, always alphabetical, there you are. So when you come to class, he said, oh. Frank Roberts again. Oh, he said, What subjects have you picked? Well, hell, I didn't even think about it until I sat down that yeah, I said, and I don't know why historical developments belong in the Willamette River,

where that came from,

but being a young man, I said, when we left the room, I forgot that, yeah, and I didn't forget that. Time came up and, God, I gotta get going on this. And so I started my paper. Went to the library, but the subject was so interesting, I'd get what I want. But I kept reading. That took up time. Yep, I was one day late, yep, but

James Moore 9:31

yeah, I always try to tell my students, especially in this introductory class you, some of you will be tempted to want to write a 10 to 15 page paper, and more power to you. I would just advise you to look at how much this grade is worth in the class, and whether the work that you're putting into it is worth the grade. It's not like I'm going to say, Oh, you've written two papers. So you just, you're adults. You figure it out. I.

Victor Atiyeh 10:00

It to I enjoy these things because you are part of it. My last term in college, and I'm filling in, yeah, so I filled in with with philosophy, and I got there, my God, I just now found this course. You know, I really enjoyed that one. And

we had a very small class,

I think we sat in the room, maybe not much bigger than this room. And the thing I could never understand is one boy would go to sleep 40, maybe you might skip one. Yeah, exactly. But I just really, how come I didn't take that course? Yeah, that was Plato's. Yeah? It's

a famous

James Moore 11:09

Republican, oh, yeah, you told me about that. Reading, reading Plato, yeah, which for your later life was a great, great basis there. It was a burden,

Victor Atiyeh 11:21
because

I learned that you have to deal with people that have different views than you. But So my friends, I'm thinking of Vern cook particularly, to make a difference as you as it's you and then screw

it, yeah, yeah, exactly, so he

wasn't burdened with that. Yeah. I may not still do what I need to do, but it

was a tough deal for me. Yeah,

James Moore 11:51

yeah. Well before, based on what we just said before, we go into the topics for today, yes, which are going to be your gubernatorial elections, yes, and then the people that you appointed, I really want to hear that process and why you picked them, and that kind of thing. So your last your last semester at U of O, your last term there. When did your dad die? Did your dad die? And then you went, finished a term? Or did you finish? And then he died in July. He died in July, over the summer, so you didn't know it was your last term.

Victor Atiyeh 12:33

My next door neighbor makes his own birthday cards, not this year, but last year. He said, You got time. That was my 90th birthday, so I wrote back to him by Kelly Harv, you're writing, I still have three

eligibility quarters of football.

Been accepted to the law school, and I had my Green Bay Packers contract I haven't signed yet,

James Moore 13:03

exactly you have options.

Victor Atiyeh 13:07

Dad had a heart problem. Do it at it for some time. My brothers came home on leave

prior to going overseas, and

my one brother said, Well, why don't you get married while we're here? So then that's when I got married, which was lucky, because my dad was there. We got married on the fifth of July, and he died on whatever, July, 30 or 31st

July, yeah. And

so my brothers went, and that came back again, and he was cognizant when they came, but very shortly after, he went coma, and his brother from New York came, but Dad was still alive, but he didn't know

that's a story that's good. What do you want to

James Moore 14:04

do? Sure. So I mean, as I said, what I want to talk about is the 7478

82 campaigns,

and then while your governor, the people that you appointed, and so Supreme Court justices, other justices, and then you had some some other appointments in there. So let's start with the 74 campaign. Just so you know, it's a very important campaign for me. That's when my dad ran for county commissioner in Jackson County. So I know exactly where I was that night, going between the television stations in Jackson County. Uh, yeah.

Victor Atiyeh 14:45

Well, first of all, I'd never run anything other than County, with one exception, and that was you ran for delegate. To the convention, right?

And for whatever reason, I said,

Well, I'll enter the race, but that's all I did. I start counting the people that certainly are going to do Hatfield and all of us, so the Lord's not for planning our vacation. Well, I won,

but it was an on campaign. Campaign

comical

had finished.

I was a legislator. I could see how, least in my mind, he just sort of took the bucket and dumped it on it went upside down. And there's still so many things that had to or could be or should be done for, even things that we did, land use planet, or

all these famous business, they're still

and so I

wasn't matter of thinking who competition was.

Tom finished. I'd been there 20 years, almost

16 years,

and I said to myself,

I can do this job.

And so I entered her

at that point in time, Clay Myers had been Secretary of State Treasurer, Tom McCall loved him. Tom McCall was but I never paid any attention to that kind of thing. All clays in, I better stay out kind of thing. Yeah,

so I was for quite some time

what you call who's in the governor's race, Clay Myers and others, and I was an other Dorchester just finished, and it was there for the first time. I moved from others to Clay Myers and vicaria

and others,

they and this is all new experience altogether. Yeah, I did have

the advantage of

a couple who worked on my campaign, who had been very active in

think of it. It's an organization the young people,

I'll try to come up with it. But anyway,
national and but there was also local,
and they had been acting so they knew people all around the state. Oh, good.

And so now we're going around
selecting chairman.

Mike franksdale was one of those, I'm speaking of that, and he was on my campaign

Junior
not Junior Achievement.

Anyway, it was, it was an organized Yeah, young people thing, yeah.

I can remember where it was, down in Roseburg.

They asked,
well, now who's, who's, yeah,
that turned out to be among my

James Moore 18:51
best. Oh, yeah, yeah.

Victor Atiyeh 18:54
So that was, that was an advantage, but it was interesting. I knew Clay was widely an hour. Also, as a general
Republican, Clay was going to be our next nominee. Everybody presumed that.

So I knew all that,
and I so now I took my first, what you call down state, right, left the barrier.

