

Denny Miles Jul. 2014 interview on Atiyeh

An interview of Denny Miles regarding Oregon's Governor Victor Atiyeh, recorded on July 31, 2014. Miles was Atiyeh's Press Secretary during most of his governorship. The interviewer, James Moore, was as professor of political science at Pacific University and was Atiyeh's biographer. This is one of several recorded interviews between Moore and Miles.

The interview includes discussion of: logistics and strategies of political campaigns, focusing on Atiyeh's 1978 and 1982 gubernatorial campaigns; the challenges of managing a campaign with a candidate who dislikes debates; Atiyeh's ability to connect with voters personally; his preference for hands-off campaign management; the impact of the 1982 Recession; Atiyeh's legislative experience, his fiscal conservatism, and his approach to budgeting and policy-making; the reform of Oregon's Unitary Tax; the SAIF raid incident; Atiyeh's strategic use of vetoes; Atiyeh's challenges in balancing budgets during the Recession; Atiyeh's frustration with the legislature's ideological shifts; the Rajneesh movement's impact on state governance; Atiyeh's health concerns; speculation about potential poisoning of Atiyeh during the Rajneesh crisis.

Note on the text: This transcript was made through AI in 2025, with some manual corrections. It has been provided in order to facilitate research, but the text does contain errors and inaccuracies. Users should check the transcript against the recording before quoting the speakers.

[Recording begins mid-conversation.]

James Moore 00:05

We had to rent a mobile phone because we don't have a mobile phone, and with 16 people coming in and out, you connect with them, and I'm lost towards the train station, etc. And so we rented the thing. It only worked in Italy, which is good. And first guests were friends from college. And so I sat down with one of them and said, Okay, Bob, I have no idea in the world how to do texts. You know how to do any of this stuff. And so we had a nice seven minute tutorial how to use a cell phone. It's quite exciting. That's a pretty fancy rig. Yeah, it's archival quality. It's got all sorts of other doodads in the here. There shouldn't be a problem, but it's got, you know, the cover, uh huh, got a little stick you can put it in if you want to lift it up. And very nice. So I, in the past, have sung with an extremely good choir, and I take this to concerts with the permission of the conductor, and I record it, and then that night, I just go home and I send it to him and say, Here, you're not going to get the recording that you did for weeks, right? So if you need it to listen to, right, or you want to take it and say all mp three, I can turn it into MP3's from the archival stuff. So, you know, so

Denny Miles 01:26

is it done as a WAV file then?

James Moore 01:28

Yeah, yeah. And it's got several layers of wave file I did, got this thing, and as I was checking them, I was always okay. Eva [Guggemos, archivist at Pacific U.], so what's archival? And so she went to the Smithsonian site, what's archival?

Denny Miles 01:40

The Smithsonian put on, or the Library of Congress put on a seminar, and the people from the State Archives went to it with the agreement that the only thing they had to pay for it was to do public seminars when they got back of what they'd learned. Yeah, right, yeah. And, and so they did a series of three of them. And the most important thing that I learned out of all of that is do it in the best possible rudiment, I mean, archival that you have now and then, have a regular schedule of updating it, right? So if you've got some 78 RPMs and you haven't been updating it, you're dead meat. Yeah, exactly. And this is the place at the Library of Congress where they literally maintain, yeah, all of that hardware. I mean, they buy old Ampex, yeah, room sized video tape machines, so that if they happen to run into a piece of tape that's on that and nothing else, and it happens to be of Kennedy that they didn't know about before, right, then they can run it.

James Moore 02:42

Yeah, yeah. So that's great, yeah. So what I do is I take these, I take it home, and I do an archival one, boom. And then I've got a nice sound editing set up all freeware. And so I convert it into the highest level of mp three for the stuff that I'm going to do. And then, like with the governor, I actually then broke it up, because, you know, he wanders. So we'd have, you know, here's the discussion about this, and it might be six minutes, it might be eight minutes. And so I have a separate one for him. For all the rest of you, I'm going to do just a straight transcription, which is now also automatic on my computer. Yeah, just put it in there. I'm going to train it to your voice, and it's just going to go and I'll tell it where the paragraphs are.

Denny Miles 03:26

My nephew, who is the Chief Executive Officer of osura, which is a primarily hospital communication badge, and he says training it to a voice is cheating. He said, You need to have voice recognition and text transfer based upon anybody's voice, because these badges are used by, you know, five different people and three shifts. Yeah, yeah. But it's still, even though it's cheating and it works better, it does

James Moore 03:51

the one of the issues with the governor was his voice got weaker, and so I've had to, and there are three versions of him. So it'll, it'll transcribe, yeah, but just over the I first interviewed him in December, and just from December until June, raspberry and a little bit weaker, and yeah, he's 9091 Yeah. So, what I'm going to start out all these interviews with the not bicker tears, is just start out telling how you ran into this guy, and you know what kind of what your relationship was to him. And then we'll get into details as we as we go on.

Denny Miles 04:46

I may have met him at a Portland Beaver baseball game. We don't. Neither one of us could remember, by the way, I'm still speaking of him in the present tense. I do the same. Okay, so, so I apologize. Apologize to whoever might be hearing this tape down the road. It's going to probably wander back and forth between President and past tense, but we would we talked about this once, and Tony Yturri was supposed to go to a game, and it happened to be that Harmon Killebrew was in the was there as a part of the festivities, whether he was a plane or whether he was just there. Harmon Killebrew comes from Pat Idaho. I was a radio station guy in Ontario, and so I went there to interview my friend. I mean, I acquaintance, Harmon Killebrew. And I believe that then either representative or Senator Atiyeh was there because Yturri couldn't make it, and we tried to look it up. And the time I officially met him was early January, 1977 and the way I came about meeting him was I was on the faculty at Oregon State, and I was one of the last tenure track regular faculty, instructor, people hired primarily as an administrator. I was hired on December 15, 1971 on January when they stopped doing that.

That's it seemed at the time like good news, except I was on tenure track and did not have a PhD, didn't even have a master's degree and although I taught some film classes and things like that that I knew a lot about, I didn't get tenure. So all of a sudden, I've got, you know, the standard years notice. And I was disappointed at the time, and I thought, you know, my career was over, and it was just despondent over the whole thing. But as it turns out, hindsight, I had been working on political campaigns for Tony Van Vliet since he began campaigning for office, and just as a volunteer, he was just part of a coffee clutch that I went to. So I went down and talked to Tony, and I said, you know, I'm looking and interested in doing something. And he said, Well, there's this guy, Vick at Atiyeh. He's a state senator. He ran for governor, but the only I remember at and this, again, is about late 76 and he's looking for a caucus assistant for the Republican caucus in the Senate. And you'd be perfect for it, but it's only going to be a six month job, and I'm thinking, Well, alright, I'm going to need a job. And six month job, you know, I went to my boss, and he said, Well, we'll give you a leave of absence. That's great. We'd love to have people that learn about the legislative system, even though you know you're gonna, you'll bring something back, right? And as it turned out, my year's notice was extended beyond that. They didn't count the leaves. So I, you know, that was a bonus.

And so I went down and I interviewed, and this was at the in the new wings. They just moved into the new wings, and I interviewed in the what you know is now completely changed because they did all that remodeling, but I interviewed with him and Glenna Hayden, and he couldn't figure out why I wanted the job either, but I wasn't going to tell him that I didn't get tenure, because people don't necessarily even understand what that concept is. And we talked and, and he

hired me on the spot. He said, If you can, if you can come. I said, Well, I just need a check with, you know, things and that kind of stuff. Went back to my boss, Sam Bailey, and, and he said, Yeah, well, let's arrange a leave of absence for you. So I took a leave of absence and was there for the entire session, which lasted, quote, a lengthy session. I think it was the longest on record, Fourth of July or something. And now that you know, before the double session, times that would have been considered long and worked in communications for a gigantic caucus of six Yes.

And as Barbara Roberts says in her book, while it might have been a small caucus, look at what they all did. One became governor, one became state treasurer, one became a congressman, and the list, you know, goes on. And so it was a very it was a great caucus, a great people to work with. Interestingly, it was a caucus. And if Bob Smith were sitting right here, and I'm this is all obviously on the record, Bob Smith evidently had tried to go for a minority leader as well and didn't win. Oh, okay, so Bob Smith never came to a single caucus meeting, and I say that even though he physically was there for about 45 seconds, because Tony Meeker grabbed him. Senator Meeker grabbed him, dragged him, drug him into the room and said, Okay, now you've been to a caucus meeting. He said, Okay, see you later. And he was gone. So it was, it was a great experience, meeting some good people, learning about the legislative process, learning about some of the systems that they had available to them at that time, and also getting to know the Catia. I always tried, except for the first day when I didn't have a key. I was commuting from Corvallis, and I always tried to be there before the senator arrived. And in typical sort of now Washington DC style, not leave until he was gone. And most of the time I was able to pull that off, because clearly my goal was to impress him and the other people. Because I was thinking there might be some jobs involved in that. Yeah, so that was the first contact that I had with him.

James Moore 10:02

So how did that build to eventually being his communications director? Was that just you eventually became part of his senate staff?

Denny Miles 10:14

No, I was, I was there in time for the campaign. Yeah, when you're when you're when you're the you know, caucus communications person, Glenna Hayden was, was entitled the caucus administrator, but you basically work for the leader, right? And the other people have a legislative assistant in those days. I don't know what it's expanded to now. And so in that process, I got to know him directly, and I threw hints around, because I said, What are you going to do? Are you going to do? Are you going to run again? And things like that. And he honestly had not decided yet. And by the time he decided he was going to run, I was back at Oregon State and was on the job market, and was looking and doing my job there as things went on. And I remember that I've talked to him since, obviously, about what was he thinking, what was I thinking, and that kind of thing. And he was thinking, Boy, it would be great to have Denny on the in the campaign if I decide to run. And I was thinking, it'd be great to be on a campaign, but neither one of us thought the other person knew that or figured that out, or whatever. And so I kept dropping hints, especially with Glenn up. And eventually I dropped enough hints that he called me up and he said, Are you really willing to leave? Because I was he was announced, and I was back at Oregon State. Why would you leave a good job at Oregon State? Me not telling him that I was going to leave that job anyway. And so I just said, Look, I want to do this. It sounds like a lot of fun. Well, I did, and he hired me, and I was the communications director for the 78 campaign. And in that process, my father just came unglued. My father was pretty critical of just about anything I did, and he thought I'd made this gigantic mistake. Because anybody who even just reads the blue book or reads any clippings from that time knows that Vic Atiyeh was in fact going to come in third in a three way primary race, primary, much less the general, right? Yeah, yeah. I mean, they're not even thinking about the general because he wouldn't make it, and that was the conventional wisdom at the time. And so I can't use the language My father used with me, but it was very, very colorful about how I had screwed up big time. And then, as it turns out, we won.

James Moore 12:21

So you so you were there for the primary and the general. So talk to me. I mean, clearly, for readers of this book, you know Roger Martin, nice footnote, but Tom McCall's the story. So talk, talk about from your side, from your view. And I've talked to the governor about this several times, what it was like dealing with Tom McCall as opponent, and then, you know, after the after the primary, when you're supposed to come together?

Denny Miles 12:51

Well, we didn't come together. That's a start right there. Tom announced that he wasn't going to be endorsing anyone.

