

Wally Carson Interview on Governor Vic Atiyeh

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Interviewer: James Moore, Pacific University Professor

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Wally Carson 0:00

When you put it in context, the second time I ran, I ran for the House, and then I was posed as elected. It's not very democratic, but sure nice to run. No opponent. And we elected 38 House members... party, and so we had a stomping majority, right? And so that was one context I had. And then not many years -- that was in '69, and my '75 and all my '77... I changed location and changed... our party changed from majority... Thank you dear. We don't get at this very often. Excuse me.

Unknown 0:47

Could I get you some coffee or tea?

James Moore 0:49

No, I'm fine, for sure. Yeah, I just stopped and wet my whistle. So my whistle is wet. You got a poster size there, you know, life size.

Wally Carson 1:09

Yeah, the genesis of this was...

Unknown 1:12

That's good of all of you.

Wally Carson 1:14

...when I was in the Senate phone booth, because I was speaking to a group. I said there are some advantages of only having six that... small bell donated a [unintelligible] for us. And it was pretty nifty, because when we shut the door, the light went on and the fans started. So the editor, publisher of Klamath, said "I'm going to send my photographer up, and we'll take a picture of it."

James Moore 1:50

That's great. The funny thing is, those phone booths are still there with no phones in them. Yes, yes. And it's not clear if you're supposed to go in there with your cell phone and it's really quiet or what, but they're still there.

Wally Carson 2:02

Yeah? Well, that little phone booths had their own culture, because you could get away from the floor, and they did have doors on them, in addition to the two phone booths in that area, and that's where a lot of people just hung out, and particularly in the Senate, not so much in the House. They don't have even the phone booths. They have halls outside the entrances to the front after that Senate to the House. Do they still have phones?

James Moore 2:37

I don't think they have phones in them either.

Wally Carson 2:39

Yeah, it's a different society, and I'm resisting it as much as I can.

James Moore 2:45

Oh, yeah, no, my wife and I don't have cell phones.

Wally Carson 2:47

I don't either.

James Moore 2:49

With all the stuff I do, radio stations get kind of ticked off. It's like, no, you know, you can leave me a message and I'll get back to you. It'll all work. Oh, good. So the main thing that we're doing here is Vic asked me to write his biography.

Wally Carson 3:09

Yeah, and I thank you for accepting that.

James Moore 3:11

Oh, you're welcome, and it was a joy. He and I talked about what that would be, and his view and my view were the same, which is why I said yes, and he offered, [Carson: Good.] which is basically, there's Vic Atiyeh, but it's Vic Atiyeh in the context of the history and what was going on. So it's a biography, but it's really a good hard look at what was going on, especially the '70s and the '80s in Oregon, and because he was trotting the globe, in the globe.

Wally Carson 3:39

Well, and also in the '60s, he, in my view, and I didn't know, I knew who he was, but he was part of the Young Turks, and that's where I got there. But I was somewhat active in local politics. Of course, he didn't run in Washington County or West Multnomah County folks, I guess. And no, in those days, you ran sub districts in by county. Washington County...

James Moore 4:08

Yeah, Washington County is a whole thing.

Wally Carson 4:10

Yeah. And so I knew who he was, and I had met him, but I didn't start running myself or get involved in politics until '64, '65... but I'd heard of him, and what I saw of him I liked, but he is a message, I hope, and you'll have to check this, but I firmly believe that it was, he was an unsung hero in early days on movements that became identified with more progressive movements. In fact, there's a photograph on the wall in front of the entrance to the house where he's I think that's. The one where it is standing in there doing a non-discrimination housing bill, that he pushed through... might have been the Young Turks, but I think it may have been as a Senator, and also clean water, were arm in arm, and that's even before I got here. So he has that, of course, you'll find out if you didn't know, I'm very biased on his behalf and [unintelligible] of that matter.

So he did a lot of things that were more typical of the legislative body then than it is now. Right? We weren't expected to be tea potters or progressives or whatever. And I learned early on when they'd say, "Well, are you conservative or liberal?" And I would say, "Ask me a question. I'll answer it, then make your own judgment." I've been trapped too many times saying I was conservative that I had some of my friends who were really [conservative] and I wasn't, you know, I was a RINO, as Lars Larson used to say. So he was just a very able legislator from the beginning, and I can't remember all the people that were in his class of Young Turks, but they were significant legislators in their own right. So I hope some of that gets into your biography.

James Moore 6:25

It will, and the part of the reason is, it's an interesting story, but part of the reason is, by the time he becomes governor, one of his claims, which so far, it's absolutely true, as I'm investigating it, is he knew more about taxes than anybody. [Carson interjects: Oh yeah.] And so as I'm tracing that back just today in our Archives, I was... first time really picking up the boxes and stuff, which is always fun. But there he is in 1960, first term, doing stuff where he's taking the numbers home. He's worked it himself, he's done the homework. And he said, "You know, when you come out and look at this, the political claims on both sides really don't seem to hold water. This is what's going on. So I'm finding that kind of, you know, from the get go, that kind of involvement and depth.

Wally Carson 7:13

Well, he was always that way, and he was, I would say, rigidly -- and I admire that -- honest. And so when [unintelligible] was right, it was right more than right. It was Mike Martin is wrong as more right than most. But he told you something, he believed it, and it was probably true.

