

VICTOR ATIYEH

July 28, 1993

Tape 51, Side 2

C.H.: This is an interview with Governor Victor Atiyeh. This is Tape 51, Side 2.

V.A.: Well, I was talking about that trip, and I was mostly offended when they had invited as a special guest a representative from Libya, and he was up there giving a speech chewing up the U.S. And you know, I said to my friends, "I don't need this. I don't have to come here and get insulted." But I didn't make any more fuss than that.

It was an interesting trip. It was good to see some of these other folks. You get a flavor of, you know, what's going on. But I don't know, this whole idea of flying - "Come on over from Taiwan," that's a long haul. That is a long haul.

C.H.: Well, then shortly after that in November of '85 you made a trip to Japan and Korea.

V.A.: Yes.

C.H.: And I have down here that you had 68 appointments in nine days.

V.A.: Nine days.

C.H.: Yeah.

V.A.: Yeah. Well, that could very well be. I was just figuring one week. But we really piled it on.

Some were social calls, in the sense that they weren't immediate prospects, but I knew, again, that you have to call on these people. And just all of the people that we met and made contacts with and just keep knocking at their door, let them know we were there and interested, and you just never know when something's going to happen.

C.H.: Did anyone coach you in terms of how to build rapport with people in the Orient?

V.A.: There were some things that were said, more of a cultural impact, but I've given speeches on the subject. And in the sense that I didn't go there even initially with a great deal of trepidation and nervousness about what was going to happen because I always approached it on the basis of that there are cultural things that you need to know and understand, but they're human beings like I am. Many of them had families; they had children they're worried about. Their business - you know, how they're going to be promoted or not, how their families are doing. And so they're human like I was.

Second, this matter of shaking hands or bowing never made me nervous. I just made up my mind if they bowed, I'd bow; if they put out their hand to shake hands, I'd shake hands. In other words, I'd let them be the lead in that. I wasn't going to worry about it. And that worked out perfectly well. I think I have described to you in terms of you go there and eat whatever they serve you; don't ask. And I would tell them, "I don't eat everything at home," and I don't. They probably don't. They probably have their favorite meals and some things they don't eat. So you know, again, I wasn't insulting them.

As it turns out, my demeanor is quite acceptable in those countries: Japan, Korea and Taiwan, versus traditional American "Let's go make a deal," you know. Soon learned that things are different, that you don't just rush in and start talking about your subject - I mean, what you're there for. You learn that you talk about the weather, and how's everything in the economy - whatever, you know. And then finally - and maybe not even on the first visit, you finally get down to what it is you want to talk about.

But that again is part of my own demeanor, anyway. I mean, I'm patient. And so that was acceptable.

So I think to that extent, and I just happened to be - that's the kind of person I was, that I think I did very well. I think people in those countries looked forward to my visits.

C.H.: In your business now, do you coach other people?

V.A.: I would tell them. I've made talks to Portland State University, and sometimes they want to know about these things, and I tell them pretty much what I'm telling you right now, that you just have to understand there are some differences.

Let me give you a good example of the things you really need to know, and it's important, for example, in Saudi Arabia. You never show the soles of your feet. Well, okay, you know that, so don't do it. That's just one of those things that you should know.

I'll tell you a real funny story. When I said you just don't rush and start talking about your subject, I can recall a visit in Japan; we went to Osaka, went to a sawmill. Incidentally, that sawmill, that was not a small sawmill; it wasn't a big one. It was a medium-sized sawmill, had 30 employees. You know, sawmills in Japan are entirely different than we imagine here.

Anyway, we went in the first - you know, here I'm used to jumping out of the car and going in the sawmill. You don't do that. So we got out of the car and went to the head guy's office and had some tea and chit-chatted, and then we went out. On that particular visit I think we had Channel 2 with us. So we went through the sawmill, and I'm looking at this sawmill, and I said, "Gosh, this is so antiquated, if we can't compete in the United States, we have no right being in the wood products business."

But anyway, we went through this sawmill. And now we're out, and Channel 2 was interviewing the number one person, who spoke Japanese, but working through an interpreter.

Let me back up a minute. While I was in the office, they were saying this young man spent five years in Oregon. Well, we didn't get into that one.

So now we finish our sawmill visit, and they're interviewing the number one man, so I'm chatting with this young fellow.

"You were in Oregon for five years?"

"Yes."

"What did you do in Oregon?"

He said, "I bought rugs."

"Rugs?" I said, "That's my business."

And I'm thinking, "What in the world would he be doing buying rugs in Oregon?" So I finally said to him, "Well, what kind of rugs did you buy?"

"Oh," he said, "Douglas fir, pine, hemlock." He said "rogs." Not logs, rogs. That's what he said.

I haven't told that story because I don't really want to embarrass the Japanese or anybody else.

