

INTERVIEW WITH WARREN BISHOP

PART THREE: **Joining the Rosellini Administration, Building a New Team, Issues in State Government**

Ms. Kilgannon: When this new person, Albert Rosellini, ran for the governorship in 1956, the then-Governor Art Langlie had been in office for two terms; he was a Republican and had somewhat of a mixed record on supporting these conservative causes. He certainly employed some of that anti-communist language himself in his own campaigns. But when this Albert Rosellini was running for governor, were you paying attention to this new person coming up? Was he saying things that interested you as a follower?

Mr. Bishop: Yes. I think all of us who were in that particular situation at that time, students and others, I think became impressed with the new approach, the new ideas, the more forward-looking political activity. Of course, Rosellini was on the leading edge of this. Important individuals within the community such as Shefelman and Ellis and others were supportive of these new approaches, new ideas. So, yes, I think that I knew about it and even if I didn't become politically involved, I did develop an interest in his campaign.

Ms. Kilgannon: He'd been on these different commissions and investigations and statewide efforts. So was he a name that you would be familiar with?

Mr. Bishop: Yes, he was. He was very much involved in mental health and corrections. He was a senator who had done a lot of things for the University of Washington.

Ms. Kilgannon: That's true. Yes.

Mr. Bishop: So he was well-known and I was well aware of his background.

Ms. Kilgannon: Did he sound like he was going to bring in a new era in Washington State? That he had some fresh ideas, that he had new approaches, that he was going to perhaps even tap into some of the things that interested you that you had been working on?

Mr. Bishop: His campaign, especially in 1956, was so based on these kinds of changes. The mental institutions had lost their certification; the budget system was obviously not functioning to assist management in financial affairs; adult institutions; his committee on crime hearings. There were a lot of things that appealed to young voters who saw opportunities for there to be some changes. I had followed state government pretty carefully and I knew about what was going on.

I got to know a lot of people on the faculty. Langlie's chief of staff—a position which was then called administrative assistant—was on leave from the University of Washington. Everest was his name and he had come back to be the acting president at the University of Washington. I knew him a little bit, but I got to know him a lot better. So he and Don Webster, who was the director of the Bureau of Governmental Research—and

probably some of my professors, I suspect, because they all knew each other...Harold Shefelman was a part of this group. He was an attorney in Seattle, but he was involved in a lot of city things, especially the bonding council. I knew him because of his work with the Bureau of Governmental Research—they are the ones who apparently suggested me. When Rosellini was elected, he went to the University of Washington to see if there was someone they could suggest who could come down to join him as his chief of staff, and I was on the list. There were only two of us.

Ms. Kilgannon: He was looking for an expert, not a political person, but an expert in government?

Mr. Bishop: He decided—and a lot of his advisors, including Shefelman, said he needed somebody who would help to bring the system together and not be politically appointed.

Ms. Kilgannon: Were you active in politics at all?

Mr. Bishop: No.

Ms. Kilgannon: Just as an academic?

Mr. Bishop: Yes.

Ms. Kilgannon: Were you considered nonpartisan?

Mr. Bishop: No. I probably leaned in that direction more than another, but that was because of my education in government, I think. You would have more of a tendency to be an activist in government than not. I was very interested in government.

As I say, there were two of us on the list of these people and one of them was Lloyd Schram and myself. Lloyd Schram, I don't think, had any interest. He was more student government related and was actually on the staff in student affairs.

Ms. Kilgannon: A different branch altogether.

Mr. Bishop: But I'll tell you, I was interested. But it came as a great surprise to me. So the first shot out of the box...I remember the first thing that happened was that I was interviewed, and the persons who participated in my interview were his two cousins.

Ms. Kilgannon: Leo and Victor?

Mr. Bishop: Victor, the restaurateur and Leo, who was a doctor. And Pellegrini, who was on the faculty at the University of Washington.

Ms. Kilgannon: Was he any kind of relative?

Mr. Bishop: No. The two Rosellini's were related. And then Hal Shefelman was on this. But he wasn't participating in the interview. He already knew me.

Ms. Kilgannon: So he wasn't present during that interview?

Mr. Bishop: No. I was invited to come to "Rosellini's 410" for this interview. I'll tell you, I absolutely was just beside myself because I didn't even know what to order to eat and I finally ordered spaghetti, which obviously was not the appropriate thing for me to... I think it was lunch. But it was quite an interview and it seemed to hit off very well.

Ms. Kilgannon: What sort of things did they ask you?

Mr. Bishop: They were more interested in my personal life and my career at the University of Washington and my interest in state government.

Ms. Kilgannon: Had you already worked on the Metro legislation? You had something to do with that, I believe.