James Moore 7:33

Yeah, person I interviewed yesterday is Mike Donahue, who's at Channel Six... anchor, and he went to Syria with Vic when they went on that trip when he was governor, but Mike was talking about meeting him, and the first time you met him was as a intern reporter in 1968 and Vic just scared the bejeebers out of him.

Wally Carson 7:55

I can't believe that.

James Moore 7:55

Well, it's because Vic was being an official state legislator, and the reporter was asking questions, and Vic was, you know, stern. [Carson interjects: Vic, yeah.] But then as Mike got to know him, it's like, God, he's such a pussy cat, you know, much later on. But when... he said, "You know, as I was thinking about Vic, he's, he's the Boy Scout Law," and he called up the Boy Scout Law, and he went through it. And, you know, boom, boom, boom, boom, all the way.

Wally Carson 8:27

Story behind that, two of the people that are most intellectual to me in my life was [Star Lawson?] who was the deputy agent in general for many years and passed away a month ago. And I served in the Air Guard, and he was our Air Guard leader, and Vic Atiyeh, both were silver beavers, and boy scouts. And boy scouts meant a lot to both of them. Yeah, and it showed 60, 70 years later. Marvelous people. So I always thought that was appropriate that those two people learned the Boy Scout Law and lived it.

James Moore 9:07

Yeah, absolutely lived it. So let's get into some of these questions. Talk to me about how you can be effective as a member of a six or seven person caucus in the Senate.

Wally Carson 9:30

Well, it would be, from my vantage point, very busy, because Jason Boe who was president of the Senate for most of my time in the Senate, well, when the Democrats controlled... learned early on, keep the renegades busy, and if they have a lot of time, they'll get you in trouble. And Jason was a very able administrator. I was not wild about his politics, but for the most part, but he was very able. So, I think I had five or six committees. I had one hour a week anytime that I didn't have a committee meeting, or Senate, or session. So that was a lesson I learned. I never had a chance... I was Majority Leader in the House and floor leader and the Minority Floor Leader in the Senate, and I never got an opportunity to exercise that little gem because, but that's... that was one thing. You have to transport yourself back into those days. And it's not, I don't think it's the same, sir, but I was lobbyist for the judicial department for a number of years, and back in those days, doing your homework was part of your credentials, and you could figure you get challenged by even your own party, by others in caucus or on the floor or interviews about how did you reach this conclusion, and what are your facts to support your decision, and he was very good at that, as you already indicated. You know it, and that is, he did his homework, and most of us learned early on that, and I regret this, but politics is by polls now, I fear. In those days, the polls weren't so sophisticated, thank heavens, and they just didn't play the big role that whether you're watching NBC or CBS or Fox or CNN, they'll always run up the polls because data is too easy to come by now, and to get a poll or a percentage, you just hit a button, and none of this working it out. So they try to make points that somebody's popularity has gone from 38 and a half to 40 and a half, and that means this, right? No, it doesn't. Could mean a lot of things, but not necessarily that. So in the older days, it was a little easier, because you didn't... what's my vote today, was not as important, and you were expected to have read the bill. Now Pelosi is "Well, I hope we pass this so we'll have time to read it." That's not to say all of us every time read the bills, but for the most part, I think most of us, DNR concluded that we're going to be held accountable to knowing what was in the bill we just voted for. So most of us took it pretty seriously and tried very hard to do that, and that made it better. And so I think that was a little easier to be a legislator in those days as now you do your homework. There were some who had instant credibility in some areas, and if they... Staff Hansell, for instance, when Staff was in the house, he's a pig farmer, and they used to talk about that and joke about that, don't ever get on the wrong side of the budget with Staff Hansell, you clean your clock. And everybody knew that, that he knew the budget forward and backward and upside down, and you couldn't play well, we didn't just take it out of the highway. No, I can't, can't go the highway. [Unintelligible] the whole thing. And Vic was the same way. They were so good, and in certain areas, they were nearly perfect in knowing what's going on. So the level of discussion was not as snipey and as political as it is now. I just can't watch the stuff now much, but it and Vic was always prepared. And Lynn Newberry was another one of my greats. His father was Secretary of State, and Lynn grew up... and was it Talent? Phoenix? Medford.

James Moore 14:00

Yep. He's from my neck of the woods. I grew up in Southern Oregon.

Wally Carson 14:06

He was just perfect. And then another guy that knew a lot about politics and government was Debbs Potts. And so that was just kind of the way most of us operated, and he never wanted to get caught pretending something happened that didn't. And so he had great credibility, did his homework, went to committee meetings, unlike Congress and a variety of other states, as a matter of fact, the tradition was do your work work, and most of us did. I remember, I was the editor of the [Bush Booster?], which is... they moved it now, but the school was not far from the Capitol when I was a sixth grader, and I learned a lesson there, I got to be editor because I could run the mimeograph machine. [Moore interjects: There you go.] There's a lot of politics in that. Finding, and I wrote an editorial about how nobody's paying any attention on the floor during the debates. How could they learn? Well, I'm worried that somebody will find that, because that is a credit to my misunderstanding how the Oregon legislature operated because it's to debate the issues, not to tell everybody what the bill's about. Yeah, because the presumption was they all read the bill, yeah. And in my view, that was generally true. And so it was very dull, because we didn't have the bill debated. Another thing, although we can the tradition, has been, although we can amend on the floor like Congress, we never did. Well, it's maybe extension, an [unintelligible] or something like that. They'd always go back to

committee. So you didn't have to wash your backside for these little sneaky amendments that came in. Also, the Constitution requires the relevance of an amendment to the body. And of course, Congress, you wind up with all kinds of stuff. So we had things going our way that weren't our fault. The original Constitution and the tradition and legislature have kept it pretty straightforward and that fit the style and intelligence and integrity of Vic and Lynn and Democrats, Jason and others. So that made it a lot easier than it is now.

