

Gary Wilhelms 00:00

[Recording starts mid-conversation.] ...First time. I had to lobby him, and his retirement function when he was when he left the Senate, I was one of the roasters, and it was, and we've always had a very cordial, good relationship. Then my daughter went down there and went to work, and he had a good relationship with her, and I probably never agreed with him on anything politically, yeah, but we always were, you know, you know, I would almost say friends, you know, it was certainly a friendly relationship. Yes, when I used to lobby him and my wife and I would take he and his current girlfriend out, yeah, for dinner in a Blazer game or something, and it was always pleasant. Always had a good time with him.

James Moore 00:42

Yeah, the group I was just talking to was a, it's a kind of, they're trying to make the equivalent of the Arlington Club, but for women. It's called Portlandia, it's been around since the mid 80s, when they were kicked out of clubs like that, and they had Sylvia Hayes has come and talk to them, Rosie Sizer, who is no longer the chief of police. There was another one as well. So they were all worried about my job. People tended to talk to them, and then, whoops, they're gone. So yeah, it's interesting. The friend thing when I was talking to Gerry Thompson, Vic's Chief of Staff, just like a month ago. So it was after the Oregonian had called for his resignation, but they were something in Salem, and they realized they'd known each other since like, 1976, and had never had a picture taken together. And so they had a picture taken together, and she was showing it to people. He looked great. It's a fantastic picture. And she told them at the time, she said, You know, John, I'm just mad and I'm sad. And he got a real hangdog look, and, you know, didn't say much...

Gary Wilhelms 01:42

Yeah, I'm in the same boat. I mean, I'm very sad that it happened to him and didn't happen to state government, but he's got to pay -- if he did, if he did wrong, he's got to pay for it, you know. And he enabled her, you know? I mean, I, I've got my own thoughts about her, you know, and they aren't good, but at the same time, he enabled her.

James Moore 01:55

And he never told that other side of the story. Yeah, it's like, Jeez Louise, come on, guys.

Gary Wilhelms 02:11

So I don't know what's going to happen, but I'm reserving my... I get asked all the time what I think about I say, Well, you know what, he hasn't been indicted for anything. Yeah, that's right. Give me some facts, and I'll wait till the reports come out. If he gets indicted, then he's gonna have to pay for his wrongdoings. But don't be burying the guy. Don't be piling on. I don't, as a public, former politician, I don't like that.

James Moore 02:36

That reminded me of Watergate. People were saying, Well, you know, what do you think it's like? Well, we need to see some facts. Where law is actually broken. You know, what happened? There's nothing.

Gary Wilhelms 02:52

It may not be something you like, but that doesn't make it against law.

James Moore 02:56

Yeah, exactly, exactly, yeah.

Gary Wilhelms 02:59

Well, it's too bad. And I wish him the best, and I sent him a note and said that, yeah, I know. I'm just gonna sit and wait. Yeah, feel bad about it.

James Moore 03:06

Let's hope he doesn't recycle that in the dump in Bend or the police are gonna go... Well, that's if they're probably at her house.

Gary Wilhelms 03:14

Oh, she still has a residence over there?

James Moore 03:16

Yeah, yeah. But yeah.

Gary Wilhelms 03:19

Well, the immediate thought is, oh yeah, he's packing stuff over and Deschutes County's gonna get rid of it. I'm thinking, what then? I don't think so either.

James Moore 03:28

So let me tell you what's going on. Okay, a year ago, in October, Victor asked me to write his biography. And I've... he's been giving his stuff to Pacific for about the past four and a half years, right? I understood. So I got the archive over there, and I've known him for a long time, anyway, but I worked with the archivists. We would go to his office, I would ask him, he'd have a box. Usually, when you get an archive, you get everything at once, not with Victor! So you have a box. And I talked to him about that, and we recorded those conversations with things. And so over the course of of him knowing the work that I do, but then also this, he came to the decision that he wanted me to write his biography. And he said, you know, the condition I gave him is, I want to tell your story warts and all, there's no restrictions on anything in his in his archive, which is extremely rare. And I want to put you in the context of the times. I've been reading the Bob Straub biography, and it's good, but it just focused on Bob. There's nothing in there. Boy at the same time, Mark -- er, Wayne Morse got knocked off by Bob Packwood. But that's totally missing. Those contexts just aren't there. And that's exactly what he wanted. And so, you know, off we go. I was able to interview him several times before he died, so I've got that good stuff going, and so I'm working through the lists. Started with a year ago, he sent me a list, There had been an attempt to write a biography about 10 years ago. And it didn't work. He sent me the list that that biographer had worked on, and he went through and wrote D for dead and F for fail. So I've been hitting the F's, working my way down. But it's sad because this person is supposed to have interviewed Mark Hatfield, and we don't even know if there were any notes or anything, so you know that kind of stuff is just gone. But so that's basically the thing. And so I record everything. This is all archival quality. It's eventually going to go into the archives. And then I take it and, in effect, snip it up by conversation. So I have my own bibliography going and and off we go and try to figure out who was this guy, Vic Atiyeh.

Gary Wilhelms 05:46

Well, I'm thinking when you said warts and all, my guess is you're not going to find a lot of warts. Vic - just the kind of guy he was.

James Moore 05:56

Yeah exactly. I did find one that I'm going to be chasing down: on one of his Middle East trips, a rich Syrian guy came up to him and said, I want you to go buy whatever you want in the bazaar, and I'll pay for it. And the deal is that you then, when you leave the country, send an equivalent amount of money to his daughter, because there were currency restrictions, he could have said. And so that's a nice thing to do, and I'm sure people did it, but I'm just going to be looking back at 1982, 83, 84 currency laws, and say so Vic, were you a currency smuggler? Because, because for him, that he wouldn't really bat an eye about doing something.

Gary Wilhelms 06:42

Well, I wouldn't have thought anything about it either. Yeah, yeah. I mean, I wouldn't have thought anything about him doing it.