Got into Corvallis
an early morning breakfast, and

so I showed up and room was full, and we had similar successes. Wherever we went, I came back and said to my staff,
hey, I think I can like this. I. And slowly it came to me that it wasn't that clay

was well known.

It's how they knew him. And so I think that this was a reluctant Republican Party that, okay, we'll vote for clay. They
weren't really didn't have somebody they got excited about, right?

So that's where I that's how I fit in.

I began to start moving around again,

lucky for me, I like people.

The I enjoyed being with people.

I have one man. He was my Air Force General. What he knew he was a pilot. Knew non pilots, and so if I need to go somewhere, he'd call, Hey, Charlie, you going to wherever?

And so that was an easy thing. And

matter of fact, I got over to Hermiston, and I needed to be a sort of a glitch in my schedule back in the valley and then back to the campaign, but that was the next game, and Ed Patterson, who was the legislator and supporting clay. And I said, Ed, I need a plane ride. Let me see what I can do. So I got this fellow, and he said, I got my friend that's running for office, for governor, and he's a plane ride. He said, it doesn't play Mars. And to play. And we got the buddies. He was in the interesting business. He what they call

it, companies, pencils.

That was his business. And he, he said he had one car on 15 clunks. In other words, he fly to that place and take that car, right? And that was the business he was in. As a

matter of fact, he was, he played a large part

after the primary.

And one of my favorite stories, famous money to me, we had a breakfast and it was U shaped table, about

size wide,

sort of what you call a local

restaurant

and so I'm and his wife is sitting opposite me, talking. I get up, get my spiel, then he come to questions, any questions, and my pilot says that, yeah,

but your flies open.

Where do you go?

James Moore 23:35

Exactly?

Victor Atiyeh 23:36

Just turn around, zip and come back like it ever happened. I tell it. Rarely tell that story, but I wasn't embarrassed that kind of laugh.

They told me I needed a driver. I said, What do you mean? I need a driver. I've driven all my life. No, you need a driver.

Then I won. And of course, now you know you really do,

right? And they said, you have to, you have to write a speech, because the media wants to see what you said. Yeah, I said I can't write speeches, and I surely can't deliver a written speech.

Oh, you have to do that,

and you understand. But I had notes, and I've been in the legislature, yeah, it was just easy. Just, I do remember as nice, sunny, sunny Sunday, and I went down, wrote this speech, and the speech to the Sun group, and I don't remember what, but it's at the moment club. I remember that my staff went. I was all over they said to me, by Kelly, you're right walking. But of course, that cured us. You moved along. Yeah, I never was charismatic. You You know me, so you've got your own vision of who faculty is. That's one of the beauties of what we're talking about, you and me, because I'm talking about from my view, and you're listening to what I'm saying, but

whatever.

And the fascinating part of our school, uh,

who I don't know. I remember his name. Your professors retired. He was Oh

James Moore 25:49

Russ Dondero, yeah, and

Victor Atiyeh 25:52

I think he was a pretty good Democrat, solid. He's very

James Moore 25:56

solid Democrat. We got three

Victor Atiyeh 25:59

real buddies, yeah, I mean, really, we just enjoyed each other. And well, anyway, maybe it's hard to tell that How come. And I started thinking, because I've been interviewed, how come sometimes I don't know. I was never concerned about large groups. I was never worried about, I'm going to screw up, say something wrong, or

I was ever relaxed to that extent,

jumping ahead.

I mean, really, I had the second time around, and Bob Straub and

pat in August, they were going to get a trailer and

go see the people. And my reaction then was, my God, it's August. Where were you seeing the people before? Anyway, he started in Southern Oregon, working his way up north, and he got to Bandon. Oh, God, Bandon is great. This cheese is wonderful. That's our it's our favorite Pat. And I literally love this cheese. And he's heading toward Tillamook.

James Moore 27:21

This is way before Tillamook bought out bandit,

Victor Atiyeh 27:25

anyway, that kind of thing. Yeah.

Trying to think maybe you can ask a question, well,

James Moore 27:35

let's, let's go to the to your first primary against Clay Myers there. Yeah. So what did you have for staff? I had,

Victor Atiyeh 27:52

well, I can't say,

campaign manager. I had a person had never done anything like that before, the woman, but she had a business well

organized. I really didn't have a finance chairman, but I had several people that I knew and were able to go get some money.

I mentioned earlier the

mike Ragsdale was working for volunteers and getting me volunteers, then a secretary. I guess it was a small thing, but fundamentally, we need it, and it works. They all work extremely well.

James Moore 28:53

So then you beat Myers, and so does the Republican Party swing in and say you need more professional campaign, like a driver. Or is that my campaign? Or is that, you know, Mark Hatfield takes you a sign says, Oh, by the way. I mean, how did that? How did that more professionalization happen there?

Victor Atiyeh 29:16

Well, first of all, terms of driving, this, there was no time for argument. Yeah, you don't need. You do need? Yeah, let's not argue about that at

the speech business. You do need to run a

speech as surprise punch crazy, I'm sure. Oh, yeah, okay. He came in and asked me the same question. You asked him, who's your campaign? Well, I don't have a campaign, man after how about you finance chairman? How about paci? I don't have them, but I've got this guy that's kind of hard. Okay, and then he says to me, you can't win. But it came down to my early statement, as I told you, yeah, they knew clay, but it wasn't that they it was how they knew him, right? And I didn't know. I didn't recognize that, yeah, because that was not the field I'd been playing. And his problem, I would tell you, was that he wanted it too badly and presumed he was going to win. Now those two things are the poison. Yeah, if you think you're going to win, you're going to lose it. Just, you know, just, I'm going to make it happen with Tom, I think two

James Moore 30:56

years, four years, yeah, the 78 race. And

Victor Atiyeh 30:59

he just figured he'd come on the stage and say that, and that would be all there was too.