Mr. Bishop: Yes, I had. I had participated in several incorporations, including Bellevue as a consultant to them, but still from the Bureau. And several other towns: Port Angeles and so on.

Ms. Kilgannon: So you had built up quite a lot of experience.

Mr. Bishop: Yes. Of course, I was involved with this Institute. But anyway, the next interview was with Rosellini.

Ms. Kilgannon: Himself. So they would have been able to check you out as a person. Do you think they were looking for particular qualities? Obviously, you had the knowledge and the background, but was there something else they were looking for?

Mr. Bishop: I can only imagine, but I think they were looking for somebody who would be capable of being independent in terms of not being so influenced by outside forces, because the governor was under tremendous pressure from political people within his party and so on. And with some of his constituents. They wanted somebody who could really...

Ms. Kilgannon: Would you be like a buffer in a sense?

Mr. Bishop: Yes. I think they wanted to have somebody who was not associated with some background-type appointment, you understand?

Ms. Kilgannon: Yes.

Mr. Bishop: It would look better to have somebody coming from the faculty at the University of Washington.

Ms. Kilgannon: It would be a recognized sort of stature?

Mr. Bishop: Yes. So, he immediately embraced me and started asking questions about, "Would I make the transition for him?" because in those days there was no money in the budget for transition and there was no space. Nothing.

Ms. Kilgannon: Could I ask how you felt about him before we go into the detail of how you actually did this job? You met and you felt a connection to him?

Mr. Bishop: I felt comfortable with him.

Ms. Kilgannon: I would imagine that would be important.

Mr. Bishop: Yes. I really felt that he was eager to do things. He was so upset about the corrections and what was going on. He was so upset about the loss of certification of the mental health institutions.

Ms. Kilgannon: So he was going to be an activist governor?

Mr. Bishop: Right. He was a person who wanted to do something. So that's what I really enjoyed.

Ms. Kilgannon: Did you have to think twice at all about this appointment?

Mr. Bishop: No.

Ms. Kilgannon: You were ready to go?

Mr. Bishop: Right.

Ms. Kilgannon: So then, about moving to Olympia?

Mr. Bishop: I agreed to go down early—it was either in late November or December—I went down to make the transition. That was quite an experience. There was no place to go. They wouldn't let me in an office or have space in the governor's office, and as a matter of fact, the then-assistant would not even give me very much information.

Ms. Kilgannon: So you came down to Olympia and what do you do, just knock on the door of the governor's office and identify yourself and they gave you the cold shoulder?

Mr. Bishop: Yes. There was quite a bit of news in the newspaper, in *The Seattle Times* that I had been selected to go down, so they were knowledgeable about it.

Ms. Kilgannon: They didn't say, "Warren Bishop, who?" as you walked in the door?

Mr. Bishop: I think they were surprised that he had selected somebody from the faculty at the University of Washington. Incidentally, the Regents put me on a leave of absence so that I would come back.

Ms. Kilgannon: Didn't you also want that as a kind of security and backup for yourself?

Mr. Bishop: Yes. So I thought that was rather nice. But then I came down to Olympia and Barbara stayed in Edmonds because we had to find someplace to live down here. I stayed in a rooming house. I had to solve the space problem, so we started looking around. Earl Coe was the Secretary of State and he had been very active in his own campaign.

Ms. Kilgannon: Yes, he had run in the primary against Rosellini.

Mr. Bishop: Right. So he was interested in us getting situated.

Ms. Kilgannon: It's a good thing he wasn't vindictive.

Mr. Bishop: I went to see him because I knew one of his staff real well who kept records, Ken Gilbert. When I was at the University of Washington, we always had a lot to do with records and things in the Secretary of State's office. I'd go down to see him and ask him if he knew where I could locate something. He sort of leaned back in his chair like this and said, "Let's see." He had stacks on the floor so he'd start down and say, "Should be right about there."

Ms. Kilgannon: Through these stacks of paper? Oh, my. And he knew he could find it?

Mr. Bishop: It was so amazing to see this happen. But Earl said, "I'm going to move my assistant out of his office and you can take it over." And he said, "We'll do whatever we can." So then the next thing we did was to get Marge Gunderson, who was in Seattle and had worked with Rosellini, to come down and be the secretary.

Ms. Kilgannon: It was really just you two, wasn't it? So when you came down and you found a little corner in Earl Coe's office and you had the legal secretary helping you, did you have to begin to get a grasp of what the governor's office would ultimately be doing? What it was doing under Langlie, and then what Governor Rosellini wanted to do? There must have been a gap in between those two things. What were you able to learn about the Langlie administration?

