

Victor Atiyeh Interview with Jim Moore, January 2, 2014

An interview of former Oregon Governor Victor Atiyeh, recorded on January 2, 2014. The interviewer, James Moore, was a professor of political science at Pacific University and was Atiyeh's biographer.

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

[Recording begins mid-conversation; they are speaking about current events in the Middle East as of early 2014.]

Victor Atiyeh 0:00

And during that period of time he had, I could tell he was talking in terms of what he envisioned as a united Arab country, right? And I'm saying myself, that's gonna happen, when you fight with yourself, I mean, people on your country, and then they fight in their own country. You take Lebanon, for example. They went for what, 12, 13, years, shooting it up.

James Moore 0:31

Oh, yeah, the Civil War was, was actually for the most part of 20 years. But like, 13 or 14 years, you wouldn't want to go there.

Victor Atiyeh 0:41

And, you know, you could just say, Oh, my name is Victor. I'm an Episcopal, oh, by the way, I'm an American, yeah. And so that's what's dominating, yeah. And that's why all of this business is going on.

James Moore 1:01

Did you ever see a Lebanese ID card or a passport? Because the religion is at the top. Not that you're Lebanese, but the religion is at the top, yeah, okay, and then it goes from there down. It's just, it's fascinating.

Victor Atiyeh 1:16

All right, no, I haven't seen that. I do have. Well, you'll, you'll, no, I don't think you have it yet, but I was going through my stuff, and I have the mail that was sent to my father, I think maybe my mother, but they were censored. And then this now is in the 40, 41, and they're censored, yeah, from from Syria or Lebanon, yeah, by home. And for what reason I never know,

James Moore 1:49

yeah. Well, because at that point, World War Two was there, because there was French control, German influence, British and so they just extended the war everywhere. It's

Victor Atiyeh 2:04

just amazing. Then you need to look at Saudi, oh, yeah, and where there is no disturbance that I've seen. They have a king. America doesn't have kings. I think Obama should jump on that. The other part of it is that, for some reason, our State Department thinks that every country in the world needs to look like the United States, and that excuse the our approach to it. Of recent times, I kept saying to myself around the Syria, why are we choosing sites when we invaded Iraq, it was very obvious. Reasons to go there, and they weren't hidden behind the internal security. Well, it was, but a lot wasn't. And so, okay, you know why you went in there? Yeah,

I've been to Syria, I've been to Iraq.

I know. I say no, I'm sure there's internal security, but it was not evident in Syria, but I'm presuming, but it was clearly evident in Iraq. Yeah, that was between after Iran and before COVID, right? So I was there at that period of time, right? Well, I don't know.

James Moore 3:45

Good Well, I have my first two days done.

What I thought I'd do today is start out looking at some of the personalities that you worked with over time, and then get into some of the specific things during your governorship. And so I want to start out the personalities looking at the other elected officials when you were governor. So people like Dave Frohnmayer, you know, all those kinds of people. And last night, as I'm going through your oral history I'm up to,

let's see tape number eight of 64

I've read about 200 pages, but there was a really interesting back and forth with you and the interviewer, Clark Hanson, about Bob Thornton as Attorney General, who seemed to make all sorts of opinions that were then overruled, and then you later became good friends with him. But it struck me that one of the things that's really fun, and I can imagine very interesting in being Governor, is you've got other people who in effect have equal political power, because they've all been elected by the total electorate of Oregon. And so dealing with them, from personality issues to constitutional issues to

Victor Atiyeh 5:16

must be my wife.

James Moore 5:18

But you know, dealing with that, you know, how does that? How did, how did that work? So, so tell me about some of them

Victor Atiyeh 5:28

now, with the understanding that my relationship throughout 20 years was I was a minority member, right? Yeah. And so in dealing with them, that was not a that was not accountable barrier for me, I didn't give a damn. And it was interesting to begin with. Meaning 1959, Carl Fisher, Eugene, Monty, Montgomery, Eugene,

Doug, Heider, Salem, and

I know I'll get with anyway. There were five of us. Somebody came up with the Young Turks, and we made fun out of it. And I

James Moore 6:20

saw that in your in your in your oral history, you were saying that you invited Mark Hatfield to kind of be a Young Turk witness.

Victor Atiyeh 6:30

And we were so naive and young, and we and we were overwhelming, like Democrats. We get up and make a motion and we surprise the Democrats, and then they put the way they shouldn't be voting, and then they have a recess and various and actually, we didn't take that as brutal. We just said, Well, we had fun doing that. Now we got to figure out what the next stop is, because we didn't know what to do once, what you want the motion, what now, what I want to do gradually, as it came along, we ran into two,

I'm in the House now, and

two, I mean one who very openly, you know, once the sessions are over, the doors are open, and toward the afternoon, evening, would kind of sit around and discuss these and artisans and I Well, he was Eastern Oregon, older guy, relatively we knew how he felt.

I mean, we were talking,
that's not the way he voted.

He voted with the Democrats because he wanted to be re elected. We know this was now in private conversation.

So there are those kind.

