

Jon Yunker Interview on Governor Vic Atiyeh

Recorded on June 22, 2015 in Oregon

Interviewer: James Moore, Pacific University Professor

Note on the text: This transcript was made through AI in 2025 with some manual corrections. We recommend checking this text against the audio recording before quoting the speakers, as it may contain errors.

Jon Yunker 0:00

And this is one of the interesting part, people don't believe that governors actually respond. [Moore: Right.] You know, there's this staff that does all this. [Moore: Right.] I was there. He read everything. [Moore: That's great.] And he would change some of it and take it back and say "No, because it needs to say this." He's that kind of guy.

James Moore 0:22

I have the ability to scan that. So, before I leave, let me make sure I have scans of whatever you want. [Yunker: Yeah.] That's fantastic.

Jon Yunker 0:32

Yeah, see, well, there isn't too many of them.

James Moore 0:34

Yeah, though that's wonderful.

Jon Yunker 0:36

See, but it's all the issues you're talking about. So I'll just talk about the issue for a minute and go from there. So I was one of the top four or so, human resources. That's what they called it back then, they changed it twice since then. But anyway, that's what I was. I just got there for two years. Before that, I'd been in budget. Then I got over there and kind of got this great job. And the next thing I know, it was 1980, and the boss who was running our department... Anyway, he couldn't find anybody else to run the programs back in the budget. Everyone else said, "No, we're going to stay where we were. We don't want to do this." And he said, well, he was this kind of guy. He just said, "Well, the three I really wanted, not one of them took the job, but I think I can protect you for a while." Well, within two years, he was gone and I was running the house, the executive department. So that's how that happened, because I got along well with the governor and everybody I worked with. So that worked out just fine. So with that in mind, this is one of those... there's so many pieces, it's hard to say, "Well, which came first?" Now this worked, but you did mention already that we had created... a specialist came in. We had three people that put together the finance report on what our revenues were and whether we needed to just adjust more money in or reduce more money. And thank God, we had it every quarter. So every three months, we were going back to the legislature and the governor reporting that... of course, he saw it first, but seeing how this was working, and we didn't turn it around till about 1983. And, of course, the poor, I mean, this is one of those sad things where he worked his tail off, and then once the money started flowing in, they got a new governor. [Yunker laughs.]

James Moore 3:13

Yeah, exactly. I was talking to somebody. I can't remember who it was, but they were saying, "You know, he left Neil, you know, a real clear deck." And, you know, money in the coffers, everything.

Jon Yunker 3:31

Everything was, yeah, just perfect now. And, of course, the guy that ended up getting it, because the whole idea was he was supposed to be a Republican, the next one. Well, it didn't turn out that way. Last I heard of him, he was the head of Eugene's program, which is fine, and I really, really liked him. So I'm still a Republican, but I'm a liberal Republican, so I have to hide in his house because there aren't any more of those people. You're either a real Republican or you're one of these guys. So anyway, that was all good. So then the next, I'm just going to go through them, then on pieces here, and I'll hand them over to you at any time here, but let's see. So when you go through this, you'll find out what the issues were, and you know them. First of all, on my list, it says, well, the first one is, jobs and pay for people that wanted to be in government. Work in government. Well, it obviously was going the opposite. We had to cut something. So we made a list of what was going to get cut, and that was one of them, was we can't go along giving people pay raises. And in fact, the big guys -- and we all look at each other around the table -- are going to take a cut in pay. So we can tell the rest of Oregon that we're not feeding ourselves. We're trying to make this work for everybody. And he did a nice job of responding to them on that so that problem kind of disappeared. That wasn't big. Then one of them here, and I don't know where it is here, but I'll get it in a minute. If you remember, the biggest issue was the taxes on property that California had frozen those things, so no one was going to have to have increased taxes. We had to give increased taxes. And it doesn't say that in here, that the truth is, the Republicans and the Democrats got together in their own quiet room and said, we understand, we do understand, and we'll give you just enough votes to make this work. So it's okay, but we have to -- but he said, well, the governor knows it. I promise, if we do this, in two years, we're going to give it back. And no one, I don't know how many countries have had a tax increase and then given it back. He did, our governor did. So that was so good. And that's, I think, that was the final note that everyone said, "The man is as honest as I've ever seen out of anybody, ever." So that worked good, but he took the heat for it. The Democrats just quietly said, "We'll give you the number of votes. What is it?" And they, they went around and found out who's leaving in the next two years and can afford to say "Yes, I voted yes on this."

James Moore 6:53

That and the safe districts and have together in their yard.

