

Tape 23, Side 2

CH This is an interview with Governor Atiyeh. This is Tape 23, Side 2.

Did anybody else go down to the Benson with you?

VA Well, Steve Young did, myself.

CH Was there any kind of entourage of these people following you?

VA Certainly I must have had a driver. I didn't walk down there, but I don't recall that part because - you know, my mind was on Tom and what I thought was a pretty severe problem he was having. We mentioned it's unusual that the winner will go to the losers, and I'm respectful for him. I did know how pained he was going to be. I'm fully aware of that. I didn't want him to say, Hey, you won, hooray, pat-on-the-back kind of thing, I just thought that we ought to communicate in some way, and we did.

CH At what point in the election night - when the returns were coming in, at what point in those returns were you declared the victor or you decided to go down there?

VA I decided to go down there - the polls close at 8:00. I suppose it could have been as late as 10:00, 10:30. You know, you wait, but it was very clear what was happening. Very clear. It wasn't a cliff-hanger. I ended up forty-seven. I'm not sure where Tom ended up; in the thirties, and Roger was in the twenties or - I don't recall exactly, but it was not a cliff-hanger, and it became very apparent early in the evening what was going on. That's why the media was trying to detach and - it was a very exciting evening. I felt good about the campaign. I told

you about saying, Hey, I won. Obviously, you don't know you won until the polls close, but I had a good feeling about what was going on. So it was, altogether, a very exciting evening.

CH Who did you go to for endorsements and for raising money, or how did you go about that effort?

VA Well, you contact people that I knew, that I had met in the '74 campaign, and you go to people that can give you, you know, good, substantial amounts of money. And, yet, you get surprised every once in a while. We had in our solicitation, you know, I'm going to give money to the Atiyeh campaign: 25, 50, 100, other. Carol Whitney ~~1991~~, who was then the campaign coordinator - which, after the primary election, I said, Okay, now you call yourself campaign manager - she came in and said, "Who is -" I'm trying to think of his name. I said, "Gosh, I don't know. I'm trying to remember." And then I said, "Why?" She said she was looking - you know, she opened the mail. [She] loved to open the mail with all the checks coming in, and this was marked other. So other usually means one dollar or five dollars, ten dollars. Well, the other was \$5,000. Oh, I better remember who this was. And it's interesting. You never think about it. I had breakfast with two or three men one morning. They wanted to have breakfast; fine, we'll have breakfast. We chatted about one thing or another, nothing particularly special, you know. About the state, I suppose, and - anyway, he apparently liked it and wrote a check. So those were the unexpected ones.

We really ended up with - we kept saying we've got about 20,000 volunteers, and this was, again, Sharon's job, and she did a super job at it. Our average - we kept track of an average contribution. I don't recall where it was, but the average was somewhere like twenty-five or thirty dollars. That was their average. So we got a lot of money from a lot of people - you

know, a little at a time from a lot of people; plus, people that I knew, had known in business, people that I had known when I ran in '74, you know, people that I knew could make a good \$500, \$1,000 contribution, those kind of things, and that's where you go. But we really prided ourselves on the strength of the volunteers and their giving. I personally was very touched when I'd get a contribution of a dollar. You know, that probably meant as much - it happened to be a woman, an elderly woman - meant as much to her as it did this fellow that gave me \$5,000. It was a big contribution for her. We even got valuable coupons, which I think is even more touching.

CH What kind of coupons?

VA You know, the things you - valuable coupons. You can get something at a ten-cent discount at the store, or twenty-five cent discount at the store. You know, just people who were very, very thoughtful and wanted to help, and it was kind of catching fire.

I kept talking about my thousands of volunteers, and nobody paid much attention to me - now I'm in the general election; actually started building it in the primary - because politicians say that all the time: Grass roots, thousands of volunteers. I didn't care whether they believed me or not. I'd tell them, but I - that's okay with me if they don't believe it. That's fine. But late in the campaign Wayne Thompson came over from the Oregonian. Talking to Sharon, he said, "I understand you've got 20,000 volunteers." "Yeah." "Well, who are they?" "Well, right there in the filing cabinet." So he expected to see a whole bunch of empty cards. You know, we had it pretty full. He's thumbing through there, and there's names on all these cards. So at random, he picked a - I don't know, two or three or - he'll have to tell you. I don't remember. But he picked a few to

actually contact them. Sure enough, they were real. They weren't just names on a card, they were real.

