

# John D. Mosser

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MOSSER: John Daniel Mosser

CH: Clark Hansen

Transcribed by: Unknown

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## **Tape 1, Side 1** 1990 November 15

CH: This is an interview with John Mosser in his apartment in Portland, Oregon. The interviewer for the Oregon Historical Society is Clark Hansen. The date is November 15<sup>th</sup>, 1990 and this is Tape 1, Side A.

Why don't we just begin by giving us your full name.

MOSSER: John Daniel Mosser.

CH: John Daniel Mosser. And you were born when?

MOSSER: March 13, 1923.

CH: Maybe you could give us a little background on your family and where they came from and how they settled in the United States, and what you know of that.

MOSSER: My father's family was Pennsylvania Dutch and came to this country in the 1700s. I don't know exactly when, but I've seen birth certificates for the early 1800s with the little painted [gestures] certificates that were common in those days. And they lived in the Lock Haven area of Pennsylvania.

CH: Is that in the Lancaster district?

MOSSER: Actually, it's farther north and west than Lancaster. My mother's family was — maiden name was Wood, and they also came to this country in the 1700s, before the Revolution. Unfortunately, they were Tories [Loyalists] in the Revolution so they... [Both laugh]

CH: They were on the wrong side.

MOSSER: Were on the wrong side. My mother grew up on the main line of Philadelphia in Wayne. My father's family was five boys. I never met any of my uncles on that side. I did meet my grandfather, my grandmother was already dead when I was born, and I met some great uncles and aunts. My mother's family was eight children and I met all of them, and my grandfather and grandmother, briefly, when I was young.

CH: You had mentioned their being in the Pennsylvania Dutch area. Were they Quakers?

MOSSER: No.

CH: What were their religious beliefs?

MOSSER: My father's family was Lutheran and my mother's family was Presbyterian with some Episcopalians. I was raised in — and both my father and mother attended the Episcopal church while I was growing up.

CH: How was that compromise reached?

MOSSER: Well, my mother had been one of the Episcopalians in the Wood families, and I guess she persuaded father. Anyway, that's the church they always attended.

CH: I noticed, in something I read about your background, that you had mentioned that you were part of the Unitarian church.

MOSSER: When I came out here, I attended the Episcopal church for a couple of years, but my wife used to get furious with me because to me the ministers were hopeless clods and kept giving these sermons that I couldn't possibly accept and I'd sit there shaking my head all through the — [Laughs] and so we finally — Dick [Richard] Steiner, of course, was a very able man and a wonderful speaker and so we ended up at the Unitarian church.

CH: That was about when?

MOSSER: Oh, well, it must have been in the fairly, you know, probably the mid-1950s, certainly, because the kids we put in Sunday school there.

CH: Was there anything about the Unitarian philosophy that was appealing to you?

MOSSER: Yes. Basically, they're a very tolerant people. They are not prejudicial against any other religion, their service at that church was fairly close to an Episcopal service, actually, without the communion frills, but many of the hymns were hymns that I knew. I think it's the only church in existence which has never put anybody to death for not believing the same as they do. [Both laugh]

CH: Sounds like a good recommendation. What about your family's political affiliations when you were growing up?

MOSSER: Republican.

CH: Republican. Was there an ideological slant one way or the other on their Republican orientation?

MOSSER: They didn't like Roosevelt, and of course he was president most of the time I was growing up. My grandfather had been very active in Republican politics.

CH: Your grandfather had.

MOSSER: Yes.

CH: In what way?

MOSSER: Well, he was president of the Pennsylvania Manufacturers Association one year and lobbied Congress for them. He was in both the iron and steel business and the wool business and was a fairly wealthy man and I assume for that reason, inclined not to...

CH: Do you feel...

MOSSER: But you know the country had had a long period of Republicanism, except for Wilson, when Roosevelt came.

CH: So were you involved in any of this, then, as you were growing up?

MOSSER: I was always interested in politics but I don't — I read political things to a greater extent, I think, than most kids did. I liked geography and history and wrote a few constitutions for groups.

CH: Oh, organizations?

MOSSER: Organizations. Frequently I rewrote them because there were already some constitution or bylaws in existence. I was active in a mock political convention in high school.

CH: What were your parents' occupations?

MOSSER: My father was a hide broker.

CH: Hide broker?

MOSSER: Hide, cattle hide. He had worked as a hide buyer for a leather company, oh, well, until the late 1930s. He started out working for his uncle who ran a tannery, and then another uncle was in the hide brokerage business in Boston. He went there and worked for him, then went to England and then to South America, to Buenos Aires, buying — as a broker, working, buying hides for American tanners. Then he went to work, when he came back here, with the American Oak Leather Company, worked for them till about 1939 when he went into partnership with a firm called A. L. Webster and Company, and stayed — there were three Websters in it, and they were probably the biggest independent broker in Chicago, maybe in the country.

CH: In the hide...

MOSSER: Hide business.

CH: Was it located — this was in Chicago, I take it.

MOSSER: In Chicago, yes.

CH: Was it in Chicago because of that being the agricultural center for the Midwest?

MOSSER: You know, the big slaughter houses were in Chicago and as that began to change in the — but they bought — their method, they didn't buy for their own account, they bought for tanners, shoe companies, furniture companies. And they employed a group of inspectors who would travel around to all the tanneries in the Midwest, some even out here in Oregon but basically most of it is in the Midwest, and inspect hides and grade them so that the buyer was comfortable with what they were getting.

CH: Did your father have to travel very much to do this?

MOSSER: Not a great deal. He did occasionally go around with the inspectors but — you know, maybe one or two weeks a year. Mostly he had a nine to five — actually, it was a seven to six day buy the time he put in the commute.

CH: You lived where in Chicago?

MOSSER: They lived on the south side when I was born, near the University of Chicago, and almost immediately moved out to a rented house in Glencoe.

CH: And then, his company was downtown?

MOSSER: His company was downtown.

CH: In the Loop?

MOSSER: Yes.

CH: And your mother's background? Was she — did she...

MOSSER: She was a college graduate from Bryn Mawr. In fact, it was kind of remarkable that all — there were three girls, three sisters, and five boys, and they all were college graduates.

CH: Is that right? That's unusual for that time.

MOSSER: For that time. And I even had an aunt Ida on my mother's side who was dean of women at Bryn Mawr. So the tradition of education went back a long way. She was married to a cavalry officer who was killed in the first world war and she spent — after she — I guess during the world war my grandfather was working, he was a general but was stationed in Washington in procurement and she went down and kept house for him there, was his hostess, and then she went — after her husband was killed she went to the Argentine, where one of my uncles was in the wool brokerage business, and met my father down there. She was never employed again. Anyway, she was the president of the garden club, president of the guild, you know, and very active in organizations. Ran the thrift shop for the church, that sort of thing.

CH: Were there any children from the first marriage?

MOSSER: No. My father had a daughter. His first wife died in childbirth. And then he left her with aunts and went down to Buenos Aires.

CH: And met her, then, down there.

MOSSER: Met my mother down there.

CH: How long had she been living in Argentina?

MOSSER: I honestly don't know, but about a year, I think.

CH: So you grew up, then, in the Chicago area.

MOSSER: Yes.

CH: What was the environment like where you grew up? What was the neighborhood and town like?

MOSSER: Well, I lived in a total of five houses, I think. One for a couple of years while I was, you know, still being pushed around in baby buggies and barely walking, and that kind of thing, and then one fairly close to the school. Both of those were rented houses. Then we bought a house, it was the year I started first grade, or kindergarten, which must have been 1928, something like that. We lived there until I was a sophomore in high school, and then, when my father went into business, they sold the house to raise the capital to go into the partnership and rented another house, and another one. Then I went away to war and then they bought another one. They lived in Glencoe all the time. And Glencoe was a village of, what, five thousand then? It was a very wealthy suburb for the time. Nice, in many ways, for a kid growing up. There was the lake and beaches on one side and a wonderful swamp on the other. Just a marvelous place to play with these islands of big oak trees and channels here and there, and reeds higher than your head. Great fun, running through trails down there.

CH: So it was a pretty pleasant environment then, for you.

MOSSER: Yes, and although it was a wealthy suburb there was a variety of kids because most families had servants and many of the servant families lived in town, too. In fact many of my friends were servants' children.



CH: Were you — did you go downtown very much, or did you stay pretty much in that suburban area on the north side of Chicago?

MOSSER: There were two railroads that ran through. The Chicago and North Western and — which was steam locomotives, and I can't even remember the name of the other one but it was more like a trolley, electric, very much like the cars you see here in town now.

CH: Oh, yeah, Tri-Met. Max.

MOSSER: Yes. Two or three or four cars together and you could run them from either end. Those ran constantly. You know, every half hour during commuting hours, every hour, at least, during the rest of the day and into the evenings. So, I didn't go into the city of Chicago much, but we ran the length of the suburbs on the North Shore. We'd go to movies in Highland Park or Wilmette, Evanston, Winnetka, and my dentist was in Evanston. A lot of the stores that you went to for unusual things were there. The banks failed in Glencoe so everybody went to Winnetka, or somewhere, to bank. And so there was a — we traveled on the train a great deal as kids.

CH: Alone as well?

MOSSER: Oh, yes. More so after you got into high school, but I went to movies every Saturday afternoon in Highland Park when I was probably seven or eight.

CH: What was your school like?

MOSSER: It was an old, three story monster that dated from the 1800s, with creaky wood floors and steam heat, but very good teachers, a very high quality of education.

CH: Was it a public school?

MOSSER: Public school. Actually, I went to the central — there were three schools, one on each end of the town which took kindergarten through sixth grade, or through fifth grade, and then the central school had kindergarten through fifth but all the sixth, seventh, and eighth. The pattern was homerooms for — through the fifth grade and then in the sixth you had different math and history and English, science teachers.

CH: Were you involved in any activities while you were in school?

MOSSER: Scouting was probably my biggest activity, and, oh, I played intramural sports, was in some clubs, debating in high school, newspaper in high school.

CH: And high school was?

MOSSER: New Trier High School, which was a train ride, about five miles, from home.

CH: That served a much larger area?

MOSSER: That served everything from Evanston to Highland Park. Not Evanston or Highland Park but included Kenilworth, Winnetka, Hubbard Woods, Glencoe, Wilmette.

CH: When you look back on that period of your life is there a particular event or episode or memory that you have where you were more or less made aware of the larger world around you? You know how it is when you're a kid growing up, that you have this sort of an insular — most kids have a very kind of insular family experience, but then there's something that brings them out that they recall that made them aware of a larger world.

MOSSER: Well, I went away to summer camps from the time I was 11, and they were a long ways from home.

CH: Where would they be?

MOSSER: The first one was in Michigan and the scout camp that I attended four years as a camper and four years as a counselor was in Wisconsin.

CH: Whereabouts?

MOSSER: Well, it was a very small town near Antigo. And it actually — there was a general store, a small town consisted of one general store, and we were two miles from that on a lake.

CH: But you were there for quite a few years, then.

MOSSER: Yes.

CH: Each summer.

MOSSER: Yes. I started out as a camper going for a month, and pretty much that's — while I was a camper it was for a month, and then I started working there summers. I worked generally with the setup, which was a week before, it was a tent camp and we had to set it up, and stayed on to take it down after eight weeks of camp, so it was about almost all summer for those four years.

CH: What does that experience represent for you? What kind of an experience was it?

MOSSER: Oh, great fellowship, hard work, being outdoors all the time.

CH: Is that something that stayed with you?

MOSSER: Yeah, when I came out to Oregon I became a scout master and had two scout troops and a sea scout ship for a while.

CH: Were your sons scouts?

MOSSER: Yes, but never very interested in it.

CH: But it was a — for you it was an experience of nature, then, too, that...

MOSSER: Yes.

CH: Brought you that — as a city kid that you might not have had living in the swamps of...

MOSSER: Well, you know the lakes and the swamps were a lot of nature. But it was an outdoor experience and I liked the activities at camp, canoeing and swimming, hiking.

CH: Did you have any jobs while you were in school?

MOSSER: Yes. My social security card is dated 1936, and I had actually been working, I think, since I was six with a paper route.

CH: Was that a daily paper?

MOSSER: Well, I started — I think the first thing I did was sell *Saturday Evening Posts* and that was once a week. And then I delivered shoppers and that was twice a week,

Wednesday afternoons and Saturday mornings. And I think that was all there was to that. Then in high school I worked as a cashier in the cafeteria every day.

CH: That was in high school?

MOSSER: Yeah.

CH: Did your family go on trips?

MOSSER: Yes. We traveled both by train and car. I think I first went back to my maternal grandfather and mother's house in 1927, probably, it was before I was in school, and again in, I think, 1929 and 1931. And then in...

CH: To Pennsylvania?

MOSSER: To Pennsylvania, so we'd go overnight on the train.

CH: Was this the whole family or just by yourself?

MOSSER: It was usually mother and my brother and I, because we would stay longer than a two-week — then my mother and father would take a vacation somewhere by themselves without the kids.

CH: Out East?

MOSSER: No, usually they — oh, they went to Florida, they went to Indiana to French Lick, sometimes they just, with two friends, would drive around the countryside. We started driving — I think I got my driver — you got a driver's license when you were 14 in Illinois in those days, and I think the first year I had a license I drove back East, and then we started

on spring vacation in high school. We generally went south somewhere, to New Orleans or to Florida. We'd usually drive down, and then my brother and I would take a train back and my mother and father would stay on for a week or two.

CH: Was this completely pleasure for the family or was there...

MOSSER: Yes.

CH: Business connected to your father's...

MOSSER: No, it was just fun.

CH: So you and your brother would come back by yourself.

MOSSER: Yeah.

CH: Was that ever — that must have been quite an adventure, the two of you without parent supervision.

MOSSER: Yeah, we had fun in the club car. [Laughs]

CH: Then, when you got home, they weren't there.

MOSSER: That's right. We had somebody to cook for us and then, you know, by the time we were in high school we could pretty much take care of ourselves.

**[End of Tape 1, Side 1]**

**Tape 1, Side 2**  
**1990 November 15**

CH: This is Tape 1, Side B.

I was asking you earlier about moments of awakening you to the larger world. I was also thinking of, like, events that might have happened that vividly stand out in your mind, say like the Great Depression when the banks failed in 1929. Do you recall those occasions very clearly?

MOSSER: Some of them. I recall the banks failing. I had a few dollars in the bank. I can recall the hobos coming through town. There was a regular hobo village down by the railroad tracks. I had a — my scout master was an engineer who couldn't get a job, so he organized bootblacks in Chicago, and then the mob took over.

CH: Oh, is that right? Sounds like a hazardous profession.

MOSSER: There wasn't that much unemployment in the town. My scout master was probably one of the exceptions, and his parents lived there and he was really living — oh, he was married. They were married. They were living in a large house with them. But it was, as I said, a wealthy community. Most of the people did have employment, either in the city as professionals or as servants in the large houses that were there.

CH: So the effects of the depression were not as...

MOSSER: Not immediate. We saw it in the newsreels. We did see the people coming to the door for a handout, and went down and talked to the hobos occasionally, but it was not as vivid, personally, to me, as I'm sure it was to many families.

CH: Was that true throughout the Depression, then?

MOSSER: Yes.

CH: Your family didn't have to cut back anywhere to make ends meet? Fewer trips or...

MOSSER: Well, I think there was one period when we gave up having a live-in maid and just had a laundress who came and also cleaned, but I don't recall any feeling of deprivation.

CH: Did you have any long-lasting associations or friendships at the time that were influential associations? Things that influenced you somehow in the way you looked at the world, or friendships which you developed which stayed with you, looking back to that period in your life?

MOSSER: Most of my grammar school friends I haven't seen in years. The one exception was a kid that lived next door from probably the time I was eight to the end of high school, and I see him whenever I go back to Chicago. He was my brother's age.

CH: Older or younger?

MOSSER: Younger, but we were good friends. My closest friends in high school were probably some of the people at scout camp, and I've seen fairly few of those since. There were a few that were close — I had two close friends that went on to Princeton that I saw after the war but haven't seen lately. One of them came through Portland just recently and left a note for me but I was out of town at the time. I think I may see him next year. My 50<sup>th</sup> high school reunion is next spring, so I'll probably go back for that.

CH: Oh good, good. How many were there in your class?

MOSSER: Seven hundred.



CH: It's a relatively large high school, isn't it?

MOSSER: Yes. It was larger than Princeton when I went to Princeton. It was 2,800 and Princeton was 2,400.

CH: So you've actually kept in contact, then, with a few people.

MOSSER: With a few people from back then, yes.

CH: And any other associations that you can recall that — mentors or teachers or people that influenced you in any way that counseled you?

MOSSER: Oh, I had some wonderful teachers all the way through. You know, I might have had a couple of clunks, but basically very high caliber of teacher.

CH: But there are some that stand out as particularly...

MOSSER: Oh, more as characters than as having that great an influence on my life. Some of the older counselors at camp I was close to. I think probably the most decisive thing was deciding where to go to college because I was seriously considering going to DePauw, where a number of my friends were going, and my father said, "No, you ought to go to Princeton." He thought Princeton alumni were the most loyal alumni he had ever seen around the country. I was still debating it and I went back to Pennsylvania and one of my aunts was a Republican patronage disburser, and she and an old Italian man named [Rocco Odericio?] ran the county. [Rocco?] was the one who finally persuaded me. He says, "No question about it, you know, you can go anywhere and get a good education, but going to Princeton you'll be with men who are going to be influential all over the country, you'll have friends everywhere and access to all kinds of [inaudible] Princeton."

CH: So that was a decisive counseling.

MOSSER: Yeah.

CH: Were there any other reasons? Were there...

MOSSER: Oh, I had a few friends who were going. About six of my classmates from high school went to Princeton. The dean of New Trier was very high on it. He was close to my relatives in Pennsylvania.

CH: Did you have any idea, when you went off to school, what you were going to study?

MOSSER: Yes.

CH: What was that?

MOSSER: Well, your freshman year was pretty much required, and I think I took one extra course. I had debated through high school between chemistry, biochemistry, and politics and journalism. I eliminated the science and decided to essentially have a liberal arts education that would — stressing politics. That would be a base for journalism or for law.

CH: What were the primary attractions to journalism and politics and law? Where did you come up with those ideas?

MOSSER: Well, I worked on the newspaper in high school, I'd been on the debate team, I was very interested in politics and followed it closely in the newspapers and by reading books.

CH: Any that you particularly recall that were particularly inspiring or interesting to you that you read at the time?

MOSSER: Well, I can remember a lot that I thought were — but I read a good deal of revolutionary biography. There was one of Franklin that must have come out in the mid-1930s.

CH: By revolutionary biography, what do you mean? Like the American Revolution or?

MOSSER: Yes, the American Revolution.

CH: Were you interested in that from a historical point of view or were there other aspects of that which drew you to that?

MOSSER: Well, just you know, it's our country. The men seemed to me to be very remarkable men. Adams and Jefferson and Franklin, particularly, but a lot of them.

CH: Did you have a particular ideological point of view by this time, by the time you were going off to college?

MOSSER: Well, I think I was more liberal than my parents but still Republican.

CH: Would you describe your parents, at this point, as being conservative?

MOSSER: Yes.

CH: And you would describe yourself, then, as a liberal Republican or just more liberal than they were?

MOSSER: I don't know how — I know by the end of the war I was a [inaudible], and when I came out here I was liberal Republican, for a Republican. The first time I voted, I voted for Roosevelt.

CH: Did you tell your father?

MOSSER: Yes. [Both laugh]

CH: What did he say?

MOSSER: Well, he did, too. He said he was persuaded that if I was fighting over there and thought Roosevelt should stay in, why, he'd vote for him too.

CH: Was this kind of a turn-around for your father?

MOSSER: Well, I think he went back to being a Republican. [Both laugh]

CH: Where do you feel that the roots are to your liberal Republican points of view? Where did that come from? Did it come from Hoover or...

MOSSER: No, it didn't come from Hoover.

CH: Democratic influences that Roosevelt — the New Deal?

MOSSER: Well, Roosevelt, and Willkie, of course, was probably the first president — that was the mock presidential race when I was in high school, but senators like Saltonstall and — I'm trying to remember some of the other prominent senators from the 1930s and

early 1940s, but there were a number of fairly prominent liberal Republican senators at the time.

CH: And you became interested in their points of view from having read about them in the news and followed their careers?

MOSSER: Yes, and by the time I was in college I started meeting some of them.

CH: Is that right. At Princeton?

MOSSER: Yes.

CH: Did you have any political aspirations or thoughts at the time as far as your own life went?

MOSSER: Yeah. I can remember even when I was in grade school that I would draw maps and try to figure out how countries could be reorganized. I thought of running for office probably by the time I was in high school. I can remember one summer at camp they had a campers' election every — and it was obvious how it was going to come out because there were four villages on one side and three on the other. So I organized the Clean-cut Campers Crusade and put up a new slate that cut across all the village lines and swept the elections. [Both laugh]

CH: You stole it away from the other two camps.

MOSSER: Yeah.

CH: Was there some kind of inspiring feeling that was drawing you towards — I mean, why — it seems like an early age to be considering, you know, the thoughts of running for political office and — do you have a feeling for what drew you to an interest in politics?

MOSSER: It seemed to me that it was a — it touched almost every aspect of life. It influenced people, whether they realized it or not. It was fun if you did it as fun.

CH: And then you pursued this as you were in college, as well, then, to these same interests.

MOSSER: Yes.

CH: Did you have any influential professors at that time at Princeton?

MOSSER: Again, the quality of the faculty was very high. I think my freshman English teacher, Lawrence Thompson, certainly interested me in aspects of literature and theater that I hadn't really been as interested in before. I had a good philosophy teacher for Plato, and that started me reading philosophy to a greater extent.

CH: Were there particular philosophies that you were attracted towards or interested in more than others?

MOSSER: Plato was the one that I read the most of and carried around with me during the war.

CH: *The Republic*?

MOSSER: Well, that and others, yeah. I read fairly widely. I guess I came out with what I would call a pragmatic philosophy.

CH: What about activities in school? Were you involved in any extracurricular activities?

MOSSER: I started the fall of my freshman year, ran cross country and went out for the *Princetonian* competition.

CH: What was that?

MOSSER: The *Daily Princetonian* was a daily paper, six days a week, no Sunday, and it was run by students. Each year there were two competitions, one in the fall and one in the spring, and you were given assignments and graded on the stuff that you wrote. You worked — usually you could get bonus points for writing editorials or submitting editorial ideas, but most of it was just covering stories, some interview. And at the end of the competition they picked usually a half a dozen to a dozen people who then became night editors responsible for one issue of the paper in rotation.

CH: Each night.

MOSSER: Each night. You'd take one night and then they'd go through...

CH: So every Monday night you...

MOSSER: There might be 20 of these people, you know, and you'd come up again in three weeks, or something. Usually you also did some writing, but essentially you had one editing responsibility every two or three weeks. The typical pattern was that in your — the end of your sophomore year they picked — it was more like the middle of the junior year, you picked an editorial board, a managing — elected from those people, a managing editor, an editor, a business manager, and all the rest of it, who then were responsible for overall oversight. The makeup of the paper was the managing editor's responsibility,

assignment of stories, and then the editorial board wrote the editorials and the business people solicited ads and ran the — anyway, it was a pretty big enterprise and that took a lot of time. And I also...

CH: Were you on those boards, aside from being this rotating editor?

MOSSER: I became the managing editor after the war. The paper had closed during the war and so I really came back to start it up. I was on the yearbook staff. After the war I was president of an eating club.

CH: Of what club?

MOSSER: An eating club. They didn't have fraternities, they had eating clubs at Princeton.

CH: How did you finance your education, or how was it financed?

MOSSER: My father paid for that part of it prior to the war and the GI bill paid for that part of it after the war. By the time I got to law school I was making — actually, I got paid a thousand dollars the year after I left Princeton by the next board for — usually you made money running the paper in your senior year but we hadn't because it was so much effort to get the darn thing started up again, but the following board paid us for our work when they started making money. So I had some income from that and I did some instructing in law school, but mostly it was my dad before the war and the GI bill after the war.

CH: Were you involved in political activities, either on or off the campus, during that time?



MOSSER: Well, let's see. The Truman election was while I was at law school and I don't recall being really active there. I did do some work for a local gubernatorial candidate in Connecticut.

CH: Did that person win?

MOSSER: Yes.

CH: What kind of work did you do? Volunteer work?

MOSSER: Ringing doorbells and...

CH: What was the political atmosphere like on the Princeton campus.

MOSSER: Princeton campus?

CH: Before and after World War II?

MOSSER: I would say the faculty was probably more liberal than the student body. There was a good deal of — before the war. After the war it was everything, you know. There were an awful lot of veterans, older people. I can recall both flaming liberals and arch conservatives among the student body and, to some extent, in the faculty.

CH: You began there in what year?

MOSSER: I began in 1941, stayed — I enlisted the year after Pearl Harbor, December 7th of 1942 but they didn't call me up right away so I — and they kept telling us, "You ought to stay as long as you can." I took one three-week short course, one class, after that term, and then I just decided that everything was closing down around school and I didn't want

to take one course at a time, and so I just went home and waited a month till they called me.

CH: In 1943.

MOSSER: Yes, early 1943.

CH: Just going back a little bit on your experience in college, were there friends and associations there that have endured, people that you've stayed in contact with?

MOSSER: Yes, quite a few. My freshman year roommate was killed in the war. My sophomore roommate I hadn't seen again until this spring I saw him. And a couple of my close friends from high school I kept in touch with to some extent but I haven't seen for quite a few years. Then my — what I call my junior term, I roomed alone. My senior year I had three roommates and I've seen all of them at various times. One of them lived in Oregon for a while and I visited him in California a couple of times. Another one I just ran into last spring, and the third one I did quite a bit of hiking with before I came out here and I was in his wedding, he was in my wedding. And he was out in Oregon a couple of times and I saw him then.

CH: Got to change the tape here. Good thing I have to keep extra...

**[End of Tape 1, Side 2]**

**Tape 2, Side 1**  
**1990 November 15**

CH: In his apartment in Portland, Oregon. The interviewer for the Oregon Historical Society is Clark Hansen. The date is November 15th, 1990, and this is Tape 2, Side A.

Going on to your military experiences, you were drafted, then, in 1943.

MOSSER: I had enlisted and was called up.

CH: And you enlisted for what? The army?

MOSSER: Yes.

CH: Could you choose at that time?

MOSSER: My eyesight was 20/200 and I was not eligible for — of course, there wasn't a separate air corps then. There was the army and the navy and the marines, but I wasn't eligible for the marines, I didn't want to go to sea anyway, and so I signed up for the army figuring I would probably end up in the infantry.

CH: And you did.

MOSSER: I did.

CH: Did you have any skills which the army wanted to employ, other than your two feet?

MOSSER: Not basically. I'd had a year and a half of field artillery ROTC at Princeton. I could type but I didn't tell anybody that.

CH: Why is that?

MOSSER: I didn't want to type.

CH: You preferred to take a gun at this point or...

MOSSER: Yeah, I preferred to be — if there was going to be a war, I preferred to be at the front lines.

CH: Why is that?

MOSSER: I don't know. It was sort of a feeling that the war was important and I certainly didn't want to not be a part of it or to have an armchair kind of role in it.

CH: So you had pretty sharp feelings, then, about the issues around the war.

MOSSER: Yes.

CH: Had you been following fairly closely?

MOSSER: Oh, yes. You certainly did in those days when you knew you were going — if we went to war, that you were going to be in it. I think we all had that feeling from 1941 on — no, I guess it was the summer of 1940, is probably when we started talking about, "Well, we're going, it's just a question of when."

CH: How did you feel about the country's involvement? There were still a lot of people wanting to isolate the United States from what was going on in Europe at the time. Lindberg's...

MOSSER: Yes. I felt that they were mistaken, but all that came to an end, of course, with Pearl Harbor, or 99% of it came to an end with Pearl Harbor.

CH: Do you feel that most of your friends at college and at home, their views coincided with yours on that?

MOSSER: There were some who were more pacifistic, I think, than I, some who were more afraid of it than I, but, generally speaking, after Pearl Harbor there was a consensus, I think, that in the nation that you knew what you were fighting for.

CH: As well as the war in Europe.

MOSSER: Oh, yes. You know, to me that was the main war, even though the Japanese were the ones that precipitated our entry.

CH: Were there friends of yours that did avoid going into the war?

MOSSER: There were some who were 4-F.

CH: For medical reasons?

MOSSER: For medical reasons. Not many, but some. There were some who were conscientious objectors but still went into service as medics. I think some of the people that were planning for the ministry took that course. But most people ended up in one of the active branches of service.

CH: Where did you do your basic training?

MOSSER: Camp Wolters at Mineral Wells, Texas.

CH: Basic training is pretty much the same for everyone, isn't it?

MOSSER: Yes, I think so.

CH: But did they give you any training after that in artillery or other — any kind of specialization that you had before you went over to Europe?

MOSSER: Well, from there I went forth two months and, in essence, marked time at Camp Paris — camp, no, what was it? It was at Paris, Texas. [Camp] Maxey, I think it was, which had been built as a Japanese prisoner of war camp. It had high barbed wire all around it and guard towers, but they never caught any Japanese prisoners of war so we were stationed there for a couple of months. And then, when the army specialized training program opened up, I was sent to the University of Pittsburgh in area study and language.

CH: Which language were you studying?

MOSSER: I studied German. They had three at the school, Russian, German and Greek. I was there six months and then shipped to the 95<sup>th</sup> infantry division, which was stationed near Harrisburg in Pennsylvania, and I was assigned to a heavy weapons company, machine guns and mortars, and we went on mountain maneuvers in West Virginia, then up to Boston to be shipped overseas in August of 1944.

CH: At that time were you — how did you feel about going to Europe, then? Were you anxious to get to Europe or — how was your feeling about the war at that point?

MOSSER: Well, I think I still felt very much the same. I was tired of training, and it was obvious that the war was entering a critical stage. The Normandy landing had been in the

spring and it looked like it was on the way towards being won, but a long way from won still.

CH: So what was your experience, then, after arriving in Europe?

MOSSER: We were in England for something like three weeks, then went over to Normandy, and all of our trucks, and we had a lot of trucks, were taken for the Red Ball Express to run supplies. Patton's army was outrunning his supply lines and so the rest of us sat in Normandy for about a month while the trucks ran the supply line, and then we went across France in boxcars and ended up in Patton's army in an assault on Metz. From Metz, which was a part of the Siegfried Line with huge entrenchments and bunkers, after we took Metz we went on through the Saar into the Saar River, crossed it briefly and got into another fortified line and were driven back and pretty much held positions into December. Then, after the Battle of the Bulge started, we went north into Belgium to relieve the forces there, then went north into Holland, pretty much just marking time while Montgomery's artillery pounded all day long for weeks, and then the Remagen bridgehead opened and we went south across it into the Ruhr and took Hamm and Bremen, Dortmund and ended up the war there.

CH: Did you stay in Europe very long after that?

MOSSER: No. By July, late June, actually, we were the third division back from Europe and went down to Louisiana, got a 45-day pass and were supposed to ship out for the Pacific on our return from that, but Truman dropped the bomb while I was on that furlough. So when we got back they figured out that everybody in the division had enough points to be discharged but they didn't have the paperwork in order, so they gave us another 45-day furlough and said, "Come back and get discharged."

CH: Where were you during those furloughs?

MOSSER: Mostly I went home to the Northshore. I had a girlfriend at Sophie Newcomb [Memorial College] in New Orleans, and I was the acting first sergeant by that time and the captain let me take his car and drive into New Orleans almost every weekend when I was at camp, so it was basically a pretty relaxed kind of life.

CH: Going back to your experiences in Europe, were you ever involved in any direct — well, you were involved in direct combat, but to what extent?

MOSSER: The division took 110% casualties.

CH: What does that mean, 110% casualties?

MOSSER: If the division had 20 thousand men, we had 22 thousand casualties.

CH: So how was that possible, then?

MOSSER: You got replacements, or some people got hit twice.

CH: Which — you said you were in Patton's army...

MOSSER: I was in five armies but I started in Patton's Army. Then I was in Montgomery's Army, Bradley's Army...

CH: Montgomery was British.

MOSSER: Yes. We were under British for a while.



CH: Did you have experiences that you still remember that were of a life-threatening nature?

MOSSER: Yes. I was in combat continuously for months, first in the fall, from about late September until mid-December, and then briefly in December, late December, after the Bulge opened up, and then after we crossed the Remagen bridgehead for about six weeks in the spring.

CH: Were you wounded?

MOSSER: No. I had people wounded on all sides of me, killed on all sides of me, but I wasn't.

CH: How did that affect you?

MOSSER: It's cumulative. Our first big push through Metz — and actually the company in Italian that I was with took the worst casualties shortly after Metz in a little town called [Marton?] where in three days we probably lost half our heavy weapons company. I was covering the battalion front with the captain at that time as an instrument corporal, and I ran into one company commander who, out of 200 men, had 23 left. After you've been through that, then you go and keep fighting. Then we got this break after the Bulge, and the spring fighting got very hard. Every day it got harder and harder to say, "I'm going out one more time and get shot at." You knew the war was near the end, but people were still getting killed every day.

CH: Did you feel that, since it was near its end, that you would have a — that being killed so late in the war was...

MOSSER: [Inaudible] would not be fun. But it's just — you know you're — cumulatively it gets harder and harder, at least that was my experience, and I think most other people, to psych yourself up to go do it again.

CH: What was your health like during that time?

MOSSER: Oh, it was very good.

CH: Was it? Were you well fed and...

MOSSER: No, we weren't well fed, but we had food. I tended to favor the K-rations, which were a bar of chocolate or a bar of fruit, together with a little can of cheese or — that you could heat up and eat with crackers. We got some very big rations. Half of them were terrible, but we'd take the bacon, which was good, and a few other things that were good, and make some decent meals out of them every now and then when we had a chance. But, you know, when we first went into combat it was 45 days that I didn't take a bath, and you just ate whatever you could. There was no formal serving of meals, it was all rations.

CH: Were there any positive experiences that you came out of all that with?

MOSSER: I had some very close friendships, but I lost an awful lot of 'em. I came out very glad to be alive.

CH: In retrospect...

MOSSER: I think with some maturity. You know, we lost men so rapidly I think I became a staff — jumped over being a sergeant to be a staff sergeant in charge of a platoon and then became first sergeant all within a period of a few weeks, really. I can remember sort

of a sense of shock the first time I gave an order and people obeyed it, but you do learn some command and how to handle people.

CH: In retrospect, how do you think those experiences affected you philosophically or politically or in any way religiously or...

MOSSER: Well, I think they added to my pragmatic philosophy and I think I got a certain kind of toughness about making decisions. First of all, one thing you learned damn fast was that it didn't matter so much where you moved, but you had to move. You didn't stand still and let the guns zero in on you. An awful lot of decisions that other people seem to agonize over are awful easy for me to make. It's just, you know, there may not be a perfect decision, but a decision needs to be made and I can make 'em.

CH: So under those kinds of conditions you were able to become more decisive, then, in your ability to choose, make choices.

MOSSER: Yes, I think so. And knowing that, you know, when you pick a man to go out on a night patrol he may not come back, but you've got to pick one of 'em. You learn, too, that sometimes some very tough decisions have to be made but they have to be made and you do it, that's all. Don't dither over it.

CH: How did you feel about Truman dropping the bomb in Hiroshima?

MOSSER: Believe me, I thought it — you know, I realized, more than a lot of people, I think, what a horror of a weapon it was, and I sort of wished that he'd been able to stage a demonstration bomb on some battleship, or something, but the problem was they only had, what, two or three bombs and they didn't know if one of them would work, so they really didn't have that option.

CH: So they made their demonstration on a small Japanese town.

MOSSER: Believe me, I didn't want to go — as I said, it had been harder and harder each day, and I sure didn't want to go over and lead an assault on Japan, or something.

CH: Being in the army, that's what you would have ended up doing, wouldn't you?

MOSSER: Yeah.

CH: Are there any other feelings you had about World War II and those experiences?

MOSSER: Well, it was curious. Last year when the Berlin Wall came down I said, "The war is finally over."

CH: Really. I mean, you really felt that. So you really felt the Cold War and everything that resulted afterwards, was a continuation of...

MOSSER: In a sense, a continuation. It certainly wasn't the peace that everybody hoped for.

CH: How did you feel about the change of power in Europe during the aftermath of World War II? There were some people that were counseling that we could continue our effort right there to deal with the Russians, and yet the troops were very weary of war. How do you feel about that, being there yourself?

MOSSER: I don't think any of us had the slightest interest in that. Russia had been an ally. If you knew the war you knew that Russia had suffered far worse casualties than we had, or any of the rest of Europe, and at that time there really hadn't been that strong a

feeling. You know, I think an awful lot of the 'we should have done something with Russia right then' was afterthought, second-guessing. We still had a war to win in the Pacific.

CH: And the Allied situation in Europe was not really that strong, was it? I mean, the Allies had suffered a lot as well and...

MOSSER: Well, the countries, you know, some of 'em were just bombed into rubble. A lot of those German cities were very badly damaged. We had a very strong military force, but so did Russia.

CH: In a time like now, when we're perhaps at the beginning of another war in the Middle East, do you draw back on those experiences in reflecting on what our country should do now?

MOSSER: Well, I — if we can maintain a United Nations unity and establish a principle that the big powers will not tolerate a smaller power invading somebody, that could be a very useful thing for the future. But if we go it alone, I think it would be a disaster. Our history of dealing with tyrants is not very consistent. One has the strong feeling that oil is the moving thing here, and I would hate to see us go to war for oil.

CH: Maybe you could describe then how you returned to Princeton then at the end of the war.

MOSSER: Well, by the time they goofed around it was too late to start in the fall, so I spent a couple of months at home. I did a lot of bowling, a lot of sleeping and a lot of listening to Christmas carols. Then after Christmas, another fellow and I — he was going back to Dartmouth and I was going back to Princeton — got in the little old flivver and drove across the country. I persuaded the dean that I could finish, because I had taken extra courses and had the Arian language study, that I should be able to finish in three terms.

CH: The Arian language studies?

MOSSER: Yeah. So most of my courses after the war were in politics, history, philosophy, economics. At Princeton you took junior comprehensive exams and senior comprehensive exams and wrote a thesis. The newspaper hadn't been operating during the war and I started that up again, spent a lot of time. The first term I was teaching how the paper had run in the past, running competitions, grading them, making up the paper, because the rest of the editorial board, none of them had been there before the war, none of them knew how the paper had operated.

CH: Were there other returning students coming back from the war?

MOSSER: There were, I think — see, my class had shattered, kind of. A number of them had stayed in ROTC and finished up on an accelerated basis at Princeton, some of them had transferred to a program at Cornell and finished up there, some were still not discharged, were in the Pacific and not back yet...

CH: At that point I bet you were glad you weren't in the navy, too.

MOSSER: And so there really was kind of a mixed bag of people from various — most of them were people who were going to Princeton under navy programs, but the veterans were beginning to pour back but there weren't many from my class, relatively few, and none that I recall that had been — I think there were one or two on the business side of the paper, but none on the editor. Anyway, I did everything from delivering the paper in the morning the delivery boys to running cuts to New Brunswick, pictures to New Brunswick to have cuts made, to the real job and that took a lot of time. I didn't go out for athletics anymore.

CH: No time for that?

MOSSER: No.

**[End of Tape 2, Side 1]**

**Tape 2, Side 2**  
**1990 November 15**

CH: [This is an] interview with John Mosser. This is Tape 2, Side B.

So how much more time did you spend, then, at Princeton before graduating?

MOSSER: Three terms. I'd had three before the war and three after. I graduated in spring of 1947.

CH: At this point you were — did you know what your next step would be?

MOSSER: Yeah. I had applied and been accepted at Yale law school.

CH: And you went there when?

MOSSER: Fall of 1947.

CH: Was there anything that happened between your leaving Princeton and going on to Yale? Any transition time or jobs or...

MOSSER: I was engaged. I became engaged on New Year's of 1947, but my wife's father wanted us to wait until she graduated from college, which would not be till the spring of 1948. In the summer of 1947 I started looking around for where I wanted to settle, make sort of a final screening. I came out to Seattle and went up to Alaska, spent about a month hiking around Alaska and talking to newspaper editors and lawyers up there.

CH: What was your attraction to that area?



MOSSER: Oh, frontier, scenery, the fact that I thought it was going to grow. I liked Alaska a lot but I decided it was no place to go. In each town the typical pattern was a lawyer's office next to a saloon with a lawyer's office above it, next to a title company with a lawyer's office above it, [Both laugh] and it seemed that there were plenty of lawyers. And also, it was nice in the summer having those 24-hour days, but I didn't think the opposite was anything I wanted to experience.

CH: But you did look at Seattle at the time.

MOSSER: Yes, I looked at Seattle.

CH: And this was before you went to law school?

MOSSER: That's right.

CH: Were there any other places that you checked out?

MOSSER: Well, I had already been all over the South and the Midwest and the East. I never got to New Mexico and I hadn't been to Hawaii, but I had been in every other state except Oregon, and I hit Oregon on our honeymoon in 1948.

CH: How did you meet your wife?

MOSSER: My mother's home town, Wayne, Pennsylvania, was her family's original home town, too. Her father worked for the Pennsylvania Railroad, so they moved a lot, but her father and my uncle, one of my uncles, were classmates and close boyhood friends, and so after the war when I was visiting them, why, they set up a date with Priscilla for me. And then her father was working in Chicago at the time, and at Christmas time she came out to Chicago and I saw her. Then she stayed on and visited me there.

CH: What was she doing then?

MOSSER: She was going to Smith College. She was a junior.

CH: Tell me a little more about her background, what she was studying in college and what she was training for.

MOSSER: She was studying French and I think she was thinking some about being a teacher, but it was still an era when a lot of women never worked and once she knew she was going to marry me she didn't really think about a career much after that.

CH: So on your honeymoon you went to Oregon, is that right?

MOSSER: We went all through Canada and down through Seattle and into Oregon.

CH: What was your impression of Oregon as you traveled through that first time?

MOSSER: I liked it. You know, we hit in summer when the weather is perfect, and it was — Portland then really didn't look that much like a city. There were almost no high-rise buildings, really. 13 stories, or 15, was the highest building in town. But it was a very pleasant place, and by that time I had pretty well narrowed down that I was either come to Oregon or Washington.

CH: During the time that you came out here on your honeymoon?

MOSSER: Yeah.

CH: But then you went back to law school at Yale?

MOSSER: Yes.

CH: What was your reason for choosing Yale?

MOSSER: There was a professor — there was a course in constitutional law at Princeton and there was a professor there who was very high on Yale. Yale generally was considered one of two or three best law schools in the country. It was smaller, not nearly as large as Harvard, and the general pattern was that if you were admitted to Yale you could graduate. They didn't flunk anybody out, where Harvard was still in the two out of three flunk out. Just more of a competitive, nasty kind of crowd to be in. So a number of my Princeton classmates — fellow graduates, they weren't in the same class as me, were going to Yale.

CH: Did you live, then, on campus or off campus in New Haven?

MOSSER: The first year I roomed with a fellow from Princeton on campus. It's one big quadrangle, is the law school. The library is on this side and the commons is on that side, the classrooms are on that side and the dorm is on this side.

CH: The center of your universe, then.

MOSSER: Yeah. You know, if you played squash you went up to the big gym, and if you wanted a book other than a law book you went across the street to the main library, but that was about it. After I was married at the end of my freshman year, then we lived in an apartment for one year on a fourth floor, and then we moved into a Quonset hut for cheaper rent the last year.

CH: In New Haven?

MOSSER: Yes. Married student housing.

CH: So your wife came back with you and — but you said the first year you were with another fellow on...

MOSSER: Yeah, because I wasn't married until June of 1948.

CH: Did you participate in the *Law Review* at all?

MOSSER: I tried out for the *Law Review* and I had just finished an article, we had to write an article, I had just finished it, this was near the middle of the fall semester, and somebody published virtually my article in the *Michigan Law Review*, and I said there's no point in trying to publish — you work with one member of the *Review* as an editor, and we both agreed that we couldn't publish it. There was not enough difference between the two articles to publish mine the second, and so they wanted me to start another one and I said, "Oh, the heck with it." Being on the *Law Review* isn't that important.