James Moore 06:49

So, yeah, there's just little things like that, but, but yeah, no, it's, it's basically getting a full picture of him as a person and as a politician.

Gary Wilhelms 06:59

So good, yeah, so Well, I I've been asked, and I have written and produced two little things that I've done on Vic in the last -- since he passed away. One was just a brief thing that we that those of us who are on the Oregon State Capitol Foundation did for our newsletter, and that was only a couple tew hree paragraphs, and then I had to deliver a speech, 10

minute speech, on my relationship with Vic, which I did. I brought those things along, and they'll tell, they tell. I mean, kind of my personal feelings about Vic and my personal experience with him. Of course, I had more experiences with him that are contained in those items, but nevertheless, that is there, and I can give that to your -- whatever you want me to do,

James Moore 07:53

Yeah, yeah, no, if I could have them, that'd be great, yeah, I just put them into bibliography.

Gary Wilhelms 07:59

I think this this, or are you familiar with I don't, I'm not pressing, but are you familiar with the organization called Trumpeters?

James Moore 08:08

Yes, yeah, yeah.

Gary Wilhelms 08:11

I the speech was to that, okay? And, and it's, we kind of hold the stuff that we do there close, right? And so when I give it to you, just I give it to you with that. I'm not, I'm not, I'm not saying redact anything. I'm just saying that. We don't go out and say, Hey, this is was said at Trumpeters, right? But anyway, no problem. Yep. So this is that speech to Trumpeters. And then this is a copy of what was in the... And that's, you know, so, yeah, I just thought I'd bring those along. Yeah, it might help. Because, because I did have, I did have some close times with Vic. I would, you know, I considered, and I think he considered me a friend, and I considered him a friend, and Dolores a friend. And my wife is involved in that too. But as far as being one of his close confidants, I was not.

James Moore 09:03

Yeah, it's interesting, because the last time I interviewed Gerry Thompson was like, all hell broke loose with Governor, with calling Kate back on a Wednesday, I interviewed Gerry on that Thursday, and I was checking email and everything, and I went to so I was interviewing her in Salem. I went to lunch a block and a half from the Capitol. I checked everything we were fine. I went to a funeral in Lake Oswego. I got back here and everything had exploded, because that's when Tina Kotek and Peter Courtney and Tim Wheeler all called for him, but because of Kitzhaber, the day before, my first question to Gerry was, so we're looking at Kitzhaber, who who clearly has no one to talk to, you know, Sylvia Hayes and his attorney. So who did Vic talk to? And she talked about, there were he had a couple of close friends that he grew up with, but when he said. His leadership style was, I want to be part of the discussion, but he then made the decisions by himself, sometimes behind closed doors. So he had that, that style as well.

Gary Wilhelms 10:14

Yeah, well, he was an interesting guy. And you know, I played cards with him. I played golf with him. I, you know, used to go to, we used to have a retreat that was called Tri-P, and it was press, politicians and public affairs. So it was lobbyists, elected officials and people from the press, yeah, and this was back before the press got holier than thou? Didn't want, you know, and we used to go up to Timothy Lake, oh yeah, for a couple three nights, and we'd play around a golf going up, and then we'd have a horseshoe tournament. Of course, there was a lot of booze and and a lot of card playing and just socializing. Then it was great. And Vic would come to that, and it's in that speech, he would come to that. He'd make an appearance, at least, but sometimes he'd come and stay, and he'd play cards, he'd play golf going up there, and he always presented the trophies with the horseshoe tournament, and they'd have dinner with the guys. And the thing that I always admired about him was that that when he was there, he was just one of the guys, but it was a crowd that he knew. We all knew he was the governor. I mean, there wasn't any question about it. Everybody had respect for him, but in this environment, he was just kind of one of the boys. Nobody favored him in the card games or in the golf game,

James Moore 11:33

Yeah, yeah. And you don't get the sense that Kitzhaber ever did that kind of stuff at all?

Gary Wilhelms 11:37

Oh, I don't, I don't think so, you know. I mean, even -- [James interjects: no fishing buddies or anything?]. No, I think he

fished alone. But I don't, I don't know if John, I just don't know if, if he had any, you know, friends that that he that he would even socialize with, like that he had, I know some of his, his early staffers were very close to him and and they were together a lot, but when I think back, well, they were together, they were together in the Capitol building, or they were together at political functions. Did I ever see him anywhere else? No, yeah And I -- you know, and in those days, John was not married, and he hadn't married -- Been married well, to his, to Sharon -- hadn't been married to her yet. And, you know, so it was, he was, he was kind of a loner. But anyway, that's Kitzhaber. So, so tell me, when were you first elected? Oh, I was elected in '73. '72 election, and was a freshman representative from Klamath Falls. [James interjects: So did you know him over here from Klamath Falls?] at that time, that was my district, okay, 53 in Klamath. At that time, 53. [James interjects: I was right over the hill in Memphis.] Yeah. Okay. Well, my district in Klamath Falls was basically Klamath. It was the first - '72 was the first election for single member districts, right, right? And so it was a district that was basically the city of Klamath Falls and the suburban area. And it was, it was just, it was a, basically an urban district in Eastern Oregon, you know? And it was small compared to all the other guys in Eastern Oregon that had vast districts, you know, but, but nevertheless, it was Eastern Oregon, so I was part of that crowd. But anyway, that was elected and served in '73, '75, '77 and then '79 and I was the minority leader in '79 and I was in the minority the whole time. These had -- they took control in '73. And so Vic was the Minority Leader... Was he the leader in '73? In the Senate?

James Moore 13:51

He was '75 and '77 I know. I'm not sure. I think he was, but... [Gary interjects: he might have been.] I'm just putting together. I was trying to find Blue Books, yeah, pals, but they don't sell them anymore.