Honestly, I'll tell you, watching campaigns today - talk about Packwood and his sophisticated campaigns, there really was never any - not even close to it - better well-run, managed campaign than mine was. And I say it because it's those who were working for me that put this all together, along with Paul Newman, my consultant. It was really an outstanding effort. You make decisions. Again, Paul Newman advice: Lawn signs, you know, are very good, or a lot of people use them. He said, "No, we won't do that. We don't want to use our volunteers that way. We want to use them a different way." You know, you can only expect so much effort from your volunteers, and a lawn-sign campaign is a campaign. You've got to go and ask people, and then on a certain day you've got to go put them out, and it's a campaign if you want to do it right. No, we're not going to do that. We had people in the campaign headquarters and around the state, and they were getting addresses and checking phone numbers and getting ready for the phone bank, and that's how we used our volunteers. So we didn't do that.

CH Was that at all disconcerting to you that you weren't going to use lawn signs?

VA No. I was willing to take Paul's advice. Now, actually, lawn signs are okay, but a lot of that stuff is mostly for the comfort of your volunteers. They like to see their candidate. You know, if it's all underground, you get a little restless. You know, what's he doing. So you have to give your volunteers a little comfort, and this sort of thing kind of makes them feel good about - they see lawn signs of an opponent. How come my guy doesn't have those? So I don't know how effective they are, but at least it's comfortable for your volunteer. But we had some

really, really neat people. It was a great, great campaign. I'm rambling. You can ask questions when you want.

CH What about endorsements, then? The endorsements from people. How important was that, or editorial endorsements? I'm still thinking mostly of the primary, but, then, you know, also into the general as well.

VA Editorial endorsements are good to have. Better to have them than not have them. In terms of their influence, it's just a part of the campaign, it's not a major part of the campaign. You don't live or die by that editorial, but it's nice to have it. It just adds to the imagery of the candidate, so it's good to have it, so we work at it. When you mention that, it is astounding to me - I'd forgotten this, but the Statesman Journal in Salem, would have - when they'd have candidates in to talk to them about endorsements, they'd have them all in at the same time. They invited all of us seven; four showed up: Roger, Tom, and myself and one of the other four. I thought it went very well in terms of what effect I may have had. I felt real good about it, and particularly the question came, well, what - let's see, now, how can I phrase it? Well, it's something like, you know, what can the office of governor do? And the thought crossed my mind, oh, this ought to be a home run for Tom McCall because, of course, he was one for eight years. He did a very poor job in answering the question, and I remember that because I was surprised. Oh, hey, this one's out of the ballpark for him, and it wasn't out of the ballpark for him. By contrast, I felt pretty good about whatever I did, and I don't remember. The next day they endorsed Tom McCall. So I had trouble - you know, you figure out how come. I don't know how come, because - of course, obviously, I'm the candidate and I'm prejudiced about myself, but I thought I was pretty objective as to the way I thought it came

out. That didn't surprise me. I had a pretty good meeting with Willamette Week, and they just chewed me up something awful.

CH And the Journal and Oregonian? Were they at all supportive?

VA I can't remember. I really can't remember. It's important, but, as I say - and it's nice to have them, but it's just a piece of the campaign. The major effort was going on there with the volunteers. We did have a phone bank, and we did arrange to get people to the polls, and these are all very difficult to accomplish. People have to say, I'm going to do it, and then actually go do it. Volunteers are volunteers. And the phone bank and all the rest was - and the mailings and all of that sort of thing. It really pulled that whole campaign together.

CH What about endorsements from people of importance in the community?

VA You seek those. You can use them in ads. Or organizations, you can use those in ads, and along with editorials, and you see that all the time. Oh, I can recall, going back to the '74 campaign, we used it: all the major newspapers endorse me rather than Clay Myers. You know, one of those things, and you use it. And they were all part of it and an important element of it, but I'm still getting back to my 20,000 volunteers. I said that we're going to try to match Bob Straub in his dollars because he was governor, he can get more than I could, but we're going to beat him with volunteers, and, you know, that's what we were concentrating on. We had some good ads that portrayed me. Paul Newman did a fine job in designing these ads, how they were to be - come about. It was a good campaign, a good campaign. Things would go awry. Denny Miles will tell you a story that he still remembers. It seemed to me I was in southern Oregon. I picked

up the newspaper, and here's, on the front page, about I'm - I'm really chewing up Bob Straub, and that was not something I wanted to do. Not that I was kind to him all the time, because I've read some of my speeches; I wasn't all that kind. But, you know, it's just not something that I wanted to do, and here it was, quote - Atiyeh was quoted as saying something. I've forgotten what it was, but I was just - I was really disturbed. I called, gritting my teeth. When did I say that? Well, that was a Paul Newman thing. Paul Newman said, "Well, I think we've got to crank this up a little bit," and so they just manufactured that thing. I was very upset about it, but those things happen. You know, you just - they're unfortunate, but they happen in a campaign.