CH: You had put a lot of effort into that first article?

MOSSER: Oh, yeah.

CH: Were there any other activities that you were involved in while you were at law school or was that your...

MOSSER: I played a lot of poker and bridge, played the stock market, played squash, was in a moot court, won the national moot court competition.

CH: What is the moot court competition?

MOSSER: It was an argument — it was held in New York at that time. Each school — well, there was a moot court program on campus, where you argued before local judges some case that you were given, an appellate-type argument, and the best people were picked to represent the school, a team of three, and then we went down to New York for the national finals. We argued twice a day for three days, a six-round sort of thing, and if you kept winning each time, you moved on. So we did win it.

CH: You won the finals in the national competition.

MOSSER: Yeah.

CH: Do recall what the case was that you argued?

MOSSER: Yes. Somewhere in one of these boxes I even saw the outline of the case. It was a criminal case and an argument over due process, whether a fair trial had been had, and it was called the United States vs. Black, or vice versa. I think the thing that won the finals for me was that we had an actual supreme court justice judging it that I — the opposing team was, you know, trying to argue civil rights, but when I got up I pointed out that there wasn't anything in the record that said this man was disadvantaged or colored, only the name Black to suggest — and that was a good English name. But it was more complicated than that.

CH: Do you recall which supreme court justice heard that?

MOSSER: Frankfurter.

CH: Felix Frankfurter, really? What was your impression of him through that experience?

MOSSER: I enjoyed arguing before him. He had a very sharp mind, asked a lot of questions. And I argued before him twice on the real court.

CH: Is that right? Were there other influential associations or professors that you had while you were at school?

MOSSER: Yeah. I worked in my senior year as a research assistant for a professor of contract law. Really, he had been a businessman — he had a law degree but he had never really practiced. He had been a businessman all his life and had sold his business and decided he wanted to teach, so he was teaching business contract law, and it was a very practical approach. I don't think they considered him a great scholar — he never got tenure at Yale, but it helped me a lot in getting a practical approach to business problems. There were lots of characters and very able professors. But he was the one — the other one that I worked fairly closely with was Harry Shulman, who taught labor law. He interested me somewhat in labor and furthering my political interests. I spent a term working with a representative of the state, county and municipal workers at the Legislature in Connecticut, so I learned a little about Legislators and lobbying while I was there.

CH: You were lobbying?

MOSSER: I was observing, he was lobbying.

CH: But you assisted him in that effort.

MOSSER: Yeah.

CH: How did that influence you?

MOSSER: Well, I guess I learned that you could move around a courthouse if you didn't — or, a capitol building without having to be terrified or in awe of all these politicians, and who they were, that they were human beings, and learned some of the things you can do and can't do in trying to influence them.

CH: Did you have any specializations in terms of your law practice, your law studying, rather?

MOSSER: No.

CH: Were you inclined to pursue labor law or business law other than, you know, in general law practice? Were there aspects that you were more interested in?

MOSSER: No, I was not clearly focused on any one thing. I liked tax law, I liked labor law, I liked contract law, but I — my actual practice has been very general and broad and I did not have any great specialty at the time.

MOSSER: How were the law boards for you? What was that experience like?

MOSSER: Well, there were six of us that came out from Yale and four of us lived at the Y for two months.

CH: This is where? Here, in Portland?

MOSSER: Portland.

CH: Did you take the boards somewhere else first?

MOSSER: No. It's state by state. Yale had — as one of my friends and I analyzed it, had not very well prepared us for a typical bar exam, which requires short answers. Our typical exams involved a two or three-hour essay of some kind, and there was a lot of economics and politics and sociology taught along with law at Yale, and it wasn't 'this is the rule.' In fact, the general attitude was, there isn't a rule. There's facts and you try to work it out from that. But anyway, we holed up at the Y and got Ballantyne's law quizzier and the Forrest Cool Law Series of pamphlets, which had just questions, typical bar questions, and we practiced writing answers for hours a day, quizzing each other on this stuff.

CH: How long did this process take?

MOSSER: The bar exam was in July, I think, and we got out here in early June. We traveled a little looking for jobs in communities. Went to Bend, went to Eugene, went to Salem, but mostly we stayed here in Portland.

CH: Now, what drew you to Oregon to begin with?

MOSSER: Well, I had decided that I was interested in politics. It was more Republican and Washington more Democratic, and I was more Republican so I figured I would — it had fewer lawyers per capita than Seattle. It had a very small bar, in fact, in relation to the population at the time. So I thought the opportunities looked a little better in Oregon than in Washington for what I wanted. Anyway, of the six of us who came out, two passed the bar very high, and four failed.

CH: I take it you were one of the ones who passed.

MOSSER: Yes. Phil [Levin?] and I passed.

CH: Is he still out here? Or did he...



MOSSER: Phil lost a lung to cancer when he was, oh, probably under 30. He was very young. He was only about 20 when he came out here, a graduate from law school already. I think he got cancer in the first five years that he was out here and lost a lung, but then he went on for — became a very prominent lawyer, appellate lawyer particularly. But he went up to Canada one summer on a fishing trip with several supreme court judges and they were up at a fairly high altitude and all of a sudden he just got sick, the lung gave out and he died out in the woods. That's been 10 years or more ago.

CH: But you were pretty much set on coming to the Pacific Northwest...

MOSSER: Yeah.

CH: From very early on, then.

MOSSER: Well, I had made up my mind by the end of that honeymoon trip, and pretty much by the end of my trip up to Alaska.

CH: And what were the...

MOSSER: Another thing that influenced me to come out here, my freshman year college roommate's father was Norwegian and loved the Northwest and said, boy, that is the place to go. For one thing, he said, compared with New York, even if you get twice the salary in New York, it won't buy as much as it will in the Northwest.

CH: So that was an influence, then, in terms of your deciding that the Northwest was the place that you wanted to live. And how did your wife feel about this?

MOSSER: She had some [trepidation] — well, she liked what she saw on the honeymoon, but when I started talking about maybe going to Bend, she wanted to know if they had washing machines in Bend. [Both laugh]

CH: She was a little concerned.

MOSSER: This was kind of Indian country.

CH: Is that how people were perceiving it from — that lived out East?

MOSSER: Yes, I think so.

CH: They were still dealing with the Indians, and other such things, on the frontier?

MOSSER: Yeah.

CH: Well, at this point did you have any children?

MOSSER: My oldest daughter was born while I was taking final exams at law school.

CH: That must have been a little distraction from your studies.

MOSSER: Yes, it was, yes, it was.

CH: Did you have any friendships from college that you maintained then throughout your professional career, from law school?

MOSSER: I really — there's one fellow in California that I've seen a few times and several that I talk to occasionally on the phone. I haven't been back, really, professionally

to the East for quite a while. I used to see my classmates in New York or Washington when I'd go back there, but I haven't been back on business for quite a while. But I do get business referrals from them and correspond with some of them.

CH: Then right after law school and you came out here and you took the bar exam and you passed, then did you go back and then get your family and bring them out here then?

MOSSER: I had already bought a house. I had a job contingent on passing I got — by early September or mid-August I had a job contingent on passing. The bar results came out in September. I bought a house and we had some furniture then shipped out and my wife had gone to live with my — she had been part of the summer with her parents in Pennsylvania and then had come out and was staying with my parents in Glencoe. And my father and she, rather than me going back, by father brought her and the baby out, came out with her and the baby on the plane.

CH: Oh, on a plane. And your first home was where?

MOSSER: Cedar Mill Park.

CH: At this point you just had the one child, is that right?

MOSSER: Yes.

CH: And the next one came along how soon after?

MOSSER: 1952.

CH: So at this point — by that point you were established in your law practice and settled here and it was...

MOSSER: Yes.

CH: Was a little easier than the first time when you were in law school. Who did you have that commitment to work with?

MOSSER: [Wooden Mathiesen Wood?], same firm I'm with now.

CH: So you stayed with the firm all these years, then.

MOSSER: Yes.

CH: And you became a partner when?

MOSSER: It was kind of a gradual process. As I recall, I spent a couple of years on salary and then I think I had a salary plus one percent and then a salary plus two percent, and I think it was about 1955 that I became just a partner with no salary.

MOSSER: And you started with them in what year?

MOSSER: 1950.

CH: 1950. And they were located where at the time?

MOSSER: In the Yeon Building.

CH: Why there as opposed to any of the other law firms in town?

MOSSER: They were the ones that offered me a job. I had applied at practically every firm in town.

CH: Is that right? About how many firms were there?

MOSSER: Oh, there were — well, I can remember there were — I think it was called Hart Spencer, which is now the largest firm in town with a different name, and King Miller was a large firm, there were — I would guess there were maybe 10 — the Schwabe firm, which was then Oppenheimer Becket, somebody and Souther...

CH: Which is now Schwabe Williamson.

MOSSER: Which is now Schwabe Williamson. The large firms now, except for the ones that have come in from Seattle or San Francisco, were all here. They were just much smaller. I think the biggest firm in town was maybe 25, and there were only a couple bigger than 15.

CH: Did your firm have any specialization to it?

MOSSER: Yes. It was 90% admiralty.

CH: Is that what you engaged in, then?

MOSSER: Yes, though Mark [Mathiesen?] had the 10%, or most of the 10%, that wasn't admiralty, and that was a number of wealthy Portland individuals and a couple of corporations, Pacific First Federal Savings and Loan Association. I worked him on those. The first thing I started doing was representing one of his clients on a tax matter, but I — in those days the new guy did the marine investigations. You went down on ships and found

out what was going on, or they'd come in, and frequently we'd go down to Astoria and ride the ship up and investigate while we came up.

CH: Is that right, really? Was this appealing to you?

MOSSER: Yes. It was kind of difficult. I didn't have a car, I couldn't afford a car, so I had to hitchhike to my investigations.

CH: You could buy a house at the time but you couldn't afford a car?

MOSSER: I couldn't afford both, and the house cost 11 thousand dollars and I was only making — I had saved, from the stock market, investing some savings of my wife's and money that I made play...

**[End of Tape 2, Side 2]**

**Tape 3, Side 1**  
**1990 November 21**

CH: This is an interview with John Mosser in his apartment in Portland, Oregon. The interviewer for the Oregon Historical Society is Clark Hansen. The date is November 21<sup>st</sup>, 1990, and this is Tape 3, Side A.

You had mentioned in the last interview that 90% of the cases in your law firm were with admiralty cases. Is that what you worked on mostly, then, too?

MOSSER: Well, I had a dual swing role. There was one partner, Mark [Mathiesen?], who had a number of wealthy Portland clients and I did work for them. I did tax work, I did real estate work, some corporate work, some collection work, Emanuel Hospital was one of my clients back then, but most of the work that I did was in the admiralty field and we went investigating. In those days the ships were polyglot ownership, Greek ownership principally but various registries, Liberian, and one of my jobs early on became negotiating. The crew would always strike and the owner would fly out or a member of his family would fly out from New York and we'd sit around.

The first time I made the mistake of doing it in my own office and they all smoked Turkish cigarettes, and I never did that again. [Both laugh] But usually you'd hassle for hours and hours and then at the end they'd agree to take so much money and the owner would peel this huge roll out of his hip pocket and count it out and the ship would sail. The major cases that I had, two of which went to the Supreme Court, involved that type of deal in which the American unions became involved and started picketing the ships. In one big case it actually bounced back and forth from state to federal court for about 40 days of trials, eventually ended up going to the Supreme Court and was a case in which we eventually recovered damages against the American unions.

CH: It started out in District court, Federal District court?

MOSSER: Yes.

CH: And who heard that case here?

MOSSER: Gus Solomon. It was one of Gus Solomon's early cases. He was more patient then. As I said, we took endless testimony. In later years he was known as somebody who got it — you know, your cases were done before they started, practically. But that was not his style back then. I had with me — my firm was very nervous that — this was a big case, the ship was being held up in port at a cost of several thousand dollars a day, so they considered it important and they were a little nervous about my handling it. So they hired Gunther Krause, who was valuable in two ways: one, he was a good friend of Gus Solomon's, and, second, he was an able trial lawyer but one who didn't mind the fact that a junior was the primary attorney on the case. He was very helpful to me without ever trying to take over the case or dominate it in any way.

CH: So you argued the case, is that right?

MOSSER: We both took witnesses during the trial phase. I argued it in the Court of Appeals twice and in the Supreme Court.

CH: So going before Gus Solomon was not an intimidating experience, then?

MOSSER: No. James Alger Fee was the intimidating judge in those days. He was just a very — he could be terrible to attorneys, but I quickly sized up that he liked people to stand up to him. If you talked back and just stood your ground, he didn't bother you.

CH: Judge Fee.



MOSSER: Yeah. If you were timid, why, he'd just chew you up and down and blast you. The third federal judge then was Claude McColloch, who — he was someone that you seldom saw. I did try a couple of cases before him, but most often his clerk handled matters. He'd stay back in chambers and you'd tell his clerk something and the clerk would go back and talk to the judge and come back and tell you what the judge's order was, or something. I can remember that on another of these labor cases came up probably about the same time and it was assigned to McColloch. I never really tried it to McColloch at all. I went to his clerk and said, "Well, this is what Gus Solomon did in the other case." He went in and came out and said, "Well, if that's what Gus did, I'll do it too." I think it was getting a temporary injunction issued against the picketing. But those cases took up — the first one was heard in the Supreme Court in 1957, and then I had cases in Washington and California, as well as Oregon, that all went to the Ninth Circuit, and one of those eventually went on back up to the Supreme Court on a different question in 1961, I think it was, 1960 or 1961.

CH: For the Court of Appeals, did you go down to San Francisco for that?

MOSSER: Yes.

CH: Were there any of the local judges from here down on the Court of Appeals then?

MOSSER: I don't believe so. Several of them have gone there since, but at that time the court, of course, was not nearly as big as it is now, not nearly as many judges, because the whole West has mushroomed in litigation and population. It used to be fun to go to San Francisco. Now they talk about wanting to divide the court so you get your cases heard more promptly and don't have to travel as much, but we loved to travel to San Francisco.

CH: How do you feel about that division of the Ninth District?

MOSSER: I think it would probably be better. There are so many panels at the court now that it's frequently hard to know what the law is going to be just in your own circuit. I do think that we might fare better if we had a smaller number of judges to deal with.

CH: What happened on the cases that went to the Supreme Court, then? Who did you argue before there? Well, it was the whole court, but who was — what was your experience like?

MOSSER: Warren was the presiding judge, Frankfurter wrote the opinion in the first case in my favor. The second case I lost because the issues that had been presented in the Court of Appeals and had taken most of the time were not at all what the Supreme Court was really interested in and they were just establishing a principle that they didn't want the courts messing in injunctions in any labor disputes. They heard another case under the Railway Labor Act the same day and decided the same thing.

CH: Was the — in both cases was the same issue involved?

MOSSER: The statutes read, except for one word, read identically, the applicable portions of them. One was the Taft-Hartley Act [The Labor Management Relations Act of 1947], and that was the first case and the Court said, no, the Taft-Hartley Act did not apply to an American union — a labor dispute between a foreign ship, foreign crew in an American port. The other statute was the Norris-LaGuardia Act, and if you read the statute, the same section was — the same language exactly was there except one word, which was even stronger in favor of it shouldn't apply to it, but they were looking at a different principle. They weren't looking at whether it was foreign ships, foreign crews, anything, they were looking at American Federal courts, that they didn't want in labor disputes issuing injunctions. So although the statutes read the same, they decided the other way.

CH: What was that like for you to go before the Supreme Court?

MOSSER: I enjoyed it. I enjoy appellate argument, and those courts were — you know, the judges were of a very high caliber. Sometimes you get judges who ask stupid questions. They weren't asking stupid questions. It was an enjoyable experience.

CH: You had gone before Felix Frankfurter before in college with the moot court. Did he recall your presence?

MOSSER: I don't know. He didn't comment on it.

CH: Is your like for appellate cases due to the nature of technicalities that you enjoy looking at?

MOSSER: No. To me it's more enjoyable than a trial because you have an issue of law rather than of fact, and with witnesses you're constantly on your toes to see whether they — to try and hear what they're saying to immediately get a next question out, and that kind of thing. You have a long time to prepare for an appellate argument, and it's really just being prepared and thinking fast enough to answer questions. But most of the questions you should be able to anticipate. I rode back on the plane with a lawyer who had just argued a case in the Canadian supreme court, and where we had half an hour on a side in the U.S. Supreme Court, they'd had a day on each side in the Canadian Court of Appeals, so it was a much more leisurely experience.

CH: What was that regarding?

MOSSER: I don't remember what it was now.

CH: So as far as the local bench goes, you actually argued cases before each one of the Federal district court judges at the time?

MOSSER: Yes. In some cases it was just motions, in some cases it was trials, but I think I had trials before all of them, and certainly motions before all of them.

CH: Who impressed you the most of those three, Fee, McColloch and Gus Solomon?

MOSSER: Well, they were all different. They were all able men. Gus, I think I liked the best as a person, but McColloch was an extremely able judge in one way, when he decided a case it stayed decided. He could write findings of fact, so that no court could ever overturn him, better than any judge I've ever seen. Fee was somewhat temperamental and erratic but I always found him fair and I got along with him.

CH: What about the rest of the local bench?

MOSSER: Oh, there was a wide variety. I tried a number of cases in the state court. There were some able judges there but also some, what I would call, mediocre judges. Some worked very hard, some were lazy. They were nice people to be around, for the most part.

CH: Were there any notable state court justices that you recall as being exemplary in their...

MOSSER: I guess Judge Holman from Clackamas County, who later went on to the supreme court, was very able. The Oregon supreme court, Hall Lusk...

CH: Was Hall Lusk in the state government before that?

MOSSER: I don't know. I wouldn't be surprised if he'd been — I think he'd been a trial court judge before he went on, but he'd been on the Supreme Court for quite a while

before I came here. Many of the people who were judges in those days had been Legislators. Later in my practice I spent a lot of time in probate court before Bill Dixon. You learn the idiosyncrasies of them. Some of them were very abrupt. One who I won't mention by name was something of a drunkard and you had to know what time of day to get there if you wanted to get any kind of intelligent result out of him. One had a bad back and you never wanted to try a back case in front of him.

CH: At least from the opposite point of view.

MOSSER: Right.

CH: What about any other local notable judges in Multnomah County court or people that you dealt with at the time that stand out in your mind as being notable in some way?

MOSSER: Well, a lot of the cases, as I've said, in the admiralty field that I was involved with were labor and there was an elder — Tanner and Carney represented the seamen's union and had most of those cases on the other side. Tanner was kind of a fox, very clever at leading a witness to say what he wanted the witness to say. Dick Carney was about my own age and I think the abler lawyer of the two, certainly as far as the law was concerned. One of the things that I always considered a blessing was that, unlike Gunther Krause who let me argue, Tanner, when he got to the supreme court didn't let Dick Carney argue and he didn't make a very good argument. Nels Petersen had a lot of the longshore and seamen and was a very able plaintiff's attorney. Bill Morrison was one of the big characters of the bar and a very able trial lawyer who tried a lot of cases. There were a number of other able business lawyers. I think those are the trial lawyers that I had the most contact with.

CH: Did you have much involvement with the bar association?

MOSSER: Oh, I served on bar committees. I was on the bar committee on taxation, the bar committee on probate and, during the time when I wasn't in the Legislature, the bar in those days sent lawyers down for a week or two to draft bills for Legislators. That ceased because they built up, eventually, a big Legislative counsel staff, but it was still going on through the 1950s, I think, anyway, and I went down there as a bar bill drafter. I used to play in the golf tournaments, but I never tried to run for the board of governors or to seek bar association offices.

CH: Did that experience of being a bill drafter have any importance on your career later on?

MOSSER: I don't think so. I could draft simple bills, but one of the things I learned that most Legislators hadn't learned was that there was this very able professional staff, and I knew how to use them so I could get any bill I wanted drafted better than I could pick it out myself. I usually confined my work to drafting amendments in committees. Sometimes I wrote a whole bill in a committee, but usually I let Legislative counsel do the work.

CH: Any other associations, professional associations, that you were active in?

MOSSER: No.

CH: Any other clubs or organizations at that time?

MOSSER: Oh, I had two scout troops and I belonged to the Cedar Mill Community Cub, which was just kind of a social — they did some neighborhood project works, they sponsored the scout troops, they had square dances and, occasionally, speakers. But mostly — oh, I belonged to the City Club in those days.

CH: What was the City Club like back then?

MOSSER: It was an important club for issues and for political debate. Smaller than it is now but still very — probably the leading civic club for issues.

CH: It sounds very similar to...

MOSSER: It's very similar to what it is now except that now it admits women. I quit when it didn't after a couple of votes.

CH: What other early political involvements did you have? I think you mentioned school...

MOSSER: Well, they were mainly educational things, like the first fall, in 1950, the school was getting overcrowded because these big subdivisions had been plopped into what was farmland up till then. A bond issue was put up to expand the school, it failed, so I worked to get a second election. I became the school clerk, which, strangely enough, is the person who really controls the school. Pretty soon all the superintendents woke up to that and made themselves clerks. But it was compounded. We didn't have a superintendent, we had a principal, and he died, so really there was only me and the teachers and the school board. I was pretty much the administrator till we found a new superintendent.

CH: That must have taken a lot of time.

MOSSER: Well, a fair amount. Maybe a couple of evenings a week in making out payrolls, and things like that. I got paid 150 dollars a year.

CH: Not much compensation...

MOSSER: But the highest paid teacher only got \$2,400 a year.

CH: Things have changed, haven't they?

MOSSER: Yes. Then, from that, I went on the budget committee of the school district, became its attorney, handled a bond issue, or two, for it, got involved with two other school districts, Cedar Hills School District, as their attorney, and the Beaverton Union High School District as a member of its budget committee and of several study committees that it had. It was one that was promoting a unified school district which would cover grades first through 12 instead of having 13 separate elementary districts plus the Union High School. There was another one that was studying the need for a new high school and enrollment trends. Then I got on to a committee that was put together really by the Portland School District but it was a metropolitan study of schools. Cliff Zollinger of Portland was the chairman, [Alan Hart?] from the Skyline District, I've forgotten who, somebody from Lake Oswego, some people from Clackamas, there was one from Clackamas County, some of the eastern — and that was studying school finance, mainly. Those committees were mostly active in 1955 and 1956, just as I was running for the Legislature.

CH: Was that important in your consideration of running for the Legislature?

MOSSER: Yeah. I thought I knew about school finance and what was wrong with the way we were financing and organizing schools than anybody else in Washington County and, to some extent, anybody else in the state, and I had some fairly strong views on what needed to be done. That's mostly what my platform that I ran on was and what I did in that first session.

CH: Did you have any other political involvements at that time?

MOSSER: I was on the Republican Central Committee, had been since 1952, anyway.



CH: How did you get appointed to that?

MOSSER: You ran for it, it was an office that you ran for.

CH: Within what kind of a constituency?

MOSSER: Your precinct.

CH: Why did you decide to do that in 1952?

MOSSER: Oh, I was interested in politics and it was a good way to get to know people. I thought Eisenhower was a good candidate, though Stevenson was too, but I was a Republican and I thought we had a good candidate and so it was worth working for.

CH: So you were involved in the first Eisenhower campaign?

MOSSER: Yeah.

CH: What was that like? Wasn't one of his main competitors in the Republican party Taft?

MOSSER: Taft and Dewey.

CH: How did things line up in Oregon between those three candidates, and the people that you knew?

MOSSER: The people that I knew were mostly in favor of Eisenhower, but there were, you know, supporters of all of them. I think there were more candidates than that in that race.

**[End of Tape 3, Side 1]**

**Tape 3, Side 2**  
**1990 November 21**

CH: This is an interview with John Mosser and this is Tape 3, Side B.  
You were a committeeman, then, in 1952?

MOSSER: Yes.

CH: What kinds of issues were you involved with at that time, or were you?

MOSSER: I really don't remember, you know, aside from ringing some doorbells and handing out some leaflets, getting out the vote, offering to take people to the polls, and I think I went to a few county central committee meetings. In fact, I think there was one time — it probably wasn't till later. Let's see, it probably would have been — well, at some point Paul Patterson became governor. He had been the senator from — and the county central committee had the job of picking a successor, or at least recommending one to the county commission, but that's about the only significant activity that I think it...

CH: At this point, at the beginning of your political career, how would you describe yourself ideologically, politically?

MOSSER: As a liberal or progressive Republican. A fiscal conservative but more liberal on many things, member of the American Civil Liberties Union, that's one thing I was active in back then.

CH: Card-carrying?

MOSSER: Yeah. Tried cases for them.

CH: Oh, you did. Really.

MOSSER: Had one very interesting one. That was the one before Holman in which the ACLU challenged the provision of textbooks for the Catholic church. We won.

CH: What was your feeling about that?

MOSSER: Well, you know, I couldn't understand the position of the Catholic church, which was, 'we don't teach religion.' I subpoenaed their study guides, which were full of it, and how to work it into every aspect, even mathematics, in their curriculum. But they needed the money but, you know, if separation of church and state meant anything it meant that you didn't support their school.

CH: And you won that case?

MOSSER: Yes. It was a very interesting case because the Catholic head of schools was a very able man and I had a black education professor named [Guy?] from Portland State University and he was an extremely articulate and able philosopher of education, too, and these two were back and forth on what impact things had on kiddies, and whether this was religion or wasn't religion. It was an interesting case, and it was appealed up to the Oregon Supreme Court and I argued it there.

CH: And did you win there as well?

MOSSER: Yeah.

CH: Any other cases for the ACLU?

MOSSER: There was one other but I can't remember what it was. I occasionally helped them in the Legislature, and I think played a role in getting one criminal pardon issued but I can't even remember whose that was.

CH: What were your initial considerations when you decided to run for state representative?

MOSSER: In those days you ran at large.

CH: For how large an area?

MOSSER: For the county. And there were two representative seats in Washington County at that time. Leon Davis was an incumbent who was going to run again, but there was one vacant seat and the Republican who had announced for it was Jim Gardner, the district attorney, but I didn't think he could win in the fall against the Democrat who I thought was going to win the Democratic side. I thought I could beat him in a primary and I wanted to get the school issues down there, so it seemed like a good time to run so I filed.

CH: When you filed did you feel that you had a good chance, then, of winning?

MOSSER: I've always been an optimist.

CH: Aside from the school finance issues and other school issues, were there any other compelling issues or goals or motivations that you had when you were first considering public office?

MOSSER: Oh there were — I can't even remember what they were. There were some local government issues that I was interested in but I can't remember what they were now.

Educational issues were the main thing that I felt I was fully prepared on and that I was interested in doing something about, and there were a whole host of those. The bonding statute was based on a five-year-old appraised assessed value, which meant that Washington County only had about half of what it was supposed to have. All basic school support funds were allocated on the basis of the previous year's enrollment, whereas we were growing 10, 20% a year in some of those school districts and you were always underfunded. There were something like 700 school districts in the state at that time, far too many, small and inadequate, the curriculum wasn't coordinated between elementary schools and high schools. 30% of the Beaverton High School students never graduated. To me there was just an endless array of educational issues that I wanted addressed before my kids got in school.

CH: So you were responding to the needs that you perceived of your kids as opposed to the situations that they were dealing with at that time.

MOSSER: Oh, yeah. In '50 — we didn't have kindergartens, public kindergartens, then, and in 1956, when I was running, my oldest daughter was a freshman in school, I mean a first-grader, in a one-room school. They went to a — the first grade was in a one-room school and then the next year the, second and third, they went down to a newer school. Actually, after I filed for the Legislature we learned that the fourth child was on the way, after I had won the primary, so that meant there were going to be kids, but I probably wouldn't have filed if I had known the fourth kid was on the way.

CH: Is that right? Just too many other obligations?

MOSSER: Yes.

CH: How was this primary against the DA that you won against?

MOSSER: Races then were far different. You couldn't possibly look at television. It was just, you know, in Oregon but nobody used it as a campaign thing, and particularly in Washington County. You had a heck of a time getting anything in the Portland press.

CH: Why is that?

MOSSER: Well...

CH: You were part of the Portland area.

MOSSER: You were part of the Portland area, and later on, when I got to know the reporters, it was easy. But still there were 22 — I've forgotten. I think it was something like a third of the Legislature, about 22, I think, were from Multnomah County, and there were two from Washington County, two from Clackamas County and they were running at large, you know. In Multnomah County, where you had 22 spots to fill, there might be 40 or 50 people filed on each party in the primary. It's hard to get that much coverage when you're one of a mob. But the main campaign methods that I used were you went around and talked to things like — there was a Beaverton Rotary, Kiwanis Club. Some of them would have political speakers, some wouldn't, but you still went to those things and got introduced.

There were community clubs, there were, frequently, candidates fairs, where half the time all you did was talk to other candidates, but still they were a means of getting some coverage because you'd write a little speech, usually five minutes — two minutes to five minutes was about what a candidate had. You'd write a speech, you'd send the copy — I wrote the stories, actually, of 'so and so gave this speech' and summarize what the speech was and sent it to — there was the *Hillsboro Argus*, the *Forest Grove News Times*, the *Valley Times* in Beaverton, and there were a couple of other small papers in Tigard and Tualatin. Most of them would run what you sent them. *Hillsboro Argus* always edited

a little, the others would pretty much run it verbatim. I wrote a long article on what needed to be done for education and the *Valley Times* printed the whole thing.

While the type was set I got reprints of that so I had things to hand out at all these meetings you went to. The voters' pamphlet was very important then and I, as a newspaper editor, managed to put some headlines into it and get a kind of punchy page out of it. I think I bought one ad. Somebody gave me 25 dollars so I bought a — they were Democrat and so I organized Democrats for Mosser and ran one ad in the general election. I don't think I spent more than 150 dollars in both the primary and general elections. Most of that went to buy a page in the voters' pamphlet, get cuts made so your picture was in the voters' pamphlet, and the county central committee assessed you I think 25 or 50 dollars, or something, to run, and that's about where the money went.

CH: Did you have a platform that you ran on?

MOSSER: Yeah. I haven't laid my hands on the voters' pamphlet, but it was, basically, get our fair share of schools, increase basic school support, change the method of funding, solve the bonding problem. School issues, mainly.

CH: What was your opposition like?

MOSSER: Well, all you had to do was come in second and, as I recall, there were just three candidates running in the primary and then, in the general election, there were two Democrats and two Republicans. In the primary I won the second spot. I don't know by how much. I can't remember. The general election was extremely close. In fact, it was announced on election day that I'd lost. It wasn't till three days later that they came out with the final returns. I knew I had won because I knew the precincts that were out were basically a few in my neighborhood, very large precincts, which is why the vote was slow in getting counted. They hadn't reorganized precincts and the size of precincts ranged from about 50 to 400 because of growth in the east end of the county, so it was a couple



of those big precincts that were still out. There was one quirk. I swept the community of Timber, which I had never been in in my life, and it wasn't until years later that I found out there was — I saw in a publication there was a character who lived up there, kind of a hermit, in the woods but he was loved by everybody, called Grandpa Mosser.

CH: Oh, no. [Both laugh] So they confused you with...

MOSSER: Well, at least the name was recognized out there. Whether they thought I was a relative or not, I don't know.

CH: You never verified that?

MOSSER: No.

CH: What was the reality, then, of campaigning versus what you thought it might be prior to the campaign?

MOSSER: I had watched county politics enough to know that it required some effort but not endless effort, and that if you were at all skillful at getting a little publicity and using the voters' pamphlet — oh, there was another very important thing in the primary. Phil Levin, who was an active Democrat, and I studied politics to some extent, the Oregon system to some extent, and we observed that you had a ballot slogan, 10 words, or something, that you could put after your name. In the primary the most important thing to put was Republican or Democrat, depending on which primary you were running in. Of course, every candidate running in the Republican primary was a Republican and every candidate in the Democratic primary — but people didn't realize that and so identifying your party, how could you lose? The first word should always be the party in the primary.

CH: That seems amazing that it would be an oversight by anyone.

MOSSER: Well, there are a lot of things that people take for granted, or don't think about, that are so basic.

CH: Who was your primary opposition, then, in the general election that you had such a close call with?

MOSSER: A very able attorney from Forest Grove. I can't think of his name now, but he was a likeable person and a prominent attorney in the western end of the county, which at that time had more population than the east, although the east was growing very rapidly.

CH: Is that right?

MOSSER: You had Hillsboro and Forest Grove and all the farm communities, banks...

CH: So were there any setbacks or losses that you had, or things that deterred you in any way, when you first ran for office?

MOSSER: No.

CH: It was pretty much as you expected it would be?

MOSSER: The major thing that I hadn't expected was to have my wife pregnant and the fourth child on the way.

CH: Was that difficult campaigning with that kind of a situation, your mind being somewhat distracted by events at home?

MOSSER: Oh, the baby was born just before the general election, the end of October, so my wife was licking stamps for the final mailing in the hospital, but aside from that.

CH: What kind of supports or endorsements did you have?

MOSSER: None.

CH: Was that common?

MOSSER: Well, labor inevitably endorsed Democrats. The League of Women Voters put out its pamphlet but they don't endorse. OEA [Oregon Education Association] I don't think endorsed me.

CH: Why? It seems like they'd be...

MOSSER: Some of these issues that were before the — when we get into the Legislative session, there was a very controversial issue on the allocation of basic school support that divided the state severely, and OEA was on one side of it and I had taken sort of a neutral position, not as extreme as theirs. So that may have been the reason. I'm trying to think who else does endorse now. I suppose some — I don't know whether Associated Oregon Industries endorses now. It didn't then.

CH: Did you have any communication with the OEA at the time, or approach them in some way?

MOSSER: I had lots of communication with the school superintendents all over the state because I had worked with many of them in getting some Legislation ready, but I don't recall having that much contact with OEA before the session. I certainly had lots during the session.

CH: Did you eventually become allied with them in some way?

MOSSER: No.

CH: Why?

MOSSER: To me they've always been an organization that is more interested in teachers' salaries and in protecting the status quo of educational requirement and certification than I've ever been willing to support. I think the abomination of education is schools of education. I'd do away with all of them if I could.

CH: All the...

MOSSER: Schools of education.

CH: You would do away with them?

MOSSER: Yes. Teachers major in how to teach, and all these endless variations on the same theme. I can see where child development and a little educational psychology, a little practice teaching, something could be a minor, but to me the teachers ought to be studying math or English or language, or whatever the heck they're going to teach. Why is it that you can teach in college without ever taking any education course but you can't teach in high school or grade school unless you've had nothing but?

CH: So that...

MOSSER: So I was not that sympathetic to the teachers at all times.

CH: Did you have any mentors or guides or teachers for you in the political process, or people that kind of showed you the ropes in some way? Helped you, gave you advice?

MOSSER: Not before I got down to the Legislature. In the Legislature you quickly learn to judge and rely on other people. You can't possibly be an expert in everything, and so certainly I learned from watching people, I learned from talking to people, I learned to judge people and rely on their recommendations.

CH: What was it like going down as a freshman Legislator in 1957? Or, actually, it would be the beginning of 1958, wouldn't it?

MOSSER: No, the election was 1956, start of 1957. Well, the Democrats had won the state for the first time since the early depression, I think. They elected Dick Neuberger to the Senate, they elected Bob Holmes as governor, they had a majority in the House of Representatives for the first time since the memory of man, they had never had committee chairmen before and now they had all the committee chairmanships. They had a lot of freshmen, obviously, because to have come from the minority party, way minority party, to the majority party took a lot of upsets. The Senate had a terrible time organizing. I think they spent nearly three weeks before they were able to elect a president because it was very closely divided between — I think it was 15 to 15.

But this division in the Legislature on the school issue, Portland and all of eastern Oregon and some other areas of the state, but principally those two, were opposed to what was called the Key District Bill, which was a new method of apportioning. What it was going to do was to — the definition of key district turned out to be Portland, and state aid was to be distributed to make all the other districts get as much as if they were as wealthy as Portland, which took quite a bit away from Portland on any given amount of money. The other big area that lost was eastern Oregon where they had high property values from their farms in relation to the number of school kids.

So the bill that the state superintendents had come up with, called the Key District Bill, that OEA supported, that Governor Holmes supported, that Monroe Sweetland, who was the head of the Democratic party and the one who had engineered their big election victory, supported, was opposed by these areas. Pat Dooley, from Portland, was the Speaker of the House and I told him I wanted on the education committee. The deal we ultimately struck was that I wasn't committed to vote against the Key District Bill but I was committed to try to work out a better system that would not reduce support for Portland while it took care of some of these problems that I told Pat had to be taken care of as far as the growing suburban districts and some of the other areas of the state.

So it ended up that there were four pro-key districters, four anti-key districters and me on the nine man education committee. I introduced two alternate plans. One was sent to the Ways and Means Committee and one was sent to the House education committee. The Key District Bill started on the Senate side and I went over and presented the two ideas over there, but the skids were greased over there and probably within the first five, six weeks of the session the bill passed over to the House out of the Senate.

CH: How did those skids get greased that they were able to do that so quickly?

MOSSER: I think the education committee over there had a predominance of people who favored the Key District Bill. I know Monroe Sweetland was the chairman of it.

**[End of Tape 3, Side 2]**

**Tape 4, Side 1**  
**1990 November 21**

CH: This is an interview with John Mosser in his apartment in Portland, Oregon. The interviewer for the Oregon Historical Society is Clark Hansen. This is Tape 4, Side A. So your consideration in getting this key district plan through the Legislature was oriented more towards geographic considerations than political, being a Democrat or a Republican?

MOSSER: I don't think it was a partisan issue. It was an issue in which people tended to vote their own interest, which was how they economically fared under the plan, how their district — when we started taking bills to the floor, everybody had a printout that said exactly how many dollars their district got under each proposal. It was that kind of a vote.

CH: Who made those statistics for them?

MOSSER: We usually had the Department of Education. They didn't have a computer, it had to be sort of laboriously worked out, especially considering that there were 600 to 700 districts in the state and that you had several elements of each in the distribution formula. There were usually at least four different ways of distributing money in a formula, so you had to put four different numbers and a total for each district. There were some Legislators, you know, that had districts that benefitted under one plan and were hurt under another plan. The county wasn't all the same.

But basically they were looking at how their county, or the majority of their districts, turned out. I had two bills of my own that were introduced and went to two different committees in the House, one to Ways and Means, one to Education. I had a bill to increase the amount of money in the basic school support. It was voted in by the people and had never been increased by the Legislature. I had a number of other education bills. But the House committee was four-four, four against, four in favor of the Key District Bill and myself, and I set about to try to get a better formula. By the end of the session I actually got one

formula through a conference committee and came out and told the superintendents who wanted the equalization what it was and they said, "No, that's too much equalization. Go back in and give some of it back."

CH: Why were they against that?

MOSSER: They thought it would lead to some kind of a revolt. It just wasn't going to be good enough.

CH: What was the argument against equalization?

MOSSER: The argument isn't necessarily against equalization, the argument is in are you going to take money away from one district to give it to another. That was really what the argument was about. What we eventually succeeded in doing, I think, was adding enough money, new money, so that no district got less, and most of the new money ended up going into equalization.

CH: But from what you were saying, at that point Portland was getting a lot less because...

MOSSER: Portland was getting — Portland would have gotten a lot less under the Key District Bill.

CH: And why would they have gotten less?

MOSSER: Because they were the wealthy district and this said that you picked the wealthy district and then you distributed the money so that, with the same property tax levy, all the districts would come out the same. Well, that isn't the way it had been distributed. It had been distributed largely on a per capita basis. So what it would be doing



is taking the money out of Portland and some of the other theoretically wealthy areas, and, again, there's some question — Portland at that time had probably a better tax base in the way of business property, but whether the farms of eastern Oregon were really a great wealthy community or not, some of them didn't look very wealthy to me, and neither did some of the other so-called rich districts.

They also, in eastern Oregon, had very high transportation expenses. There's even one boarding school in eastern Oregon because the kids come from hundreds of miles away to attend it. So to say that they had the same expense as a Eugene or a Salem or a Portland where there was some public transportation and the schools were close to the kids' houses was not necessarily — the formula was getting kind of complex. And, of course, they were all based on the prior year's enrollment. One of the things that I insisted had to be done was to get it on to the current year's enrollment so that there was a growth factor in there for the districts that were growing.

CH: What was the final plan, then, that was adopted?

MOSSER: Well, it was interesting. It was still called the Key District Bill and there was a definition of key district in it, but that was the only mention of key district in the bill. It was not a key district bill. That had just gotten such magic name that we left the definition in. It distributed — I've forgotten the exact proportion, but something like 75 or 76% on a per capita basis and the other 24% on an equalization basis. It had the growth factor in it, it had a transportation factor in it.

CH: How much of it was your bill?

MOSSER: Almost all of it. One of my two bills. I'd had two different bills, but it was mostly one of them.

CH: Why did you put two different bills in at the same time?

MOSSER: Two different ideas, I had two different methods of handling it, and one of them gained favor. I think I gained a great deal of respect in the session. I know I did two things that almost never happen in the Legislature in the dying days. One, the final Key District Bill that we passed on the House side was an amendment, the entire bill was amended on the House floor by unanimous consent. Normally you don't get even three words of unanimous consent in the Legislature.

CH: Was that done on a voice vote?

MOSSER: Yes. If anybody objects, there isn't unanimous consent or, silence. The other thing I did, there was a second bill which had been drafted by the Zollinger committee that equalized — it changed county schools — it was a county school district, and this changed the way the county fit into the school picture. It was a fairly complex bill. That finally came over from the Senate the last day of the session and I moved that it go on the final calendar without reference to committee. Again, almost no bill ever gets through a House without going to committee, and that was accepted. So we did get quite a bit of — reorganization was another big battle as to how you could merge school districts to try to get the number reduced. That was another big battle in that session.

CH: Did anybody help you figure out how to go about doing business in Salem when you first went down there? Did you have anybody that pointed you in the right direction or did you just figure it out all on your own?

MOSSER: Well, I sort of figured it out on my own. As I say, you study, watch other people. As far as getting bills drafted, I was rooming with Jeff Hazzard, who was a young attorney working for what then was the big law firm, Hart, Spencer, McColloch, Rockwood, and Davies, and he was taking a session to go down and work for Legislative counsel as a bill drafter. He and I rode together and — there was a tremendously able Legislative

counsel staff. They just finished completely redoing the Oregon statutes. Sam Haley, Bob Lundy, Kathleen [Bouffet?], and some of these temporary people like Jeff — most Legislators didn't even realize they were there, I don't think, and even when they did they'd say, "I want a bill," but they wouldn't know that staff does not make up the content of the bill.

They technically draft it but they don't make a decision as to whether it does this or does that. The typical pattern was that somebody would say they wanted a bill and then the draftsman would go back and ask him about 20 questions and they'd scratch their heads and take a month to get back, and so it never got drafted. So it does help to know what you want to do, and I really had studied school finance. I got so that, you know, people would come up with a change in plan and send the poor Department of Education off to work all night on these numbers. I could tell before they ever came back what the numbers were going to be. You just learn that much about how these districts are affected by any change in the bill.

CH: What kind of a staff did you have?

MOSSER: I had one secretary who could not type but was a very nice lady and knew her — she knew something about Salem. She'd worked in the capitol for a long time.

CH: And how did you find her?

MOSSER: I think misspoke. I said there were two Legislators from Washington County. There were three. In addition to Davis and myself there was Arthur Ireland from Forest Grove, and Art's sister lived in Salem, Emma [Lemon?], and she was my secretary.

CH: So what did she do for you if she didn't do any typing?

MOSSER: Oh, she did a little typing, but I didn't get out lots of long letters, I got out form postcards and shorter letters. She kept my scrapbook, she organized files for me, she kept me posted on the grapevine. You know, all the secretaries talk to each other, and you had two or three ways of finding out what was going on. One was your secretary, one was lunch in the lounge, and the third was going out and drinking and socializing at night. But the secretary was an important — the other thing is, we had no offices. All the desks were on the floor. That was your only place of work. So it made it very easy to find out what was going on because everybody was there in the chamber some part of the day.