I'm going to getting ahead of myself, and I'll come back. He wasn't going to endorse anyone, because, after all, he was going to go back onto television and be a commentator, and he couldn't endorse anyone. We were thankful he didn't endorse anyone. We were worried more about him endorsing Straub than anything else. But in terms of dealing, let me just treat it broadly. First of all, in a three way race. Everyone was scared to death that there was going to be a splitting of the quote, conservative side. And in 1974 in my opinion, the candidate Vickie Atiyeh got pushed into the conservative mode. And of course, in 1974 conservative meant something different than it means today, right? Just like all of these political labels, there's a huge amount of change that goes on. He might have said to you, you know, I haven't changed. Why has my label changed Exactly? I'm the same person now. I'm the moderate or right of center, or whatever that might mean, and I'm still the same person I've always been. What's going on here? And I said, well, the world is moving, and you're just staying where you are, and you have to the labels change as the world changes. But Roger, in those days, Roger and Roger is a factor here, and I realize for the book that Tom is the is the draw. But in those days, you could raise money during the session, you could gather in your troops during the session, you could he had Greg Walden working for him during the session, he was half on kind of a lobbyist paid for half his salary, and the state paid for the other half. And he was gearing up with all this campaign staff, basically campaigning for Governor while being a legislator. And that in those days, it was perfectly legitimate, perfectly legal, and he had credit for it, but everyone in the establishment of the Republican Party was saw, you know, Rogers got money, Rogers got charisma. Rogers got all this going for him, and as a result, he's our best chance against Tom McCall, right, it was kind of the moderate to conservative side against, oh my god, anti business Tom. Call, and then McCall will certainly win the general election, and we'll have another eight years of of Tom McCall. And I don't know if the governor told you, or if you've read about in Brent Walsh book, although Brent kind of got it wrong, the famous meeting in Woodburn where supposedly they were going to decide who was going to be the one that everyone was going to get behind. Yeah,

James Moore 15:18

Brent writes about it as a secret thing where, you know, all this kind of stuff and and talking to the governor that was there were, it didn't sound like this. Well, yeah,

Denny Miles 15:28

exactly. I mean, and I wasn't there, so I can't talk about it, but in terms of being personally there, but I do know that the governor thought he was going down to, basically, they kind of talked to him and said, you know, we're going to get together, and we're going to get together and we're going to get behind you and all this kind of stuff. And then all of a sudden, here's Roger, and here's he and it's a setup. It's a total setup. And then when he said, quote, no, you don't understand, I'm going to win, they then leaked it that he'd been asked to withdraw. And then the battle was on at that point. So in terms of Tom the governor, I believe, will has already said on your tape and the Historical Society tape, that Tom, bless his soul, believed that he was going to announce, and as the governor would say, ta, da, there would be this, you know, huge, loving, welcoming kind of experience, which there was not because a lot of those people were gone, you know, and he'd lost a lot of that kind of support. Plus, he really wasn't a campaigner. Didn't like campaigning, certainly did not like to fundraise, so he had less money than the other two candidates. I don't have the public record in front of me, but I'm assuming that.

And he just figured that all he had to do was maybe buy he didn't want to debate. In fact, he the advisor said, don't debate, because you'll get baited into things. And his campaign staff, we knew late in the camp, late in the primary campaign, were picking out apartments and homes in Salem, so the overconfidence factor was unbelievable, yeah, and in a lot of respects, Roger, who, now, I listened to him tell this story many times. It's something called the old fogies, or old timers group that gets together believes that he won the race for Vic Atiyeh because he was the one who went after Tom McCall. And in some ways, you know, he's got a little bit of credence there, because we like to just say we held, you know, Roger's coat well in the debates, especially where Roger went out, because somebody had to do it, was the way he put it. Well, here comes this very nice, affable, nice, looking, steady, experienced person against Roger, who self described fiery, you know, gusto, kind of thing, against Tom, who showed that he didn't, and I don't know if you've reviewed those tapes or not, but it basically showed he really did not have control over the issues, which is, which is the his style of management. He flew very, very high, and every time we'd have a debate, we'd bump up in the polls.

And you may have heard the story that when the Oregonian came out with their poll 10 days beforehand, and it showed that Atiyeh was ahead of Martin and closing on McCall, even though McCall had the lead, both Tom McCall and Vick Atiyeh said Atiyeh won it because we knew that all of the Roger Martin anti McCall sentiment would shift. And in 10

days it did. It was just an overwhelming shift. And we can get into the more details of election night story and another mistake that Brent made, but, you know, it's, it's for Tom. It was crushing. You know, it was a personal insult to him, and this is a guy I got to know as reporter, press secretary after that, and we had a very good relationship. I kept calling him governor. And he said, Call me Tom I'm just Thomas. No, you're governor. I'm sorry, once you're a governor or or a colonel or a president, and you keep that title, yeah, you know, and that's just the way it's going to be governor. And he said, Yeah, yeah, no.

James Moore 19:03

In fact, the governor told me, I think three or four times the story of election night, okay, good, going over there and, you know, all that kind of stuff, and that gets you thinking, that gets into another issue. Say, what you were going to say, Okay,

Denny Miles 19:17

well, I was just saying that a lot of this is really good, because not I mean that what the Oregon Historical Society did in terms of their or history, is great, you know, and it covers a lot of detail. And they obviously had more time with him than you had with him and so on. But that was still when he was kind of pulling punches a little bit, and not with quite as much detail as I'm sure he got into in your chances to interview with him. So he was a lot kinder to some people back then. And he said, Well, you know, okay, and all this kind of stuff, but it's different interesting,

James Moore 19:49

because there's also, there's another way, because he's become kinder to people since, yes, 20 years ago. That's true too, especially the Democratic governors, gulchman, mm. Yeah, and he mentioned him by name. No, no, no, no, no, he didn't. He was, yeah, exactly. But, but Roberts, I mean, it's Roberts is, is in office when he's talking in 9293 and he's frustrated with some of the things she's doing and all this stuff and and Goldsmith, you know, the scandal certainly had not hit. And so he's frustrated with him. And, you know, feels strongly about things that the legislature let Goldschmidt do that they wouldn't let him do, you know, so things like that. And so Goldschmidt in His own, His own world, but hearing him talk in the past six months in detail about Roberts and Kulongowski, it's like he's talking about different people, right? Though, they both become good friends. They've become good friends. There's a, you know, the club of ex governors. There's a real appreciation, I think, as well as him, you know, he's in his late 80s and early 90s. I really

Denny Miles 20:53

called it for years, the Red Baron syndrome. And I don't know if, in World War One 100 years ago, they really did have respect for their enemies, yeah, as they went down and so on and so forth. But using that anyway as the metaphor of having respect for your enemies, they've all been through the same football game in effect, and so it's shake hands afterwards, and they got the same bruises that you got, and they understood it and so on. And you still may disagree with them on issues, but you respect them for having been in that office. It's really a respect for the office more than anything else, yeah. I mean, the madness he ever got at Governor Kitzhaber was on inauguration day when Kitzhaber wore jeans to the inauguration, not the letter, yeah. Oh, he was man

James Moore 21:36

that. And he also he brought the same thing he would talk about the Western Governors Association and those kinds of things, but the same kind of thing, you know, it really didn't matter that they were Republican or Democrat. We, we'd gone through the same thing. We there was we knew how we got here, and some people were really respected, and some people weren't. But

Denny Miles 21:56

the Western Governors, I mean, the the strongest, the strongest, it's got to have a motion detector. The strongest Democrat, in most cases, was about the same as a Republican from Oregon, anyway. And unless you got into somebody from Colorado or California, they were all interested in the same issues. And as long as you talked about natural resources, you were right in line with Democratic governor of Montana or Washington or Idaho, whatever is Idaho had a Democratic governor? It must have Yes, Andrew Anders had Cecil,

James Moore 22:29

yeah, but I think that's about it, that you have to go back to labor and silver days. Probably we digress. So what I was

going to get sure at, which comes up pretty clearly in his story of election night and going over to the McCall, he gave the impression that he did things in the campaign that his staff didn't want him to do. So talk to me about that. Was that the case? I mean talking to him and vice versa, by the way. Okay, perfect, perfect. But talking to him, you know, pressing him on things, a lot of his campaigning came down to feeling, this is how I felt. I didn't look at the polls. I felt there's only one election that he really couldn't call about himself. When he was back in the in the legislature, he thought he had lost it as he was driving to the party, and it turns out he won it. But he had no he that's the only election. He had no sense about how he was going to do. He knew he was going to lose in 74 he knew he was going to win blah, blah, blah, right? And so he had really a great confidence in his gut feeling, but also, except for a couple of the state legislative races and the loss to Straub, you know, he really, never really had tough elections either. Oh, and

Denny Miles 23:51

I see I disagree. Isn't that going to be fun? I he didn't. The results looked good, yeah. But you know

James Moore 24:01

the well, the governor, governor's races, because governor's races are always tough, unless you're Bill size. More Can I write that? Sure you can. But you know, Governor, statewide races are going to be tough, but it's, it's like he honed this in state legislative races where he very rarely

Denny Miles 24:21

had, yeah, he was in it in even initially, he didn't come in first, but he was in a multi member district right to Republican scheme, and he represented an area that was pretty straightforward there, and people knew him in that area. But yeah, I guess I would say that I can't remember the initial part of your question, but in terms of,

James Moore 24:41

basically, did he behave as you

Denny Miles 24:43

Oh, well, no, you know, he loves shirt sleeve shirts, and that was, and, you know, there's, there's a uniform out there that you wear, long sleeve shirts and and you and a red tie and so on. And there's some research, actually, that it's pretty, you know, people see that kind of image. And. They have respect for it. We used to joke in the 78 campaign that there was going to be this news brief in the paper that Senator vikat Eva house had been broken into. But strangely, the only things that were missing were two camel sport coats and a whole rack of short sleeve shirts. But then we figured he'd go out and buy a bunch of short sleeve shirts. Anyway, we were having a conversation about what he ought to be buried in. And I said, Well, whatever it is, it's not going to be a long sleeve shirt, okay? And the kids said, Yeah, we know. We know. And so yeah, he would not like to do that. And he was, he's talked to you about Paul Newman, I'm sure the consultant and and Paul Newman is a genius, and we were trying to run him down. He's like, gone underground in Hawaii someplace, and literally a genius, ideas just flowing all the time, but also wanting to control things. You know, as a lot of consultants, speaking as one retired political consultant, you want to be in control, and you want to, you know, craft the message and you want, then the parrot to repeat it and repeat it every time, over and over and over again, whether you're running for president or dog catcher. And so he was not disciplined in that regard at all, because he had been 20 years plus in the legislature and, or was going to be 20 years in the legislature and, and that wasn't his style, and he was open to questions, and he would respond, he has probably told you, and he said to a lot of people that it was impossible to lie because he had terrible memory, and in order to be a good liar, you got to remember what you said to this person, this group, whatever.

And he just said what was and on the other side of the coin in 78 Paul had an expression, and I want to make it very clear that that without Paul Newman, we simply would not have won in 78 or 82 Now, Paul and I had some run ins, and we can go into that too down the road, but the fact is that we would not have have won without him. He's truly a genius, great ideas, and producer of television ads extraordinaire. So I give him all the credit in the world having said that he had an expression of, well, let's get a release out on that. And he'll have to say it, well, you know well enough of the governor to know what kind of reaction that would have. And in fact, without my even knowledge, they did that one time in late 78 campaign. I don't know if he told you the story or not, and he called up, and he was just mad as a hatter. And he had been driving in the gorge, pre cell phone days, of course, driving down the gorge and listening to radio stations, and they were, you know, broadcasting, and it was like a personal attack kind of thing. I mean, it was a real

shot, and it was at McCall, and it might have been true if you looked at it through a political consultant's lens, but, you know, it was, it was not Vic Atiyeh.

And he kept saying to his driver, evidently, you know, I didn't say that. I didn't say that. And so he got back, and he called the campaign manager, and he and he was ready to fire everybody. And he said, Danny, have anything to do with this? No, let me talk to Denny, because he kept running down the staff level to see who is accountable to it. And so he saying to me, he said, Okay, you get a release ready. I'm firing this person, firing this person, this kind of stuff. And I said, No, you can't do that. He says, well, but they did. They broke the rules. I said, Yeah, okay, so Paul bullied him into it and so on so forth. But we're at that point, like, two or three weeks out. And I said, it's gonna look like you can't keep control of your campaign staff. He said, Well, that's evidently the case, you know, kind of thing. And I said, Well, we don't want that to be known. It'll really and we're close, you know, let's hang in there. You know, things are going well, and so on so forth. Oh no, he was and the stubbornness is the one word that hasn't been used here in this recent time, but I've used it a couple of times, stubborn to a fault sometimes. And so finally, I said, Look, it was only picked up by one newspaper reporter, Doug Yoko, because it was inflammatory last minute, it met all the rules for don't cover in a campaign.