CH It was fabricated?

VA Fabricated, yeah. But it was fabricated against what I wanted. I didn't want to do that. I didn't want to be chewing him up or chewing him out. That's something I didn't want to do. And here I was chewing him out on the front page of the newspaper. It wasn't very nice, it wasn't very nice, but it was - you know, in a whole campaign you do have to hit a few speed bumps, and that was one of them.

CH Maybe we could discuss for a minute the - what was going on in the Republican party at the time. There was a right-wing fundamentalist preacher by the name of Walter Huss that took over the Republican party, and the incumbent chair was Steve Young, wasn't it? Maybe you could describe to me a little bit about that situation.

VA It was very distressing. That actually happened after the primary and before the general election. Actually, we've been

suffering with that for a long time; that is, more of a right-wing nuance to the Republican party over - since 1974, I guess, is really when Huss took over. It was difficult. In terms of my relationship with the party, the party can help, and be quite a constructive help, but that was not part of my campaign plan. It was just not something that I wanted to get involved with, so we never really asked the party to do anything or help us. Ours was strictly a solo effort. I do believe in the party, I believe in it being a strong party. I had worked very hard to have the party more important in the state. Once Walter Huss took over, it just blew all that out of the water, that whole concept, and so you just go ahead and run on your own.

CH How is it possible for that not to become an issue in the general campaign? I would imagine there would be some vulnerability on your part, running in the party that was being run by Walter Huss. Did Straub ever target that as a vulnerable point?

VA No, it was - by now I was pretty well known, having run in '74, and running all over the state, talking to a lot of people, groups, small groups, large groups, everywhere, interviewed in the various newspapers and radio. You know, I was pretty well known, so it was very hard to paint me other than how people already knew me. If I were a mystery, then they'd begin to guess. You know, well, he's part of that, or whatever. But it was pretty clear that I wasn't - just by listening to me, I was not part of a far right. The whole thing is, you can speculate on something if it has some opportunity for credibility, but if somebody could say, well, Vic is on the far-right wing of the religious righters, it just didn't have - you know, it wasn't creditable, it just wasn't, so there was no point to even try to bring it up. Straub did bring up again - this is our second run

- about the bottle bill and that I voted for the sales tax, and, of course, we've already covered that. The bottle bill was - he said I sent it back to committee to kill it, and, then, I voted for the sales tax. We've already covered all of that. But in the second time around, now, and he brought it up, both of them. My answer was, Aw, come on, Bob, we already covered that. I'm not going to keep talking about that anymore. Everybody knows what the - and that was the end of it. He brought it up once, and that was my response to him. I do recall - I'm really kind of leaving the party because the party really wasn't an effective part of my campaign, pro or con.

CH you see so many candidates in situations like that trying to distance themselves from the party. There must be some kind of fear that any bad image might rub off on them if they don't make some kind of effort to distance themselves from these controversial leaders.

VA Yeah. In Oregon. Now, as I understand some other states, the party is very powerful, and that you must be endorsed by the party or you really can't go anywhere. But that's not the case in Oregon. So the party in Oregon really has to scramble for identity, and the party really has to work hard to become important.

CH Did you endorse Steve Young for the chairmanship?

VA No. It wasn't a matter - nobody asked me. When I say no, it wasn't a matter of would you endorse me or won't you. I just wasn't asked. And I was so busy campaigning that I was just out of touch with things. I was there when it happened, but I really wasn't involved in the politics of it. The one thing I did say to what I would call the regular Republicans is that one thing

Walter did was to show us the system works. The way the system works is, you go out and get precinct people that are favorable to you, and they go to the county meetings, and they elect the delegates to the convention, and they elect the chairman and vice chairman, and all those folks go to the state committee. And so the system works. If you want it to work it does work. He just proved it to us. And it does, if you want to work at it. If you don't want to work at it, then you really shouldn't complain about it.