So Becca T shows up.

I suppose I've been there, but I was always a minority member, so media didn't pay much attention to the chairman of the committee or that sort of thing, and so I did amendments and things worked. Only place I could really work to a good extent was in the committee. That's what's the south of Florida. Yeah, I won, and people know who I was and I was Republican. Later,

you certainly must have a picture then,

James Moore 31:56

oh yes, yeah, no, this is the famous phone booth I had lunch yesterday with Phil Keasling, who said to say hi, and he was an intern in the 75 session, so that's when you were seven, instead of six. And he remembers this picture very much. That's great. Well,

Victor Atiyeh 32:19

the thing it went at the time. Of course, it took time to come up with it, but he was

treasurer,

Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Congressman, Governor out of six, yeah, and that's incredible. The thing about this

George Wingard and Ken, yeah,

James Moore 32:47

and I think, I don't think the government think that phone booth is still there. I think that phone booth is still there. This phone booth is this the phone booth that's in the Capitol building? It

Victor Atiyeh 32:58

could be, I don't get there anymore, yeah, no, I think it's the back of the room.

James Moore 33:02

Yeah, I think it's still there with nothing in it, because no one makes phone calls there anymore. But you can close the doors and you can talk on your cell phone and people can't really hear you.

Yeah, that's great.

Victor Atiyeh 33:18

Yeah. Actually, I have a pen. I had a after the election two years later where we got up to seven, and it has Roman numerals, seven, little, just a little dot thing, and there's only six of them, yeah and yeah. But

again,

we did our work with these. These were bright people, and they did their work, not with any anything against Democrats, but they did their good work in committee and made some bills that were crummy better, and some of them couldn't even make better, right? Didn't make come out of the floor. So whatever power we had within the committee, yeah, and

it worked out well. So

James Moore 34:18

if you've beat Clay Myers, so talk to me about the 74 campaign in the general

Victor Atiyeh 34:26

the first word was

the next Day,

the conservative Bay, Clay Mars, and moderate. I remember that I thought, oh shit,

that's the way it came out. Yeah. And

as years going along, I think I told you before, another reason that. I will openly admit I'm a physical conservative, but certainly not a conservative in terms of human relations. I'd be, I'd be, really not the other side of the issue, yeah, but that's beside the point. So that was the first twinge I got. That was the day after and he posted. He said, that's big news, and that's going to stick. You know, if it happened somewhere in the middle of the campaign, it wouldn't have made much difference that day. And I just start the campaign we had now. We got professionals, meaning we paid people.

He did keep of course,

let's call the campaign manager. Yeah, she wasn't and we did formalize our office. Got a little bit bigger, ready, got of course, we had to raise money

that campaign.

There was a limit

passed by the legislature. I knew it was unconstitutional, but it was the law, right? And as you know, that's what the Supreme Court said. That's unconstitutional, yeah? But that's what both Bob and I honor that Yeah. And believe it or not, if I remember correctly, or Frankie was something like 75,000 Yeah,

James Moore 36:47

75 85,000 it wasn't very much, yeah.

Victor Atiyeh 36:52

So that, again, would be his advantage.

But again, I didn't think about that. That's what we had. Let's go do it. I it as always, start a campaign. Whatever my message was,

seemed to bring

well, where I went. Bob,

unfortunately,

made bad choices. By that, I mean in terms of what we call a palace guard, and they just guarded him too much, hovered, and I really believe, because I think Bob was a hell of a heat guy, a great sense of humor, already dedicated. If they let Bob be Bob, it'd have been tougher to be, but his pals, Garland wouldn't turn him loose.

I just could tell that I

always did like Baldwin, I know, but I could tell that he'd run to me here again. I think it was a bit of well, we can't lose I run twice for my office and maybe four, four campaigns and twice for governor. And so I got a lot of people out there, and there may be little comments more in his palace go up than with him,

but I just kept going.

I knew

two or three weeks before the the

general that I wasn't going to wait.

I didn't tell anybody. I didn't look sad or anything.

James Moore 39:07

So is this just based on your feeling? Having been in so many elections, it's not like you had polling or anything so and

Victor Atiyeh 39:18

so I knew

was not surprised. I think most candidates

and with me as

I felt bad for my volunteers, that

they were so enthusiastic and they worked so hard, and I let them down. But still, for her first timer at 4555

Nixon resigned Ford Park.

That wasn't too bad, yeah,

when it was all over with Incidentally, I tell that the next morning I could drive anywhere. Our water.

But I said,

after I rested, I might run again, but I only do that if I think I can beat Bob right. I'm not going to go do this just for the photo. And he made his chief of staff. It wasn't Burke state, it was someone. Anyway, I said, oops, that's his first mistake. I'm

trying to remember who it is.

But anyway, again, he had his problems, and there were some issues and

taxes and all kinds of stuff. But anyway,

the first campaign Bob Chandler and

the newspaper

Vicky said, Was it worth it? This is two weeks before there came. I'll let you know.

I mean, whether you win or lose, of course. Larry,

so about a month later, called and said, Yeah,

you don't run or lose. But yeah, it was a tremendous experience. And

anyway, it went back to

beta senator, yeah, and

James Moore 41:37

before we switched to the 78 campaign, I've been reading the 75 and 77 legislative session tapes. Do you have a sense that you your position as senator, or your perception of issues in Oregon changed because of your statewide campaign. I mean, the personalities didn't really change. I mean, basically, here's, here's your caucus, right here, but you're now, you know, you know Hermiston, you've eaten their watermelon, you've been to Malheur County, you spent time in Medford. Did that change your perception of how your job was in the Senate.