How strong were the party ties of Vic talked a fair amount. It wasn't a central thing, but he noted that you and he voted differently on bills fairly frequently.

Wally Carson 16:40
[Carson laughs.] I don't remember that.

James Moore 16:43
Well, he used the words, it happened several times, and then he talks about it again, and it comes back. So was it because of the homework thing? Party discipline wasn't as strong?

Wally Carson 16:54
We didn't have party discipline.

James Moore 16:56
Okay. When you have that small caucus, you just...

Wally Carson 16:59
Well, we didn't have it when we were 38. I used to joke about how I can let my caucus vote their conscience.

James Moore 17:06
There you go.

Wally Carson 17:07
And I had to explain that when I'd go out to [Waldo?] Middle School, and saying that it's not as pessimistic as you might think it, there are very few -- and there were then, I don't think now -- very few quote, caucus votes. And number one, we don't have [unintelligible] didn't have, then at least, a party position on most things. So we never had, or seldom had, the confrontation of the party lined up in the gallery, or the Republican flags saying, vote this way. It didn't work that way. And I remember one time Hank Hart, who was my tenure from down your way, from Medford, went up to... they were working on the computer stuff that we later adopted for Ogin. Well, not there, if we did better, I think. But I was just amazed...

Unknown 18:01
We went to Washington.

Wally Carson 18:02
Yeah, went up to, I'm sorry, went to Olympia, and the position in the sales tax between the parties was diametrically opposed. And I never thought that the Columbia water had that much political influence, because the Republicans on this side were steadfastly in support of the sales tax and more income tax was an anathema. You go across the bridge, the water flows underneath, and over there, they were steadfastly Republicans, were opposed to the sales tax. And whether I got that right or not. Anyway, I learned that

politics is situational, geographical, or as... what's his name, Tip O'Neill said, is local. And so that was one thing that we didn't have a lot of party confrontations. One of the delights we had was, both parties had their biannual party convention, and they're elected, as, you know, I think, then and still now, because county precinct committee people and others, and they go to the statewide convention and they elect their presiding officers or not, as sometimes they didn't -- home party -- and then they have a platform. We could hardly wait for the Democrats when they would go and come back with their platform. And their platform would be, you know, no ownership of property in Oregon. I mean, they were because the people that showed up sometimes on the Democrat caucus, as well as ours, I suppose, were not truly representative of the party out in the field. So my memory, and I may be fogged with age, was the Democrats spent most time running away from their platform. So there just wasn't the party to begin with, to tell you how to vote. And then two, there wasn't discipline, so that was not a party problem. There were some that were purely political votes and Rs vote and Ds voted, whatever. But not one, I know that -- he never mentioned it, but after he had appointed me at the Supreme Court, sometimes after, Bud Lent was still the... But Lent and I used to fight on the floor all the time, but when we got to the court, we both served on the Supreme Court, as he is Chief Justice and I was brand new. We got on very well, on most things. And it was very interesting. There was a year too young, but one of the big fights Vic had, and lost, because during the dark time of money disappearing, not disappearing, being scarce. They decided, I think it was the workers comp fund... which had a really sizable surplus. So they took that surplus, plugged it into the general fund, and balanced the budget.

James Moore 21:15

"The Raid," as they called it. That's what they called it, yes.

Wally Carson 21:19

So it came over, eventually came to us, and we ruled. I don't know whether it was unanimously, but it was heavily in favor of... against Vic, and I'm still wet behind the ears. My ink on my appointment was kind of damp still, and I voted against him. Never said a word about it, and of course, I didn't bring it up. Yeah, no, we did vote different ways. Part of it is just our backgrounds. Lawyers weren't particularly liked, although most people thought lawyers ran the legislature. That was not true. He was very deferential, but it was, and I don't know whether that played in it, but no, we had a good personal relationship. We occasionally felt friends close enough to vote the opposite way, right? I don't know that he ever killed anything that I cared about or I killed anything other than the raid on...

James Moore 22:18

Yeah, but that's a worker's comp, your different bodies at that point, so.

Wally Carson 22:21

Oh, yeah, absolutely, yes, yes, yes.

James Moore 22:23

Different constitutional duties and all that.

Wally Carson 22:26

I felt bad because it was contrary to what Vic wanted, right? That's what I got paid for, not caring about that, I cared about what the Constitution was.

James Moore 22:35

Exactly. Yeah, that's great.