CH It was said that the Washington County delegates who were supportive of Young were not kept in mind by you and voted for the controversial Huss delegates from Multnomah County to be seated. Was that a responsibility of yours to keep the Washington County delegates in line?

VA No. You know, there's still that feeling like that, you know, you're the leader of this thing and they're supposed to do what you tell them to do. Well, they don't do things like that. We don't do it in Oregon that way, and they don't respond that way. No, I didn't feel any great sense of responsibility. I was so intent on my campaign.

CH Mark Cushing said, Vic's got to have the right wing of the Republican party if he's going to win. Did you feel that way?

VA No, no. And I don't need the far left either.

CH That your centrist views are strong enough that most moderates, being the majority of the people, would be....

VA The majority of Oregonians, no matter how they're registered, they range from conservative-moderate to liberal-

moderate. That's where they all are, and those are the people that elect you. The far right or the far left, they can rattle sabers all they want, but they're not going to do anything about it. The only time it's dangerous, like from our losing the governorship by running an Independent candidate who has no hope of winning but takes away from the Republican candidate. That's the place they can be dangerous. I didn't feel any - you know, I wasn't really part of that. I wasn't a precinct committee person, I wasn't a delegate to the convention.

CH Did it make any difference to you at all who became chair?

VA Oh sure, sure. I felt really bad about what happened.

CH You were quoted at the time saying, which seems to reflect what you're saying here, I don't think the chairman of the party is regarded to be over the views of the candidate. People won't presume that I'm reflective of the chairman's views. And you basically said that again here today. Then, Willamette Week said, This explained why Atiyeh hadn't been too concerned with Huss' potential victory. Apparently he thought he could avoid totally alienating the Huss supporters while gently distancing himself from Huss in the eyes of the public. Was that how you were approaching it? Or were you even concerned?

VA Well, of course, I was concerned. That's why I remember it so vividly. I even remember it was a sunny day, I remember where we were, so I remember the event. You know, you get reporters' interpretations of something, and I suppose it goes way back to some of our early discussions on the tape that, you know, I decided I am who I am, and that's who I was going to be; I wasn't going to try to be anything other than that, and that I just was continuing to be who I was. When we talk about

distancing myself, certainly I wasn't going to embrace Walter Huss, because that is not what represented me. You just kind of walk away. But it wasn't that I was - I was unhappy, sorry it happened, I could see the dangers to the party itself in terms of its strength, but in terms of my being concerned that I was going to get painted with Walter's brush, I wasn't concerned about that, maybe for the reasons I said to you earlier. It's not creditable. People wouldn't believe it. They already knew me; they knew me well enough.

CH Huss said that he preferred candidates to be Christian and believes that the - or believed at the time that the Divine had played a part in his leadership of the party, and was worried about the communist threat, and he voiced a Christian call to duty. How do you feel about that kind of approach? Where do Christian views fit into the political arena?

VA My Christian views - mine, or take someone else who has none - really is part of the makeup of the person. What you do, what your life is. It becomes part of you, it becomes part of what you believe in. I'm a great believer of do unto others as you would have others - I believe that. It's a cliché, but I believe it. I didn't crow over McCall losing. I went to him maybe because I thought maybe if I were in his shoes and had been so devastated that I would have appreciated somebody doing what I did. I don't know. I mean, I didn't think of it that way. I'm saying it becomes part of you, who you are. On the other hand, I never saw myself as a missionary in the sense of converting somebody else. By that - well, that's not quite right. When I say that to you, maybe overtly trying to convert somebody else. If others would look at me and say, Hey, he's a neat guy, he's - he believes in God, he's conducting himself, he cares for people, whatever; maybe I can be like that. Okay, to that extent. But

I'm not saying, You be Episcopalian or Baptist or Methodist or whatever you want to choose to be. I'm not out missionarying to try to save these poor souls out there. So I'm separating things. I guess I'm saying to you that I am who I am, and Christianity is part of it and all my other experiences through life. That's what made Vic Atiyeh, that's what manufactured me. But for me to be out there with "Onward Christian Soldier" with my flag and a saber, that's just not who I am. I'll fight. If somebody said, Gee, look at that guy fight, and, you know, I'll fight as hard as he does, well, that, by example, okay, I'll go for that. So whether it's a newspaper or Walter Huss making judgments as to who I am and what I should do, I don't...

[End of Tape 23, Side 2]