There were there were those who felt that Democrats always have to win, give or take and make a damn bit of difference. But pretty soon, depending and I would talk about ligature, I got to a point where, okay, and my largest example was Vern cook. Vern was really left an attorney, and we disagreed on almost everything. But I said to myself, well, he really I gave him the advantage of saying he really believes what he's saying. This has nothing to do with part or anything. He really believes it. I really believe in what I do. Okay, I'll take that. We got along together, didn't buddy buddy. But the point is, we never fought, right? You? As Time moved along, and I was given a little bit more respect, and then the,

I think probably the greatest relationship I had on the D side, I'm talking in terms of the mechanics of it, let's say it was Jason Bo although there were names like Al Fauci on and Harry boyman and these guys were all big shots of hated their long time, and we ought to be friends and then strengths. Things would happen. I mean, strange to me, Tom Mahoney was a real let me call my Chicago Democrat. And one time I had done something I don't know. Finally, we were lining it up to go somewhere, and he kind of mumbled to me, I'll get you me

okay

for what? But when his time moved along, he passed away, and I was among the others, carries gasket
and so how this all

came about? You know, there's some things I didn't know I just want.

I never really

well. I did have a problem once with Jake Bennett. Jake Bennett was very late 60s, early 70s. Had been recalled from office in Portland. I can't remember whether it was house, excuse me, city or county, but he was recalled, and I was personally offended to think that he was elected as a legislator that really bothered me, and he was a cantankerous old bastard,

so I agonized through the First session he was there. Personally, inaugurating. It's all internal with me.

Second session, one day, I said,

Jake doesn't represent his district, but he represents the Jake Bennetts in Oregon, so I guess they're entitled to vote. Then i i personally relaxed,

and

he went through a series, and one time we had a bill on us. I think it was on the sales tax. Had it on the floor. And then failures may be wrong with it. I think at that time I was going to get \$18 million but this biennium is only going to be 15 million. And Jake gets up and wants to know where that other 3 million is going to, which members of the tax committee got some of that three me. And obviously, you go and understand we're talking about biennium, and it's not going to be for football, and Clarence Burton was then. That's the third session. Speaker, Mr. Ed said how he kept talking, Mr. Bennett, and I could tell knowing Clark, get ready. And bang, he came down with a gavel, busted it. Those

kinds of things you're asking me on the right track for what you want. Well,

James Moore 13:17

let's go to when you're your governor, okay, okay, and you're working, it's working with the other elected officials, in other statewide elected officials. So the superintendent of public instruction, Attorney General, you know, that bunch so, so tell me about working with them, and what it was like, in effect, sharing power. Did the buck stop with you, or did it stop with the Secretary of State, because the Secretary of State's elected? I mean, how, how did that all work during your administration?

Victor Atiyeh 13:53

Now this is just a sense, because we never expressed it, but

I honestly believe that they

treasurer, Secretary of State, Attorney General,

they figured

the governor was number one, okay, and it wasn't a matter of really trying to say they were ticked off about that. They instead gone through the process, and the governor was number one. Dave Frohnmayer was Well, Jim Red was attorney general, but Dave from Meyer was attorney general, most of mine, and Dave gave me some opinions I really didn't want, but my attitude was, well, he's the Attorney General. I mean, maybe I don't like it, but his job is opinion, and whether I like it or not is not the point, as I. Ask for an opinion. He gave me an opinion. Secretary of State, we had really not too much communication. I mean, we saw this together every day, but there was, and I think even now, there is the Secretary of State's office is to audit the Fauci and I was so pissed off about that, because that this was the Governor's team and I'm supposed to do that. The Secretary of State may bitch about it, but she has no authority, but then all of a sudden she's got the authority that was really but not again, personally, right along with Jim red and raised quite well with the

with the secretary of state's new applause.

Clay Myers,

well, that was actually

yeah, but we were after I won the election.

He was still there, yeah,

so Okay, in context, I know these people, and I know what authority they had, and I respected that admired the Treasury, which was really shaped up by Bob, and I gave them, I'm talking, quietly, all the respect I could for what I thought was in a row. And of course, we got together the border control we didn't quite often, didn't agree

where

Norma and clay were more kind of no trees in the world are better to be caught Again, to me, let's cut a couple of trees.
And

again, it was not a contentious thing.

My closest I

uh, my closest working knowledge is with the speaker and the president Senate, right, right? And I would, I would argue strongly, and I don't do that very often, always yelling at Jason Bo and again, the speaker medley, Jason Boaz numero

speaker is below him, but those are all things that how I looked at. But

the elected officials, oh, education as well. I invited them. I had my meetings every week of my leadership, but I would invite all of these elected officials, and they would sit in and the way it would work is that I'd get reports from each of them. And if I may, step aside for a second, that was one of the best things I did, because up to that point in time, I don't think any of them talked with any other agencies, yeah, yeah. And pretty soon, these people got to know each other, and as they heard those reports, that they began to realize how their affects this one classic Department of Veterans Affairs, huge bond, and we started a housing thing, and needed some bonds. We're talking about \$1,000 versus 100 bucks. Yeah, but what the Department of Veterans did affected this little new agency, and they began to realize what they were doing, that's among other things.