So you're in there. In '66 you're elected to the House, then you go to the Senate in '70. Talk to me about Tom McCall, and then Bob Straub, especially Tom McCall as governor. And the reason I'm asking this is, when Vic decides to run for governor in '74, at some point -- and he's never clear, and in his own mind, I think these things just come to him -- he looked up there and said, "You know, I can do that job." And that's when he decided I should really look at this and throw my hat in the ring and eventually become the nominee in '74. So talk to me about Tom McCall as a governor from your stand, your vantage point in the legislature, looking at this, you know, we may be putting a statue of them in Washington, DC. I mean, so.

Wally Carson 23:35

Well, let me backup and give some context, and if I take too much of your time...

James Moore 23:39

Oh no, no problem. I got batteries. [Both laugh.]

Wally Carson 23:43

You do? You're smart. Somebody tipped you off. There's some things that are in our context that change some dynamics. The governor's office is four years, that's not true across the country, pretty [unintelligible] too, and we have it limited to two terms. So it's one of those things. When you run for office, it's not only the electorate can decide that you're going to retire, but the Constitution says you're going to retire, and I can assert that the Constitution says for judges, you can't serve past December 31 of the year, you each 75. There's nothing about your ability or whether you want to go [unintelligible]. And so that's one of those factors one considers is, what, how am I going to be there? What am I going to do? What's the rest of my life look like? And so I don't know that that played anything in Vic's experience, but I think Vic had a full understanding himself of how government works, and perhaps even more, how he thinks it should work. And I think he liked Tom McCall. I like Tom McCall very much. I remember when he ran against Edith Green, and so I remember got his clock cleaned. And of course, he had that Massachusetts-Prineville twine. I spent my life trying to figure out, where's that come on?

James Moore 25:19

Just as a sideline. I grew up with people in Medford who had very strange accents, and lo and behold, they were great nephews and nieces of Tom McCall. [Carson: Is that right?] When the book came out, I was talking with a family friend. She said, Oh yeah, that's my uncle. That's my cousin. It's like, no wonder!

Wally Carson 25:34

No wonder! You were brought up on that.

James Moore 25:36

So I had my copy of the McCall book' it's always, you know, there's cousin this and that.

Wally Carson 25:43

Oh, that's wonderful. I really liked Tom, and he would get on a track, and hard to get him off of it. And of course, he had several people, but two people I really liked were Ed Westerdahl and Ron...

James Moore 26:05

Schmidt?

Wally Carson 26:06

Schmidt, yeah, and I got along great with those guys. And I wound up... I got to work with Westerdahl

when Tom first ran for governor -- no first ran for secretary of state. And I volunteered my health, which wouldn't have been much, and it didn't come to pass. But then Tom did a good job, and ran, I think, did a good job, and he was very good at... now we call them narratives, and I remember the one -- and this is from me --- I remember listening to, when I was going into college, I would listen to KEX, because that was my touch. I was down the peninsula, my touch with Portland and Salem. And I found that when I was in the legislature and up here, I listened to KGO, because that was my [unintelligible]. And I was driving home from something or to something, and there's a guy talking on the radio, one of the talk shows, and said, you know, this gas crunch. He said, what you got to do is, if your license plates end in an odd number, you can get gas on a day that ends on a calendar day, it ends in odd, even the contract, and it wasn't more than 24, 36 hours that Tom McCall came out with this really good idea to cut down the lines to pump.

James Moore 27:29

And he knew he'd been up in the middle of the night and couldn't sleep on KGO. [Both laugh.]

Wally Carson 27:29

I'm betting that. And I'd put money on it and I'm not a betting man. But he pulled that off, and his confrontation, constant [commentation?] with Straub on the Greenway, and how it was and how it was used. And he kind of stole the lunch on that, because I really think it was Bob Straub's push. And, of course, I have divided loyalty. I got appointed to the circuit bench by Bob Straub, and I got appointed to the Supreme Court by Vic Atiyeh, probably... but Tom was an opportunist in, I would say, a good sense. In other words, he was kind of in a crouched, leaping position. And had, in the early days, had a significantly facile mind that he could move from subject to subject and move across -- one of the funniest ones, it was about Davis that told the story about how we had Agnew... Spiro was vice president, and Tom was speaking somewhere, and one of Bob dates, it was also in Medford, actually, well, Roseburg is where he worked for the lumber company, but he was from Medford. One of his jobs was to make sure, after Thomas through giving a speech, that he kind of guided him off the stage and didn't let the press [unintelligible] to get in there and talk to him. And so somehow Bob, as he tells the story, didn't get over there in time the press got Tom and asked him about Spiro Agnew, and that's where the knife and the shawl came from. That was just good press for a long time.

And Bob said, "I really muffed that one. I didn't get there." But Tom was like that, but he could spin a story, and I liked working with him. He held a grudge, and most people do to some degree, but we'd have the meetings in his little office, ceremonial office back in the car, and if we didn't perform very well, then he let us know that we were voting the wrong way, or we need to help him more on this sort of stuff. But it was, I was comfortable working with him, of course, when Straub became governor, they didn't ask me much what I thought about right, which way the state ought to go, or any of the other five of us. And so I didn't have that opportunity. But I liked Bob and enjoyed working with him, but Tom really was kind of a nice ride, a little edgy. Didn't know quite where he was going to go with his speech. I was in the guard, and so I don't know if I was introducing Tom or something... was right when we had thwarted one of his tax plans in the Senate, we had not gone that way, and Tom was still one of the... and I just lived in fear that I was going to be the subject matter of his speech. He did make some remarks that...