CH: You've mentioned these three different places that you found out what was going on, the secretaries being one. What about the other two, what was that like? The lunch...

MOSSER: I always lost weight because lunch was so bad. It was sort of handouts. You know, the [Cowbells?] would come to town and they'd serve beef that day. Generally speaking, it was cold cuts, cottage cheese, salad, Jell-O, cake, coffee, nothing very fancy. No cooks up there. On the Senate side they ate much better, but the House side was always just cold cuts and a buffet.

CH: That sounds like discrimination against the representatives, a bias in favor of the senators.

MOSSER: It was just, you know, the Senate had half the number of members, which meant there was more space behind the podium and upstairs in the lounge. With 60 members, all there was, was space for people to sit and eat, there wasn't space for a kitchen. There was a refrigerator, period.

CH: Later on in the evening going off to having drinks with fellow Legislators, what was that like?

MOSSER: Well, there were one or two places where people tended to gather in the evening, the Colonial House and Chuck's, on opposite ends of the town — oh, and the Marion Hotel. There was the Senator Hotel, but not many people hung out there. A few Legislators lived at it.

CH: And where did you live?

MOSSER: The state had condemned — in the expansion of the capitol mall had bought up a bunch of old, falling down houses, and Jeff and I rented one of those. It was about where the Revenue Building is now in Salem, three long blocks walk to the capitol.

CH: Was it difficult being away from home for this period of time?

MOSSER: Well, I commuted a good deal. I didn't have a care to commute with because I had to leave that for my wife, but Jeff and I frequently would go down Monday morning and stay Monday and Tuesday night, try to get up Wednesday night, maybe. Sometimes I took the train, sometimes I came with Jeff, sometimes I got a ride from one of the education people from Portland that was coming back this way, I hitchhiked a few times. If I came up then, I usually, I think, took the train down the next morning. There was an early morning train that got me in by the time of my — certainly before our 10:00 session, and I think probably by 9:00. Anyway, I was there maybe four nights out of the week, except at the very end of the session when we were in session till late at night, even on Saturday sometimes, then it got to be kind of long.

[Tape stops]

CH: What committees were you assigned to and what committees did you want?

MOSSER: The main one I wanted was education, and I got that. Judiciary I didn't much care whether I was on or not, but as a lawyer, a lot of lawyers end up on Judiciary. There were 10 lawyers in the House and two of them were — Bob Duncan was on Ways and Means, and that's one that's very hard to share with other assignments. I think Clarence Barton was head of Taxation. I don't have my journal here so I really can't remember which of them were on which committees, but I do know that I was on Judiciary, and I think I was — I wanted Local Government. I've forgotten whether I got that or whether I was on Financial Institutions. It wasn't one that I spent a lot of time on, I remember that.

CH: Who impressed you most during that term in the Legislature?

MOSSER: On the Democratic side Bob Duncan was very able, and Keith Skelton. There were, you know, people that I liked a lot and that I admired for some things but I didn't always agree with or think they were the greatest Legislators, people like Gracie Peck, who was a character that...

CH: What was the name?

MOSSER: Grace Peck. Grace was a large woman who had been a drunk in earlier sessions but was not in this session, or any later session. She was a reformed alcoholic. She was a bleeding-heart liberal. Welfare was what she spent her time on. She talked a good deal, but she was fun. She had candy jars on her desk by the dozens, everybody was always around her desk getting some candy or — and she played the piano at parties, and just a nice person. Clarence Barton was very able, from the Democratic side, Allen Tom was somebody I was close to on the Republican side, a Legislator from eastern Oregon just died a couple weeks ago. He was on Ways and Means.

George Layman was a very able lawyer, statesman sort of Legislator, always watching out for the constitutional questions, I think one of the few people who spoke on the House floor and actually swayed votes. Most people knew how they were going to

vote on any major Legislation before the start of the discussion. Ireland and Davis and I worked together on a few things that were of interest to Washington County. We were trying to get — oh, I think it was a later session, 1963, we were all working on the Tualatin Valley project, Hagg Lake, the dam out there, and there were some things of interest to the Conservation Service or the farmers in the county that we worked on together but, generally, speaking we weren't on the same committees and...

CH: What were the relationships like between the House and the Senate during that time?

MOSSER: They were better than in some later sessions. The Senate had such a terrible time organizing and was so closely divided in the 1963 session, I think, and 1965 probably had more House-Senate disputes late in the session, particularly, some pettiness. There were some very able senators on both sides. Rudy Wilhelm, Howard Belton, Don Husband among the Republicans, Harry Boivin, Dan Thiel — oh, Tony Yturri on the Republican side, Boivin and Gene Lewis, Alf Corbett, Dan Thiel on the Democratic side, I guess Warren Gilman on the Republican side.

CH: You've mentioned that the Legislators on the Judicial Committee were primarily lawyers. What would you say was the ratio between lawyers and other professions?

MOSSER: On the Judiciary Committee?

CH: Yes, or in the House in general.

MOSSER: Well, with 10 lawyers I guess you'd say that that was, what, a sixth of the House. In some earlier sessions it was probably a much higher percentage than that. In some later ones it got down to where there were only about five or six, and those not really many of them practicing lawyers. But in this session they were mostly practicing lawyers

who — and quite a few leaders of the Legislature were lawyers. There weren't nearly as many housewives as there are now, there weren't nearly as many teachers as there are now. There were some other — policemen and firemen. A lot of farmers then, still, had a lot of small businessmen, insurance, publishers.

**[End of Tape 4, Side 1]**



**Tape 4, Side 2**  
**1990 November 21**

CH: This is an interview with John Mosser. This is Tape 4, Side B. What were the primary issues before the Legislature in 1957?

MOSSER: Education was certainly, I think, as much a focus as anything. Strangely enough, cutting taxes was probably the other thing. The previous session of the Legislature had put a 45% surtax on the income tax and it was raising more money than anybody needed and...

CH: A surtax on the income tax?

MOSSER: Yes. The income tax, I think, had run from two percent to eight percent, or something like that, and they added a 45% surtax, which made it three percent to 11 and a fraction percent, or something. I think that may have been one of the keys to why the Democrats suddenly were in control of the Legislature and the governorship. [Both laugh] In any event, Monroe Sweetland had one plan. He wanted to raise I think a lot more money than anybody else, but he was still going to increase the taxes on the wealthy, he was going to abolish the federal tax deduction and add a big corporate tax but then was going to cut taxes — get rid of the 45% surtax. Pat Dooley had a plan. I think his plan, or something close to it, finally passed, but it was still raising too much money. That's the reason we had a special session in the fall, was to further cut taxes because they — that was a fairly partisan session with the Republicans trying to get credit for bigger cuts.

CH: Why was the special session called in?

MOSSER: There was too much money.

CH: Who called it?

MOSSER: The governor.

CH: Which was Bob Holmes.

MOSSER: Bob Holmes. Poor Bob, he did everything wrong that fall. He also — I don't know whether it was that fall or the following, I think it was the following fall, just at the election time when the hunters were already in the woods and he canceled hunting season. [Both Laugh]

CH: That didn't make him very popular, did it?

MOSSER: No.

CH: What was the relationship with the House and the governor like otherwise during that term?

MOSSER: You know, I don't know what it would have been like if I had been in the same party as the governor. I had relatively little contact with him. The general impression was that I didn't think he was very effective in working with the Legislature.

CH: Had he been in the Legislature at any point?

MOSSER: He had been in the Senate, yes. He was a senator from Astoria, or somewhere on the coast. I think it was Astoria. I thought his director of finance was an able man but I didn't think very much of his executive assistant and I didn't think Bob himself was very effective in dealing with the Legislature. I got to know Bob quite well later when we were both on the Board of Higher Education and I liked him a good deal in later life, but I didn't think much of him as a governor when I was down there.

CH: What about with the federal delegation?

MOSSER: The federal then would have been Wayne Morse and Dick Neuberger, and Neuberger had just gotten into office. I had met Dick but didn't know him well. Morse I had great respect for before I got to Oregon and much less respect when I was out here. He did things, to me, that were strange. I can remember he endorsed every — when he was a Republican he made these impassioned speeches endorsing every Republican on the ticket, including some people I thought were terrible clunks, and when he became a Democrat, exactly the same. There wasn't any good Republican left, every Democrat, regardless of how big a clunk they were was Wayne Morse's boy. I also thought he was kind of a pompous, arrogant man and, in fact, I counseled Packwood on how to beat him. I said, "Debate him. He thinks he's the greatest debater in the world and he isn't and you'll knock his socks off," and that's exactly what happened.

CH: What about the rest of the congressional delegation at the time?

MOSSER: I'm trying to think who the representatives were. There was...

CH: Was Edith Green in there at that time?

MOSSER: Edith Green was in, I'm pretty sure.

CH: And Al Ullman?

MOSSER: I don't think Ullman was there yet. Maybe he was. I think he came later.

CH: And Charles Porter?

MOSSER: Charlie Porter. There were just three then, is that right? Yes, because...

CH: What about Norblad? Was Norblad in there?

MOSSER: Norblad was there. I'm pretty sure he was still there. Wyatt came in shortly after that, I think.

CH: From the same district?

MOSSER: Yeah, the First District. I had relatively little contact with any of them.

CH: What was their relationship like with the House in general? Was there much contact at all between the House or the Legislature and the federal delegation?

MOSSER: No. We sent them memorials, which they probably filed in the wastebasket, or maybe paid some attention to occasionally. But occasionally you do need and have close contact with Congress on some issue, but I don't recall it in that session.

CH: Going back to the issues and the accomplishments of the 1957 Legislature, you had mentioned education and cutting taxes and then the special session. What did the special session accomplish?

MOSSER: It did further cut the income tax and — I've got a scrapbook but I can't remember much of anything that happened that was significant.

[Tape stops]

A \$75 million surplus. Considering that the whole budget was something like 240 million, that was a big surplus.

CH: And they had to call in a special session to deal with it, rather than to put it into the — give some kind of a rebate or?

MOSSER: Yes.

CH: Now there's a — isn't there a constitutional requirement forcing surpluses to be rebated? Was that in effect then?

MOSSER: No. That came in in 1979 or 1981, I've forgotten which.

CH: Much later. [Both looking at scrapbook] \$75 million, gee.

MOSSER: That's the voters' pamphlet page with my platform.

CH: I was trying to look this up the other day, so I'm glad that I have a chance to take a look at it now. So in the voters' pamphlet your main statements are concerning school building funds and suburban schools, and mostly education issues.

MOSSER: Yes.

CH: Do you feel that the 1957 Legislature was able to address some of those issues in a way that you found satisfactory?

MOSSER: As I say, we got a better school formula, one that recognized the growth that was going on in the suburbs. There had been this entirely phony bond thing where we were tied to a 1952 assessed value ratio that was totally out of date and meant that we had much less. I passed a bonding bill that's stayed the same ever since, and as far as I know there has never been a school district that didn't have bonding capacity since then,

whereas there were many of them that, under the statute, couldn't issue bonds because of the archaic restriction. We did something with school district reorganization, and shortly after that the Beaverton School District did become a unified district, merged. We did reform the counties' role in education. I didn't like it afterwards, but it was one of the objectives and we did do it. So we passed a great deal of school Legislation. I introduced one bill that would have gotten the state into the partial funding of school buildings where they were entirely — or, still are entirely local. That didn't pass, but that's about the only thing I failed to get any action on.

CH: Were there other bills that were of major importance that were passed, maybe not dealing with education but other areas? You've mentioned taxation and...

MOSSER: I really don't recall much that — you know, the budget has to get approved every time, but I think taxes and education were the two big things that year.

CH: Were there other representatives that you felt were major leaders in the education issues?

MOSSER: Well, we didn't always agree but, yes, I think Gene Lewis and Monroe Sweetland on the Senate side, on the House, Joe Rogers, who was chairman of the House Education Committee, certainly a person I had to work with and through a lot.

CH: You mentioned earlier geographically — about how some issues broke down geographically. Do you recall other issues that broke down geographically, or how allies and adversaries changed over time from issue to issue and situation to situation?

MOSSER: Well certainly, when you get into higher education, that frequently has geographic implications. There are schools scattered pretty much around but still Eugene and Corvallis, the downstate people, frequently dragged their feet on advancing Portland

State, and that became a Portland metropolitan area against the rest of the state kind of thing. Highway allocations sometimes end up with coalitions being formed. Frequently the selection of a speaker or a president of the Senate becomes a battle between Portland and the rest of the state as much as it is between parties.

CH: Why is that?

MOSSER: There is a feeling that Portland doesn't understand the rest of the state. Portland dominates the rest of the state, Portland gets rich off the rest of the state. There's a certain tension there and, now, you know, the metropolitan area is about half the state. It's always been close to that, so it sort of tilts. On the other hand, you sometimes get the Portland suburbs against the city of Portland, so that — for example, I was roundly condemned by the Washington County Central Committee and some of the Washington County press for not voting for the Key District Bill and sort of siding with Portland to get a balanced program. I had to write a letter at the end of the session saying, "What's wrong with you people? Where do you think all these kids in your schools are coming from? They're coming from the Portland schools. Where do the people in Washington County move to when they move? Most often they move to Portland. We're interchanging kids. We've got to watch out for both." But, you know, they couldn't see it.

CH: What other issues did things break down in peculiar manners like that?

MOSSER: Well when you get to — anything that's distributing money it can be — a property tax relief program or the distribution of basic school support are typical, but some — in the old days there used to be some jurisdictional fights over things like where the — we were closing a tuberculosis hospital about every session, and which one was going to be closed and which one was going to be kept open was very much a jurisdictional fight. There was one year I remember when we closed the tuberculosis hospital in Portland but put the Salem hospital under the medical school's jurisdiction as a compromise.

CH: Why did that happen? I noticed that in the newspaper accounts and it was rather confusing as to why they would come to that conclusion.

MOSSER: Well, the argument was how big a hospital you needed. There were only something like 80 beds at Portland, many more beds in Salem. There were jobs involved with both places. The argument for bringing it to Portland was that an awful lot of the patients came from Portland. They tended, by then, to be the derelicts that didn't take good care of their health. Also, there was surgery at the medical school, the Portland hospital, where there wasn't — they had to bring patients from Salem to Portland for surgery. The vote ended up that session being that — I think that was 1963, that they would keep the beds in Salem but make them subject to the medical school's supervision, the idea being that probably, if the medical school ran it, by the next time they'd fit in 80 beds and could be brought up to Portland, but there were more than 80, it appeared, required, or somebody was arguing that.

The tuberculosis hospital was a big argument in the next session. At that session we wanted to close all of the tuberculosis hospitals. We didn't think there was any need for more than a few beds anywhere in the state for surgery, and that could be done at any good hospital. Ross Morgan, his wife Shirley, had had tuberculosis had and been saved at the medical school, and so he blocked the closing of it. Anyway, it was one session later before they finally closed the hospital in Portland. There had been one at The Dalles, that got closed in the 1950s, and then the other two in the 1960s.

CH: Were there other aspects of the 1957 Legislature that are notable?

MOSSER: As I say, the start was notable for the fact that it took, I think, something like three weeks and hundreds of ballots to select a president of the Senate.

CH: When they finally elected a president was it Boivin that they elected?



MOSSER: I think it was [Walter] Pearson. I'm trying to remember who it was. I think it was Pearson that got elected.

CH: Well at the end of this session you decided to return to private practice, is that right?

MOSSER: Yes. My practice was busy and the win in the Supreme Court case had brought me cases outside this jurisdiction in that field. Mark Matthiesen was close to retiring and I was taking over more and more of the business work in the firm. We moved from Cedar Mill in 1954 to five acres, five and a half acres, and there was a very small house, and by then we had four kids, three in one dormitory under the eaves, one in a small, very tiny bedroom. I knew I needed to get a bigger house built, and I also needed to make some more money.

CH: So it was primarily for business and monetary reasons and family reasons, then, that you returned.

MOSSER: Yes.

CH: You knew that as soon as you left the Legislature at the end of the 1957 session, that you would be...

MOSSER: That I wasn't going to run again, yeah.

CH: What did you do during that time, then, during those years?

MOSSER: Well, in 1957 and 1958 I was vice chairman of a Legislative interim committee on state government organization. Howard Belton was the chairman. Our budget was only 15 thousand dollars, which hired one part-time employee, but we put out a lot of major

recommendations, nearly all of which, except the one on the Legislature, were enacted. I spent some time in the 1959 session lobbying some of that stuff. I was also active on OMSI's board. We had a — in the Beaverton School District there was a battle over whether we should have junior highs or only the eighth grade and senior high thing. I led a recall campaign against two board members that were opposed to what I wanted, which was junior highs, and were generally opposing almost everything that was progressive in the district. That was the [Hansen-Jensen?] Recall Committee.

We won that, so I was spending some time still on school matters. There was a local organization called MAP, Metropolitan Area Perspective. I was president of that and we were working to try to get a metropolitan government. In the 1959 session I lobbied for and introduced a bill and got it passed, a bill to establish the Metropolitan Study Commission, Area Study Commission. Kay Rich became the secretary of that, and that's the one that ultimately led to the proposal for Metro. There were some other proposals for a reorganization of county government that didn't get through, but that one did get through. I wasn't formally named, but in fact was the managing partner of the law firm by then. So I was still pretty busy. I did have fun. I designed a house, and built it, had it built, right next door to where I was.

CH: In Cedar Hill? Cedar Mill.

MOSSER: West Tualatin View, whatever you want to call it. No man's land just over the border in Washington County. In a way it was the worst move I ever made because, being right next door, you tended to carry things over and only got the moving van at the last minute to bring your refrigerator and a few other big things.

CH: But then you had plenty of room.

MOSSER: Yeah, and it was a very satisfactory house in many years, certainly very cheaply built, though good work. We had 3,600 square feet. It was enormous. Plus 3,000 feet of covered decks and patios.

CH: The kids must have loved that.

MOSSER: Yeah, and we had a big enough yard that it was the local playground for — bigger than the school playground.

CH: So you had all the kids over, then, for...

MOSSER: We had lots of kids in the yard, usually.

CH: Well good.

**[End of Tape 4, Side 2]**

**Tape 5, Side 1**  
**1990 November 29**

CH: This is an interview with John Mosser in his apartment in Portland, Oregon. The interviewer for the Oregon Historical Society is Clark Hansen. The tape is Tape 5, Side A.

Do you have anything that you'd like to add to our last session?

MOSSER: Well, I thought of — in the 1957 special session, after the regular session Joe Rogers had changed his registration from Democrat to Republican, which narrowed the margin, I think, to 31-29. There was a move to unseat Pat Dooley as speaker and elect Dick Groener, who was a Democrat, as speaker because, basically, the Republicans thought he would go along with them and certainly appoint them to committees chairmanships. They hoped to get — I've forgotten — one other Democrat to vote with them. Well, the morning that the special session convened, this whole idea I think so nauseated me that I was throwing up at home and couldn't get to Salem. In any event, the move never took place. Whether it was because I wasn't there or because they didn't have the votes otherwise, I don't know. [Both laugh]

The special session I think — he probably had come in at the very end of the regular session, but the special session was the first time I really got to know Stafford Hansell, who came in as a representative from eastern Oregon, and he later became one of my very good friends and certainly one of the great Legislators of the next two decades. That session, aside from the political maneuvering that went on, the one thing of consequence that I did for my constituents was that the Beaverton School District had passed a bond issue for the Sunset High School, to start construction of Sunset High School, but they had missed something in the procedure and the election was flawed, and so I got through a special bill to validate the election of the bond issue so that they could build the high school.

CH: That was during the special session?

MOSSER: Yeah.

CH: What other things were passed during that session?

MOSSER: Oh, I don't think an awful lot. The major thing was dealing with the tax cut, and the tax bill took — this is one of the problems with special sessions. As I say, I had one each session, and usually all of the action focuses in one or, at most, two committees. Everybody else has nothing to do, and that's the worst possible situation because broomers sweep around, they're bored, they start playing games and trying to figure out how to create some action because there isn't any, and it's really a very unhealthy situation. The objective is always to try to get them through quickly, and somehow they never do get through quickly.

CH: Is there any kind of a time limit set when you go into session?

MOSSER: No. There's no ability to set a time limit. Sometimes the leadership has been able to get both parties to agree that they will only consider certain subjects so that the rest of it doesn't come up. There are a thousand bills introduced and full-blown committees formed. But the reverse of that is that this leaves out of 90 Legislators maybe 60 to 70 with nothing to do until the final vote is taken, and that's a very unhealthy situation, too.

CH: Why can't they just reconvene the committee until the committee is finished?

MOSSER: They have sometimes done that, but some things — you know, you have to read a bill three times, so even a few bills coming through you have to have two days of readings, probably. And then a lot of Legislators, once they get there, don't want to go back to Pendleton and then be called back the next day. There's always the hope that things will move quickly, so the tendency is to get everybody down there and then not have anything for most of them to do.

CH: Have there been any memorable pieces of Legislation that have gotten through that weren't expected to get through during special session?

MOSSER: I don't think so. A little thing like cleaning up that school district bond issue, that's not too hard to get through, it doesn't hurt anybody, none of the other Legislators really care much about it. But there's always a fear that it will either end up being very partisan, and that's frequently the case, or that somebody will try to sneak something through.

CH: You don't recall any cases where somebody snuck something...

MOSSER: Not really significant, no.

CH: So how long was that session, that special session, in 1957?

MOSSER: I don't have my journal here. My guess is that it was probably two weeks, something like that.

CH: Is that an expensive addition to the budget to have the Legislators there for two weeks?

MOSSER: It depends. Today, I don't think it would be significant in the three billion dollar, four billion dollar state budget. In those days when the budget was maybe a tenth that size — but then they didn't pay anybody very much so it didn't make much difference, I don't think. Legislative salaries were frequently something that was raised, more in the 1963 and 1965 session, I think, when we were there to cut budgets. Then there was a lot of talk about 'we ought to cut Legislators' salaries,' and that became a partisan issue.

CH: Partisan in which way?

MOSSER: Well, in 1963 the Democrats had put through a Legislative salary increase in the regular session, and they controlled both the House and the Senate, and so in the 1963 special session it was the Republicans sniping at the Democrats for raising Legislators' salaries when we were cutting all these other budgets and we ought to cut the Legislators' salaries back to where they had been before.

CH: And the Democrats countered in what way?

MOSSER: They just bottled up the bill and refused to vote on it.

CH: So they wanted to raise and the Republicans wanted to cut.

MOSSER: Well, they already had raised in the regular session, and at that point we were saying it ought to be cut back and they blocked that by just not letting the bill get to the floor, as I recall it.

CH: Are the special sessions usually in the fall?

MOSSER: Yeah, usually — frequently they come about because — oh, 1957 it was just the revenue collections were obviously running so far ahead of what they thought they were going to be that they were building a huge surplus. They still could have probably gotten away with not cutting them, but the Democrats were afraid that if they didn't cut them then they'd lose the next election, so they had a special session to cut them. I think in 1963 there was a something — a ballot measure had failed, been voted down, that was supposed to provide the revenue, the tax increase for — and that left the budget out of balance so the governor had to call a special session to rebalance the budget. I think 1965 was about the same thing, too, another tax measure had failed.

CH: You had mentioned last time about some of the reasons why you left between the sessions from — after the 1957 session and before the 1963 session. You mentioned building your house and your family and your law firm. What were your reasons for wanting to return to the Legislature in 1963?

MOSSER: Well, by then I had built the house, built it in 1959, the kids were all in school by now, the Supreme Court had decided all the labor law that had been my main focus for half a dozen years, and I had made some money and I was bored, so I ran.

CH: What was that like? Were you running against an incumbent at the time?

MOSSER: Well again, we were still running at large in the county. As I recall, there were probably five or six candidates in the primary for three Legislative seats. Once the three had been determined we sort of ran as a team.

CH: Who were the others on that team?

MOSSER: Bob Jones and Vic Atiyeh. Vic Atiyeh was an incumbent, Bob Jones was running for the first time, I was rerunning. It seems to me there was [Elwin Paxson?] and Hollie Pihl, at least. I'm trying to think whether we had four seats at that time. I don't think so, I think it was just the three of us.

CH: What had Vic Atiyeh come in at that point?

MOSSER: I had nominated — I went out and introduced Vic at the 1959 central committee meeting, told them I was not — 1958, it must have been, I was not going to run. He ran in 1958 and was in the Legislature, then, until he ran for governor successfully in, what, 1978? 20 years.



CH: So was Bob Jones — he was a Republican, then, too?

MOSSER: Yeah. Somewhere here I have a brochure that we all three ran together on.

CH: [Looking at brochure] Oh, yeah. Basically what were your main objectives for the three of you?

MOSSER: We talked about property tax relief, everybody always talked about property tax relief, promoting the graduate and research center in Washington County, Tualatin Valley project irrigation, job opportunities for youth, education, highway safety, local government. Sort of just a good government campaign with a few local projects thrown in.

CH: When you were nominated for that at large, were there other — was anybody else that had been an incumbent excluded, voted out, in essence?

MOSSER: That is a good question, and somewhere I've probably got the election results...

[Tape stops]

Of us who had been in the, oh, I think from something like 1955 through the 1961 session, did not run again. I think Arthur Ireland ran for the Senate. So I don't think there was any incumbent that was put out. I see the ballot here and there were, what, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight candidates running for three seats.

CH: Were you still pretty well known at that time?

MOSSER: I think so. Washington County is really kind of amazing. The population, 'A', expands enormously and, 'B', turns over. I would guess that at least half the voters were new voters since I had last run.

CH: Boy, that's quite a turnover.

MOSSER: Well, you know, people die, they move back and forth and out of the county, but mostly the population had probably grown by 30%, at least, in six years.

CH: Had you done anything politically in the intervening years between the 1957 Legislature and the 1963 Legislature?

MOSSER: I had been active in the Beaverton district consolidation, getting 13 elementary districts merged into the union high school as a single district. I had been active in a recall of two school directors who were opposing junior high schools and some of the other things that I wanted to get done in the school district. I had supported the formation of the Tualatin Valley Recreation District, though I wasn't a leader in that campaign but I was active. So I guess I'd done some things to keep active but I hadn't been around campaigning all the time.

CH: Before you decided to run did you contact these other people that you eventually ran with, Vic Atiyeh or Bob Jones? Did you consult anyone?

MOSSER: No, not really. I probably let Vic know that I was going to run. I didn't really know any of the other people that well that were in the race. Ed [Gearin?], I guess, had been the county chairman, at least that's my recollection, and I knew him but I didn't know him well.

CH: By what margin did you win? Was it a close election or were you...

MOSSER: I was third. Vic, I think, ran first and Bob Jones second. Again, I had sort of a minimal campaign, spent no money to speak of, made some speeches.

CH: What is this poster here?

MOSSER: This is a poster — I had two of them. This one shows Superman and the other one was a warm, fuzzy puppy, I think. 'Happiness is Mosser for state representative,' and this is 'get real action, Mosser for-' But what these did, I made a speech on how silly everybody — everybody was starting to use billboards and signs and I made a speech on how stupid this was and how these really told nobody anything about a candidate and I held up my two posters and got my picture on the front page of the *Hillsboro Argus* and a long story on my speech. That's the whole purpose, free publicity instead of paying for a thousand lawn signs, or something.

CH: And that's what you were anticipating with that?

MOSSER: Yeah.

CH: Any other notable campaign strategies or tactics that you used that you can recall?

MOSSER: Somewhere, but I haven't found them, I had — I gave a different speech probably five or six times. There was a Beaverton club that was similar to this Portland City Club that met once a week to discuss political issues or public affairs issues and had guest speakers, there was, again, the Lions and Rotaries, and whatnot, but basically I probably had five or six themes. I was still talking about school issues, I'm sure, sewers were beginning to be a big need in Washington County then.

CH: You were trying to get the state help on those things?

MOSSER: Yes. Basically, I think I was urging a state bond issue to create funds that could be used at the local level to build sewers and get a — one of the problems, there were all these small sewer districts, among other things, and they had very low or no bond ratings. If they put through a 600 thousand dollar issue, the legal work and bond underwriting fees were almost as large as for a 60 million dollar issue, and it just wasn't economic to do things in that fashion. This was shortly after the Cuban missile crisis and civil defense was one of the things I remember talking about.

CH: What was your point of view on that?

MOSSER: Well I thought that we had an absurd program and that probably something ought to be done to create a sensible program out of it. I've forgotten what I was advocating.

CH: I remember that coming up later on in the Legislature, didn't it, in the 1963 Legislature...

MOSSER: Yeah.

CH: And wasn't there some conflict there with Hatfield in regards to that?

MOSSER: I wouldn't be surprised.

CH: In 1963 I notice that Governor Hatfield slashed the civil defense program, and that made national news at the time.

MOSSER: That's quite probable.

CH: Do you recall any of the issues surrounding that?

MOSSER: Well, we had these stockpiles of stale things sitting around in schools and the basements of buildings, as I recall. The shelter program was almost totally ineffective. There were a few real shelters. I actually had built one in my own house.

CH: A fallout shelter, bomb shelter?

MOSSER: Mine was more than just fallout, it was blast and fallout. But that was very rare. There were almost none of them that were worth anything. And, oh, every office holder was supposed to — and we did, appoint five alternates to serve in case we were killed in a bomb attack. There were all these crazy things going on but none of it was very effective.

CH: Maybe you could recall a little bit the events around the Cuban missile crisis and how that affected you and your family and your constituents and fellow Legislators.

MOSSER: It was a real crisis in the sense that people were really frightened by it and that they actually did send missiles to Cuba, which — I think for the first time since the bomb had been dropped there was a real focus on the danger of nuclear war in the early 1960s. It faded pretty rapidly but for at least two or three years people were concerned, were talking about building shelters and organizing civil defense.

CH: And you were involved in that effort in the community at large, or within your district?

MOSSER: Not really. I just felt that none of the community stuff was at all effective and that we either ought to have an effective program or none at all, probably.

CH: Coming back to the Legislature in 1963, what were the differences, what changes had you seen in the Legislature from the time you left, between 1959 and 1963?

MOSSER: Not a lot. The Democrats were more experienced, as I said, back in 1957 was the first time they had been in power for half a century, practically. Now they had some experienced leadership. There had been some turnover, Bob Duncan, who was one of the leaders in 1957, had gone on to Congress. But basically the Senate was still kind of a coalition government, as it had been back in 1957, the Democrats nominally, at least, in control but in fact sort of a coalition of conservative Democrats and Republicans dominating things. The pay was now 100 dollars a month instead of 50 dollars a month. There was one new staff which I quickly learned to use. That was the Legislative fiscal staff, a very capable staff that worked with Ways and Means.

CH: And you worked on that committee, is that right?

MOSSER: Yes, I was appointed to Ways and Means. Bob Duncan had told Clarence Barton that he thought I would be a good Republican for that and Clarence appointed me. That was really the focus of the session for me was Ways and Means. I threw in a lot of tax bills, which again there was a — the governor had a net receipts proposal that was to raise 60 million. There was a controversy between the House and the Senate as to whether it should be a sales tax or an income tax. Finally an income tax passed but it was not the governor's proposal. It was referred to a vote and I don't think anybody campaigned very hard for it and it was voted down. So then we had to come back and cut 50, 60 million [dollars] out of the budget.

CH: That must have been a very arduous process, then, to come up with that kind of money.

MOSSER: Well, you know, there's only a few places that you can get that much. There's welfare and education, and that's where most of it came from. But, actually, that — this was the special session of 1963 and the governor gave a detailed list of where every budget was going to be cut. A lot of it came out of a building program for higher education, but there must have been 50 or 60 agencies that he was cutting to raise the money. Most of the Legislators just wanted to give the governor carte blanche to cut anything he wanted to cut and go home and I, from the first day of the session, and a few other people, argued that that was unconstitutional, that the Legislature controlled the purse and appropriate, that you couldn't give the budget power to the governor. There was one other big issue in that special session. The governor, at the same time he was promoting slashing all these budgets, wanted to spend three million dollars to buy the Boardman bombing range for his space-age industrial park which was going to be leased to Boeing. It was very hard to get the Legislators to say that they were going to spend this money essentially for Boeing when they were cutting all the schools and welfare and health programs, and everything else.

CH: But Boeing did get that.

MOSSER: Yes, but in the end I proposed that we use the profits from the veterans' fund and invest those in Boardman as an asset of the veterans' fund. That sort of pleased everybody because they didn't have to slash anymore budgets to come up with the three million dollars. Anyway, finally the attorney general, I think, did rule that just giving the governor the power to cut the budget was unconstitutional and I ended up as a subcommittee of one to write the budget bill and the Boardman bill.

CH: How did this end up being dumped in your lap?

MOSSER: I was on Ways and Means and I had come up with both positions, essentially, and I got along well with everybody in Ways and Means. A large part of the work had to

be done by technical staff, but I and a draftsman from Legislative counsel and a draftsman from — a budget...

**[End of Tape 5, Side 1]**



**Tape 5, Side 2**  
**1990 November 29**

CH: This is an interview with John Mosser. This is Tape 5, Side B.

The staff that you had mentioned for some of these committees for Ways and Means and the Budget Analyst, who appointed these? How did they get on?

MOSSER: They were chosen by the Legislature, not by the governor or executive branch. Essentially what would happen is that there would be a committee — for example there was a Legislative counsel committee which usually had some lawyers and Legislative leaders from each House on it, and they would pick one person the Legislative counsel, who would then build his staff. With the Legislative fiscal, again it was probably either the emergency board — I think probably the staff would have been authorized by a regular session, then picked by the emergency board, which included the president and speaker and the heads of Ways and Means during the regular session and a selection of other leaders from both parties. So you had — and they would pick, again, one person, the Legislative fiscal officer who would then pick a staff.

CH: I see. What other things did the emergency board deal with?

MOSSER: The emergency board is the Legislature when the Legislature is not in session. It usually has a pot of money, how big, depends. It can be, these days, tens of millions of dollars, in those days it was a few millions of dollars, which they can allocate to meet unforeseen spending needs during an interim when the Legislature is not in session. In addition, they have what amounts to considerably broader power to shift money. If money has been appropriated, say, to the Board of Higher Education, they can shift from buildings to salary to — they can juggle the money within that budget to a considerable extent. There are some rules that restrict what they can do somewhat. It's frequently been controversial. The people who don't sit on the emergency board think it has far too much power.

CH: Does the money usually get spent?

MOSSER: Yes. In fact, usually there are more requests than there is money, by far.

CH: It seems like people on that board would try to get their own pet projects through there. How is that kept from happening?

MOSSER: Well, there isn't enough money for a lot of pet projects. You get into things like the prison runs — budget needs more money simply because the jails are bulging. You get into a recession and more people are showing up on the welfare rolls than they budgeted for. There are some very real needs that have to be met, and usually there's enough people around to keep much log rolling from there. There is some that goes on in the general session as well as — and this can vary. You're from the Historical Society. I can remember Dan Thiel raiding the highway fund for some money for the Historical Society saying, "Why, they sloop that much from the pail just going back across the street to the highway building from the committee". [Both laugh] Willie Holmstrom from Astoria, I think his whole career was devoted to getting the Astoria bridge built back in his early sessions, and he worked on practically nothing else. He would trade his vote for any other project if you vote for his bridge, and eventually he got it through.

CH: Were these decisions by the emergency board usually one-shot deals, something needs a shot of cash at this point and...

MOSSER: The emergency board usually meets about once a month to consider requests.

CH: Only when the Legislature's out?

MOSSER: Only when the Legislature's out. It has no authority at all when the Legislature is in session. Usually the requests initiate from the governor, the executive department. It's fairly rare to be initiated in the committee itself. They're usually initiated by the governor. The governor then sort of sits on the state agencies and, through the director of finance or head of the executive department, tells which agencies can go, can present a case to — that's the way the governor keeps control of the budget and which agencies are getting money. The emergency board sometimes grants, sometimes turns down, sometimes modifies the requests that they do get.

CH: Were you chair of any committee?

MOSSER: In 1963, no.

CH: But in 1965 you did?

MOSSER: In 1965 I chaired, I think, the subcommittee on general government in the Ways and Means Committee. In 1963 that committee consisted of Debbs Potts, chairman, myself and Sid Leiken. We got the budgets for, oh, all of general government, secretary of state, state treasurer, all the little agencies, boards and commissions, the governor's budget, and it was — we met every morning at seven, I think. Maybe it was eight until late in the session, and then it was seven. We met in a room that was about nine by 15 feet. There was room for the three of us, the person who was presenting the budget for the governor, and the Legislative staff person who was assigned to review and comment on that budget, and maybe four or five other people. If you had 10 people, they were standing against the walls. It was a very harmonious committee. I made the motion, Sid Leiken seconded it, Debbs Potts said it was unanimous. We'd discuss — I knew pretty much what they were going to support and not support, but I don't think we ever had a disagreement in the entire session. Everything was that way. My motion, Leiken second, Potts saying it's unanimous.

CH: You exercised a lot of authority, then, didn't you, in that committee?

MOSSER: Yeah. There was a subcommittee on highways in that session, a subcommittee on education, I also was on that, and a subcommittee on welfare and human resources, essentially. Except for the education, human resource-welfare, and highway budgets we had everything else, I think, in our committee.

CH: How would you characterize the relationship between the Legislature in 1963 and governor Hatfield?

MOSSER: Strained. Hatfield had a sort of peculiar style. I think he had a consistent, coherent philosophy of government, but it was very much separation of powers. He proposed and the Legislature had to decide what to do, but he didn't really lobby the Legislature, meet with individual Legislators, to the extent that other governors I've seen did. He pretty much just dumped his program in the Legislators' lap and then maybe made some comments to the press every now and then, but didn't effectively try to get his program through. In that sense I think he was an ineffective governor. In other ways I think he was one of the best governors we've had, but in his relationship to the Legislature I think he was essentially pretty poor.

CH: Did he have somebody that acted as a liaison between the governor's office and the...

MOSSER: The staff that he had was not nearly as large as today's governors' staffs, but it was absolutely topnotch. He had Freeman Holmer, who ran what's now the executive department, the budget and personnel stuff, Warren Nunn was his executive assistant, and Travis Cross was his press secretary and liaison, to some extent. All three of those played some role with the Legislature and they all got along well with the Legislature. But, you

know, there were times when he'd just tell them not to say anything, or not to go — I can remember, in 1965 construct — well, actually in that special session, when I was criticizing the Legislature giving him all the power. I'd say, "I don't disagree at all with the cuts he's made. I'm perfectly willing to have the Legislature vote exactly for the cuts the governor's proposed, but we ought to do it." I got along well with Warren Nunn and Travis Cross. We went out and drank together occasionally and certainly kidded around a lot, but their position was quite different than mine on that issue.

CH: The relationship between the governor and the Legislature is sort of — it waxes and wanes, and especially with authority and how much power a governor does have at any one time, so how would you characterize that with Hatfield's reign?

MOSSER: I would say that — well, of the governors I've known, Tom McCall was the best at dealing with the Legislature, and probably Neil Goldschmidt comes in second. I think Atiyeh got along well with the Legislature but mainly it's because he let the Legislature dominate him. His first session they ran away with his programs. I thought that Bob Holmes and Straub were only moderately effective with the Legislature. They both understood it, they had both been in the Legislature, but they simply didn't present their programs as effectively, partly because their staffs weren't as good. Hatfield I didn't think was effective but for the entirely different reason. As I said, I think he had probably the best staff of any governor I've ever seen, but he had a separation of powers philosophy and an aloofness that kept him from being effective in dealing with the Legislature.

CH: In what way was McCall better at that?

MOSSER: Oh, he was so warm, everybody was his friend. But he had a strong program and he worked it, you know. He'd butter up anybody to get what he wanted.

CH: Did he come down to the Legislature very often?

MOSSER: He ate in the coffee shop, at least early in his term. I think later things changed somewhat, but early he was down in the press room, he was down in the coffee shop, he'd have Legislators over a few at a time to his house for dinner or cocktails. He was just very warm, social, very active, and keenly interested in his programs and pushing them all the time.

CH: Did he push his programs on the floor of the Legislature as well?

MOSSER: No. No governor really — oh, you know, you make a speech at the start of the session and maybe one or two special addresses, but it's sort of an unwritten rule that the governor does not enter the House or the Senate.

CH: For what reason?

MOSSER: Separation of powers. I don't know. You know, he comes only by what — for example, to make his initial speech. He is invited...

CH: The state of the state?

MOSSER: Yes. The two bodies meet, they appoint a committee to go invite the governor to come and speak to them, they escort him in and they escort him out. No, he never comes down on the floor of the House and lobbies somebody.

CH: I'm thinking not so much in terms of lobbying somebody but in terms of addressing some piece of Legislation that may be his before the floor at the time to argue on behalf of it or...

MOSSER: Oh, no, no. Nobody but a Legislator speaks on the floor except by invitation of the body, and then it's always a formal address.

CH: I see. There's been a lot mentioned about the Mosser plans when you were in the Legislature. What basically were those? What did they cover? I understand there were a lot of them.

MOSSER: Well, let's see. There was basic school support, school bonding, local government election law, Legislative fiscal committee, law improvement committee, metropolitan study commissions, congressional redistricting, an ungraduated five percent income tax, a unified higher education building program, extended school year, Boardman financing, emergency budget cuts, property tax relief, highway fund advances for flood damage restoration, early salary level determinations, competitive academic salaries, awards for outstanding teachers, summer session incentives, urban arterials program, urban marine parks, student loan program, hotel-motel tax, and an inventory tax for [inaudible]. [Both laugh] Those were the 1963-1965 ones.

CH: Where do we begin? I know that a primary concern of yours was in education, so maybe that is a good place to begin. Governor Hatfield had strong feelings about higher education. How did your philosophy and his coincide or differ, do you recall?

MOSSER: Well, I think we both were in favor of higher education in seeking money for it. We disagreed on details to some extent. I can remember one year when he had proposed a certain ranking of — the Board of Higher Education had ranked building program, you know, this building and this building in this order, on the various campuses. Hatfield changed that order, and I think I voted to reinstate the Board of Higher Education's priorities. I know that he had knocked out the library addition at the University of Oregon and I know that I put it back in. He was generally very critical of the medical school, surprisingly, with all the money he's pumped into it now. He thought they were an elitist

group. And the Primate Center was under the medical school then. He thought the guy who ran that was just terrible, that they had no respect for the purse. Now he's pumping hundreds of millions of dollars up there on the hill. But then he really was quite critical of them as kind of an elitist bunch that weren't willing to listen to anybody else in government.

CH: What made him turn around?

MOSSER: I haven't any idea. I've never talked to him about it. I'm just commenting that that was one of the — and since the Primate Center was in Washington County, it was one of the places where I was trying to protect the program out there and he was trying to get rid of the director and to limit the program.

CH: Why was that?

MOSSER: I was never quite sure, but somehow that guy had rubbed him wrong. The only comment he ever made to me was that these people are just an out of control bunch and he was trying to bring them back into control.

CH: What about on school financing? In 1963 didn't Governor Hatfield have a dispute with the Ways and Means Committee about trimming higher education, calling it a meat-cleaver approach?

MOSSER: Yes. I can remember we all got meat-cleaver tie clips after that. [Both laugh]

CH: Whose idea was that? Tony Yturri?

MOSSER: No. He wasn't on the — you know, these things are sort of spontaneous. There was one time when we were all down at Klamath Falls. Among other things, Ways and Means traveled around to all the institutions, all the prisons, all the higher education



campuses, and hospitals, and whatnot. We were down in Klamath Falls looking at OTI, it was then, and something else, and we went out drinking afterwards in this pretty rough bar and I saw this one cowboy come in and he just danced up a storm but he kept his black hat on all the time. So I was going to steal his black hat when finally — he finally got so hot he hung up his coat and his hat and I was going to steal it.

CH: Why?

MOSSER: Well, it just looked like a darn nice black hat. [Both laugh] They all persuade me that we'd all be killed if I did. The next day we were up at Bend and McKay went out, Senator McKay went out, and bought everybody a black hat, and from then on we were the black hats of the Ways and Means Committee. That was 1965, I think. In 1963, the governor said we were meat cleavers so we all got meat-cleaver tie clips.

