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Pappy Moss

Scott Sterling, interviewer

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Scott Sterling introduces Pappy Moss. Senator Moss was first elected to the House of Representatives in 1978 and re-elected in 1980. In 1982 he ran for the Senate from the newly apportioned Senate District J. He has a strong interest in agriculture

Scott Sterling asked Pappy Moss why he chose to leave the House of Representatives and run for the Senate. Moss said he was doing most of his work for his constituency over in the Senate anyway. The last two years when he was in the House, he was in the minority. He found the Senate tends to work in a calmer manner. Going over to the Senate has been to his advantage and his constituents. He represents Senate District J which covers half of the geography of the North Star Borough. Mike Miller represents the area in the House and he considers it a privilege to work with him.

Sterling talked about declining state revenues due to falling oil prices on the world market and asked Moss if he supported the use of Permanent Fund money for capital projects. Moss explained the Permanent Fund is locked up and is set to make interest. They were not talking about touching the Permanent Fund itself. The Alaska Legislature has added 2.7 billion dollars to the Permanent Fund in the last three or four years. The Senate was looking at the unallocated interest because there was a concern about Pioneer Homes and pioneer bonuses which needed to be continued. He is concerned that senior citizens may have just received their last check for a while under the bonus program. What they were attempting to do was take part of the interest money from the unallocated interest in the Permanent Fund income to use for some of these programs.

Sterling said many Alaskans are beginning to wonder about the budget process that the Alaska Legislature uses. He asked Moss what is right and what is wrong about the process. Moss said the present system should be called a three-way process. He thinks the process that we have now is not bad at all. He said the Senators and Representatives are more responsive to what the people are asking for than the governor will as a whole. The main thing the legislature has is the ability to appropriate funds. The governor does not appropriate money. They do not intend to allow the executive branch to tell the branch of governance which is the House and the Senate how they are going to appropriate money. The governor can do a certain amount of red lining and he is sure that will happen this year.

Moss commented about what happened in the recent session. This session was unique in that there was a very high percentage of individual decisions by makers new to the system. Many of the newly elected members and particularly House members came to the system with a determination that government in general is at best a necessary evil. This created a distrust among members. All attempts to negotiate a solution were a problem. This suspicion and distrust clouded the real issues with a deeper and viable issue of the survival of each individual's personal power and in turn the power of the larger group that individual was part of. Many elected individuals perceive themselves as being the person with a personal

mandate to destroy the evil government without a clear understanding of what would be a better system. This seldom solves any problems and most likely creates new problems. He talked about the House refusing to attend the joint session. The legislature lost its credibility, the governor has a cloud over its cabinet and the voters lost faith in the system. He feels the first session of the 13th Legislature had no winners and very few real accomplishments.

Sterling asked about the bicameral legislature working this past session in making it difficult to pass bad legislation. Moss said it worked as blackmail in a sense. He said the House and the Senate laid out priorities and someone was going to lose. The people perceive that all this was being done at the tail end of the session. Moss said the major part of the work is done early in the session. It ended up with trade off deals. It has to be proven to be important to the House and the Senate side or forget it. It is a power play. He feels they may still go to court over the cabinet confirmations. There is a cloud hanging over these appointments and in turn every action that was made by the 13th First Session.

Sterling said the House majority coalition has claimed the Senate has dominated the House in past years. Moss said they had a pretty smooth-running government until the latter part of 1981 when the coalition took over. There has been a continual problem with every piece of legislation that has come through. Any political coalition has to compromise to keep things moving. He feels the Senate compromised more than they should have.

Sterling asked about the bills of particular interest to the Interior. Moss said in Senate District J he isn't sure what will be red lined by the governor. He explained the majority of the money needed in the district had to do with major construction projects such as roads and highways. He said 70 million dollars for this will go into the district if there are no vetoes. There are school projects and road projects. This is not all state money. There is state money to leverage federal money. He didn't think the Interior did too bad this session.

Sterling asked Moss if he felt he had to sacrifice a lot in terms of good government to get what he wanted for his constituents. Moss felt he did justice for both. He mentioned projects that didn't have any apparent justice for his district, but they benefitted the Interior. He talked about projects looking into the future.

Sterling asked about his criticism of Governor Sheffield's appointees especially those having to do with agriculture. Moss talked about the need for the Seward grain facility and implications for the state. He felt there were people making decisions about the facility who were not informed. He said this year he and Mike Miller allotted money for a facility in North Pole and hopes it survives.

Sterling asked Moss about the pay raise bill. Moss said he did not vote for it and at first the bill failed. He later changed his vote and it passed. It was a compromise. The bill didn't basically increase the salary for legislators and it eliminated the per diem pay during session.