

Tape 2, Side 2

CH This is an interview with Governor Atiyeh. This is Tape 2, Side 2.

VA Really, when I think back on it, it was kind of a silly reason. At the time, it made sense. I guess, in the whole context, it was - they're all good schools. That was the context generally, so it was just a matter of deciding where I wanted to go. That was also interesting. My dad said to me, "What do you want to do when you go to college?" I said, "Well, I'd like to be a commercial artist." His comment was, "You're nuts," which was the end of that conversation. I remember when my kids went to school, you know, this was - we sat down and did some real debating about the whole thing, and debated with your children back and forth. No debating with my father. I mean, if he said you're nuts, you're nuts. That's it. Finished; done. So I went there as pre-law.

CH At his suggestion?

VA No. I don't know where it came from, to be honest with you. I said, Well, okay, if I can't do that, I'll go in pre-law. I actually finished pre-law and was accepted into the law school at the end of my sophomore year, but I never returned to college, so I never followed that up.

CH You hadn't applied to any other schools or anything else?

VA No, it's not really quite the same. We weren't going to go - there wasn't any thought about going elsewhere than the state of Oregon. I mean, there - today young people have an opportunity, and they know about - and they're being recruited academically now, not athletically, to all kinds of colleges and universities around the nation. My granddaughter's going through

that exercise now. Then, you'd never - that wasn't even part of anybody's consideration. You just - you're going to go to school. Some of my fraternity brothers were from California, and you begin to wonder how come they come to Oregon. You wonder about it, because it seemed real strange to go out of state somewhere to go to a school. So no, there wasn't any discussion. Willamette I thought about because I had the coach come and say he wanted me to play football. I never really gave that a great deal of thought - I don't know why - but made the decision as I told you.

CH And while you were there for that - was it a year and a half, two years?

VA Two years.

CH Did you have any particular activities or influential professors that you had, or very interesting classes that you might have taken?

VA I was active in the fraternity house. Incidentally, we pledged Phi Gamma Delta - they're called ~~Peegees~~^{FPGIS} - I enjoyed it very much. I think fraternities and sororities are a lot more worthwhile than many people believe they are. But I did learn quite a bit in my fraternity, actually; that is, many things about being able to, first of all, live with other people of different personalities, and you're living close with them. That was something new. We hadn't done that before; we'd just been at home among our own - my own family.

CH Did you cook for yourself?

VA No.

CH You had cook for the fraternity house?

VA There was a cook at the fraternity house. I think I would have starved if I'd had to cook for myself. No, no, they had a cook, you know, and you have your meals. And I learned cooperation. You know, you cooperate with one another, and I learned some things in the fraternity house.

I mentioned this professor that we spoke about, "You're in my class now." I remember him. And I remember him being - this is interesting because he did not grade on a curve. I even signed up the second term with him, which I didn't have to do. I thought, well, this guy's a tough teacher, and that's fine with me. Okay, let's do that. I remember a neat professor in accounting. You'll remember, I told you I wasn't great on numbers. I really struggled with accounting, really struggled, and I recall him. In those days, to signed up for the next term, you'd go to MacArthur Court, and you'd just walk around and sign up for your classes. Now it's all computerized. But anyway, so I saw this professor, a nice fellow. "Vic," he said, "I looked and I looked at your finals, but the best I could give you was a D." And I didn't tell him, but I said to myself, Oh, thank God I got a D. I was afraid I was going to flunk the class.

CH well, speaking of accounting, how did you support yourself while you were there? Did you have a football scholarship?

VA I did get a scholarship. Now I think back on it, it was tough. My brothers and I all went at the same time, three of us in college at the same time. See, they graduated in January of '41, so they really had to wait till September, and, then, I graduated in June of '41, so we all went down at the same time. And when I look back on it, that was really tough on my dad. But I did get a, what you call a scholarship for football. However, I was not one of their big shots. I did get my tuition, I got my student card, and, then, this was the interesting thing. The really good ball players - they give you certain of work. You can work so many hours, sixty-two and a half cents an hour. And

the really good ball players, they got a lot of hours, but they didn't really have to work. Guys like me, we got fewer hours, and we had to work every single minute of our hours. That was the difference between the big shots and guys like me. And so all of that helped. Again, I really wasn't thinking about it, but thinking back, there had to be considerable help from my father. So that's what I did. Then, of course, we'd come home in the summertime and work at the store.