CH: Do you still have your meat-cleaver tie clip?

MOSSER: I haven't seen it for a long time.

CH: This is something that should go to the Oregon Historical Society as a memorable item of history here.

MOSSER: Anyway, we were cutting budgets. Hatfield was promoting a big tax increase and we were trying to not spend as much money and not raise as much in taxes, as I recall. There was some feeling, I think, that we really knew a lot more about that budget than the governor did. We met three times a week for three hours looking at that budget, you know, hundreds of hours, and visited every campus, and so we thought there were areas that could be cut that he hadn't cut or that they hadn't cut.

CH: I understand that there was, in 1963, there was a dispute over at the Legislature not considering Governor Hatfield's combining of the Board of Education with Higher Education.

MOSSER: The governor had extensive government reorganization proposals in every session, creating a department of commerce, department of education that encompassed everything. Basically, complete government reorganization. He introduced it in 1963, none of it passed. He introduced it again in 1965, never came around to talk to anybody about any of it. Finally, near the end of the session we were — we still had the same three people. I was chairman this time and Debbs was just on the committee, and Sid Leiken were again the general government — we also had highway budget that time. But towards the end of that session I said, "You know, despite the fact that he doesn't really seem to want to do anything about it, I think some of his reorganization proposals are pretty good. Why don't we try one?" So we called Warne Nunn and said, "If you come down here we might pass out part of your reorganization plan." He and Travis and Freeman all showed up and we said, "We aren't going to pass the whole thing but we'd kind of like to try one phase of reorganization." So we talked a little and we voted to create the department of commerce, but it was entirely at the latest — you know, our committee that said 'let's do this,' instead of the governor beating on us to do it.

CH: That actually seems rather odd. Didn't Governor Hatfield have any Republican in the Legislature supporting his — as a sponsor of his Legislation? If he couldn't come down on the floor himself to talk about it, didn't he...

MOSSER: The bills were all introduced at the request of the governor, but it takes somebody pushing them and he hadn't lined up Senator Dokes or Representative Rowe, or anybody, to be the people who were pushing those bills.

CH: Isn't that a little unusual?

MOSSER: Well, as I said, he had this, you know, 'I propose and then it's your job to pass it.' A sort of philosophy that, to me, was not very effective.

CH: But even the federal government, you know, where you have the same kind of separation of powers, there's still — the president will line up people in his party to be able to push his — Bob Dole will push President Bush's program on such and such, you know, and that kind of thing. Wasn't there any effort in that?

MOSSER: Hatfield, as far as I could see, never made any effort to really pass his programs. He would, you know, if the Legislature started talking about something else, he would sometimes hold a press conference or be critical, or say the Ways and Means Committee were using meat cleavers if we were cutting his budget, or something, but he did not come down and affirmatively — or send his staff or have two or three key Legislators who were prepared to push his program.

CH: Nobody ever suggested that to him as a way of dealing with the Legislature?

MOSSER: I don't know whether anybody did or not, but he didn't do it.

CH: You were a, how should I say, a liberal Republican and so was Hatfield, to a certain extent. What kind of relationship did he have with people like yourselves in the party?

MOSSER: Very limited. He entertained the Legislature, usually in two or three batches, early in each session for a buffet dinner, or something of that kind, at his house, and I think once he told me that he was — I was fighting to get something done for higher education that he wanted done, and he told me he was glad I was doing it, but he never asked me to do it.

**[End of Tape 5, Side 2]**

**Tape 6, Side 1**  
**1990 November 29**

CH: This is an interview with John Mosser in his home in Portland, Oregon. The interviewer for the Oregon Historical Society is Clark Hansen. The date is November 29<sup>th</sup>, 1990, and this is Tape 6, Side A.

Just to go back here a little ways, we were last talking about Governor Hatfield and I was wondering what other education issues came before the Legislature during the 1963 and the 1965 sessions.

MOSSER: Higher education enrollments were expanding rapidly. This was still the baby boom coming through the elementary and high schools and so there were large demands for increased education budgets at all levels. There were proposals to reorganize education, proposals to change the funding. In 1963 we did again change basic school support. One of them was my bill. I just was trying to get a clear picture for people of what we were. The prior formula had appropriated so much for students between the ages of four and 20 and I said, "There aren't kids between four and 20 in school, there are kids between five and 18, so why talk about four to 20. It just looks like we're appropriating less money per child than we are." They talked about average daily membership instead of attendance, which tended to distort, again, the figures of what was being appropriated. So along with trying to get increased appropriations I was trying to get more intelligent appropriations. I thought the county school program had not done what we'd hoped it would do and was distorting, again, educational funding, so we largely eliminated the county role except for at the service district aspect to cover a few things that individual districts couldn't. In higher education we were trying to encourage teaching instead of just research. We were trying to make them plan from one campus to another, not just try to have everything everywhere. So there were a lot of issues in education all the way through.

CH: What were the Mosser awards?

MOSSER: That was 1965. We had saved some money over the governor's proposal by changing the student-teacher ratio slightly. I wanted to put that money back into increased salaries because I felt we needed to raise the average level of faculty salaries to get better teachers and keep good teachers. I couldn't get anybody on the committee to go along with that idea, but I knew that one of the things they had been carping about was the fact that too much teaching was done by graduate assistants and too much emphasis on research, and whatnot, so I got 600 thousand [dollars] appropriated for awards for teaching. They had to be for undergraduate teaching, which tried to get some of the better teachers to pay some attention to undergraduate teaching. They were basically to be given on the basis of student evaluations, and that's where the faculty got up in arms. The University of Oregon's faculty just turned it down flat, just let the money go. The other schools accepted it but carped about it. But that was a program that I think was effective, and a great many teachers later told me that it had made a difference in their careers when they had received those awards.

CH: Because they got recognition?

MOSSER: They got recognition, and a thousand dollars was not an insignificant amount of money. But basically it was recognition that they had not gotten in the past.

CH: What was the appropriation for that fund?

MOSSER: 600 thousand. This could have meant 300 teachers a year. It was not a small program. In fact, maybe if it had only been 30 it would have raised so much ire.

CH: So there were basically 600 teachers, then, that would have gotten those awards each year.

MOSSER: Yes.

CH: Were there other education issues and school financing issues that you dealt with during that term?

MOSSER: Well, I think I comment...

CH: Portland State University.

MOSSER: That one of the mistakes that had been made in the state, probably after World War II, was to start rebuilding Oregon State University, where all the buildings were old and falling down, instead of creating a university in the metropolitan area. So during this period of the 1960s, there were bills in every session with Legislators from the Portland area trying to push the development of Portland State, to get it a campus, to get it programs, to make it a university. The thing that I did probably that had the greatest impact of my programs was, they came in in 1965 and wanted something like 100 thousand to study and develop an application for an urban renewal grant to buy some property there, and I felt strongly, because I knew what was happening to development, that if you waited for a study you were never going to get a campus because too many other buildings would have been built or the price would have gotten too high. So I asked them how much money it would take to — with the urban renewal money that was available from the federal government, how much local money it would take to buy a campus. They said six million, and that's what we appropriated.

CH: That was in the 1963 or 1965...

MOSSER: That's 1965.

CH: Other issues dealing with education?

MOSSER: Oh, the community colleges really got their big push after — starting in 1967, I think, but they were being talked about, and it was apparent to those of us on Ways and Means that we had as many universities as California but no community colleges and that our structure was upside down. This was one of the problems that needed to be corrected. So we were starting in the Legislature to push that but, as I say, I really think that the major push came after 1965, 1967, 1969.

CH: How did your education agenda, or the Legislature's agenda, differ from Governor Hatfield's at the time?

MOSSER: I think more in detail than in anything else. Hatfield generally was pushing money for education, particularly, I think, in the 1963 session, money for faculty salaries. We made cuts in some areas where he had proposed spending more and we spent more in some areas than he had proposed. I think it was more detail than general conflict between the Legislature and Hatfield on education.

CH: He was generally supportive of the goals...

MOSSER: Yes.

CH: You were trying to accomplish?

MOSSER: He was critical of the medical school, as I said, where now that seems to be one of the things he pushes. He was, I think, a little more trying to find some way to help the private schools, and after all he had come from a faculty administrative position at Willamette University, than the Legislators who were concentrating more on programs for the public schools. But in general he favored education and the Legislature favored education and there were a lot of needs in education at all levels.



CH: Did property tax measures come up during this time, too?

MOSSER: Yes. You know, property tax has been obviously high, obviously troublesome for a long time. The first one and a half percent proposal...

[Tape stops]

CH: You were talking about the...

MOSSER: Yes. The first one and a half percent measure was proposed [by] Clyde Brummel, whose name I saw in the paper just the other day, some story about him and the tax payers union. Anyway, he was the leader, back then, of the one and a half. It was an impossible measure in the sense that it just said property taxes have to be one and a half percent. It didn't say how you got there, there was no formula for getting there. Of course, property taxes generally were two, three percent all around the state except in some of the rural areas. I first fought it as a — by introducing — filing a case in the supreme court to challenge the ballot title and succeeded in getting the ballot title changed.

CH: What was the controversy over that?

MOSSER: The attorney general wrote ballot titles in those days.

CH: Who was the attorney general at this time?

MOSSER: Bob Thornton. Anyway, McCall was secretary of state and he had an election function, so I sued the two of them. They'd come up with a ballot title that said 'constitutional amendment limiting property taxes. Purpose: limits property taxes to one and a half percent of market value, accepts voter-approved local improvements and school expenditures, repeals six percent limitation on property tax increases.' It didn't really do

those things, so I — it was totally eliminating the present system and proposing an entirely new system. Anyway, they eventually came up with a different ballot title, which I had proposed. But in the meantime I was out speaking on television and various organizations around, heading a citizens campaign to defeat the measure, and I remember that I used to have fun — in addition to Clyde Brummel, who had invested in a lot of property on the east side, there was another realtor, I can't remember his name now, and I used to get up and read all the real estate ads. 'Near public park, next to tennis courts, best school district,' and I said, "What do you sell houses with? You sell them government amenities that you're trying to cripple with your damn measure."

Anyway, it was narrowly defeated that year. One of the things that I did after the 1965 session was head a Legislative fiscal committee which came up with a detailed study of how you could possibly go about limiting property taxes between competing government entities if one of these measures did pass, because it had come very close that time and we knew there was going to be another one on the ballot again. In the 1965 session the Republicans had gained control of the House and one of the things we did was — I had a program for property tax relief, which instead of — you know, if you appropriate money to basic school support, this is a form of property tax relief, but we wanted something that went on the tax payers' bill and said, 'this is what your property taxes were that you voted for, here's some money the Legislature gave you, here's your net bill,' to get a little credit for the fact that we were trying to cut property taxes. So we passed that program in the 1965 session. I've forgotten how much money we put into it. It wasn't huge.

CH: Was there any attempt to find other means of financing state government, or school financing?

MOSSER: Oh, sure there were. I'd have to look at my notes, but my guess is, you know, Hatfield had had the net receipts tax in 1963 that got voted down, I think there was a sales tax proposal in 1965 that got voted down, when McCall got in in 1967 we first had an income

tax proposal, and then three years later he had a sales tax proposal. It's just been an endless — for all the time from the early 1960s on people have been trying to get something to relieve property taxes. In fact, in 1956 there had been a study called the [Slye?] Report. Professor [Slye?], from Princeton University, had proposed the third leg of the stool, the sales tax, which the Republicans were in favor of, but in the meantime the Democrats had captured the Legislature and the governorship so it never got anywhere.

CH: Well, how has that issue evolved now? Today, where we have...

MOSSER: Well, it's essentially...

CH: Just passed a limitation?

MOSSER: There's no question that property taxes are a real burden for some people and that they have grown very fast. I can remember that by the time I moved out of the house I built in 1959 my property taxes were more than my entire mortgage including property taxes had been when I built the house. That's not atypical. It was a period of 25 years in which there had been a lot of inflation, though. And really we have programs with the home owners' and renters' property tax relief program which says that people of low income get rebated money from the income tax, we have programs where senior citizens can defer taxes until their death, even if it's for 30 years after, but they don't — so really if there's any burden, it's going to be that their kids don't inherit a house free and clear, they inherit one with a lien for some property taxes. But there is still this feeling, I think, that property taxes are too high, that they are the wrong way to pay for education.

And now that [Ballot] Measure 5 has passed, this is not as bad as many of the earlier one and a half's in that it comes in somewhat gradually, gives people a little time to figure it out, but it also has some quirks. There are areas of the state that will get no relief at all for three years whereas others will get a large relief fast because there are areas where the taxes for education, which start cutting down next year, aren't high enough to be cut

for three years. And it's taken away a lot of local control as far as city, county, special district governments are concerned, which to me is different. Again, these are amenities that benefit property, that people have wanted, and I think that people are not going to be happy with what they found they did on that program, but I doubt if they're ready to pass a sales tax and I doubt if people are going to increase the income tax. So, it's going to be a period, I think, of — maybe taxes of a variety of small ways that don't get challenged and referred, probably some increases in corporation and utility taxes, probably some liquor and price increases and cigarette tax increases, nibbling at the problem, but three or four years down the road the problem's going to be too big for nibbling to work, I think.

CH: Do you think they'll be forced to pass a sales tax then?

MOSSER: I don't know that you can force people to pass a sales tax. And in a way, the sales tax has some built-in costs now that it didn't used to have because you can't deduct it on your federal income tax return anymore. So the difference between raising a billion in sales tax that you can't deduct and a billion in property tax that you can deduct is probably 75 million dollars in this state, at least. Extra taxes you've got to pay.

CH: What about with income taxes, then? Raising the income taxes?

MOSSER: I think there is room to raise the income tax some. It's lower now than certainly it was in 1957 or 1963, but it is one of the higher income taxes in the nation. The unfortunate thing is that people who establish businesses and can move those businesses — a lot of business now is quite mobile. High-tech business, Nike-type stuff where their factories are all in the Orient anyway, those people can have their headquarters and their advertising agency and run their business from almost anywhere in the country, and you run up one form of tax that hits them too hard and they move away. I actually had one of my proposals in 1963 was for a flat five percent income tax and I proved that it would collect more money than the graduated tax and was more graduated than the graduated tax, so

you can do some things economically that are not acceptable politically, I guess is what I'd have to say. If we want to encourage energy conservation, you can raise an enormous amount of money with a penny a kilowatt hour of electricity and so much a therm on natural gas and encourage conservation at the same time.

CH: You've been involved with these issues for a good part of your adult life. Do you have sort of an idea, a plan of how the state might go about restructuring things so that they could have a more equitable system and be able to not rely so heavily on property taxes?

MOSSER: I thought both McCall's plans, both the income tax plan that he and I put together and the sales tax plan that Bob Davis and he put together later were excellent. I think the sales tax that was referred to the people in 1965 that had offsets for low income, income tax rebates for low income people, and various things, was about as equitable as you could get but the voters didn't like them. So it isn't a question of whether you can design a better program or not, it's a question of whether you can sell it to the voters. Basically, I think it's the fear of the unknown. Whatever we've got is better than anything new. Washington will never pass an income tax, Oregon will never pass a sales tax.

CH: In terms of being unknown, though, Measure 5 did pass and that certainly is a...

MOSSER: Ah, but that was just saying 'do something.' It didn't say what. We had a preference ballot on the mark in the spring and nothing got more than about 30%.

CH: Well, we'll see, won't we. Are there any other education issues that you can recall that you were dealing with in the 1963 and 1965 Legislature?

MOSSER: Building programs were big, at the higher education level particularly.

CH: I notice that in 1965 the Legislature enacted a ban on higher education employees from serving in the Legislature. Do you recall the debate over that?

MOSSER: I know there was a feeling that there were too many educators, generally, running for the Legislature and grinding, in effect, their own ax and we didn't — I think the sentiment was that you didn't want a lot of state employees, which is what they were at the higher education level, sitting in the Legislature and trying to up their salaries.

CH: Was the measure also aimed at other state employees as well, or just the higher education employees?

MOSSER: I think it was mainly aimed at higher education. [Phone rings] You certainly have higher education people in now.

**[End of Tape 6, Side 1]**

**Tape 6, Side 2**  
**1990 November 29**

CH: This is an interview with John Mosser. This is Tape 6, Side B.

Were there other areas of education that you dealt with?

MOSSER: Oh, there were administrative things. There was always talk of whether the chancellor should be moved to Salem to get him out from under the thumb of the University of Oregon faculty and get him more related to state government and less related to education. I always felt that would be a mistake because, although there is the feeling that he's too close to the faculty of one university by living in Eugene, it is his — the fact that the universities at least perceive him as being on their side rather than on the state government's side that gives him his effectiveness. I think if you tried to make him a state bureaucrat, why, he would really lose his effectiveness as a chancellor, and so I've always opposed moving him to Salem. Actually, I think the present chancellor is slowly establishing offices for himself on all the campuses and probably going to be more effective because of it.

CH: What is the chancellor's role in the other universities, then? Does he...

MOSSER: Well, the chancellor is in charge of all of the universities. He has a central staff that proposes the budget for higher education, the universities do not bring their own budgets to the Ways and Means Committee. He establishes common personnel policies, he meets with the Board of Higher Education. The college presidents are usually sitting there too, but...

[Tape stops]

CH: So you were just commenting on other things that you dealt with in the Legislature over education and school financing and...

MOSSER: I think we've covered most of it.

CH: We've talked somewhat about taxes, and I read about, in 1965, the...

MOSSER: In the 1965 session there was one other new program that came in.

CH: For education?

MOSSER: Yeah this was — I think the committee, Portland Schools Committee on Race and Education, finished its report in 1964, and I think in the 1965 session we started — I don't know what it was called — a disadvantaged child program, which was largely money for the Portland schools to start preschool programs and extra lunch and breakfast support for some of the disadvantaged kids, largely black kids.

CH: That was in 1965?

MOSSER: I think that was 1965.

CH: Anything else?

MOSSER: Well, that was the kind of thing where, if you did it, you took some money out of higher education, or something, because it didn't grow on trees, but there was that shift in emphasis, I can recall, trying to get early education.

CH: Also in 1965 I understand that the Legislature defeated a bill permitting — or, putting an emergency clause on tax bills. Do you recall anything about that? And...



MOSSER: You can't constitutionally put an emergency clause on tax bills. The constitution forbids it.

CH: That's probably the reason why it was defeated, then. [Both laugh] And thereby removing the threat of a referendum over the subject?

MOSSER: This is the thing that makes Oregon's problem with Ballot Measure 5 unique. We are the only state where the Legislature has no power to pass a tax that the people cannot refer. It's fine and dandy to say, in a constitution, we don't want any more property taxes than so much, but the fact is the Legislature does not have the power to put in any different program. I think we're the only state in the union that has no power to pass a tax. There is, I think, one state where they can pass it and it goes into effect for two years and then can be referred, but no other state, I think, that absolutely says every tax measure is subject to an easy referendum.

CH: Has that always been the case? How long has that been in effect?

MOSSER: I think it was part of the W. C. [Yurin?] Legislative package that brought in the initiative and the referendum in, what, 1916, somewhere back then.

CH: Do you see that as a fundamental flaw in the constitution that will have to be dealt with eventually?

MOSSER: I think it may prove to be a flaw. We'll see. You know, if the people are willing — get willing to pass another tax, or somehow the Legislature decides it can get along without a lot of the government programs that we have and the people will accept that, but it really — I think modern government is too complex to have everything decided by initiative and referendum. Money is the core of government. If you get to the point where

the people can pass a constitution saying we don't want any more taxes, then government stops.

CH: Are there any states that you've seen that have structures that are closer to the ideal that you think might work in Oregon?

MOSSER: Well of course, I believe in representative government as I think the founding fathers saw it, and as Mills outlined it in his political writings, which is that it is not a democracy, it is a representative government where the people's role is to select a representative who is then not there to take a poll of their views but to use his best judgment to decide what is correct Legislation and what is not. If they don't like it they vote him out of office, but they don't change his vote by recasting it every time. I think we have serious problems with the way we conduct elections and the role that money plays in them, and I think we have serious problems trying to run complex government too democratically and not by representative government.

CH: Do you think that's a problem for all states?

MOSSER: Well it's much more so in Oregon. I think the role of money in elections is pretty common throughout the country. I think there are a few states that have some things that are better than ours in that respect, but basically they've all got a problem. It hasn't been solved. I think there are ways it could be solved. Oregon was the first state to have the initiative and referendum and recall. I don't think the problem is probably as bad in many ways in Oregon as it is in California. I think, there, money plays a bigger role. Incumbents are much like incumbent congressmen that never get thrown out no matter what they do. They seem to have much more complex, much larger number of initiatives fought with much bigger money on their ballots than we do, so I'm not sure we have the worst problem, but we have a bad one.

CH: Are there other tax issues that came before the 1963 or 1965 Legislature that you recall?

MOSSER: Yeah there were — or at least there are money measures. Workmen's compensation was a big battle in many of those sessions, and that's a big expense for business. Highway taxes, gasoline versus trucks. Weight-mile tax is a common issue, certainly was in those days when we were building the interstate freeway.

CH: The 1965 Legislature worked on a three-way insurance system?

MOSSER: A three-way bill, yeah.

CH: How did that come into effect?

MOSSER: Well, there was a — as I recall we had a two-way system before that, which was either private insurance or the state industrial accident fund, the state insurance. The three-way system allowed both of those plus self-insurance for large corporations. It was a battle between large corporations and insurance companies, as much as anything else, plus a state bureaucracy. Labor versus management. It was a very messy battle.

CH: It's still seems to be a pretty messy battle. Those issues seem to be resurfacing.

MOSSER: They resurfaced — I don't know whether the thing that passed in the special session last year will solve it or not. It probably improved the program, but whether it solved it, I don't know. Some of the issues, we had a chiropractor in both the 1963 and 1965 sessions. I've forgotten his name. 'Doc,' we all called him. One of the things that he was constantly trying to do was get chiropractors eligible to treat patients for workmen's compensation and covered, Blue Cross and other insurance required to cover chiropractic

treatment. This last bill they revolted, some of the chiropractors who were making millions off the system.

CH: So I guess the pendulum swings.

MOSSER: It swings.

CH: In 1961 they had a timber tax solution. Were there other timber tax issues that came up at all in 1963 or 1965?

MOSSER: I don't recall ever fighting that battle while I was there. You have different systems east of the mountains than west of the mountains, and periodically I think maybe in one of those sessions there had been a bad fire which, as it did again a few years ago, drained the firefighting fund that's created partly out of those taxes, which required an increased assessment, but I don't recall it being a big issue in the sessions that I was in. I think it probably got settled in 1961 and pretty much went away for a while.

CH: You had mentioned before about the formation of the Department of Commerce. I understand that that was the only part of Governor Hatfield's government reorganization plan that was passed. Why is that? Was it just, like you were saying before, that he...

MOSSER: He never pushed it, and the bureaucracies all liked their existing structure, nobody wanted to be put under anybody else. Actually, the Department of Commerce was as much a con job as anything else [Inaudible] [Lueddemann?] sort of diplomatically brought them into the fold without — he didn't have much power over them in the bill that we passed, but a lot of the agencies that we put in there were boards and commissions that had part-time lobbyists as their executive secretaries, and not any efficient organization at all. Now, under Goldschmidt, they dismantled the Department of Commerce and created new departments. It changes all the time.

CH: So you don't see it, then, as a really significant development then in the state?

MOSSER: Well, it was a start, and under McCall a great deal of reorganization took place. You had the Department of Environmental Quality, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Human Services. A lot of reorganization took place under McCall.

CH: You talked before, in our last session, about the TB hospital being moved to Salem from the University of Oregon here in Portland. Were there other health care issues that you dealt with, that you can recall, in the 1963 or 1965 sessions?

MOSSER: I don't recall — the community mental health clinics were getting started in that period with some state funding. Actually, I think their big thing was probably later, probably under McCall, than in 1963-1965, but they were creating the clinics and I think the state funding really became significant under McCall. Dammasch Hospital I think was built — probably it was authorized in 1965, or something like that, and built after that. Mental health was one area that was receiving increased attention.

CH: Was that because of the Legislature or more because of Governor Hatfield?

MOSSER: I think — again I think the real push came under McCall. Hatfield invited [Meninger?] to address us but, really, in his aloof style, didn't push it. I don't think that a lot of money was ever appropriated or much done under Hatfield. It was an issue that he was concerned about, but he didn't effectively address it. The blind and deaf schools were issues. We were just at the start of how much main-streaming should be done with those people. It was common then that the blind went to the blind school and the deaf to the deaf school and that there weren't real programs out in the public schools. The blind school and Fairview were beginning to get — and I really suspect it's gotten worse — these terrible, multiple kids that are blind and deaf and malformed, just sort of hardly

recognizable as human beings, but they are. The 'how do you deal with those people' is a real problem.

CH: In the area of transportation you talked a little bit about state highway funds, and apparently that was a pretty big chunk of the budget, is that right?

MOSSER: It's a separate budget. This is the unique thing. It's a dedicated fund. Now, in those days you could pay for police, the state police were paid for out of the highway budget, and you could pay for parks, and the state park system was built and funded with the gas tax. It was in, I think, 1979 that the highway fund became totally dedicated to highways and not to parks or police or adjacent — I think it's unfortunate, but, in any event, it's a separate budget. There was always, in my mind, a question of 'did we need to spend as much on highways as we were spending when we didn't have money for education or health, or something else,' but it was dedicated. There were issues about freeways. One of the things that I tried to do, and one of the reasons I grabbed for and got the highway budget in my subcommittee of Ways and Means, was to try and force them to make decisions on where they were going to put the freeway in Portland. They kept talking about locating I-205 everywhere from Mount Hood to the river bank. Where was it going to be? Instead of keeping everybody in a turmoil, make up your mind or we'll make up your mind for you.

CH: Did your committee, then, deal with the interstate highways then, or their creation?

MOSSER: We had jurisdiction over them, but basically what I did was try to press and guide them to make some decisions. We also, I think, tried to put a little more money into some streets other than those. I mentioned that I had a program for urban arterials, which was to try to develop some of the streets that were being neglected while — at that point Hatfield really pushed the interstate system, and while it didn't get completed in Oregon until recently, an awful lot of it was done. We had built more miles than any other state, for

a while, in the 1960s. We completed both north-south and east-west, except for pieces, little pieces, vary rapidly, and I thought we'd neglected a bunch of other roads.

Then, in the 1965 session there was a different problem. In December of 1964 we had what Washington's having now, floods all over the state. The rain and Chinook winds came in and melted all the snow, and every river in the state was over its banks and tearing out highways. We had the money for the state to rebuild the state highways, but one of the big problems was all the rural roads that needed rebuilding. I put through a special program that allowed the counties to borrow against future — I think we had the State Highway Commission float some bonds and advance the money to the counties, which could then repay it out of their future gas tax allocations over a period of years to get those roads rebuilt.

CH: Is that a program that's still available to counties?

MOSSER: I honestly don't know. Really, the only time they desperately needed it was then. They didn't have the money and they couldn't efficiently each go out with bond issues. They had to get approval by a vote of the people, the roads needed to be rebuilt right away. So there really wasn't any controversy. I think we had that bill passed by the end of January or February.

CH: In 1965 I understand that there was Legislation limiting the rail crews.

MOSSER: Oh, yeah.

CH: The unions were involved in that, isn't that right?

MOSSER: Very much so. The full crew law. Oregon had a law that required — that Legislated train crews. You had to have a conductor and a brakeman, and for every six

extra cars another brakeman, or something, and it was a pretty feather-bedded type of law that the unions had passed. Repealing the full crew law was a big battle.

CH: Were you involved in that?

MOSSER: Only peripherally. I had to vote on it. I think I voted to repeal it, but I wasn't actively — everybody was lobbied heavily on it by the unions and by the railroads.

CH: Your mention of labor reminded me about the — in 1963 they tried to pass some Legislation regarding striking and minimum wage and imported workers in a strike. Do you recall those issues at all?

MOSSER: No, I think it was back in 1957 that there had been an issue that — it might have been 1963. In one of those sessions collective bargaining for public employees was a big issue, and I voted with the unions to allow collective bargaining. I think most of the other times I was voting against the unions, basically because they were trying to get, through Legislation, things that they couldn't get collectively bargaining. In essence, I said, "These aren't Legislative subjects, go bargain with somebody." But I gave the public employees the power to bargain.

CH: I understand that there was Legislation that was passed preventing employers from using a lie-detector test.

MOSSER: I'm sure that came before Judiciary Committee, and I think I probably voted to prohibit the lie detector. I'm not positive of that but that would be my best guess. Actually, in both those sessions, while I was on the Judiciary Committee, the Judiciary Committee frequently had hearings on these big issues, like lie detectors and employment, at night with thousands, casts of thousands, and they went on dealing with hundreds of bills. It was a heavy-workload committee. It conflicted frequently with Ways and Means,



and basically I had an arrangement with the chairman of the committee in both sessions that I wouldn't be there unless they needed my vote. If there was ever a time when the committee was divided and they wanted me to vote, or if there was ever a time when they felt that I had some special knowledge of the thing that was being discussed, I'd be glad to come. Otherwise, I wasn't there.

CH: Your schedule just conflicted too much with your Ways and Means...

MOSSER: Ways and Means was a full-time job. We started not later than eight, frequently at seven in the morning, and met right up until just before the floor session would start. Three days a week we met again in the afternoon for two or three hours, or in the evening, and then we had these trips to inspect the prisons, the hospitals, the campuses.

CH: Why would they even put you on another committee, then?

MOSSER: Particularly in the Senate, where they were short of people, they almost had to have people on other committees. And in the, I think it was, the 1965 session there weren't enough lawyers to fill the Judiciary Committee. They had — Sammy Wilder went on it, and a few other civilians, and so occasionally, you know, they needed to call you in because you had some knowledge or ability that — but generally speaking, the other committee loads were light and there were generally understandings like mine that you weren't going to be there all the time.

**[End of Tape 6, Side 2]**

**Tape 7, Side 1**

**1990 December 4**

CH: This is an interview with John Mosser in his home in Portland Oregon. The interviewer for the Oregon Historical Society is Clark Hansen. This is Tape 7, Side A, and the date is December 4, 1990.

In the last session we were talking about the state highway funds and transportation. Are there any other transportation issues that we should discuss, or were there any Mosser plans in regards to transportation?

MOSSER: No. The main thing I was trying to do was get the freeway locations in the Portland area set. I think after the Marquam Bridge was built, but I can't remember whether it was in McCall's administration or whether it was while I was still in the 1965 session, there was an issue on the design of the Fremont Bridge. We insisted that the Fremont Bridge not have piers in the river.

CH: Not have piers?

MOSSER: Piers in the river like the Marquam Bridge does.

CH: Why was that? You just didn't like the aesthetics?

MOSSER: We didn't like the aesthetics of the Marquam Bridge and we didn't want the shipping channel...

CH: You have to look at that Marquam Bridge out your window now, don't you?

MOSSER: The Marquam Bridge is an interesting bridge to be on because you sort of feel like you're flying a plane down the river as you come off that ramp, the upper ramp,

looking down the river, but it is not an attractive bridge, and, of course, now it's the same in design as the one that collapsed in San Francisco in the earthquake, so they're going to rebuild it.

CH: Is that right?

MOSSER: Yes. It's exactly the same thing, rigid piers sitting up there on top of the...

CH: Are they going to tear it down and rebuild it or just reinforce it?

MOSSER: No, they're going to just reinforce it and put some flexibility into it so that it wouldn't go in a minute the way the...

CH: There was some thought that they might relocate the bridge — or, the off-ramp.

MOSSER: They were just going to relocate the east bank, but now...

CH: Well, going back to the other, the Fremont Bridge, how did they decide on that design, then?

MOSSER: They hired an engineering consultant. They didn't do it in-house, as they — they have some pretty good engineers in the highway commission, but they're not what I would call aesthetic people first, at least. So they did hire an independent engineer to design that bridge.

CH: Oregon has a reputation for very beautiful bridges.

MOSSER: We have some unusually good bridges. In Portland, the St. John's Bridge, the Ross Island Bridge, and certainly some of the coastal bridges, although there are some

big battles on the coast now about replacing some of those old bridges. They're beautiful but not very safe or functional anymore.

CH: In human resources, I notice in the 1965 Legislature that there was a property tax relief and senior citizen homestead exemptions. Do you recall much about that?

MOSSER: The property tax relief program was one of the Mosser plans and it was intended to get some direct credit on the tax bill where people could see it for the Legislature doing something to reduce property taxes. The senior citizens' homestead again was — we were trying to take pressure off of some of the groups that we felt were most hurt by the inflationary factor in property tax, and that included the senior citizens, particularly, who were on fixed retirement incomes. It was one of many, you know, in later sessions you came up with the homeowners' and renters' relief program, again designed to benefit certain low-income groups that were victimized by high property taxes.

CH: Was there an attempt made at that time to go at it at the other angle as well in terms of tax — changes in the tax law that would allow people to have relief, more or less, from — or, exemption from the beginning, from that end?

MOSSER: For a variety of reasons, there — periodically, somebody has come up with the idea of the homestead exemption, 10 thousand, 20 thousand, 30 thousand, exemption for your house. The problem is that there are communities where everybody's house is less than 30 thousand, and so it doesn't do a thing. If you'd reduce everybody by that 10 thousand assessment, then everybody's got a 20-thousand-dollar house, the rate goes up 50% and the dollars collected are exactly the same. Another thing is that in some other areas where you might take a third of the people off the tax roll, there was always the fear that, well, that third, then, has no incentive to economize on any measures, they'll vote for everything and the property taxes will soar on the other people. So there were a lot of reasons why — I guess the last time it was seriously proposed was by Straub in, probably,

1976 in a special session, and I had suggested an alternative plan and the Legislature bought the alternative plan.

CH: What was the alternative plan?

MOSSER: It was a flat percentage reduction paid for by the state. That lasted till something like the 1981 session when they were in the deep recession in Oregon and there wasn't any spare money to fund it anymore. It lasted about five years, I would guess.

CH: What position were you in at the time?

MOSSER: None. The governor had just asked me to come up with ideas and there was a caucus of the Democrats with the governor in the House before the session started and the two plans were discussed. Wally Priestly objected to my plan and said it ought to just go to benefit the poor people, and I thought, 'well, Wally, those aren't the people that vote and elect you. Go ahead.' The governor went for the homestead but, as I say, the Legislature, when they got into session, rejected the homestead and put in the plan that I suggested.

CH: Were you part of a panel or commission?

MOSSER: No, I was just an adviser to Straub on things, and occasionally he'd call me to come up with a plan and I'd come up with a plan.

CH: Why did he choose you instead of a fellow Democrat? I mean, is there — you seem to have gone back and forth between administrations.

MOSSER: I had managed his campaign, was the chairman of his campaign, in 1974, and he asked me to be the director of finance and administration, head of the executive

department it was then called, under him, but I said I couldn't do it. I did help start to put his budget together until we got Stafford Hansel aboard to do it, finish it.

CH: You had mentioned Wally Priestly. He just died recently. Maybe you could describe — did you work with him in the Legislature at all or did he come along later?

MOSSER: No, he was in in 1957, I think, and certainly in 1963 and 1965. Wally was always kind of a loner. I liked Wally, I thought his heart was in the right place. His head was a little weak on some of the things. He was a terrible thorn to lobbyists because he was always broke and living off of them, and although he had this pure-at-heart sort of all-for-the-poor-folks campaign, he really probably lived off the lobbyists more than any other Legislator down there. [Both laugh]

CH: I heard that he also lived in the — a lot of times in the lounge, kind of, just sleeping on the couch and...

MOSSER: No, he was either bunked with one of the lobbyists or there or bumming rides from them, doing meals. It was not a very healthy situation in a lot of ways. Wally was a populist. There was a bigger one in, I guess, the 1963 session, old Jake Bennett, who had been on the Portland City Council for years on and off and had come back for a term in the Legislature. He must have been in his 70s then. But he was a populist and a demagogue, and I could just, you know, I could tell when he stood up what he was going to say, always, but he was very effective. He was a marvelous demagogic speaker.

CH: And ideologically where did he fall?

MOSSER: Populist, against the vested interests, which he saw everywhere. [Laughs]

CH: Do you feel there's a place for those kind of people, the Bennetts and the Priestlys, in the Legislature?

MOSSER: Sure. They're gadflies, they help to keep the thing honest. The trouble is that most of them tend to go too far, some of them just do it as a political career, as a way of getting publicity.

CH: How would you judge their effectiveness for their own constituents?

MOSSER: Mediocre. They tend to be resented by the majority, they are almost always lone wolves, in my experience, that do not effectively work the system to get others aboard for what they really want to do.

CH: But they have a place.

MOSSER: I think they have a place, sure. As I say, they help to keep the system honest, but I don't think they're really very effective except in blowing the whistle every now and then, or making people nervous enough to look over their shoulder at some of the things that they would otherwise do.

CH: How about the other extremes in the political spectrum, people that are on the far right or the far left? What do you remember of those people in the Legislature?

MOSSER: I don't think they really were that — there were some partisans, there were people who called Monroe 'Sweatland' a communist, but they were mainly Republicans who had been in power forever and thought anybody that espoused anything other than the rigid Republican line was a communist.

CH: Was he a New Dealer?

MOSSER: Yeah. A liberal Democrat, labor oriented, maybe even close to a socialist, but not a communist. There were a few, really what I would call sort of Neanderthal right-wing Republicans, but they were left-overs from an earlier era and, for the most part, not as effective, I thought, as the middle-of-the-roaders which made up, one way or another, a large part of the Legislature.

CH: In both parties?

MOSSER: In both parties. Actually, it's amazing, I would guess that of the people who came to Salem as Legislators, 70% of them really had no philosophy of government. They wanted to be of service. They didn't have a program, right, left, up, down. They had a certain background that they brought with them, but they were not ideologues and mainly just thought it was an honor and — oh, some of them were bored. They were from small towns where not much went on, or they were from big towns but were something like undertakers and were bored with their lives. This was exciting.

CH: Do you think that's unusual in terms of Legislatures? I don't know if you've looked at other Legislatures in other states, but — that they didn't have an agenda?

MOSSER: I don't think that's so unusual. I wasn't really as aware of it until I got in the Legislature myself, but I don't think it's all that unusual. I think there are usually a few people who have agendas, but a lot of people don't, or they have maybe one thing that they're interested in doing, and when they've done that, or it's failed, why, they don't know — they just go along with the flow on the rest of it.

CH: Do you think that's changed much?



MOSSER: Not a lot. I think there are more career Legislators now. People — I saw in the last session there was one article in the paper, I think, where 25 out of 90 people got their major living from being in the Legislature. Well, certainly nobody, when I was in it, got their major living from being in the Legislature, with the possible exception of Wally Priestly and, as I've described, he wasn't very wealthy.

CH: How do you feel about that change?

MOSSER: I think in a way it's unfortunate. I think we get too many people now who are after the job rather than maybe — if I had to have somebody who wanted to be of service, I'd rather have that than somebody who wanted a job. There aren't many really able people that would look on it as a job that was worth having as a job. The income is not that big, so you tend to get a lower — people who are shooting a little lower at what they think of as a good job when it is a job that they are after.

CH: Now?

MOSSER: Now, yes. I don't think the caliber of the Legislature is anything like what it was in the mid-1960s, particularly in the House. You can look at the people that were there. A large number of them went on to become judges, congressmen, senators, businessmen, mayors. I would guess that out of the House at least a third went on to have fairly distinguished political careers.

CH: How do you account for that change? Why has it changed so much?

MOSSER: The sessions get longer, which tends to discourage people. Before I was in the Legislature the Legislators themselves went to Salem. They didn't bring their wives, they didn't bring their families. By the time I went they were bringing wives frequently. If you once get the children in school, you don't want to pull them out before school's over,

so automatically the session sort of goes to June. When there were farmers in they used to want to get home and plow in the spring and get the crops planted. There aren't that many farmers left. Lawyers and doctors didn't want to be away from their practice forever in those days, so there was some real incentive to small businessmen, whatever they were, to get back to the way they made their living and get the session over with. Now they can make some sort of living, they get expense money, they have staff, permanent staff, at least two people for every representative, and it's just gotten to the point where the person who wants to do it as a part-time thing almost can't afford to do it anymore because it takes so much time and because they spend so much time and money campaigning when they aren't in session.

CH: Campaigns have risen in cost, haven't they?

MOSSER: I think I spent a thousand dollars in six races, three primaries, three generals, total. They spend up to 80 thousand dollars in one race now.

CH: When you have to come up with that kind of money you get a different type of person, don't you?

MOSSER: You get a different type of person and you get an awful lot of time spent just raising that money.

CH: Do you think that, because of the need to raise that amount of money, not only it takes more time but perhaps then they are obligated in certain ways to certain sources of that — they're not as independent?

MOSSER: Probably that's true. They depend on the money raisers to an extent that I think is unhealthy. They spend so much time at it that it interferes with what I would call holding another job. I'm not convinced that you have to spend that kind of money. I think

a large amount of that money is wasted, I think a large amount of it is a substitute for imagination, for having a program to enunciate. And I think you can win a race with a lot less money than is used, typically, but it's kind of discouraging to get into a race where you know somebody is going to spend that kind of money on the other side.

CH: So perhaps the opposition is more limited, then, too, in...

MOSSER: Yeah. Again, like Congress, I think incumbent Legislators have a greater advantage than they used to have.

CH: Do you see any solution for those kinds of problems? Spending limits or?

MOSSER: Well, you can have public finance, give some money, 10 thousand dollars, to any candidate who will agree not to spend any more than 20 thousand, say, or not to accept more than a hundred dollars in any one contribution, or something of that kind. I have thought that you can't constitutionally prevent people from giving money, necessarily, or spending it, but you can put incentives there, and I think you certainly can disclose, require disclosure. I would never permit anybody to run an ad by the Committee for Good Government or the Committee for a Clean Oregon or the Friends of the Wilderness unless it was to every name of every person who contributed to that committee. I think politics is for voters, it isn't for corporations or committees or things that cover up who's doing the contributing.

CH: But those large committees might have thousands of members.

MOSSER: You'd be surprised how many of them have six members or have a hundred members, all of whom are the executives of one company.

CH: Do you think there would be much resistance to that kind of Legislation?

MOSSER: Oh, sure, there is. A lot of the politicians don't want it because it will tend to dry up their source of money, and a lot of the people who will give them the money secretly but not if it's known don't want that.

CH: But don't you think some Legislators would feel relieved not to have to have this high pressure, high expense...

MOSSER: Oh, yes. I think election reform is going to be one of the big issues of the 1990s because, as it is, both at the national level and — even more at the national level, but to a growing extent at the state level, people are alarmed at the amount of money that is spent, the ways in which it is raised.

CH: Are there other types of campaign reform that you'd like to see instituted?

MOSSER: Well, I had a program which I was never able to sell for any — I sold it to the committee on government reorganization when I was on that in 1957 to 1959, but I wanted to have a Legislature that met one week out of each month, figuring that a lawyer, doctor, could afford to schedule that kind of time away from a practice, where they couldn't schedule six months at a crack away, and figuring that the problems went on year around rather than for six months out of every two years. You could possibly do a better job of Legislating over that kind of time period, but you get into the question of, well, when do you cut it off for the campaign, and should you have a month or two session for the budget anyway. I felt it would have been one of the things that helped to keep an amateur Legislature.

CH: So that was your primary objective, then, having an amateur rather than professional Legislature?

MOSSER: Right.

CH: Some people criticized that because of the lack of expertise that an amateur Legislator...

MOSSER: I think there were some outstanding Legislators when we had an amateur Legislature, and in many ways the caliber was far higher than with a professional Legislature. They knew more about how their constituents were affected because they were living the same kind of lives instead of this sheltered political life. So, no, I think you would have had a better caliber of Legislator.

CH: Going back to some of the issues that you were dealing with in the Legislature, I know eventually you became a member of the LCDC, land development and...

MOSSER: Land Conservation and Development Commission.