Gary Wilhelms 14:00

Well, I've got them back there if you need, I've got it from, oh I don't know from when forward, but certainly from '73 forward. But Vic, Vic was Minority Leader and, you know, in those couple of those times, like in '77 I think there were only six.

James Moore 14:20

There were six and there were only seven the other time.

Gary Wilhelms 14:23

Yeah, and so there weren't, I mean, I don't remember us interfacing with the Senate a lot, other than socializing, you know, I interfaced with Jason Boe and Debbs Potts and some of the leading D[emocrats]'s, right, as much as I ever did, you know, some of the Republicans, but nevertheless, I didn't have a great deal of interaction with Vic as a legislator. But then when I was the Minority Leader and and I was new, and most all the leadership around there was new, and Vic was the new governor, we interfaced quite a bit yeah, in the '79 session. And then we had some, some significant legislation that was enacted that session that, you know, that Vic was involved in, because we had to get it past him. And one, not the least of which was the the property tax relief plan at that time, right, which contained the Kicker, and in any event, that that was a package of bills and Vic, Vic signed them all but one, and he let that one go through with his without his signature. He didn't veto anything. But there was a camaraderie between Vic and Jason Boe, who had been, you know, who was Senate President for a number of years, and Debbs and John Burns and a bunch of other Democrat senators that were in that old coalition. And there was a real camaraderie amongst those guys, and so they knew how to work together to get things done, and so you didn't see the vetoes. Yeah, they worked it out ahead of time. Even though it was the D's trying to work something through a Republican governor. It was a very interesting time. And when I think back, there were, you know, those, they were very competent legislators. They were damn good. They knew how to play the game. And Vic knew how to play the game as governor. He was good at it. And I think, well, history shows not too much criticism of Vic and how he handled himself during those times. He didn't have necessarily a lot of easy time there either, but he had, he went through the some rough economic times.

James Moore 16:43

Yeah, yeah. I've heard the '79 session described as kind of the apogee of good tax news. But the Tax Revolt in California, which is kind of on everybody's mind -- it was everything.

Gary Wilhelms 16:57

It was. And that, that had been pushing the Legislature for more than '79. It's, you know, that tax revolt we did. We'd

had a number of efforts to limit the property taxes in Oregon before then, and then, and then we headed it off in '79 with the package that we passed, which was quite an interesting package when you look back at it, but you talk about the times. I mean, you could never do that today. You know, nor would you want to do it today. But at the times we were looking at -- I did a paper on the Kicker, not long ago, and I'm trying to recall the number. But I believe in the budget, the projected budget for '79-'81, during the '79 session, we had a something like a \$700 million surplus. [James interjects: Even today that would be huge.] Oh, yeah, but, but what happened? We gave it, most of it away, yeah, gave it back to the taxpayer, yeah, but, but what happened then was that the economy turned to crap right after that. Had we known that was going to happen? You know, we'd never passed those bills. But we did. We passed them, and it was a good package, and it was well received. The public loved it, and, you know, but obviously, Vic didn't like parts of it, but he let it go without... Anyway, that was, yeah. That was the tax legislation in '79 was probably the, probably the premier issue that session.

James Moore 18:29

Yeah. So talk to me about the dynamic of working with the Governor's Office. And the reason I ask is I talked to Hardy Myers, and Hardy was saying that when you were there, he was dealing with you, the leadership. But after you resigned, then he wasn't able to work with whoever came in, and so he was working much more with Vic. As kind of working with Vic, to go to the to the Republicans like that. So talk to me about working with Vic, you know, and you know your position in the in the Legislature, and then working with the governor, and how that all fit together.

Gary Wilhelms 18:40

Well, that was a good those years right in there were a pretty good time for Republicans, even though we were in a minority in the legislature, we had, we could see light at the end of the tunnel. We could, we could. We were working toward regaining the majority, and we were making progress. And there was a, there was a a unity that existed there that I don't believe exists today. There was a camaraderie that was there at the time that I don't believe exists today. And I think that, I mean, certainly between the D's and the R's, it doesn't, I'm not sure that it's near as good between members of the Republican caucus as it was then, but we were riding high. We felt good. We wanted to work together. The Republican legislators wanted to work together with the new governor, and you know, we wanted him to do well, and we wanted to look good, because we wanted to win the next election. And so everything was kind of positive. There really wasn't much negative, and I can give you some for instances, like when my good friend Bob Smith, who was the Senate Minority Leader, and I got at odds over a bill that one of my caucus members was, was not helping him with in his committee, and I was pulling for my caucus member, but Bob and I were good buddies. And in any event, guess who I get a call from? Vic Atiyeh. "How about coming down the office." So I go to the office, and there sits Bob Smith and Vic Atiyeh. I don't know who else was in there, not many people, but they wanted to know if it wasn't kind of an intimidating other than me being in the governor office, because I knew he was trying to help Bob Smith, his old Senate buddy. But he wasn't using a heavy hand on me, you know, but the after the conversation and his request and so forth, I felt okay about trying to heal it up with Bob and going his way on the bill. But my problem was, having to go back to my caucus member and who I had a lot of respect for, and believe me, I was sensitive. I did not want to, I didn't want any of my caucus members getting angry with me, nor did I want them to to have any trouble in their districts. But in any event, I I was able to go back and patch that up and and get it done. But I always think back to that about how Vic, he wasn't above calling in his friends and saying, Come on, you know, let's make peace. Let's get, let's get this figured out. And it wasn't with a heavy hand. Some guys would just come in and say, you know, here's what you got to do. And please understand the negative if you don't. But it was, he never came out and said, "Well, what do I, what do I have to do to get you to change your mind?" Because I didn't want him to have to do that. And, and we, it was just kind of a there was a lot of unspoken good will amongst all of us at the time. And so we tried to work together. And so we and we did, we got it worked out. And that was just one little instance that had something to do with cattle and raising, I think...

James Moore 22:52

All the good stuff, yeah.