CH Had your father gone to college?

VA Well, he went to the American University of Beirut, but I don't - I think he went there; I'm not sure he graduated from the college.

CH And what kind of jobs did you have while you were in college?

VA Well, all of what I told you earlier was basically in high school. The department store, the paper route, that was all basically high school stuff. After that, it was just we'd come home after school, and we'd go to the store and work, so it was that all together.

I do remember, when you're talking about it, the one class I really liked, and I took that my last term as a sophomore - actually my last term in college. I was sort of filling in, and so I took philosophy, and it just sort of filled in with that one. I had thought about that many times. That did make some impression on me because I really enjoyed that class. What I got out of it was a perspective that there were other views, not just yours. You can always - you could understand other people had views, and that had quite an effect on me, then and in later life and through my time in politics and in government and governor. And I said, Gee, I wish I'd found this sooner. So I just had that one term of philosophy, but - this was Plato's Republic, and

I can remember reading Plato's Republic, and he was designing the perfect government. I recall reading that, and he's been talking about taking the children at an early age and teaching them and molding them. And I thought to myself, you know, Plato designed this perfect republic - that's what Plato's Republic was about. He had forgotten, however, one thing, and what he had forgotten was people. People don't fit the mold that you've just designed. People aren't that way; people are all individuals. Incidentally, it was a very small class. So small, as a matter of fact, we met in the professor's office, a room not much larger than the one we're in, which is now a pretty small room, with a table not much bigger than this. And the thing I can remember is - now, we're sitting very intimately in the this room with the professor. It's not a huge class. This one guy would come and go to sleep. Now, I can understand going to sleep in a huge class where nobody can really notice you, but you're going to notice one guy asleep in a small room around a table [laughter]. But he would do that. Anyway, I remember that. But I do recall that philosophy did - if we talk about an impact that I can identify, that would certainly be one of them.

CH And do you have any other impressions or memories from that period at all?

VA Oh, a lot of things. Memories about fraternity life, initiation. We grew a beard - we had a sophomore wiskerino, and I grew a beard pretty well, so I was the designee for the fraternity house, and I can remember I couldn't wait till the whole thing was over so I could shave. I just learned that I don't like a beard. And I can recall shaving, after the whole thing was over, that night and burying my face in a cool pillow, and it felt so good. So I learned I didn't want a beard.

CH How would you identify what your political views were at the time? You know, things that you might have considered

politically. Or did you?

VA No, no. Politics was not something I even thought about.

CH What did you think in terms of FDR?

VA I didn't like FDR.

CH You didn't?

VA No. Again, I guess there were things that I grew up with, or understood as being something important. I can recall when FDR ran for his third term. I was very indignant about that, in the sense that my thought was, if he thinks that he's the only one that can run this nation, then he doesn't understand our democracy. He doesn't understand. That's why I was indignant, that some one would say, I'm the only one that can do this; nobody else can. I remember that. You know, I did more analyzing of the FDR period later on than I did at the time, although I do mention this to you, that I can recall his third-term run. But I never - you know, the whole idea of being what we call politically involved just never occurred to me, just never occurred to me. I didn't think about it, I just - although I say I eventually led to running for the legislature and being actively involved because I was interested, I did have some strong feelings about this country which just sort of came. I can't really tell you at what point in time, although I can tell you when my father died there was this editorial, and I said, Gee, this is a great country. To come from that small village and be a success, this has got to be a great country. I remember that.

But I was interested, I was - as I grew older, watching politicians doing things, I was maybe more vocal than some, or more emotional about it. Gosh, they're doing this thing wrong. I remember reading the Kiplinger Letter, and he would write this

letter and it would say, well, such and such is a problem, but this is an election year, so nothing will happen. And I'm indignant. What difference does it make whether it's an election year or not? If it's a problem, you solve it. That was my - still, I'm not involved politically; still, I'm not having anything to do with the Republican party, although I registered Republican when I was twenty-one. You know, central committee, nothing. I didn't do anything like that.

CH Your brothers, you said, went into World War II in what year?

VA They went in 1943, March of 1943.

CH And I believe that you mentioned this before, and I can't remember whether it was off tape or on, but about how your brothers both fought in the Battle of the Bulge.

VA Yeah. They first went to college. They sent a lot of young men that they inducted into the - I'm trying to think of the acronym, but anyway, a lot of them went to college. They went to basic and then to college. But anyway, they were finally put together in an infantry unit, the 106th Division, and then they were sent to Europe.