CH: Conservation and Development Commission, and had worked on other land-use issues. Were there any land-use planning issues that came before the Legislature back in the 1960s when you were in there?

MOSSER: Well, the beach bill was in the 1960s. That was, I think, 1967, after I was out of the Legislature but while I was still down there. I remember working on it.

CH: What was your position on that, or what did you do to help it?

MOSSER: Governor McCall was the governor, and there was the threat of privatizing segments of the beach, which everybody thought was public because of Os [Oswald] West. Lee Johnson and I were the ones that came up with the idea, in essence, that the public had acquired an easement through long use of marching up and down the beaches,

and McCall turned to Oregon State to define the vegetation line, which is the way the dry sands-wet sands vegetation line became the survey line for the beach. Lee was in the Legislature and carried the bill in the House, but he and I did some of the drafting of it together.

CH: That's remained a fairly durable piece of Legislation, hasn't it?

MOSSER: It's still under some kind of challenge every now and then. There's somebody right now, I think, who's still challenging it in Cannon Beach.

CH: Oh, really.

MOSSER: Yes. He bought a lot back in the 1930s, or something, for a hundred dollars and now, if he could just put up a seawall and fill it in he'd have a million dollar piece of oceanfront property, so he's challenging the beach bill.

CH: This isn't John Yeon, is it?

MOSSER: No, no. John Yeon has — would be just the opposite, though John Yeon did want to have a deluxe resort in his area down there, but John is much more a protector of the beach. He's a sort of elitist protector and he thought that it would be nice to have something like a Mediterranean resort with private deck chairs out on the sand and...

CH: [Inaudible].

MOSSER: Yes. Then there was a challenge of a different sort down...

CH: Little Whale Cove?

MOSSER: Little Whale Cove, where the question was whether this was part of the beach or not, because it was a tidal basin that was separated from all the rest of the beach by headlands.

CH: How did they decide on that? It went on to several courts, didn't it?

MOSSER: It was finally decided in the supreme court, and I think they decided that it was not beach because it was only at high tide that the water came across the rocks into this sheltered cove, so that it was — that's my recollection, but I wouldn't want to be quoted on it without looking at the case.

CH: What was the reaction to the beach bill when it was first introduced?

MOSSER: It had tremendous popular support, tremendous editorial support. There was opposition from people on the beach, some of them.

CH: Were there many law suits regarding it at the time, back when it was first...

MOSSER: I don't recall that there were. I can remember...

**[End of Tape 7, Side 1]**

**Tape 7, Side 2**

1990 December 4

CH: This is an interview with John Mosser. This is Tape 7, Side B.

Is there anything else under land-use planning that you'd like to mention?

MOSSER: Well, I think it's hard for me to distinguish now what was state and local. I think there was more local at that time. [MAP?] led to the formation of the Columbia Region Association of Governments, and it took Legislation, I think, to get that formed, which eventually, then, after some — I think there was a vote to establish a super city at one point that didn't go through. Then they created Metro.

CH: What was the Columbia Region Association of Governments meant to accomplish?

MOSSER: Well basically, some regional planning and to come up with proposals — and this was a formal — see, [MAP?] had been a private study group with a few dollars and some people working away at it. CRAG was a Legislatively enacted association of governments, the cities and counties from the metropolitan region. It had some minimal state funding and there was a formula by which the counties and cities contributed to it, so it had a publicly supported budget to hire some planners. They came up with various proposals. The one that finally passed was the one that established Metro, the present metropolitan governmental agency. The city of Portland had zoning, but I don't think Washington County had zoning till some time in the 1970s, late 1960s, early 1970s. Eastern Multnomah County didn't have much in the way of zoning. So there were a lot of local things going on throughout the period that I was involved in that occasionally would end up with a bill down at the Legislature, but the Legislature was not the main focus of that land-use planning.



CH: What about redistricting? I believe that there was some major reapportionment issues in the 1961 Legislature which you weren't involved with, perhaps, but later on, in 1965, there was a law suit in federal district court over it. Do you recall...

MOSSER: Actually, there had been a law suit somewhere else in the country, that must have been decided in 1963, that, in effect, said that if you hadn't reapportioned according to one man one vote your congressional districts were unconstitutional, and Oregon had not reapportioned. I think it was spring vacation. Anyway, it was a dull Friday afternoon and the press came around, as they sometimes did, and wanted to know if I had anything for them, and so I threw out a bill to redistrict the state for congressional redistricting.

CH: Spontaneously?

MOSSER: Well, I had it drafted and it made a nice map with new districts on it. I had one that was eastern Oregon and then swept over through Jackson, Josephine, Coos, and Curry counties, I think, and so there was a lot of — that got a lot of publicity and a lot of discussion. The Democrats wouldn't let it be voted on, they just bottled it up, so it made a nice Republican issue to challenge them on. By 1965 a law suit had been filed challenging Oregon's apportionment, and so the 1965 session had to deal with congressional redistricting.

CH: What was your original motivation for coming up with this plan for redistricting? Was it just something that you were fooling around with and thought it might be kind of an interesting idea, or was this something you had been actively pursuing? There are some of these Mosser plans, I'm wondering what their conception is, how they're conceived.

MOSSER: Well, I'd see something, like I'd read an article, I think I read an article in the *Atlantic Monthly* on student evaluation of teachers. That led to the Mosser plan for awarding undergraduate teachers. This one, I had seen this case and I knew we had an

unconstitutional apportionment, it was bound to come up sometime, so I started playing around with the numbers to get the counties to come out equally. My lines followed county lines, they didn't try to, as the districts now do, cut counties in half. I was able to come up with districts that were very close, you know, within two or three thousand of the same voters, in population. I knew it was going to make all the congressmen nervous about what was happening to their district, so it was kind of fun. [Laughs]

CH: You didn't mind making them nervous.

MOSSER: No.

CH: Did this plan obviously benefit one party over the other from previous status quo arrangement?

MOSSER: I honestly don't remember. I think it was probably opening up at least a possibility of another Republican being elected. The Republicans up till then had pretty much controlled the First District with Norblad and Wendel Wyatt, but they didn't have, I think, any of the other congressional districts.

CH: Wasn't there a lot of debate about where to divide the district here in Portland, whether it should be the Willamette River or further east or?

MOSSER: By 1965, yes. My plan, I think, just left Multnomah County — no, I think mine divided it at the river.

CH: Wasn't there some objection to having the downtown area divided in half? Weren't there a lot of businesses on the east side that were reticent to be clumped into an east side district? I just thought I recall hearing something about that.

MOSSER: Again, I think the Republicans liked the idea of going to the river because it gave the West Hills, which was pretty Republican, to add to Washington County and sort of counterbalance the coast and some of the other areas that were more democratic at the time. I think Edith Green didn't like losing downtown Portland. That was part of her district that she didn't want — it was more what the congressmen wanted is what really gets into the politics of where you draw the district lines, I think, and...

CH: Even though it's the Legislature's responsibility?

MOSSER: Yes, sure. The congressman sees, 'well, this will hurt me,' or 'this will help me,' or, 'hey, that's where I get my campaign contributions,' or 'that's where I want my office in the district.'

CH: So how was the law suit in federal district initiated?

MOSSER: I've forgotten who brought that. I had said there was going to be one, but I didn't have anything to do with filing it.

CH: Did that get resolved in that time or did it drag out?

MOSSER: Again, my memory isn't that good, but if I had to guess at this point, I think what happened was that the court waited for the Legislature to act and the Legislature did act.

CH: In which session?

MOSSER: 1965.

CH: So how did you resolve — if they didn't accept your plan and they bottled it up, then how was it resolved?

MOSSER: That was in 1963. So, now, in 1965 there were two or three plans. [Both laugh]

CH: Was your plan one of them?

MOSSER: Yes, but I didn't push it. It wasn't in a committee that I was on, and I didn't care how it came out.

CH: Anything else under redistricting that you can recall as being significant?

MOSSER: No, I don't think so. It's been redistricted twice since then and they've had some kind of tortuous changes in the lines to try to — the big problem is what do you do with eastern Oregon, and for a while it was with Salem and then it was with Albany and parts of Clackamas County, but you don't have enough population in all of eastern Oregon to have a congressman.

CH: It must be one of the biggest districts in the country.

MOSSER: Well, of course, the whole state of Montana has had two congressmen but it's going down to one as a result of the new census.

CH: And Alaska, I guess, is...

MOSSER: Alaska has only got one, I think.

CH: What about water policies at the time? Were there major issues over irrigation or federal expense for supplying hydroelectricity, and BPA and...

MOSSER: Dams were still being built, both within the Willamette drainage — things like Cougar and some of the other dams on the Willamette's branches, Santiam branches, were still being built in the 1960s. First Pelton and then Round Butte Dam were being built on the Deschutes and they caused a good deal controversy, but not in the Legislature. There were still dams being built on the main stem of the Columbia. I don't think the Hells Canyon dams had been built yet, and there was talk about a high Hells Canyon dam as a federal project versus the private one that was finally built. So people were still building dams. There was some talk of diverting water to California back then. It comes up periodically. I don't think there was much awareness yet of the extent to which ground water could be polluted or exhausted. You hadn't really — I don't think in 1965 they had yet built any irrigation projects of the type that are around Boardman now. They were talking about Boardman being a space-age industrial park, and the first thing that got built there, probably in the late 1960s, was, of course, irrigation for farming.

CH: Didn't Boeing lease out all that land then for agricultural use?

MOSSER: Quite a bit of it. They had a small test facility over there. I don't know whether they still do or not, but they used to test some engines over there, but it was never much in the way of an industrial park. Somebody spent 20 million bucks putting in irrigation for potatoes.

CH: What about that issue on diverting water to California? Was that hotly debated or was that...

MOSSER: No, no, no. I came up with the idea of a dual pipeline. They'd put oil in their end and we'd pump water down and force the oil back up and said we'd trade them barrel for barrel. [Both laugh]

CH: Did you get any response from California on that?

MOSSER: Oh, I think I saw a few editorial comments. It was more of a joke than anything else.

CH: Any PUD Legislation that was notable in 1963 or 1965?

MOSSER: No. There was a proposal, and my guess is it was 1963, I think Bob Duncan — no it was Clarence Barton that was trying to work it out. They wanted to get Bonneville power for industrial use in Oregon.

CH: Was that part of the Columbia Basin compact? That was not ratified?

MOSSER: I honestly don't remember. I know I didn't become involved on the power issues until 1969, probably, and mainly from — I came up with plans in the mid-1970s that led to the current Northwest energy thing. But that was — the Democrats always wanted to get Bonneville or federal power for industry, and my thrust was always the opposite. Because of the way the bill was written there was a preference for domestic and rural use, so what I wanted to do was funnel — qualify the private utilities in Oregon, as well as the PUDs and co-ops, for the domestic and rural advantage, and that's what the present bill does. Private utilities get cheap Bonneville power for their domestic and rural customers. Since we have something like 85% private power in Oregon, that was the way you got the cheap federal power, rather than talking about industry.

CH: Wasn't the rate different for public utilities, then?

MOSSER: Public utilities could qualify for Bonneville power, federal power. Cities could, public utility districts, and co-ops. Private utilities couldn't. Washington had almost all public power, a few exceptions, Oregon had almost all private power, so almost all the federal

power was going to the state of Washington. The idea was how do we get some more for Oregon.

CH: So do you feel that's been reconciled between the two states?

MOSSER: There are a lot of things that I found out when I finally studied it. First of all, 85% of the power is generated in the state of Washington, so to get what I wanted was — according to population we should qualify for about three-eighths of the power. You can't do it on the basis of 'we're generating it here.' Even if you apportion all the dams, like Bonneville and McNary and The Dalles, that are on the border, half to Oregon and half to Washington, it still comes out 85% Washington. On an industrial basis I don't think we'd come out ahead, and, besides, the bill gives preference to domestic and rural, not to industry. So it was — you had to rewrite the federal Legislation, in any event, and I felt we'd probably lose the benefit of the power if we tried to change that too much. So my whole thrust was always to try to qualify the residential and agricultural-rural customer for a share of the federal power. Well, we got that. It isn't worth as much anymore. Federal power used to be the cheapest power in the Northwest, by far. Half the price of private power, or less. Thanks to WPPS, and a few other stupid developments, federal power is now almost as expensive, in fact, it is more expensive than Idaho Power's power. Idaho Power rejected getting federal power because federal power is more expensive than their own power.

CH: So in the long run they're actually...

MOSSER: So in the long run the nuclear plants threw away the cheapest power, anyway.

CH: Did you get involved the WPPS issue at all when that came up?

MOSSER: I gave a speech in 1969 to the Bonneville Power Advisory Conference, or committee, called "Is Power Necessary," in which I said that — Bonneville had this hydro-thermal power program that was supposed to develop a lot more hydro power and 20 megawatt nuclear plants, and I said we didn't need that much power, that the nuclear power was going to be hideously expensive, instead of cheap like they thought it was, that environmental objections would probably prevent some of the plants from ever being completed, and nobody wanted to listen back in those days, so it all came true.

CH: You could foresee pretty easily back then that there were going to be environmental problems?

MOSSER: It seemed to me I could see the — I had been, of course, heading the Sanitary Authority and knew what the environmental problems were, and also I didn't think the economics of their program made any sense. I didn't think they were going to build the things as fast and cheaply as they thought they were. I do think nuclear power is probably one of the desirable long-run things, but not the kind of nuclear power we were developing in the places we were trying to develop it.

CH: What do you see is more plausible?

MOSSER: Smaller plants that do not rely as heavily on perfect management, that have some real fail-safe, the plant shuts down if it isn't functioning properly. They can design that kind of plant, but it takes a different generation. One of the things I argued for then was that before we started to build any plants we ought to have a public siting committee that would evaluate and approve some sites that would be stockpiled sites so that when you needed a plant you could put it on one of those sites without having to go through all the environmental studies at the time you needed the plant. A lot of people liked that idea but it was never put into effect in the way I saw it. They did get the energy facility siting council, or whatever it was called, in Oregon, but it was totally reactive. It didn't go out and



investigate and try to establish safe places for sites on its own, it just waited for somebody to bring it a site.

CH: Is it a little more proactive now?

MOSSER: No, not that I've seen. Right now every kind of power is dead in Oregon. You cannot build a dam on any river in Oregon, you cannot build a nuclear plant anywhere in Oregon, and I doubt if you could build a coal plant anywhere in Oregon today. So when we need energy it's going to be very interesting to see what gives.

CH: It sounds like something people have to give in one of those areas unless they come up with something spectacular with solar or waste...

MOSSER: Well, there are possibilities for conservation and for cogeneration, but ultimately we are going to need another power plant of some kind. The question is, what is it going to be and where is it going to be.

CH: If you were to get a crystal ball in front of you, what would you say that the outcome would likely be to that argument? Where would be the most plausible source?

MOSSER: I think there are a few hydroelectric projects that could still be built with minimal environmental impact. Very few, but some. Certainly, I think you could expand some of the power potential of the existing sites. I think probably at some point we will get another nuclear plant, but it may be a long ways off. In the meantime we may get a coal plant in eastern Oregon.

CH: So a little bit of everything.

MOSSER: We may get a gas turbine plant. We had one here in town that was so noisy that they wouldn't let it run, but...

CH: Really?

MOSSER: Yes.

CH: Where was that?

MOSSER: On the Willamette River down near the St. Johns Bridge, a PGE project. There is another one down in Columbia County that's still there that can run on either diesel or gas.

CH: Anything with natural gas?

MOSSER: That's what the — gas was the gas-fired terminal we had. I've forgotten what the name of the thing was, but, anyway, it was ultimately dismantled and, I think, sold to somebody in South America.

CH: Where they wouldn't have as many complaints?

MOSSER: Well, what this was, was a peaking plant. It was only used a few hours or days out of a year, but they were very cheap. What they basically are is big jet engines.

CH: And they made a lot of noise.

MOSSER: They made a hell of a lot of noise, like a jet engine does, only this is a whole row of jet engines.

CH: And then the heat generated from them was converted?

MOSSER: I think they just turn a turbine and the turbine...

CH: What about on rules and appointments? I'd read in the paper that the 1963 Legislature had a Legislative council committee that was given power to review rules and regulations of state agencies.

MOSSER: Yeah. This was, I think, a national Legislative thrust at that time to review the rules that agencies wrote. So much Legislation was authorizing rules to be adopted, and there was a general feeling that the rules didn't always conform to the Legislation, that bureaucrats were taking over the Legislative function and rewriting law, or writing the law. The real problem is that Legislatures don't write good Legislation. They get lazy and say to somebody, 'go make rules,' and they don't give them very good guidelines on what kind of rules to make. Most of the problem with poor rules and regulations is (A) that a Legislature didn't take time to think something through and write the law properly, or that it saw too many political conflicts in trying to do it correctly and so passed the buck to the bureaucrat.

CH: You said that at the time there was a national movement for revamping these rules, right?

MOSSER: Yeah.

CH: What other national influences were affecting the Legislature here in Oregon?

MOSSER: They really got in somewhat later, I would say starting in the 1970s, maybe the late 1960s. I went to one national conference of Legislators, and Jesse Unruh from California was trying to get professional Legislators, professional staffs. The argument was

that the executive had all the expertise and the poor Legislature didn't have any expertise and needed big staffs and needed to be better paid, and everything else. It was mainly a move that was coming from places like California. Jason Boe pushed it hardest here in Oregon. He's the one that got the Legislative wings built with offices for each Legislator and staff for each Legislator.

CH: Jesse Unruh was quite a political power in California for a long time, wasn't he?

MOSSER: Yes. Somewhat like Willie Brown now.

CH: Did his influence, then, spill over into Oregon from time to time because of his changes?

MOSSER: It wasn't just — it spilled over through this National Conference of Legislators. They had various things that they were urging all the Legislatures to do, and a lot of Legislators took the program seriously. I think Monte Montgomery was at one point running for president of that association. I've forgotten whether he was elected or not.

**[End of Tape 7, Side 2]**

**Tape 8, Side 1**

**1990 December 4**

CH: This is an interview with John Mosser in his home in Portland, Oregon. The interviewer is Clark Hansen for the Oregon Historical Society, the date is December 4<sup>th</sup>, 1990, and this is Tape 8, Side A.

In the area of ethics were there any issues that came before the Legislature while you were in there?

MOSSER: I would say really not. There was no such thing as an ethics commission then.

CH: Wasn't there an ethics committee in the Legislature?

MOSSER: I don't think there was. There were rumors that certain Legislators could be bought, but I never saw any evidence of it.

CH: It was a pretty honest Legislature?

MOSSER: I would say yes. There were a few Legislators who I felt did not have the highest ethics, but on the whole I thought it was very good. Some people were almost ridiculous. I remember Don Willner would never let a lobbyist buy him a cup of coffee, and I always thought that was kind of an insult to the lobbyist and to Don, himself, to think that he could be bought for a cup of coffee. [Both laugh] Generally speaking, I never saw a lobbyist try to bribe anybody. I've had a lot of friends among the lobbyists, but I bought them a drink as often as they bought me a drink, I think, and it was just a social, friendly kind of relationship. Some of them I think had more influence than others. Again, there were, even then, some Legislators who ran fairly expensive campaigns and who depended more on lobbyists to help them raise money than I ever did, but I don't think there was any real sign of corruption in Oregon politics back then.

CH: Do you find that to have changed?

MOSSER: I don't think so. I would say that there is more dependence on lobbyist fund raising now than there was then, and to that extent there may be more access or need to go along with lobbyists sometimes. On the other hand, I think — back in those days I went out almost every night, late. You know, I would frequently be in committee meetings till 10 or 11:00 at night, or, when I wasn't, I was studying bills for the next day. But about 11:00 I'd go out to Chuck's and socialize, have a few drinks, dance some, end up with Sid Leiken, usually, having steak and eggs about 1:00 in the morning. But that was the way you kept up on what was going on, particularly for somebody in Ways and Means. I wasn't around the floor of the House that much, and I found out, by going out there at night, from the lobbyists and other Legislators what had happened during the day, what was going on.

CH: How would you characterize your relationship with the lobbyists? Was it pretty informal? It sounds like it, from what you've been saying.

MOSSER: Oh yeah, yeah, sure. I respected a lot of them for their ability, and I think they respected me for my ability. I would always listen to them, I never hesitated to tell them when I disagreed with them. I think one indication of how good I thought they were and how much I thought they could do in the way of good was when I was head of the Sanitary Authority. We had a lot of new environmental Legislation that needed to be written and I appointed a committee to write it. Herb Hardy was the chairman. He was the lobbyist for Safeway and the canneries. On it were Irv Luiten, who was the lobbyist for Weyerhaeuser, Pete Schnell, who was the lobbyist for Publishers Paper, I think Alan Hart, who was the lobbyist for the aluminum companies, and there were a few more. But basically I had every big lobbyist with a vested interest on the committee that wrote the Legislation, and it was tough Legislation, very practical Legislation. And then I had all those lobbyists lobby it through the next session. Everything went through.

CH: If you put them together in the right way you had the formula for being able to get your Legislation through.

MOSSER: Yeah. And those guys were all going to be there. Instead of having them opposing my environmental Legislation they wrote it, and it was very tough Legislation.

CH: How would you...

MOSSER: Tom [Donica?] from Associated Oregon Industries.

CH: How would you convince them to even be supportive of environmental Legislation to begin with?

MOSSER: Herb Hardy was an old fly fisherman, Irv Luiten was an outdoorsman. They were as much interested in those things as anybody else in this state. How do I convince them? I say, "Look, if somebody else writes it, it may not be practical, it may needlessly harm your clients, it may not work, but it still may pass because there's a lot of steam and the governor is going to have back an environmental program, so why don't you guys do an intelligent job on it?"

CH: Were you able to do that in other areas as well, aside from environmental Legislation?

MOSSER: Oh, I don't — you know, there were little things. Again, out at Chuck's at night one of them would tell me he was having a problem in some area and I'd help write a law for him, you know, just the drafting of it, suggest a way in which there's some language that might fit. Another thing was on the bottle bill. I was actually a lobbyist then. My firm was representing Blitz Weinhard, the Wessingers, and actually we had a whole coalition of

people that wanted to oppose the bottle bill and had an alternative, something like the California system now where you have redemption centers. But the Legislature wasn't going to buy this alternate bill, and it finally got — we passed something out of the House and it had gotten over to the Senate. Betty Roberts had the committee that was responsible for it, and the committee made it clear that they were going to pass a bottle bill, and I said, "Fine. Let us write it so that it works." Betty said, "Okay." So we drafted the bill.

CH: How were you able to convince them that you should be the ones writing the bill?

MOSSER: Oh, I don't know. Trust, I guess. That's what I'm saying is a lot of Legislators trusted lobbyists and the lobbyists I don't think ever betrayed that trust when it was put on that basis. There were times when they were lobbying for something and you didn't like it and you were fighting them, but if they said they would do something and you trusted them to do that, they would do that. They weren't going to play some sneaky game behind your back.

CH: Did anybody violate that principle?

MOSSER: Not that I know of. Some are better than others, more intelligent, but I don't — you know, the real professional lobbyists in Oregon are real professionals and their ability to function depends on that kind of trust.

CH: Lobbyists seems to generate a lot of bad feeling among people, when you mention them, as being unscrupulous and manipulative and very one-sided in their views, but, from what you're saying, it was a different breed of people in Oregon, at least. Do you think that was true all over at that time?

MOSSER: Oh, I don't know. You know, I grew up in Chicago and I don't think that politics was quite as clean in Illinois as it was in Oregon. But I do think that the best lobbyists are



the ones who do not try to buy votes, do not try to manipulate. They try to be very informed and totally honest and dependable and to be glad to assist with something, if they can, that's consistent with their obligation as a lobbyist.

CH: Were there ever any hard feelings when you had to take opposing sides to them when you were fighting them for some reason?

MOSSER: No, I don't think so.

CH: They understood that that was just the nature of the game?

MOSSER: Yeah.

CH: Do you recall any of these people that you were friends with that you had to fight with against something that they were proposing or you were proposing?

MOSSER: I'm sure there were lobbyists that I know. I had tax plans that they didn't like for their impact on some industry. Sometimes your fellow Legislators got kind of ticked off at you for — and even after you were out of the Legislature. Why, I've begun something like LCDC and Lynn Newbry would come down to lobby for Medford Corporation, which he was an official of, and you'd make some decision that, 'no, we're not going to do what you want. The city is going to be able to annex you and you're going to be taxed and subject to their land-use laws.' They'd get furious, but I think they ultimately calmed down and say, 'well, he was doing his job. He sure made a stupid decision but I'll go along with it.'

CH: Is that true with fellow Legislators as well, that you were able to easily enough oppose them and in another case be supportive? I mean, it wasn't taken personally or people didn't get bitter over disappointments?

MOSSER: You sometimes got mad. I can remember Ross Morgan and I were the House conferees on the bill that had to do with state salaries and the tuberculosis hospital closing. We agreed in conference committee and then, by the time the vote came up, Ross was working the other side of it. He was working against his vote and took me by surprise, and I was mad at that. But it goes away. I didn't mind his taking that position, I just felt it was dishonest to have agreed to something as a conferee and then to work against the conference report without letting me know that's what he was going to do. But he was very emotional on that issue.

CH: Were there very many lobbyists that came from outside of the state, you know, that represented companies or...

MOSSER: Well, something like that bottle bill. This was part of the problem. There were a lot of big-shot lobbyists from the glass companies and the can companies back in New York and the Midwest and they didn't know what they were doing in Oregon at all and they made a lot of hard feelings by trying to power their way around like big shots. It's a mistake. I've seen a few. There used to be a guy who lobbied nationally for United Airlines that was very smooth. But generally speaking, you're better off with a local lobbyist than with a national lobbyist. They just know the people, the customs, how to get along in Oregon, that a lot of outsiders don't know.

CH: What about in the area of law improvement? In 1963 there was a big fight over insurance companies' involvement in industrial accidents. Do you recall those issues, by any chance, trying to change some of those regulations?

MOSSER: I really don't. I can recall that I did something on a law improvement committee. I think we recommended, from one of the government reorganization committees, or something that I was on, that we establish a law improvement committee

to work reviewing laws because so many of them just get put on the books and stay there forever, and they're inconsistent with other laws. You need to have somebody really looking at a code from an overall standpoint every now and then. But, no, I don't recall any specific issues there.

CH: In agriculture?

MOSSER: Oh, there were some funny things on Ways and Means and the education subcommittee. One of the things we had was the agricultural extension and research programs, and I can remember they showed these films of their research to battle nematodes. What they were doing was blowing fields up with dynamite. [Both laugh] My God, what a stupid thing to do. That's the way you kill nematodes, by blowing the field up.

CH: Really?

MOSSER: Yes, really. It was just hilarious. They had been doing this for 10 years and they wanted to continue their research, and we all just about died laughing.

CH: They showed this on the education subcommittee.

MOSSER: They showed this to us, yes. There were some battles, the Soil Conservation Service, which is a separate federal-sponsored agricultural improvement thing, was always battling with the — they had almost no money in Oregon and the Extension Service had lots of money and lots of people. The Conservation Service was all — they might have one guy in a county. He was paid part-time, a few hundred dollars a year, to coordinate the program, or something, but they were doing some better things as far as tiling fields and telling people how to do stuff.

CH: It sounds like one of William Proxmire's Golden Fleece awards.

MOSSER: Yeah. There were 4-H things all the time, and campaigning you always had to go judge 4-H contests at the county fair and the state fair. There were also things like the wheat commission and the flax commission and the chewings fescue commission that had little budgets that needed to be looked at. Eventually we got those put under the agriculture department with a staff person to take care of them instead of having independent staff for each of these things. I was never really — I let the farmers decide what was good agriculture, pretty much, instead of trying to become intimate with those things.

CH: I read in the paper where, in 1963, there was some controversy over a law fixing milk prices with the producers.

MOSSER: Yeah, you get those price-fixing schemes. You also got quotas. The dairy farmers wanted quotas, had federal quotas. There were federal marketing orders that fixed the amount that could be grown or sold by somebody. And there were sort of fads. People would put in filberts until there were too many filbert trees and then they'd put in cherries until there were too many cherry trees and all these — it takes seven or 10 years to get an orchard into production, and what looked like a great bonanza when they started out was probably a glut by the time they got it to market.

CH: So was there an effort to regulate this, or did you just let the market do that?

MOSSER: I have believed more — I don't think there's a real role for state regulation of agriculture. I'm skeptical of federal regulation, but it seems to me — I can remember for years there were surpluses of potatoes. There were potato subsidies, and finally they did away with potato subsidies and nobody has heard of a surplus potato since, as far as I know. I think most of the government programs tend to distort the market, tend to do more harm than good, though they're well intentioned.

CH: In business and consumer affairs we talked a little bit about the 1965 effort with workmen's comp and the three-way insurance system. There was also a measure for seat belts, I believe, in 1963. Do you recall that or any of the other Legislation that might have taken place in business and consumer affairs?

MOSSER: I don't think I was ever on business and consumer affairs as a committee. I think I supported seat-belt Legislation whenever it came up. No, I really don't.

CH: What about on sunset review? Anything in there?

MOSSER: Yes. That was, again, I think, a recommendation that had initially come out of the government reorganization committee I served on 1957 to 1959, and it was a part of the national Legislative movement of the 1960s to sunset a lot of laws and regulations so you had to look at them again. It was part of the law improvement movement, I would say.

CH: Crime and corrections?

MOSSER: Again, I can remember visiting the prisons and correctional institutions on Ways and Means, but we were — in 1957 we were tearing beds out of the prison. The central cell block I think was torn down. It was very old, sort of medieval prison kind of thing, and somewhere in the early 1960s the correctional institution was built, and then it was fairly stable. There were enough beds, there were not the high crime waves that we've got in the 1970s and 1980s that — the shortage of beds, so it wasn't a big issue.

CH: What about, in 1963, the effort to remove the death penalty?

MOSSER: I know what my position would have been. I would have been in favor of removing the death penalty. But I don't recall what happened that year. It's been up and down so many times over a lifetime that...

CH: I think we talked a little bit about this at some point in reference to Governor Hatfield because...

MOSSER: Hatfield was in favor of repealing the...

CH: Repealing it. And didn't — wasn't there a major issue in the state about commuting a death sentence?

MOSSER: I wouldn't be surprised. As a matter of fact, I think Bob Holmes commuted some death penalties. It's a long time since anybody has been executed in Oregon. I've forgotten. There was somebody when I first came to Oregon, but it's back in the early 1950s, I think, because I don't think anybody was executed under Hatfield or Holmes or McCall or Straub or Atiyeh, so...

CH: There was also, in 1963, an anti-obscenity law that would apply to movies.

MOSSER: Again, I know where I would have been, as a good ACLU member, and I can remember writing, in 1957, to Fleming. There was some issue on the Oregon campus that related to obscenity, and they wanted him to ban something that he wouldn't ban, and I wrote a letter supporting him.

CH: Wasn't that about communists speaking?

MOSSER: Yeah. It was probably something like that, but it may have obscenity, too. I know my senior partner, Erskine Wood, and I would occasionally — he wrote some

beautiful letters to the press that I always enjoyed, and his father, of course, had been very much in favor of free speech and an outspoken champion of civil liberties.

CH: Were there any special task forces during your terms in the Legislature that you recall?

MOSSER: No, I don't think — you know there may have been...

CH: Actually, you mentioned a couple of things, and I'm not sure whether that was in relationship to task forces, and that was on studying water sent to the southwest United States, and also the pollution, in 1965, pollution into rivers banned, including houseboats, and that. You've mentioned that a little bit, but not in reference to special task forces.

MOSSER: There was some task force, and I would guess it was even earlier because it probably was before McCall ran for secretary of state in 1964. I think he and Governor Sprague and somebody else were on a task force to deal with pollution, and that water task force may have been something at the federal level. I don't recall being involved in it except, as I said, to come up with some joke schemes for trading water for oil.

CH: What about the state constitutional...

MOSSER: There was a constitutional revision commission that I was not a part of, and they reported I think to the 1963 session of the Legislature. It was before I returned to the Legislature that the commission had done, and its work was before either 1963 or 1965, but I think 1963, and the revised constitution was submitted to the people and approved.

CH: We've talked a little bit about the environmental things that have come up. A couple of things that we didn't talk about. One was in 1963 the House defeated Hatfield's bill for the department of natural resources. Do you recall the issues surrounding that?

MOSSER: No. Vaguely, I think the timber interests were threatened by it, as were some of the other farm commissions, and it was sort of a turf battle. People that had their own agency, so to speak, wanted to keep it.

CH: Also in 1963 there was the State Sanitary Authority, and getting the power to bring suits to stop pollution. You were later involved in that group. Do you recall some of the things that they were doing at the time?

MOSSER: Basically, the State Sanitary Authority had very little power until 1967. Harold Wendel had been the chairman for years and years and years, 20, 25 years, something since the 1930s...

**[End of Tape 8, Side 1]**



**Tape 8, Side 2**

**1990 December 4**

CH: This is an interview with John Mosser. This is Tape 8, Side B.  
You were talking about Wendel.

MOSSER: Well Harold Wendel had been the chairman of the Sanitary Authority since its inception, practically, in the 1930s, and he was the chairman of Lippman Wolf, and a courtly gentleman, businessman, and he had basically done what he had done through two things. They had built a very fine staff of professionals, and they persuaded people. He just constantly badgered people to do something, and many of them had, but there was still a ways to go. They never quite got there. The river was still polluted in 1967, had been since 1931, or something like that.

CH: What kind of pollution? Was it coming more from logging companies or cities or both or others?

MOSSER: The biggest polluters were pulp mills, but many of the cities had still only primary treatment or very elementary secondary treatment. The trend was towards secondary treatment. There was no tertiary treatment anywhere. But the overwhelming thing was the amount of pollution from the pulp mills and a few other sources. In the Willamette those were by far the biggest.

CH: You've mentioned the bottle bill and we talked a little bit about the beaches, the beach bill. Was there anything else? I think there's some recreation areas that we declared along the beach.

MOSSER: Well, that really was the beach bill, in essence, was declaring it a public recreation area and then defining it, which was an OSU triangulation study to fix the education line with survey metes and bounds.

CH: Were there other environmental actions during your terms in the Legislature?

MOSSER: Not during my terms in the Legislature. That, of course, was the main focus of McCall's administration and my part in it.

CH: What about within your district? Were there specific issues that you were dealing with in terms of — in the 1963 and 1965 Legislature?

MOSSER: Educational finance was still one of the things that was of primary interest in Washington County. Highways, sewers, the Tualatin Valley project. Hagg Lake was of interest both to farmers and to the municipalities as an extra source of water.

CH: You served with Vic Atiyeh during that time, didn't you, from the...

MOSSER: Yeah. Vic was — he took my seat when I didn't run in 1959 and was in the House in 1963, in 1965 moved over to the Senate. We were part of the delegation those four years down there.

CH: What was it like working with him?

MOSSER: Vic was an easy person to work with. He was one of those Legislators that wanted to be of service, that hadn't a particular agenda of his own very much. He was very interested in abolishing the inventory tax, as a small businessman and one with a large inventory. But other than that he didn't have much of an agenda of his own. He was a very courteous Legislator. I think he was one of the best presiding committee chairmen I ever

saw in that he really listened to people and was courteous to them. It's not uncommon to see a certain amount of discourtesy among Legislators toward the public. Part of it is that they're just tired. They've been there in endless committee meetings and somebody is saying something stupid and you just don't want to put up with it anymore and they get kind of short and testy. But I never saw that in Vic. Vic was very courteous to people. He sincerely thought Washington County was God's Eden. To me there was nothing metaphysical about Washington County or its boundaries, but I think Vic felt a real sort of affinity for Washington County as an entity. He was, as I said, I think, a very conscientious Legislator but not really a leader in the Legislature.

CH: Were you surprised when he became a leader in the Legislature? Didn't he become...

MOSSER: He was minority leader in the Senate. No, that didn't really surprise me. He'd been around a long time by then and seniority is one of the things that the Senate respected, and, as I say, he was courteous and nice to everybody and didn't have an agenda of his own that he was pushing hard so he didn't ruffle many other feathers. He was a good leader in the sense of being willing to push the party's position without having an ax of his own that he was grinding.

CH: I was reading some of the assessments of the 1963 Legislature by — well, by Hatfield and by Paul Harvey, and they characterized it as one of the most contentious between the two branches, between the House and the Senate. First of all, is this Paul Harvey the same Paul Harvey that eventually became a radio commentator?

MOSSER: No, it's a different one.

CH: I kept on seeing his name and I wasn't sure. Did you feel that that was as contentious as they seem to indicate it was between the House and the Senate?

MOSSER: I'll tell you, I recall that there was an aura of contentiousness, but on Ways and Means you had — I think it was then seven senators, seven representatives. You're working with people from the Senate every day. I told you how Potts and Leiken and I worked as a committee, and the committee as a whole, it's sort of like a family by the time you spent that much time together. You're not fighting with each other. I can remember, again, at this conference committee I was on at the end of the 1963 session with Ross Morgan, and this was supposed to be a big battle between the House and the Senate, and the press is all around as the four conferees meet. Debbs Potts was on the committee, and I've forgotten who else from the Senate, and we sit down at the table and Debbs says, "Well, anything John says is okay is okay with me." Big fight.

The press's teeth drop on the floor, [Laughs] and they try to make a big battle out of it, but for us on the Ways and Means Committee it was never a battle. At the end of the 1965 session there was supposed to be a big battle between the House and the Senate and Monte Montgomery was the Speaker, appointed Stafford Hansell, the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, and myself as the two conferees and they put all the outstanding bills on which there were differences, there were about three of them, into the one conference committee. Big battle. Staff and I said to Monte, "What do you want to do?" He says, "I want to go home." So we went upstairs and in half an hour we — you know, what do you have to have on this one, what do you have to have on that one, we agreed on everything and were done.

CH: And did generally the houses, your respective houses, listen to your recommendations and follow them?

MOSSER: Oh, yes. I think that one time when Ross Morgan worked the floor he prevailed on not closing that tuberculosis hospital so the conference committee had to reconvene and come up with a different solution, but it was a day's delay. That was the only time I can recall a conference committee's report not being accepted.

CH: How did your own position in the Legislature evolve over the sessions that you were in there? Did your position among your peers change at all?

MOSSER: Oh, yes. The first time I was a freshman in the minority party. As I say, I think I got a lot of respect by the end of the session and got along well with both Democrats and Republicans. In the 1983 [1963] session I moved up to the Ways and Means Committee and was somewhat of a party leader. I was a candidate, at the end of the session, for speaker. I never campaigned seriously for it. My wife became ill that summer after the — or, start of the 1964, and so when I should have been campaigning I was not interested. I didn't reject my candidacy till the end, but I never took it seriously at that point. Then by 1965 we were the majority party and I was one of the major tacticians of our party as far as what issues we pressed, when and how.

CH: How were those decisions made?

MOSSER: Monte, as speaker, Bob Smith — I could have been majority leader but Bob Smith wanted it and I didn't give a darn, so I was glad to let him have it. In exchange Monte agreed that Staff Hansel, who had backed me for speaker, would be chairman of Ways and Means, and that George Flitcraft, who backed me, would be on Ways and Means and so would I, so we controlled that committee. But I would say largely Monte and Staff and Bob Smith, maybe Winton Hunt, and I were the leaders in establishing the policy for our party, usually amicably by discussion, consensus.

CH: Were other people brought in to those discussions?

MOSSER: Oh, yeah. You'd caucus the whole party and you'd talk to everybody, but some people set the agenda more than others.

CH: It's always seemed to me that that's sort of a backroom, closed-door area that you don't hear much about, and yet it seems to be pretty important in deciding the way the Legislature's going to look in the next term, during the next session. I've always been curious as to how that works, what you do when you're in that room trying to decide where you're headed.

MOSSER: As I said, in that time it was amicable. Stafford and I were more idea men and Monte and Bob Smith were more party organizers and out-front spokesmen on a lot of things.

CH: Was there difficulty in deciding what priorities should be established, either by party or by region of the state or individual desires?

MOSSER: We had a property tax relief proposal that was one that I came up with but was adopted as our party position on that fairly early. There were a few other positions, on state salaries, budget issues, on elections, that were party. The congressional redistricting, to some extent. But there really were not many partisan issues in the Legislature.

CH: It seems remarkable, actually. It must have been remarkable to you, coming from Illinois where things are so strongly divided between upstate and downstate that...

MOSSER: Well, there's a certain upstate and downstate, Portland against the rest of the state syndrome, in Oregon, but that isn't Democrat-Republican, and that's what I was meaning when I said partisan. You sometimes get issues that are — like the full crew law, a labor issue. You have Democrats tending to side with labor and Republicans with management. That can become a partisan issue. Workmen's compensation, business versus injured workmen, can become a partisan issue, some tax bills can become partisan issues, and there are some regional issues, coast versus valley, valley versus Portland, eastern Oregon versus the rest of the state. But people tend to move around in those

coalitions, if you're in a party vote one day and a regional vote another, still, when you come down to it, there may be 20 of those votes out of a thousand in the session. The closer the Legislature is divided, the more likely you are to have some partisan issue rise. On the other hand, usually those are the times when the parties are more disciplined and so you seldom lose one of those issues.

CH: Who's responsible for the party discipline? Is it the whip?

MOSSER: This is something that has varied. The speaker had enormous power in the 1950s and 1960s. Under Phil Lang in the 1970s it was almost totally destroyed.

CH: Why?

MOSSER: Phil gave it away to keep the job, is the way I would analyze it. There were a group of conservative Democrats, the hornets, who demanded that they be chairman of Ways and Means, that they do this and that, and then they also — the Republicans somehow got through that they could appoint their members of committees, whereas in the 1950s and 1960s the speaker decided who was on what committee. He might consult with the other party, but he didn't have to, and he didn't have to listen to them when he did. Well, by the late 1970s the minority party was appointing its own members of a committee. The speaker's power to appoint from that party was gone.

CH: And that changed during Phil Lang's leadership.

MOSSER: Yeah, or lack of leadership. He had been speaker for a long time and he had just made so many deals to keep being reelected that his power was gone by the time he got through with it, is the way it looked to me.

CH: Did it ever get reestablished after that?

MOSSER: Oh, yes. You're seeing that now.

CH: With Vera Katz?

MOSSER: Vera Katz I think got some of the power back, and certainly Campbell is asserting it even more.

CH: Oh, really. I just don't know him. I don't mean to...

MOSSER: Well, there was a story in the paper. He appointed the Ways and Means Committee early, and it's apparently now eight members from each house. But he appointed six Republicans and two Democrats, where there was supposedly an understanding that it would be five and three, and he didn't even consult the Republicans as to which two Republicans he put on Ways and Means.

CH: Did Vera consult when she appointed them?

MOSSER: I think so.

CH: What is your impression of Campbell thus far, then?

MOSSER: I don't know the man. I think he'll probably have to back down from being that assertive.

CH: Just because of the nature of...

MOSSER: He doesn't have that big a majority and there will be times when he needs some Republican votes and he won't have them if he keeps on that way.



CH: Republican votes or Democratic votes?

MOSSER: Democratic votes, I mean.

CH: Were there any other shifts in position at that time that you recall? I mean, you're talking about the speaker. What about with the other leadership positions in the...

MOSSER: The Senate, through the 1960s, was pretty much a coalition of conservative Democrats and Republicans. It was usually divided something like 16-14 Democrat majority, but really with three or four Democrats always coalitioning with the Republicans to elect one of their number as president, and they were usually conservatives. Some of them were very mediocre. Some, like Harry Boivin, were far from mediocre but still on the conservative side of their party. There was always a certain amount of trading of who will be chairman of this committee in order to get the votes to put the coalition together. It made for an uncomfortable kind of leadership, I always thought, and that's why I thought Phil Lang, too. He'd have been better off not to be speaker and to have some authority and clear-cut responsibility rather than cutting too many deals to be elected.

CH: Do or did the committee chairs have power to be able to set the agenda of what Legislation was coming before it?