And I said, I'll call Doug at home. I remember, I'm staying at the Mark Spencer Hotel. That was my room just a couple blocks in the campaign. I'm talking to him on the phone, and I'm sweating, and it's October, no, I'm sorry. It's the spring and and so it's warm. And I said, I'll call Doug, and I will fall on the sword, and I will say Doug that went out without authorization. The governor never said that. If you want an apology, I'll get him. You can interview him. You know, it was a complete open faced. You can take whatever you want kind of thing out of this. And Doug, bless his heart, who I sat next to at the last old timers lunch at Lake Oswego Country Club and told him sorry again. He's probably tired of hearing it said, Ah, Danny said, everybody does that. I'm not going to do a follow up story. It's stupid. Thanks, Doug. Bye. Quick call the governor up at home, right? Said he doesn't want to even touch it. He's just writing it off. You don't have to worry about anything like that.

And so, yeah, that's an example of something we had after the in terms of staff doing things that he wouldn't want. Paul we had this big meeting after the primary election, and Paul Newman is the one who is primarily speaking, but there's the governor, and here's all the staff, and Paul goes into his standard, nobody has a job, you know. And let this no guarantees, and any of you can go and and, along with a lot of other really hard, you know, if you don't perform, you know, it was supposed to be a pep talk, right? Let's go the hell out of you, yeah, but you got Marge Russell, and you've got me, and you got people who have kind of given up their careers and or that have known him for years as family. I mean, Marge was at the Family Service here a couple of Fridays ago, and we're all kind of going, excuse me, you know, it's not we who need him, it's him who needs we. And so finally, the governor got a little embarrassed about the whole thing, and he kind of said Paul. Paul said there's at least one person here who's who's got a job, and that's me, I'm the candidate, right? I still have a job. And that broke the tension, and we all laughed, and Paul kind of shrunk away at that moment. So, yeah, that happens, yeah, you know, depends on how much control the candidate. You know, candidates shouldn't run their own campaigns, period, but they all, they don't want something that is anarchy going on in the campaign either. Right

James Moore 31:26

during the campaign. As communications director, were you involved in writing speeches?

Denny Miles 31:30

You know, I'm not a speech writer. Yeah. And Governor, not a speech deliverer, yeah? And so, no, I wrote position papers. I wrote definitive little on each ballot measure and things like that. I mean, I knew his positions on the issues from going traveling with him a bit, and I also did debate prep, and that turned out to be something that I he said, modestly, was pretty good at. The governor hated to prepare for debates. He hated to raise money, and he thought debates were a waste of time. They all the media wants to see the crash on the third turn and all that kind of stuff. And so preparing him for debates was, in fact, torturous, because you had to block out time that he would just as soon be at the mount here County Fair instead of preparing for debates. But you know, we it's the kind of thing that, again, I had some native ability, and I'd also done some research on and so the idea of even negotiating debates in 82 about how many times do you get to be the last person to speak, and poisoning the well, and bridging from the question you're given to the one you want to answer, and some pretty straightforward debate techniques that Anybody can buy a high

school debate book on and so we would identify the landmines and the issues where we knew that his position wasn't in his case, and in every successful politicians case, you do not answer based upon what the polls say exactly.

Okay, then that is just an absolute, you know. And of course, he would never have done that ever under any circumstances, even if it just meant instant losing. But there is such a thing as not, you know, answering something for five minutes, where you're just lashing yourself with sharp knives all through that period of time, right? So if you're on the if you're on the quote, wrong side of the issue in terms of the public, you still answer the question, but you do it in 30 seconds or 15 seconds, then you move on to something else, and that's just smart politics and so doing that in a debate environment, especially when you've researched the other side's positions, it was it was a those were important aspects of the of that campaign. So I didn't write speeches, I responded to media inquiries. I framed issues in ways that I felt were ones that he was comfortable with, number one and number two would be politically successful. Has he told you the story about and I can tell it from my side either way, but about Wayne Thompson and the card file?

Denny Miles 33:58

all right, this was this, the 78 campaign was the last volunteer, primarily volunteer based statewide campaign in the history of the state of Oregon. He had a bunch of maybe 10,000 cards by the time he got out of the 74 campaign that had been kept very, very carefully by volunteers in every county. And he nurtured that every time he would go to an area, the notice would go out. And so these people knew him. They knew him well. They were ready to support him. We had a table as big as this, which is what, four by eight, and it was filled with three by five card boxes. And you know, it was impressive looking. Wayne Thompson had been the sports editor and then became the political editor for the Oregonian, eventually editorial writer, and now retired, and so he kind of covered the horse race aspect of it, being the Blazers reporter earlier and so on. And he What is this, Denny? And I said, Well, these are the governor's volunteers. Oh, yeah, no, no, really, these are all well, but they're a lot of them are. Dead. And you know, this guy said, No, actually, Marge Russell and Sharon page, they do a very good job of keeping up on this and that. We have, we have county chairs, and in the big counties, we have multiple co chairs, and their job is to and this is a bullet that, when loaded into the chamber and the trigger is pulled, nobody can stop us. Now, that sounded like great political rhetoric, but it actually is true. Yeah. And so Wayne said, Well, all right, we we agree. We can test this.

And I said, Well, what kind of test do you have in mind? He said, Well, I want to pull at random 12 cards and call six people at random. Said, Sure. So he pulled 12 cards and he and I don't know, I honestly can't tell you, because I didn't keep the card file whether we got some luck, or whether it was really that robust, but he got six out of those 12 that he picked at random from his 12 right, that had met him several times, saw him last time he was in town, remembered a story he told could compare with Roger Martin and, oh for sure, Tom McCall. And these are from all over the state, and, you know, he came back, and, you know, it wasn't like that was a big story that turned anything, but all of a sudden, in the political editor of the Oregonians mind, we were credible. Yeah, we actually had this resource. We may not have enough gross rating points to go against somebody, but the fact that Tom did not raise a lot of money, and Roger really raised money, but in many ways, didn't spend it very well. And that we had these people literally going door to door to get out the vote. I mean, voter ID and getting out the vote with volunteers on the statewide campaign, right? Nobody would try that. Now, yeah, raise millions of dollars, get a good ad agency, have a consultant. That's the way it's done now, yeah, and in 78 that was the last time it was done. We didn't even do that. Even do that in 82

James Moore 36:45

fantastic. Did you read the New York Times?

Denny Miles 36:48

You know, we have a deal in our house that we we get the Wall Street Journal and The Statesman Journal and The Oregonian, and occasionally we pick up the New York Times.

James Moore 36:57

There was a great article Jimmy Carter's grandson is running for governor. Oh, really. And so there was a great article about that and the relationship with his grandparents, because Jimmy Carter was a knock on every door person, right, right? He claims he knocked on 600,000 doors, right? And the other grandson is, you know, how do I, you know, keep him at arm's length and he'd use all that expertise, yeah, and so he says specific things on the campaign trail to say, I'm not my grandfather, right, right? No differences in policy. But the difference between the pre consultant era right and the

post consultant era right

Denny Miles 37:35

is basically, I mean, in 78 it was Paul Newman and David Garth. And the only real problem with Paul was that when we were down in the polls, he wasn't that available to us. When we got better in the polls, all of a sudden, he became much more available to us. And that's all consultants. They do that kind of thing the I think, and I've said this before, you know, especially in 82 because I was closer to it then and I and I knew the mechanics of it then, and I was involved in every aspect of it then. But even in 78 that the secret weapon was the fact that a lot of people who voted for Vic Atiyeh, even though, in polling they might have answered, he hasn't really made the Oregon economy spring back. And this, again, is in 82 but a lot of people said, Yeah, but I met him at the county fair. I met him at the town hall meeting. He seemed like a really honest, straightforward, cares for Oregon kind of guy. And you know, that makes a difference, it really does. And if they had ever met Tom McCall, they would say, Wow, fiery speaker and all that kind of stuff. But he didn't have that kind of trusting. He had more of the politician look and Roger, bless his soul, he was the consummate politician. I mean, he just looked, sounded and acted like, like one. And when it came right down to it, in the in those days, the polling booth, I mean, the booth and the voting booth that swung it, it really did swing, and you could almost see that in the polling Yeah, that would give him a chance, you know, he's done a good job. Let's, you know, yeah. So the personal

James Moore 38:59

connection Exactly. It's just Yeah, so important in 92 when I did my very first class where I had everybody, had all the students had to go out and volunteer for campaigns. So Clinton's running, and Clinton had a big thing in Pioneer Courthouse Square. And one of my students, who was just a Dyna wolf Republican, or family Republican, back to Lincoln, shook his hand in that way. Yeah, she's and ever since she's been a democratic activist. But it's that personal connection just boom, yeah,

Denny Miles 39:29

no question about it, yeah.

James Moore 39:32

So stay on campaigns to 82 okay, okay, so you're the big kahuna at this point in terms of the campaign,

Denny Miles 39:42

yeah, bigger than I am now.

James Moore 39:45

But one thing that the governor really impressed on me is that he governed through his entire career as if he was not running for re election, right? And that to a certain extent, he. Seemed to kind of pride himself on not telling his staff if he was going to run or not, because he hadn't decided. And it began to drive, you know, deadlines were coming up. So was that the case in 82 you know, when, as the election is coming up, did you get a sense that we need to decide this, and he hadn't yet, because he the decision was in the fall before I believe,

Denny Miles 40:29

yeah, and I've got the date someplace, because in my own personal I'm writing down as much as much as I can remember, because I've got some relatives who can't remember, right? And so if I write it down and I read it, it'll be a fascinating story that I've never, never heard before, exactly. But one of the things that I have in a file is when he announced, but it was late, you're right, it was late in the in the process. Now, part of it is the wheels are coming off the state at that point, right, right? He's, he's busy, yeah. And so it's not so much that he's worried about whether he's going to get reelected or not, because he never worried about that, right? Worried about that, right, as much as we really wanted him to worry about it. So, yeah, it came late, but you know, we were in a heap of trouble. And not only was the state in a heap of trouble, but the governor was in a heap of trouble in 82 and even 81 and 80 in terms of special sessions and dealing with the legislature and all of that kind of stuff. And the polls were just abysmal. The public polls largely had one that showed, you know, once the colonoscopy got through the primary, and it was they were ahead of us, basically. So the way it the way it operated, I think it's it's a fair story that enough people know that it's okay to talk about it now is that we Sharon page ran the primary, and we had a no name bunch of opponents, but we got 83% and so

the way I talk about it today is nearly one in five primary voters picked none of the above.

I mean, Bill Patrick or somebody's name, \$200 in a voter pamphlet page, and that's all they had going for them. And that's a scary thing in a primary. Very scary. Bob Straub used to do that in Democratic primaries as well. And so going into that there's a group that I refer to as the influentials. And the influentials in Governor Atiyeh's circle were those people who sometimes were benign, sometimes they were toxic, sometimes they were very caring and loving and supportive and loyal to him, but they all kind of wanted to work around the system and whisper in his ear and things like that. And the business community, for example, as I think I said on straight talk the other night or no, it's something I wrote for a capital newsletter. It's all blending together, but I can remember lots of times when the so called business community was in the border control room, the conference room down there in the governor suite, and they were just fighting mad at him because he wasn't doing what they were trying to tell him to do. Now, when your political survival is at stake, there's a whole lot of throat cutting outside of the corner office that's going on. Everybody doesn't want to take any blame for anything when.

And you can read in Straub thing when they decided that, you know, Ken phobes should go and come on second press secretary to Bob Straub, it'll come to me, TV REPORTER, CHANNEL 12. Anyway, I've got a cartoon that says, take him for going to the French inquisition and the guillotine is around the corner says, Take him first. He was our PR guy. And so there was a lot of pressure on me at that point, is whether or not I was ever going to even have a job, let alone anything else. And I was running the Western Governor conference and so on. Well, we came away from the primary night party having met someone who had been highly recommended to us by one of the quote influentials, one of those people who thought that they were very powerful as going to be the campaign manager in 82 and it was clear from his behavior that night to everyone that that wasn't going to happen.