As a matter of fact, I'll have to interrupt for a minute, because they came home on leave before they were going overseas. That was a typical thing. Both of them. And Dolores and I had been going together, now, since late '40, December of '40. So they said - and we were officially engaged at that point in time. "Well, why don't you guys get married while we're home?" So within a week this all took place. Married on July 5. So they came home, and we got married, and then on July 30, 31 - anyway, the last day of July, my father passed away, and my brothers came home again.

But anyway, they went overseas, and they went into Belgium,

and then finally to the front lines, and that's where the Germans broke through, the Battle of the Bulge, through the 106th Division, their division. And they were relatively new and inexperienced. The interesting coincidence - I mentioned Tom Galt earlier. He was in the infantry. For a while after basic he stayed there. He finally became a sergeant. He was a trainer for folks in basic. But he was in the Second Division. He landed a week after D-day and was there till the end of the war. He was the only one of his original company left at the end of the war. But anyway, he was in the Second Division. The 106th replaced the Second Division, where Tom was. They never saw each other, but that was what occurred.

And, then, the Germans broke through the 106th, and they were both taken prisoners. They were separated the night before - but they were both in the same platoon - and so they were captured separately. Although I may have told you this, Ed knew that Richard was okay, because there was two large compounds, and someone from their division moved from one compound to where Ed was, and he said Rich is over there. He tried to get there, but, obviously, the Germans had their own system. So Edward knew Richard was okay, but Richard had no idea what happened to Edward until he finally was released, he came home - Edward came home first. He was released first, he came home first. Then Richard was released, he came home, and as soon as he hit the States he called home, and his twin brother answered the telephone. This was the first he knew about it, that is, Richard knew about Ed. They both suffered jaundice and malnutrition. They were there for only a few months in prison camp. It was pretty bad. You know, you can kind of chuckle about it now, but Ed tells the story of - in their prison camp. He said one morning they woke up, and they could see the Germans moving around and setting up machine guns, and something unusual was going on. Then they got them out and lined them up and stood them there for a long time. Finally he told them that someone had broken into the dining hall and was stealing food and beat one of the guards, German guards,

with a meat cleaver, or something, and they wanted to know who it was. They stood them there for hours. They didn't get the word. Then, finally, they went back into the barracks and they came in and they said, "We want to know who did this. Until we find out, we're going to start shooting you ten at a time, alphabetical." Now, this is the time you don't want to be an A. So I said to Ed, "What happened?" Well, he said it wasn't within their barracks, but whoever it was, they turned him in. I said, "Gee whiz, that's tough." Yeah, but he was endangering all these other people.

Rich was in a work camp, coal mine, and there he described the Germans shooting Polish soldiers, just for no particular reason at all. It wasn't pleasant. It was tough on the Germans at the time. They were actually living off of Red Cross packages, because the camp was taken over. There was this warehouse of Red Cross packages. The Germans were living off the Red Cross packages; the prisoners weren't getting any. So anyway, it was a short period of time but quite tough.

The really tough part was because I'm home. I'd been asked to - again, we didn't cover this, I don't think, on tape. I was called down to the federal building, which is down there by now the Schnitz, across the street from the Schnitz, and there was an officer down there that wanted me to volunteer for the OSS, which was the Office of Strategic Services. That was their kind of behind-the-lines spy kind of things. That goes back to French. They knew that I had taken French. And I told them that my father by then had passed away, my brothers were in the service, I was in the business, and I said I really - "I can't in good conscience volunteer. I want to go badly -" and I really did want to go - "Now, if you can take me, I'm glad to go, but I can't volunteer to go." I tell you that story because when - oh, maybe a couple or two or three weeks later I'm walking back to the store, and I see this GI Plymouth sitting at the front of the store, and my first thought was that it's this same guy that I had talked to earlier, the officer. It turns out there was, I

think, a captain, and he had come in looking for my father, who by then had passed away quite a bit of time. They said, well, he wasn't there, but I was there, so he waited. Now, he reads this telegram: Private Edward E. and Private Richard A. Atiyeh are missing in action. That was the telegram. Then we had to go home and tell Mom, or read the telegram to Mom, which we did. Then we went to the - there was one theater. I think it was Blue Mouse, and I think it was right across the street here, and they showed newsreels. That was what their thing was, not movies; they would show newsreels. So we'd go there to see the new newsreels in case we might be able to see - because this was still missing action - see Ed or Rich. We never did. Then we get a card from Ed; he was a prisoner - this is a Red Cross card - and then he says Richard's okay. Of course, he knew. Then we got some notice from Richard that he was a prisoner, and then we knew they were prisoners. That was an interesting period of time.