Gary Wilhelms 22:54

But anyway, that's just one little, little experience, but, but we had a good relationship with Vic. I could get in to see him anytime I wanted to. Nobody ever, ever stopped me from getting in to see him when I was the Minority Leader, ever. And I didn't wear that out. And we actually appointed somebody in the caucus to be the liaison with the governor's office, which meant he would go work with the governor's staff, primarily, but, but we used to have, you know, regular

conversations, and it was just easy communication, and we didn't disagree on issues much. Once in a while -- Vic came from Beaverton and I was raised in Beaverton, so I understood. But when you're coming from Klamath Falls and Eastern Oregon, you don't always see the issues the same from over east of the mountains as you do over here, you know that? And anyway, Vic understood all that, because he'd been around there a long time and we were always able to work it out. You know, we were always able to work it out. But in those days too, we had, you know, we had an Eastern Oregon caucus. It was about half Democrats. We would meet regularly, and we would vote together on the floor these and the odds would vote together on Eastern Oregon issues. And, but we never really, it never really got me at odds with Vic or the other Republican leadership. And that's probably because most of those Democrat legislators from Eastern Oregon thought like Republicans anyway. But it was, I don't know how else to explain it to you. It was a good time. The thing that, the thing that is different now when -- and I'm not bragging up Minority Leader, because that we always joke about the awesome power of the Minority [laughs], which is pretty much that much. Although, that session, because of Hardy Myers, in large part, and his desire to bring the Minority more into the fold, we were able to negotiate our caucus and their caucus, and Hardy and I were able to negotiate a whole of concessions to the Minority that didn't exist before that session and have never existed since that session. As an example, one of them was that the minority leader could appoint his own caucus members to a conference committee. Yeah, and so I was pretty good at appointing myself and others to these conference committees where there was a bill that we did not want and we could: we tangled them up, tied them up, killed them. But Hardy was okay with that, and I had a lot of respect for Hardy as Speaker, and we got along great. And I think that the Minority Leader at that point, and probably prior to that point too, was truly the leader of the Republican caucus, was truly the representative of the Republican caucus and when it came to negotiations, and if they wanted to do it behind closed doors, and there was only going to be one from the caucus in there, it was the Minority Leader, and you'd go in and you'd represent your caucus. And I don't, I don't know that. It's that the caucus is, is, is quite that solid or or significant nowadays, and certainly the Majority Leader-- the Majority Leader in those days was also more significant, I believe, because nowadays, the Majority Leaders defer in the Senate to the President, yeah, and in the House, the Speaker, yeah. But the Minority Leaders don't have that, so yeah, they're kind of the ones.

James Moore 26:36

So, how Barbara Roberts describes being Majority Leader is, she was in there, in those meetings with Vic. Because, you know, that's what that's the way it worked.

Gary Wilhelms 26:43

In those days, it's true. Now, I staffed a number of years since then, and sat in those meetings as a as a person, alongside the Speaker. And you know, the Majority Leaders are in there and they have something to say, but it's not the same. And certainly with the Minority Leaders, it's, you know, it's, sometimes it's, it depends on the Minority Leader. I guess there's, there's been good ones and bad ones. Larry Campbell was very good Minority Leader. He parlayed it to being Speaker, ultimately. But, but there have been some that have, that have not been as good in those situations. But nevertheless, I'm not putting down anybody, and I'm not blowing up anybody. I'm just saying the times were different. Politics was different. It was different. And Vic fit right in. That was the environment he was good in. If he knew people were working at it and getting along. I mean, we're respectful of each other, he could climb into the den with them and bring them together. And did.

James Moore 27:55

So when did you resign?

Gary Wilhelms 27:57

I resigned at the end of '79. Became a lobby -- registered lobbyist on the January 1 of '80 with my company, who was the telephone company. [James interjects: So, Hardy was saying it was GTE?] And, well, it was, it was Pacific Northwest Bell at the time, and, and so it was a promotion for me, and I'm staring down the barrel of four little kids coming up to be educated. And I thought, Should I be a politician, or should I be a telephone man? I've been a telephone man for 20 years. I haven't been a politician that long, and I don't see, you know, I may have aspirations, but so do a lot of other these other guys. I think I'd probably better take care of my family. So I took the job, and it was a significant promotion for me to come up here and be one of the lobbyists. And then eventually my boss retired, and I became the lead lobbyist, and it was a good career, the last 17 years of which were lobbying.

James Moore 28:52

Yeah. So were you immediately lobbying down in Salem, or did they...

Gary Wilhelms 28:55

Immediately. And that's a transition, that all of a sudden, instead of walking in as the enemy, you're walking in with the company's, or the PAC's checkbook at a Democrat fundraiser, and the Democrats are looking at you like, "Uh..." [James interjects: yeah, "We just saw you..."] Yeah: do we trust you or don't we trust you? But fortunately, I think you know, speaking for me, I had a decent reputation in the Legislature. I never double-crossed anybody. So maybe there was a little doubt in the beginning, but it didn't take me long to earn my way into the Democrats' hearts, as much as you can. But I never concealed my Republicanism, and I never concealed the fact that I that I'd been labeled the Republican leader once and they all knew it, but, but you know, in those days, you're getting probably 20% turnover in the Legislature every two years anyway, so it didn't take long, and they mostly all knew that. And...

James Moore 29:50

So from that perch, talk me through your observations as '79 turns into '80, Paul Volcker decides that interest rates are just going to go "poof," kind of mid to late '79. So the economy starts shifting pretty radically. By '80 there's special sessions, '81 and then as we go into '82 you know, our economy just falls through the floor.

Gary Wilhelms 30:20

Yeah it was not good. [James interjects: So it's worse than what we just went through (with the 2008 recession).] I think so too.

James Moore 30:27

Yeah, when you when you look, there's no doubt the unemployment rate was higher, just the fact that it just destroyed the timber industry, that what we have now is basically the rebuild from that. And it hasn't gone much further.

