

# Community

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Gov. Vic Atiyeh steadies a nine-pound muzzleloader as he blazes his way to the Governor's Cup. Assisting (left) is Al Dino of Merlin. —Courier photo by Paul Fattig

## Vic Atiyeh Wields Smoking Gun with Keen Eye

By PAUL FATTIG  
Of the Courier Staff

MERLIN — Gov. Vic Atiyeh proved his shooting eye is as steady as his politics by winning the second annual Governors Gold Cup muzzleloader shooting competition Monday at the Sportsman Park.

Sighting down the barrel of a Tennessee Longrifle .50-caliber flintlock, Atiyeh placed all five of his shots into a 8-inch black target at 35 yards to take the cup.

"I used to shoot quite a bit with muzzleloaders — black powder," Atiyeh said. "I'm strictly a target shooter. I'm not a hunter."

The event was the highlight of the weeklong 16th annual Jedediah Smith Muzzleloader Rendezvous which concluded Monday.

But for Atiyeh, who was easily re-elected to his post by a landslide last year, it was a bit like waiting for election returns as he waited for the competition to finish shooting.

His political activity hasn't allowed much time for target practicing, he explained.

The challengers, save one, were all Republican politicians. Democrats had been invited, but they failed to show, according to a range officer at the park.

The Republicans included state Reps. George Trahern and Bill Markham, Josephine County Commissioner Harold Haugen, Grants Pass Mayor Bruce McGregor and local Republican party leader Clennie Banks.

The seventh contestant was District Attorney Gene Farmer, politically a nonpartisan.

Markham, a former bomber pilot, had a rifle which misfired several times. And Haugen explained he hadn't spent much time with a rifle since being discharged from the U.S. Marine Corps in the mid-60s.

Trahern was equally dubious about the smoking muzzleloaders.

"I got one at home but I can't hit the

broadside of a barn with it," Trahern said as Atiyeh calmly fired his volleys.

Each had five shots with the rifles, which are little different than those used 200 years ago. However, they are better balanced and the black powder has been refined a little.

Al Dino of Merlin, who won the shoot last year when it was open to "buckskinners" as well as politicians, served as Atiyeh's assistant.

"He is very knowledgeable," Dino observed. Atiyeh used Dino's rifle, which weighs about nine pounds.

The shoot, like the rendezvous, helps to relive an important part of history that should never be forgotten, Dino said.

Like a rendezvous of the 1800s, the celebration enables antique gun aficionados from throughout the west to get together each year to fire muzzleloaders and swap stories as well as goods.

"We cannot forget the past or else we'll never be able to take care of the future," Dino said. "We learn from the past . . . it's part of our heritage."

An antique gun collector, Atiyeh is a former leader of the Multnomah County muzzleloader club. He has been collecting antique firearms since 1944.

Four holes were apparent on Atiyeh's target and he wondered where the fifth shot had gone. He need not have been concerned about his other shot. As it turned out there were three holes in the

black that could be covered with a 50 cent piece.

Trahern placed two in the black. "And one in the leg," he added. An outline of a buffalo surrounds the target. Every competitor hit the black.

When the smoke had cleared, Atiyeh scored 46 out of a possible 50, followed closely by Banks with 43, Trahern 38, Haugen 33, Farmer 29, McGregor 27 and Markham 23.

Meanwhile, Atiyeh has yet to find out if Democrats are better shots than Republicans.

"I've never heard that," Atiyeh said, laughing. "That's a very interesting question. That's a great question. I have no idea."