

Tape 7, Side 2

CH This is an interview with Governor Atiyeh. This is Tape 7, Side 2.

Yes, as you were saying about obscenity?

VA Well, again, I'm trying to remember which session. I remember who it was. We had a bill. I guess it may have been when I finally went to the senate in '65, the '65 session. But the courts would say the laws were unconstitutional because they were vague, so a bill was put in to become less vague, and Jim Redden was the one that said it. He read the bill. "Have you read that bill," he said. "You know, when you read the bill, it violates the present Oregon obscenity law," trying to be not [inaudible] any more. I can remember that.

CH This is when Jim Redden was in the legislature?

VA Yeah.

CH What was your impression of now Judge Redden as he was a legislator?

VA A great sense of humor, a great sense of humor. He was determined. He got his way an awful lot, but he would do it very nicely. I mean, he could really cut into you, but do it very, very pleasantly [laughter].

CH He ran for governor once, didn't he, for the - in the primary and lost, I think, to Bob Straub.

VA I think so.

CH Would he have made a good candidate or a good governor?

VA That's hard to tell. I don't know, I couldn't really answer that. But I still like him, he's a neat guy, and of course he's very much involved in what we're doing right here, and always got a good smile, and a neat fellow.

CH We've talked a little bit previously about the '63 session, so you kind of wrapped up a little bit earlier about - on a previous tape about the feud that existed between the house and senate between Clarence Barton and Ben Musa and some of the other things that happened during that time. Was there anything else about the '63 legislature that was interesting?

VA Nothing that really jumps up at me.

CH Maybe we could - since this is toward the end of your term - this was your last term in the house. Maybe we could go over a few things in general in the house. Who did you consider to be the principal Democratic and Republican leaders of the house during that period while you were in there? You've talked about some of them, I'm sure, but...

VA Well, of course, I would say - they'd have to be Democrats in this sense. Bob Duncan, Clarence Barton, Ed Whelan, Al Flegel. I think that's pretty much it.

CH Who stands out as being the best spokesperson for the Democratic party or the best leader in the house during that time?

VA Well, by '63 Duncan had left the legislature.

CH But before that time, while he was still in the house?

VA But you see, that would be in my eyes. By that I mean someone that would be maybe closer philosophically to where I am.

Of course, he was a leader, and he did very well at it. By contrast, Clarence Barton was sort of a bull in a china shop kind of guy. That was not Bob Duncan; that was Clarence Barton. I got to know him quite well, and you could tell when his ears got a little bit red and when it finally got to his nose, he was really mad. I mentioned Jake Bennett, incidentally. This might not be a bad time. I kept thinking of the - I think Clarence might have even had a heart attack. He was trying to get Jake Bennett to sit down to stop him from talking. He tried to stop him several times, and he hit the gavel, and he was getting madder. I mean, I could tell he was really getting very, very mad. I think it finally got to his nose, and he just slammed that gavel down, and he says, "Mr. Bennett, sit down," and he slammed it down, and the gavel broke, just flew off, just broke. And that, of course, I think helped everybody. You know, they had laughed at it, and that sort of broke all that terrible tension that was building.

I think Monty Montgomery was doing a good job at that time, but obviously in the minority.

CH Is there any objective way to critique a leader? I mean by terms of their success, by the amount of legislation they can get through?

VA Well, it depends who's doing the measuring. I think Willamette Week did pretty well in the sense that their bias is very strong, and their bias obviously would be for liberal Democrats, but I say that because they included me as one of the leaders, so to the extent that they were measuring effectiveness, different things like that, other than Republican-Democrat, liberal-conservative kind of thing. But I don't really think there is. Certainly, among your own colleagues these are all made and decided individually with your own biases, and obviously the biases are all different. So I don't know if there's a standard, how many bills you introduce or how many bills you

carry. How many you introduce is no standard, really; as a matter of fact, that may be a negative standard. I don't know. I think - oh, remember I was trying to remember somebody that I said was persuasive on the floor?

CH Yes.

VA George Layman. If you want to go back to wherever that page was, his name is George Layman. He was from Newberg, and he was the only one that I know that could actually persuade people, change their votes on the floor.

CH That was by his oratory skills?

VA Yes. He was very good. He'd say, here it is, and this what, and this is why. He was very orderly, and, you know, you'd listen to him. It wasn't just puffery. And he wasn't partisan, and everyone understood that as well. So I think those are among the reasons. No, there's no subjective way to do the measuring. It just depends on who's doing the measuring.