But again, the statewide officials were

James Moore 19:54

so they came to those meetings as well and

Victor Atiyeh 19:57

to whatever like there. What it was doing. And I was pleased to have him come. And they were coming. There are some things he just wondered about to me. I never thought he or whatever position they had. There were people and I had a job, and they had a job, and they say I was stubborn. Maybe, I don't know what I did to make Gerry Thompson, yeah, you were stubborn. I don't know how well I didn't think that was but maybe it was. So basically, what the leadership elected right?

I had no problem, no problem at all.

Rarely, rarely, well, we wouldn't have any, like, I told you, Dave Omar gave me an opinion, but as far as I was concerned, that's I didn't go any further. Yeah, and so, and it's not an opinion I wanted, but I want, maybe in my mind, just as an exercise, okay, I get the book. After I was elected governor for a long time as a House member, I always figured you could line item veto ways to meet, and that's it. So I'm thumbing through when I get to the executive department, I'm reading what to say, and it says, And I'll paraphrase, but

we can not item be place

and means and any other bill with an urgency clause.

So I tested it on an Oculus bill. I still today can't figure it out. In one to Supreme Court, we lost, and it's so clear to me, right,

not to the Supreme Court.

So Bob Oliver, as we talked about it, he was fine. I had two assistants. Bob was one of them, having responsible to keep an eye on part of the state government. And I legal person. I But Bob, it says right here, no, I don't think you're not going away. How legalized.

What's in there that says

words don't mean anything

fundamentally, maybe, as we talk, it's pretty much the way I exercise my career. I was interested in measures. I wasn't really interested in finding them with anybody. I wasn't that always timid about it. I'm just saying that way I feel I'm going to go with that.

We have, we have things like,

there was the Equal Rights Amendment,

and this all came from my secretary. And she said, Some woman called and what Senator Taylor I do? Well, she said he's thinking about it, which I was, and she got so upset that I was thinking about it. And of course, I voted for but I was looking at it differently. Some of these words this we make are equal rights are going to impact some of the things they now have. Yeah, there's one coming up. I have to, I've got to call and talk to her. This is going to be a ballot measure. Yeah,

James Moore 24:17

they're just starting gather signatures. Do you know anything about that? Nothing at all. I mean, I watched it last year when, most notably the ACLU said, we're not going to support it. And the reason they did is because they felt that case law protected women, and that the way the amendment, as it was written last year would actually make women a special case over sexual orientation, race and all those other kinds of things. And they said, no, no, it's got to be equal. And so apparently the new wording is makes it so that it just enshrines things in the Constitution. And. Because the fear is, if it's in case law, then case law can be overturned at some point. So, but that I haven't seen the new wording at all, and

Victor Atiyeh 25:08

I am inclined, I they asked me, and that would be where I would be calling to support but I read what it's supposed to and I still do. I said, Well, when we pass equal rights, isn't it? Equal rights are the equal rights, you know, just like the word, yeah, equal rights really isn't as kind of what the judge says is equal rights, right? And

so that's why I asked you, I'm

still going to talk to the he wants me to do it,

you know, I don't know. I

James Moore 25:51

haven't, yeah, I haven't seen the wording to see what they're doing. Okay,

Victor Atiyeh 25:55

now back to you exactly.

James Moore 25:58

Well, let's talk about other elected officials. Your career almost exactly overlapped Mark Hatfield's. You both entered. Well, he was in the state house before you, but he became governor. As you came in, reading the oral history, it's pretty clear that your first several sessions, you basically kept your nose to the grindstone in the house, and there were some dealings with the governor's office, but nothing. You weren't really paying attention, in a big way to what he was doing. You were focusing on what you were doing. But then in the mid 60s, his career takes off to the Senate. Your expertise changes in the legislature. You're moving into the Senate, or Oregon Senate yourself, and then you become governor, and he is now, at that point, a well established Washington, DC politician. So talk to me about what it was like to work with him at different stages, and then I'm really going to want to hear more about what it was like when you were the single governor and he was one of the two US senators, because that's always a very interesting dynamic there.

Victor Atiyeh 27:12

Oh, of course, start with

almost instantly

became good friends as a family of his age and our age, we needed the Turks, but he took us on. I was talking to Antoinette well when we had the opening, and

going back to those days, and

we really almost became familial. But that didn't mean that I would even as much as I like him if there's something he wanted I didn't like I remember, I just won't know. One time, I said, Yes, I will vote. And then as I studied it further and before the vote, I got contact. I said, No, I've changed my mind. Now some of them don't do that on the day of the voters, but

I respected him,

if we look at him versus all the other senators and how they were, the other senators admired and respected DNR Mark Ray gets high marks, and that doesn't mean he was a patsy for whoever wanted it. I think probably, if you want to look at it and wonder why he was a vote against balanced budget that defeated the measure and never came to anything. He was never spanked for doing anything publicly

I couldn't now,

I know most people,

Americans, hopefully

would support that,

but he did it. He thought about it. That's where it was. And so his integrity and honesty, even on a major issue, carry the day for him,

and to me, that's more resounding than a lot of smaller things that might sound bigger. Mm, hmm. The Vietnam he was entirely correct. Absolutely. That's the same way I feel about why they fooled him with Syria. Why did they fuss around with Egypt? You know, we America, Iraq. Maybe we had some pretty good reasons to go in there. But I felt the way he felt Vietnam was just Vietnam and Afghanistan. We went, the French left, we went. Why? Why do we go in. Well, we had that

called, you know, if

the Vietnamese, whoever, oh, the

James Moore 30:55
dominoes, yes.