Jon Yunker 6:57

Yeah. And we still have a mess in that issue, so that's going around. And he wanted that to get fixed so bad, and he fixed it as good as he could, but...

James Moore 7:09

Well, it was fascinating, when we hit 2002 and Kitzhaber has to call the special sessions. You know, people said, "Well, what about the income tax surcharge?" And it was a no go [Yunker: Right.] It just, the politics of change wasn't even on the table. Just fascinating.

Jon Yunker 7:26

Well, yeah, and I'm just guessing here. We're not... I'm not publishing or anything. But that was the point where that governor that I worked for, that's about when I retired, I got out 2000 even, but he had already - - I guess the word would be ticked off -- almost all the Republicans, so they had pretty much decided, whatever he wanted to do, they weren't going to support, period.

James Moore 7:55

Yeah, that '99 session was when he got the [unintelligible]. Which is fascinating to me, because when he beats Bill Sizemore in '98, he wins by a record amount. And in fact, I've looked at the different districts of legislative districts around the state. In many of the Republican districts, Kitzhaber got more votes than the incumbent Republican senator or representative. It's called political capital. He had more than they did. And yet we didn't see true tax reform come out of that. We saw him burn bridges. It's just like... [Yunker: Why did he do that?] I had a fascinating talk with Ted Kulongoski about that same thing. It's like, you know, this comes along every 75 to 100 years, and just threw it away.

Jon Yunker 8:47

Yeah, exactly, which is sad, because Oregon needs a lot of help. Oh, yeah, I think we're in a bottom five in a lot of different issues when you compare with other states. There's got to be a reason for that, and there's got to be a person that's going to stand up and fix it!

James Moore 9:05

Exactly, and say, "Hey, a tax system based in the 1920s economy needs to change."

Jon Yunker 9:11

No kidding. [Moore laughs.] All right, so that's that. Now the next thing again, and then we can go back. You can go back through the details here. So we talked about employees pay, and we did cut their pay, A, and we did cut them by almost 10%. When you're talking about all the government workers in the state of Oregon, and tell them all, every 10th person is gone, we don't know which one that is. You just pick it out. That's what we had to do. We couldn't get too close to it, and it worked. And you know what? The work went just as good. Every now and then you do have to trim things for one reason or another. People are tired of it and want to do something else. So some of them volunteered. Okay, so then we got away, I talked about higher education. Higher education, the governor said it in a nice way. He's trying to get the business community to be successful. That's what we need. We need jobs, and we need good jobs. And I remember he came by the -- you know that too -- the governor came out of Washington County. That's where he came from, so it's fun to be, but that's where Intel came in. And he set that up for him. And there were two or three other businesses. He was very good at really dealing with business people, and then saying, you know, now we can make this work. And Hillsboro will give you a little break on this set up and getting built and everything. But everyone was tickled pink. We haven't had that happen lately either, although, well, there's been some up in Portland.

James Moore 11:11

Yeah, but now the big argument is the strategic investment, because 99% of the money goes to Washington County, and so they're fighting in the legislature about... they're getting too much money for having income tax makeup for the property tax they don't get.

Jon Yunker 11:32

Well, I think that's true, and it's not mean or nasty, but almost everybody outside of Portland, and maybe Eugene -- and there's maybe another one other besides that -- they just don't get it. The rest of this place is country mostly. Look at, we got, what, 36 counties, or whatever it is, but the Democrats are in the powerful... you know, who's got the most votes, not how big your county is. So I don't know what they're gonna... they've got to work a deal out between the two of them, and there's no reason that they can't for heaven's sake. So, we're working on that. Governor's probably still in heaven trying to work on some of this. Okay, so that's higher education. Higher education back then they said they was way overpaid compared to everything else. Well, you know, that's an opinion, but when you're cutting everybody else, then what do you do with higher education?

James Moore 12:40

And it's interesting, because nationally, at the time, just as it is now, the state universities paid about 20% less than other comparable universities. So in a national comparison, they were really low, but in a state comparison, they were high.

Jon Yunker 12:55

Right. And we had to work out that -- have you ever heard the old joke on education? Our governor mentioned that, I don't know, and it wasn't bad at all, but he had to work that issue out with the higher ed

and then with a general... the education people, period, you know, whether they were a principal or whatever, unions all of that. And their question was always, we need more money. And so he, being a business guy, say, "Well, what do you need more money for? What are you going to do with it? I mean, we're cutting everybody else back." And they would just say, "Well, he just needs more. Just give us some more." And so he said, "You're just kind of like a cement wall. I walk up to the wall and I hear a voice on the other side says, 'We need more money.' That's not a very good way to work out this problem." [Both laugh] [Moore: Exactly.] So anyway, they're still working on that, but they are making progress. So that's good news, I guess.