I mentioned my friend Tom. He had some very close calls, obviously had to, and he was, as I told you, only the last one of his original company, and he was there till the end of the war. My friend Jim that I mentioned, he was over in what they called the CBI, China, Burma, India, and he was over in China, in Lu^{LU} Yang [sp?], which was - it was an airbase there. And, then, the war, you know, you get - of course, I lost a lot of fraternity brothers. One was a glider pilot who was killed, and one was in the navy, he was killed. This was in Europe. Several of them in the infantry. We lost fraternity brothers. My friend Jim, his brother, Dick, younger, graduated from high school, went to basic training, came home for his leave, went to the Philippines and was killed, just bang, bang, bang, just like that. That's the way that war went. A very interesting time to live through.

But you know, I think about it, and then I think of people today, young people, relatively, and then I think of myself. I didn't go through World War I, so to me it was all pictures and history. World War I didn't really happen, although my father-

in-law was in World War I. He was a machine gunner, and my friend Jim Campbell's dad was in World War I, but that wasn't real. And so I can understand, you know, younger people, to them, World War II isn't real. I mean, they weren't alive at the time. Movies and whatever, history books and things of that kind, but that wasn't real. It's getting to be Korea isn't real pretty soon, although Vietnam still is.

CH You were in the coast guard temporary reserve, weren't you?

VA Yeah. Our secretary's husband was an older fellow and engineer. Now, this is a strange way to start the story, but he signed up to go to Alaska, and you get a deferment. You have to sign up for a year, and he went up to Alaska, and all the time he's trying to get a commission because he keeps worrying about the fact that here he is, a mature engineer, and he's afraid some young punk is going to be an officer over him, and he couldn't stand that. Anyway, he finally couldn't take it any longer, came home - and, incidentally, he had a pre-induction physical and flunked it. Now, he didn't have to spend the year in Alaska, but he didn't know that at the time. But anyway, he came in the store one day. He said, "Hey, you want to join the coast guard with me?" "What are you talking about?" And he had discovered this coast guard temporary reserve. What this was, folks would sign up, and we would patrol the docks here. Well, he never did sign up, but by that evening I'd had my physical and I was in the first class that evening. He told me this in the morning. So I was out there walking the docks. I'd spend twelve hours each week, and it was - actually, my shift was midnight to - well, wait a minute. It was six to six, 6:00 in the evening to 6:00 in the morning. And we'd put on our uniform and go out there. They'd say, Now, you can have a stick or a gun. I always took the gun. I didn't want to get close enough to use a stick if there was anybody around. And it was also interesting, they'd issue - this is a Smith and Wesson .38, was what we got issued,

and they issued the pistol and they'd issue five cartridges, and, by god, you'd better come back with the five cartridges or they were going to court martial you. Those were the shaggiest cartridges in the world. They'd hand them out and take them back, hand them out and take them back. But it was interesting. Lend-lease was going on with the Russian - not lend-lease. Whatever we called it. We were giving Russia a lot of material, and a lot of Russian ships were here. I can recall seeing locomotives being loaded into holds of ships, and they would fill these things up, these ships, these Russian ships, just fill them up. Then the captain would put lumber on the top of the deck, and they'd go out - as a matter of fact, during our training session they were talking about how heavily loaded these ships would be. They were kidding that the Russian captain would sit on the deck and put his hand over the railing, and when he could touch water, he'd say stop loading. But they did add - they would go to Vladisvostok, and they'd have to be very careful because they'd have an awful lot of ice en route. And that was something I couldn't understand: huge letters, USSR, on the side of the ship, you know, and we're fighting the Japanese, and somehow I used to think that - how can they do that. The Japanese are going to strike them. Well, I knew, but didn't really think about, that they weren't fighting the Japanese. They wanted to make sure the Japanese knew this was a Russian ship. So it was interesting.

CH They weren't fighting the Japanese?

VA No, they didn't declare war on Japan until about the last, I don't know, week, or two or three weeks. Just before the end of the wary.

CH So all this materiel was going...

VA It was going to Russia to fight the Germans.