MOSSER: The committee chairman are very power — Oregon has a very powerful committee system. The bills go to a committee, the committee chairman sets the agenda for the committee, and bills are almost always approved based on a committee — they may be turned down, but they are not amended on the floor, they are not — they may occasionally be sent back to committee, may occasionally be voted down, but basically a committee can bottle up a bill so that it's very hard to get the votes to take a bill out of a committee. I've seen it happen rarely, once or twice a session at most. Again, when the

speaker was powerful, he always had a committee — or the president — that was his committee, that is, nothing happened in that committee that he didn't want to happen. Usually a rules committee. The bill went there and never saw the light of day again unless the president or the speaker, whoever had sent it there, ordered it out.

CH: Did the Rules Committee also have — did it function in other ways, aside from doing that?

MOSSER: Oh, they adopted rules at the beginning of a session, they occasionally were used by the speaker to get a hearing. In other words, the speaker or president would want a hearing on a bill that he didn't think he could get if it was sent to the regular committee that might have jurisdiction over the bill, and he could send it to his committee to have that hearing. But an awful lot of the bills were sent there just because the speaker or president wanted them killed, or at least wanted them bottled up for a time.

CH: When you were talking about Oregon having a strong committee system, you're saying that in comparison to what?

MOSSER: Oh I was — well, let's see. I was around the Connecticut Legislature and there was a lot of amending of bills on the floor, a lot of work in the session as a committee of the whole. Arizona worked that way, too. Texas is a law unto itself. There I would say that the speaker or president is far more powerful even than in Oregon, and the gavel is very heavy, or held in the air for four or five minutes while the final deciding vote is rounded up or changed by arm twisting. I actually saw that. The vote had ended, I've forgotten, 31 to 28, or something, against the way the speaker wanted it to turn out. There were four missing votes and slowly two of them came in and then somebody changed a vote so it was now tied, and finally another vote came in and, bang, the issue was decided, and then the last vote that would have changed it back again, too late, he couldn't vote.

CH: Sounds pretty arbitrary. Were you on any interim committees?

MOSSER: Well, 1957 to 1959 was that committee on government reorganization. I was on one, but I can't remember what it was, in 1963, and then 1965 to 1967 was the Legislative fiscal committee.

CH: Then there was — you were dealing with highways and insurance in 1963? Were you involved in that?

MOSSER: In the regular session?

CH: Yeah — or, in your committees, rather.

MOSSER: I honestly can't remember what I was on. I was a delegate to the national Legislative conference, and I think that's about it, probably.

**[End of Tape 8, Side 2]**

**Tape 9, Side 1****1990 December 7**

CH: This is an interview with John Mosser in his office in Portland, Oregon. The interviewer for the Oregon Historical Society is Clark Hansen. The date is December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1990, and this is Tape 9, Side A.

When we were just finishing our last session you were talking about the differences between the interim committee and the standing committees and the joint committees, and I just thought maybe you could clear that up as to what their purposes were.

MOSSER: The standing committees are the ones that meet during the session. When the Legislature adjourns sine die they essentially go out of existence, but they handle the Legislation during the session. The major joint committee, the only one during the session, at that time, of any consequence was the Ways and Means committee, which had seven members from each house. There were smaller joint committees, the Legislative Counsel Committee and the Legislative Fiscal Committee, which essentially just supervised the hiring of the principal staff person for those functions.

Interim committees are committees to meet between sessions, usually to study something and draft Legislation for the following session. Back in 1957 these usually included people appointed by the speaker, people appointed by the Senate and people appointed by the governor. It was, I think, in 1959 or 1961 that the Legislature stopped having the governor appoint any members of those committees, and from then on they were basically appointed by the speaker and the president. Sometimes they had equal members, more frequently there was an odd membership, like nine or 11 or seven, and the House would appoint five and the Senate four, or something like that.

CH: Was there any formula for it?

MOSSER: It wasn't always fixed. This was sort of a negotiation between the speaker and the president. Frequently you alternated. If the chairman of the committee had been a senator in the previous interim, then this time it would be a representative. But that was sort of subject to negotiation, and usually there were specific Legislators that wanted to be on a committee or wanted to be chairman of it, and they'd sort of jockey with the head of their house and he would negotiate with the other house as to how the committees were going to be set up.

CH: Was there a balance between parties?

MOSSER: Usually some balance. Usually the majority party from a house had more representatives than the minority party. Sometimes this worked out so that one house would — the House might be Republican, the Senate Democratic, so that you could get a blend where the senators were appointing all Democrats and the House then would appoint all Republicans. But usually it was a mixture of both parties from both houses.

CH: Conference committees.

MOSSER: Conference committees essentially were of very short duration and were appointed at the end of a session, usually, to iron out the differences between the houses on a bill. One house would pass a bill, the other house would amend it, it would go back to the first house, that house would refuse to concur in the amendments of the other house, then you'd appoint a conference committee, usually four people, two senators, two representatives.

CH: Then after the bill came out of conference committee it would go back to the floor.

MOSSER: Go back to the floor, and sometimes the house that had refused to concur would concur, sometimes the committee report would recommend that the bill be further amended and passed, and then both houses would have to pass the further amendments.

CH: Were there any other types of committees or...

MOSSER: There were housekeeping committees, a committee to supervise the House lounge or the Senate lounge, a committee to escort the governor in at the beginning of a session, or something like that. These were housekeeping or ceremonial type of committees.

CH: What would you consider being major junctures for you during your terms in the Legislature? Were there any real turning points for you or any real milestones that you managed to reach while you were there? Critical junctures?

MOSSER: Gee, I don't think so. When you're working on a bill and it passes, that becomes — or fails, either way, it becomes a juncture, I suppose. No, in the first session, 1957, I was mainly involved with educational issues, and in the latter two sessions I was mainly involved with the Ways and Means and with various plans that I was putting out myself. A lot of them had to do with finance, but not all, by any means.

CH: And the major goals that you feel that you accomplished during those terms?

MOSSER: I think I did a lot to shape educational finance, both at the elementary, secondary, and at the higher education levels. I think I did a fair amount on government reorganization, a little bit on election reform, some on taxation. But on Ways and Means your major job is putting together the budget for the next biennium, and that's where an awful lot of the time is spent.

CH: Do your efforts in Ways and Means preclude involvements in other places in the Legislature just because of the time consuming...

MOSSER: Time pressures, yes. I think I've already said that, though I was on the House Judiciary Committee in 1963 and 1965, the general understanding was that I wouldn't be there unless they needed my vote to break a tie or to hear some public testimony that I might have to rely on later on. The other committee that I was on in 1963 was Military Affairs, which had a very small role.

CH: Was that with the national guard?

MOSSER: It's national guard and civil defense, in those days.

CH: What kind of relationship did you have with your constituency during the times that you were in the Legislature? How did you communicate with them?

MOSSER: I wrote articles for newspapers, both in the campaign and while the session was on. There was a Washington County civic club of some kind that met in Beaverton, and you spoke before things like Rotary and 4-H groups and other groups that — because we represented the whole county we did some of it in, oh, Tigard, Forest Grove, Hillsboro, Beaverton, no one particular area. I didn't do a great deal of personal correspondence with constituents. When I got a letter, I typically had a form response. If it was a major issue that I was getting dozens or hundreds of letters on, I sometimes set out my position and what I was doing on the issue, sometimes just said 'thank you for writing' and put a tickler in a card file and if something happened, like they wanted a bill passed and it later passed, I sent them another post card saying the bill passed. But it was all pretty much forms. I didn't believe in lengthy individual correspondence. A few cases, yes, but not very often.

CH: Do you recall some of the cases that you did get a lot of response from your constituents on?

MOSSER: I haven't gone back through my files to look. Some of it was fairly innocuous, like the Tualatin Valley project. Basically all we were doing was memorializing Congress to put up some money for it. But you might tend to get a lot of mail on that, you might get a lot of mail on school issues. In 1957 school finance I'm sure is what I got the most mail on. Things like the full crew bill that were being heavily lobbied by either labor or a union you'd get a lot of mail on. You knew that it was not spontaneously generated and you treated it accordingly, whereas if you got a long, thoughtful letter from somebody on a subject, you'd be much more inclined to give them a long, thoughtful response.

CH: Do you recall any special projects for your district or your constituents that you worked on?

MOSSER: I considered the most important thing probably was educational finance because Washington County was just growing like mad. It was more of a bedroom community and less of an industrial community than it is now, and it wasn't uncommon for schools to go up 20, 40% a year with the baby boom coming through the schools. There was also a lot of need for government organization and services which were largely being met through special districts, the sewer, water, insect control, all kinds of park and recreation, all kinds of special districts.

My main thrust, and I did accomplish some things, was to organize these in a more coherent fashion to consolidate, though it wasn't so much as a Legislator, but I led the campaign to create the Unified Service Agency, more commonly called sewerage agency, in Washington County, and worked with developers to consolidate most of the water districts into the Wolf Creek Highway Water District, initiated the county service district law, which let the county create a special district but the county commissioners served as the board of it so you didn't have all these little elective boards that nobody ever voted for and



you had some coherent, consistent management by a county that was looking not just at sewers but at water and other things at the same time.

CH: Were there any personal problems of constituents that you intervened on in their behalf?

MOSSER: Oh, a few. I think the tendency of Legislators to be ombudsmen, intervening with agencies for their constituents, is something that has grown more and more. For one thing, you have a lot of staff, this is part of your electioneering, and you build a staff and they take care of it. We didn't have any staff to speak of, so it was what you thought was important enough to spend your own time on.

CH: What was your staff at that point?

MOSSER: One secretary.

CH: With all the Mosser plans and the other Legislation that you actually wrote, did you do that primarily yourself or did you have assistance on doing that?

MOSSER: I did draft some bills myself, but mostly I used Legislative counsel. They were experts at Legislative drafting and, even more important, at double checking to be sure that you weren't creating a conflict with any other law, or that if you were amending this law and another one had to be amended to be consistent, that you got both of them amended in the same bill.

CH: Does that require having people in that department that have been there for a long time?

MOSSER: It's certainly helpful. When I first went there in 1957 they had just completed a complete recodification of the Oregon statutes, and the people who had worked on that, three or four of them had been there for something like six or eight years doing that. Most of them stayed on. I know that there are still — Kathleen [Buffet?] I worked with last year on some stuff for Governor Goldschmidt, and she had been there back in the early 1960s. So they stayed quite a while, a lot of those people.

CH: Do they have particular areas of...

MOSSER: To some extent. It wasn't a large staff. Sam [Hailey?] was the director in the 1950s and early 1960s, later went on to be public utilities commissioner, and there was Bob Lundy and Kathleen [Buffet?], and I think one other. It was a fairly small staff so they all had to deal with a fairly broad range, but one of them might be the specialist in tax laws and another one in education laws. That didn't mean that any of them couldn't be drafting in those fields, but to the extent they could keep workloads even, they probably stayed within a specialty.

CH: Were they nonpartisan?

MOSSER: Oh, yes, completely.

CH: I would expect them to be, but you never know when you have a — they're appointed by whom?

MOSSER: The Legislative counsel, one person, or the Legislative fiscal officer, one person, would be selected by a committee of Legislators with the approval of the president and the speaker, and once hired would stay there as long as he wasn't making anybody mad. He generally picked the rest of his staff. The committee determined the budget and

size of the agency, to some extent, but individual hiring was done on merit by the one officer that had been picked.

CH: Were there groups or organizations that you worked particularly closely with?

MOSSER: I worked with school administrators a lot in 1957. I met with a good many of the superintendents in various and committees, and things, and I worked with the county commissioners to some extent. Less contact, but some, with city officials.

CH: Portland?

MOSSER: Both Portland and Washington County cities, Beaverton, Hillsboro, particularly, the City Club in Portland. Some law — some of the bar bills, I didn't usually lobby those very much but I helped get some of them to pass. The party, the Republican party, when I was a member of it, but I would say it depended an awful lot more on other Legislators than on any outside groups.

CH: Were there state or regional or national issues that affected your district?

MOSSER: One man one vote was — this was the era when — and, strangely enough, the Republican party of Washington County was opposed to one man one vote. The most rapidly growing county in the state, and almost in the nation, and they thought each county should have equal representation as part of — at least in one house, like, say, in the Senate or the old state-federal pattern. So I was at odds with at least some members of the county central committee on that issue. Civil rights was a national movement in the 1960s that affected the Legislature. You had a move to create civil rights in Oregon by Legislation and to promote education for disadvantaged, job opportunities, various kinds of activity there.

CH: Did the one man one vote issue evolve out of the Baker versus Carr...

MOSSER: Yeah.

CH: Decision in the Supreme Court? The opposition to it, could you explain that a little bit more?

MOSSER: Well there were feelings that eastern Oregon, for example, ought to have more representation for that vast territory than it would be entitled to if you were strictly on a one man one vote basis, that one representative might have to represent several counties. In Washington County the conservative Republicans thought that they got along better with the conservative eastern Oregonians than with the liberal city folk, and therefore they thought Republicans would be better off, even though they weren't getting many Legislative seats in Washington County, if you did this, which would keep the conservatives in power.

CH: Most of the city people were in favor of one man one vote.

MOSSER: Yeah, not all, though, strangely enough, but most.

CH: But those that weren't, were there any liberal Democrats that were opposed to it, for instance?

MOSSER: I don't think so.

CH: I'm just trying to think of what arguments they would use against it, other than the one that you just mentioned about the larger districts. Were there other rationales?

MOSSER: Well, just as eastern Oregon was losing representation on a one man one vote basis, there were some people in Multnomah County who could see that Multnomah County was going to lose relative strength over time.

CH: Because of the growth of the suburbs?

MOSSER: Because of the growth of the suburbs and the valley and other areas, whereas Portland and Multnomah county have been virtually static for all 40 years that I've been in Oregon. So where you once had almost a majority of a House from Portland, that has dwindled.

CH: But why was that an issue, because wasn't that mandated by the Supreme Court?

MOSSER: Oh, yes, but people don't always believe what the implications of what a decision is for a while.

CH: Was there much controversy in Oregon about the Warren court and its decisions?

MOSSER: I don't think so. There was certainly some. I don't recall that as being a big issue.

CH: Did Vietnam become much of an issue?

MOSSER: Not while I was in the Legislature. Afterwards, yes. While I was on the Board of Higher Education it was certainly a major thing that had been rocking the campuses.

CH: Were there any outside ideas or issues that you had to represent to your constituency or to the Legislature, things that you were bringing in from the outside?

MOSSER: I'm not sure I understand the question.

CH: Well, were there issues of regional and national importance that you were addressing, that you personally were addressing?

MOSSER: I think we've already discussed that in the 1957 session I was trying to rewrite school finance formulas in ways that helped Washington County but not to the extent that some people wanted — that what I felt would have hurt Portland and the interchange of students between the two. I pushed congressional redistricting before anybody else was interested in it. I worked on promoting one man one vote when, as I've said, the central committee was opposed. I worked on some highway things which I felt were of regional significance rather than simply local county significance.

CH: You had mentioned the interstates. Wasn't that one of the things that...

MOSSER: The interstates, but also what eventually became 217, which is not an interstate but is a major expressway or freeway. Getting overpasses on the Sunset Highway, upgrading that from — it was a two-lane road with intersections at grade level, with no stop lights, for many years in the 1950s.

CH: That certainly has made a major impact on the area. What about your relationship with the media?

MOSSER: Very good. There were some very competent reporters for both the Portland papers, the *Oregonian* and the *Journal*. Harold Hughes, Doug McKean, Tom Stimmel, Schumacher. When television came in you got people like McCall and Forest Amsden, and there were also very competent reporters on two Salem papers, the *Statesman* and the — I think the *Journal* was the other Salem paper, but you had a morning and an evening paper, and the *Eugene Register Guard*. The other editors around the state, Bob Chandler

in Bend and Forrester in Pendleton — I can't think of the name of the man that was in Medford, but there was an excellent editor in Medford.

There were some really distinguished reporters and editors, and since I had had newspaper experience, I knew what their job was, I knew how to get publicity and I liked talking to them, they were informed, and they liked talking to me because I could always produce a story for them if they needed one. So I had great relations with the press. And something that was true then that is no longer true, the press did have kind of an unwritten code that they did not magnify every weakness that they could possibly discover in every public official.

Essentially, they were interested in your public positions and in open meetings, fully reporting what your government positions were, but if you had a drink with somebody or were out with someone other than your wife, that wasn't the first thing that they wanted to — and also, they were willing, most of them, to take information off the record, whereas now I think most of them feel that that's a violation of their ethics, that they shouldn't ever take things — but they got a good deal of background information and open discussion from public figures that they don't get under today's circumstances.

**[End of Tape 9, Side 1]**

**Tape 9, Side 2****1990 December 7**

CH: This is an interview with John Mosser, this is Tape 9, Side B.

So you feel that journalism has changed to the extent that those kinds of confidences...

MOSSER: I think from Watergate on, there has been an emphasis on investigative, exposing type of reporting, and a lot of the reporters have come to feel that, ethically, they should not accept confidences, that they have a duty to the public to expose everything they can possibly expose, and it's just a different atmosphere.

CH: What was Tom McCall like as a correspondent, commentator?

MOSSER: He was able. First of all, he had been Governor Sprague's executive assistant, he knew state government, knew local government, had run for Congress, had been on the constitutional revision commissions and other study commissions, so he knew — which many reporters don't bring that kind of background to government reporting, they have to be taught as they go along. He took what I guess could be called editorial positions. He wasn't just a reporter. He did documentaries, like *Pollution in Paradise*, that certainly helped to form public opinion, and he had a voice mannerism that was distinctive that gave him a flavor. You could tell him immediately on the radio without having anybody introduce him, just from his voice. I think he was a very able reporter and editorialist.

CH: I understand over at the Oregon Historical Society there's a great tape recording between Tom McCall and Tom Vaughan.

MOSSER: I wouldn't be surprised.



CH: With two such distinguished voices it must be — but did you work with him as a correspondent, then?

MOSSER: Sure. He was covering the Legislature and he was covering things like the one and a half percent ballot measure that I was on one side of. He was interested in the metropolitan government concept that I was pushing through MAP, and various local city things. So, sure, he covered some of the things I was doing and we talked about others.

CH: You had mentioned before that you only had a secretary for staff, but what did that person do for you? Was it correspondence, or more than that?

MOSSER: During all of the sessions that I was there Legislators had no offices so you had a desk on the floor of the House, your secretary sat next to you. She organized your bill book. There's a flood of paper in the way of amendments to bills, and stuff. She kept that up to date, pulled the bills that were going to be on third reading for the next day so you could take them home at night and become familiar with what you were going to vote on the next day, answered correspondence, filed. But basically you were off in committee meetings all the time, she was sitting there in the gossip chamber, learning what was going on, and they could tell you, you know, what was going on anywhere in the Legislature because they talked to the other secretaries or to the other representatives that were on the floor of the House.

CH: So was being a good listener a requisite for...

MOSSER: Sure.

CH: Would she come and get you out of committees if she needed you, to get you back to the floor or to...

MOSSER: Usually not. There was a system of pages, some of which were full-time pages, and lots of honorary pages, kids that were down for one day, or something. They ran the notes all over the capitol. Usually you weren't called out of committees, except near the end of a session you might be working in a committee but have to go to vote on a — that was particularly true when Ways and Means would be in session at the same time the floor was in session. If you had a close vote somebody would call everybody down to the floor. There were some days when you spent half your time running back and forth, but generally speaking that was confined to the end of the session.

CH: How did you find your secretary?

MOSSER: The first secretary I had was the sister of Arthur Ireland, who was another member of the Legislative delegation from Washington County. In the second session, 1963, I think a representative who wasn't going to be there and had been in the last session recommended that I interview his former secretary, and I did. In the last session I had my wife as my secretary. She had been ill and the kids were older by then. I felt it was better to have her down with me where we could be together than separate all the time.

CH: Were there any setbacks or disappointments that you had while you were in office?

MOSSER: Well, I think I would have probably pursued a fuller political career except for my wife's illness.

CH: That was a pretty major impact on you, wasn't it?

MOSSER: Yes. She started trying to commit suicide, was very depressed. She had become addicted to Valium, and some of the other drugs that doctors pushed pretty hard on women who had complaints in those days, and so it was a form of mental illness or disturbance that kept coming back. You'd think, well, she's better now, and then suddenly

you'd have a problem again. She later became addicted to alcohol, eventually went to AA and stopped drinking completely, but there was a period of at least a decade there where life was somewhat tumultuous, in turmoil.

CH: Was that harder on the kids then, too?

MOSSER: Sure. There were nights when the ambulance would come and take her away, and she was gone in the hospital at times. I don't think the kids really understood what was going on. But it meant to me that I really needed to — for one thing, it was an expensive proposition, which required me to earn more money, but for another, I just felt it was important for the kids, and for Priscilla, that I not be away all the time.

CH: Were those problems eventually resolved?

MOSSER: Yes I would say so. Basically, what they eventually found was that she was a manic-depressive, and Lithium sort of stabilized her. Then when she stopped drinking she really didn't have any major mental health problems. Every now and then the Lithium would get out of balance, but you'd figure that out pretty fast.

CH: What about your law practice during this time?

MOSSER: I was still trying cases, I had some corporate clients, I had done a good deal of probate work, so it was kind of a varied practice during the early 1960s. By the late 1960s I had pretty much stopped trying cases, not completely, but very much, and was more an office lawyer dealing largely with — oh, I became counsel for Portland Community College and the Savings and Loan Association and became a trustee for some wealthy people, was involved in the paving business and some other businesses. It was more a business practice, and, in fact, to some extent it was more being a businessman, or a fiduciary, than a lawyer.

CH: How do you feel that your terms in the Legislature affected your law practice?

MOSSER: Relatively little. From the 1957 session the hours were terrible. I used to come up Friday and work Friday afternoon and Saturday trying to keep up with my law practice. During the sessions in 1963 and 1965 I did relatively little in the way of practice during the session. I moved to Salem in each case and stayed in Salem except for the weekend. From 1957 two of my fellow Legislators, Fred Meek and John Goss, became clients, but they weren't big clients. I already represented school districts.

After 1965 I represented some new school districts, Riverdale, and created a Dunthorpe county service district, represented some sewer districts in Washington County, but basically the Legislature didn't get — except I'm sure that my record in education had something to do with becoming counsel for Portland Community College, because the board had three lawyers who knew me as a lawyer as well as from — and some of them had been Portland School Board members. DeBernardis and [Benny?] had been an employee of the Portland School District when I was working on educational finance. That's probably the major client that resulted from Legislative service.

CH: Were there any constraints you had from being in the Legislature? I know you mentioned about Priscilla and the time limitations you had, but were there other limiting factors?

MOSSER: No, I don't really think so.

CH: Financial?

MOSSER: Well, I always reduced my percentage at the law firm. My income at the law firm went down every time I took on the Legislature, but it was manageable.

CH: Going on to your relationship with the party, how would you characterize your relationship with the Republican party during the times that you were in the Legislature?

MOSSER: Of the Republican Legislators I was somewhat of a leader, helped to form and articulate party policy for Legislators. [I was] frequently at odds with the local central committee.

CH: Over what?

MOSSER: They condemned me for my position on educational finance, they condemned me for supporting one man one vote and...

CH: Was it an ideological difference, basically?

MOSSER: Oh, I think so.

CH: They were more conservative?

MOSSER: Yes.

CH: But this was county, this was Washington County?

MOSSER: Washington County. The party is relatively powerless. It never did anything to help you in an election.

CH: I know we've talked about that before. It still seems puzzling to me that the party has so little impact on its members, its representatives.

MOSSER: It may have a little bit more now because there is more money raised, and certainly more distributed from the national party at times, but, basically, in Oregon the parties are extremely weak and have very little funding.

CH: Did you do anything with the Republican party on a state-wide basis?

MOSSER: I attended the state convention a couple of times. I took part in the election of — well, I ran issues for Tom McCall's campaigns and was active in some of the other campaigns, Howard Belton's, Shirley Field, Packwood when he ran against Morse.

CH: What about the party caucuses? Were you involved with them very much?

MOSSER: These were not frequent in the Legislature. You obviously caucused at the beginning of a session to pick your candidate for speaker and minority leader, and whips sometimes, but few officers. You occasionally, but it was extremely rarely, had a caucus to establish a party position on a bill. I would guess you sometimes, when an issue had become partisan, had a caucus just to receive a report of what was going on.

CH: How were decisions made? Can you describe the atmosphere when these people were selected, the party whip, and all that kind of stuff, where decisions had to be made about the party voting on a bill a particular way?

MOSSER: Who was going to be the majority leader or the speaker was — there was some campaigning for those positions. The people who were campaigning frequently helped other, in the House, representatives from their party, to get elected. They would come to their districts and speak for them, help them raise money sometimes. I think that's much more common now. Vera Katz, for example, has raised money for other Legislators, and I would guess Campbell probably did. There wasn't that much money raising when I was there, but there was some service by people who were candidates for leadership

positions in the party. How were decisions made on a bill? You'd have an argument. Somebody would say 'I think we ought to do this,' somebody would say 'I think we ought to do that.' Eventually you'd take a vote and see if you had a consensus or a majority, or what. Then it would become a question, maybe, of should everybody be able to vote the way they want to or should we try to get everybody to vote the same way on this issue.

CH: Were there issues that all Republicans and all Democrats voted for on party line?

MOSSER: Very few, but some.

CH: Redistricting?

MOSSER: I'd have to go back and look. When you say 'all,' it would probably be all but one or two, and maybe one or two on each side. In a Legislative session — the division was quite close in 1957, quite close in 1963. Occasionally you had some pressure to vote a party line on something because of that closeness, but I would guess you're talking about a dozen bills out of hundreds.

CH: How did the independents figure into all this?

MOSSER: I'm trying to think. I don't think there were any independents in the Legislature when I was. There later were occasionally some. [Charles] Hanlon from Washington-Columbia County ran first, I think, as an independent. I think there's at least one other. Joe Rogers changed parties. I can't remember who, but I'm sure there was at least one other case of someone changing parties.

CH: What happens to them?

MOSSER: It depends on what happens to the party control. If they are instrumental in shifting party control, why, they may end up in a very strong position. If they don't affect party control and the party they left is in power, they will probably be punished in some way.

CH: Who looks after their interests in terms of assignments, committee assignments?

MOSSER: Presumably the party that they are in at the time.

CH: And if they're independent?

MOSSER: If they're independent? Again, did they vote for the speaker or somebody who isn't the speaker. It depends — if they are independent, they probably are not going to be that controversial. They'll vote with one party one time and another, another. If they have switched from one party to the other it depends on how partisan they are about it, whether it was a philosophical thing or a personal thing.

CH: What changes have you witnessed in the party over the years?

MOSSER: In the party?

CH: In the party or party politics. There have been some controversial party leaders, especially in the Republican party.

MOSSER: Well, I left the Republican party long ago.

CH: When did you leave?

MOSSER: 1973, Watergate.



CH: Sounds like there's a story there.

MOSSER: It was very clear to me that Nixon and Mitchell and Erlichman and the rest of them were lying. This was before Nixon left office, certainly long before, and to me they betrayed everything in both the professions that I followed, public life and law, and I didn't want any part of that so I became an independent.

CH: So you could tell me about independents from an inside position, here. That was a rather strong stand to take after having been active politically for so long.

MOSSER: Yes. Lynn Newbry was furious with me, said I was convicting them before they had been tried. And I said, "Well, you can wait till they're tried if you want to, but it seems pretty plain to me what's going on."

CH: But why did you come to the conclusion that the party was responsible for this, just because the head of the party was...

MOSSER: Well, this was the principal office holder, all the lawyers in his cabinet, the head of the Republican party, John Mitchell, what more do you want?

CH: Why did you become an independent instead of becoming a Democrat?

MOSSER: Because I didn't think the Democratic party, as a party, was all that much better. For every time I'd argue with a Republican central committee I would probably argue at least as often with a Democratic central committee.

CH: In retrospect, do you have any feelings about having made that decision, then?

MOSSER: No. I, in a way, have it easy in that I can support both Republicans and Democrats when I want to. I thought for a while about running for office as an independent. I think I could have been elected governor in 1974, but I decided I didn't want to spend that much time at it.

CH: That would have been against McCall, wouldn't it?

MOSSER: No.

CH: Straub?

MOSSER: Instead, I ran Straub's campaign.

CH: That's right, McCall was elected in 1966.

MOSSER: Yeah. He was finishing his second term. The Republican candidates that year, there were several, Atiyeh, Clay Meyers, I think there was at least one other Republican, and there were several on the Democratic side. I think Betty Roberts. Again, I'd have to go look, but I'm sure there were at least three candidates on the Democratic side.

CH: What convinced you not to run?

MOSSER: The kids were in college, starting into college, anyway. I think I had two in college at that point, and my wife, while she had gotten on Lithium, was still an alcoholic, and it just didn't seem worth the effort.

**[End of Tape 9, Side 2]**

**Tape 10, Side 1****1990 December 7**

CH: This is an interview with John Mosser in his office in Portland, Oregon. The interviewer for the Oregon Historical Society is Clark Hansen, the date is December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1990. This is Tape 10, Side A.

Were there other elements about the party that you wanted to talk about in terms of party politics in Oregon and its...

MOSSER: No, I don't think so. It's obvious to me that the party is weak, and because it's weak they tend to be irresponsible. They tend to attract people, whether it's the Birch-type Republicans who want to have an ideologically pure Republican party or it's the extreme liberals that tend to go to Democratic conventions and come out with, in both cases, positions that the vast majority of the people want nothing to do with, and then their poor candidates have to run on those tickets. You really either need responsible parties with some power or you might as well ignore them. [Both laugh]

CH: But you lived in Chicago. You saw a what a political party that has lots of power is capable of accomplishing, or of doing.

MOSSER: Yeah.

CH: How would you contrast the two effects?

MOSSER: Well, either one can be bad. Chicago and Illinois politics were probably the extreme of patronage politics where the party controlled a lot and used it to reward the people who got out the votes for them. It was an effective system, but you don't always end up with the best people that way, either. I guess I would prefer some power in the

party that came from their having the ability to distribute money to select candidates but not to control public office.

CH: Gee, it seems like that's a rather difficult balance.

MOSSER: Yeah.

CH: I mean, if you have the power, if you have the money, don't you think it's a little...

MOSSER: It's a difference between controlling who runs for elective office and controlling every policeman on the block, every sanitary inspector, all the non-civil service patronage jobs that a Chicago or Illinois machine would control, and those are the people that are out working for the party because they have a job out of it. I'm not talking about — I don't think that's desirable. I think party influence and control over who runs for office is something different.

CH: And that is something that you feel...

MOSSER: I think that is the way you have a responsible party that, in turn, attracts capable people to the party office. I think the real problem is now you don't get mainstream, responsible people running for party office.

CH: Do you see any way of attracting those people?

MOSSER: Well, maybe if you didn't have a primary election, if you had a party convention that selected candidates, and what you voted for were delegates to the party convention.

CH: How would that help?

MOSSER: Then those people have some real power because they are going to select the candidates.

CH: But doesn't that remove the people even further? I mean, then the people aren't really voting for the candidates, they're voting for the representatives to vote for the candidate. Doesn't that remove...

MOSSER: Well, it's the way you get a contest between parties that means something.

CH: Would those representatives, then, be bound to in any way to — how would you know the representative you're voting for is one who — what would that person be running for? There are so many different interests out there and there are so many single interest people, how would you — I know this is all speculative, but it's an interesting puzzle.

MOSSER: They would be running for the office of delegate to the state party convention.

CH: So you're trying to find somebody that coincides — your philosophy coincides most closely with theirs.

MOSSER: Yeah. And some people would say, 'I'm going to go vote for a specific candidate,' others would say, 'I'm going to go vote for people who stand for this philosophy.'

CH: Do you think party reform is ever likely to...

MOSSER: I doubt it in Oregon. I think we're in for weak parties forever, probably.

CH: I guess there are some people that...

MOSSER: And really the thing that makes it — I think there are occasions when an independent can win an election in Oregon, but, generally speaking, there are a lot of people who still vote party labels. It is more important than it should be, probably, in what happens, and so any Republican probably is going to get at least 30% of the vote and any Democrat at least 30% of the vote, no matter what, just because people are voting because they are the candidate of that party.

CH: And yet it seems like in Oregon there's less of that impact than in most states, or in many states, at least. Well, I thought maybe we'd talk some about the political leaders that you've worked with in the Legislature and afterwards. You've already talked somewhat about Mark Hatfield, at least as governor, and Wayne Morse, a little bit about Wayne Morse. Did you work with Mark Hatfield at all after he got into the Senate?

MOSSER: No. I worked a little with Packwood after he was in the Senate, but I've had relatively little contact with either of them for quite a while.

CH: What did you do with Packwood?

MOSSER: Worked to get some funding for Portland Community College, particularly a large part of what is now the Cascade Campus in North Portland that was owned by the federal government, and I also worked with him a little, back when I was on the Sanitary Authority, on some pollution Legislation.

CH: Did you work with him in the Legislature at all?

MOSSER: Yes. He was certainly in the 1965 session, and I think in the 1963 session, and he was totally into election mechanics, party politics. He loved the process. That was

his major focus. My criticism of him at the time was that he really had no views on any of the substantive issues, but he was really into the procedure. Single member districts were something that he was responsible for promoting because he thought the Republicans would win more races. When he was getting ready to run against Morse, which must have been 1966, probably, I can remember coming back — we'd been over at Bend at the state Republican convention and I rode back with him in the car and we discussed how he could campaign against Morse.

CH: 1968.

MOSSER: Was it 1968?

CH: I think so, because Hatfield came in — was elected in 1966. Wasn't he?

MOSSER: That's right, 1968. Yes. It was 1967 when they passed single member districts. Bob was still in the Legislature when I was down as director of finance. Anyway, basic strategy was, challenge him to a debate, and he is so egotistical that he will think he can out-debate anybody and he is not really that good. [Both laugh] So Bob nailed him at the City Club debate and then ran his — all his television was stuff that had come out of the debate.

CH: And Packwood was a fairly good debater, then?

MOSSER: Yeah, yeah.

CH: How would you characterize him in his effectiveness as a Legislator?

MOSSER: He was effective, he was effective.

CH: Were you on any of the same committees?

MOSSER: I don't think so.

CH: You later supported one of his Senate bids, is that right? Did you work on one of his campaigns?

MOSSER: Only in discussing strategy for that first campaign. I don't think I've — I may have gotten involved in a campaign in the 1970s when he was running, the second time he ran but first reelection. I haven't been involved in any of his campaigns since then. Let's see. There was one time when I owned a building that I rented him as campaign headquarters over by the Lloyd Center.

CH: And how would you judge him as a senator?

MOSSER: Well, again, he's an extremely effective campaigner and money raiser.

CH: And what do you attribute that to?

MOSSER: He targets specific groups and — you know, the women's movement, he was one of the earliest supporters of freedom of choice of the women's movement so that they do national fund raising for him. He's been very pro-Israel so that the Jewish community raises a lot of money for him, and of course now that he's been in responsible positions in the tax writing thing, there are all kinds of people who contribute to those spots. He's a good organizer of campaigns. I think the most significant thing he's done is that tax bill that was passed in 1986, as far as actual Legislative results are concerned.

CH: You've done a lot of tax-oriented work. That was a rather controversial measure that he forged through the Congress. Looking in retrospect, how do you...



MOSSER: I think it was a sound measure. I wish it could have been even simpler than it was. To say that they simplified the tax law is simply not correct. It's a terrible statute that even an expert can't read, but what it did to taxation in eliminating some of the lowest income people from having to file and in doing away with all kinds of loopholes and more or less evening out what people pay is, I think, a very sound tax philosophy.

CH: So it's more progressive, you feel, than the...

MOSSER: It's more progressive, even though the rates now go to only 29 or 28 or 31 or 33% instead of 70% or 90 — I guess when my father was paying taxes during World War II the top rate was 92%, and it went in pretty low income. I think there was one year when my dad made something like \$110,000 and paid 95 in taxes. That, of course, was the background that people like Ronald Reagan brought to tax philosophy with the — in his highest earning movie years he was probably paying that kind of taxes, too, and was determined to reform the system. There is probably room for a little more graduation than we have now, but it's still a lot better than when a lot of very wealthy people paid no taxes, or next to no taxes, at all because of all the loopholes.

CH: And the 1986 bill has rectified some of that?

MOSSER: Yes, a lot of it.

CH: What about the Neubergeres, Richard Neuberger, Maurine?

MOSSER: Richard, of course, was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1966 — no, 1956, the year that I ran for the Legislature, so he and Maurine both left the Legislature as I entered and I never served with them or was close to them. I thought he was an able senator. Both he and Maurine knew how to dramatize an issue. He was a good writer and took positions,

fairly liberal positions, that I generally agreed with on a lot of civil rights measures and some conservation measures, but I never worked with either one of them.

CH: You said that he could dramatize issues. Can you give me an example of how he would do that?

MOSSER: Well, Maurine's issue comes to mind fastest. That was when she was kneading the margarine. You used to have to put the coloring into the margarine...

CH: The capsule that..

MOSSER: And heat it up. Well, she did that on the floor of the Legislature and got a bill allowing colored margarine through. I'm trying to — conservation is where I have the image of Dick having more of an impact but I can't give you a specific example.

CH: Maurine would have been in the U.S. Senate when you were in the state Legislature, is that right?

MOSSER: Yes. She went back as Dick's wife. She had been in the state Senate in the 1955 and earlier sessions.

CH: Going back just a little earlier, then, what about Walter Norblad. Did you have much connection with him?

MOSSER: I met him, I campaigned for him, but I never worked with him, really.

CH: What was your impression of him as a politician?

MOSSER: I thought he was certainly an effective politician. He made the people think that he was taking care of their interests. Whether he was or not, I never studied his record really closely.

CH: What about Wendel Wyatt?

MOSSER: Wendel, I thought, followed in the tradition of Norblad and was probably a little bit abler, but that's maybe just because I saw more of Wendel over the years for a longer period than I followed Norblad's career.

CH: Al Ullman?

MOSSER: Ullman is someone that, again, I have met but never worked with. I thought he was a very able Legislator. Congressional redistricting, I think, did him in.

CH: Really? It changed his constituency?

MOSSER: It brought in Marion County and a good chunk of the valley.

CH: Why did that work against him?

MOSSER: Well, because he was eastern Oregon and it was an area that hadn't voted for him lots and lots of times and didn't know his name as well as the — it was more than that, of course. The campaign issue against him was that he'd lost touch with the people and lived in Washington and wasn't really from Oregon at all anymore because he was so busy with the Ways and Means Committee back then.

CH: And yet doesn't it seem ironic that his district — I mean, he was chairman of Ways and Means. Maybe it wasn't as powerful as when Wilbur Mills was in there, but still it must have been an extraordinarily powerful position and...

MOSSER: It was.

CH: He must have funneled a lot of money into...

MOSSER: Yes.

CH: Projects in his district. They'll probably never have that chance again. Do you think that was more of their dislike towards him because of that or did Denny Smith have an attraction that was more compelling?

MOSSER: No, I think Denny just ran a hard-hitting campaign and he had the time to campaign and campaigned hard. I certainly don't think Denny Smith was ever as capable as Al Ullman.

CH: What about Edith Green?

MOSSER: I never knew Edith. I heard all kinds of stories about her, generally that she was a difficult person to work for or with. She generally got along well with state politicians, perhaps Tom McCall being an exception because of the fact that they had run against each other initially and she beat him for Congress. But as a Democrat she was fairly Republican, conservative, especially at the end. It seemed to me that the Republicans got along with her better than the Democrats. [Both laugh]

CH: Did you have to work with her on any project or issue?

MOSSER: No, really, no.

CH: Charlie Porter?

MOSSER: Charlie Porter was not one of my favorite people, and I don't think was very effective. He always seemed to have some sort of a far-out position that attracted enough publicity that he could get elected, at least some of the time, but I don't think he was effective.

CH: Ed [Dernow?]. Did you have any contact with him?

MOSSER: No.

CH: What about Bob Duncan?

MOSSER: Bob I knew. He was in the 1957 session of the Legislature with me, sat right in front of me, and we were good friends, I thought very capable.

CH: And then as a congressional representative?

MOSSER: I didn't ever work with him. He was unusual, certainly, in that he got elected from two entirely different congressional districts. He's a capable lawyer — was, because he's retired now. My impression was that he was a capable congressman, but I can't give you any specific instance, now, why.

CH: Looking at some of the leaders in the Legislature at the time, who stands out as being most notable — who were the most notable leaders that you worked with?

MOSSER: I think there were more outstanding people in the House than in the Senate. I worked closely with Debbs Potts and Ward Cook and some of the others that were on Ways and Means and I liked them all and I thought they were effective, but I don't think they were outstanding. John Dellenback, Bob Duncan, Jim Redden, all from the Medford area, two went on to Congress, one would be attorney general and judge. There were others that went on to be judges, Wally Carson, Bob Jones, Berkeley Lent, Lent probably the most outstanding of those.

CH: Did he go on to the supreme court?

MOSSER: Supreme court, yeah, for a long time, was chief justice for a while.

CH: What about Harry Boivin?

MOSSER: Harry was near the end of a very long and very distinguished — he was speaker, I think, while I was still in high school and was president, again, of the Senate in, what, 1965, I think. He was a capable lawyer and an expert Legislator, had the reputation of being crafty, foxy.

CH: Is that an admirable quality, from your point of view?

MOSSER: You know, there was a certain element of deviousness to it, that you didn't always know what Harry's agenda was, but he was regarded as capable of getting whatever that agenda was enacted.

CH: So you think that perhaps he enjoyed that kind of reputation?

MOSSER: Yeah, I think so. I think he had fun at it. Tony Yturri was another old-time, nearing the end of his career as a Legislator, though he may have stayed in — they both

stayed in for some sessions after that, but — again, a capable small-town lawyer with a good sense of humor, liked to play practical jokes.

CH: Are there people in the Legislature now, or after you left there, that fill those roles of lightening things up and making people laugh?

MOSSER: Oh, I'm sure there are. I don't know them as well. I think I've already mentioned Staff Hansel was in there, was chairman of Ways and Means, and was, I think, a — some of the eastern Oregon Legislators really, I think, performed a great service in that they were sometimes more interested in the metropolitan area and understood what needed to be done for it than many of the people that came out of Multnomah County. Staff promoted things like Portland State and special education for the Portland School District and civil rights Legislation, and a good many other things that were very significant to this part of the state.

**[End of Tape 10, Side 1]**

**Tape 10, Side 2**

**1990 December 7**

CH: This is an interview with John Mosser. This is Tape 10, Side B.

What about Ben [Newsome?]?

MOSSER: Ben was nice and was, in my opinion, not very able. He wasn't inept or stupid, but he was not really very able. He was elected president largely because he wasn't really going to dominate anything or anybody. Sort of the compromise coalition candidate. He created some problems for the House because his wife was in the House and she was very sensitive to any criticism of the Senate because her husband was president of the Senate, and I can remember there was one day when poor Kitty broke down in tears and just was standing there sobbing, kind of, and I finally got up and yelled and got the speaker's attention and moved that we adjourn until the next morning.

CH: What was she crying over?

MOSSER: Oh, she thought that people had insulted Ben.

CH: How did she get down on the floor?

MOSSER: She was a representative.

CH: Oh, she was a representative, as well.

MOSSER: She was a representative from there. Because of that experience, I've always been a little bit leery of husband-wife combinations in the Legislature.

CH: What about Clarence Barton?



MOSSER: Clarence, again, was a capable lawyer, though he was basically running a title plant rather than practicing, and was an effective speaker.

CH: Did he have any particular qualities or traits which made him effective or outstanding in some way?

MOSSER: He was a good speaker, he was fair, I thought. Some people might not share that feeling, but I thought he was fair. He was an imposing physical man, though he had a withered arm. He was a tall, fairly handsome, big man. If you looked at where speakers came from after Pat Dooley, they came from the Fourth Congressional District, either Medford, Eugene, Coos Bay. There was a...

CH: Why?

MOSSER: I think a general mistrust of Portland domination of the Legislature, because of numbers, and downstate usually put together a coalition to select somebody from one of these places. Bob Duncan had been the speaker before and had gone on to Congress. Monte would be the next speaker, from Eugene, but Clarence had been there for several sessions by that time and was capable. I wasn't a party to picking him in a Democratic caucus as their candidate, but...