Gary Wilhelms 30:40

There were a lot of... everybody was riding high. There were, there was a lot, as you probably know, there were a lot of enormous subdivisions being built around here, because the money was just flowing from it. And then all of a sudden it stopped. And all these subdivisions which were middle income, family homes stopped and sat there for, you know, some of them for four or five years before they ever went back in and finished the houses. And a whole lot of people went broke because of that, and a whole lot of jobs down the toilet. It was not a good -- I mean, we moved up, bought a new house in '80 that was already built, and within two years it was underwater. It wasn't worth what we paid for it in 1980 and we're thinking, well, maybe this wasn't such a good idea to come up here [laughs], but nevertheless, you could see, you could see that things would eventually turn around. Which they did.

James Moore 31:40

Klamath Falls, I mean, with Weyerhaeuser just cutting back and things like that...

Gary Wilhelms 31:46

Well, Klamath, they had an awful time. Yeah, it was, it was not a good time, yeah. But anyway, yeah. Well, what was your question?

James Moore 31:54

Well, but basically, so, so you are a lobbyist now. What were your observations about Vic's leadership as those crises just began to hit.

Gary Wilhelms 32:03

Well, when he came out with his income tax, surtax, I think at the time, being a Republican from Klamath Falls, I must have looked at that like, what are you, nuts? But at the same time, in the back of your mind, when you sit down and work the numbers, you you think, well, may be the right thing to do, you gotta do something. And he's smart enough to, you know, it wasn't, I don't know if he put a sunset on it or, anyway, it wasn't a permanent deal, right? You know, however they handled that at the time, and I can't remember, it was probably a sunset. But in any event, thinking, Well, okay, and so I being a new lobbyist at that time, and I probably wanted to just kind of watch more than I wanted to get

in and mix it up. And besides, I was working on telephone company utility stuff, you know? And that really wasn't income tax stuff. That was personal stuff. But anyway, we watched him get it done. And so Vic Atiyeh is ... What people thought of him as a governor, I think, went up considerably at that point in time, because he got this done and got through the problem, and then, you know, the tax goes away, and things move on, yeah, and, and it was probably the right, you know, the right thing to do. And I know there was a lot of Republicans that didn't like the tax increase, but at the same time, it solved the problem, and he got support from both sides. And so it was another example of Vic Atiyeh's leadership, because that took leadership. That's something. I don't know if anybody would do that today. Surtax the income tax. Yeah, I you know, Tom McCall tried to raise the income tax. Didn't work for him in '73 that was yeah, you know. The McCall Tax Plan. That didn't work. Shift the burden from property taxes over to income taxes and work for him. But anyway, Vic, he did it, so I think that, and I don't know all of the ... like I said, I was worried about utilities, and so I don't know what other bills he may have pushed during the '81 and '83 sessions to deal with the economic times. There were no doubt, some but, but that was that that income tax surtax was a big one. And it worked okay.

James Moore 34:37

So during that time, the Atiyeh administration, at some point, decides that the main focus is no longer triage, although that's still there, you know, dealing with the timber district collapsing and unemployment, and you know, things like the income tax or charge, but Vic becomes "Trader Vic." And he starts heading out everywhere he can find to get people here. And by 84 there's a special session to repeal the unitary tax for all the Japanese companies that have said the unitary tax, we have problem with that. And so did you sense a difference in Salem as that was happening, were people wondering, What the heck is he doing? Were people saying, oh, diversity is good, or

Gary Wilhelms 35:29

all that you certainly heard. You certainly heard the Business Industrial community and Republican business community patting him on the back for trying to increase international trade and so forth, and getting Oregon on the map for that, and he did that, and he deserves a lot of credit for that, and it's got a lot of credit for that. But then you would also have the naysayers who are, you know, and I don't really have much truck with them, but the people that criticized public officials for traveling on the on the state dime, and going all over the world and doing this, they just don't understand the value of it. And I think that Vic did it for the value of it. I don't think Vic was just having fun traveling around the world, because he made things happen with that. And most of the governors, when they go on these international trips are, are not doing it for to have fun. Sometimes, maybe, okay, I don't. I'll give that to them. They're the governor, but, but most of the time, it's something that's, it's aimed at international trade or enhancing our state. You know, we, I just came back from a three week trip to Southeast Asia. And a lot of people would ask where we were from. We weren't around very many Americans. And we'd say Oregon, on the Pacific Coast of the USA. And you could see there were a few of them that said, Oh yeah, Oregon, that's Portland, you know. So you knew that they'd heard so they knew about it. But, you know, most of the people still were trying to picture where it was. You'd say, Seattle, oh yeah, San Francisco, oh yeah, it's right in between. And then they and then they get it, yeah, you know, but, but there were some that did know Oregon and Portland. And I've got to believe that if we weren't, if our governors, if our, you know, our trade adversaries, weren't going over there and selling the state, we wouldn't be as far as we are. And so I think it's important if the future is really the Pacific Rim and our, you know, our trade around here? Well, we got it. We still have to start doing that because, because I don't know how much traveling you've done over there, I haven't done a lot, but you go into towns like Tokyo and Singapore, Bangkok, my god,

James Moore 37:52

yeah, that's three

Gary Wilhelms 37:54

wind of activity, yeah. And Singapore is way more modern than Portland, yeah, you know. And you think, Well, okay, maybe this, maybe we ought to start paying more attention. Well, a lot of people back here, they don't know that. They don't. They probably don't understand it. And once again, I'm not putting them down, just saying that there's no reason why they would. And a guy like Vic, he, he he really got it started. I don't know how many trips that any governor before him ever made, but, but he did, and not only to the to the east. I mean, he went to the Near East too, yeah. But anyway, I think it's he had a lot of foresight, and then deserves the credit that he got with his recognition now, Portland airport and so forth. That's all that's good. And the governor since him, have done it too. Gold Schmidt was good at it, and kit saber was good at it. Not I don't know about Colin goski, how much he did it, but he did some. And Barbara, I'm

not sure how much she did, but in any event, I think he was into it. And he was good at