Unknown 30:51

Too colorful?

Wally Carson 30:52

Yeah, but he was a lot of fun.

James Moore 30:55

So, the impression when I'm talking to people about Vic Atiyeh, if they didn't know him, is that, I think it's partly because when he ran for governor, especially in '74 but in '78 as well, the Oregonian editorial page

said he was conservative and so and that just kind of floored him, because he was just Vic to him, but they were you know, looking for labels and that kind of stuff. So when you talk about land use in Oregon, a lot of people have the impression that Vic opposed it, and Vic didn't oppose it. And his reasoning is just fantastic. From where his house was, he watched that little road become a four lane highway with strip malls. [Carson interjects: absolutely] And he said darn straight we need land use planning, because this is happening. But when, you know, Tom McCall takes credit for that, they go back to DC together, testify before Congress and all this kind of stuff. And Vic discovered Tom didn't really know what was in the bill. Spent the night before their testimony in the hotel room, saying, "Okay, this is what's in the bill. Here's this, I'm right next to you. If anything comes up, you just say, 'Well...' and I'll come in." But Tom eventually held grudges against Vic that never went away.

Wally Carson 32:16

That doesn't surprise me. He held a lot of grudges, I think. And to this day, I don't know that Vic ever held one.

James Moore 32:25

Yeah, I don't either.

Wally Carson 32:27

I couldn't... maybe back in the Green Bay Packer days, he had some. [Both laugh.]

James Moore 32:34

Yeah, exactly.

Wally Carson 32:37

That's an interesting part. Of course, my [unintelligible] requires me to point out that I had some experience of that with Senate Bill 10... was that the one? The precursor to land use planning?

James Moore 32:53

Oh yeah.

Unknown 32:55

You started that really early.

Wally Carson 32:57

Oh yeah, that was in the house in 1969, and Tom Hartung and I and Bob Davis, and ultimately Courtney Bateson, I think, who was then in the Senate, came out of [unintelligible]. I don't know whether you've heard that name, but [unintelligible] was a great planner for Mid-Willamette Valley Planning Council, and he was the one that pushed on land use planning and did a lot of... he and Willamette Valley planning and others did it, but he was my guiding light when we eventually got the first one. The first one was voluntary. It put the governor in a position to encourage everybody to do it. Well, it's like, as long as you're talking about nice things happening, they're with you. But when you said, Well, how are we going to pay for this, then all of a sudden, the crowd quiets down and then builds back up. And so it passed, but it was a mess to try and move forward. So that's when Senate Bill 1 came out, and that's the one Hartung and I... and Hartung had similar stories from Washington County. He lived out closer to Hillsboro, but yeah, out there, but no, Vic was a strong supporter, as I remember. But that was, that was Tom. He was a quick learner, up to a point, but no, that's my memory, is how many are surprised, how many good things way back Vic had a hand in. Yeah. That he never really got credit for.

James Moore 34:47
Well, he never tooted his horn.

Wally Carson 34:48
No, of course not.

James Moore 34:49
That's when I was talking to the reporter yesterday. He was talking about all these things that he later found out Vic was in the middle of. Had no idea, and how would you? And I know, talking to Denny Miles, you know, Denny would get so frustrated. You know, great. So as governor, you're having weekly press availability, that's good, but when we do stuff, we need to go out and stand on a stop and say, hey, wave a flag, and that's not Vic.

Wally Carson 35:18
No, that's not Vic. And he was a good leader. One of the things I should mention, even when he went against you, or you went against him, it didn't seem to tear the relationship. And when you plan to come back and work the next day with the same guy. That's not bad, yeah, that kind of an attitude, yeah? And he always did. I just, I realized when my opposing... which my story is not very often, but I didn't have to worry about [unintelligible]. There was one elderly lady in the house, if you voted against one of her bad bills, you paid for it with your life. Next, if your name was on the bill, then the next few votes you were gonna get a no vote, yeah, but I never had that feeling with Vic, and that's how we ran the caucus. And of course, I didn't get to work with him in the house, but I did get to work with others in the house, and some were very gentle and some were pretty tough, but Vic was tough minded, but he didn't take it out on your skins.

James Moore 36:33
One of the interesting dynamics I'm going to be looking at, as people have done research on this kind of thing, is Vic was never in the majority. When he was governor, he had a democratic legislator, okay, and so, you know, what does that do? Because people talk about as a compromiser and things like that, he had no choice. Yeah, that was the reality. And then another interesting dynamic that comes up with him is he only had one legislative race that was close at all. So he never had the experience of having to go back and really fight for a seat and do that kind of thing. And so what does that do for your certainty of yourself, for the way that you hold yourself as a legislator, those kinds of things? And people have done some really interesting research across the country looking at the dynamics of those kinds of things.

Doesn't it depend on the personality of the [unintelligible]?

Yeah, personality is an important thing. You know, when we look at it today, you'd think, if people don't have that kind of competition in Texas, they then create a little fiefdom. You know, they didn't want a fiefdom.