Mr. Bishop: I think I learned for the first time that there were a lot of things in state government that needed to be examined. From a student's point of view it just looked to me like the budget was one thing, and that the condition of our institutions was really deplorable. Mental hospitals had gone down, lost their certification, and it was difficult to hire people to come in and work in those institutions. I could see a lot of things that I knew the governor would be interested in trying to do something about them. I think that that was the exciting part about it because I knew, or had already learned, that the governor was eager to try to institute some things to do that would improve state government.

Ms. Kilgannon: Did it seem in such a state of disrepair that almost anything you did was going to be an improvement?

Mr. Bishop: As a senator, I think he became aware of a lot of things that he personally would like to have undertaken even in the Senate. He was very loyal to the University of Washington and therefore did quite a few things to improve the medical school and so on.

He conducted a series of hearings throughout the state, which got him a lot of publicity on corrections. So he had a lot to say about those things. He was concerned about the welfare of the poor and disadvantaged. He

was concerned about most things that I was concerned about. So we really hadn't had very much time for philosophical discussions when I came down.

Ms. Kilgannon: Did he have a philosophy of government that he brought to the administration?

Mr. Bishop: Yes. He really did. He had some friends like Max Nicolai, an attorney in Seattle, who really had spent a lot of time working on cases involving people who were less fortunate.

He had another attorney who came down for a while. We had more attorneys than I could figure out what we were going to do with. The governor's office normally had not had an attorney at all, except representation from the Attorney General's office. I thought it was a brilliant idea to have an attorney who would actually be in the governor's office and provide legal advice to the governor. So that didn't take long for that to happen.

Additionally, the Governor's Office did not have a press secretary staff position.

Ms. Kilgannon: Even though Ross Cunningham worked for Governor Langlie? He didn't work as a press person?

Mr. Bishop: He was here, but Ross did it like he was a stringer for *The Seattle Times*. He did most of the work as a release to the press. I don't think he worked very much on preparing press releases and things like that.

So the governor hired, very early, a person from the *Post-Intelligencer* who came down. That was before Bob Reed, who later came. They were young people who were eager to work in helping the governor put press releases together, those kinds of things.

Ms. Kilgannon: Was it a different attitude that the public needed to have more participation, therefore more knowledge of what was going on?

Mr. Bishop: Yes, I think so. There didn't seem to be much of that going on with the previous administration. The staff was very small.

Ms. Kilgannon: Yes. A mere handful of people.

Mr. Bishop: We kept most of the women staff and of course a couple more came down from Seattle. We hired a press secretary and an attorney, which I thought was really helpful. It helped to pull together sort of a family of persons who could make observations and influence thoughts that were going on. I know that happened with the attorney and I know that it happened with the press secretary. They have a way of feeling how things are out there and bring it in and of introducing it to what decisions are being made.

Ms. Kilgannon: These would be just the governor's office staff? You were considered an executive assistant, I think, at that stage. I don't really know what your title was when you first began.

Mr. Bishop: When I first came down, I was the only management assistant of the office. There was a person here by the name of Burt Gibson, who had been there since way early. He was almost ready to retire when we arrived. Gib did all the work related to pardons and would keep records, which really surprised me, how much information had to be kept in the governor's office about parolees and so on.

Ms. Kilgannon: The governor personally did those sorts of things?

Mr. Bishop: Yes. He had to have all these files because, finally, he was the one who could grant the parole.

Ms. Kilgannon: What about, say, capital punishment issues? Would that be in the same area?

Mr. Bishop: Yes. But Gib had everything locked up in the vault. There was a vault in the governor's office. In fact, there were a lot of young people who got their start in that vault—that's where their office was. The vault was a secure enclosed area, eight by ten feet, off the hall between offices.

We didn't gain any additional space until the Budget and Accounting Act, when the pre-audit function was taken away from State Auditor Cliff Yelle; an office right next to our secretarial group was the pre-audit. So we were able to go right straight through. Cliff always complained that we had taken over that pre-audit in order to get that space.

Ms. Kilgannon: Did you have any role in helping the governor choose his cabinet and his agency people and the people he would surround himself with to actually implement his programs?

Mr. Bishop: Those first months before the governor actually took office were really something, because we had to get used to each other, but it didn't take very long. He immediately wanted a lot of consultation. The office was absolutely jammed with mail. I was trying to take care of the mail before he even came down, and it was difficult for me to do that even with Marge Gunderson to assist, because it was just stacked all over.

Ms. Kilgannon: These were from people wanting jobs?

Mr. Bishop: Jobs or problems about particular functions of the state. I set up a system of referring letters out to the appropriate agencies for a suggested response, and then a letter would go out from the governor's office. We continued to do that. In fact, one of the secretaries—who was my secretary—became really expert at that. And I thought that was better than sending a letter out and then getting an answer back from the Department of Corrections or some other agency.