James Moore 39:05

Victor himself, talking about the Republican Party. He always would refer to his principles. Here's the principles. And in he did an oral history with the Oregon Historical Society about 25 years ago, early 90s, and he's talking about because he was governor, as the Moral Majority is beginning to come in. So when he's elected, it's kind of a twinkle in people's eye. By the time he leaves, it's a well established the social conservative part of the Republican Party. Then here the real big sweep comes in the early 90s, with not just Lon Mabon, but it's, it's the that's that's behind the Republicans taking the House and the Senate in Oregon and things like that. And his description of it at the time in the early 90s, and then thinking back to the 80s, was that people were joining the Republican Party and then redefine. What it meant to be a republic, Republican. I don't disagree with that, which frustrated him. So, you know, talk to me about him as a Republican. He hated to be called the last Republican governor,

Gary Wilhelms 40:17

yeah, but he uses it a lot. He did do

James Moore 40:21

it was no the most recent or latest, but, but so talk to me about him as a Republican. Well,

Gary Wilhelms 40:29

you'll see in my speech material there I the first time I saw Victoria was probably in 1960 um, 63, or four, I don't know early, because he was the state rep for Beaverton, and I was a member of the Beaverton JCS, and he gave a speech to the Beaverton JCS down downtown Beaverton. And that was the first time I ever became in contact, came in contact with him. And I was a Democrat at the time, but I liked him, and I probably didn't see him again, and for a long time, probably for, you know, 10 more years until I got involved in politics, and I made the conversion to Republican and doing, doing backwards, responsible for that. But in any event, I didn't know Vic very much or pay much attention to him during that period of time, you know, while he was serving in the legislature as my representative or a representative. So my first real observation of him was when he was, when we were both together in the legislature. He was always respectful. He was always, I would say moderate. He was, I don't think you'd ever call him a right winger. I would call him, probably basically conservative, but certainly not the same ilk as as Mabon or Walter Huss before him, yeah, or any of the ones since he was he was a peacemaker, and he didn't like the division in the in the party. He didn't like that. He could see the damage that it did to the party and and everybody else could see the damage is done to the party too. But the division still exists, although it may be moderating So, but he always would speak against, and by against, I don't mean negatively, but he would, he would always warn everybody about what, what the divisions in the party, the problems with that, what it would cause in terms of elections of Republicans, and how much trouble it caused us with to pass legislation and so on. And he was, he was very good, and he's very open about that, and it did bother him a lot. And he had a lot of allies, and guys like me and Roger Martin and other people that that he ran with and that were in the legislative leadership at the time, because we saw eye to eye with it, but Vic always used to show up at Dorchester. And Dorchester, you know, the moderates call it conservative, and the conservatives call it moderate. It's really pretty moderate, but there are conservatives there, and there are liberals there, but it's still pretty moderate overall. And Vic was always a very active participant and supporter of Dorchester, and it's, it's its ability to discuss issues and in his terms, and you'll see that in there too, to discuss him with and and make a decision and there's no blood on the floor. And he said that that was always that was great. So he used to always support that. So my view of Vic as a Republican was that he would, he would never turn his back on a Republican invitation that I know of, be it conservative, liberal or other kind of people wanted him to come and talk. He'd come and talk or visit whatever they wanted to do. My guess is that the the extreme right wing probably didn't invite him to a lot of function. But I don't know that for sure, but, but he showed up a lot. He Vic would. He was very accessible by most anybody I don't know. I never heard anybody criticize him for having a closed door or turning them down, you know, but not already,

James Moore 44:27

still in awe that as a freshman, he was able to walk sure his office, yeah, yeah.

Gary Wilhelms 44:32

And not only were you able to access Vic, Vic would reach out. Vic would go to this trip. He would go to Dorchester.

He would go to all kinds of conventions and functions around he would show up. And he would show up, you know, when it was appropriate, and show up with Dolores, and they were just a class act, and they were there, and he was sincere, and he would, you know, he would visit with anybody. And so I, as a, you know, my thoughts of him as a Republican. Really, he was a he was a very good Republican. He was the kind of Republican that I liked, you know, a big tent Republican, one that walked his talk when he's when he's when he said he was a big tent Republican, and he didn't believe that there should be rifts in the party. He'd try to heal the rifts, and he would reach out to anybody, whether they were on the left side or the right side, he'd just reach out to him because it was, you know, republicanism, to him was not, you know, abortion or gay marriage or, you know, the single issue stuff that wasn't because he did.

James Moore 45:37

So tell me about your impressions of the 82 election you talked about. So things are beginning to fall apart, and Victor is in the middle of solutions and looks like a problem solver. But in my business and political science, the best model is economics. Economics, bad incumbent, and do do well, pretty, pretty clear there. So 82 that was, that was cool. Guskys, yeah. So not only does he win, but he wins by basically a record amount. But

Gary Wilhelms 46:06

there was a time during that campaign and he wasn't winning, right? Yeah. Well, I interviewed, are you interviewing Greg Walden?

James Moore 46:13

Yeah. Greg Walden, I hope I can interview Ted, but he's a little squirrely, so well.

Gary Wilhelms 46:17

Interviewed Greg because Greg, I don't think he was just, I don't know if he was just campaign man. I don't

James Moore 46:26

think he was campaign manager. He was in the he was certainly one

Gary Wilhelms 46:29

of the insiders and and he'll, he can quote you poll results and things that they did do turn that around. But, but, you know, I was, once again, I wasn't on the inside of that campaign. I was watching it closely as a lobbyist. We obviously wanted Vic to win re election, you know. And, but, but it was a tough election, you know. And I guess I wasn't aware that he won with a with a record, yeah,

James Moore 47:00

yeah. It was the, it was a record that then kits would be when he beat size more.