Wally Carson 37:25
That was fiefdom in Texas.

James Moore 37:42
Exactly, but, it is just different cultures, as well as certain personalities. But it's just fascinating to look at things that he felt so strongly about and who he was, but it's like, you know, well, you were never challenged in a real way with that. It's not until he runs for the statewide offices that he has tough fights, and then he has doozies. Oh, yeah, but it's not really until then.

Wally Carson 38:05

Well, I think one of the things I thought was most interesting, is after he lost to Straub, I'll say in the first election, he, my opinion is that he survived that loss better, at least within my group, which were Republican but also Democrat, came away head held high, not only himself, his competence, but among the public. He got a standing ovation, as I recall it over at the Dorchester conference, after losing, yeah and. And from that time on, people said you're going to run in four years. And almost everybody... very little opposition to him running, and he's a loser. But no, not really. He was late to race, but he's no loser. And so his momentum just increased. And then he became governor.

James Moore 38:05

Gonna be my next question, because he specifically talked about walking into that Dorchester conference with you, and everybody turned and just gave a huge ovation.

Wally Carson 39:22

Well, that wasn't for me. That was...and that really was surprising. I've not seen, I've thought about it quite a bit, is that he ran such a good campaign, did such a good job and respectable that even in defeat, he won. And so in my mind, it was no question that he was going to run again in four years, and I didn't know whether Straub was going to run again. Of course, I've known Straub for quite a while. As I mentioned, I knew him back when he was county commissioner in Lane County, and I remember running, and it ran against Howard Belton, Mr. Integrity, for State Treasurer, and Marty [Brandonfells?],

Unknown 40:09

Martin [Brandonfells?].

Wally Carson 40:10

Yeah, well, the story behind that, and it's my memory, so you better do your own research. But Martin's dad was from St. Helens and invented hair restorer, grow hair. Oh, there you go. Yeah. So poor Marty, who was, was he a [Phi Alpha?] at Oregon?

Unknown 40:30

I think so, he was at Oregon when I was.

Wally Carson 40:32

Was either [unintelligible] or... but he was a deputy DA and blew the whistle, and Straub hadn't been heard of statewide, hadn't been outside of Lane County, and Belton, Mr. Integrity, had run and won. Was on his way, I think, to his re-election, and Marty turned... one of Straub's campaign parties in Eugene and under Oregon law, I think it's still true, you can't sell drinks without an LLC permit. Well, they turned him in. So it was a big flare up, that the campaign of, well actually, that Lane County Commissioner Bob Straub broke the law selling booze at one of his campaigns without an LLC license. Well, that just boomeranged. Because, you know how Oregonians are? They thought, oh, come on. You know, what are you doing? And so Bob's just started building and building and building. Of course, Pat was an extraordinary sidekick, in my view, Ben and his wife, and so...

Unknown 41:47

He was a nice man.

Wally Carson 41:48

He was a nice man.

Unknown 41:49

Kind of bumbled a little bit.

Wally Carson 41:52

Well, the ability to make small talk is greatly underrated. And I remember one day we'd been talking about... Bob is very uneasy in a crowd. And the crowd could be six year olds. Didn't have to be intellectuals or faculty or anything like that. And somebody got a... they had certificates awarded for... some kind of art. So 20 children in the ceremonial office standing and holding their pictures, and the governor went methodically, because he was fairly methodical, around the room, saying, congratulations, congratulations. He went to one girl, and for some reason, he said "Did you draw that?" And of course, that's what the whole program was, to award the people. She said, "Well, of course!" But that was Bob. He didn't mean anything nasty about it or anything else. He just wasn't in the day.

Unknown 42:54

He could never remember anybody's name. [Carson: No.] And he had a special person to follow him around and say, "What's her name? I can't remember what her name was."

Wally Carson 43:06

I thought the worst thing ever happened to me was when they came in, and when I was standing on the diocese in the Senate, this was, I think I was in a car, and he was up there, and he was by the microphone, and we're going to do the Pledge of Allegiance. And he talked like he knew it, but he was kind of like the guy at the South African sign language. He just rattled on all kinds of words. I thought, "How am I going to get out of here?" [Both laugh.]

James Moore 43:40

One thing that we inherited into the Pacific archive with all of Vic's stuff, is we have a bunch of campaign buttons, tons of them, and we also have stick-ons. And the stick-ons were a specific request from Dolores, because she'd go to some campaign event, put it on the person. And by the time she got around, if she saw the sticker, she'd already talked to you. So she'd sticker the whole place.

Wally Carson 44:08

How's she doing?

James Moore 44:10

Not well, she's basically... she doesn't have much mind left at all. And then she fell. She and Vic fell at the same time, basically, and just within maybe two months ago, now, they finally got her into a place that they're happy with, rehab place, but, you know, money issues and all that stuff.

Unknown 44:32

We got a Christmas card from her that was signed, but I was wondering if she did it.

James Moore 44:37

Probably not. Yeah, probably not.

Wally Carson 44:40

That's another thing about Vic, I just was constantly amazed at how persistent he was of going to funerals, and one I remember particularly, and he drove himself all the way over to Bend for... was it Jim Westwood?