Victor Atiyeh 31:02

We lost so many soldiers for no good reason, and

I, you know, I was not in a position to make any nobody really cares how I felt about Vietnam, because the issues back there, but

that's the way I felt, and I felt the soldiers

were condemned for that which I thought were really bad. And my brothers were in the military. They were prisoners of war they had using them, but they were respected for coming home, and all the rest of the soldiers came home from Vietnam, and people turned their back.

That was the tragic part of it.

Well, we're still on Hatfield. I

I'm glad to have known him. I'm proud to say that

I believe he's unmatched and never, never will be matched. I wouldn't take the route that he took. You know, people said, Well, why don't you run for the Senate? You mentioned that just as you introduced it, I was one of one, right? I didn't want to be one of 100

and I don't have the time if you kept

one and same thing with the house was even worse. Oh yeah,

James Moore 32:48

it takes a long time to get power in the house. But

Victor Atiyeh 32:51

it wasn't that basic. It really was as simple as I didn't want to live in Washington, DC, and I didn't down to be one of 100 and I think I could have beat Bob backward in a primary. I think I could have,

but I wasn't interested in doing that. Yeah,

I don't know if I

want to deal more

James Moore 33:20

well, let's go into Hatfield specific policies while he was Senator and you were governor, the one that you've explored with me a little bit in the past is the Gorge Scenic Area and the way the Reagan people called you up right at the end. You said, No, keep it, but Hatfield during the time you were in Governor, Hatfield is in power, in the majority, out of power. He's a close connection with the Reagans. So explore some of those, those kinds of things, either policy things or or him when he's in an in the majority and out of the majority while you governor,

Victor Atiyeh 34:12

the court is a good thing, but it's one of those cases where he felt the same as I did, actually, the when I got Spellman to agree to sloppy document, everything in the world was supposed to happen with it, and I wasn't interested. It was a long list and a lousy piece of paper, and he signed it. I signed him, but the point was, he signed it. And so now that Congress is not going to take this as a gospel, but the issue now is on the table their congressional delegation and. President and arts restaurant. He needed it because it was the

COVID River. And

so what we agreed. And then, of course, he had to work through the machinery. And he knows, you know, to get a bill on one subject in Congress is just almost impossible, and I think it was his

standing that Congress considered if

we didn't have anybody, I don't think we could do that. We surely can't do it with our new senator, and maybe not even with widened Yeah, it was the same thing. And so

we were finding out.

Interesting to

me so many what said, there's a slogan I take credit for the gorgeous. And sometime I get irritated, because if it hadn't been for me, who knew that you had to get both sides, then you go actively, go do it. Nobody did that. And I had a piece of paper, I think you have it somewhere, where I wrote down, this is a little kind of piece of paper one time because it was important to me. But Hatfield had that stature. And, you know, it's important.

There were just like in the legislature. There

were some

Well, the worst of them was,

I'll come up with this name. I was going to say I would do that field. He was in the he was the setup was a bunch of chairs here and a bunch of chairs here, and he was sitting in the back on that back point, right back.

James Moore 37:40

I just as an aside reading the oral history. It's really funny how you have geographic memories of where people sit.

Victor Atiyeh 37:50

Well I do, because they impacted me. And it was a month before I even knew he was a member of the legislature, and he moved the previous question, which was his Zenith? That was his high point?

Well, I guess

I respect they happen to sit somewhere.

George Lehman.

There was nobody like George layman, Attorney from Edmonton or somewhere in that area. He's the only one that I know of changed votes

during the debate.

He was a Republican, and he was very articulate, very concerned. He's very understandable.

He sat where Jack Van Impe said

Mahoney was over here in that car, and a Tory was forever. I've forgotten Debs pots had his lock on the seat here.

I hadn't thought about what you just said,

yeah, you spot Gracie. Pac was over here,

Fern cook next to her.

God, I guess I

James Moore 39:15

it's like remembering your third grade classroom.

Victor Atiyeh 39:19

Well, my problem with that was that when I went to school, they always say alphabetical, oh, I didn't want to sit in front for God's sake, right? And it was always a, you know? And

I remember, maybe that's where it all comes from. So

suppose, if you look at the big picture, a person can make a difference and

and that would go either way. And

there in my. Opinion. Briefly, there are too many there for their own ego or whatever, not for whatever is right for the country or the state. They will go where they think. They'll vote on a measure that

it'll help them at their next election. And

I never changed.