CH: Why didn't that hold true for the Senate, then?

MOSSER: The Senate, most of the time, from the 1957 session on till well into the 1960s, probably even longer than that, was dominated by a coalition of Republicans and conservative Democrats. And again, if you look at where the speakers came from, you had Harry Boivin from Klamath Falls, you had Debbs Potts from Grants Pass, Jason Boe from Reedsport...

CH: Ah, Reedsport. [Both laugh] That got me there.

MOSSER: Ed Fadley from Eugene. I'm not sure the pattern is that different.

CH: That's right, you're absolutely right. I just thought of Jason as being from around here, but he was not. He was from Reedsport. How did you feel about Jason as a Legislator? You were close to him at one point, weren't you?

MOSSER: Yes. You know, it's funny. If you had — he was a freshman in, what, probably 1965, my last session, and Phil Lang came in somewhere, probably 1963, and I don't think you would have picked, in 1963 or 1965, that these were ever going to be leaders at the Legislature. Phil Lang was noted for — at the start of each session he took every bill that had failed in the last session that had any interest and reintroduced it as his bill. So he dumped in maybe 120 bills on the first day of the session. Jason Boe was an optometrist from Reedsport, too. You had the impression he was sort of bored with optometry but not really very serious politically. I think, of the two, that Jason became much more the master politician, somewhat like Packwood in that I think he was more interested in the process, in the institution, than in the substantive positions.

CH: You've mentioned that a couple of times and I'm wondering what the formula is for people who are not outstanding as they come into the Legislature eventually becoming leaders, why it is that these people end up in the positions that they do.

MOSSER: I think a lot of it has to do with longevity.

CH: Being in a district that keeps on...

MOSSER: Being in a district that keeps putting them back and they being content to keep going back. I think mostly they are good at doing favors for other people, at

maneuvering so that over time enough people owe them enough things to achieve those positions and, once in them, Jason was much better, I think, at controlling and staying in office. He did, what, four consecutive terms, or something like that, which is very long in Oregon as president. Phil was speaker for a number of years but, as I've already said, he, I think, diminished the office by trying too hard to stay in.

CH: You had talked a little bit about Montgomery before, Monte Montgomery, but I was just wondering whether you had any other assessments of him as a speaker.

MOSSER: I think he was a good speaker, and certainly was popular, I think, in 1965 and 1967 as speaker with the people in the House. He proved less adept at seeking higher office and I think ultimately had enough financial reversals that he did some things that were not what I would have expected from Monte.

CH: He became rather controversial, didn't he, towards the end, there?

MOSSER: Well, he went into business first, I think, with Pete [Gunner?] and they developed some of the condominium projects, the Inn at the Seventh Mountain, the one on the coast...

CH: Salishan?

MOSSER: No, no, no. It's four or six story...

CH: Oh, Spanish Head?

MOSSER: Inn at Spanish Head, and I think there was one other, and they started making money and then lost it all. Then he was in a foreign trading company that I don't think ever made any significant money. He had had an insurance business and I think that

had gone sour on him, and eventually he got into workmen's comp, running a logging congress, kind of — there was a good deal of controversy over whether he had milked the system, and then I guess this loggers congress felt that he had misappropriated some of their funds.

CH: Who had?

MOSSER: Monte had.

CH: Monte had. Who felt that he had, though?

MOSSER: This logging congress group that...

CH: Logging congress group?

MOSSER: He set up this new outfit to administer workmen's compensation for loggers, and I think it was called something like the logging congress. But anyway, that was what he was executive secretary of.

CH: And that's where he ran into fiscal problems.

MOSSER: I think he had already run into the fiscal problems, but there is where he was finally, I think, indicted for taking funds from the organization and severely criticized by others for having diverted improperly funds from SAIF, the State Accident Insurance Fund, to this logging congress.

CH: You've mentioned Stafford Hansel, and of course I hear his name coming up quite frequently. What was it that made him as effective as I understand, from what you were saying, that he was?

MOSSER: Staff was a good businessman, to begin with. He bought an old army barracks, set of barracks, and turned them into pig houses. I think at one time they were delivering a thousand hogs a week to market. A big operation. He had a good sense of humor. I can remember him pointing to a picture of him and a pen of hogs and saying, "I'm the one with the coveralls on." He was fair, he was able, he worked hard, he, as I've said, had interests that went far beyond his own farm and eastern Oregon constituency, and, again, he stayed a long time. He was in the House for quite a while.

CH: You know, I know that Glenn Jackson wasn't a Legislator, but I see him everywhere.

MOSSER: He was. Quietly.

CH: Could you describe him?

MOSSER: Sure. Glenn was easily the most powerful man in the state. Between heading the biggest utility and State Highway Commission, he could do an enormous number of things to help somebody, or hurt them. This made him an extremely effective fund raiser for anything you wanted funds raised for because all he had to do was pick up the phone and make the calls and the money was there. He was decisive, not very democratic in the sense that he — I only served on one commission with him. That was the Waterfront Commission here in Portland that made the decision to tear up Harbor Drive and create the Waterfront Park, and that was — I've forgotten whether it was three or five of us, Glenn and myself and I think Frank Ivancie, and there may have been one or two others on that, but there were never any minutes of the meetings.

What happened, Glenn would call a meeting, we'd all meet in his office with some highway staff and afterwards some consultants, architects, [inaudible] people. I think we had one public hearing where Belluschi talked to us. But basically Glenn would have some plan that the highway engineers had designed, there was a short tunnel, 500 foot tunnel,

there was a long tunnel, 24 hundred foot tunnel, there was a slightly depressed or a slightly raised — just squeezed the roads together and joined Harbor Drive and Front Avenue and made 10 lanes instead of 14 lanes. The press criticized him a good deal. You know, he really ought to open this up and make it more of a public affair to decide something like this, but basically what happened was Glenn would come out with his new proposal, and usually he'd have talked to McCall and gotten McCall to say, well, maybe that'd be okay, and I'd call up Ed Westerdahl, who was still executive assistant, and say, "Ed, this just won't work," then Tom would come out and say, no, he didn't think it would work, and they'd go back to the drawing room and come up with the next plan.

But really, the thing was, I kept saying, "Where are these cars going, why do we have to have 14 lanes on the waterfront, where are the cars going?" And the ultimate answer that the Highway Commission came up with, when they finally did the traffic study to find out where they — they were all trying to get from the west side to the east side, just looking for another bridge, and so the conclusion was that when the Fremont Bridge was finished, that would route enough of these cars that were just coming down and taking the Morrison or the Steel or some other bridge, around downtown Portland and you didn't have to have it, though the Highway Commission thought by 1990 we would have to have another bridge. Well, maybe that's the bridge down in Oregon City, I don't know, but there doesn't seem to be any great demand that isn't met without Harbor Drive on the waterfront.

CH: Did that also coincide, then, with 405?

MOSSER: 405 was going to be built and the Fremont Bridge was going to be built. The Marquam had already been built. I think the highway plan then called for another freeway bridge down near the Ross Island Bridge to hook up to the Mount Hood Freeway that was supposed to be built. But Glenn could do things so fast that — I remember two ladies came in to see me, one of them a good friend, Lou Beck, and [Jean Sidle?], I think her name is, and they had been working for years trying to get Tryon Creek preserved. They had raised maybe 20 thousand dollars and they wanted me to see if I could raise some more money

and I said, "You know, I think you're going at this the hard way. Why don't you ask Glenn Jackson to make it a state park?" Well, how would they get to see him? I pick up the phone and call Glenn and he says, "Sure. Send them over." They came back an hour later. "He's going to do it. It's going to be a state park. Do you think he's really trying to run a freeway through there? Is he going to ruin it?" "No, no. Down. You won". [Both laugh]

CH: I understand he had a way of resolving disputes among people, too.

MOSSER: Oh, yes. He was really a very, very capable man. He was so powerful that it was really partly just knowing that he had that much power, but partly because he was very good at figuring out how to accommodate different interests. When McCall was first elected he let it be known that maybe he wasn't going to appoint Glenn Jackson to the Highway Commission because maybe he ought to have somebody who was his man instead of Hatfield's man. The phone started ringing off the hook from every member of the Arlington Club, "You've got to keep him." It went on for about a week, and all kinds of pressure coming from Jackson, but eventually they sat down together and Glenn assured him that he was going to be working for Tom McCall and not for Hatfield or anybody else, so he stayed as chairman of the commission.

CH: Why do you think he didn't run for public office?

MOSSER: That was not his style at all. He wanted the power without having to — as I say, he didn't even want minutes kept or the public involved in his decisions. That was not his style. He was a quiet, back room, quick-deal maker.

CH: Any reflections that you have on the Legislature in terms how you feel that it's changed over the years?

MOSSER: I think we've already said something about the fact that, with the creation of offices, it's easier for people to hide. They have administrative assistants, the administrative assistants tend to have their own agendas and they filter things back to their employer and others. The whole process gets much more cumbersome. You've got, instead of 90 egos with secretaries that sometimes got involved, you've now got 180 egos, or more, because many of the committees have also developed separate staffs to a much greater extent. We talked about the amount of money that's spent and the fact that it runs as long as it does and it discourages the professional, or the person who wants to make a living some other way, from running.

CH: Are there other Legislators that we haven't talked about that you recall as being outstanding in some way? We've covered quite a few, but I'm wondering if there's anybody else that we've...

MOSSER: Oh, I'm sure there is. The first session I was down there was a fellow named [Alan Tom?] from Morrow and Rufus, that area, who became a good friend of mine. He was on Ways and Means. Again, an eastern Oregon rancher but with a real interest in the Portland community. He eventually sold his ranches and moved here. Even back then he was on the World Affairs Council, and [had] much broader interests than you might expect from a small-town farmer. Dick Eymann was a long-time Legislator from Eugene that was fairly knowledgeable in tax, was a leader in the Legislature, but I never thought was as competent as his record would indicate.

He worked hard but his judgment was always sort of one notch off, it seemed to me. Although he professed to be an economist, I don't think he really understood the economics of a lot of his proposals. Of course, in later years there have been a number of Legislators, like Vera Katz. A number of the women have been outstanding. Joyce Cohen from Lake Oswego, Jeanette Hanby and one other from Washington County. I guess I would say that in recent years there are a lot more capable women in the Legislature. You tended, back, certainly, in the 1957 and 1960s sessions, to not have as many women. A



few of them, Jean Lewis, Betty Roberts, were capable, but there weren't the number and they didn't stay as long, I don't think.

CH: Do you think there's more acceptance, then, of women in state government?

MOSSER: Yes, I think so, and I also think that more capable women are willing to seek a Legislative career than men, partly because this is a new avenue for women and partly because they have not been used to earning, or accustomed to earning, the larger salaries as executives that — I think to some extent it's less good male competition than a vast improvement in the ability of women.

CH: Are you then inferring that the quality in general of the people that have been going into the Legislature has been diminished somehow?

MOSSER: I think it's been diminished. I think there are now too many people who have never held another significant job, which diminishes their experience and the backgrounds that they bring to the Legislature, and because, at 10 or 20 thousand, depending on how you add up the expense money with the salary, this is still a low-paying job and so nobody of real ability is likely to be seeking it just as a job.

CH: Do you have any other comments that you'd like to make about your years in the Legislature? Any areas that we haven't covered?

MOSSER: No, I don't think so. I enjoyed it. I wouldn't want to go back now.

CH: Why don't we stop here for today, then.

MOSSER: Okay.

**[End of Tape 10, Side 2]**

**Tape 11, Side 1**  
**1990 December 11**

CH: This is an interview with John Mosser in his apartment in Portland, Oregon. The interviewer for the Oregon Historical Society is Clark Hansen. The date is December 11<sup>th</sup>, 1990, and this is Tape 11, Side A.

Where we left off last we were sort of just finishing up with your terms in the Legislature. Were there any other comments you had regarding that?

MOSSER: I don't think so.

CH: What about any of the Mosser plans that we didn't cover?

MOSSER: Oh, a couple of them get into the McCall campaign for secretary of state, and they were really McCall plans, but we had to think of themes for him to use in speeches and to talk to editors, and stuff. One of them was to use funds in the common school fund to invest in scholarships — loans, not scholarships, loans to students. Then, in the elections field, there was a common election day for all the little districts. Up until then one could vote on Monday and another on Tuesday and another on Wednesday and nobody ever came to any of the elections, so the theme was to pick, in addition to the primary-general election May-November dates, a couple of other dates, and say that's the only time you can vote, so they all had to get together and vote at the same time. Those were his proposals in his race for secretary of state, and we put them through in the 1965 session.

CH: Secretary of state is an elective office?

MOSSER: Oh, yes.

CH: Has it always been?

MOSSER: Yes.

CH: They're never appointed?

MOSSER: No. Only appointed when — like Barbara Roberts will now appoint a secretary of state since the office has become vacant by her elevation to the governorship. Same thing when McCall was elected governor, he appointed Clay Meyers. So that's the only appointment — death or resignation or elevation to a higher office.

CH: How did your relationship with Tom McCall originate and evolve?

MOSSER: He was covering the Legislature and interviewed me on various things. He addressed Republican groups of Legislators on how to campaign, he and I worked together on some local projects in the Portland area. I wouldn't say we were close friends, or anything, but I had contact with him for several years before he ran for office.

CH: And that first office that he ran for was secretary of state?

MOSSER: He ran for Congress before that and was beaten by Edith Green.

CH: But you weren't involved in that campaign at all?

MOSSER: No, I wasn't involved in that. That had been several years previous.

CH: So how did you — did you end up as campaign manager?

MOSSER: No, no, no. I was the issues man in his campaigns, and strictly that. I didn't run a committee, or anything else. No, he had Ed Westerdahl and Ron Schmidt in that

secretary of state campaign and also in his campaign for governor. They were both young guys and had been — Ed I knew because he had been one of the lobbyists for Portland General Electric at the Legislature for a couple of sessions. Ron Schmidt was advertising, working for the Lloyd Center. They were the full-time staff, or as close to a full-time staff as he had.

CH: You decided not to run for re-election to the Legislature in 1967, is that right?

MOSSER: That's correct, I did not run in 1966.

CH: Why was it that you decided not to run?

MOSSER: My wife's illness, principally, and I felt that I was going to be needed at home and needed to earn the money to put the kids through college and provide for her medical care, and so on.

CH: You got involved with the secretary of state campaign in which year?

MOSSER: That was 1964, before my last session in the Legislature.

CH: Then what was your next step after that, then?

MOSSER: Well, I really wasn't that active in his campaign for governor in 1966. Again, I worked issues for him, helped him write a speech to present, I think, to the emergency board on taxes, and a few things like that, talked issues with him, contributed to his campaign, but, basically, I went to Europe in August of that — or, I guess it was September and October of that year, so I wasn't around during the last stages of the campaign except for the last two weeks, or something, of it.

CH: How was that campaign?

MOSSER: Well, Tom was a very nervous campaigner. He, in the secretary of state's campaign, I think took to his bed several times for a week or more at a time with almost a nervous breakdown. He was in bed in Klamath Falls, I think, near the end of the gubernatorial campaign. I was never worried about his campaign. He had, from the television exposure, more name familiarity, persona familiarity, than anybody else possibly could have. He had good people running against him but they didn't have a chance, in my opinion.

CH: Who ran against him in the primary?

MOSSER: For governor? Oh, golly. He didn't have serious opposition. Monte Montgomery had talked about it but backed out of the race early, never filed. And I think there were one or two other primary candidates but they were not significant.

CH: And in the general election?

MOSSER: Bob Straub had beaten Howard Belton and I think he ran almost a hundred thousand behind McCall. 400 thousand to 300 thousand.

CH: So it really wasn't really very close.

MOSSER: It wasn't really a close race.

CH: At what point, then, did you become involved in the McCall administration?

MOSSER: The day after the election. Like a good many other people I've seen run for governor, Tom really didn't have any idea who he was going to appoint to any position.

CH: Why is that so common?

MOSSER: Their focus is just on getting elected and they seldom seem to have given it any thought until after the election. I think Barbara Roberts showed some signs that she did give it some thought, but Atiyeh was terrible in that department, Straub was bad, McCall was bad. I think the morning after election some of Tom's big contributors, Ted [Bruneau?] and a couple of other businessmen from Portland, I can't remember who, called me in and asked if I would be his executive assistant and I said, "No, I couldn't do that. If somebody was going to do that he had to stay with him, and I'd help set things up but I couldn't stay." There was some question as to whether Ed Westerdahl should be appointed. I urged that he be appointed. He and Tom had battles. Their temperaments were not — they'd had some terrible battles in the secretary of state's race, but not so bad in the governor's race. Anyway, they finally agreed, yeah, that Ed was all right and...

CH: What was the source of their disagreement?

MOSSER: Oh, just personality. Tom was nervous and liberal and liked to shoot from the hip on some things and Ed was very methodical, organized, a lobbyist for PGE, pretty conservative. Some of it had to do with the details of campaigning, some of it philosophical. You know, they were together so much, and a good campaign manager should tell a candidate what he's doing wrong, and the candidates usually don't like it, or are at least uncomfortable taking that much direction.

CH: So you feel that he was doing his job, then?

MOSSER: He was doing his job. So then Tom asked me if I would treat it like one last session of the Legislature and do the budget for him and I said, "Yeah, I would." Ed and I

were the first two, and then Ron Schmidt, and the three of us, with Tom, largely picked the rest of the staff.

CH: So you were part of a kitchen cabinet of sorts?

MOSSER: Yeah. Probably one of the leading people in it. I was the one who had the Legislative budget background, and a lot of the people that were selected, Ed Branchfield was his lawyer, legal assistant, his public utility commissioner, and my replacement, all those were positions that I made recommendations on that generally got followed.

CH: How do you feel about the original staff that he ended up with?

MOSSER: It was a good staff. Ron Schmidt was not seasoned the way Travis Cross was, but I think every governor has what I call his warm fuzzy. This is a guy he just likes to have around, somebody who doesn't argue with him and tell him he's a jerk all the time and that he ought to be doing things he's not doing, that just holds his hand and his coat and his briefcase and says how great he is. I think that McCall was somewhat intimidated by Travis Cross, who was a real pro by that time. He'd been on the national scene with Hatfield and with some others. Also, with his news background, I think McCall really wanted to be his own press secretary and he felt that he could do that with Ron and would have more trouble with a pro like Travis Cross. Even so, they had a number of arguments early in the administration.

CH: With Ron Schmidt?

MOSSER: Yeah. And I would have said if there was somebody who was going to get fired or leave early, Ron would probably be it. He was the only one who stayed on through all eight years.



CH: How do you account for that? Adaptability?

MOSSER: Adaptability, the fact that he really did like Tom and took some of the guff that other people had a harder time taking. He was the one who had to, more than anybody else, I think, take the calls from Tom's mother and help with some of the family problems that Tom had, and so got to be very close to him.

CH: How would you characterize Tom McCall's relationship with Mark Hatfield?

MOSSER: Strained.

CH: And for what reason?

MOSSER: Well, I'm not sure. I would guess that maybe Tom had sometimes said some things that weren't all that flattering about Hatfield, but they were strained and Hatfield furthered it. For example, I wanted to start work on the budget as early as possible and so I went to Freeman Holmer, who was Hatfield's budget director, and said, "Can I get the early stuff on the budget?" And he wanted to, but he came back and he said, "No. Hatfield says that he's governor and until it's published you can't see any of it." So I went to Leander Quiring, who was the deputy director of finance, who actually ran the printing plant, and Lee got me the galley proofs of the budget before it came out. It was just that kind of petty 'keep your distance, I'm still governor,' kind of thing. He was the last outgoing governor to present a budget.

In those days the outgoing governor presented a budget and then the incoming governor had to put together a different budget, probably, and Hatfield really stuck it to us. I mean, he counted revenues that weren't there and put money in for everybody. About the first thing I had to do was cut about 40 million bucks out of his budget, and that was a big percentage on a 600 million dollar budget, and that's before you even started to put any new programs in. So it was not — you know, I got along well with people like Warne

Nunn and Travis and Freeman Holmer and Lee Quiring, and all the rest of them, and so did Tom, but Hatfield, to the extent that he could, made them keep their distance from us.

CH: How do you account for that, since they were both liberal, or moderate liberals, and they were both Republicans and...

MOSSER: Egos.

CH: Had they clashed often in the previous years?

MOSSER: I don't really recall it, but I think there was definitely some strained relations there.

CH: But the people underneath them got along with each other...

MOSSER: Yeah.

CH: For each administration, each staff.

MOSSER: Sure. Travis Cross pulled some pranks. He said to McCall and Westerdahl, "You've really got to go up to-" I think it was Fort Lewis, "and go through the civil defense program." So they got on the train one day and went up to Fort Lewis and came back and said, "Travis, why did we go up there? There wasn't anything there." He said, "That's what I wanted you to know." There was one old janitor-type guy and a fallen-down barracks full of out-of-date stuff. That was the Northwest civil defense program.

CH: He couldn't have gotten you up there any other way?

MOSSER: Well, I think he was having fun.

CH: How did you organize the administration financially, then, in that first budget that you had to do? You were talking about the cuts that you had to make and the new programs that you were trying to establish.

MOSSER: Basically, Tom wanted to do almost everything, and I told him he could have one big program, minorly funded but a start on one big program, and one little one. He couldn't do both mental health and prisons, he couldn't do the environment and parks, he had to pick. I think the places where he put money in that first budget were in the environment, and, boy, it was peanuts. I think we had five million that got us 15 million of federal matching money for sewer grants and a little money for, basically, tax credits for businesses that did certain things to clean up, and a little extra money for staff for the Sanitary Authority. And I think he put some money into mental health, mostly community programs. That's about the extent of the innovation.

CH: But his primary choice was in environmental...

MOSSER: Yeah.

CH: How did he come to that decision?

MOSSER: He'd done his television documentary called "Pollution in Paradise." He was a fisherman and an outdoorsman and was aware that things were bad and were not getting better fast enough. The Willamette greenway was another new program but we didn't have any money for that. We just finally persuaded the Legislature, without giving us any money or the power of condemnation, to have the authority to accept grants and acquire easements and do whatever we could on our own, and that's what Tom did. He got some Rockefeller money and, again, matched it with some federal money and some highway money for state parks, and acquired a good amount of the greenway.

CH: You refer to him as finding this money and doing these things, but was he actually initiating that or was that under your department or somebody else?

MOSSER: Carl Unthank, at the University of Oregon, had written both Straub and McCall, and Straub had raised it in the campaign as a program. Tom was a big enough person to say, "Okay, Straub may get the credit for this but I don't care. It's a good idea, let's go ahead." So that was in his inaugural message. Well, it wasn't that popular with a lot of the Legislators. They were getting heat from the farmers and the businesses along the Willamette that were very skeptical of what was going to happen to their land. The budget was very tight. The state was going into recession and I kept having to revise it. I knew it was going to be bad so I started out with, instead of a definite amount of revenue, a spread within which revenue would fall and I kept gradually backing it down to the lowest level during the session so I could figure out some way to squeeze a little more out.

CH: That must have been frustrating for you.

MOSSER: Oh, sure. It would have been lovely to have had a ton of money, but it was more of a challenge, probably, to have to scrape things together.

CH: How long did you work with the budget, then? Just that first year?

MOSSER: Oh, not even a full year. I started by late November, and there wasn't any money to pay me until Tom was in office, which was mid-January, so I worked almost two months before I started on the payroll, and then I stayed until about mid-May, I think, and just said I — by that time most of the budget was through. I really felt the need to get out of there. I had been working a hundred hours or more a week for seven months, something like that, and I just decided that that was it, I was leaving.

CH: Did you have any idea as to where you were headed?

MOSSER: Back to law practice and the family.

CH: When you left, you left on good terms, though, and...

MOSSER: Oh, yeah. There was one problem. I tried to get various people to be my successor almost from day one that I was in a position to do anything about it. I can remember that I talked to John Lobdell, who was in the revenue department, and I talked to [Jonelle Hill?], who was Hatfield's outgoing public utility commissioner, and tried to get them to agree to take it on and they wouldn't. Eventually what we did was Lee Quiring became the director until the session adjourned, and then the other guy I'd wanted to get, [Clayton Penwell?], who was the Legislative fiscal officer at the time, he wouldn't leave until he had finished his job for that Legislature, but he came in then as finance director.

CH: So there was a fairly smooth transition?

MOSSER: Fairly smooth. It would have been better if I could have found somebody earlier.

CH: So you returned to private law practice then?

MOSSER: Yeah.

CH: And how long did you continue in that before your next political step?

MOSSER: They gave me all of two months. Harold Wendel had died and Tom, to dramatize his pollution cleanup, had appointed himself chairman of the Sanitary Authority. Well, that was a nice public relations gesture but it was a terrible mistake in every other

respect because this was a commission that had to hold a couple of days of meetings every month and that had a lot of hot potatoes to handle in the way of having to issue orders to cities or businesses to clean up and it was not the place where you wanted the governor very long. So I left in May and by July they were asking me to take over and replace Tom as chairman of the Sanitary Authority.

CH: In that appointment is it necessary for approval by anyone?

MOSSER: It wasn't then, wasn't then. One minor flaw, Tom gave me a certificate appointing me as chairman of the Sanitary Authority but the statutes actually provide that the Sanitary Authority elects its own chairman. There was a little bit of 'we're not quite so sure we want this guy as chairman,' but they went along better than — later I had a similar experience under Straub with the Land Conservation and Development Commission, and there was almost a revolt. They almost refused to vote for me for chairman.

CH: In this case who were the other members of the board of the Sanitary Authority?

MOSSER: Wonderful people. There was Barney McPhillips, who had been on for ages — I think most of them had been on for ages, as a matter of fact. He was a retired vice president who had been in charge of the McMinnville branch of the U.S. National Bank and had an extensive farm down there outside of McMinnville. [Herman Meyerjurgan?], who had been the chairman of the Fish Commission for years, another old, retired man, a fairly wealthy family. Storrs Waterman, who was a chemical engineer with Pennwalt Company that had a big plant on the Willamette in Portland. And Ed Harms, who was the city attorney for Springfield and a lawyer in the Eugene area.

CH: What are their terms of office?

MOSSER: I think we were appointed for four-year terms. I was appointed to fill a vacancy for two years.

CH: Did you hold the chair?

MOSSER: Yes.

CH: When you came in you held the chair?

MOSSER: Yes.

CH: And that was the aspect of your appointment that bothered the other people the most?

MOSSER: A little bit. You know, some of them had been on for years and years, and it was one thing to have the governor, but who was this new upstart who was going to be the chairman?

CH: What kind of credentials did you have to come in to that position?

MOSSER: Well, I chaired a number of committees, but that was about it.

CH: How was that transition for you?

MOSSER: It came very fast.

**[End of Tape 11, Side 1]**

**Tape 11, Side 2****1990 December 11**

CH: This is an interview with John Mosser. This is Tape 11, Side B.

So the transition was quick, then?

MOSSER: They had told me when I was appointed in July that I really wouldn't have to do much till September, but by August we were holding hearings and it was kind of interesting. We held hearings in Eugene. Charlie Porter threw a stink bomb of mercaptans, which is the thing that creates the odor in pulp mills that everybody dislikes, in the hearing room and we had to evacuate. We drove to Corvallis for another hearing and the field burning was so bad that it was raining straw and you couldn't see the sun on the freeway. You had to have your lights on. Just a cloud of smoke and raining straw. So anyway, we held hearings all over on this thing then had our meeting up here in Portland in September to make a decision.

The night before, Tom was in Hawaii and I talked to Westerdahl and said, "We'd better call him on this because it's really politically sensitive and everybody down in the valley was up in arms about it." Ed and I, on the other hand, thought there was — that the industrial community would be very upset if you turned down a new industry. This really did look like so much better a pulp plant than anything that was in existence in Oregon that if I turned it down it was going to be very hard to say that we shouldn't shut down everything else. Anyway, Tom said, "Go ahead and make the decision. That's what I appointed you for."

So I sat up and wrote this long dissertation on pulp mills and I read that at the start of the meeting, and my recommendation was that it be approved, that it was not going to be perfect in air quality but it was far superior to any plant in existence in the state and would set a standard that we could then upgrade the other plants to, and that in water I thought it was extremely clean and they had agreed to parallel all of the control systems so that if something failed they had a backup system. So I recommended approval. I got



barely a vote, three to two in favor. [Herman Meyerjurgan?] thought that we couldn't stand another one as far as fish were concerned, and, I forgot, I think Barney McPhillips voted against it. I think I had Storrs Waterman and Ed Harms with me.

Well, then, at the same meeting I had read this research report from the federal pollution control lab, which at that time the federal didn't have a big, extensive bureaucracy but they had a very good laboratory. A guy named [Aggie?], Jim [Aggie?], was the head of it. They had written this report on the Willamette in Portland saying that, if you shut down the turbines and the diversion of water at the falls at Oregon City, you could put oxygen back in the river and clean it up at the critical falls stage. So our staff was skeptical of that, didn't think it would work, but I thought it would and so I proposed that we ask the industries — we didn't even have the authority to require it yet, ask the industries, which were Publishers Paper and Portland General Electric, to shut down their turbines and diversions until the salmon run could get through. They complied and, sure enough, the salmon run did get through for the first time in 30, 40 years. From then on I had the full support of the commission. I don't think we ever had a split vote again.

CH: And that was the turning point?

MOSSER: Yeah. It also — industry knew that we were not anti-industry and would approve something that was clean. The environmentalists saw that we could be tough enough to shut down industries, or ask them to shut down, and so we had kind of a honeymoon of — in all the two years that I was on the commission no industry ever appealed an order to clean up that we issued.

CH: How was public reaction and media reaction to that decision?

MOSSER: It was generally favorable. *The Oregonian* ran the full text of the thing that I had written and had editorial comment. Most of the papers — you know, some of them

were skeptical of one thing but liked another. Anyway, it got a lot of attention and when they showed the fish going up the ladder, that made a lot of difference.

CH: What were some of the other major decisions and issues that you had to deal with on that authority?

MOSSER: Oh, Wigwam burners that threw sawdust and ash out, field burning, the meat packing industry, the asphaltic paving industry, various chemical processes, the aluminum plants, tremendous — and cities and municipal bodies that needed to clean up or improve their treatment. Almost everything needed some attention. We set pretty high standards, probably the highest in the country at the time.

CH: Your period on that authority was from when to when?

MOSSER: Two years, approximately. I think I went on in July and the term ended June 30, or something, two years later and I said I didn't want to be reappointed. In fact, I think I was ineligible to be reappointed. One of the strange things about federal law which had been passed was that a majority of the Oregon commission that had led the nation in cleanup was ineligible to serve after that. The federal law said that nobody that got more than 10% of their income from anyone who had a waste discharge permit could serve on any part of the program that was federally funded. Storrs Waterman — Pennwalt, of course, had a permit. My firm were attorneys for the Port of Portland, the Port of Portland had a waste discharge permit for the airport. Ed Harms was city attorney for the city of Springfield, it had a waste discharge permit for its municipal plant. So none of the three of us could serve.

CH: Would you have served otherwise?

MOSSER: I'm not sure. I was beginning to see what I thought was an extremist attitude that I thought was going to make it very difficult to do what we had been doing, which was, we set tough standards, we had an excellent staff, they worked with the engineers in an industry to design something that was practical, we helped people conform and comply when they wanted to. The federal law was setting up this adversary process where you regulate, you order, you enforce, you fill out endless paperwork, but you don't cooperate. At the same time, the citizens were beginning to act a little crazy. There was a group on the McKenzie River that wanted tertiary treatment and sewers on both sides of the river, and what they were proposing was something that was going to cost each home owner over a hundred thousand dollars for their little summer home that had just — you know, it made no sense. But this was beginning to be — the people were beginning to be irrational. It had to be perfect at once. They didn't understand the costs. And so it wasn't a bad time to get out.

CH: What do you consider your primary accomplishments aside from — you've mentioned so many things here, the wigwam burners, were you able to outlaw them or regulate them?

MOSSER: Yeah, we set a schedule and were phasing them out. I think it was a few years after I was off the commission before the last wigwam burner was shut down. And actually, this was the kind of thing that made eminent sense. That was a total waste. The chips and sawdust that they were burning had value to a pulp mill, but they were just burning it. Bark, well, that didn't have as much value, but even that had a use in landscaping. They were wasting an awful lot and creating a pollution problem at the same time. I saw instances where people would put in a log chipper and start making chips for pulp out of stuff they had been burning, and the return was 40, 50, 60% a year on their investment. That's the kind of money they were throwing away. A guy at Publishers Paper told me that when we ordered them to clean up the mill at Oregon City and they had to go

through and check everything, they found that they had been flushing finished pulp into the river. They just didn't know what they were doing.

CH: How did your staff work with these people?

MOSSER: There were very competent engineers, both in the air and water quality fields, and they were willing to make suggestions, to review plans in advance and comment on them. They knew what would work and wouldn't work and they didn't ask for things that wouldn't work. In fact, there was one — there was an aluminum plant that was proposed for the coast, and this was going to be a reduction plant where they were going to bring in bauxite and turn it into alumina, which is what they make aluminum out of, and in the process it creates a red mud. The people that were proposing this plant didn't know what they were doing. They proposed things that — they were going to make it so clean that my staff said it won't work. There is no place in the world that can reach that standard of purity. We actually issued them the permit [but] they never built the plant because when they woke up, what they had proposed wouldn't work, and by then, of course, how could anybody change it for them. But my staff would try to head off that kind of unreasonable expectation, but where something was practical, then the fact that it cost some money didn't prevent us from saying you've got to do it.

CH: You had mentioned a few minutes ago that you really didn't have any authority to penalize...

MOSSER: Well, that was only at that first meeting. The law that we had passed in the session of the Legislature that gave the Sanitary Authority some increased power didn't come into effect, I think, for another two weeks. So at that time we could only request. Afterwards, we did have authority.

CH: What was your authority afterwards?

MOSSER: Oh, it grew. I mentioned the last time that while I was head of the commission and heading for the next Legislative session, the 1969 session, I had had the lobbyists write a program that particularly increased requirements for air pollution, but also water quality.

CH: You had mentioned field burning. What did you do there?

MOSSER: I really think that relatively little progress has been made in field burning. Some fields are not now burned that were burned then. There were a larger amount of burning. Basically, even back then everybody said you didn't have to burn the annual rye grass fields. They still burn some of them. The generally accepted view was that burning was the most efficient method of controlling certain disease in the perennial grass fields. We put through research programs and gradual control of the system where you have to call up and get approval to burn your field. And only so many fields, where they think the wind conditions are going to be right, could get burned on a specific day.

CH: So you did establish that.

MOSSER: Well, we established the program but we didn't end field burning to any — and all these research programs have basically produced clunking machinery that doesn't work very well. I think some of the big farmers today really can get by without field burning, but the smaller ones, it's the only thing they've got that works. This field burning is not new. I saw pictures of Ethiopians firing their fields, as they had done for thousands of years in Africa, to improve the grazing.

CH: Natives did that here, too, didn't they?

MOSSER: Yeah, sure.

CH: What other things did you accomplish during your tenure with the authority?

MOSSER: The meat packing industry was one of the most interesting hearings. Most of it is located out on the slough, Multnomah Channel, here in north Portland, and we set a hearing to order cleanup of both water and air pollution in the meat packing industry. They all came in, hired a very able attorney, George Mead, who wanted to get up and make a presentation on their behalf. I said, "Well, George, we'll let you make your presentation and we'll hear from all your people, but before we do that I'd like you to hear what the problem is as other people see it." And the staff had rounded up these wonderful witnesses. There was a black professional who lived out on a bluff overlooking the Columbia River and had had to abandon a big party they were having in their back yard because the odor was so bad, and there was a little, old German woman who said it was just like Auschwitz. We put on this parade of witnesses and then we adjourned for lunch and came back, and when we came back George Mead got up and said they had decided that they would clean up.

CH: And they didn't present their case?

MOSSER: No.

CH: Sounds like you were fairly persuasive.

MOSSER: A lot of it was orchestration, and many of those people that had come in ready to fight said they knew they were doing the wrong thing but none of them thought they could afford to clean up unless everybody had to clean up. Well, I'm not sure they're still all that clean. I'm sure there are still problems. But at least you could persuade them that they had to make the effort, and that everybody else was going to have to make the effort, and they would generally agree to do something and try.

CH: Any other notable successes?

MOSSER: Asphalt plants. I think Barney McPhillips comment was, "They think they're clean if you can see the plant". [Both laugh] Bag houses, wet scrubber systems went in on those everywhere. All the pulp mills really did have to spend a lot of money, but it was money well spent. If they had waited it would have cost them twice as much 10 years later, or more than that.

CH: Sewage treatment?

MOSSER: Yes. All the plants, municipal plants, were generally primary or secondary — Portland was primary treatment, which means that you chlorinated it but you didn't hold it in big ponds and stir it up and beat oxygen into it until it was relatively clean, and nobody had tertiary treatment at that time. After I left the Sanitary Commission the next job I took on was to head something called the Clean Water for Life Committee that organized the unified service area district in Washington County and consolidated all the cities and sewer districts there, something like 16 of them, and put through sewers for — I think the basic trunk sewers are big enough to handle a population of over half a million. The thing was, at that point the state put up 25% of the money and the federal government put up 50%, sometimes 60%, so that the local community only had to put up about 15%, 25%. Sewers were still expensive, but people that dragged their feet, like east Multnomah County, are now spending something like 10 times as much per house and there isn't any federal aid anymore, to speak of. It's more like 75% local money at this point.

CH: Were you trying to deal with the east Multnomah County situation at the time?

MOSSER: We were urging more than commanding. Portland needed to clean up its sewers. Their storm and sanitary sewers were all mixed together and every time there was a heavy rain they'd overflow the whole system. Their treatment was primary when it didn't overflow. So there were a lot of priorities for attention in Multnomah County, and that was

pretty unorganized territory out there. They didn't have sewer districts, they didn't have much in the way of community spirit, it didn't seem to me. Whereas Washington County was organizing park and recreation districts, sewer districts, and other things, Multnomah County was content to do a lot of it on the cheap. And Washington County had to have sewers because that clay soil, wherever there wasn't a sewer it was running down the streets and across the playgrounds, and everything else, whereas in east Multnomah County it's a huge sand and gravel bed that's been built over and so they can get away for a long time with letting it just drain down.

CH: Well, this Clean Water for Life Committee was after you left the Sanitary Board?

MOSSER: Yes. I think the election was in the spring of 1970, something like that. It might have been the fall of 1969.

CH: So you were doing this while you were also handling your law practice as well?

MOSSER: Yes.

CH: Was that a paid position?

MOSSER: No. I never had a paid — when I was director of finance, that was one of the highest paid positions in state government. I think the only things that paid more were the doctors who headed public health and the highway engineer and the college presidents. The salary, top of the range, was 19 thousand dollars, and I worked for seven months, got paid for five, and by the time I had to have a separate apartment in Salem and eat all my meals out and commute, I figured my expenses ate up the entire salary, that's the only paid position, outside of the Legislature, I ever had in government.

CH: So all these other positions that you've had have been — you've donated your time.



MOSSER: Yes. What I found was that I could afford to donate a quarter to a third of my time and still make a very good living, but I could not possibly afford to work a government job full-time.

CH: So it was a practical consideration, then.

MOSSER: Yeah.

CH: Where was your next move, then, after that, after the Clean Water Committee?

MOSSER: I think I was on minor things around the — I had just finished being president of OMSI in 1966-1968, two years. I got on to the Civic Theater I think about that time. I was on — it was some Portland commission that Terry Schrunk appointed me to that looked at planning, and I was still working trying to get the Metropolitan Study Commission follow-up.

CH: At what point were you on the Portland Waterfront Commission?

MOSSER: That was late 1960s, 1968 or 1969, probably. It was during Tom's first term. It was a commission that, as I said, met rarely and didn't keep minutes or have large studies to look at. It didn't take much time.

CH: This was run by Glenn Jackson?

MOSSER: Yeah.

CH: They were fairly effective in creating the Waterfront Park?

MOSSER: Yeah. Once the Highway Commission gave up the notion that they had to have 14 lanes of freeway, or whatever, to handle traffic, then the last obstacle was the Journal building, and that Ivancie, with state highway money, largely, took care of getting rid of. It took time to develop, and I think we all had some hopes that there would be more people activity and events than there were for a long time. I think it's now finally getting to have the kind of attractors that bring large crowds of people down there. There was a period, certainly, when it was first developed when it was more old men sleeping on the grass than it was a vital area.

CH: But you feel that since then it's evolved into a...

MOSSER: It's evolved, and is still evolving. At that time, actually...

**[End of Tape 11, Side 2]**

**Tape 12, Side 1**  
**1990 December 11**

CH: This is an interview with John Mosser in his apartment in Portland, Oregon. The interviewer for the Oregon Historical Society is Clark Hansen. The date is 12-11-90, and this is Tape 12, Side A.

You were saying that most of the land along the waterfront had been gradually been converted into parking lots.

MOSSER: Yeah. The fire station was the only new building. Things like the Benjamin Franklin Building and the Marriott Hotel, and even the Crown Plaza, all these buildings that you can see on the waterfront now, weren't there then. Certainly none of the development, RiverPlace, which was then a plywood plant falling down. But one of the problems we had, again, was once we succeeded in saying, yes, we can have a continuous strip of park along the waterfront, then there were people who wanted to move it five blocks back into the center of town and you had to sort of say, whoa, this is a small city. It's hemmed in by hills and river and we need some space to develop things downtown, not just a park.

CH: How did you feel about the more recent proposal to move the freeway back on the other side of the river?

MOSSER: I felt it was pretty unrealistic in that they weren't going to create a very big area. I felt the freeway noise would still be pervasive in most of that district and that, for the expense of moving it a few blocks, it really wasn't going to create any wonderful space on that bank of the river. If it had been moved 10 or 15, 25 blocks into the east side, that might have made a difference, but by then you're probably running into the Lloyd Center as you go to the north and...

CH: Couldn't they have sunk the freeway below surface, below grade, like they did with 405 over here on the other side, and eliminate a lot of the noise, or built walls that would have...

MOSSER: Well, you've got a couple of different problems. One is that you — I'm sure that you can do this. It gets very expensive, and all the more expensive because, unlike 405 which just has to have ordinary streets bridged across it, on the east bank you're dealing with all the bridge approaches, which are a lot of spaghetti already, and if you start putting all the spaghetti below ground to connect to a freeway, you've got some big problems.

CH: You had mentioned before the Board of Higher Education and I was wondering where that fit in with the scheme of things here.

MOSSER: I think I went on that in 1970, fall of 1970. I had been interested in education all along and had sat on the Ways and Means Committee that did higher education's budget for two sessions and I thought it would be kind of interesting to do that one, so I suggested to Tom that, if he wanted, I'd take that one. I think I spent about a year between going off the Sanitary Authority and agreeing to take on that one.

CH: Was he pressing you to take anything else?

MOSSER: No, not at the time.

CH: So what was your original motive, then, for mentioning this to him?

MOSSER: It was something that interested me.

CH: What was that experience like?

MOSSER: Like punching a bag of marshmallows.

CH: [Laughs] It doesn't sound very satisfying to me.

MOSSER: It was the least satisfying commission I ever served on. Power is so diffused and there is so much suspicion of anybody that isn't a full-time academic, that it's very hard to do anything. I think I accomplished maybe two things in five years on that commission.

CH: What was that?

MOSSER: Every campus had a master plan. The master plan for Portland State called for 30 thousand students, the master plan for Corvallis and Eugene each called for about 25 thousand students, Ashland I think only had a master plan for 15 thousand students, Eastern Oregon maybe for six thousand. In any event, all of them had master plans that called for twice as much as was there or likely to be there in what I considered the foreseeable future, and the result was that there was really no planning because every department could show itself expanding to double or more in size. If one of them was crimped down to only one and a half times its size and another one was put at three times its size, it still didn't amount to any decision. Nothing was restricted, no decisions were really being made.