Victor Atiyeh 42:29

I'm almost going to put us a question,

because I said to myself,

having lost to Bob,

I know that I am where Oregon is. I did do a good job of conveying it. And of course, this Heather Nixon Ford and first time earned all of us. But so I'm saying whatever it was, and I didn't define it in my mind that I was, were Oregonians were, and so in answering your question that I know, I didn't change it on I didn't. I didn't the problems that we had at the time, basically, were not the big ones that you know about, but managing this the big ones, right, right? And we and we had instances I'll give you. And this was a nursing home in Bend and they had one of the department people come and tell me, You should do this, this and this. And about a month later, another one came in and said, You should do

this, this and this, same department. And they were confusing, right? That kind of thing

that was so I didn't change

my view of how things, but I couldn't. I as a, as a legislator, you can't really that's, that's management, right, right? And you can't pass a bill and say two people can't go to the right.

So I just moved forward. I didn't change

my attitude. My attitude was, I'm going to vote

how I felt.

I wasn't going to

run again for Governor

until later on, made me mind up I wasn't going to do that, and I'm just going to be the Senator that I met before and try to square. Things away So fundamentally, the first answer was, I knew I was her working hard by having traveled. But that's where Democrat and Nixon for that's where all that comes to play

James Moore 45:20

the 74 Yeah, Watergate babies and every all that is complex.

Victor Atiyeh 45:25

I had a chance to talk to Ford several times. I admire him very much, and I think he was a great president. And I've told him he made he made the right decision. Politically, it was a crummy decision, but he made the right decision, and I've told him that because all the congressmen, and that's editors ever always had the right color tie, they weren't Paying attention to what needed to be done in the country. So the clearing of Nixon with Ford there and it just there's no point talking about it anymore. Games over now, so it's less medical work and

maybe two weeks or so, let's see. Two, three weeks. Got invitation from Ford

to come

to the White House,

and the invitation came, you'd come and do whatever they picked about four or five of us that thought might win, right? And the do whatever you think you want to do. We'll film it, and then you can use it or not. That's the way it's the way it came. Yeah, my first reaction was, hell, there's no votes in Washington, DC. And then I got to thinking, I may never get the chance to begin over there, exactly the incredible thing Jim had, friend had a jet, and anyway, we left at five o'clock in the morning from Portland, flew to Washington, DC, got there early, visit Wendell, and then went to the White House, was briefed, but then Ford came in for more briefing.

Then went to the Oval Office, did my thing,

went back out, got a taxi back to the jet. At nine o'clock, I was at a happy Canyon pageant.

My God, what did I just do?

And the follow up on that was, Laura said, is that office really open? And my answer was, God, I don't know, but I know what the rug looks

like, and

that remembers me incredible thing in the world. So, but there wasn't much good stem to tie. They were tough all up and down the country. I remember we lost Lynn Newberry, yeah, good man, yeah, done well, although his successor matured and worked out real well, but he had to start at the bottom and then whatsoever, yeah, but he then was a good example of the kinds of things that took place. Yeah.

That's just the way it goes. Yeah. The next

James Moore 49:16

time we had an election like that, was 2006

people tired over the Iraq War, and, you know, it went down that low. So state legislators were losing because of national issues. So it's very remarkable election. So 78 so at what point do you decide? You know, Bob Straub hasn't done things well, and I do need to get into this.

Victor Atiyeh 49:53

There was a point in time, but it was within a year. It was, in other words, it wasn't the next year. Of the year after that, and at that point in time, the issues that we're dealing with, and the one that really was probably a difficult for me, was this, the tax a tax bill and

for me to deal with, I knew,

but Bob had, because that was his deal with him. But Bob had other things happen that he had to deal with. So

anyway, I decided I think

I've got a chance. I think I win this,

and I'm going to guess at least a year, maybe a little more than a year. And yes, it was because maybe couple of months after that, point, announced we're going to run again. So that was by now, of course, I'm almost to her. I've run statewide. We don't have to spend a lot of time on the volunteer side. I had a volunteer chairman. Absolutely incredibly good. There was a woman she was active in Washington County and,

or going in right or I'm thinking of his name. He wrote about campaigns. Anyway, he came my office and said, I was there. Okay, everybody says they got a lot of volunteers

showing her volunteers

and wait. And she just pointed out. So he goes over there and he picks out at random, I don't know, some, some several, whatever, came back and said, I got you. And we really did. We had good, solid, just not names, really solid volunteers. So our initial thought once which network started, Bob's gonna run, that was presumably he did. We read that he was going to get this big shot from

Austin or New York or forgotten, there was an

advisor to campaigns.

But we knew also that he sells his campaigns to pay a media that was his style, so we knew that part of it, he said to ourselves, okay, Bob's governor, we'll try to raise as much as we can, but expect you to be getting The money, and we'll be with our volunteers and basically, there's somebody heading there, basically that's in a very Large manner, yeah, that's the way

it happened, yeah? And

our army of volunteers helped a lot, yeah? But in my first run at 45% I made a lot of friends, yeah, and people now knew me. I had colleagues, sort of four or five, but you've got a much more solid base. You don't know where it is, but it's there. One major issue we had was to make sure we get as many Republicans to vote for us, yeah, and so he was separate, but now we had professional people. Had consultants, both actually the first campaign and the second. And God, he was a bright guy. He'd get one line out, and before he write it, he's got another line, and I Paul Newman, and he says, I'm the real Paul Newman. And he even said, Becky. The year hokey. But maybe this is the year for hokey, he says. But so we had a good a good advisor,

both, and a good team of people.