I'm not holier than Ellen, and sometimes I almost hesitate, but I went in because I believed that our government could be better than it was, and I said to myself, I'll just go there, and I'll be honest and direct. And maybe, maybe, some will say, maybe I can, you know, and unfortunately, it hasn't worked that way. So I'm there for the reason that I had to do with the government and the people, and that had some interest in it. Again, was a minority member, but I got, I got my real looks, licks and committee, right? And there we did some pretty good stuff, and that's where my opportunity came. And I realized that that was something I could do,

I tell you, and

when I first started,

they would give us a sheet of stamp, or whatever they gave then mail. I had mine that I bought for my pay my bills and stuff, and I'd use those stamps. And when I wrote the constituents, I use. Who the hell knows which stamp I use? Nobody knows except that that was the way that I thought it should be, yeah, and anyway,

I keep losing the track, but

James Moore 42:25

whatever you want, well, let's, let's go back to senators so Hatfield, and as I get into things, there may be more things I want to talk about with Hatfield, because he's such a strong figure. But then you were governor also then Packwood had been in office for about 10 years by the time you're there. So he's also moving up. And it's they both become very powerful while you're governor, but they really reach their peak in the early 90s, when one is heading up appropriations and one is heading up finance. But Packwood, notably, was the chair of finance when he rewrote the tax code, almost by himself, in 1986 Well, while you were governor. So talk to me about Bob Packwood, his reputation in the state before the scandal, the reputation of State was that he was a younger Turk than Hatfield, who had been his professor. And so, you know, pack would have that kind of reputation, but talk about working with him while you were governor.

Victor Atiyeh 43:38

Our relationship was good. I

uh, although I have very few things that I was directly interested in that I needed Hatfield help, or if that would help, however, I would go to Hatfield. Bob Fauci was, yes, powerful, but he wasn't, in my mind, the same class as Mark Hadfield. He was a senator. Mark Hatfield was an outstanding senator, and that doesn't mean he's bad. He just, I don't think he achieved the admiration and respect Martin

by a long story, yeah, I think you're right.

But we got along getting on the road very well. I do remember probably made the greatest gift he ever had. We were at Dorchester and walking the beach. He and I Bob, I said, I'm just, I want you to know that I'm not going to run for Senator. That was what he was up

I think he was more relieved about that than anybody could have been.

But the fact is, I told him, and that's how I believed it. That's what I wanted. Another aspect of the Hatfield Packwood, you're going to be Senator, you were governor. I it.

States can do more good

than the federal government can do.

States can experiment, and if it didn't work, that's only one of 50. If it doesn't work here, that's one.

That's the whole nation

Congress. By the time they finally solve a problem, the problem has already been solved. So I've said the highest elective position you can be is a governor, because you can do something as a governor,

or you'd have to fight

well, even the Senate would need 51 or whatever

Speaker 1 46:18

you need 60 most of the time. Yeah, so

Victor Atiyeh 46:27

I don't recall calling Bob Parkwood for help, but I didn't have too many reasons. Back to the courts bill, that's true. I got worried that Reagan was going to veto it,

and I called talking to Jim Baker,

and I said, Jim, I haven't left the president for anything. And he said, That's right.

I want this.

I think that's

locked up because I do think Reagan was just about to do just that. And so in this case, talk to Baker instead of Murray, right? But Packwood, I would say that the pair is a better pair than the pair we have now

widened.

Widen is very powerful now,

James Moore 47:42

yeah, but he's powerful in a weakened Senate, yeah. So he's, I don't think I'll even get up to the level pack would was, but yeah, but yeah, within the Senate, he's a very powerful person. Now,

Victor Atiyeh 48:00

that's another thing I find so interesting and so contradictory. The only claim about Bob Parkway, he'd want a little pet on the butter. They didn't say he was not sleeping with him. And oh how terrible that was. And our president got a blow job in the Oval Office, and that's okay,

James Moore 48:28

yeah, I have the entire Senate Ethics Committee report, 10 volumes. Oh, my It's one of my pride and joys to have that. But it's very clear that the reason he resigned was eventually because he was caught out simply lying to his colleagues. And it wasn't he was lying to his fellow senators, and so it wasn't the act, it wasn't even responses to the act. It's that he eventually was making things up and they said, We can't trust you. And that was it, okay.

So, yeah,

Victor Atiyeh 49:11

yeah, that's, that's the worst thing I would tell you. I had my annual weekly Prescott books. I called it the availability. And if the media ever wanted to really get to me, they would hint that I'm lying, that would they call me son of a bitch or whatever they want, but not liar? Yeah, and they knew that. Yeah, I had fun with them. I Denny miles is the one that gave me the formula. You have, you have the 103, ways to answer a question. I know, we'll tell you, I don't know, but I'll get the information. I know, but I'm not going to tell you. That's the. I said, nuts, and a couple of times, particularly in Roger nation, yeah, and we're like, What? What? Even got several ready for and I smiled. Finally, I said, I know what you're trying to do, but so we, we had a good relationship, yeah, and you've got my, that's probably my prized position. Yeah, to think that the media would do that absolutely, absolutely,

James Moore 50:29

let's, let's go with another Washington D per DC person, little remembered in Oregon, but Al Ullman, who, in your first couple of years was the these Democrat, but he was a chair, Ways and Means, the Ways and Means Committee, so he was arguably one of the top two or three most powerful people in the country. So did you have dealings with him, or was that just something that was far away back in DC?