And so I tell the story. I'm driving back down the freeway with my wife Holly. Governor. Delores and Lon are driving back and Gerry without Al, because al decided to wait out, didn't need to go to that party, kind of thing. We're all thinking the same thing, only Gerry's thinking, God, Denny be perfect. The governor thinking, I think Denny would be great. I wonder if he'll be willing to do it. I'm thinking, my career is over. You know, if I accept this job, this is a losing campaign, you know, where the wheels are coming off, only the state, but also the campaign right now, and I'm telling Holly this, and she said, well, then what are your choices? I said, Well, if I stay, I'm going to be take him first. He's our PR guy, blame, blame the messenger, kind of thing. And that was lining up. Yeah, because other staff, who might have had some reason to be blamed, you know, wanted to have somebody there. So I'm, I'm really just in a, in a total, I'm going to lose everything here. And the end of my career period, I was somewhat despondent. Well, then there was a meeting, and we went to the meeting, and Blake Herring, who, bless his soul, great fundraiser, great leader.

And he, pretty much, you know, said, Look, well, this guy's not going to work out, so it's gotta be Denny and and I said, Well, okay. And I made just really a couple of rules. And then later I had a private meeting with the governor, and I said, No. I said, you know, as a Gethsemane prayer, if this could pass, yeah, let it pass, kind of thing, I just as soon not do it. And then he pulled out the Do It For Me line, and I said, I can't say no to that. He said, No, I know you can't say no to that. That's why I'm putting it that way. So then I said, Okay, here's I'll do it. And I said, I got just a couple of rules. Okay, what is it? And I said, I got to have a free hand once we get the plan put together. I don't want people having private meetings. I don't want people second guessing it. I don't want people coming to you and saying, you know, well, Denny's doing a terrible job, because he didn't do it my way. And he said, you know my style, I hire good people, we get a plan, we put it together, I leave them alone unless there's a problem, and then you come to me and we'll solve you know, it's just the same way he ran state government. And I said, that's fine. I said, then I've got, you know, one other requirement, and I already had that agreement, by the way, with the executive committee, with all the people who are really going to do things, who are really cared about him. And the second one was a private one with the governor, and that is, there'll be no private meetings with the consultant.

And he said, What do you mean? And again, this is a classic consultant gambit, and I've seen it. Never used it, but I've seen it several times in other campaigns that I was either a debate coach for or I was involved on the periphery, even as a volunteer, there would be an argument, and the argument with the consultant was, consultant wanted to do something that was totally bizarre and totally un-Oregon and counter to what the governor would or the candidate, if it was the earlier campaign would have wanted to do. And the consultant says, well, I'll meet with the candidate privately tonight, and then we'll get together tomorrow. Well, it always came out his way, yeah, you know, because you don't have a

chance to make the counter argument and so I said it just isn't going to happen. Because I said, I'm going to be one who everybody's going to look to is being responsible, and if somebody else is, you know, calling some shot that I really should be calling. I don't mind losing an argument, but I want to be in the argument.

And he kind of looked at me, well, of course, you know, to close off the loop on the story. It was 30 days later when the consultant said, you know, I'll meet privately with the governor tonight and we'll talk about this in the morning. I said, I'll see you there. And he said, No, you won't. I'm meeting with him privately. I said, Yes, you will. I might. That's my arrangement. And I mean, we're in a 30 person meeting, and he's standing up and I'm standing up and we're starting to yell at each other. And I went back to the campaign office and wrote my resignation letter, slipped it under the door of the Hilton Hotel, and at two in the morning the governor calls me, says, What do you need from me? What do you want? And I said, I don't want any private meetings with the consultant. We already agreed to that. He said, Tomorrow will be our last one. Now, did the governor meet with Paul Newman, private leader than the rest of the rest of the 82 campaign? Yeah, probably on the phone, or maybe even in a hotel. But was the consultant ever able to come to me and said, I've met with the governor, and this is what he has decided, no, that was now off the table. And so, you know, coming through with that arrangement was a key to being able to do the job as campaign manager. So I digressed. Keep bringing me back on track, Professor,

James Moore 48:45

you're doing great. Let's stick with the 82 campaign. Okay, we've got a lot of stuff, and I've talked to you before about this, and the governor goes into it in great detail, and I talked to him about it, about Ted Kulongoski Being a dangerous guy, right? So tell us for the record what, what was going on with that, because I'm going to go back. I mean, there's, there's a perception thing here, and so I'm going to go back and be reading the media pretty carefully. And, you know, seeing that kind of stuff

Denny Miles 49:17

as well. I'll just tell you that I've got, I've got the binder cool. I have every single ad that we produced, right? And I brought it with me to the so called post mortem at the Benson Hotel. Michael Murphy did not, I think that was his name, the manager that Ted brought in. And so they immediately brought that up kind of thing. And I said, we never called him dangerous. We called his policies dangerous. And you know who in their right mind would name a bill, the plant closure bill? You know he supported the plant closure bill? Well, that's not what it did. But wouldn't you if you were Ryan, get somebody say he supported the plant closure bill? So yeah, we never called him dangerous. We called his policies dangerous. Did people conclude. That that meant that he was dangerous. Yeah, we were not stupid, but we didn't call him dangerous. Now, maybe that's a fine line, especially if you're talking to Governor Kulongoski, but for us, it was really important. Now for the record, Bob Packwood, who I don't think, has had the RE introduction kind of friendship with Governor Kulongoski that Governor Atiyeh had, he called him dangerous in a letter he sent out because he decided that was that he was, he was dangerous, but it wasn't, you know, something that we were responsible for.

So, yeah, we were, we were very careful there. And then we were accused of negative campaigning. And I had, I was ready. I had all these quotes from German Whitcomb, the two guys who wrote the political column now dead, and, you know, said, You got to define negative campaigning for me, if negative campaigning is saying something true, but is basically saying something true about your opponent, that makes the opponent look bad. If that's negative campaigning, then Ted did it first kind of thing, and I had all of their ads too, of course, that we'd, you know, gotten copies of. But that's not negative campaigning, and that's fair game if, in fact, you you say something that's not true and it's negative about the person. That could be considered negative campaigning. There's another school of thought that says, if you do nothing but say bad things about your opponent, you can't win. And I kind of agree with that. I mean, you've got to have your base of support. That's the positive side to people to go to. You can't just bring the negatives up or bring that candidate down. So we did a lot of that as well, especially early on. But if you don't bring out the things that the voters don't like about someone, then you're only running half a campaign, right? So, yeah, we didn't call him dangerous. We called his policies dangerous. They were, as far as I was concerned, the governor believed it, and that moved numbers.

James Moore 51:52

Let's go back a little bit to the your comment about tn debates. He didn't, he didn't like him. Didn't really see the point of them. He's very clear about that. He was clear about when we talked. He was clear about that as well. It hits me to my political scientist wanting to have debates hard, but what you just said, You've got it. You've got to give the voters

something to vote for as well as something to compare against. It's standard now it's absolutely standard. But the debate thing, I mean, one reason that, from my point of view, debates are good is because there's a small chance the people who run the debates are not very good, but there's a small chance that you'll get the candidates off of their talking points. And in no other way are you going to do that. And so when the governor was saying, Well, we had other ways of doing that, I was thinking to myself, and at one point I did ask, so you just want me to hear your recipe. You know, I never get to know you. I never get to know these other things from your point of view as campaign manager, and then from your point of view as political consultant, how valuable is it for the voters to see a candidate who's not in control of their message, who has to respond to things that they haven't thought of as deeply as the things that they're really focusing on in The campaign?

Denny Miles 53:19

Well, in the case of Vic Atiyeh, the 20 years in the legislature just trumped a whole lot in the primary and, for that matter, in the general election of 78 and in 82 as well. Because as bright a guy as Ted Kulongwoski is, he'd been in the legislature for what I don't even remember, four years or three years or something like that. And, yeah, I did a, as we said, and that's the other thing he didn't like. We called him a union lawyer rather than a labor attorney. Well, I mean, you sit in a room and you say, Okay, what sounds bad? Yeah. And it's still accurate. You know, union lawyer sounds bad and labor attorney sounds really distinguished, yeah. And so it's one thing versus another, but anyway, they everyone he ran against in the time that I worked on his campaigns in 78 and in 82 were people who really either had a somewhat superficial understanding of the issues and would not be ready to answer something that was of a technical nature or an informational level. And in the case of Bob Straub and Tom McCall. It was because they, as you say, in the management school, flew at 50,000 feet and just simply looked and had the staff deal with the munition. Munition, no munition minutia. Minutia. Thank you, professor.

And so they really beyond McCall just went on and on and on about all of his accomplishments, and he knew about that because he'd been bragging about himself forever, and that looked bad, and he really didn't answer the questions. And Roger knew most of the issues, but was caustic and mean and all that kind of stuff and and so yeah, you're you have a real ace in the in the in the hand, when, in fact, you've got someone who knows the issues that well. Because. If you don't prepare for them, he'll still have knowledge of that issue, and we'll be able to say, I worked on that 10 years ago, and by the way, I was the chair of the committee, and, you know, on and on, never a chairman committee, but that, you know, it was in that position to have an influx on it, and so made it kind of easy, really. We focused on in a political debate, you can anticipate, I think, 85 to 90% of the questions easily Yes. And if you can't, you can have an answer for the other five to 10% of the questions that close enough, and you can prepare for that so they're really not off message. I don't think now flubbing, you know, free Poland, and you know, you can go through all of the classic, you know, you know, Jack Kennedy, and I mean, I got all the books. Those are the books, and moving to a smaller area for books. Here the first of the year, I kept all of those because, you know, I still have a book on the Lincoln Douglas debates, which were not debates, as I'm sure you know, they were long speeches.

But, yeah, you can always, you can always move to an area that is more comfortable for you, even if you have to say, you know, that's something I'm still working on, but you know, that's similar to and then immediately move to something else. You just have to be willing to do that. And with the governor Atiyeh was it was relatively easy. If he just sat down and said, Okay, you got to do this in 30 seconds. And by the way, you've got to leave it so that the other person is left hanging because you've just socked them, and because you were the person who answered last, we'd have different practice answers for known questions, whether you answered first or whether you answered last, or whether you did a rebuttal, or wherever it was. Because it's a it's a technical process, and the taste you leave in the voters mouth that are interested, and most people who are watching debates are really eager to be interested. They want to know what's going on. It's very narrow audience, except for the mistakes and so on. So yeah, it was, he didn't like to do it, but when he did it and he came out, there was what he probably told you the story. But he came out of one of those in 82 he came out of it one of them, and they said, Wow. People said you even had charisma. Yes, you should have told me, I didn't know you wanted charisma. Oh, I'll give you charisma, you know, kind of thing, yeah. And when you look at the real definition of charisma, he had it in spades. I mean, the guy was charismatic in the true meaning of that word, not flashy at all, but with incredible--

James Moore 57:23

yeah, people, people came around him, yeah. And liked to be there, yep. Like to be part of that. So what you just

described sounds different than what he was describing, about not liking debates. Did he have that kind of loose style? I can talk about anything when he was out on the campaign trail.

Denny Miles 57:39

Yeah, yeah, and he could. And so it was not for him, something that he felt like he needed to prepare for. But in a debate environment, you're in a much you're not in a town hall meeting in Fossil, yeah, exactly. You know, you're in a very structured environment, and you've got people who are looking for gotchas, and your opponents looking for gotchas. The media is looking for gotchas. You know, they're hoping for the crash in the third turn, as the boss used to say. And so you do have to prepare for that. And it is a relatively high risk kind of environment.

James Moore 58:13

So, and in any more the fishbowl aspect of it, yeah.

Denny Miles 58:17

And again, in Fossil you can go on for five or six minutes on a subject and do a follow up, and nobody's out to cut your throat. But in a debate environment, that's what it's all about, is cutting throats. In 82 when I had some control over the debate process, we had a strategy going into the you know, first of all, we challenged Kulongowski to debate on election night, election night, and second of all, we were negotiating with his law partner. I can't think of his name right now, who was a union lawyer. Basically, he was a negotiator and I was just a PR guy, right? But it was all set up, and I had conversations with a lot of people about this, so it's no big secret. I went in and they started talking about, well, we're going to have, you know, 20 debates, and we're going to do this and that because he wasn't as well known as governor Atiyeh was, and so on. So more debates was good. And I said, Well, I I, I'm hopeful that we don't have any well, but your guy challenged. I said, I understand that, but my negotiating position was, create an impasse, if you can here, because I would love to go back and say, I'm sorry, but they don't agree, and we've created an impasse.