Now I told you, I knew I was going to lose in the first campaign. We had a massive poll, and then tracked it from there, and I was

three weeks ahead of my poll. I knew I was going to win, and when I drove up that night and waiting for the first announcement

straw for the 5545

or something, no, no, no, that's not right. That's the other way around, I wasn't alarmed. I knew it was a mistake. So here again, gut reaction has been very good for me. Yeah,

Unknown Speaker 56:07
it's

Victor Atiyeh 56:08
been very useful and largely Correct,
yeah, yeah.

But it is, I can't tell you, yeah,

James Moore 56:19
let's cut that's that's good to have, not I mean, when you're saying that, I keep thinking of the Mitt Romney campaign, where apparently they were totally mystified that they lost and the numbers never added up for them. And I just was wondering, does anybody have a gut feeling in this campaign, or is a gut feeling and is willing to talk about it? So I just, it's just, it's just fascinating to

Victor Atiyeh 56:50
I don't know. How many do I really don't know.

I would say back there,

there's so many experts. Quote, and and they all know,

and they can all confuse the hell out of me

when we have a candidate running for Congress or whatever, and they have an advisor. I said, Where's the advisor coming from? Come from Austin. Forget it. You got to get an advisor here. But, you know, on major issues or major things, having, I just had a gut feeling, and

I feel,

and as I say, basically, it's probably to be

very largely Correct. Yeah. So

James Moore 57:45

let's talk about that primary. 1978

you come in, you have been the successful nominee four years earlier. You lose to Straub, you come in again, and you're the underdog again. So talk to me about that campaign with

Roger Martin and Tom McCall.

Victor Atiyeh 58:10

First of all, I've said, if we could have written a script and say, Roger, you say this the time you say that they couldn't. We wouldn't have done it there. We made the presumptions that it would be as people should discover.

Tom and and Roger.

There was a meeting,

actually. We had a meeting whether Vicker TIA or Roger should get out of the race. I

was there.

Finally, this group, which are trumpeters, mainly figured to you how to get out. My answer was, why should I get out? I'm going to win.

That's my answer to them.

And I knew that Roger was going to be third no matter how it ended. Roger was a good candidate, good guy, but he had really they had three debates. The third one was Medford, and that's when the dogs all came out. I'm smiling, thinking it's wonderful. But ever again, these are all things that I'm sure you know as well as I do. Tom

was much too confident.

He was really, really. Pissed off, really pissed off, what he lost.

I kept waiting for Mr. Clear I was gonna wait, and I kept waiting for phone call. Roger was great. He came over to my very upbeat about it,

and I kept waiting for Tom

Mark Hatfield called What did I do? Well, he didn't have any more answer.

Finally, I just said, I'm going to go down to his which I did.

Unfortunately, he was in the lobby, and the media was all around him and showed up. He was quite petulant, and they got that on there, but he was a loser. So that was not we went back to his room, and there he just tore up his campaign manager, nice, really nice woman. I knew her. She was in tears a couple others. I wasn't because I

know Tom, and I knew that's who Tom was.

Take it as it was, but

I mean, he was really, yeah,

the and the margin was unexpectedly large. They're already going to call me 10 days before the election.

It's a Saturday anyway, yeah,

and they just taken a poll, and Tom was something like 38 and I was 31 or 32

and my comment, I said I won

because Tom was so High, he couldn't do higher.

So all that could happen is down.

What was Can they come down fast enough for me to catch him again? So when I saw that, like that slide, like it did,

there's no question. What's going on. It

was fascinating with the media. The media figures that the big show was the Benson hotel,

and we were at the

hotel of the street the

on the ball field.

But anyway, that was mine.

But anyway, the media, me, you was at the Benson, number one team.

They could see it, and they were scrambling

tip where the real news was.

And I was smiling about that. Anyway, I had this poll, and I saw the poll on election day, and I said, Denny, I'm three weeks ahead of

your call, yeah, yeah. So I don't know.

I look back now, I think to myself,

I'm just a regular

retail merchant.

I did add the store as kids work harder manually. We had the store, and here I am this small retail store, and I become a governor of Oregon, which

it's saving heart for you to get a hold of. Oh

Unknown Speaker 1:04:33

yeah, yeah,

Victor Atiyeh 1:04:34

for me to do that, yeah.

And yet, that's one of the marvelous of America. Yes, it's

James Moore 1:04:50

been quite a history, yeah, well, it's interesting to look back on that time and compare it to now. If you were a candidate now, we would have lots of. Things about your life story. They'd have pictures of a broom, or you cleaning rugs, or something working his way up by his bootstraps. And in 78 that kind of stuff didn't exist. It was just beginning to come in. But it was at the presidential level. They were kind of beginning to do it. And, you know, you were elected. I was in college. My dad was actually defeated in that primary. Jimmy Carter took away federal funding for abortion, and so he and the other two county commissioners in Jackson County said, we'll pay for it. And so he was defeated in the Republican primary. But, but just watching that election, you know, from the rest of the state, and I was voting absentee in California.

We didn't know Tina brothers.

It did you know your the all the retail stuff. We didn't know any of that. It was just who were the candidates were so but, but that wouldn't no consultant would let you get away with that. Now, by gosh, they'd have a hard scrabble bringing up, and, you know, working hard, and, you know, doing all that kind of stuff, and it would be a great story. Well, that's

Victor Atiyeh 1:06:15

charged me to say I read ads, but

an ad had to

phony it up, right? And

I see that's today, R's and D's, and they're really phony,

kind of gets to me. But

James Moore 1:06:39

it's amazing how many people have kids and a dog?

Victor Atiyeh 1:06:49

That's part of

it. If I were to run today, being younger, of course, I think I have chance to win. And the reason I think I have a chance to win is so much of the campaigns are

not very friendly. Why is it friendly?

They're not warm, they're not right.