Victor Atiyeh 51:02

Although we got started faster than any other. But I say that to you, I knew government. I knew who was there. I knew who are the good people. I i helped either pass or sit there when some Bill, you know what government was like. And so we got going right away. I got up to stop and ask anybody. Matter of fact, I decided when telemedicine is his eight years I said to myself, hell, I can do that job.

And so that's what I said to myself. I

Yeah. And so I got to going because we had a lot of things to do in Oregon, and hardly any of it reflecting

VC.

So I really never had any communication with open, yeah. And it and it was interesting. Denny

came in, and I said, you're

going to win this thing. Now, why? I said that Denny was just nowhere, and here we got this big shot, right? And he did.

But strange stuff goes,

James Moore 52:25

Oh, yeah. One of my favorite things about that is when Tom Foley was defeated in 94 we were doing exit polling for the entire Pacific Northwest, and 25% of the people in his congressional district thought that George nethercutt would be the speaker of the house. It's

like no, no.

Doesn't work like that at all. But yeah, so yeah, Denny Smith was in.

My favorite thing about that new district

every single person who has held that office since Denny Smith to now, has been divorced while in office, every one of them, and Stan bun was or Jim Bunn was only in for one term, and he still got divorced while he was in office.

Victor Atiyeh 53:18

I want to tell you this Jim that

my joy,

and we talked about it, but it's becoming reality that you have had the big picture because you were interested in had them to do with faculty or anybody else that was your field of interest, say, institutional memory, if you will. So whatever I say, or anybody else says, and you can put in context, I know that's not good, yeah,

James Moore 53:54

that's the joy of it. Yeah? Me, oh, it's the joy of it for me too. Thank you. You're welcome. Let's shift away from the US senators and members of the House and things like that, and come back to Oregon, and clearly the big name is Tom McCall. So talk about your relationship with Tom McCall. You were basically in the Senate the whole time that he was governor. You're in the minority the entire time. And I've read once again, in the oral history, you were very different. For instance, the media you had your weekly media gatherings. He didn't do that kind of thing. He didn't gather the department heads together to talk. He kind of went you described him as Reagan's kind of going to the public to bounce in, kind of thing. So talk to me about your relationship with Tom McCall and what it was like from your vantage point in the Oregon Senate.

Victor Atiyeh 54:52

Tom was difficult in the sense that he'd be turn on her off he either hate him or her. I wouldn't say like me, but didn't hate me. I always forget that's Tom. So he'd do some things outrageous, but I'd say that's Tom. That was my way. I tell the story about if you really wonder about topical I play golf with him and he hit the ball. I'd say, nice shot Tom, and he'd say, Yes, it was no you, and I would say, thank you. But that was Tom on the election night that I beat him in the primary.

He was very upset,

and I kept waiting for a phone call. No phone call. Talked to Mark Hatfield, and he really didn't have particularly any you know, what do you do when it

got so I just decided to go down to his head. Of course,

unfortunately, he was in the lobby talking to the media when I showed up. Now, it wasn't unfortunate for me in the sense that I just didn't want an embarrassing situation, and he was Petaling as hell, and the media caught her, but then we went upstairs to his room, and he really jumped on everybody up there. His manager, a nice woman. I know her very well. She's in tears. Our state chairman was in tears. I wasn't

I thought that was,

that wasn't very nice. But I said That's Tom I don't like that. However we never I mean, I have a photograph somewhere. Maybe you have now he had some very complimentary things. He writes on there, not just top Bucha

and yet,

all right, see, he actually says

Audrey says

he told me the army,

he'd tell me that, right?

So I,

I wasn't, sometimes

I don't. I told westerdol, why did you have Tom wanted speeches and you rise had libs, because if they had libs, I would

always get the point. And he loved it. He really believed, when he left and Bob there, and of course, with me subsequently that somebody was sitting in his chair. Yeah,

that was his chair. What God did.

But he had the capacity

he gets credit for things. Of course, he didn't start. But the point with him as he got behind it, and no, he wouldn't let go. And it was that tenacity and his stature and how he would talk that we have the beach bill. Hell, his portrait was the beach bill. I know he never had nothing to do with a damn peach.

James Moore 58:41

That was it. He flew in on the helicopter and held up the stick.

Victor Atiyeh 58:50

He opposed the bottle bill initially, but as remembered, because he was a lot of people heard from him. He wasn't he didn't say things that would be offensive. They liked him, and I've said that, just without knowledge, that Tom will go down as one of our, like, our beach, really, beach field guy, but we got along well enough, if I were anywhere down that I needed something, which I never had, that

I could, I couldn't. I wouldn't hesitate to go to him,

but he had my own things to deal with. I've kind of, I figured he was, well, I just had my own things to deal with. I didn't bother about it. Me with the two of us went back to Washington, DC. Jackson had a national land use bill, yeah, and so Tom, of course, he's the one that gets all the attention, and they sent him back on the land use bill. And the legislative anyway, somehow I'm the one that speaks for the legislature. The first thing was that I get there that night and he gets the first notes. That's where he told me that I was his course.