CH How do you look at the state in terms of the way it breaks down ideologically or philosophically in terms of the regions of the state?

VA Well, of course, the regions, they're more conservative in eastern Oregon and central Oregon; much more liberal in the valley, particularly as you get into Eugene and Portland. That's you know, I think these are always deceptive terms, but using the ones as we generally understand them. However, having said all of that, I'm absolutely convinced that Oregonians, regardless of how they're registered, range from conservatively moderate to liberally moderate, and that the conservatives, in however you want to measure it, and the liberals are minorities. By far the largest number of people are in the scale that I just described.

CH Do you think that that's typical around the country, or do you think that Oregonians are more moderate than in other places, or less polarized than in other places?

VA This is a very hard question to answer, because one would say Oregonians are conservative, and I'm not sure that's the right word, but maybe in the kindest sense of conservatism rather than ultra or extreme, something of that kind. And yet, Oregon has been very progressive, number one on many things, so you wonder how come. How come here is this relatively conservative state, it's the only state that has statewide land-use planning, which is very controversial. We were the first one to have a bottle bill; very controversial; the first ones to have the initiative and referendum way back then; first ones to have a gas tax for highways, dedicated to roads. You wonder how come, in this, quote, conservative state. And I think that they - and I said how come this is all happening in this state of ours. Maybe they're a little more thoughtful, a little more perceptive. That doesn't really relate to liberal or conservative that they're willing to try new ideas.

CH How would you describe the relationship you had between adversaries and allies on various issues, and how that might change from issue to issue?

VA I think, if I were to judge it, that I was generally respected by my colleagues. They knew how I felt, and they knew I believed in what I believed in and that I was articulating it and that I was not partisan - and I wasn't - and that although oftentimes I would be on the losing end of a measure that I'm dealing with, and very often - not very often, but the only one "no" vote. Frank Roberts, I can recall, was reading clerk. I don't recall which session. He was - it was roll call, and he would mark, you know, nays and yeas. He finally said to me, "Vic, you'd make it real easy on me. Just tell me where you're

going to vote yes," because he kept saying I vote no too many times, and I was. I was voting no an awful lot of time. But in spite of all of that, I can recall one of the labor leaders that came by; I think it was the end of the first session. He said, "You know, we didn't agree very often, but I really respect you. I know where you're coming from and I understand it." So I think that's how I was generally accepted.

CH Would it change from time to time? Would there be people that you would be allied with on certain bills and then adversaries on another?

VA Oh yeah. That's the nature of things. Even among my Republican colleagues. As I told you, I voted no on many things. As a matter of fact, as governor I voted no. I vetoed - I call myself - I first thought I had the record for vetoes. Now I have to say that I have the modern-day record because I found that Governor Os West had vetoed so many bills. But, you know, I just - if I don't think they're right and it doesn't fit my idea of what a law should be, then I have no compunction of voting no. I don't care whether I'm all by myself. I don't care. That's just who I am, and that's what I'm going to do. But, sure, it would shift. I can recall that my very good colleague Wally Carson, who I appointed to the supreme court, quite often we were on different sides of the issues. He would be voting yes, I would be voting no, or vice versa.

CH Why would you - and this is something we'll probably get into later on, but why would you nominate somebody to the supreme court, like you did with Wally Carson or with Betty Roberts, where they were ideologically so much different than you?

VA Obviously, it would all vary, and we could all talk about that, but registration had nothing to do with how - whether it was a Republican or Democrat. I can recall - now I'm jumping

ahead, but I saw - you know, they have this - there's a form you fill out if you're interested in serving in government, and so if someone's interested, you send them a form, they fill it out and send it back in again. And I ran across Bob Straub's. Now, I don't know if it was there previously, but I did see it with Bob Straub, and in the list of questions was, How are you registered? and I was very offended by that. Very. And when I became governor, we hung on to stationery for a long time, you know, because there was a lot of stationery out there with Bob Straub's name on it, but that form, I said, "I don't care how much is out there. We're going to get rid of it, take that question out. I just don't think there's a place for it." And so when you ask the question you did, you know, say how come I appointed Fred Heard, whom I said did an extremely good job. Very evident Democrat, and there was some question about his lifestyle. I just thought he was going to do a good job. That's all that counted. So I'm partisan. I believe in Republicanism, I believe that people should have - if they at least don't register that way, they ought to vote as a Republican would in terms of fiscal conservatism and the kinds of solidly good and less government interference, all that sort of thing, I believe in it. And I know the Democrats believe just as avidly on the other side of that issue. But to me, they are going the wrong direction in terms of my view of a democracy. But that's the generic, it's not the specific.