James Moore 14:05

Actually, Friday, somebody approached me to possibly brief the new University of Oregon president from the University of Chicago, to brief him on Oregon politics. [Yunker: Yeah, it's different.] One of the things I would be saying to him, you know, besides the other stuff is, you know, you have to be transparent. You guys just aren't, still. Even with Dave Frohnmayer, they weren't transparent.

Jon Yunker 14:28

Yeah, oh, that's -- I'm sorry that was the name I was supposed to -- Frohnmayer was a favorite guy of mine. I liked him a lot. He was, you know, he was almost wired. There was no way he was not going to get elected.

James Moore 14:30

Yeah, and then he forgot to campaign.

Jon Yunker 14:36

No, it wasn't that either. I mean, it could -- that was part of it. No, the one that killed him, the Republican Party brought another guy in... [Moore: The Al Mobley thing, yeah.] and that was just enough votes to get him out, and then we got a nice... the first lady, I guess, governor. Yeah, and it's like, what were they thinking? See, they just took a shot through their own foot! Okay, next. I mean, that's the last governor, and it might be the last governor for another 50 years, who knows.

James Moore 15:21

The state changes. The fun thing about the state changes being more democratic, one of the main reasons it's happening, it's because of all the high tech industry Vic brought in. [Yunker: Yeah.] All that yeah brings in moderates and Democrats, absolutely. And with the way the Republican Party is, they are not going to vote for a Democrat. And I was talking to Gerry Thompson and telling her that, and she said, "Oh, I wish you were here right now so I could look him in the eye and say, 'You missed a Republican!'" [Both laugh.] But that's the change.

Jon Yunker 15:54

Yeah, Gerry was a great lady, by the way. I'm sure you know that, but I was seeing almost all the important meetings from that point on, with her, and then usually with the governor. And so she and I would go in and visit on some things, but she did a great job. Okay, higher ed, human resources... now this one, in today's world, would be considered cold on people. Human resources, they reduced welfare recipients by 30,000, and there was a terribly nasty joke. And that was, I said, "Well, how are we going to make that work?" And he said, "We're going to lock the front door and the side doors, and only if they can find where the back door is are there going to be any increases." And that was the concept. We're trying to get from zero to 30,000 less. And it was tough, but it worked. I mean, at the bottom, when you get all done, you know, you, you helped a lot of folks and the ones that didn't, didn't come back either, particularly, which was interesting. Okay, the guy that ran that, I can't remember his name either for a half a minute here, but anyway, he was tough. He was a good Lutheran and very hard at working. We got to make this. The Governor wants this to make it work, world, make it work. All right, higher ed, human resources, public

schools dive up. Property taxes, those kinds -- gas taxes, was an issue during that process. Which is crazy, because we needed it so much. Take a look now, you know, you can't save money for very long on that. It's kind of like we were talking about on the other things, you can do that for a year or two, but you got to get it back. So that's still fumbling around in the legislature as we speak. Okay, we talked about excess income taxes. Oh, but we again, but we created taxes for the rich. [Moore: Right.] Which was exactly a good thing, and reduce the taxes for the poor. That seems like a very good, common sense to me. And no one really... they didn't really complain that much at all on it, which kind of means maybe something inside of them said, "Yeah, I think they're right."

James Moore 18:36

Once again, the comparison to the two tax majors we had that we did in January, like four years ago, and raised the raised income taxes on the upper payers. And there are still people in the legislature -- that that passed across the state -- and there's still people in the legislature, Republicans, who are saying, "I'm here because of Measure 66 and 67. Those were wrong." It's like, well, your constituents voted for him. So good luck with that.

Jon Yunker 19:03

Exactly. Okay, so we did... gas tax is going to pass here too again. They've got to have some more money, excess income. Okay, Governor -- now here's the one of them, and I'm surprised, because I didn't know this, and I should have known it. Towards the end, which would have been 1983 when he finally had money coming back in and could start, the people wanted to make a residence for him down here. [Moore: Oh, yeah, that's right.] But he did have a residence down here for a short while.

James Moore 19:42

He had the... [Yunker: It was right next...] the rental house. [Yunker: Yeah.] Which is fascinating, because they raised the rent on him twice as he was taking pay cuts, and it only had heat in half the house.

Jon Yunker 19:59

Yeah, I've been there a couple times, but it was very modest. [Moore: Very modest.] And the house next to him was higher education. [Yunker laughs.]