And the next morning, at the

committee Tom said, Senate Bill 100 No, no atomic. Well, Senate Bill says No, Tom, he really didn't understand,

but he didn't and,

but he wasn't that nervous, he gets up and does this Tom McCall thing,

laughter. Everything was fine with the world,

remembered by people who weren't even born. Yeah, and that's fine.

You have to be practical about these things.

I did, what I did, I'm proud of what I did. I think it was good for Oregon. That's my opinion. People would say, Well, what's

what? There we

James Moore 1:01:41

go. I could move the table

Victor Atiyeh 1:01:43

too. Oh, it's that chair, okay?

And, well, you know, what's history going to do? That's not my right. That's not my job. My job. I can't force history to

say what history is going to say. I just feel we did a good job. The people that worked with me were damn proud of what they did while it worked. Oh, early on in my administration, that's not the way we did it, I know.

And I had them working harder,

but they felt better. Yeah, they really did. They felt better, yeah. And, you know, can you imagine the going to school 35 years in their retail drug business, year months where my brothers and I wouldn't take our own checks because we don't have enough money to pay our employees. You have to buy the same rugs, thinking from the market, thinking, that's what we could sell, that kind of thing. And 20 years in the legislature. Hey, that's kind of a good school, very good. It was the right guy at the right time, I think my opinion, because I'm not sure that any of my - those before me or after me, could have handled every recession we had that was clear now it's still screwing around hysterical down there. You know, we didn't have parallels. Hysterical people weren't happy. I know that they didn't have a job, but they're dead. People don't understand their nicotine. That doesn't have a job. Jim is working, but is worried he might lose his job, so he doesn't buy so it isn't just doesn't have a job.

And I know all that, but

I know enough about it. Know that I'm proud.

I'm personally proud

in my triggering binder

about a year after I was after I left office and I was in Salem and I was talked to,

well, let's, let's, let's, let's say this is confidential, but not the story that person, Jill Thorn,

Mike's Yeah, Mike's wife and the mother of Katie,

she has an understanding. She has a head screw. Job real quick. And she said to me, and I consider it one of the greatest compliments, Vic, the job is tougher than you made it look wow. I thought that was, I wrote that down, same thing because, you know, we just got about doing it. We didn't fuss around and say, like, the football I'm a football fan. Some football guy sacks the quarterback, and then he'd say, God, that's his job. What he's strutting around about, and the runner goes through there, and then, if you keep your eye, he's got blockers all over the place that are clear in a path. So, but when she said that to me, I

that's pretty much what we did.

And it was not a matter of making noises. It was a matter get doing it, yeah, getting it done. Yeah. And

by and large, Lynn Newbery said to me,

Hey, you must have done a good job this year. He said, I haven't seen any headlines of people living in cars and sleeping on the street. You know, usually from that time here, and that said something, we used senior centers as a distribution for food and outcomes food share, but they were all over the country, so senior centers

did everything we could

anyway. I surely strayed. But I think it's well to talk me, to talk to you about how I've thought about it.

I was lucky.

I feel, I feel very comfortable about what we did. I am very proud of the people that work with me. The department heads are just really good, very offended when my successor talked about "dead wood", yeah, and I chat with you, that's

all probably not part of Your script, but maybe help somewhere.

James Moore 1:07:39

Yeah, absolutely. Let's switch and go into probably the most attention grabbing issue during your time as governor, the Rajneeshees, the Rajneeshees You've talked a bit about, versus telling the press. There are things I know that I can't tell you. And I know from talking to Denny at one point, he was so frustrated with some reporter who was just pushing at him. He said, this is totally off the record. Turn everything off. And he took him behind a door and showed him the command center and had somebody from up on one of the mesas around there, on the rim road. Yes, nothing's happening in there right now, but talk to me about the Rajneeshees in terms of two things. First of all, your feelings about religious freedom and expression, which we've talked about before, but I want to kind of get it officially here, and then the practical management of dealing with the Rajneeshees, which gets into, you know, state troopers in the other and That kind of

Victor Atiyeh 1:08:55

thing. They they didn't get any,

good marks for me for diversification and everything, and it's only because diversification is fine and I believe in it and work on it. You know it, read about it. But these people were this greedy people who are self centered, and all they cared about was them and their cells, their face was Sheila, and arrogant and cocky, and I managed. Part of my management was that I would never go on that ranch, and I would never talk to them, and I didn't want to give them any credibility at

James Moore 1:09:48

all. Did that come from you, or is that okay? That

Victor Atiyeh 1:09:52

was my MO and Bob Oliver and Gerry Thompson were my wasn't me? You? They, we had them in court, as you know, on a land use measure, they had brought these elbows in, and we wanted them to send them back home. They started to do some training, you know, well, well, the governor would

get over and Gerry told them,

You don't understand, we don't trade. Never have, never will. Well, it took them a while to read he believed that. I think when they finally believed that they were not going to get any trade, is why they began to think about it, and the Bob ones started to leave. I will tell you that my personal view was that that happened quicker than most cults. They all go away, but you just don't know when they're going to go away. And my personal feeling was very strong about Sheila and what they were doing, they were flaunting it, and had come into town with a red dress, and they bought property and spent a lot of money, bought all these cars, and they were strictly not Oregonians by like a long shot,

but my job was to keep it cool.