And so, you know, they were just kind of shocked at this, and I said, you know, I'll negotiate in what you guys like to call good faith, because I've been told by my boss to do that, but I feigned. I hope this fails, you know, please send me in the briar patch kind of thing. You know, this failing is the best thing could possibly happen here. So and we agreed up front that nobody would talk about what we talked about in those negotiating sessions. And we agreed up front that we would control it. We wouldn't let the League of Women Voters control it or KGW control it, that we would be the ones making decisions on format and location. Location and everything else and and so I was pretty much said, I hope it fails. Well, we came up with, actually, exactly what we wanted as a result of that. And because they were really, really needing to have debates, they had to hit a home run. And the format was fair. It was not over balanced one way or the other, the locations, but Portland, Eugene Medford were, you know, I kept pushing for Bend, or, you know, Pendleton, or something like that. But then, you know, they gave up, like a second Portland debate for that and but in the end, we had exactly, really what we wanted, yeah, as far as the strategy was concerned, yeah.

James Moore 1:00:38

So let's shift from campaigning, which is always good fun, to the actual things that governors do they govern. One thing that I was asked when the governor died is, what would his governorship have been like without the recessions, and the sense that I get is, it would have been a pro business administration, but pro business he was. He was extremely worried about moral hazard, the idea that if you have too much government, people will just kind of expect government to fill in those holes. But he realized that there was a strong role for government, for people who are in need of things, for land use. He's very eloquent on that. I'm just talking about watching Kenyon road change, you know, he there's this a strong role for government there. So I it didn't, it didn't make it into any of the of the obits that were on the air, or anything, I don't think,

Denny Miles 1:01:43

no, the obits were hijacked by dealing with the economy and right,

James Moore 1:01:48

just I did, I did a the OPB, think out loud, one, which is 10 and a half minutes of unadulterated stuff. So I'm not sure. I don't think they asked the question, but, um, so. But my sense, it would have been. It would have been an administration that worked on making it so that job creators could create jobs people consumers were protected within, you know,

reason. But it would have been a moderate pro business administration. But then the recessions hit, and so there's, there's all sorts of things that hit that he has to respond to. You know, we've, we've cut these things now, we have to raise taxes. You know, all these kinds of things happen. So what is your sense of kind of what would have been without, you know, the kitchen sink and Rajneeshes counterfactual, counterfactual history question. And the reason I ask is, when I asked him what he wanted to accomplish, he really gave the impression that he was a blank slate. You know, he'd had all this experience. He wanted to run when, when Tom was retiring, because, you know, I can do that. But he didn't come in with boy. You know, in 1964 we dealt with this. I don't think we dealt with it the right way. We need to change that. None of that was really there. He just, he saw himself as a competent administrator who could be governor, and so then he eventually becomes governor.

Denny Miles 1:03:24

Well, let's talk generic political philosophy. He whether with or without the recession. I want to start with that maybe I'm using a debate technique here and bridging to what I want to say. I don't know, but he certainly believed there was an appropriate role for government, government in general. But he had a libertarian streak, that there was a whole lot of things that that government was involved in that it didn't need to be involved in, and that they were costing a lot of money. And fiscal conservative socially, I think even again, this the name and the labels don't do much justice to anything, but really pretty much liber liberal or libertarian in that regard. I mean, you look at his views on diversity and discrimination and the fact that most bills that he ever that he introduced as a legislator were human resource bills and things like that. So he talked about often, and hopefully he's talked to you about this as well, so you can quote him, and not me, but you know, coming up with carefully judging the essential versus the desirable, right?

And it was his view that there are, there is an infinite supply of desirable things out there, and if government does it, that means somebody else is paying for it in a lot of people's minds. And even if it's appropriate for government to do it, what happens is that in good times, before the Kicker came in, in good times, all these desirable things would get latched into place, and then in bad times, they couldn't get rid of them. Them, even though the revenue dropped, so you'd have to raise revenue in order to keep paying for them, and that ratchet would continue to grow. And I think one of his goals was to look at everything kind of and they use the phrase, you know, the base budgeting and all that kind of thing, well, or zero based budgeting. Nobody ever really did that but, but he sort of did and his direct involvement in that process made a huge difference. The story about him being in the in the actual budget meetings, yeah, okay, so you heard that one. It shocked the hell out of some agency people who walked into these meetings expecting to see John younger and Bob Smith, and all of a sudden, here was Vic Atiyeh and Lee Johnson, and you know, whoa kind of thing. And he said, the story about the whatever it was, \$60,000 and the guy says, Well, Governor, it's only \$60,000 and he said, Excuse me, if that was in your bank account or not in your bank account, it'd make a difference, wouldn't it? Yeah, okay, so now we're talking and and and getting into that minutia and making those decisions. I'll go so far as to even say that the recession actually helped him get that stuff done. Because if it hadn't been for the recession, working with the Democratic legislature the entire eight years, if we'd have had a whole lot of money, it would have been much more difficult for him to have screwed things down and and cut things that were necessary, that were really maybe desirable, maybe not. But certainly some people thought they were desirable or they wouldn't be there. Since then, it's, of course, just gone. Gone the other way. But during you can only do what you can do during your time. There, we would go to these Western Governors meetings and during the recession, and we would talk to people from Alaska staff. Staff would always get together, have a few drinks, swap lies, hopefully learn something. And they would say to us, oh, we wish we had your problem. What do you mean? We're cutting people we've got high on, or just that and something else. Of course, they had more money than anything. They were giving money. Yeah, they were giving money to citizens rather than taking money from citizens. And we said, why would you want our problems, because we can't say no, you can say no, you have every reason to say no. And if, if we just had something like that, it would make it so much easier to govern if we could say no. So I guess one premise would be that the recession, in some ways helped. It was too deep, however, to, you know, lean on that and say, Oh, that and say, Oh, that was a good thing, you know, because it wasn't a good thing. People were suffering. Industries were changing. A lot of things were happening as a result of that, but there was at least a more positive side. I mean, if you're dealing with Grattan Cairns and Ed faidley and John kit saber and Vera cats and so on, and they're not, you know, well, let's get rid of this entire program. You know, they wouldn't even think about doing that if there weren't in a situation where the budget had to balance in some way, shape or form? Yeah, so

James Moore 1:07:45

that really comes out strongly with the 84 special session on the unitary tax. I'm going to be fascinated to talk to people who were there, because it makes perfect sense. His impression was that the legislature really didn't have any clue what a unitary tax

Denny Miles 1:08:02

was, yeah, the unitary, unitary method of taxation, right? And so kind of like plant closing, you know

James Moore 1:08:08

exactly. And in my notes, I'm not doing repeal, I'm doing replacement of unitary, right? It was just a change. It's just a change. But he, he, it was injected in there that this was economic development, and that worked with the people that worked with the legislature. And so one day session, you know, there's a, I can't remember what the other economic thing was that came up in that time. There was one other economic thing that was during that one day session. But whatever it was, you know, it was economic development, I got a file. We can look it up. Yeah, exactly, exactly, and, but that when political science, it's called, you're not only setting the agenda, but you're setting the parameters within which things can happen, right? And the recession, in effect, provided right? Yeah, it was.

Denny Miles 1:09:01

And the same thing for the SAIF raid, right? Can you on the recording? Can you hear air quotes exactly around the word raid, exactly? It turned out it was, you know, we thought we were Attorney General said it was okay. You know, Bank of lawyers say it's okay. Supreme Court X number of years later, says We stole it. Interestingly, of course, that was the last of three special sessions in the election year during the campaign, and the treasurer of our campaign was Roy Livermore, who was on the board of safe and was just hopping mad that we were going to do that, and it was dead wrong, and all, and I'm dealing with him virtually every other day. And he just, he buried that, and he said, we'll get through this campaign, then we'll have that fight. And he won it, and he reminded me of it, that he won it, and you know, that was the end of that so, but yeah, you get we're kind of switching back to campaign time, because you tend to remember those stories. But Gerry Thompson calls me up. And I've got the date in my file over here, but you can look it up. And she said, Denny, we need another special session. I said, Gerry, you know, we're just the numbers are looking good and all this kind of stuff. And she said, Well, it's going to be a one day session. And I said, you know, she explained it to me, and you talk about setting the parameters. Well, here's what when you add up the numbers. You know, half of the of the body in one house is running, and all of the body in the other house is running, and the governor's running, and there's other people who are running, and, you know, they have to balance the budget so that we pretty much cut everything we can cut. Here's a revenue source that appears to be painless. Bang, it was. Yes, I don't I don't know how many people voted against it, but I wonder very many Yeah, and the governor counted six,

James Moore 1:10:43

yeah, yeah. So you they? Everybody didn't show up.

Denny Miles 1:10:47

Yeah, we ran the other way, basically exactly, exactly so. And I really think in terms of of his philosophy, that that everybody says, you know, he was tailor made for governing during the recession, and that's probably true. But if the recession had not been there, there's a there's maybe the possibility that the, you know, some of the numbers were fairly close in terms of elective politics and and, you know, Doctor No, as they called, kit saber at the time out, did us, I think, on record number of vetoes. But when we had Larry Campbell in the House who was willing to even he had discipline of his house members, and so he would say to them, even though you don't want to uphold the governor's veto on this, because you're on the other side of the issue. Once we lose that ability to threaten a veto, we've lost all our power as a minority. So you stand firm and we'll count, hold noses and see who's most vulnerable politically, and we'll let you go. And you know, that's the way it's done. And we were successful in being able to threaten that situation, make do it better, do it different, bring it back to me, and you'll get a signature. If not, you're going to get the veto. And that made it work.

James Moore 1:11:57

One of the things when he talks about vetoes, because I think that was the 33 veto session. But he talks about prioritizing, in his own mind, what is he willing to go on the mat for? What's, you know, it'd be great to have, but, you know, one way or the other, and one of the vetoes got overridden, and that was, you know, he didn't feel that strongly

about right? But so talk about being inside his office. Was he clear on what those priorities were, or was that in his own head?

Denny Miles 1:12:30

It was in his head primarily, but the but you could tell, you could analyze his vetoes, and if we laid him out here in front, I could probably even put three classifications on them. They were bills that were, at least in his mind and the mind of some legal experts and so on, just technically flawed, you know, and that was just bad legislation, and it needed to go away. And those didn't get overridden. In general, there were the serious, major philosophical benchmark kind of issues at the top end of those that he would even fight to keep them from being overridden. I mean, it was, we would lobbied them, just like we would lobby a bill with the legislature. And then there are ones you're kind of talking about in the middle of, you know, this just isn't good, you know. And I've got, I've got one vote, but it's the big vote, and so I'm going to exercise it because I can, yeah, and some of those got overridden, but none of the first category, and a few of the big ones, and some more of the of that middle category. And kind of from, from my perspective, when you're talking to me, some of this kind of depends on when, which sessions you're talking about, because early on, I was simply not in the loop. Yeah, I was just out of it because of internal politics. And then later, obviously, I was much more involved, much more directly involved, but still not as a policy person. I mean, my job was to communicate and to facilitate communication more than anything else. I've always felt from a public relations standpoint. And I learned this from from Sam Bailey, head of the department of information at Oregon State University, one of my mentors. His mentor, Fred Scheidler, was actually one of the very first press secretaries. He was press secretary to Smith, to Elmo Smith, yeah, yeah. And never

James Moore 1:14:19

understand why people wouldn't support Denny? Well, he's a nice boy

Denny Miles 1:14:25

anymore. Yeah, right. He's grown up. He's grown up. But and that is that Communications and Public Relations is not taking something that is bad that you've done, or you're doing or whatever, and trying to gloss it over and make it into something good. It's, in fact, taking something that you're doing and communicating it well, and getting it out there, and taking your best shot at something like that. The second basic principle is that the quote PR guy, which has a negative connotation, but the communications person, needs to be involved in the decisions, because some. Sometimes there's three right things within a decision, but one of them is easier to deal with on a communications level, and one of them is impossible to deal with on a communications level. And so you want to be there at the table arguing that, well, pretty much, I don't know. I got to get the chart out and find out when Lee left, but pretty much, at least halfway through Lee Johnson's term as as executive assistant, I was the guy they'd walk in and hand me the position paper and say, get a release out on that. And it wasn't until later that I was involved. And I got more involved for a couple of reasons. I don't know if you want to go down this path at this point or not, but

James Moore 1:15:40

no, I do, because I want to hit Lee and those dynamics as much as I can, because the governor glosses over him. Yeah, he's very kind. Yeah, he's very kind. And Joe, well, you know, the most he did is he felt that he said to me, and he said on the in the OHS thing. I felt that Lee wanted to be the governor. He's much more comfortable in an environment where he's in charge. Yeah, exactly right. And it's like, but Lee states for a long time. Yeah.