Unknown 45:01

It was Westball, wasn't it? [Carson: No.] Okay. Anyway, it was...

Wally Carson 45:04

I think it's Jim Westwood, was a Bend lawyer and in the guard. And he and -- I don't know why they became friends, but they were -- the governor drove all the way over by himself from Portland for the funeral there, and then Gary Lockwood and I drove up to Ken Jernstedt's funeral, and Vic drove all the way up.

James Moore 45:27

Vic and Byrne, yeah. A

Unknown 45:29

It's amazing.

Wally Carson 45:30

Just loyal. Loyal.

James Moore 45:34

Just last year, I was hearing from people who were at one of the old timer things. And the talk of the whole thing was that Vic had driven wherever it was by himself.

Unknown 45:46

He even drove himself to the hospital when he...

James Moore 45:48

Oh yeah, for the first time, yeah.

Wally Carson 45:51

Great guy.

James Moore 45:55

So, you get appointed to the Supreme Court. And we talked a little bit about one of your early, early votes in that was on the SAIF raid. But talk about the relationship between the court and the governor while Vic's in there, especially bringing... you know Vic, talking to some other people around Vic, their impression was that when you became a judge, you kind of separated out because you had a role to play. And so talk about that, the way that worked for you.

Wally Carson 46:35

Well, actually, when I went over there in '82, I'd come from Marion County circuit court, and we had quite a bit of government cases in Marion County, and so you learned just not to talk about things that are pending or likely to be pending before your court. And so we never talked much about those. He didn't bring it up. I didn't bring it up. I didn't think it was. One of the things that occurred to me was maybe to ask him his

insight. But, no, wait a minute, that's the coziness that the public gets, even though it's innocent or well meaning, that kind of backstage discussion ain't Oregon. And so he didn't do it and I didn't do it. Where we did work is on appointments. And I say work, if I had somebody that, somebody said, be a good person. And I remember, I had quite a lengthy discussion with the governor, when Barbara, or when Betty Roberts had announced that she was going to file and she was going to win, and then the question came whether the governor [unintelligible] with somebody else. And we had quite a conversation about that, about the good and the bad. And I was of the opinion that Betty would probably win, first woman, a very able campaigner, I thought. And I said, you know, it's your choice, but I think this might be a chance to turn it into a favorable opportunity by appointing the first woman in the history of the state of Oregon to the Supreme Court. I overstated that because he did and it didn't, but that's what my take on it. And so we did confer from time to time, and that was not uncommon. I think all the governors, and I have except one example, would consult the court, and I see nothing wrong with that. What is it you need? What are you looking for? And this sort of stuff, I don't know if they still do it. I do know that Peterson was chief, and he had kind of asked Gillette to go over and talk to Neil Goldschmidt, and we didn't have anyone on no plate, nothing to talk about, but say if you have any questions about what our needs are, or budget or or our administrative view on what's going on, let us know we'll be glad to respond. And I'd forgotten quick words, but under no circumstance would he ever ask us what we thought we wanted, Mrs. Goldschmidt.

James Moore 49:30

I hear that from more people about Goldschmidt. [Both laugh.]

Wally Carson 49:32

Yeah. I mean, and Mick and Goldman had played basketball against each other in high school. They went back, not close by us, but it just dumbfounded us, because we had had the opportunity to work with, well, most of people there, and they were interested and say, well, we need somebody who's got trial experience, and that's good or bad, but whatever it may be, but I remember vividly when Gillette came back almost drawn. Not only didn't want us to tell him who we thought would be a good judge, he didn't want to hear from us on anything. Emily said, "Okay, there you go."

James Moore 50:18

About two years into Goldschmidt's governorship, someone who worked in his office came up because, you know, Vic had set things up, and he thought he, you know, made it easy. He went on the first trade trip with them, and Goldschmidt just started chopping people. You know, as soon as he got in there, started chopping people, changing things and making it harder to work. You know, it was the governor and this wall, and how do you get to the wall? But about two years later, someone who was in Goldschmidt's office saw Vic and said, "You made this look a lot easier than it really is." [Both laugh.]

Wally Carson 50:57

Good line!

James Moore 50:58

That's perfect. If I can figure out how to do that, that'd be a good title of the book.

Wally Carson 51:06

Well, that's so true. And the interesting part, Goldschmidt was a -- and I have a lot of, up to a point, similarities, I see, similarity between Goldschmidt and Obama. Not sure they really wanted to have them in office, but they love campaigning, and they are very good at it, and community organizing, we now know it. But it was apparent that Neil did not like being, from my vantage point, did not like -- he liked being governor. I don't know those things. Certainly with the salary, but when he came before committees, he would struggle, because he didn't know the details. And that's understandable, Governor's got a lot going on, but, man, so that was a revelation to us, but Vic was always there if we... about the only thing I ever

talked about was personnel needs, and I think it was mostly with Peterson, because I didn't have much to say about who was running for office. None of us did.

James Moore 52:19

So Vic leaves office, talk about Vic as a post-gubernatorial kind of guy. What did you see?

Wally Carson 52:31

Well, one of them, I mentioned his presence when it first of all, none of us [were?] worth any votes. So you can't say, well, he's not trying to pick up some votes. And he fulfilled the senior retired state official role very well. And I thought, and we'd seen from time to time, and I always enjoyed it.