That's who I am, yeah. And if they asked me a question about abortion or gay marriages and stuff, I'd answer the question. I wouldn't say, Well, I'm thinking about that kind of thing, and I'll stay in integrity. I believe is so important to people. And we haven't had really somebody you can say, has that? Yeah, and I believe that, you know, I say, How come back? You did do all this? They people who put more store in Odyssey directness, and I may disagree with him, but

being that way is more important than the issue,

and that's the way it felt about that

not the issue, but they got the person,

and you don't, you don't think that either feel that way or you don't feel that way. Let's go back to legislative races. I knew some of the legislators, they would come, and today I'm here, and I'm having this tomorrow. I'm here on this, and that's and then they win. Now comes the time to vote. Now, who am I? What's one of the days you're me? Right, right? That's a little embarrassed to tell you what I tell you, but I believe that. I think candidates, they come and say, Well, that's an advice, be who you are. If you lose, you lose, sun's going to come up the next day. Just be who you are. So I think there's lack and that's why I say maybe I got to have a shot at it.

James Moore 1:09:27

Yeah, yeah. It's amazing, because I talked to candidates. I'll talk to any candidate at any time, but the second meeting, I charge my professional rates, yes.

And so the first question I always ask them is,

do your politics match your district

and the number of people who have not thought about that? It's like, you know, if you're a Republican in Portland, so have a good campaign, but you're not going to win. You. Yeah, so number one, and then number two, it's like, so do you you know you have an issue. Everybody has an issue that gets them in. Is that going to be enough to keep you interested? And are you willing to learn? Can you learn and show me evidence of that? So be yourself, but but be open to things. And it's amazing the number of candidates who don't take that second step, I know,

Victor Atiyeh 1:10:25

and politics, certainly statewide, any large city, it's hard to become identified. Portland being

number one,

I could come into Portland and media wouldn't even know it, right? I would come into Ontario and the whole damn town would know it, yeah, so it's that kind of a situation, and

those are the things that you deal with.

I don't know if there's the

only formula that I know of is it who you who are you? They want to know who you are, and you just be who you are. Win or lose? Yeah. Don't give

James Moore 1:11:23

the people a real choice. Don't try to cuddle up to the people. I

Victor Atiyeh 1:11:27

would, of course, force the

opponent to pay who yeah she was. Yeah, exactly. Surprising one to me is this, is this doctor? Yeah, Monica Levy, I don't know. Some say she's almost anyway. I don't know what the polls say, but she's ballooned out there. I talked to her very early on, and she had met become public, but just and she was still quite overwrought about whether she did the right thing to tears, yeah, and now she's a candidate, yeah, yeah. I don't know America. I worry about I worry about it greatly.

I was in the

doing what I was doing, because I really believe this system needs to be protected and we are getting weaker. I believe the guys that invented this said it that I use it. People are strong. We got a strong country.

So it's a personal philosophy that's

here, this is hard, almost as hard as when I first brought here. Bought the test coffee. She told people how damn good you're Yeah, that's not easy.

The thing that

saddens me is it went downhill so quickly after I left. Couldn't believe it would happen that quick, and my successor was, of course, the major one to blame. He was, and forget his infidelity. He was Washington, DC, kind of guy. He cleaned house, talked about my team of people with dead wood,

kind of that was sort of

so angered me, because

they were unlike anybody been there. And so then that became the pattern, and

it's interesting now, since summer,

I really have really strong good feelings about Ted

and Barbara

and in that order, not just like Barbara,

Ted is

we can log together real well. We could go camping together without any problem.

Ted did make some mistakes, but his first time and plant closing was a major one. While we're. Trying to deal with it. There's a misunderstanding of how business works.

Of course, obviously, I think I've already told you about my feelings on my successor, but now our current governor, I think,

not as highly as I think Barbara and

Ted must have been shocked how the hell I won back in the middle of a recession. Oh yeah, what was that? Changing horses in the middle, exactly,

James Moore 1:15:43

exactly, well, actually, before we shift to that 82 election. In the 78 elections, some people who were very important came into your life. You appointed them, hired them, so people like Denny. So talk to me about finding Denny and deciding that he would be kind of a central person campaign. We'll talk about him later on. You know, in other interviews when we get to actual Governor stuff, but

Victor Atiyeh 1:16:12

Denny came, he had

Oregon State allowed him to take time to do what he did. I was the Senator. I was live across the leader, and he came on as my assistant, and the session was over, and come up the next session. And he knew and decided that they're telling me that Oregon State is just just so generous. You can't do that twice. And so he had to make a decision. It was a leap of faith, and

we got along together wonderfully well.

I would be a hard one to

you know, how come a team is not getting more press? Well, at wasn't looking for more press, but he's this press guy. So I said, Danny, you're at fault for not getting that to you whenever. I repeat, just take it for what it is. But every once in a while I'd get a shot. Take it at me. I wouldn't really mind it,

if it's like say the media

the difference of opinion,

but when it's clear to me that they're

really forcing themselves to come up with a shot at me, that makes me upset. Danny would come in. Now take it easy, relax. Now, these are the things that happen. Just Just relax. And I'm not across the storm in the office, but you can tell one morning he's standing in my door. God, he's so upset. So I took a shot at him,

Danny, I said,

that's the way things go.

That's one of our favorite stories.

So obviously, he rolled the dice more important because I had a rug business, but it worked out well. He was compatible. He's very meticulous. Things supposed to be done, and

it's just one of those things that worked out.

I think he's happy with what choices he made, and

we shifted him over to chair our campaign manager.

It took leave.

I don't really know one maybe.

I can't tell you what we did

that worked well.