C.H.: Sure.

V.A.: But it was funny. Because I said, "Rugs? What kind of rugs do you buy?"

"Douglas fir, hemlock." And what he was saying was "rogs."

C.H.: Well, what about subtler things like - well, giving of gifts, how gifts are exchanged, who's introduced, eye contact, things that the State Department is very sensitive about?

V.A.: That kind of came natural. Well, first of all, in terms of how you converse, the number one person is the one, both sides. And if we are meeting at a table, like we are now, which is what we'll call for the sake of the tape an oblong table, we don't sit at either end of the oblong, meaning the number one people. We sit in the middle on either side. So I would be the governor in the middle of the table on one side, and the chairman or the

president of the company I'm meeting with would sit in the middle of the table on the other side.

But that I didn't have to worry about because they usually said, "You sit here." And pretty soon I learned what that generally meant is that you sit in the middle. So they would always say, "You sit here," you know, because this was a matter of courtesy. It wasn't a demand; it was just a courtesy. "Here, Governor, this is your seat." And so you learned that.

I think I probably violated this - the Japanese don't really like to be touched, and eye contact I probably violated, but I don't think it was offensive. If I ever did touch anyone, it was someone that I knew very well, very well, for quite a period of time, and it was kind of mutual.

C.H.: Would you either be briefed or asked to be briefed by anybody in the federal government before any of these trips?

V.A.: No, I never had any briefing from anybody. But it's a whole matter of how you go. By that I mean if you go there uptight and nervous, you're certainly bound to make a mistake.

I read after I left office a book called the *World Class Businessman*, I think is the title. And so it gave you bits and dabs of different countries and some of their cultural differences. I said, "I want to read this thing to see how I screwed up all these years." And really I didn't read anything there that would say to me I really screwed up badly, and this was after eight years of doing it.

You know, I think they'd be very much like we are, meaning if a Japanese came here and did something a little different than we would do it, we wouldn't be offended by that. You know, we don't expect them to know how we operate, in minute detail, and I think they'd give us the same credibility, that it wasn't a matter of an insult or deliberately trying to insult them. Maybe you lose a few

points from ignorance, but it depends on the size of your error. Just little things, they wouldn't be offended by it.

C.H.: You didn't have any major faux pas, then?

V.A.: No. No. You know, I read the book, and I went back and there really isn't anything. In terms of a gift, generally you don't open it, but oftentimes - and you exchange gifts. Oftentimes they would - I would like to have them open it, my gift to them, and you'd say, "Do you mind if I open it?" and usually they'd say, "No."

So that wasn't a big deal. But you know that traditionally you give a gift and you don't open it till you leave, and oftentimes I would do just that. But there were many times when we mutually opened our gifts.

We always went with some kind of gift of some kind, and obviously the bigger the person and the bigger the company, the better the gift, but I never went overboard in terms of gifts. You know, 15, \$20, or - you know, I didn't get into hundreds of dollars for gifts. We'd exchange gifts.

C.H.: No calamities or accidents - like poor President Bush vomiting in the lap of the Prime Minister of Japan?

V.A.: No. I tell you, I do wonder from time to time, and I'll never know because I'll never really ask the question, I'm not much of a drinker. So I'd drink a little bit, a like sake or whatever, and I sometimes wonder, well, if I'd been a regular guy - you know, really go out and drink pretty well and maybe get a little bit groggy, that may have scored a few points. I don't know that. I just say, "Gee whiz." But that's not a social gaff; it's just you wonder.

C.H.: I presume, then, that you didn't do any singing at karaoke bars?

V.A.: Oh, yeah, I did that.

C.H.: You did? That seems out character.

V.A.: Actually, the funny part was in Japan I sang one night, and there was three of us singing at the same time, and one was Japanese, one was Chinese, and one was me, and I think we were singing - well, I'm sure this wasn't the song, but something like "Deep in the Heart of Texas," you know, the three of us singing this song.

You know, you go to these places in Japan. I remember in Taiwan - and now that I think about it, I really never did that while I was Governor. I think after I was Governor they figured they could take me to these places.

C.H.: Right. You must have had a little sake under the belt at that point?

V.A.: Yes. We'd go to these places after dinner, and there they had what's called the hostesses, and they'd sit there, and in my case they'd light a cigarette, or pour your drink or whatever, and there we'd do some singing. But that was always, at least from what I observed, you get up and go home by yourself, meaning you don't get up and go home with some girl. That was the nature of those kind of places.

I went out one night with - who was it, now? A Japanese, just the two of us. And he loved to dance. And we went to this place, and there was dancing involved. But he just happened to like to dance, so that's what we did.