CH One hears admonitions for politicians not to burn bridges behind them. How would you go about maintaining a good rapport with somebody who you were consistently opposed to ideologically, or would you try to at all?

VA I suppose it - because I just wouldn't meanly berate somebody who doesn't hold the same position I do. I recall, when we were talking about philosophy, and remember I said that I took *A COURSE* *(N)* this - and it was just a neat course. There was a time that came

when I wished I had never taken it because I could see someone else's viewpoint. Not necessarily agree with it, but knew somebody had another viewpoint, and I could see it, and I would sit there, and I would say - like a Vern Cook, for example, who didn't really care if there was another viewpoint. I said, God, I wish I could be that free. There's only one viewpoint. His. And I said, What a wonderful relief it would be to not be burdened with the knowledge that there's another viewpoint out there. But I would never - you know, Vern and I just clearly don't - I'd pick him or Fadeley or a few others. They're just not anywhere in my scope of things. But, you know, I wouldn't chew them out because of their position, I wouldn't be angry at them. I understand it, and we disagree. To me, as we mentioned several times, it was always an issue, not a person. And so Vern Cook would have an issue, and I'd disagree with the issue, not Vern Cook. We got along. Clearly, we were very diverse in our personal philosophies. But that's, I guess, who I am. There's no way to measure that. I don't know why or how or anything else.

CH When you would be sponsoring legislation, how would you go about putting together, forging, an alliance or your support for that legislation?

VA Oh, you just go to people that you thought probably would think the same way. You know, Would you sign on this bill? What does it do? Well, it does such and such. But I wouldn't really go - I wouldn't spend a lot of time with people that in my judgment would be opposed to it. I don't have time for that sort of thing. I'm just getting signatures to get a bill in, try to pick some people that I thought would be somewhat - you know, I told you about people voting as to what the names are on the bill. I tried to get a sprinkling of people that would sort of negate that idea, but I wouldn't spend a lot of time at it. I wouldn't spend a lot of time debating why they should or



shouldn't. So I tried to make it as easy on myself as I could.

CH What about the work that you conducted off the floor? How would you go about doing that? For instance, were there places that you would intend to meet legislators, since they didn't have offices during that - at least while you were in the house? There was a lounge, for instance. I've heard about places where people would go, the Senator Hotel and Chuck's Steak House. Where would you go, and how would you engage somebody off the floor in terms of talking to them politically, or not talking with them politically, socializing with them?

VA Well, I did spend a lot of time at Chuck's Steak House, but that was because it was right across the street from where I was staying, and they had good food and it wasn't all that expensive. A whole lot of legislators would gather there, Republicans and Democrats, although I had a tendency to get in early, have dinner, and leave early. There was another group that would come late and stay real late. I normally wasn't involved with that one. I just didn't particularly care for it, that was all. Oh, we'd go to the lounge or we'd go - during the session, particularly, the public is not allowed on the floor, so we could go off on what we called "outside the bar." The chambers are where all the seats are, and, then, there's a railing, if you will. Outside the bar is that aisle outside, but it's still inside the scope of that first floor. That's pretty much it. I didn't go out an awful lot. Some legislators would go out every night, almost. Some lobbyist would take them to dinner. I didn't do too much of that. I didn't have a great need. The Turks would get together in one of our rooms, particularly early on, and we'd have the third readings, bills coming up the next day so we could kind of share each other's thinking on that; how are you going to vote on this, and how are you going to vote on that. But that was the early freshman days. That's pretty much it.

CH Were there social events connected with being in the legislature?

VA Not uniform. There was a hello party, they called it, the lobby would put on, and there was a sine dei party that the lobby would put on, and, then, the folks from the Fourth Congressional District, they'd have a timber party, and the timber industry would put that on. Those were the biggies. Other than that, I don't think there was anything what you'd call a uniform.

CH What was the sine dei party like?

VA Oh, some of them were a lot of fun, and the lobbyist got to be putting parodies on legislators, and some were pretty funny.

CH Did they ever do one on you?

VA I don't recall they did. They did some parodies on me down at Dorchester, but I don't recall at a sine dei party. Some of them were pretty funny, really funny. Henny Willis ~~is~~ was the great producer of that. He was a writer for the Register Guard. He was a very, very bright guy. He loved theater and was involved in the civic theater down in Eugene. But they were kind of fun.

CH I've also heard about, and I think we mentioned before, too, about getting around the piano at the end and singing Auld Lang Syne.