Gary Wilhelms 47:07

That's, it was a little different than a TIA cool, oh, yeah, because

James Moore 47:10

cool Gucci is a future governor eventually. But yeah, it was, it was a record Well,

Gary Wilhelms 47:17

and that's, that's good, because they, like I said, there was a time during that campaign when it wasn't looking real, real good, you know. But once they got it rolling, obviously it worked. But anyway, yeah, we breathe the big sigh of relief when he won. That's for sure.

James Moore 47:42

That's i i ways back, yeah, exactly, yeah, when, yeah, geez. I wish you would have asked me, like 15 years ago that have been perfect. But you know you do what you do, sure. Well,

Gary Wilhelms 48:00

I don't, I don't know that. My recollection of the time was that most everybody going into that thing, at least

Republicans, assumed Vic was going to get reelected. And it was a kind of a wake up call, and they kept getting this news that, hey, you know, it ain't so great, yeah, but, but, like, I'm trying to remember what, what really turned it around was it, did they say, well, there's kind of a negative on cooling guys,

James Moore 48:30

yeah, there was a, there was a, in fact, because Denny miles ran the campaign when they got beyond the primary. And so Danny miles and I now have the ads. We got him digitized. I have the actual ads. So they called cooling Goss keys ideas dangerous, and people took that as cool and gossip is dangerous. So the cooling go ski, people are still kind of ticked off about that, and it's kind of splitting hairs, but I'll be able to make the definitive what do they do? But, but, yeah, it was and cooling gossip then, because he was as a labor lawyer, and then, you know, in the legislature, he was behind one of the ideas that companies had to notify when they were going to close down or do layoffs, yeah, but they called it, I can't remember the exact name of it. It was, like the it was called the plant shutdown bill or something that the name of it sounded like it was, what it was actually protecting against, plant closures. Plant closure, yeah, the plant use, plant closure bill. And so they just, they just kept hitting them on the plant closure, plant closure. And, you know, when the voter, wow, he wants to close plants, you know, so that kind of stuff just builds up, yeah, which is fascinating to me that, you know, he goes against everything in political science about who ought to win the election,

Gary Wilhelms 49:54

yeah. But still, he, you know, uh. Vic was almost above that. You know, we have, we haven't, I don't. I think I'm fairly well grounded, and I don't know that we've had, we may have had people that were just as competent to be governor as Vic. And come along, I'm not saying that case, but, but there was something different about Vic I mean, he was kind of above the dirt and the grime that goes on in politics, and I think even his enemies respected him, yeah, and I don't think that exists today very much, but, but even his enemies respected him. And so if you know, when you heard something good about when, when there was something in the media that was good about Vic it, it probably turned some voters back to him. Democrat voters might have been looking for a way to go against him. It might have turned him back toward him, because they didn't have any reason to hate him. They were on the fence, yeah. Now cool and gossip is and when I was a freshman in 73 cologne, gusky was a staffer on the Labor Committee, and I was on the Labor Committee, and then he ran for office and won, and we always kind of got along great, too, Ted Knight, and he's got probably the best resume of anybody I've ever seen for politics and, and, and he's a charming guy. I mean, people like him, you know, and when they get to see him, and it's, it's obvious is, I mean, he's been very successful over time, although he lost that one, but, but, you know, he's, he's pretty good. And for Vic to be able to recover and and beat him, even though he was the incumbent, still saying something for Vic, but, but Ted, he's got nothing to apologize for. He's been, as far as elected politics, he's been pretty good. Just don't

James Moore 51:57

find that many people who served in all three branches with distinction. Yeah,

Gary Wilhelms 52:01

it's, you know, and people can argue about how, how much distinction there was there, but he's very successful, and I think he knows what he's doing. He was, I was on his committee. Of course, he gets elected, and then all of a sudden He's chairman of the committee, and I'm still on the committee, but he was a good chairman to work with. He was very good credit chair. A very he did it, very lawyer, like always careful to make the record so that if anybody ever wanted to come back and challenge the record, it was there, it was clear, and he did a good job of that.

James Moore 52:40

So Victor Lee's office, impressions of him as an ex governor.

Gary Wilhelms 52:47

He he stayed Republican, stayed active, kept coming to Dorchester. We'd see him all the time. There were, there was a period of time there when I didn't really have that that all that much to do with him, when I was still lobbying and working, and he was retired, he was working, yeah, but once in a while we get together, and we'd always see him at Dorchester and so forth. But then, as he got older, and you'll see this in there too, one of the things there's a group called political old timers, just a informal group, yeah, Roger Martin kind of heads up.

James Moore 53:25

I heard the big talk last year. Was it Victor Grove himself? Well,

Gary Wilhelms 53:29

one of those, he drove himself to some of them. But what's in there? You know, people were asking me about my relationship with it. Well, my wife and I got to drive he and Dolores. Oh, great, too. I'd pick him up sometimes, and I just show for him to the lunch, yeah, but then Roger Martin sometimes would would say, let's, let's have a dinner after, you know, that Friday night after we have the old timers, he said, Bob Smith and Tom, let's get together. I'll get the atheist and you guys, and Bob Smith and Kay, and we'll go have dinner there at the at the golf club there, whenever the hell the name of that golf club is used to be oriented, no, it's red tail now at the stockpot restaurant. And so we would do that. But then I'd get a call. I said, Can you go pick up Vic and Dolores? And I say, sure, you know, Gail, and I'll go swing by and get him. And so we'd get him, and we'd go over there. Doris was, you know, starting to fail, yeah, but Vic was still spry and enjoyed the visits. But, you know, we did that, no, I don't know how many times, not, not a lot, but three or four times, I guess, and it was a lot of fun. We used to have some great visits. Just a bunch of old farts reminiscent about the old days, and those guys all have more reminisce about than I did, because Smith had gone off been in Congress, Roger. You know, he was in the legislature a long time, and he was one of my mentors. Yeah. But matter of fact, in Vic's first campaign, I it was a the primary was, of course, was McCall and Roger and Vic, yeah, and I was in Rogers caucus, and so he was my leader. So I supported Roger. None of us probably thought Roger was going to end up being Governor, but we supported him because good guy, we like. He was a friend. And then as soon as the primary was over, of course, we all jumped in with Vic naturally. And

James Moore 55:29

it was like everybody did, except Tom, yeah.