But I wondered sometimes, if I was a - you know, a regular guy. You know, I wasn't in training much for drinking. One of my first trips I went to Taiwan, it was with then-Governor ^{Lin} ~~Lynn~~, and he was known for his drinking. I mean, this guy has a reputation. But I didn't know that at the time. So we went to the Grand Hotel, and we were going to have dinner with the governor. We went to the top floor; we were staying at the Grand Hotel. And at the very

beginning there was an exchange of gifts, and I thought that was kind of unusual. I didn't say anything. We just exchanged gifts. Determined later why. We sat down to dinner, this guy was [indiscernible], and it wasn't a matter, you couldn't sip [indiscernible] - bottoms up for the tape, he wouldn't go for that. I mean, it was the whole thing. He'd have to hold the glass, you know, no drops come out of the glass.

I really had a lot that night. Fortunately, it was in the same hotel. I remember that very well. But by and large I just wasn't in training for that sort of thing, so I'd try to sneak it by.

In China they have this *mao tai*, and that is powerful medicine. That is powerful stuff. Again, I'd sip a little bit. You know, I'd try to get away with as little as possible. Once in a while get on the edge a little bit, but never like that first time in Taiwan, which was the last time I got that bad.

So - but I wonder, you know, if I'd been a regular guy and did a, you know, good amount of drinking - but I don't know. Didn't seem to hurt. Oregon seemed to do okay.

C.H.: I think you mentioned earlier, and I was going to ask you again a little bit about your philosophy on drinking. I saw an article that said, "As a young man on a Canada lake, he explains, he" - referring to you - "and some others once drank too much hard liquor, and while pulling fish into the boat at a speedy clip. Atiyeh said the resulting hangover prevented him from fishing anymore that trip and led to his avoidance of alcohol."

Is that accurate?

V.A.: I wasn't that young, though. This was in my legislative days. I don't remember what age that was, but I'd been yearning all these years to go up to Canada fishing. The whole

story was I went out one morning - I was with Senator Newbry ~~and~~; there was two of us in the boat.

We came in for lunch at the place we were staying, and as we were walking out, Lynn said, "Gee, here's why we're not catching fish," and he picked up a bottle of V.O., and off we went.

And so we'd catch a fish and take a drink out of the bottle - I mean out of the bottle. Now, I told you I'm not in training for this, but you didn't realize it. And we stayed out quite a while and finished the fifth. Finished it. Two of us. And actually as we were coming in they were going out to look for us. It was still daylight.

Anyway, I never was so sick. Oh, it was a terrible night. Lynn, he had dinner, and we were in a bunkhouse and he was playing cards, and I'm dying in bed. I mean, just terrible.

And I'm sitting ashore the next morning, and they're out fishing. And I said, "This is absolutely crazy. Here I've been yearning all these years to go fishing, and I'm sitting on shore."

But it wasn't that. It was just that after that it just didn't appeal to me, and even one drink would make me feel like I don't want to feel. I mean, a little bit, not a lot. If I have - when I go out to dinner now if they serve some wine, I'll tell them to pour half a glass, but I may not drink more than a couple of sips, and I can even feel that. So, you know, I said, "I don't like that feeling," and I said, "that's why."

So it wasn't a matter of being against it or anything else. I said my own free Raleigh Hills treatment, is what I had. I just - it was just not a satisfactory thing.

I never was a big drinker, ever. I do like Scotch, still do today. And I would take a Scotch drink or two during the course of an evening. I liked it on the rocks. Even liked it without rocks.

But never drank a lot, ever. But then I went there and, you know, just -. So it's not a feeling that I care for.

C.H.: Going back to what you were saying about being in - I guess it was in Japan or Taiwan, and always being sure that you went home alone. Were you at any time during your career ever offered anything illicit or anything unethical?

V.A.: I'm glad you asked, because I want to tell you a story.

I was in Japan one time, and ~~we were saying~~ ^{STAYING} at the Okasaka Prince. At that point where the Okasaka Prince is there's a very large intersection; it's very wide and a lot of cars coming and going from different directions.

And I only say that because while I was there I had several free evenings, and so I'd just walk out across this couple of boulevards, and as is typical on the side streets there's a whole bunch of little shops, and there's a bunch of bars and bookstores and pharmacies, and you know, just small shops. Very interesting.

So I walked through there. So later on that week I had dinner with my friends at Fuji Television, and I was telling them, just recounting that, you know, I found it kind of interesting and I walked across from the Okasaka Prince and just wandered around at night.

And one of the men there said, "Oh," he says, "you've got to be careful. At that place there are lot of women there that come up and proposition you."

And I said, "You know, I wish you hadn't told me that." I said, "I've been there three times, and nobody's propositioned me."

C.H.: [laughing] Did you feel neglected?

V.A.: Yeah. I said, "Gee, I wish you hadn't said that to me."

"Well," he says, "because you look dignified," or something. He was trying to back out of it.

I said, "I wish you hadn't said that."