James Moore 20:10

And his granddaughter, Meagan Atiyeh, who is on the 1% for Art kind of thing, her office actually looks down on that house.

Jon Yunker 20:20

Really? Yeah, cool. See, this is all good. That's one of the reasons I'm enjoying it here. It's all trying to do the right things for the right reason.

James Moore 20:31

But he did -- there was actually a proposal to do Mahonia Hall. [Yunker: Yes, one day...] And he said, "No." And then Neil was the one who finalized that.

Jon Yunker 20:42

Well, yeah, but it gets back to our Republican who thought he had the job wired. And he was going to move into the new house there. Yeah, so that didn't happen for a while. Well, of course, he got thrown out in shame too. They don't even have a picture of him in the capital anymore, I don't think.

James Moore 21:02

Well allegedly, it is down in the basement behind some bookshelves.

Jon Yunker 21:08

There you go. That's happened before. Every now and then when someone's done something like that, you get put in the basement for a while, but he did screw up. There's no... okay, tax reform, we said, support the private businesses, and we talked a little about that. He did a lot for [unintelligible.] Okay, so that's about it. And I don't need to keep these, [Moore: Okay, that's great.] but I recommend it.

James Moore 21:29

That's fantastic. I'll take a look at them, and then I'll add them to our archives. This is a bit... that's fantastic.

Jon Yunker 21:39

Yeah. But you know, when people understand it was his -- these are his words! Or if they weren't, he changed them to his words, and he did a darn good job at it.

James Moore 21:50

That's just amazing. One of the fun things about doing this is, you know, he truly had an open office. [Yunker: Yeah.] And the journalists say they didn't have to make an appointment, they could just walk in. He was sometimes on the phone, and he just motioned to sit down... while in the office with him when he's on the phone.

Jon Yunker 22:12

When he's talking to somebody, and you're right there, yeah.

James Moore 22:13

And then when he was done, he just talked to him. And the weekly staff meetings, those kinds of things. And talking -- I've interviewed both Barbara Roberts and Ted Kulongoski, and because Barbara was Secretary of State from '85 on. [Yunker: Right.] And so she got to sit in on those meetings, she was just amazed. They all tried to do that.

Jon Yunker 22:40

[Yunker laughs.] She fired me, by the way.

James Moore 22:42

Oh yeah? [Yunker: Yeah.] Did she fire you or did Patricia [unintelligible] for you?

Jon Yunker 22:46

No, Patricia liked me. No, it was some kind of personal... because she had sat in on all those, because he led her, and that was fine, and she did fine, but when she got... the governor's position, that was the first thing she did was call me up. I went over there, and she said, "I don't want you in my organization." I said, "Well, okay, that's the way this is supposed to work." And she said, "You're damn right." [Both laugh.] That was the first thing out of her. And I said, "Well, I just need to learn from my mistakes, and I just want to know, you know, what was it that makes you very unhappy?" And she said, "Because you let those old guys that were puffing smoke around that table and all you did was when they did some terribly sick joke, you laughed!" She said, "They're old guys! They're not going to change, but you should have known better." I said, "Well, obviously." [Both laugh.] So that took care of that. So then I went over and was the finance guy and that kind of thing for the school district for four years. And I loved it. Everything went fine, so it was one

of those good things. So I don't have any hard feelings toward it, I really don't.

James Moore 24:18

Yeah. It's, you know, learning about the governor's immediate staff, you know, it's a big deal when you're an at-will employee at that kind of level. [Yunker: Yeah.] And you have to always know that. You have to always know that. And talking to Denny Miles, you know, he pushed the line a couple of times. And he knew it, but, you know, he was able to... he stayed the entire eight years.

Jon Yunker 24:48

There's some lines there. You can cause some damage there in that process.

James Moore 24:53

Exactly. So, did you encounter Vic when he was in the legislature at all?

Jon Yunker 24:59

Um, no, not hardly. He ran and lost again... [Moore: In '74, yeah.] Bob, right, who didn't do anything, by the way, to speak of he got a couple of key things about protecting the houses next to the ocean and all of that, trying to get that, that was public property. I mean, so he had a couple of things that he really wanted to do, and he did him. And then it was like, he just sat there and went, "Now, what do I do?" And we said, "Well, we thought you'd have a kind of a longer list." He said... [Moore: Why the Greenway ocean?] Yeah, I just got here a couple of months ago, and it's like... so anyway, he was a nice man, but again, didn't get a lot of ground. He didn't change hardly anybody's ideas. Good guy. Still a good person, and of course, the poor guy passed away. But he did it. He did a lot of good things. I shouldn't say that... I'm just gone blank for half a second that our governor in 1970, [Moore: McCall?] he did that. That being, he'd love to go down and talk to the newspaper, and he would dump all the top secret plans to them! And then he'd come back and, you know, as finance people were trying to get the numbers to work and everything else, and it's like what we don't even know what the numbers are yet. We're still working on this. But he just liked to visit with people, and he was a good person and an honest man. So I don't have, I'm not -- again, not complaining. But some people like to be that way. And then, of course, we have governors who want to hide in there... you know. And stay away from them. Which is not, not good.