Denny Miles 1:16:12

Well, let's, let's back up. First of all, the governor's right in terms of that, and he's not always right when he wanted to blow up the sign, he wasn't right, although he would, he would say to me, right now, I was right, and I should have done it, but anyway. But so he's not always right. And when he was

James Moore 1:16:30

all women in a whale next to it, then I think it might have worked.

Denny Miles 1:16:36

Well, that was my argument against it. I mean, do you tell you this the whole story about that. I mean, I

James Moore 1:16:42

didn't, I did not interview him about that. Okay, yeah, well, all right, so

Denny Miles 1:16:46

you hold the Lee Johnson thought for just a moment. All right, this is the appropriate time, okay, all right, so we're gonna, this is a little comic relief, yeah? Well, just scared them. Whatever's out of me, I this is one of those things that is so crystal clear in my mind, because I've retold the story so many times, and it hasn't changed since the first time I told it. And to his dying day, the governor disagrees with me on this decision, but he comes into my office and lights up a cigarette, which, you know, everybody in that office smoked but me, and he said, Denny, you know that sign we're going to tear down, down at the California border with Tom, yeah, yeah. Well, all right, so we want to get a lot of coverage on that, right? And I said, Absolutely, Governor. And you know, by the time it was actually happened, I was up at the campaign but, and he said, Okay. And then Tom stole the show, as would be expected. And he said, Well, we're going to blow it up with dynamite. Oh yeah, right, okay. So anyway, no, no, we're going to blow it up with dynamite. And I said, So you remember the whale, another state explosion, as it were. And then I quickly pulled out because one of our very first speech writers was Larry Sterholm, who wrote the book on the [Dautremont?] brothers.

And I said, Do you realize that that location is, as the crow flies, about three miles from another terrible, gone bad explosion that killed people and so on so forth. And I said, this thing is just fraught with disaster. And he said, Look. And his phrase was that, what was the sheriff show, where the sheriff, the southern Sheriff, would go, handle it, handle it, handle it. And that became code. We didn't have to even say the words. He would just be sitting in his office or someplace else, and he would look at a staff member and go, and that didn't even get out of here. That meant, make it happen, right? Make it happen. So he said, he says, I'm going to Portland, just like that, flipped his fingers, and not the finger, but fingers. And I he left, and I just been going, Oh man, I probably didn't say man, I probably said something much worse. And the phone rings. It's Gerry Tom's Denny, my office. Now, yes, ma'am, stood up, walked down the office. In her office, Superintendent state police, head of the military department, the head of emergency services, Bob Oliver, the governor's legal assistant.

Who am I missing here? I mean Department of Transportation, head, you know, all of the affected parties are there. And the first word out of her mouth was, you've got to talk to the governor out of this. And I said, Okay, give me some help here. Well, they started off, you know, it'll we have to close interstate five. You can't really do that. Well, I said they close it all the time for road work. No, not for this. You can't do it all the time. There are specified federal rules and regulations. The National Guard says, you know, we just don't, they don't give us those kinds of things. You know, we don't get to have explosives. They may give us some ammunition to practice shooting. And it went on and on and on. And eventually we did talk him out of it. And of course, again, Tom got all the good quotes out of it anyway, and that's going to happen. But the sign got changed, yeah, and we didn't, you know, have a hillside come sliding down on Interstate five, or people getting shrapnel, or whatever the case might be. Exactly,

James Moore 1:20:00

right. So destroyed by Governor just

Denny Miles 1:20:04

and again, the two classic cases are the whale and the [Dautrement] brothers. And how ironic that you can get the tunnel number, whatever it is, just a short distance away from that border position. Absolutely. Oh, scary. Very scary. Okay, Lee Johnson. Lee Johnson, governor elected, and one of the things that Travis cross, who was our consultant, or non consultant, he was the transition officer. He was the one who was leading the transition. He said, I'm really surprised that Vic doesn't have a long list of people that he wants to get into positions. And I said, well, to my knowledge, you know, number one, they didn't expect him to win. And number two, that's not his style. You know, we, shortly after that, took the question of what's your political party off of any application forms for boards and commissions or staff or anything else, hired a tremendous number of Democrats, kept some of Straub peoples on board.

And so with the executive assistant, first of all, Lynn Newbery, I think would have been his first choice, but Lynn made the very, very specific comment early on, I'll help you, because I think you're wonderful, and I this that something else, do not ask me to be executive assistant, slash Chief of Staff. I'm too busy down here to do that his next choice. I think it's clear, he may or may not have said this, but I believe it's clear just based on having been there at the time, was Gerry

Thompson, and he sent Travis up to talk to Gerry, and Gerry eventually said no. Much to the chagrin of her husband. You don't say no to the governor kind of thing, but she was at a very critical point with the merger of ops and Blue Cross and all that kind of stuff, and it was just literally would have been incredibly irresponsible for her and her family, for her to take that position. I don't know how many other people were on that list, but Lee was not obviously a first choice, or probably not even a second or third choice. But now, having said that, Lee, in his defense, incredibly bright guy. I mean, I think we're talking Stanford and Ivy League and, you know, old money kind of education and great if they had SATs back then. I mean, probably perfect scores and that kind of stuff.

Tremendous governmental experience coming into the position knew what was going on new state government, but unfortunately, really, probably would have been better at being Governor than being Chief of Staff. And also, unfortunately, he took the model for Chief and this is my opinion. Obviously, all this is my opinion. He took the model for Chief of Staff from previous governors, specifically McCall and Straub, where there was a very strong executive assistant, Bob Davis. You know, you look those up kind of thing, but those are people who pretty much ran state government, and the governors, again, flew at 50,000 feet. Well, you know enough about Vic Atiyeh to know that he didn't. He, in fact, was at 50,000 feet. But same time, miraculously, he was down at ground level checking on the troops. And so it was very frustrating, because he never really got that. And he tells the story, and if he hasn't already told it, I'll make it very brief, and you can do follow it, but both Lee Johnson and Lynn Newberry during the transition or right afterwards, is they're going through the budget, and they said, Well, here's what we're going to do. And they laid it all out. And he just sits there and listens to them laying it all out, and then he says, Okay, well, we're not going to do that. We're going to do it this way, right?

And he saw it as Chief of Staff and not as the chief operating officer of the state. He was the chief operating officer as well as the CEO of the state. And Lee never got that also, Lee ended up bringing in a lot of people who he knew, because there was a vacuum. I would never have been hired as press secretary had I not been hired the day after the campaign ended. And that was close as it was, because once you win, all these people come out of the woodwork that have bigger resumes and better background and all that kind of stuff. And I, you know, said, I've earned this. I've earned a chance to show you I can do it. And the governor said, You're right, and that's how I got hired. But Lee had other people who would have been more loyal to Lee than they would have been to the governor who were in those kinds of positions. And so, yeah, it was a it was not until we started the media availabilities that I began to have a little more influence. And the governor right away the media says they're not getting enough coverage, not getting enough access. That's just a standard thing. There's always a meeting in the beginning of every administration where the dean of the press corps comes up and says, we need more access. We need more coverage. No matter how much they're getting. They need more. So they did. And so the governor calls me in and says, How are we going to deal with this?

Well, that's how the so called Media availability came about. And I think I've told you before that. I think that was the first time that term was ever used. News conference, obviously, is when you have something to say, you take the responsibility for it being newsworthy. Media availability is, I'm here. You got questions. Anything you want to ask is fine. I don't think there is. Was a governor. I mean, I don't know about the Hatfield initiative, but certainly, from a call to the current governor, there only one really could handle that level of questioning, where you don't know what you're going to hear, you don't know what question you're going to get, and 99% of the time, you've got an answer for it, but it's still just like debates required some preparation. And so I was the guy who prepared him, and if it was nothing more than reading the paper and making him aware that this is something that report thinking like a reporter.

And so then we would talk about an issue, and I would say, so where are you on that? And he would say something, and I'd say, Yeah, but do you realize? And then I would bring in other information from other sources, not my personal opinion, but just other things that I had picked up from the papers or from the TV or from any number of sources talking to people, and he I wasn't aware of that. Well, I'm sorry that was Lee's job, or another assistant the governor to make sure he knew about that. And so they were Lee and other assistants would if they wanted to get a certain answer out of the governor or a certain position out of the governor, they weren't doing what I think is good staff work, which is to present him with all sides right, and let him decide they were lobbying him, rather than providing him with information. So then he would go back to Lee and say, Lee, what about this? This, this? Oh, yeah, but don't worry about that, you know. And so he was losing credibility, and I was gaining access. And it was about halfway through Lee's tenure that then Lee would come into my office and sit down and say, Oh, Denny, we we really need to have you on board on this one and help us with the governor kind of thing. And I'd say, Well, don't start off with that. Tell me what you're talking

about here, and then we'll see, you know, whether this fits what we're trying to do, communication wise and so on.

And that led to more and more, you know, sort of direct involvement in policy matters. But I've, you know, I didn't have to go talk to legislators, and I didn't have to Gerry said no, and Lee was supposed to business people and legislators and elected officials, and I was the one that had to say no or bad deliver bad news to everyone else. And so most of the time, if you go back in the clippings, in the in the room down the end of the hall here, you'll see my name associated with bad news or bad things. And of course, when it's good news, you have the boss right announce it, and that's fine. That's in your job description, yeah. But yeah, he was frustrated with Lee, I think, two months in, and he has a tremendous amount of loyalty to someone and wants to give them a chance. And that's the up the creek without a paddle award. I mean, you take risks, and I'll stick with you. But it finally got to the point where he just couldn't stick with him that long, and went to Jack Faust and said, you know, talk to Lee. And he did. And you know, Lee was much happier after that.

And by the way, Lee was incredibly loyal to the governor the other way around. Was involved in the 82 campaign, was on the steering committee, but it wasn't until, you know, he was a circuit judge, again, where circuit judges rule in their own courtroom, and they have that dominion and that domain that he was really a happy camper and again, very talented, well knowledgeable about things, knew about politics, all these kinds of things, just didn't understand the role that Governor Atiyeh had in mind For a chief of staff. And Gerry Thompson did understand that role. And even she got bit a couple of times, you know, and she'd have to say, you know, she'd say, No, Governor, I briefed you on this. Here's the notes, remember, and he would have forgotten about it, but he was kind of almost scarred or wounded from the experience with Lee that it made it more much more difficult for anyone who was going to follow that, because it was really, I am the governor time. Yeah, and soon that wasn't a problem at all, because he understood that Gerry was, in fact, doing his bidding, and was speaking for him, and not just running off on our own and doing anything.

James Moore 1:28:59

One thing that struck me is you, you guys took off the what political party question are you? He and I talked about that. My experience with that is when Bob Smith left Congress the second time and Greg Walden came in. Greg Walden filed up, fired all the Democrats in the second congressional district, and then finding out that Bob Smith, when he went and became speaker, some in some something in the mid 60s, he actually put in a loyalty thing. He would only hire Republicans. So at some point, I'll be interested to, you know, big Bob Smith's brain about whatever, but just fascinating to look at that. What's the importance of party loyalty as you go through

Denny Miles 1:29:50

so I'm sitting in my office, it's, I don't know, a month, month and a half, two months into the administration. Leo Hagstrom comes in. And sits down and starts talking. And you've seen the layout in that office, but it's basically semi private. It's kind of open. Your assistance, your staff, what little I had at that point are close by. And he goes, so Denny, I need to run something by you. So okay, what is it? Leo, he says, Well, I got a guy I want to hire as the top PR person for the Department of Human Resources. And I said, Okay. And I said, But why are you running it by me? He said, Well, that's the way it works. You know, we don't hire in state government a top PR person, maybe even a second or third level PR person, unless the governor's press secretary approves. And I said, Well, Leo, there's a new sheriff in town. And you know, you got hired by the governor.