I'm anxious to talk about some of my people, staff, that fact

that certainly jury, but

he's a good thing that came into his life, and my life sort of happened. I don't know if this is really Eva. A book. But my feeling was he and Holly, they were good people, but they were there two different people in the same house, yeah, and then they were happy, yeah, she'd go her way, and he went his way. But I said, how can they be that way? Well, they divorced very amicably, the problem and the tragedy, really, of his second wife. That wasn't tragic, but

he's happy now. Yeah.

James Moore 1:20:34

Have you ever talked to him in the last month or so? But he just moved into a new house, and so

Victor Atiyeh 1:20:38

new house, yeah, yeah. It just seemed to be very happy and she should retire. Yeah, she is retired within her last two couple of weeks, I guess. Yeah,

James Moore 1:20:54

that's a good time to get out of the newspaper business, I think.

Victor Atiyeh 1:21:00

So it's,

I'm trying to think to you just if it didn't work,

it arranged to not have it continue. That makes explain

that, and maybe,

even though it's fake, the geese don't

even care. Yeah, maybe worth well off the record.

Maybe we'll talk about that when I finish. Okay,

I my first choice was Jerry Thompson. Thompson, and she's working OBS, and had a program, and she was in the middle of it, whatever. Anyway, I went had a listen funny. Got Lee Johnson, bright man,

very strong,

drove me nuts,

and I would go in this office. God damn it, Lee governor, you're not. I never had to certainly that my agenda was his agenda. Finally, I got Jack Fauci to say, Can you get him to resign?

Which he did do.

Well, that's what I'm saying, is,

although that's probably the only major thing that ever happened, if I couldn't work with somebody, I couldn't I know myself, this ain't going to get better. Yeah, let's stop it now. Now what I don't, what I just said, was

not worth it enough. And he's,

I say, off the record. It's not an important part. But maybe I need something if I had to, but I didn't deal with anything except my top left.

James Moore 1:23:21

So let's shift. We're we've been here talking for a long time now. Let's shift and finish up with the 82 campaign. Yes, and then I'll come back another time and we'll talk about Supreme Court justices and all that kind of stuff. So 82 Is it a sure thing in 79 when you're sworn in, that you're going to run again, or does that gels over time, and you say I should do this again,

Victor Atiyeh 1:23:47

it took my staff long time to believe never started with my house race. Did I ever commit to run again? And I was

determined to keep it that way. I decided this will be based on whether I think it's good or bad, whether I'm going to win or lose, right? Took myself quite a while to really believe I met it, but then think dollar, things were working. I'm not going to say this. We had our recession, but things were coming together. The legislature and I were pretty much safe.

And I thought it was I should continue on the program that we were on. So I decided to go

so there was no,

no gap. And that was, that was the. Time for no gap of time, because things were coming too fast. Governor were going to come up short.

Too much. Governor were going to come up short,

so we didn't have time to learn, yeah, and

make I want to make sure said Ted was their candidate. He was in the legislature. I'm sure when their caucus, they were figuring out some way they could screw me. I'm sure there was some talk of but they also were, and I gave them public credit already that, no, this is too important. We're not gonna let that happen. Now, that doesn't mean we always agree, but we weren't agreed on the basis of whether TED or I wrong against each other, but the issues so i To their credit,

they work on the Republican governor,

where they where their guy was sitting with him, right?

Yeah, and he was a good candidate,

good looking. SP, spoke, speaks real well,

but I credit them.

But anyway, I decided that things that I wanted to get done I hadn't yet finished. I wanted to get land use planning done, finished.

We never did.

And there's a quote in my

oral history

where I said, if we, if you don't do something legislature,

I'll I'm gonna call you back a special session. Property taxes. That was still great. Oh yeah, feeding Oregonians try to get jobs. There were so many things that would need to be done, and I had already made good friends overseas as well as in California, so I had entree. Honestly, I am amazed at 80 when my 62% is just incredible at that period of time. And that's we come back to what I told you earlier about I believe him. Maybe I don't agree with what he's doing, but I believe him. I think that's that helped. And and so I also out campaigned him that amazed me, because, you know, I'm running in government and then special sessions, and he was where I was as a state senator, running for governor, but I actually physically now my combative football experience, competitive,

yeah, I don't know what it was, but,

James Moore 1:28:36

well, it's one thing that I really noticed about cooling gasket and Kids hover is kind of the same way as well. Um, cool and gossip ski in both of his subsequent runs for governor. Was just not a very good campaigner. He goes to a town, and it's not like everybody in Ontario knows he's there. He goes to a town to go fly fishing with the editor of the paper and maybe talk to the Elks, and then he goes out and he disappears, and he goes somewhere else, and he's, it's like no yell, jump up and down, and it's not him. It's not him, No. And so it clearly, clearly in that in your campaign where you outworked him, it's partly that, but partly it's not. It wasn't his personality. Yeah, later on, he was elected twice, and he did never have to change.

Victor Atiyeh 1:29:29

He's a good looking candidate. Speaks very well. He's got a great sense of humor. He's very humble. That sounds strange for me to say, but I think he's quite a humble person, and he's got all the elements

on one of the campaigns Bob Straub,

and Bob was going to go. He

was there. He was going to go somewhere in Washington, but it related to an Oregon issue. And in Ontario, they invited the media, invited to stop and just to have interview, and they wouldn't give him time. Said, well, we'll go out in the freeway, wherever you are, we won't hold you up. And he went right through town. I came the next day. This is the view Bob Straub, it was the sign at pointing to Idaho.