James Moore 26:57

Yeah. I actually really like Ted Kulongoski, but he would disappear into his office. And when he would campaign, same kind of thing, he'd go to a town, he wouldn't go do all these things. He'd go out with the editor of the paper and they'd go fly fishing. But you know, we elected him twice, so it worked. Whatever it is, it worked. But it's strange.

Jon Yunker 27:23

Yeah, that is strange. He and I got along wonderfully well. I mean, you realize when he ran the Attorney General's office, and... he just was bored. He's one of those kind of guys that gets excited for about two years and say, "Well, it's time to do something else." You know.

James Moore 27:42

I thought when he was supreme court justice, you know, that'd be it.

Jon Yunker 27:47

And it wasn't! He got bored. [Moore laughs.] He's just, "What am I supposed to sit in this little office and decide, you know, what my position is on this?" It's boring, you know? He just...

James Moore 28:00

Exactly, exactly. So you didn't even really run into Vic when he was in the legislature?

Jon Yunker 28:08

No, because he got elected in '78...

James Moore 28:14

'78. So he was governor in '79. Yeah, it's just that he was in the legislature -- he was kind of Mr. revenue committee guy, the one they went to on taxes. He played that role in the legislature. So some people, you know, you played with them, or you didn't play with them. And I'm also discovering that unless you were in that world, if you were a Democrat, for instance, who was not on the list of the revenue world, you never [unintelligible] Vic at all. And it's partly because that was at a time when the Republican caucus was six, and then they went up to seven. There's a picture that Wally Carson has of the six of them in one of the phone booths on the second floor. [Yunker laughs.] But it's an amazing group. There's Tony Meeker, there's Bob Smith, there's Wally Carson, there's Vic. It's like, you know, the future of these guys is pretty darn amazing.

Jon Yunker 29:11

Yeah, that's a strong group.

James Moore 29:12

That's a very strong group. But talking to them about how you make a six person or seven person caucus work, Wally Carson was very funny. He said, "When we had six, Jason Bo put us on every committee in the world." Wally had one free hour a week. [Yunker: Oh, gosh.] Because he was doing committees. [Yunker: Hard work.] But the committees are where they could do all their influence. And they did have influence, but on the floor, they were nothing. So he becomes governor. Where are you in '79 when he becomes governor? What's your position?

Jon Yunker 29:52

I was in human resources, and I was the guy that ran the federal money and programs that were supposed to be distributed to the poor. And I liked it. I mean, it was a good job.

James Moore 30:05

Well, it's, you know, because people don't really understand Oregon's budget. That's a huge chunk of the budget. It's about the general fund.

Jon Yunker 30:13

Yeah, no, exactly. It is a lot of money. Big time. And then, so I was only there for two years, and I had to turn around, come and join the governor. So that was good. It worked.

James Moore 30:28

When you came to join the governor, so you become one of those people that is going to the meetings every week, the staff meetings? [Yunker: Yes.] Okay, what were those meetings like? Were they substantive every time? Was it more just hearing what people were doing? What was the governor's role? What were those meetings like?

Jon Yunker 30:51

Well, generally, he had a good group. That's one. And we would literally just relax, and they'd smoke their

cigarettes or whatever. And they'd start with the police superintendent, or whatever, and he'd explain what had gone right and what had gone wrong, because he wanted to know. "I don't want half a story. I need to understand exactly what happened." You know, he was that kind of guy, and they worked something... I mean, just literally, within maybe five, six minutes, the governor had given him okay on what he could do or not do about that problem, and then they just go to the next guy. And now, we're running into the problem already, aren't we? There were no women at the table, but they did pretty darn good. Again, we're just talking about the human resource support. That guy was right onto this. And not only was he there and didn't he do exactly what the governor said, but he'd go in and visit quite a few times, because that was a lot of people and a lot of issues. So there's only about four or five that are really you've got to talk to them every week, which is too many important things going on. And so then we did get a lady to sit down there. That's it. So he did very, very well, but he was always good about... he didn't just blow it off. He didn't just listen and say, "Oh, that's good. Next." He wanted to know, you know, if there's a problem here and there's something we should be doing, I need to know that. And there'd be blank there for a little because they thought they just could skip over it, you know. And then they'd say, "Well, yeah, maybe it is a little more serious." And you remember when the...what was the name of the group that was...? [Moore: The Rajneeshees?] Yeah. That was a zoo for a while. No one knew how to deal with that one.

