

moba media

F 4653
F and OR
97208
1217 SW 19th
Portland OR
97205
(503) 223-1677

HOMECOMING

Channel 2 KATU-TV

3/30/84

5:21

Stan Wilson

There's been a homecoming for Governor Atiyeh in the Middle East, a homecoming probably like no other. It took place in the small Syrian village of Amar near the county's border with Lebanon.

Lisa Stark reports the celebration may be the highlight of the two-week long trade mission.

(discordant band music)

Stark

It is as if the residents of Amar are welcoming home a hero and, in a way, they are. One of their own has made good.

band

(more music)

parade

With the high school band leading the way, the Governor and Mrs. Atiyeh parade in a crowd of hundreds through the narrow streets of Amar to the home of the Governor's uncle.

Atiyeh, who was born in Portland, last visited Amar at the age of six. That was 55 years ago. Atiyeh was told the bells of the village ring with happiness, welcome to the land of their father and forefathers.

translator

This is your house. Now you are the owner and all of these people are the visitors.

Atiyeh

They're all family. Everybody, the whole town is family. It's, it's wonderful.

Stark

The celebration is just beginning. A gypsy band pounds out traditional Syrian music. Oregon's normally reticent Governor joins in the dancing.

(beating drums)

(MORE)

Homecoming, Channel 2 KATU-TV, 3/30/84

Stark cont.

Villagers literally watch from the rooftops as the festivities continue below. For dinner: a mideastern feast, dishes cramed on to a table set for 60 and these are just the appetizers.

sightseers

As the evening turns into night, gypsy Beoduin dancers take center stage.

banquet

(drums)

dancers

The riotous night gives way to a peaceful Amar morning. The tiny village of one thousand was built three hundred years ago on the ruins of another town. It was founded by those fleeing religious persecution and in some ways, life hasn't changed much since back then.

village scenes

This is a farming community whose livelihood depends partly on the surrounding olive orchards. Mearby perched on the highest ridge an old Cursaders' castle, a popular tourist spot.

Governor Atiyeh leans the castle dates back to 1031 and took 75 years to build. The Governor's trip back to his roots is not unusual here. It's traditional for those whose heritage is in Amar to return.

The exodus from the village of Amar to the United States began in the late 1800s. In fact, Governor Atiyeh's uncle, it appears, was the very first one to leave here bound for America but the Governor's father soon followed and, in fact, the trickle of people leaving Amar bound for the United States soon turned into a flood.

castle

Now, nearly everyone in the village has relatives in the States, many of them living in Oregon. The exodus will continue. Schoolchildren say they want to move to America, too.

(MORE)

Homecoming, Channel 2 KATU-TV, 3/30/84

S cont.

Those who leave don't forget Amar. The Governor's family and others have contributed to improve the streets here and to bring electricity to the town. For the Governor, this look back makes him a believers in the American dream.

Atiyeh

My dad came from a little village...and he made well in the United States and his son ran for office and I think that's, think that's a great part of the United States.

In Amar, Syria, Lisa Stark, Channel Two News.

Wilson

That's quite a story...

Tracy Barry

What a touching story. It really is.

###