Finally, just before I went off the commission, my last year on it, we put enrollment ceilings on all the schools that required them for the first time to start making decisions about which missions that school was going to emphasize and which ones it was going to give up. The other area where I think I had some impact — this was, of course, right after the Vietnam — actually, still during Vietnam at the start of it when I was on. There was a great deal of agitation on the campuses. Students, would storm a president's office and camp there for days. One of the things that I tried to do was to get more student involvement in various ways. Ralph Nader's OSPIRG — PIRG movement was starting and

we had some fairly close votes on the commission to allow PIRGs to be formed on the campuses. We got the statute changed in, what, 1973, probably, the Legislature to put two student members on the Board of Higher Education. Generally, I tried to get the students involved in the system and away from demonstrating, and I think we had some success with that.

CH: Were you involved in any of the — well, the controversies regarding the student demonstrations? Being on the board, did they have to decide upon how to handle the demonstrators?

MOSSER: Oh, yeah. It was frequent that we would have large groups of students attending one of our higher education meetings, protesting an increase in tuition or demanding that their fees be used for something they wanted or...

CH: Where to after that? What else did you do for the McCall administration? You had mentioned working on the beach bill and, I think, the bottle bill, too?

MOSSER: The bottle bill was an entirely different role. We were lobbyists for the industry, and primarily for Blitz Weinhard, so my role in that was a paid role as an attorney.

CH: Anything else that you did for the McCall administration?

MOSSER: On Tom's second campaign I had a minor role, again on issue strategy.

CH: This would have been the 1970 election?

MOSSER: Yeah.

CH: Where to from there?

MOSSER: Well, 1974 was the campaign I ran for Bob Straub.

CH: You had known him in the Legislature.

MOSSER: No.

CH: No? When did he come into the Legislature?

MOSSER: I think it was during that period when I was out, 1969 — no, 1959-1961. I've forgotten whether he was there in 1963 or not. I didn't have any contact with him if he were.

CH: Do you recall any impression you might have had of his work in the Legislature?

MOSSER: I don't think it was that significant. I had known him as state treasurer and from the campaigns that he ran against McCall, but that was subsequent to his Legislative service. I don't think he was in the Legislature very long. He had been in county government down in Lane County.

CH: How was he able to rise so quickly, then, if he didn't have a lot of time in the Legislature preparing him for the governorship?

MOSSER: He was willing to campaign and [was] pretty much a self-starter, I would say. He made money so that he could devote the time to campaigning.

CH: You've talked a little bit about being campaign chairman for him but I was wondering how you got into that kind of a relationship with him.

MOSSER: He came to me in the spring of 1974, late winter, or something like that, and asked me if I would serve on his campaign committee, and I said yeah. He had Joe Smith, I think, heading his campaign committee, and several people on it, and it was very disorganized. I think there were three candidates on the Democratic side, Betty Roberts and Bob, and I've forgotten who the other one [was]. Anyway, Bob's showing was — he just barely got the nomination. And I said if he wanted me to continue, I didn't want to be part of it if it was going to be run the same way.

The polls at that point were showing that he was going to lose to Vic Atiyeh about two to one, and he was in debt from the primary, and I just didn't think anything was being run the way it ought to be run if he was going to win, and so he agreed. His style had always been, and he'd always had campaign people that shared that style, that you had to get a headline every day. It didn't matter what it was. You did something dramatic, you created some kind of a stir, anything to get a headline. My philosophy was that you really did need to pay some attention to put together some consistency in theme, that you needed — my preference for a campaign is three themes that you can develop variations on but that you constantly come back to so that you create some feeling that you stand for something and have thought it through and can present it. Well, this shooting from the hip tended to — you know, you'd get one group on your side one day and make them mad the next day. It didn't seem to me to be very efficient.

So Bob agreed to a number of constraints. He agreed that he would let me form a steering committee that would analyze issues. We wouldn't ever tell him what his position was but we would tell him whether to present it in one way or another or skip that one and concentrate on something else as far as having an effective campaign. He was a very difficult candidate in a lot of ways. He did stick to those rules, but one of the real frustrations I had with him, particularly after McCall who was extremely literate — it was a joy to work with Tom on a speech. Tom would type, I would throw ideas, he would suggest different wording. We'd write a speech together just sort of easily and Tom could read it beautifully with the emphasis of a television anchorman. Bob Straub stuttered, and the only way Bob



Straub could control his stuttering was not to read anything. If he read, he stuttered. He could not read a speech.

He felt he had to be sort of free-flowing. If he got into trying to — memorizing a speech was just as bad. So this, to me, limited what you could do. We'd finally get, "Okay, Bob, these two sentences have to be in the text. You have to read those two sentences so that when we give a quote to the press it will be there." But that was one kind of difficulty. He worked hard at raising money but, my God, I don't think we had a hundred — you know, they just got through a race where both of them spent over two million and one of them nearly four. We spent 175 thousand dollars, I think, in the general election.

CH: You mean it was that much more of a primary contest than...

MOSSER: You just didn't raise or spend that kind of money then.

CH: Was the primary a tougher campaign than the general election turned out to be?

MOSSER: I think it was an election that Vic Atiyeh lost. He had never campaigned statewide before. He did not have effective television commercials. It was kind of jerky, home-made movie-kind of — very ineffective. Where he had what looked like a huge lead as we came out of the primary, we very quickly got him on the defensive and he never recovered from it so that the — it was close until fall, but I felt by fall that we were pulling away and were going to win. The primary should not have been as tough as it was. It was just a totally disorganized campaign with some moderately formidable people. But he'd run statewide four times, twice for state treasurer and twice for governor before, so he was by far the best known.

CH: You had known Vic Atiyeh for quite some time at that point.

MOSSER: Yes.

CH: How did he feel about your campaigning?

MOSSER: I think he was hurt. Actually, I misjudged — when I agreed to go to work for Straub, I had not expected Vic to be the candidate. Clay Meyers was running and I thought Clay would beat Vic. It's very seldom that a Legislator really runs an effective first statewide race. You can see all kinds of them that — they may be president of the Senate or speaker of the House, but they just don't get to first base when they start running statewide.

CH: Why is that?

MOSSER: I don't know, except that, really, they think that everybody in the state knows them and that they've been in this great position of visibility, and it's almost invisible. The average citizen doesn't have any idea who's president of the Senate or speaker of the House. A lot of them have come from relatively small places. Ben Musa ran for governor from The Dalles, Boyd [Overholtz?]. They tend to get beat, unless they have another candidate from the Legislature against them and then one of them has to win. So I really hadn't expected Vic — you know, Clay Meyers had run several times statewide, had been delegates to national conventions even before that, head of the Young Republicans, and whatnot, and I thought he was going to be the candidate and I didn't think much of him as a potential governor. So I agreed to work for Straub, and having agreed to work for Straub, I didn't think I should shift when Atiyeh got the nomination. But it was a long time before Vic appointed me to anything.

CH: Did you have any talks with him about it? I mean, did you sit down and explain how this had happened?

MOSSER: No.

CH: So — go ahead.

MOSSER: Well, I was going to say it quickly became more difficult because, as I say, he had come out of the primary in what looked like a strong position and the campaign that we started running really got him on the defensive in a hurry and I think he figured that I was the one who had turned it around and beaten him.

CH: But then he ended up running against Straub again after that and...

MOSSER: And winning, yes.

CH: Winning. Did you work on the Straub campaign that time?

MOSSER: Only on the fringes of it. I was head of the Land Conservation and Development Commission and there was a ballot measure to repeal land-use planning that I was chairing the committee on, and so I really was pretty much on the fringe.

CH: Maybe you could describe the appointment to the Land Conservation and Development Commission and what you did for them.

MOSSER: That was not one that I asked to be on, but Straub asked me to take it. It was a very controversial program at the time. L. B. Day had been the chairman and had made enemies almost everywhere in the state by going around telling local officials that they had to do this and that and had built up a great deal of resentment.

CH: Unnecessarily?

MOSSER: I think so. And at the same time, the program appeared to me to be totally disorganized. The staff was chaotic. It was not a professional staff. They had some good

people on the staff, but they had sort of grown like topsy and they were one big family. The world was out there against them and they were going to save the world. They didn't use very good judgment. When you analyzed the program, cities were doing one thing and counties were doing another and there was no coordination between them, there was no coordination with state government. There was this system of appeals that were supposed to be heard by the commission. They were 18 months behind in hearing and deciding appeals. The whole thing was a giant mess.

CH: It had begun when?

MOSSER: Well, Senate Bill 10 was probably 1971, I think, and Senate Bill 100 was 1973, and it was 1976 when I was appointed, so it had probably been in existence two and a half to three years.

CH: You said that your appointment to that committee was a bit contentious.

MOSSER: Yeah. Again, Straub appointed myself and Bud Forrester at the same time to fill two vacancies. He asked for L. B.'s resignation, and somebody else resigned. Most of the people on that commission had been on there for the full three years and they thought that somebody that was on the commission should be the — I think they wanted a fellow from Bend, who was the vice-chairman of the commission, to be elevated to the chairmanship. Bud Forrester helped me lobby it and Straub twisted a few arms, but I think — I said, "Look, I don't want this job that much but the governor wants me to have it. Elect me for one year and then I'll quit being chairman and somebody else can be chairman."

CH: Why did you agree to take it?

MOSSER: I felt that every governor is entitled to have you do one thing that he wants, and this was something — Straub felt very strongly about land-use planning and he needed help, that was clear.

CH: What did he feel that you would be bringing to the board? The commission?

MOSSER: Leadership, common sense, and political savvy to handle some of the controversy.

CH: It's an interesting idea that you have of allowing any governor to ask you to do something, to allow yourself that degree of service to the state government. Did that evolve out of any particular experience or was it a general feeling you had about civic involvement?

MOSSER: I would say that the last three governors have not asked me to do things that I was dying to do, but in each case I said, "Well, I'll do one thing for you."

CH: I remember reading an article about your having traveled in Europe and studied some land use before being appointed to the committee.

MOSSER: I took a sabbatical in 1975, fall of 1975 to the spring of 1976, and I had been studying land-use planning. Planning had been one of the things that I had been involved in. I had an extensive library on planning, I had read planning stuff — I think I started with Frank Lloyd Wright when I was in my early teens.

**[End of Tape 12, Side 1]**

**Tape 12, Side 2**  
**1990 December 11**

CH: This is an interview with John Mosser in his apartment in Portland, Oregon. This is Tape 12, Side B.

So then you spent some time touring in the Netherlands looking...

MOSSER: The Netherlands and also in Paris I went to an exhibit on the Paris Plan, looked at some planning in France as well, but most of it was in the Netherlands. But that was just part of my sabbatical. I was intending to write a book, when I got back, on looking ahead.

CH: On land use?

MOSSER: Well, land use was only part of it. The one chapter that I actually finished was on power, and that was the one that went into the Northwest power planning bill. But, yeah, some of it was going to be on planning. Basically, planning for the state of Oregon, the future of Oregon towards the Lewis and Clark Exposition, which is getting closer all the time.

CH: If you had so much interest in land-use planning and other types of planning why were you hesitant to take over this position?

MOSSER: Because I thought it had been run so miserably that it was starting in a hole. There are many things about the program that I still think are probably unwise. They lead to some of this controversy.

CH: Such as?

MOSSER: I think it's far too legalistic. It is trying to make a judicial process out of what is either a technical process or a political process, and it doesn't fit very well. You don't get county commissioners to build judicial-type records and to understand that findings of fact are an art form. One of my favorite examples is when you have to agree on everything, you've gotten away from a Legislative process. Suppose there's a proposed development. One guy is opposed to it because he thinks it will overcrowd the schools and another one thinks it will create too much traffic on the roads but he isn't worried about the schools because they can bus them to a different school and another one just doesn't like development at all.

So here's three out of maybe five city commissioners. They don't agree at all on the reason for what they're doing. They can't make a finding of fact that they agree on, but, still, they have to, to decide it, whereas they are really a Legislature and you don't have — all you do in the Legislature is vote yes or no, yes or no. If everybody had to agree on every reason for every bill, you wouldn't have it. It's not a political process anymore. But the differences were so much worse — the problems, because of this backlog of undecided cases, because nothing was getting done on time, because the staff was arrogant and disorganized and defensive, because there wasn't any coordination. You know, you could see all these plans marching towards completion and no agreement. They weren't going to fit together when they got done.

CH: You had mentioned that you thought that you were starting out in the hole. Do you think that that plan should have been scrapped, that commission been scrapped, and starting over, then, with another plan altogether?

MOSSER: That's probably why I agreed. If you had let that be thrown out, it would have been very hard to start over again. But it sure led to problems, and I think it's probably less controversial now than it was 10 years ago.

CH: Do you think that's because of acceptance of it or because of changes?

MOSSER: Both. It's there, people have learned how to work the system a little better, some of the flaws in the early coordination have been cleaned up. There are still problems. It's still too judicial a process.

CH: Where was Oregon in terms of land use at this point, when you were on the board, in relationship to the rest of the country?

MOSSER: I don't think anybody had the type of statewide involvement with land-use planning, the concept of statewide goals. Hawaii had some fairly strong land-use planning but it was different. I think at various times other places would adopt some part of a program, but none of them were comprehensive, none of them tried to coordinate between state and federal and local.

CH: Were there plans elsewhere, I mean in your studies, that you might have seen that you felt were closer to the ideal that you were shooting for, in the Netherlands, for instance?

MOSSER: No. Actually, the planning in the Netherlands — in a sense, it ranged all over the lot. Their pollution control was nonexistent, their energy planning was nonexistent. They had some wonderful planning in small communities, city-center-type buildings that functioned as theaters and meeting places and exhibit halls. They had some wonderful housing for the elderly in small projects. In a village of a few thousand or a few hundred there would be a small project that had apartments and nursing-home-type facilities for the old people right in the center of town where they could walk to the grocery store, if they were able, and that kind of thing. So there was some magnificent planning. On the other hand, Amsterdam's housing was these projects of 11-story-high buildings that ran for blocks. Just massive, inhuman structures that had all kinds of human problems in them because — and a lot of it was just the terrible architecture.



CH: So you were really, then, starting from scratch. I mean, you weren't looking at somebody else's ideas and saying...

MOSSER: No.

CH: Let's try to do this.

MOSSER: I was saying, "This is what we've got. What can we do to improve it and make it work?"

CH: So what was your agenda, then, when you came to the commission?

MOSSER: I didn't have an agenda when I came to it. I developed one pretty fast. The first thing I did was — typically, you'd get — the first meeting I went to the staff would just throw paper at you. So the first rule I put in was that all the paper had to be in my hands a week before the meeting or it would not be considered. That took them awhile to get used to, but eventually we got so that you'd get these thick notebooks. The staff would creep up to my house and leave them on my doorstep and then run away [Both laugh] and call up and say, "It's on your doorstep."

CH: The unwanted child. It sounds like you intimidated them, to some extent.

MOSSER: I guess the funniest story is, I don't mind silence occasionally. Talking to people, I'll stop and think and not babble away. Well, there was this one day that the deputy director, Jim Ross, calls me from Salem and we're talking away and I stopped talking and he apparently sat there for half an hour and finally said, "Damn it, John, I know you think but this is too long." What had happened, I had been disconnected. [Both laugh]

CH: And he didn't say anything, he just sat there.

MOSSER: There was one deputy director who I felt was particularly arrogant in dealing with other agencies, and I guess the first thing I asked was that he be fired. After a time — I waited a good six months before I started in, I came to the conclusion that the director had to go, too, that he just didn't know how to organize that big a staff and that it didn't have the discipline or the quality that I wanted, and I thought it wouldn't get it as long as he was running it. That created a lot of problems. We had a seven-person commission. I thought I lined up four votes, and then one of them started vacillating and so it took three months, I think, to finally get the director fired and it just created more morale problems. There was a ballot measure to abolish it in 1976, just after I was appointed. I was chair of that statewide effort. So I hadn't had the chance to really focus on the program to the extent I wanted to. I was trying to solve these staff problems and trying to keep the program alive, and that was a fairly close vote, I think the closest of any of them.

CH: Was that the first one, too?

MOSSER: I think there may have — I think it was, I think that was the first one.

CH: There have been quite a few, haven't there?

MOSSER: Yes. There must have been at least four by now. It's been four years, though, since we've had one.

CH: Does that lead you to believe that people accept it now?

MOSSER: I think it's more accepted now. For one thing, an awful lot of people have a vested interest in the system at this point. The plans are there. They may need to be reviewed and improved, but people at least understand them, to some extent. They may

not like them, but they understand them, they've gotten more used to working with them, the delays in the process aren't as big as they used to be, and I think more — also, I think Oregonians, in times of prosperity, which we've had for the last few years, tend to appreciate nature and the environment more and worry about jobs and development less, and they travel to California or to Seattle and see the problems that surround lack of land-use planning and...

CH: Do you think our recognition for land use in Oregon, land-use planning in Oregon, has prompted people to be more supportive? Isn't it recognized as one of the main assets of Oregon's government?

MOSSER: Well, I think you'd get debate on that, but it's certainly distinctive and it has done some good things.

CH: Were there other goals that you accomplished during that period on LCDC?

MOSSER: The first thing we did — there was just so much that was in chaos and not completed. The first thing was winning the election and getting some minor staff changes. The next thing was adopting the coastal goals. We spent about a dozen meetings on the coast. I wanted to get those goals finished before the first of the year. They'd been dragging for a long time and they were controversial, and I thought we just needed to get them completed. Janet McLennan, who was the governor's person for natural affairs, wanted me to do some of the Willamette greenway, which also had to be defined on the entire river length, and I said, "No, I'm going to do the coastal goals first." She said, "Oh, you'll never finish those this year." I said, "Yes, I am," and we did. December 31, we finished the coastal goals. [Both laugh]

Then we took on the Willamette greenway which, again, you had to sit down with the plan for each river mile and draw a boundary. Sometimes it was easy, everybody agreed, but sometimes there was a controversy and you just had to say, "Okay, the line is

here." Then we started to clean up this massive backlog of appeals, and that took a lot of hearings. We had just about gotten that cleaned up but the problem of having that backlog for so long eventually led to the taking those appeals out of the commission and putting them in the Land Use Board of Appeals. That is something that didn't have to happen but is probably an okay thing to happen. The main reason was that for years these appeals were so far behind that it was very frustrating to people that dealt with the system.

CH: Was that established during that time, the Land Use Board of Appeals?

MOSSER: It came in I think about the time I went off, I think in 1979.

CH: But you saw at that time that you needed to have that board to accomplish the...

MOSSER: I didn't necessarily — I thought that we had to get those appeals heard and started scheduling those for regular processing, but there was such a backlog that it — and it is something that you probably shouldn't tie up a commission's time with. As a lawyer, I could deal with it, but a lot of the people I think had some problem with that. Certainly, it took endless reading.

CH: You've mentioned the Willamette greenway. Isn't that considered to be one of Governor Straub's primary achievements in his administration?

MOSSER: Of course, it started under McCall and, actually, most of it was acquired under McCall. There were some large state parks, that haven't been fully developed, acquired, and most of the scenic easement areas. The Willamette greenway — L. B. Day had issued a Willamette Greenway Order prohibiting development within so many feet of the banks until you established a greenway program, and whatnot, and it was that that we were trying to come along behind and draw the actual boundaries and define what could be done in those areas. So I would say that the Willamette greenway is much — Straub had proposed

it but most of it was done during the McCall years or, to the extent those parks haven't been developed, is still to be done.

CH: What else did you do for the Straub administration? You've mentioned the tax plan that you worked on.

MOSSER: Well at the start I started to put together his budget and helped him put together his staff, but I didn't stay anywhere near as long as that as I had with McCall. I talked about a lot of things, both with Straub himself and with Len Bergstein. The one thing I got when I was on the LCDC, I said, "Look, I don't want expense money but I'm tired of running up a huge phone bill and then General Services won't even reimburse me for my phone calls unless I send my entire firm's phone bill to them." I said, "One thing you have to do is put in a state phone in my office." So I was on the state switchboard and, for that reason maybe, talked a great deal more than I otherwise would have with Straub and Bergstein and some of the others, Janet McLennan.

CH: Anything else for them?

MOSSER: No. Bob had wonderful instincts but he didn't get as many good staff people as he should have and, for that reason, I think, wasn't as an effective governor as I would have expected him to be.

CH: How do you feel that he was effective, in what way?

MOSSER: Certainly, he pushed the land-use program and protection for the coast and built up the environmental quality commission, so I think on environmental things he did quite a bit. I was in sort of the unique position of being president of the Board of Higher Education and putting together his first budget, so there was a big jump in the higher education budget that year. I think the two things that probably did him in were inadequate

staff and not using the state surplus, that was building up, to alleviate property taxation, or, if he didn't alleviate that, he could have cut income taxes. In other words, there was too big a surplus. That's probably the worst situation you can have. Worse, even, than not having enough money.

CH: And you feel that was his political downfall, then?

MOSSER: Yes.

CH: Did Vic Atiyeh make an issue of that, then, when he ran against him in 1978?

MOSSER: Yes. He was a no-new-taxes, cut-taxes-type of program, don't fix it unless it's broke, which would be fine if he knew anything about preventive maintenance, but he didn't. But he had a much better campaign. I mean, he had professional ads instead of the jerky, home movie-type thing, he had really professional ads.

CH: Atiyeh?

MOSSER: Yeah. He ran a very good campaign this next time around, and he hammered away that Straub was a spendthrift and taxed too much.

CH: What happened during that campaign? Did you work on the Straub campaign at all?

MOSSER: On the fringes of it. He had a full-time staff, as governor, and inevitably they tend to run the campaign. They consulted me on some things but I wasn't chair of a campaign committee again.

CH: After Atiyeh became governor, you eventually worked on the commission for the judicial branch, didn't you? How did you come to get that appointment?

MOSSER: I was still on the Land Conservation and Development Commission but tendered my resignation. I think this took him by surprise, but I always feel that a governor should have a chance to appoint clean. I don't think I would ever, as a governor, go as far as Goldschmidt did and sort of demand everybody's resignation, but I still think it's good form for the people to offer it. I really didn't have any contact — oh, I talked to Vic once or twice at the start of his administration but I had no real contact with him after I went off the commission. By February, or something, or March, they accepted my resignation.

CH: From the LCDC?

MOSSER: Yeah. Then, when he was running for his second term, I served on a campaign committee to plot counter-strategy for his opponent. It was part of Vic's campaign, but what the three of us — it was Norma Paulus and myself and, I think, Ron Schmidt, were doing was saying, how could we win the campaign for the other side, so that his campaign would then have what we thought was the best attack strategy and could get ready to counter it. We came up with a pretty good strategy. Unfortunately, or fortunately, Kulongoski didn't follow it so he didn't get there.

CH: You have expressed certain misgivings or ambivalence about Atiyeh's performance as governor in terms of how well he could function, how well he could accomplish things.

MOSSER: Yeah.

CH: Why did you want to support his campaign, then, in the second run for governorship?

MOSSER: Well, this was the general election, not the primary, and I was mad at Kulongoski. He had come in and asked for my support and spent hours telling me how

valuable he thought my type of volunteer, unpaid board commission service was, and I was about ready to support him, and he went down the next day and absolutely crucified Bob Chandler, before a committee, for volunteer service that he was doing. I think what it was, was Bob was on the Energy Facilities Siting Council and his wife held a hundred shares of stock in PGE, or something, and this made Bob corrupt and conflict of interest, and he wouldn't approve his — he was on the Senate Confirmation Committee and I don't think they confirmed Bob for the position. And to me, it was utterly absurd. What kind of people are going to serve in government if they have to go through that kind of crap? So I was ready to support Vic.

CH: Vic won that pretty easily, didn't he?

MOSSER: Yes. Kulongoski ran a poor campaign. What was the issue that — was it workmen's comp, or what? Oh...

**[End of Tape 12, Side 2]**



**Tape 13, Side 1**  
**1990 December 11**

CH: This is an interview with John Mosser in his home in Portland, Oregon. The interviewer for the Oregon Historical Society is Clark Hansen, the date is 12-11-1990, and the tape is Tape 13, Side A.

What was your purpose for going on to the commission for the judicial branch?

MOSSER: Again, that's what they asked me to do, and I had some interest in the judicial branch as a lawyer, but it isn't something I think I would have picked or asked to go on.

CH: What did you do while you were on that commission?

MOSSER: I stayed on it, I guess, for almost four years, three years, or something. We got a variety of bills that dealt with the judicial process. The first area had arbitration — alternate dispute settlement was one of the things that I focused on, and the other was indigent defense, which is a huge problem, budgetary as well as administrative. By the end of 1986 I felt there wasn't any need for the commission anymore, and one of the last things we did was to recommend that it be abolished.

CH: And did that happen?

MOSSER: Yeah. Actually, Goldschmidt still had it in his budget and I wrote — and reappointed me to it and I said, "Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't know you were going to continue this. I would have sent in my resignation. I don't think we need this," and then he abolished it.

CH: Did you do anything else for Governor Atiyeh?

MOSSER: No.

CH: How did you feel that his term — how did that measure up in the end, and especially looking back on it now?

MOSSER: I think it was a disaster. Not entirely his fault, but a lot of it his fault. The first session of the Legislature he wasn't in command and the Legislature put through — first of all, the initiative or referendum process, I've forgotten which, had put through the bill that said that parks and state police couldn't be funded out of the highway system anymore, so that was a huge amount of money that was going to be an ongoing expense in the general fund budget. There had been a huge surplus developed under Straub, but the Legislature went too far in overcoming that.

They put in things that said if you ever exceeded your estimates in the future the money would go back as a rebate in the income tax. They indexed the income tax so that inflation wouldn't increase taxes. So they did a lot of things to give away revenue that had been there and then they spent on all kinds of things that didn't — you know, building programs and salary increases, just built the expense side enormously. The consequence was that he spent the rest of his administration without adequate funds, cutting budgets every year, or every other year, and everything was in a state of disrepair by the time he finished.

The prisons were all overcrowded, the mental institutions were losing federal funding because they were so inferior, faculty salaries were not keeping up, tuitions were increasing. Just everywhere you looked the state infrastructure and programs were suffering, and I really think that it had to do with his letting everything get out of hand in that first session and never developing a strong staff. He didn't bring new people into state government. He shuffled career bureaucrats and, as a result, I think you got a lot of mediocrity in leadership and no new ideas.

CH: Some of this coincided during the time that Reagan was president. How much of that influenced what Atiyeh was doing in state government?

MOSSER: I think some of it, but Reagan's program was that these things ought to be handed back to the states. The federal government should not be involved schools, that's local. Well, if you get the state cutting at the same time, then the cuts are everywhere. Things like indexing the income tax were certainly Reagan-esque-type programs, but you can't say that the federal government shouldn't be spending on local projects like sewers and schools and then have the state unable or unwilling to spend, too, or you don't get anything done.

CH: Do you feel that Goldschmidt corrected some of that, then?

MOSSER: Yes. Again, part of it, Vic Atiyeh — and this is why I say it certainly wasn't all his fault, was governor during a period of close to depression in large parts of Oregon. There was high unemployment, farm prices weren't that good a lot of those years, a lot of farm foreclosures, the fishing industry was suffering from foreign competition and low prices, wood products were generally hurt, all the timber buyers had bid up prices so high that they were defaulting on federal cutting contracts and threatened with bankruptcy, there had to be federal Legislation to bail them out, let them get out of their contracts or prolong the cut. Things were very tough. He came in with a billion-dollar surplus, and from then on it was all downhill as far as the economy was concerned.

CH: Do you think he made a bad economic situation worse, then?

MOSSER: Yeah. He certainly didn't set the kind of tone that Goldschmidt did that we've got to turn this thing around, we've got to have government programs, that a rising tide floats all ships and you don't just cut and cut and cut. Sure, the economy improved, but a lot of it was a different attitude and leadership.

CH: How did Goldschmidt address those problems?

MOSSER: Although Atiyeh was endlessly traveling to the Orient and trying, I think, to build up trade with Japan, I think probably Goldschmidt was more effective at promoting business with Japan, getting more new plants. I think an awful lot of building has gone on under Goldschmidt. Some of it the average person isn't concerned with, with all the prisons. The highway program has certainly expanded, a lot of state office buildings and campus buildings, the farm economy has improved, and that's not anything Goldschmidt did, but it has made some of the rural areas that were poor pretty wealthy, the lumber business and paper business have been extremely strong, but, again, more national than anything Goldschmidt did, though he has, I think, cut red tape sometimes to help get those projects moved along. But generally, it's been an attitude of promoting and welcoming that kind of development.

CH: You worked on the Veterans' Commission for him, didn't you?

MOSSER: Yes.

CH: Did you chair it?

MOSSER: Yes.

CH: What did you do for them, what was your goal?

MOSSER: It had a budget deficit, projected for the year 2020, between 600 million and two billion dollars as a result of the countless loans that had been made at six and seven and eight percent when they were borrowing money at eight and nine and 10 and 11 and 12%. Absolutely ridiculous. On the other hand, this is one of those problems that is greatly

exaggerated. When you say 600 million to two billion 30 years from now, that comes down to 60 million to 200 million today. It's typical of what — people use numbers that are — now, whenever there's a new federal program it's a 20-billion-dollar program. Over what, five years or three years? There is this constant tendency to exaggerate or, conversely, to shrink. This is only a six-billion-dollar problem when it's a 600-billion-dollar problem. Numbers aren't used as annual or biennial budget numbers anymore. People are always pushing the limits to emphasize a point.

What I saw was that this was, to me, not a huge problem. If it were unaddressed it could be a huge problem, but appropriating a little bit of money each year, particularly in the early years, would do it, savings would do it. When you looked at this projection, there was a projection that in 2020 there were going to be 16 million dollars of revenues at the end of the program but the staff was going to cost 14 billion. That didn't make any sense to me. They were just straight-line projecting numbers without using their heads. In addition, we had a large cash fund on hand that had come about by floating some last-minute bonds just to be sure they had cash on hand, but what I saw was that that cash, if properly invested, could make up for the losses on the mortgages. In any event, after two years the figures said that there would be a minimum 100 million to 800 million dollar surplus in 2020 and I said, "We ought to abolish this commission. It's done its job." So at the end of last year it was abolished.

CH: Did you perform any other services for Governor Goldschmidt?

MOSSER: During his campaign I helped some of his campaign staff people. I don't think he even knew it. I really didn't want to get involved on a full-time basis in another campaign, but I liked a few of the people that worked on his campaign and spent quite a bit of time talking to them about how to handle things.

CH: Had you worked with him before he was governor?

MOSSER: Oh, yes, in some respects, when he was mayor, and he had been on my steering committee in the Straub campaign, first Straub campaign. I can't remember now, but there were local government and planning issues in the city of Portland that we had talked about and worked on. I had never been really close to him, but I certainly knew him and worked with him.

CH: We've covered several administrations here. Have there been other areas in those administrations that you've worked on for some other purpose than what we've talked about here?

MOSSER: Well, I don't really think we've missed much.

CH: You had worked on some other campaigns. Judicial races, for instance. How did you get involved in that?

MOSSER: John Butler has been a friend of mine for a long, long time, one of my first friends in Oregon, and I was — it was Governor Straub who appointed him to the Court of Appeals and I had asked him if he'd take it, and Len Bergstein and I had recommended that he be appointed, and so when he came up for election I ran his campaign, which mainly consisted, the first time, of being sure that there were six billboards that John had to pass on the way to and from Salem each day so he thought there was this enormous campaign effort. But we raised a little money and put up a few intimidating or encouraging billboards, however you want to look at them. I ran his second campaign, and then I ran the campaign that he lost for the supreme court. I declined to run this last campaign for the Court of Appeals, said it was time he got somebody new and younger, but he didn't have any opposition.

CH: The supreme court race that he had was against Van Hoomissen.

MOSSER: Yes.

CH: How do you account for that loss?

MOSSER: Van Hoomissen is a politician and John isn't. He raised and spent a lot of money. We raised, I've forgotten, 75 thousand dollars, maybe, in that race, but I think Van Hoomissen's wife put that much into his campaign, 150 thousand. They had much more TV and — but basically, Van Hoomissen is a politician and a hard campaigner and John is anything but a politician.

CH: Were there other races that you were involved in, judicial races?

MOSSER: Oh, only on the fringes, Lee Johnson's, one of his early races, Shirley Field. Shirley had been a good friend the first time I was in the Legislature in 1957 and I supported her in her race for state treasurer, I think in 1958. She didn't win. I wasn't disappointed that she didn't win because Howard Belton ran and he was a very capable man and someone I knew well, too. Then Shirley was in the Legislature in 1963 and 1965 and her career really didn't seem to be getting very far and I think I — it was a question as to whether she would make a good judge or not, but I urged McCall to appoint her and he did, and so I think I served on her campaign committee.

She really had a tragic experience. She became totally unjudicial on the bench, very abrupt and arbitrary, and what nobody realized was that she had a — and she was impeached or, you know, put out of office, for unjudicial conduct. What nobody realized is she had a terrible brain tumor. When they operated on that brain tumor they, I think, butchered it and she's really had a terrible life since. She was one of the earliest women Legislators and politicians. I've worked on a lot of other local issues but none of them of any great significance, I don't think.

CH: Looking back at some of the — sort of the evolution of the Republican and Democratic parties in Oregon, you changed your membership to an independent in 1974, was it?

MOSSER: I think it was 1973.

CH: 1973, because of Watergate?

MOSSER: Yeah. I know I was already an independent at the start of the Straub campaign, and I think I changed the preceding fall, or something.

CH: How do you see the — we've talked a little bit about this, but I'm just wondering how it's evolved differently here in Oregon compared to other places in the country because it seems like there's more detachment from the party itself and less voter identification with the parties.

MOSSER: Well, I don't know. You have places that — in California you frequently had crossover vote primaries where, I think, Earl Warren used to win both parties' nominations, and in Wisconsin I'm sure that you can pick which ballot you want when you go into the booth and vote in either party, which can lead to some strange results. So I don't know that we're unique in the fact that the parties are weak or that they're prone to be dominated as parties by the ideologues or the fringe elements.

CH: How do you account for the conservative backlash that occurred in the Republican party in the 1970s, in the later 1970s, with...

MOSSER: Oh, it went back much before that. That Goldwater convention was about as mean a convention as any, and what was that, when Tom was running, 1966, or something? 1964, it would have been, 1964.



CH: But in the Oregon Republican party? I'm thinking of like — who was it who became chairman in the 1970s and was so controversial because of his...

MOSSER: Huss.

CH: Huss, Walter Huss.

MOSSER: Well, that's the religious fundamentalist movement that you see sometimes in the Democratic party, sometimes in the Republican party. Really more anti-abortion, for home schooling, some of the religious issues. Those people seized control of the party because it's very easy to seize control of the party if you're — what this amounts to is winning a few precinct committeemen and enough counties so that you can then elect the county chairmen who in turn elect the party chairman. There aren't that many people that bother to vote for precinct committeemen, so if you've got an organized effort to elect a precinct committeeman, it's pretty easy to do.

CH: Was that a well-planned effort?

MOSSER: Oh, yes, I'm sure it was. It was definitely organized and planned.

CH: Did it have much support among elected...

MOSSER: No, none at all that I know of.

CH: Did that further the alienation between the Republican party and Republican representatives?

MOSSER: Well, I don't know. I wasn't running anymore by then. I'm sure it would, but, on the other hand, for most people you have a choice, if you're running for office, of either running as a Democrat or a Republican and you — as I described in my own experience, you try to control the nitwits in the party, whichever one you've picked, but you can't always succeed.

CH: How do you see the Republican party now in terms of its evolution after Huss?

MOSSER: In Oregon?

CH: Yes.

MOSSER: Well, I don't see it much stronger or much weaker. The Democrats are taking more statewide races, they've won the last two governor's races, secretary of state's races, you have a Republican state treasurer and attorney general. That's sort of the pattern that's been there for years. I don't think I can recall there ever being all Republicans or all Democrats in those statewide offices. The Republicans don't seem to be making any significant headway in Congress. They've gone back from two seats to one.

The races for the Senate were certainly closer this time than in recent history, and I suspect there will be a close race with Packwood coming up. They've recaptured the House by a small margin in the Legislature, which means that congressional redistricting, Legislative redistricting, will be difficult, because it isn't all one party controlling that process, and may end up in the lap of the secretary of state, which is the fallback position. So I don't see that the Republican party has become overwhelmingly better or worse. I think there are fewer liberal Republicans now than there were when I started. People like McCall.

CH: Why is that? Is it just that people have gone into — the liberals have gone into the Democratic party?

MOSSER: I don't know. I think it's partly that, because certainly it's harder for a liberal Republican to win a primary, just as it's harder for a conservative Democratic to win a primary, and that's because the fringes on each side tend to have a large voice in those primary elections.

CH: Because of the fewer people participating?

MOSSER: You've got to remember, again, if you go back from the Depression to 1957 there was really one party in this state, the Republican party, so anyone that wants to get elected, whether they're liberal or conservative, tended to be a Republican. It wasn't until that 1966 election when Neuberger and Holmes and a majority...

**[End of Tape 13, Side 1]**

**Tape 13, Side 2**  
**1990 December 11**

CH: This is an interview with John Mosser. This is Tape 13, Side B.

Did you have any other political involvements other than the ones we've talked about here?

MOSSER: I don't think so.

CH: You've mentioned working on OMSI and as a trustee. You were president from 1965 to 1967, isn't that right?

MOSSER: Yeah.

CH: And a trustee for the Portland Civic Theater. Were there other civic organizations or political organizations, Republican organizations that you worked with?

MOSSER: They've mostly been a sort of brief task force or committee. I think I've mentioned most of the ones that are of any significance.

CH: What about in the bar associations?

MOSSER: I have never tried to run for any bar office. I served on, oh, the bar committee on taxation, I think, for about 10 years and the bar committee on probate and estate planning for half a dozen years, at least, and I think one other bar committee, but the bar is so large now that — with something like 1,500, probably, outside of judges, when I started, and it's about 10 thousand now. I can go to a bar convention meeting and see a half a dozen lawyers out of a thousand that I know.

CH: Looking over your years in public office, how was it to raise a family during this being in public office so much? What kind of effect did that have on your family?

MOSSER: I don't know that I'm the one to answer that. I think it probably helped to drive my wife to distraction and some of her problems. I think the boys were a little bit intimidated by having a father who's getting telephone calls from the governor, or doing this or that. I think it sort of prevented them, maybe, from being as political. But it's hard to say because I see so many kids of politicians who are politicians, and they had interests in this at one time or another. One son was a debater and was interested in government for a while and then he became an English scholar and the other became an artist and a craftsman. I don't know whether that was just evolution. For a while each of them seemed to go through a new interest every year. I think that's just part of the process of growing up.

CH: What part has your family played in your public life?

MOSSER: Oh, they were photogenic, so you could take a good family picture, but other than that, they did a little bit of campaigning when I was running for the Legislature, handing out leaflets or addressing post cards, that kind of thing. The kids all came down to the Legislature and served as pages and met people. In the McCall administration, he had a place at Road's End in Lincoln City and the family and I used to go down and stay at — what's the old oceanfront resort? It had a Henry Thiele's restaurant for — anyway, we'd stay there and they'd see the governor for dinner or a walk on the beach, or whatnot.

CH: Where are they now?

MOSSER: The kids?

CH: Yes.

MOSSER: Dan is a professor at Virginia Tech, Susan is the only one who has grandchildren. She just moved back from Indianapolis and is here in Portland now. Her husband works for an electronics startup company. My younger daughter is here in town, works for Mentor Graphics' personnel benefit plans, and my son has a frame shop here in town. Bill.

CH: Your younger daughter's name is...

MOSSER: Anne Jewel.

CH: What about the effect of public life on your friendships, your other relationships, business relationships, things like that?

MOSSER: I think part of my life is that I have lived so many places, been active in so many different things, each of which involved a large group of contacts, that there are endless people that I know. Some people would call them friends, I call them acquaintances or coworkers. I have a few friends from almost each period of my life. These are people that you can see after 20 years and things are exactly the same as when you last saw them. You have a rapport and an understanding and are closer to them, I think. But I don't try to keep up with all of them because even if there's only two from grade school and two from high school and three from college and four from law school and five from three years in the army and one from each board or commission and half a dozen from each session of the Legislature, it's too large a number to be close to at one time. So I suppose, in a way, it's made it harder to keep up friendships by being involved in so many things, but I really don't regret it because, as I say, I found that with those few friends from each period, that I really felt close to, I can still see them and be close to them.

CH: What about the effect of all this public life on your law practice?

MOSSER: It's had a few pluses for the practice, though not much. After I served on the Sanitary Authority, I was hired to represent some clients with environmental problems, after serving on the Land Conservation and Development Commission I was hired to represent some clients in land-use planning problems. I had already done that before I was on it. Things like Portland Community College I think came out of my work in education, and some of the people you meet become personal clients, but it's never been a major source of — you know, none of these things have been the major focus of my practice. As I say, I've been able to make what for me is a satisfactory living. It's not giant, it's not what some other lawyers who are just lawyers and don't spend time in political life make, but it's been adequate for me and adequate to feel that I'm keeping up my end of the law firm that I'm in. As I say, I found that I could maintain my independence and earn a quite satisfactory living devoting a quarter or a third of my time to some public endeavor but I couldn't make that kind of living even in the highest-paid government jobs, so...

CH: How much time do you devote to your practice now, your law practice?

MOSSER: I'm tapering down. I'm 68 now and — 67, almost 68, and I'm only working about five, six hours a day. That's the other thing. When I was active in government and practicing law, I almost never worked less than 60 or 70 hours a week, and, for brief periods, much more than that. But ever since high school I've — I get more sleep now than I have any time since — in high school I started getting by on about five hours sleep a night and that's what I continued through — maybe once a month I'd have to sleep in for a day to catch up, but that was about it.

CH: Well, do you have any other thoughts or any reflections on your life that we haven't talked about or you'd like to...

MOSSER: Well, I've enjoyed it. I've had a chance to work on lots of interesting things and with some very interesting people. And while there's a certain merit to the wisdom that

comes with age, I think really the way you succeed is just by working very hard. When we'd get these huge notebooks for higher education or land use planning and development, I read every page and usually knew what I was going to say about everything before I ever got into a meeting, which allowed me to focus on what was going on around me, how other people were reacting, and it's that kind of homework that allows you to be effective, I think.

CH: But you look back on it and it feels pretty rewarding to you, then, that you've been able to...

MOSSER: Yeah.

CH: To make a difference and make your contributions.

MOSSER: Yeah.

CH: And you attribute a lot of that to just plain, hard work.

MOSSER: Just plain, hard work. A certain amount is imagination, a certain amount is technical skills, legal training, the ability to write and speak, but an awful lot of it is just plain putting in more hours than anybody else.

CH: If you had to do it all over would you do it differently?

MOSSER: Well, I got sidetracked. My initial idea was that I was going to make — I was going to just work and make money until I had enough that I could live off the income and have a nice house, and not go into politics until I was, say, 40, 45, and I'm glad I did it the other way. I got involved and decided to run 10 years too soon for that scheme to work, and as a result there were certain financial pressures and other pressures that I might not have felt, but I'm not sure I ever would have run if I had put it off that long.



CH: On my other trips here I've noticed that you've had a few things out on the couch which you don't have right now, but I was wondering whether there might be anything that you would like to review or look at or talk about any artifacts or mementos or photos or anything like that that you'd like to...

MOSSER: I guess I don't know — you know, just turning all the pages of the scrap books and opening all the [inaudible] might keep us here far too long for anything else to be gained by those kind of reminiscences.

CH: Is there anything else you'd like to add?

MOSSER: No.

CH: Okay. I appreciate your contribution. This has been quite a valuable series...

MOSSER: If you, after you go through this, on reflection, see something you want to ask more about...

CH: Yes.

MOSSER: Or I might see something that I wanted to correct.

CH: I'd like to be able to do that because you do cover such a large spectrum of ideas and period of time and you would be an excellent resource for further contact, especially in regards to the continuing development of our Legislative oral histories, so thank you for making yourself available for that, and I appreciate your time. Thank you.

**[End of Tape 13, Side 2]**

**[End of Interview]**