James Moore 33:00

Yeah. This book, when it comes out, I'm hoping will have stuff that no one has ever heard about the Rajneeshees, simply because the state government side has never been told. And Jerry has the boxes. She was on top of that thing like nobody's business. She was running it. And I have just discovered sources in our archive that allow me to show her I know a heck of a lot more than I used to, to crack open those boxes, I think. But yeah, I can imagine, you know, it's hitting, you know, land use things, poor Norma in her elections, you know, Vern Duncan in education, [unintelligible] of the state police are doing things. That's all over the place. Let's see here. Okay, so the meetings, his management style has been described as he tried to pick the best people, and that he didn't ask about political party, right? And he also, much to the surprise of people at the beginning, he kept a lot of the Straub people in place. But he then would say, "Okay, so here's the parameters. You go figure out how to do it. You hire who you need. You do all those kinds of things." Did you experience that kind of freedom to manage under him?

Jon Yunker 34:40

Oh, yeah. Yeah, once I had the whole department, and I was with him all the time, and I was very clear about that's all I know. I didn't pretend I knew things I didn't. And, you know, I just had to be honest. And when he said, and he would [unintelligible] it, "Well, Jon. It's okay. You've still got two more hours before it's dark. Just get out there and find out." [Both laugh.] I mean, he and I had a nice sense of humor with each other. And I'd go get it and I'd find it and I'd bring it back. That's how you have to do it.

James Moore 35:16

Yeah, that's wonderful. The 1979 legislative session has been described as kind of the high point in terms of budget. You know, this is when Prop 13 in California has passed the previous June. So that's hanging over everybody's head. We had in the '78 election... it's Measure 6 and Measure 10. But there were two property tax measures, a legislative one and an initiative. And so that was hanging over people's head. What do we do about this? So in '79, we get the kicker, comes out of the legislature, and then eventually...

Jon Yunker 35:59

Which is, by the way, it's still terrible...mode... but yeah, that was the big elephant that was all over every one of us, the local counties, the state, feds for that matter. Everyone's trying to figure out what in the world's going to go on here.

James Moore 36:21

Just so, you know, when I talk to people like Bob Smith, they still... the kicker is the best thing in the world. It's amazing. But then there's also a huge give back of tax money in that '79 session. \$600 million or

something. It's a huge chunk.

Jon Yunker 36:42

Yeah, it was almost 800 million, I think, yeah. It was a lot.

James Moore 36:46

And then, yeah, by the end of that year, Paul Volcker starts ratcheting up interest rates, and the housing market collapses, which hits us. And so for Vic, he had approximately eight months that was not financial crisis. And then seven years -- which got better after '83, but still, it's seven years. In 1982, when the big recession hits, the one that just devastates the timber industry and all that. What did you see in terms of dealing with that? Was it triage? How do we... you know, our budget is shrinking, so what do we do about that? Was it triage, plus, how do we help these companies? How did that work in '81, '82 as that whole thing was happening?

Jon Yunker 37:46

Yeah, no, I'd have to tell you, I sat there and listened to all that, but it was like a death knell. It dawned on us that we've got all kinds of communities all over Oregon that aren't going to make it. There's nothing we can do fast enough and good enough to keep them from losing almost every employment job there is. And then Goldsmith came in and tried to make that work, you know, come up with new programs for different communities and stuff, but it's still very awkward, very hard. So, no, I don't remember them coming up with any good, significant program that could have changed anything around for a while.

James Moore 38:35

So it's when, by the time you get to '82, '83...? [Yunker: Yeah.] That's when Vic is beginning to say we need to bring in Japanese businesses, all that kind of stuff. [Yunker: Yes.] So that's kind of the future.

Jon Yunker 38:47

He was creating new jobs for people. It's the best... [Moore: But, not in the timber communities.] Right. No, they had to go find another job.

James Moore 38:58

Okay, that's great. When he started doing all the international travel, did that make sense at the time that he was going off to do these trips? People see it as a junket. Did you see it as, "Wow, this is something that we need to do for economic development." Do you remember that?

Jon Yunker 39:20

Yeah, I remember it, but I, of course, I like the guy so much. He could have told me, you know, it was, you know, diamonds, and I would have said, "Right, boss. Okay, now I understand." I mean, I just... but he did go over there, and so did Gerry. She was with him almost every time that I remember when they took when they went out.