Unknown 53:00

I heard you.

James Moore 53:00

You were very persistent.

Wally Carson 53:06

Vic would never be that really, but he was present, and was always there to consult if he had a question about and I didn't have many nose is busy and another still looking for permanent work in another field, and kind of maybe the example, but he was still governor, but [Warning: loud dog bark] he transitioned to the head of the Oregon National Guard, seamlessly. And I don't believe he had any military experience, I'm not sure of that, and he was revered by the people with whom he worked. One of my favorite pictures was at a passing review up at the Field International Airport guard side, and I think I was the agent in general for that one or something. But anyway, we were, I escorted him somewhere, and we were talking and both smiling. It's a very good picture of me, which I appreciate, and a typically good picture of Vic. And he was just comfortable with people. And anyway, had a way of letting you know it, and you never... most everyone else in politics have little things that keep you from forgetting that they're not really people. They are golden people. And Vic didn't have any of that. He's just a super neat guy. So, our lives did not cross very often, and I was always pleased to see him. Trying to think of another circumstance... guard occasions, but he stayed pretty active. Not in politics, as I recall. Of course, I was not in politics anymore, so.

James Moore 55:02

Yeah, and I'm going to be talking to people, you know, all the Republicans would go circle through his office, whether they get a running for this out of the other and some of them he, you know, pat on the head and say, good luck. And some he worked really hard with. And so one of the last I know that he worked really hard with was Chris Dudley. And so I talked to Chris Dudley at the memorial service, and I'm going to be talking to him for the book. You know, what was it? You know, what? What is that like? You know. And How seriously do you take somebody who hasn't been in office for 30 years? You know, what's the current thing going on? But in my talking to him, and one reason he chose me for the for writing, you know, he was following stuff a lot. And behind the scenes, people were telling him things, and so he was, you know, in the middle of it himself all the way up until the end.

Wally Carson 55:55

Yep, well, I just assumed that two of my favorite role models were people that lived into their 90s and were up until the near end. They were viable people who cared about the community and worked to make it better.

James Moore 56:15

So, anything else you want to tell me about Vic?

Wally Carson 56:21
Can you think of anything?

Unknown 56:25
I don't know. He was just such a sweet person. You know, we'd see him anywhere. We had our young son, Steven, met him several times, and one time you all went out to the... what was it? The Steam Up?

Wally Carson 56:44
Oh, yeah, then it broke.

Unknown 56:45
But we'd see him anywhere, and he'd say, "Hi, Steven!" Of course, Steven was just about that big. But he, you know, he remembered little kids.

Wally Carson 56:56
And he had a good staff.

Unknown 57:00
He had a great staff. Where's Denny Miles now?

James Moore 57:07
Just down... you know where Gerry Thompson lives? Down on the golf course out the town...

Unknown 57:09
In [unintelligible].

James Moore 57:09
Yeah.

Unknown 57:09
Is he out there?

James Moore 57:13
Yeah, he moved there last summer. They live... they can throw frisbee from each other's house.

Wally Carson 57:19
I was gonna say, because he married the...

James Moore 57:22
Statesman Journal lady.

Wally Carson 57:23

Yeah, I think maybe the last time I saw Vic was at McMillan's memorial service a year or so ago when John McMillan... and Gerry is a wonderful person. She's really fun.

James Moore 57:38

She's great. And she's telling me stuff that she's never told anybody, so.

Wally Carson 57:44

That could be dangerous.

James Moore 57:46

Well, it can be dangerous, but it's also, you know, kind of is the first woman, but also someone who really had her ear to what was going on. [Carson: Oh yeah.] People would say stuff and not even realize she was kind of there. And she remembers stuff.

Wally Carson 58:01

She's frightfully loyal. And I appreciate that.

Unknown 58:05

We used to have so much fun. I was Wally's secretary, and we were all in the same office together.

Wally Carson 58:05

Oh, the bullpen.

Unknown 58:11

Yeah, the bullpen, with Gary Bauer.

Wally Carson 58:13

Yeah, well, there were only six of us. Didn't need much space. [Both Carson and Moore laugh.]

James Moore 58:24

Yes, exactly.

Unknown 58:29

And Glenna.

Wally Carson 58:29

Glenna Hayden and Gary Bauer.

Unknown 58:35

Too bad Glenna is gone, because she knew an awful lot about everything going on.

James Moore 58:40

Yeah, one of my contacts is the person who replaced her -- can't remember the name. I've got tons.

Wally Carson 58:48
A bazillion, oh yeah.

Unknown 58:49
I bet you do.

James Moore 58:50
Basically Denny and Gerry have emptied out their rolodexes.

Wally Carson 58:54
Couldn't find two better people. And they know how the world turns, too.

James Moore 58:59
Absolutely. Well, great. Well, thank you very much!

Wally Carson 59:03
Well, I'm sorry just to prattle on, but, [Moore interjects: No, that was good!] if I think of anything else...

James Moore 59:07
Yeah, you let me know.

Wally Carson 59:08
I'll give you a call. What is your phone number?

James Moore 59:11
I'll give you my card.

Wally Carson 59:12
Okay.