Why so that ever happened? That shouldn't happen? Yeah, well, you always have five or 10 minutes, absolutely, but, and, but I still, actually they say 62 if you any. As I look at it, I understand our Republican candidate was another one, like we had recently drowned, yeah, and that's where I got I was. He was a little bit hard, but he was a non candidate. Candidate. I day

I would I said, people say, Did you enjoy it being governor? Well, almost apologized by saying yes, because we had a tough time, and I knew people were suffering, but I was using all of my brain, not part of it. And that's, that's, that's kind of exciting. Yeah, doesn't have much in life. And we had some damn good people, which we'll get to, also as urgent to them as it was to me, get things squared away. And so to that extent it was, we were able to feed people and use we used

senior centers,

and so that helped

people still hungry. Lynn Newberg came to me at the end of one year, you must be doing something right. But I haven't read any article in the newspaper showing people sleeping in cars or children. You know, the typical end of the year. Haven't seen any of that. And there wasn't

just sort of sort of happened, I don't know.

But the thing is that people

we had, you know, weekly,

and so they did have whatever news

we could do,

they had trust.

They suffered. They said, Well,

I think pickle help us.

I took two cuts, which is really cosmetic. The hell it was getting 43,000 or something out of a

600 million.

But the point was, I truly did, they're taking a cut. And

the thing that I had really troubled, and that's really deal with the union. The State employees could have each taken a small cut, and we could have kept everybody but no, I want my money, and that means that in order to give you your money. Where the pots only this big. Some of the people have to go, yeah. Think they'd be willing to give a little Yeah.

James Moore 1:34:35

I think there's, as we've been talking here, there's two ideas for big projects that I've had for a long time. One of them is that my grandparents moved here in the early 30s, very early 30s, and we're Oregon State, and they so they were here with things I'm going to want to talk to you also about, there's public power, private power, all that kind of stuff. But. Yeah, the public employees basically decided to take pay cuts so everybody would stay employed during the Great Depression, and that changed. There's a, there's a post world war two way of thinking that's not that way. And I'd really want to explore that. And the second thing is when, when you were talking and saying that you felt in your 74 campaign, looking at it, that you were Oregonians were I've had a hypothesis that Oregon's been a Republican state forever. It's just now the Republicans have kind of moved over here. And when you look at it, John Kitzhaber asked an awful lot like a Republican from 40 years ago or something, but there's, there's, there's a there's a reality of the people that is very hard to shift the politicians may shift around it, but it's, it's, it's fundamentally there. So yeah,

Victor Atiyeh 1:35:57

you're right. I've said and believe that Oregonians, majority are here now, this many Republicans and this many Democrats that were here, yeah, and we all match up the same way now that these nuts over here and those nuts over there, you had your nuts, or Democrats had their nuts, and they sort of kind of stepped back, our nuts are still there, although at the last Dorchester, I think they did all I don't know if anybody paid attention to it, but there was this group of conservatives had their own meeting, and so

in my view, they swept all the crap out,

because Dorchester is not of a Republican event, but Republicans go, yeah. And then the beauty of it is that they issue no matter what, and they finish it and there's no blood on the floor. And if you go to the Central Committee, they're just bloody needy. And so

Democrats miss an opportunity? Yeah,

I do believe or going in,

regardless registered, and I've never actually seen

maybe you know, people would say, Well,

I voted for you. I said, Look, if all our Republicans in Oregon voted for me, I still couldn't exactly,

I need you

James Moore 1:37:54

Exactly. Yep, and that's what I'm watching with Monica weby and Jason Conger with the US Senate race, yeah. And also Dennis Richardson for the governor's race, yeah. We had a great natural experiment two years ago. Because remember, no Republicans ran for treasurer or for attorney general, yeah. And so we had the writing campaign guys who, you know, they couldn't run campaigns at all. And so we know there's a natural 40% are going to vote for a Republican. Yeah, that's That's it. And so I'm waiting. So is Jason Conger. Monica weby, can they be at 45 and if they're

at 40, it's like, yeah, you know you're not, you're just not moving out. And Dennis Richardson, same thing. Can he be more than 40%

we've got a really nice

pegged floor, and we'll just see what happens.

Victor Atiyeh 1:38:54
It's interesting.

It's interesting field of life, yeah, yeah,

but you do some things.

I remember standing on a corner of sixth and Alder with my good friend, dear friend, closest friend, and he's passed away. And my first race, we don't know, being some books and and so we just posed almost an academic question to each other, should I be glad and tell them all the things they want to hear and then do my good things when I get there. And of course, we answered, and people said to me, are you a lawyer? No, all you need is a set of principles of common sense. 1958, and then I look back, and that's the way I let. Night,

political life, yeah, just

that way, just Yeah. And

to me this, this is interesting. Again, I want to thank you. Feel so confident I've been involved with how much negative with

two books with Barbara's and Bob Strom

obviously involved, meaning I didn't help write it, but I'm involved with mechanics and what they're trying to do. And Bob was a good one, but I still think there was a restraint that shouldn't have happened. I don't think really bombed

good book, but it's not a book. It'll stay in the

region. And Barbara,

she really played up the part, and she deservedly does, but the part she's played in terms of women, and

that was good, but

I'm looking at you Jim and that this is more than just a pick A tear book. It's a pick a tear during the

James Moore 1:41:25
session. Yeah, that's the context is everything,

Victor Atiyeh 1:41:27
yeah, so,

James Moore 1:41:31
and you don't even have to ask questions like he was a man of his time, because clearly the people thought he was a man of his time. But yeah, context is everything.

Victor Atiyeh 1:41:42
There's one true story and one that's not true. You probably you must have heard I played in this

celebrity golf tournament. You heard my story about that?

Who did you get?

James Moore 1:42:00

I'm a celebrity

Victor Atiyeh 1:42:03

that was real

and bulked it up a little.

Came home and said to my wife, some men in the street said I was legendary, and that's nice.

You do keep your stay, yeah,

I have some things if you would.

James Moore 1:42:26

Okay, great. I.