The smart political move was to

publicly chew on

because Oregonians were matter and hell. So that was a good political but while they were doing that, I'm trying to keep it cool,

you do the best you can.

Yeah, we had good,

good information.

People would come to me and say, You gotta these folks, they got guns. Well,

I know they have guns, I said,

but every pickup goes up and down the highway he's got a gun back here now that we can have guns and they can't have

Well anyway,

we at one time, and maybe you know all of this when Ed Rudman, we had personnel carriers and tanks and helicopters and troops, and we had them on training, but had got that serrace, and of course, you Seen the executive orders. Yeah, and interesting it's historical because it wasn't signed,

right, right,

and but I mean, it was all that serious. And

even after I left,

my successor turned Sheila loose, and she still had money,

but, and he didn't tell the attorney general,

District Attorney,

but anyway,

it was a tough time. I've said, gee whiz, I didn't need a recession and Bhagwan all at the same time as mainly because they were just sort of walking around, yeah, and

Oregonians should be treated that way. I

The again, fact that I wouldn't

acknowledge them

by that, I mean, go to their ranch and talk Bucha

and the Bhagwat

that really, that was something that they did. I met about because they that was one step they did. They didn't reach. And in a way, you know, they're, you know, they're not good people. You know that they're very good and are hurrying Oregonians. But still, this is a democracy. When the Bhagavan went back to India and wanted to live in some city, they said, No. Well, we can't do that in America, yeah, but they said no to him there. So, you know, he got a people after my first session, people said to me, are you a lawyer? I said, No, I. Lawyer, don't you have to be a lawyer? No, all you need are set of principles and common sense. And as I look back 20 years, that's really pretty much the way I act.

And so he just know,

first, a good

set of principles, and I really believe this country, our system, and I lament about where we're going, because this country is supposed to be run by people, and but there's so many, damn many people here. They are not running it or running it down, and so

I worry about that.

Nonetheless,

good people,

the press that one that last day,

they were emotional. I'm sure they were because how they get treated, you know, and they had all of the six parts

in the past. In that picture,

have I told you about whatever I told the legislature, if you don't do something about property taxes, I'll call you back in some special session.

They didn't I did.

So you usually try to work out

with the legislature the leaders, so go smoothly. And I met with

Ed Fauci Karen Karen's

Eugene, Karen,

speaker and house, and then, of course, the Republicans and I'd go to the conference group, and we go back and forth, back and forth, back and forth. I'd come out into the reception area the media soldier. Have you heard this? Have

James Moore 1:17:31

you heard her? Is this the one where eventually they're not there when you have the announcement? Yes, yeah, absolutely. Yeah. Denny, where are they?

Yeah. Absolutely, okay,

Victor Atiyeh 1:17:44

same time on that. Yep,

it was a going, God, I want to talk to them. There was a demonstrated press conference and immediate availability,

right, right,

exactly.

That was funny, though it was funny.

At fatally did school. He kept when he finally came to an agreement, he wanted to make sure there was amendment in there, and that would be the one that would screw it up.

That's the one that screwed it

James Moore 1:18:21

up. There we are exactly, exactly we've been

going for about an hour and 20 minutes.

So why don't we stop there?

That's a good chunk of stuff.

Victor Atiyeh 1:18:36

Well, I want to make sure you get, you know,

I stray. Oh yeah, jerk me back, yeah.

James Moore 1:18:43

What I do when I go home? Because last time was the first time I had this is first I make a copy for archives, and then I have a copy that I edit. And so I just go through and I take the snippets out. So the Marquette field stuff will all be. Here's the Marquette field things, my pack with things, go all put it together like that, and start taking notes. And,

Victor Atiyeh 1:19:13

well, I'm pleased. I really am.

And I told you,

oh, I'll make sure you do comments again. You were the author. I appreciate that. And you know, I'll answer questions that you want. I won't try to intrude, and if I do intrude, you just kick me out of the door, because I really believe you are the author, and I don't want you, under any circumstance to feel

that you need

you don't want to offend me.

Well, I'm just trying to say. I appreciate it, and that's where we you that I get together absolutely one thing. Well, if I ever do,

tell you what my

advisor, in my campaign guy from Washington, State of Washington, and he told me, he said, Now, if I tell you something and you don't do it, that's okay. You make the decision. You don't have to do it because I said it.

And you and that's the way it should be. I will tell you one thing, and I will leave it there. It struck me before we really got going. Now, what would be the title? And I turn it over the years

and funny I came up with

which kind of fits how I feel about America.

That'll totally be an immigrant's son.

Well, that'd be kind of a pickup. But again, remember what I said, right? If it comes out, who is he? That's okay, too, exactly, exactly, okay.

Okay. Point is freedom for you.

James Moore 1:21:34

Yeah, okay, yep, absolutely, absolutely no. I.