And you know, I wasn't there when, when he gave you his marching orders, but I'll guarantee you that they were marching orders that said, within these parameters, this is what I want done, and come back with results, and I'll leave you alone and do what you want to do and do what you need to do. And he said, Well, yeah. And I said, well, that works in personnel as well. And he said, Oh. And I said, Look, if I approve who you hire, then I'm responsible for your PR program, but you're the one who's responsible for your PR program, and I'm not going to get involved in that, and I'd love to know who it is, and all that kind of stuff. He goes, Well, he said he's working for a Democrat, and I we didn't look up party registration, so he didn't even know, and I to this day don't know what his party registration was. And I said, Well, who is it? You know, tell me who it is. And now that you know you can hire whoever you want, tell me it's Dave fiscum. Oh, well, I recommended that Dave contact you when I heard the job was open and but he's working for less a coin. I said, I understand that, but he's looking to come back to Oregon, and he is great. I worked with him when he was at Portland State and I was at Oregon State, and, you know, Hanks from face just lightened up. He said, Well, it is a new sheriff in town. I really do get to do what I want to do, and don't have to run everything by the corner office.

Well, that all got reversed in previous in later administrations. Yeah. I mean, you didn't get a job in state government unless you were approved by the coroner office, which is just short sighted, if not stupid, and we didn't care when we hired people the speechwriter I had, and the entire time I was there, two of the best I had, I think, are long time, lifelong Democrats, but they were people who had a record of being loyal to who they were working for, and they were great and talented people. And who cares what party you were registered in, it's not as a speechwriter. You're not writing for yourself. You're writing for this guy. Yeah,

James Moore 1:32:33

exactly. Let's switch gears a bit, sure, and let's go to some of the fun things. Let's do the Rajneeshees. I talked to the governor about the Rajneeshees, and it ended up being like about 15 minutes of stuff. But So it's clearly a big PR issue. It's clearly a big state governance issue, and he takes the stance of, I'm not going to talk to him. He's he stepped at least one or two steps back. So Norma Paulus is the one that people see out in front. To a certain extent. Vern Duncan is there as they talk about school stuff. But Norma

Denny Miles 1:33:18

was there really just for the election aspect, Yeah, same thing in terms of with their elected Gerry was really the primary contact. So

James Moore 1:33:27

run me through the Rajneeshees in that time.

Denny Miles 1:33:33

Well, it was difficult because the policy in the office, and you really need to talk to Gerry more about this than anything else, but the policy in the office was, you know, we do not, we don't recognize them in effect, right? And because what they wanted was they wanted, you know, from the federal government, they wanted immigration forgiveness, if you will, with, you know, some sort of religious exemption or something like that. And from state government, they wanted land use forgiveness, and very quickly, we found out and had intelligence resources that that I don't to this day know if I'm able to talk about them. I don't mean to over dramatize it, but you know we we had intelligence, and we knew that there were a whole lot of very innocent sannysasins, and that there was a core element that were basically criminals. Now we had proof at that point.

You know, Turner would have had them in federal prison someplace earlier than some of them were right. So, and then they had such a close society that it was hard to get that kind of smoking gun kind of proof. But yeah, they were, you know, this fun loving, wonderful group of people in purple that the media just loved to cover, because they were great, you know, television, yeah, yeah, you know, automatic weapons and Rolls Royces and flowing robes and free sex and all that kind of stuff. And. And we pretty much, you will not, well, you will not find, except in a news conference environment, the governor really addressing, except for just the issues of land use planning and antelope and you know that? Well, that's an election, and that's the way the system works and so on.

Underlying all of this is a very, very strong feeling on his part that as far as far as these people were concerned, this is religion, and there is a you can have the strangest religion in the world, but by golly, you've got the freedom to do it. Now, we knew that there was a lot more going on than just religion, but as far as the innocence were concerned, it was a religion for them, and so we wanted to protect them. We also wanted to protect them from the criminal element that was at the Big Muddy and in downtown Portland and in Antelope. And so you get a really fine balance there between the freedom of religion and protecting Oregonians, whether they're wearing purple or not, and enforcing the law, when, in fact, it comes time to do that, the governor was involved in a lot of respects, because he had resources. He had the state police, he had the military department, he had the kinds of people who could actually do things.

You know, Charles Turner was involved, because he had the federal aspect of it, and they had some intelligence things going on as well that were rather amazing. There was a point toward, toward the when it, when it began to mature, and I use that term, not as in became more easy to deal with, but as the issues begin to come together. And it was very clear that they had stashes of weapons and that all this kind of stuff where anymore we were, you know, training the National Guard in Clarno, because they had armored personnel carriers and lots of people with guns, and they were all of a sudden they had live ammo because they were in Clarno, and that isn't very far from Antelope and chanico and the Big

Muddy and we knew that they were getting ready to leave, he was getting ready to run off the country, and all this kind of stuff was happening.

And a reporter came into me and said, Denny, you don't understand this is serious. The reporters know more about this than you guys do. Well, because we were keeping quiet about it, we weren't saying anything. First of all, I don't want shorthand. And he said, you know, he just started really saying, Listen, I'm not speaking as a reporter. No, I'm just speaking as an Oregonian. And you guys are just sound asleep on this one. You just really, you can't believe the stuff that we're hearing from good sources. And so of course, we knew all that stuff, and we're dealing with it, and we're ready for anything they could do. That was the governor stuff, I bet he said it during his interview with you. We knew we were ready for anything they could do, quote, unquote. And so I said, Okay, just a minute. I said, can I go on absolute, deep background with you and to me, and I always try to define it for reporters, because everybody has a different definition. Not only can you not use this, but you can't even use it to find out about it from somebody else. You know, I'm just trusting you on this because this person was, you know, credible, and I knew this person, and so on so forth.

And I said, Come with me, after he agreed to that, and we opened up the border control room. And here's a state police officer sitting at a radio in the in the border control room, antenna wire running out up to the top of the Capitol building. And I, I forget what the code was, but you know, can you tell me what you know peach tree is? Is what's happening right now. And so you know, 9995 96 peach tree. Peach Tree, 9596 status, everything's quiet, 10 four, and this reporter's like, and I said, peach trees on a bluff overlooking the ranch right now. Okay, I won't ask any more questions. Thank you. And that was really one of the more obvious ones. I'm sure they knew he was there, but he was on public property, or he was on somebody else's private property and and, you know, we the Governor's executive orders that he luckily didn't have to sign that are sitting down the hall here. You know, we had planned out just about every possible thing.

I mean, it was like when we used to do Trojan [missile] drills, you know, for the nuclear power plant. This was a nuclear power plant that could overheat, as far as we were concerned. And I was with the governor in Taiwan, a Taiwan hotel, when the guru was getting ready to flee the country, and we were talking in code, because we were worried they tapped our phones. But Gerry and the governor had worked out codes, and we knew, of course, the federal government knew exactly where he was at every minute. Knew how much petrol he had in his jet and how far he could go, and where the last airport was that he would land, and that's where he was arrested, yeah. And so having that kind of involvement, but at the same time, pretty much not putting on, because we really weren't putting on, we just were not responding, and as a result, looked like we were not engaged. And most of that occurred either leading up to or after the re election campaign. I'd have to get the timeline out, but so it wasn't really a political matter for us, and that. Sense, but it was just the way he would handle something like that, just the kind of approach that he would take, number one, being fair minded, protecting the innocent, making sure that you knew what was going on. Have good people. You know, state police were just, they did great work. They just did great work, and the federal government did great work. And I don't mean to to to say, you know, that Norma Paulus and Vern Duncan didn't do great work as well. It's just that they their scope was rather narrow, whereas, whereas, whereas, whereas the governor's was the

James Moore 1:40:29

whole, yeah, McGill, but their scope was also more on public that's true. I mean, that's, that's and they were they

Denny Miles 1:40:36

the only time the governor talked about it. We never called any news conferences about her issue. I don't believe any press releases on it was when he was asked about it in media availabilities, and his answers were, I'm wondering if those tapes are available. Wouldn't that be nice if those were available down there, if the Legislative Assembly media system had those, that would be something to look into. But what else about Rajneesh, or anything else? Well, I

James Moore 1:41:04

uh, one specific rush each thing, because the governor is not sure if he was poisoned or not. Right? We're not either. Okay. Were you there?

Denny Miles 1:41:10

Was I at the event? No, no, heard the story later. No, in fact, I'm still trying to we up to and including the 20th of this

month, regularly covered the governor's health and after he was governor, whenever, when he was governor, whenever it affected his schedule, we would put out a release on it right. And after he was governor, whenever he was admitted to a hospital, we would do something that those were kind of our guidelines, rules, whatever. And so I've been trying to correlate what was happening. And I dealt a little bit with Les Seitz on this, who was probably the most knowledgeable person on this subject on the planet, more so than most of the pros niches. And we can't correlate that date with anything, what was going on there, or something else, my doctor, Bill Drips was the governor's doctor. Okay, because we both were coming to Salem and Gerry had a contact, and she was his doctor. He's no longer with us.

And years later, before Bill died, I just said, you know, come on, Bill, time has passed. Was there any possibility? And he said, Well, doctors don't ever say there's never a possibility. But the fact is, we tested for everything, and we don't know why he was sick. And he was, as he says, sicker than he'd ever been before or since. And you know, nobody from the sannyasins are going to say anything more about it, because they've all done jail time for other poisonings, right? But he certainly had to be a target. Oh, yeah, absolutely, he certainly had to be a target. And we did have the office swept for bugs, yeah, and, and because we were worried about that, and we would have we talked about it. We often would talk about it in the winter street house, rather than in the office, just in case the bugs were missed or something new had been left. And we don't have any evidence that it ever was bugged, but they probably would have tried if they if they could have, but yeah, the poisoning question, to me, is an open question, and I'm not into historical speculation. But a, he was a target. B, right around then he was really, really sick just before an important event. And C, the doctor, who was the attending physician, who who used to teach classes at the Health Sciences University, along with being my doctor, flat out, said, We don't know. Now, he also said, there's a lot of times we don't know. Oh, yeah, exactly. You know, they do diagnosis by elimination, or he got well, so why worry about it? Yeah, you know, it's not a chronic condition, so why get upset about it? Yeah, but yeah, it's, it's a it's titillating. Yeah,

James Moore 1:43:53

we don't know precisely also how sophisticated the Rajneeshees were, right?

Denny Miles 1:43:59

There were some that were more sophisticated than others, yeah. And

James Moore 1:44:05

so if I was a superbug, no one had ever heard of before the I don't know one suspicion, right? But it's probably just the same thing that they use in other places where it would have shown up. But So, but, yeah, but by the same

Denny Miles 1:44:15

token, you know, I'm very hesitant, other than, you know, this happened and this happened, and this was going on at the time. Oh, yeah, you know, which is totally circumstantial. I'm personally not willing to say I think he was poisoned by the right I've never said that fact, but the I don't know is a perfect answer to that question. There's only, rather, is rule, there's only three answers to any questions from the media. You know, I know. I can tell you, I know, and I can't tell you, and this is why I can't tell you, and I don't know, and I don't know, it's really hard for politicians. They don't like to say that, very hard.

James Moore 1:44:48

Yeah, it reminds me of my very first graduate student paper, I was doing something on yellow rain was early 1980s so were the Soviets. And, you know. Poisoning people in, oh, that was the moment right there. Let there be poisoning people in in Laos and in Afghanistan, and doing all this stuff, doing research on it, I discovered a really interesting thing. Up until 1960 the US State Department travel advisories to Southeast Asia, warned against all these diseases, but not bubonic plague. After 1964 they all warned against bubonic plague. And one of the rumors that's kind of substantiated, but it's an I don't know question, is the US actually planned to use bubonic plague infected fleas and dropped them out of the airplane. And so the reason this became an I don't know for me, is my dad went to Vietnam in 66 and I vividly remember him being inoculated for bubonic plague because his arm swole up. It was awful. And then he went off to war and all that kind of stuff. So it's a total, I don't know, so in my paper, it's a long footnote, because it can't be in the text, because it there's nothing there. But look at all these cool things here.