No. Well, one time. When I say that, I'm guessing, but I think it's a pretty good guess. I've forgotten what hotel it was. Doesn't make any difference. In Tokyo. Anyway, I was going downstairs, and this young lady struck up a conversation. "Hello, how are you?"

You know, and so she began the conversation. Well, that time - it wouldn't have made any difference, but that time I had my wife with me. Now, that would be the closest, if you were talking about being propositioned. She wasn't overt, you know, "What are you doing tonight?" or anything like that, but I think that was the closest I came.

C.H.: What about here in the states?

V.A.: No.

C.H.: While you were in Salem?

V.A.: No. Not that I'm aware of, but I wasn't sensitized to that. By that I mean it could easily have been, but I'm just not looking that direction, and I don't know if I would - I certainly couldn't recount it if it ever occurred, because if it did, I wasn't aware of it.

C.H.: Do you feel that that's remarkable in any way, with your 28 years in public office, that you were never once offered a bribe or something unethical or inappropriate?

V.A.: If we're talking about females, maybe, but I'll get to the bribe in just a minute.

It just wasn't an interest of mine. I'm not roving. I love my wife, and I'm perfectly happy.

C.H.: Well, it could be an interest of somebody else to achieve some objective which ...

V.A.: Could be, but it never occurred.

In terms of a bribe in a sense, the only joke I have in that respect was, "I have never, ever taken a bribe, and besides, no one's ever offered one."

But I think the closest was, and we may have covered that, was that trade one time. And I would consider that as an honor. They would know that I didn't trade, so they didn't come to offer a trade.

And there's other things you accept as a compliment indirectly. After Governor Goldschmidt was elected, and there were several instances that things would occur, never really strongly pursued by the media, and for a while I said, "Gee whiz, how come ..." - and now I accept it as a compliment to me - they would never let me get away with that, ever. And so unconsciously the media said, "Now, Vic really knows. You know, he knows, so you know, we're going to pursue him." But they in their own minds said, "Neil doesn't know, so you know, I don't expect him to know. So we don't pursue it."

C.H.: So you're saying that there was a double standard?

V.A.: Well, no. I'm saying that I would accept that as a compliment. Not a double standard, and I think maybe it was, but I didn't look at it that way. I consider it a compliment that they really pursued after me because they expected me to know, but didn't really pursue him because they didn't expect him to know. So as I say, I'll accept that as a compliment.

And as I say, never having been offered a trade, I think that would be a compliment. I just didn't do it. I wasn't amenable to doing it. That's not a trail I ever wanted to get on. Once you get on that one, you can't get off. I never did it. Not once. Not once.

And it could very well be I lost causes that I wanted, but it wasn't worth it. It either was going to go on its merits, or it was not going to go on its merits. Now, that isn't the way it

always happens, but that's the way it was. Even as Governor, I think it was well known that you could take shots at Governor Atiyeh because he will not retaliate because that was not my style. I knew I was giving up something. I was not what you'd call an arm-twister. I just never believed in that style. But you give up something in the process, and I knew it. You know, you can vote against his favorite bill; that's okay because he won't retaliate against you.

I consider that good, not bad. Some figure that arm-twisting is okay. I don't happen to agree with them. But I knew that I gave up some things. But I wasn't going to deviate because that was not who I was and that's not the way I believe government ought to run. So I was going to conduct it my way.

We really diverted here, didn't we?

C.H.: I think that was a very worthwhile diversion.

V.A.: Okay.

C.H.: You did a lot of traveling during that fall, and right after you got back from Korea and Japan you went on to the Western Regional Council. It was an association of top executive operating in the west in Phoenix, Arizona on December 5th, 1985. And then right after that, it must have been on the same trip, you went on to the annual Republican Governors' Conference on December 7th in Wilmington, Delaware.

V.A.: Oh, the Republican Governors, yes.

C.H.: Was there anything interesting that occurred on either of those occasions?

V.A.: Oh, yes. The one down in Arizona was ...

C.H.: Is that the one where you're talking about the legislature?

V.A.: Yeah.

C.H.: We'll talk about that as we review your career, as we review the legislature.

Anything else?

V.A.: No. I enjoyed the Republican Governors Conferences. They always occurred right after an election. I enjoyed the Western Governors Conference to a degree. Maybe less in order was the National Governors Conference; I thought there was a lot of cosmetic stuff going on there.

I attended only one midyear National Governors' Conference in all my eight years. They had one in Washington D.C. and then one somewhere around the United States. It was a midyear deal. Made only one of those, which was my last year, 1986.

Well, I guess that's about all to be said about that.

C.H.: We already talked about issues around Martin Luther King. I think that came up about the same time.

V.A.: Yes.

C.H.: And combining the holidays. I guess we can stop now.

V.A.: Okay.

[End of Tape 51, Side 2]