Gary Wilhelms 55:31

Well, Tom, yeah, poor Tom, yeah. He wouldn't have been able to finish out his term anyway, would he didn't? Did he die during that died

James Moore 55:42

when been right at the end of the term, but yeah, would have been. It would have been touch and go,

Gary Wilhelms 55:49

yeah. But anyway, Vic, I think after he left office, he was a very good ex governor, he would respond to it. We had the same policy. He still had an open door policy, you know. And he still reach out and go to things, and if you want to get ahold of it, you didn't have any trouble getting a hold of it. You call the telephone number, you'd always get bit yeah, you know. And it was just, it was good, you know, I think he did it. He did it right? He certainly was helpful every time I ever wanted you know him to come to a function or sign something, he was just he was always accessible and helpful.

James Moore 56:32

That's great. So anything else about him,

Gary Wilhelms 56:37

not only I mean pretty much what I've said there, yeah, and what I've told you, I don't think I can think of anything else. The The one thing I like to the story I like to tell most about Vic and my relationship was a it's in there, but I'll tell you my boss and I, I don't know if you ever knew Ray gribbling, but he was, he was a long time lobbyist for Pacific Northwest Bell, and he was the one that got me promoted and to leave the legislature and come to work on Portland. Anyway, we were a pretty good lobby team. He and I for that company. And one, one session. I don't remember exactly which session it would have been, but it was probably something like 85 there in somewhere. We were in Vic's office, and I think Jerry was there, and we we couldn't get in to see him until about five. And of course, I'm sure he had a lot of things going, but my boss and I would go in at five o'clock, and we give him the pitch on this bill that we were talking about and, and I don't even remember what the bill was, but Vic sat there and listened, and, you know, we had small talk back and forth, and he took our message, and then he said, Hey, you guys like cigars. And we both said, Well, yeah. So he gets out this box of very, very nice cigars here take one. And so we each took one, and he said, and now get the hell out of my office. That was Vic Lo. It was, yeah, it was, he was, he had a good time, and so did we? That's great. It was,

yeah, I'm just sorry I couldn't have stuck around a little longer. I I would like to have probably spent a couple of more terms in the legislature and before I had to come back to Portland. But yeah, life is what it is. Yeah,

James Moore 58:37
absolutely, absolutely.

Gary Wilhelms 58:41
Well, thank you very much. Well, I appreciate you doing this. I wish you good luck. Do you have any time frame? You know, ideally,

James Moore 58:47
we're publishing next year. Oh, really, there's some very interesting there's could be some really good stuff with Victor as kind of the moderate but basically, as you described him, you know, somebody who's seen sides of arguments and making complex decisions as we're going through a presidential election where that seems to be in short supply. And then also, Vic told me that he could have handled the recession and he could have handled the rajneeshees, but doing them both was brutal, and the Rajiv story from his side has never, ever been told. Yeah, I barely hinted at.

Gary Wilhelms 59:30
I don't recall that. You know, I don't associate Vic with the Rajah, no, but and Jerry's

James Moore 59:35
in the middle of it. Jerry's got boxes. Jerry did some amazing things. You know, after 911 we were worried about how the different levels of government would talk to each other and all that stuff. She made all that happen. She had federal, state, local, all going through her office, daily meetings, just all sorts of things that's good. Never been told. Yeah. And. Because Vic says that those were, in fact, the book ends. I'm, I hope that I, you know, I'm talking to Jerry about this, and sometimes she's more amenable, and sometimes she's less but it's got to be in the book. It's got to be in

Gary Wilhelms 1:00:12
the book. Are you interviewing from iron? Yeah, yeah, good, yeah, yeah, yeah. He has a perspective on that too. Yeah.

James Moore 1:00:18
Well, she kept daily notes, and he told her, as Attorney General, to destroy those notes, because we're subpoenaed. You know, those are out there. She still has a bunch of them, and Victor might have them. We are the after his death and just before his death, a bunch of stuff came that's still being sorted through in the

Gary Wilhelms 1:00:38
army. That was pre email, wasn't it? Yeah, yeah, yeah. It's all

James Moore 1:00:43
all moped stuff. I've used some stuff in my classes. I teach parties and election class every election year, and so in 2012 when I taught it, the class met for the Republican nominating commission, and the democrats were the first of the semester. So we had the nominating conventions going. So we went and looked at Vic stuff from when he was a delegate and

Gary Wilhelms 1:01:09
they were delegates together once too. I forgot that. Oh yeah, 76 Uh huh, yeah, yeah, yeah, that would not, excuse me. I didn't mean interrupt. No, no, no, just you. Just light bulb went on. But

James Moore 1:01:20
he has these great handwritten notes he would go into the platform committee, and as an Arab American, say, you can't do all this stuff for Israel. You have to spread it out. And clearly, it never went anywhere. But, you know, my students Jaws just drop as they're just reading the handwritten stuff here and thinking, Republicans not supporting Israel, huh? And so here's this very credible guy who's, you know, all the behind the scenes stuff. So, yeah, it's really great.

Gary Wilhelms 1:01:44

That's good. Well, good. I'll look forward to getting a copy of it when it's published, and I'll certainly read it. Good,

James Moore 1:01:53

good, good, good. Well, thank you very much. Sure.

Gary Wilhelms 1:01:56

Thank you. It's fun to reminisce. Yeah, try to read.