James Moore 39:46

Actually, they split up when the Rajneeshees were big. [Yunker: Oh, yeah.] One of them had to be here. [Yunker: Yeah, to deal with that.] She went by herself to Taiwan once, and the governor stayed here. Most of the time, she was here, he was off on the road when the Rajneeshees were [unintelligible.]

Jon Yunker 40:00

Yeah, that's right. So, yeah, I don't know what else to tell you there.

James Moore 40:08
Yeah, okay, no, that's good.

Jon Yunker 40:10
Yeah. But look at us today. We still haven't gotten much better. I mean, we're better, but not much.

James Moore 40:18
No. One of the things... I talked to someone who went on the actually, probably the most important trip, which is unitary taxes, in July of 1984. And that fall, there's a delegation that goes to Japan and to China. And Japan loved that we got rid of the unitary tax. And so the governor actually talked to this big business association called the Keidanren that no American governor had ever talked to before. You know, it was like a triumphal trip. But when they went to China, it was amazing, because they went to a place called Fujian province. So it's kind of inland from Taiwan. And the big realization of the Chinese was, while Oregon looked the same size on the map as their province, there were only two and a half million people in Oregon, and there were 40 million people in Fujian province. [Yunker: Yeah, in one province.] And so what they expected from the relationship was not what we could give. And the relationship is still there, but for the Chinese, it was a huge learning curve. We aren't California, we're this little place. They can give you expertise in how to harvest trees better and stuff like that. Tough, tough thing.

Jon Yunker 41:50
Yeah, and it's going to be a tough thing still in the future. [Moore: But we're still in that state...] But again, as near as I can tell, just because when we had a little group, we'd talk about where he'd been and what he'd done, and everything he touches was good, though. They treated him very well with a lot of respect, and he did the same for them. I thought, thank God we got a guy that can do this stuff. [Yunker laughs.]

James Moore 42:18
At his memorial service last September, a huge amount of the flowers up in the front were from Fuji television. All that relationship still up to you know, after his death.

Jon Yunker 42:34
Makes me want to cry sometimes on those things. Good. Yeah, that was good. So now what? Now what are you going to do?

James Moore 42:42
Well, I'm just going to keep writing this summer. My sabbatical started at the end of January. I do political analysis, so there was a two week period when I was not working on the book because our government was exploding. So that was kind of fun. But yeah, just get as much done as I can this summer, and hopefully it gets published next year.

Jon Yunker 43:08
Then what? Are you going to run for office?

James Moore 43:12
Oh, God no. [Yunker: Good.] I'm someone like you. I would love to be appointed to something, electoral stuff.

Jon Yunker 43:21

Where you can be on the inside watching, but you don't have to, yeah.

James Moore 43:24

The electoral stuff is crazy.

Jon Yunker 43:25

Yes, it is.

James Moore 43:26

It's just crazy.

Jon Yunker 43:27

Yeah. This pot issue now, I just... it'll take them several years to straighten that all out. And I'm not completely against it, but it's got some good and some very bad too. I don't know if they can deal with it or not.

James Moore 43:42

The amazing thing to me on the pot issue is, it's been a year and a half, the legislature put together a committee to say we're anticipating it's going to pass. Watch Colorado, watch Washington, so we can hit the ground running. And apparently they didn't do anything.

Jon Yunker 43:59

That's right, they assigned the governor [unintelligible] ...this is our retired governor. Let's put it that way. He put one of the guys that he had worked for him for 30 years. February or September. 1980... no, it was even less than that, about 1975 from then till when he was retired. And so he said, I'm going to take a very small -- it sounds like -- I'm going to make a very small group again, up in Portland, working on good ideas. But this guy needs a job. And so he was assigned the OLCC, and he doesn't know this any better than any of us, so it's going to take a while.

James Moore 45:00

Yeah, it's crazy. One last set of questions: you talked about Straub and management style, which was kind of confusion after he figured out what... you talked about Victor's management style. What was Goldschmidt's management style like?

Jon Yunker 45:24

Well, that's an interesting question. I haven't had that one before, but I did work closely with him enough to know he was a very bright guy, and he had a lot of good ideas, and he treated people well. I don't remember him going around doing ugly things in any sense of the word. But then when your paper up there in Portland got a wind of it, he knew he was a dead man walking. It was just a matter of time before the whole story came out. And the minute that happened, he was gone, the next day, practically. So I don't know what you do when you're a good person now, but you made a terrible mistake, you know, whenever it was, 15 or 20 years ago. It's not good.