So we started having meetings at night in Seattle. That's where we worked. There was sort of a steering committee that had been formed. The governor had a group of advisors who were not yet a part of the administration, but who had been trusted persons in his experience. Some of those individuals were the persons under consideration like Charlie Hodde, but Harold Shefelman and friends who had helped him in his campaign and his cousins in Seattle, Victor and Dr. Rosellini, and I, of course, became one of this group because they

wanted me to be involved in this kind of a situation. So we would have meetings in Seattle after a day in the office and then be up there until nine o'clock and then come back and be in the office the next day. And that got to be a little hard on all of us.

But every single department head, or potential department head, was discussed in detail. That's where we discussed how we should put the program together, what people should be considered for the various directorships and so on. The governor had done some of that before he came down, but we had this sort of close group who really passed judgment on these things. And I thought that was good because they brought to the surface some awfully good people in the initial appointments that were made.

Ms. Kilgannon: Was it new, to begin with, that he chose you and not a person he knew at all, but because you were a professional? Did that fact alone give you the indication that his administration would be created on a very different basis—not the political people that had worked on his campaign, but people who were actually known for their fields?

Mr. Bishop: Yes.

Ms. Kilgannon: Was that a whole new approach?

Mr. Bishop: I think that may have made a lot of difference. He had individuals in his kitchen cabinet, or whatever you want to call it, who were professionals in their own right and were known and acknowledged, that he was seeking their advice in helping to select important members of the cabinet. There seemed to be one identifying factor, he wanted to start out with a clean group of managers and give them an opportunity to manage their respective activities. I think most of the potential department heads came as a result of those discussions. And I think this was healthy.

Ms. Kilgannon: Isn't that actually one of the biggest tasks? If you get the right people, it sort of takes care of itself?

Mr. Bishop: Yes, and that's why it was really great, because he had surrounded himself with well-qualified individuals. There were some maybe that people didn't quite have that much feeling about, like Louise Taylor in Licensing, but they were sufficiently professionally oriented that they themselves were able to get the right kind of people to help them.

Ms. Kilgannon: What was his criterion? I read somewhere that he was anxious to not look like he was hiring cronies, or people of that category. That he was actually looking for something special.

Mr. Bishop: You bet! The first thing he did was find a director of Institutions and he went everywhere for that. He finally appointed Garrett Heyns from Michigan, who was an outstanding, nationally known person in institutions. He did a lot of things to improve the public's understanding of institutions. He hired persons to

head various departments that had expertise. George Starland, who was quite familiar with the public assistance program, was the initial person for Public Assistance. He later moved on into other director positions. So he tried to appoint people who had knowledge and had ability related to a given department.

Ms. Kilgannon: When you were looking for the Garrett Heyns, the people that were noted in their fields for their particular ability to administer certain areas of government, was that a departure? Maybe the scale of it; how many of those kinds of people you brought in?

Mr. Bishop: It was a different scale. It was influenced by some of his professional friends and attorneys that there needed to be that kind of an approach to selecting his team. And it was my observation, not having been involved in the campaign, that he was sincerely interested in getting new ideas on management and wanted persons who would be acknowledged as identifiable professional people to head up these agencies. In the case of Garrett Heyns, the governor immediately went to work with the national organization on institutional corrections to find the most recognized person in the business and of course Heyns' name came to the surface. He had contacted Heyns and it was not a very long time before Heyns agreed to come. Because I think Heyns was anxious to come to a state that was putting together a new team and a new approach, too. I think it was sort of a unique turn of events.

Ms. Kilgannon: It does seem like a big turning point in government. There had been a long line of governors of a certain style, however you want to put that, and then when you read about the different programs and administrations, with Governor Rosellini it seems like there is a change. It's broadly called "modernization of government," where a lot of things are reorganized and a different kind of person is brought in. And it's right there that many historians identify a watershed moment in government. I don't know what it felt like at the time.

Mr. Bishop: I think even the type of persons who were eventually brought in as a part of the team, were also the persons who were helping to achieve this new approach. They themselves were hiring different kinds of doctors to head the mental institutions, different persons to be the various segment groups, like in the Department of Institutions, and prisons—wardens. All of those people just changed the whole scheme of things. It did, I think, have an impact.

Ms. Kilgannon: So it's just not in retrospect that we can see this change? But at the time you were aware that this was new? Certainly for institutions, the governor had the entire idea of transforming the whole situations. What about public assistance? Did he want to do something quite different from Langlie, so he would bring in a person who would share that point of view?