Denny Miles 1:46:13

Yeah, this lines up with this, with this, with this exactly. So it might be

James Moore 1:46:19

so put it down there. Put it down there. Okay, enough of Rajneeshees. Um, we've been going for an hour and 40 minutes or so, so let's, let's end up with, with a kind of a more of a meta Vic, talking to him about governing. He really liked governing. I think what my favorite story so far is him telling his brothers, I'm not coming back to the carpet business, because it's good to be the governor and not have to deal with CO leaders. He really liked being Governor, but in reading the oral history. There's a lot of things that he wasn't able to accomplish. So talk to me about him as you know, kind of in my mind, sometimes he's the happy warrior. He just loves this stuff, and sometimes it just rolls off his back. You know, we didn't get that. They're Democrats, you know, I'm a Republican, but there were a lot of things that he proposed, some small, some bigger, that just didn't fly. So talk to me about him, and from your point of view, how big a deal was that to him? You know, he's got the context of the recession going on for most of his time in office. That's really kind of dictating lots of things, except for the first year, yeah, except for the first year. But there's, there's lots of ideas that he has that just, you know, some of them make it up, so they're almost legislation, and then they fail on the floor. Some of them die in committee. But there's just a lot of ideas that just don't quite go and so, you know, if you were to line up all of his what he wanted to accomplish as governor, as time went on, I have a feeling you'd have successes over here, but you'd have a lot of failures over here. So what was that like? I mean, in your point of view, is that kind of normal for a governor? Was it because of the bipartisan control issue? Well,

Denny Miles 1:48:25

I don't. I've only worked and for a very brief period of time after 87 for governor or of Nebraska and so and then I helped a senator that she appointed to office due to a death in office, just set up his office and decided I didn't want to ever work in Washington, DC. So I don't know that there's a way to compare with other governors, but from reading a lot about I mean, let's take Floyd Mackay's Sprague thing, and you read them all, and to me, a governor, especially who's working with the other party in a time of crisis, you run a lot of things up the flagpole, and you don't necessarily have an expectation that you're going to get them all. You have a hope that the legislature is going to change, although my recollection is the numbers were spread far enough that that wasn't going to happen, right? So you pretty much have to deal with with the reality of it. He would never show that frustration publicly. He would get frustrated a little bit on things, on executive appointments in the energy facility siting Council and some things like that. Lot of frustration over the budget for his office Exactly, exactly, well.

And let me finish that thought and then come back to that because, but inside, you know, the door closes and you know there's some stomping and there's. And flop into the hand on the desk, and, and, you know, you know that he is very unhappy. And, you know, why did this person do that? And I thought they were on board and this kind of stuff, because he came out of a legislative environment where, you know, Ted Halleck was a good friend, yeah, and, and, you know, people, and he got things done in 77 because he worked well with Jason Bowe, who was more conservative than his caucus by a lot. And so the two of them together got things done and such. So he came out of an environment I like the word comedy, because he thought that's the way it ought to work. Well, if you look hindsight through the lens of history, as you guys like to say, that was kind of where things were starting to change. Yeah, the post Watergate, not so much the media, although they were changing as well, but the all of the redistricting and stuff that was going on that ended up with, you know what, maybe four or five competitive Senate districts and 10 competitive House districts. Now, if we're lucky, if we're lucky, yeah, exactly, depending upon how they recruit and everything else.

And so people were much more ideological. And that's also when, you know, Walter Huss and and Bill Sizemore. I mean, all these kinds of things started to be happening at that point. And doctrinaire sort of decisions, not I'm doing this because it's good for Oregon, which is the way he was brought up so it was, it was more of a philosophical shock to him, I guess I would say it's analogous to Governor Kitzhaber wearing jeans to a joint session. Yeah, that just was beyond the pale, as far as he was concerned. Or, as he says, The the person who followed me in office basically being a rapist. You know, these are things that that you know, just would distress him greatly, and it was an indication of how he would approach something as a policy matter in the legislature as well. So it really was a change around him, a copernicum moment, if you will. Yeah, you know, all of a sudden, instead of everybody thinking that everything rotated around the earth, everything rotated around something else, and the earth was and so the legislature changed the way it did things.

Yeah, I like to say that, you know, you could, you could really depend on legislators to do the right thing for Oregon.

And there are some right now with great respect for people who are willing to run for office that they're so doctrinaire that they would want to do it based on the doctrine, not necessarily what's going to be good for the state of Oregon. And I would chastise them for that. I've chastised I'm going to an event at Peter Courtney's House on Monday. I think that is a fundraiser for Democrats, and I'm going to it because Senator Courtney great respect for the governor, and he wants me to make a pitch for the archives here, so these people will deliver some stuff and to tell them when the thing is going to be and you know, Peter was on the phone with me within 12 hours of the governor's death. Whatever you need, whatever you want. You just You just holler, you call Debbie. She'll take care, you know, that kind of thing. Well, he's from the old school, yeah. And you know, he's still impressed by the fact that when he was a freshman legislator, he got in to meet with the governor on an issue, yeah. And that's old school as well. And he's, is there anybody who's been the legislature longer than him? Now, I don't think so. So there's a classic, you know, anchor point here of what it used to be and what it is now. And I think Oregon actually was slower than some other states, and certainly slower than Congress, to get into that kind of position, yeah. So it

James Moore 1:53:35

took until, really, the 94 elections, really, yeah, it's what swung it.

Denny Miles 1:53:38

So, yeah, he would be very frustrated with that and very unhappy with that and disappointed in that, but it was lucky for him. It was better, at least back then, than it is now. And so, and I can't even, you know, ferret out one issue over another on something like that. You remember that he met weekly, right with the leadership, and those were substantive meetings. I was not in the 99.9% of the time, but, but they were substantive meetings, and there were that's where things were worked out, because in the Oregon legislature, the leadership has pretty much the throttle on everything, and they can decide whether something live or that lives or dies, and that's where the negotiations really occurred. And so he there were a lot of things that you might use the word failure. I would say things that didn't fly. But Okay, that's

James Moore 1:54:32

fair. It's just, it just struck me, especially talking about a second, I mean, the first term there's, I mean, the recession comes in, but there's just, it's a lot of kind of catching up. It seems just in the way he remembers it. Second term, hey, you know, they elected me because they they trusted me over Ted for ideas to keep guiding us out of this thing. And so, you know, there's an. Tick and we're going to go recruiting, there's an uptick in all that kind of stuff. So there's the second term. Seems to be much more Vic Atiyeh's term.

Denny Miles 1:55:07

Yeah, that's certainly when he did most of the trade missions and it's a second term for an Oregon governor, until recently, is the one where you don't feel any even, even subtle, subconscious, pressure on you. But yeah, I think that those are just part of the game and part of the understanding. I'll even go so far Jim as to say that I think it probably hurt him more when his successor publicly and with alacrity and now, announced that he was going to dismantle everything that Vic Atiyeh had done, because everything he has done is bad, just by definition, because he's the one who took the lead on it. Now, he didn't successfully dismantle everything, but his statement about, you know, we're going to get rid of the dry rot in state government, you know, just cruel kinds of things.

He was talking about people, you know. And okay, fine, you can get your people in, and that's good too. But as it turns out, he's a moral degenerate. So you know, what good does it do that you bring in all these people, and all of a sudden party loyalty comes back in? And so that bothered him probably more than when you were in the game, and you had the veto pen and you had agency heads implementing things. I mean, I presume it might be a little scary to say this, analogous to our current president, you have some authority. You can just get done. You know, you're the power to initiate as an executive is fairly strong. I think you would probably have the chart on this. But I think Oregon is kind of in the middle in states where the extremely powerful governors and the extremely weak governors in what you can just get done through appointment process inside and so you there's some things you can just do without the legislature, but you still have to have the budget. Yeah, governor's office budget, you wouldn't talk about that. Sure. We let

James Moore 1:56:55

that go by. Well, just, just a quick aside, yeah, the two weakest governors in the entire country, yeah, Arkansas and Texas. Is that right? Yes, Clinton and Bush. Just say

Denny Miles 1:57:09

it. First time I met Bill Clinton, it was in I was like, I think it was, it was in Taiwan, but it might have been Japan or one of those places. Anyway, Arkansas had a trade mission going. The same time we had a trade mission going. And, oh yeah, he jumped on the bus, and he says, Nick, you got all the business already. I'm arriving late. He was just a bumpkin, you know? He was just a bumpkin

James Moore 1:57:32

governor's office budget, yeah,

Denny Miles 1:57:35

well, when, when, when we came into office, we sent Lee in, basically, to go to the Ways and Means Committee and the leadership, and said, you know, there's a phantom governor's budget, and you've got this little narrow thing you call the governor's budget. And then there is this circle out here in the agencies where people who are working for you but are on agency budgets, and they're appointed by you, they report to you, and all that kind of stuff. And we think that that is, you know, just not immoral, but it's, you know, it's wrong. Let's be honest about let's have a fair budget. So I think our budget actually inched up just a bit, but the number of people we had and the salaries we had were, you know, way lower than what Straub ended up. Oh, I keep the name of his press secretary. Just keeps flashing in my mind. Anyway, they compared his salary with my salary, and it was like, oh, 30, 40% above what I was making. So we wanted a kind of a truth in budgeting approach to the governor's office budget, but the legislature saw fit then to just say, Okay, I mean, they crossed the boundary of the legislative versus the executive to try and throttle us by reducing the amount of resources that we had, and after we had said, we're going to come clean with our budget, we're going to be honest about our budget, and we're not going to station people everywhere, then they did that to us.

Well, I'm sorry. That really irritated the guy, right? And he was paying rent on the winter street house, and they raised their rent, and that irritated the guy. So, yes, you know, every time we took and we and, of course, to this day, the governor has to pay rent on their on his office. And so it's, it's the kind of thing that, you know, you really wonder where the executive branch and the legislative branch, you know, interact on that we saw it as kind of punitive, really. I mean, we saw it as much more them attempting to reduce our authority and our ability. But we had plenty of people. We got things done, and we had agency heads who were you didn't need to have Governor staff. You didn't have to have them by the throat, have them working for you. And we certainly did not have a patronage system involved, and patronage just doesn't work. I'm sorry, it is backwards. Yeah, you achieve a certain amount of loyalty, but you have a certain amount of loyalty from people who are incompetent. And what good is that you don't get things done. Yeah, with that, you end up with more problems than you can shake a stick at. Yeah,

James Moore 2:00:04

absolutely. So absolutely. When you were talking about Goldsmith coming in saying, we're going to get rid of all the dry rot, it's fascinating. He did that in in 87 and then seven years later, 94 that's, that's Republican talk, that's total revolutionary Republican talk. It's not on the Democratic side anymore, right? It's just fascinating how that switch so quickly, yeah, because it's very successful, and voters connect with it, right? They really connect with it. Yeah,

Denny Miles 2:00:35

well, and again, you get this whole thing is what's negative and what's just know, what's rhetoric and what's real, and you can go round and round and round on something like that. Yeah, good. So what's your what's your plan for this kind of interview discussion, and especially as in terms of me allocating time and your timeframes and things like that. We're gonna talk again. I guess, yes,

James Moore 2:01:02

we're gonna talk again. Okay, there's still, there's still other stuff that I want to get your take on. But basically, I'm hoping to be doing stuff like this until school starts. But school starts only in three weeks. So you know that's, that's just hard to find a parking spot out here on the street. There's something, it says, event, parking, okay? And I don't know what the event is, okay, but I think event Yeah, and so, but because I've now, you know, the governor has passed, I'm now 80% through all of those oral history things. Boy, there's a lot of words in there. So I'm that's helping me to focus, you know, go down and say, oh, there was a letter from the Reagan administration on on deficit spending, you know,

that he sent and sent back. So I need to mark that down. There's, you know, all these kinds of things. So I'm basically putting together kind of a list of, here's the archival stuff that I know I need to do, as well as general archival stuff, and also giving me sport more specifics to come to people like you. So in the fall, when classes are going, This slows way, way, way down. But I'm hoping to do at least probably five or six interviews, not with you all of them, but five or six interviews with people hither that they're young, and quite frankly, my priority sheet is is, I'd love to pick your brain on it, but I have the governor's from Marty's list she had who she'd interviewed, and he went through and marked who's dead, who's less healthy, et cetera. So I need to hit that's my priority list. So

Denny Miles 2:02:53

if we're talking just strategy for your project, let's turn that off, and we're not talking on the record then and we can...

[Recording ends.]