James Moore 46:21

There's some things our society doesn't forgive.

Jon Yunker 46:23

Yeah, exactly. There just wasn't... wasn't good enough to forgive.

James Moore 46:29

So working for him was... it was fine, you had access to him?

Jon Yunker 46:35

Oh yeah, and very bright and very quick with a sense of humor, so even if I screwed up once in a while, he'd say, "Wait a minute! Wait a minute, you've got this one upside down, Jon." Damn. And they'd laugh. And then we'd go on to the next thing. He was just a very easy guy to get along with. He really was, I don't think I've heard anybody complain about what he did on a face to face issue, but he still had that anchor of sin that he couldn't get rid of.

James Moore 47:07

Yeah, absolutely. Well, it's fascinating, because I talked to Dan Simmons last week. But people at your level, they worked well with Neil, and Neil worked well with you. People slightly outside of that, including all the other elected statewide officials, had a hell of a time with him. They couldn't see him. There was too much staff. He couldn't, right? There's a very interesting thing going on there.

Jon Yunker 47:37

Yeah, no, I think that's true, and that's true almost all the time, though. There's a lot of little organizations or whatever they just demand having, you know, the governor, you know, approve this or what. And it's like, you're not even 1/10 of 1,000,000th of anything around here. The Governor's got important things to do, but you do have to at least say, you know, a 15 minute visit about, I like what you're doing, and Joe over here is going to come and visit you next week and see if we can do even better. And that's all you have to do. But if you can't get governors, and you shouldn't be getting governors, is to waste their time on small items. I'm sorry, but that's just the way it has to work. [Moore: You got to prioritize.... yeah.] Think of poor Obama, how that guy's going to... he's been beat up one side and down the other now for eight years. You know to work hard and do everything you can and still have enemies shooting at you every day. That's not fun.

James Moore 48:47

It was interesting talking to Barbara and Ted, because since Kitzhaber was governor, he didn't play well when he wasn't governor, and then became governor again. So those three, the bond among ex-governors is really strong, because they know all the stuff that comes at you. You know, that it crosses party lines. We see that with Bill Clinton and George W. Bush. They haven't become close friends, but they'd become friends, because it's a hell of a job.

Jon Yunker 49:23

Yeah, well, that's why, when you get someone like the lady governor, she didn't know what she was getting into, and she did have a strong executive that was running most of it. But yeah, exactly that. I can't imagine some people are so naive to think, "Well, I'd be a great governor." And I have a famous saying that I did... of course I shouldn't have, maybe, but, you know. It's just interesting, because I've had guys, seriously now, come into my office or ask me to come over, but... "I'm going to run for governor next time. I want you to help me with this." And I looked at him and I said, "You're not even close to being able to run for governor." What are you going to tell people? What are your five most important things, and how are you going to make those things happen? "Well, I just, you know, I've been in legislature halls. I've walked around, I know what they're doing." I said, "You know what? You know, my mom is the smartest, nicest person in the state of Oregon, as far as I'm concerned, but she'd be a very bad governor." He says, "And that's what you're saying, me too?" And I said, "Yeah, basically. But you can, you know, take it for another year or so and see if something grows, but, you know, you're going to have to work hard at it. I'll just tell you that." [Yunker laughs.]

James Moore 51:09

Yeah, that's the state that the Republicans are in this state. You know, the Democrats, the governors are better or worse, but at least you know there are people around them saying, you know, if you're going to do this, you need to learn a lot of stuff.

Jon Yunker 51:23

Yeah, big time.

James Moore 51:25

Whereas poor Dennis Richardson, there wasn't even a mechanism to train him on what the heck a governor might actually do. [Yunker: Yeah, exactly.] Just hung out to dry.

Jon Yunker 51:39

Yeah, that's an honest answer, too. So, I think you've got it made, partner, on this issue.

James Moore 51:48

Great, good. [Yunker: You gotta...] take this stuff. Yeah, this is wonderful. Wonderful, wonderful, wonderful.

Jon Yunker 51:57

Here you go, and here's... see this? This shows you.

James Moore 52:02

Oh, good. That's great. Yep.

Jon Yunker 52:06

So if anything else comes up and you want me to run over there and, you know... [Moore: Go do some digging?] Pick up another, yeah, pile of diggings.

James Moore 52:07

Yeah, that's fantastic. Oh, so there's the copies of the...

Jon Yunker 52:23

Yeah, whoever wrote the message to the governor, and this is the governor's response.

James Moore 52:30

Fantastic. Well, thank you very much.

Jon Yunker 52:34

Well, thank you.