VA Oh yeah. That would be at the very end, when it's all done and it's sine dei, and we'd sing and go home. It so often was so late at night, you know, one, two, three o'clock in the morning. Who wants to hang around. It's time to go home.

CH Were there other traditions in the house that we haven't

talked about?

VA I can't think of anything in particular.

CH And are there members of the house that we haven't talked about that - you know, characteristics or traits, qualities, mannerisms of people that come to mind when you think back on...?

VA Oh yeah. I can think of - you mentioned Fred Meek. Dick Hoyt is another fellow that - he was from Corvallis.

CH What was your impression of Dick Hoyt, and how do you remember him?

VA Oh, I remember him very fondly. Very fondly. He never appeared publicly, but he had one of the greatest sense of humors. I mean, he'd just have us rolling on the - particularly in caucuses. Just a neat guy. But I do recall that Green Stamps was a big issue, and the issue was that they would be selective. You could have Green Stamps, but I couldn't have Green Stamps. And so there was, you know, bills to do this, to let everybody have Green Stamps. I remember a specific discussion with Dick Hoyt, who was in the laundry business, or dry cleaning. "Dick," I said, "How come you've got this bill in here?" He says, "I buy Green Stamps. Oh," he says, "I think everybody ought to be able to get Green Stamps." And I said, "Well, Dick, don't you have a franchise on sanitizing?" "Yeah." "Do you think everybody ought to have it?" "Well, no." That sort of took care of his enthusiasm for Green Stamps [laughter]. But Dick, really, just a marvelous man, genuinely. What a guy. I hadn't thought about him for some time, but just a great guy. I really liked him. We started in the house together and actually started the senate together. He shifted to the senate the same year I did.

CH Earlier today, when you were talking about people that you

would talk to for opinions - you know, you would call up somebody and ask - you said the name Wally. That wasn't Wally Priestly, was it?

VA No, not Wally Priestly. Wally Carson.

CH I have to admit that I say that facetiously because I presume that you probably didn't have...

VA I never asked Wally Priestly for anything about anything [laughter].

CH But since we're talking about characteristics and characters in the house...

VA That's right, he was one. He was one.

CH What was your impression of Wally Priestly?

VA Oh, I kind of felt sorry for him. He really was kind of spaced out. I don't mean that necessarily in terms of drugs. He just didn't seem to be quite connected to what was going on. He certainly was entirely different than anybody else. I couldn't measure him to anyone that would be the same as Wally Priestly. And he was a very - he was a very kind person, also very soft spoken. Even when - I think I may have mentioned, when he came to me he was very disturbed I was going to use national guard in my inauguration. He was very upset about that, very upset about it, and, yet, was not pounding the table or any histrionics like that, that some others might have done. And I just said to him, "Wally, when you get elected governor, you can do what you want. This is my inauguration." And he just - that was it. But he was sort of really out there all by himself, and I kind of felt sorry for him in that case.

CH I had heard stories about his more or less living in the lounge.

VA Yes. And he had - and I suppose because he felt sorry for him, he had a secretary, I guess you would call it, or assistant, who was - I don't know if he ever took a bath, because the guy really - it did get kind of odorous around him. That was Wally. I guess he felt sorry for the guy. But there was really nobody that he really was close to or had fun with or enjoyed the company of, as far as I could tell. Pretty lonely.

CH Any other reflections on the house that you haven't mentioned before we move on to the senate?

VA I remember a fellow named Weatherford, who was part of the Weatherford family. Not the Marion Weatherford. What the heck was his first name?

CH It wasn't Bill, was it?

VA No. We'd sit and talk with him in the evening, you know, knew where he was philosophically, and that's just by talking. But his central committee had him - he was a Democrat - really had him spooked. He would vote against his own personal philosophy just almost every time. If that was the Democrat line, that was the one he was going to go with. And I liked him, a nice guy, but how could you do that? I know what you believe in. But he voted just exactly the - because he wanted to get reelected.

CH Where does party loyalty fit into Oregon politics?

VA Party loyalty in the sense of a state central committee is not all that keen. Party loyalty within the chamber, quite keen with the Democrats, less so with the Republicans. It was awfully

hard to get a unanimous vote to say we are going to vote for this. There's no such thing like that in the Republican party in a caucus. As a matter of fact, it got real frustrating at times. But it would be more within the chamber, although I would have to say this: there were rare, rare party-line votes. There were some, but they were not frequent.

[End of Tape 7, Side 2]