

Michael Sullivan interview on Atiyeh

An interview of Judge Michael Sullivan regarding Oregon's Governor Victor Atiyeh, recorded on Sep. 8, 2015. Sullivan was the District Attorney of Jefferson County during the Rajneesh Crisis of the 1980s. The interviewer, James Moore, was as professor of political science at Pacific University and was Atiyeh's biographer.

The interview includes discussion of: how Sullivan was appointed District Attorney in Jefferson County in 1977; how he became aware of the Rajneesh movement's impact on the area, particularly land use issues; the impact of the Rajneeshees' festivals; concerns included crowd control, funding, and potential violence; coordination with state and local authorities, including the FBI and the Oregon National Guard; Atiyeh's role in handling the situation sensitively, avoiding religious persecution, and ensuring compliance with the law; how Sullivan and Atiyeh may both have been poisoned by the Rajneeshees, though no convictions were made; Atiyeh's calm and thoughtful approach and how this contributed towards resolving the crisis peacefully.

Note on the text: This transcript was made through AI in 2025, with some manual corrections. It has been provided in order to facilitate research, but the text does contain errors and inaccuracies. Users should check the transcript against the recording before quoting the speakers.

[Recording begins mid-conversation.]

Jim Sullivan 0:00

You can kind of hear a little bit of feedback, but I'll try and ignore that. Go ahead. Okay, great. So

James Moore 0:07

tell me about being elected as the District Attorney in Jefferson County.

Jim Sullivan 0:15

Well, I was appointed as a district attorney in Jefferson County in 1977

thereafter, I ran in 1978

and was a elected official

in Jefferson County.

I became aware that the Raj nations were moving into the area. And most of the ranch was located in Jefferson County, but it also was in Wasco County, and as I indicated to some of the folks that I knew in the Attorney General's office that I said, this thing is probably going to be a very big matter. And I said it needs to be kept effective. And as it turned out, I was exactly right. I was in the position of District Attorney until February of 1988 well, until after the rise niche situation had resolved.

I lived in Madras,

although most of the rise niche Ranch was in Jefferson County. Antelope was in Wasco County. And most of the population of the big money Ranch, including the Raj nations, when they moved in, was in Wasco County as well.

James Moore 1:45

So what was the nature of your concern when you talked to the Attorney General's office early on the the thing that they the Rajesh, she's kind of first came to the governor's office on was the land use issue, but that was mainly with Wasco County. So what did you see?

Jim Sullivan 2:05

Well, from my point of view, I was concerned about the land use issues as well. One of the concerns that we had was using the area out there for festivals. So we ended up in court as well, although, as it turned out, we ended up giving them a permit for and when I say we the Jefferson County gave them the permit. We We challenged it, and we were challenged for our first refusal, I believe and lost, and so we had. It began with land use issues, and Jefferson County is a rural community that was trying to preserve farming land. And some people may question whether that was a motive, but I can say, without any reservation, that Herschel Reed, who was then the county judge, the head Commissioner, really was concerned about preserving agricultural land and not having

shall I say,

city like activities invade areas where there would end up being a dispute. For instance, when you have a development that goes near farmland, and typical dispute is like weed spray and that sort of thing. So we were concerned about development in the wrong areas, and we were trying to comply with the 90 squads.

James Moore 3:48

As 1981 turned into 1982 there were plans for their first festival that would take place in the summer, and those plans, I've seen the state police were involved. The governor's office was watching on the side. They were working with county agencies. Were you involved in any of the discussions about planning for those that first festival? Yes. And what were the concerns? Aside from, you know, an estimated at that point, they estimated a few 1000 would come and then the next years, it was estimates of like 15,000 would come out. What were the concerns for that first festival? Well,

Jim Sullivan 4:37

first there was concerned, just like any large group of people. How would crowd control be handled? How would arrest be handled when you're in a small county, the budgets are extremely limited. So how would that be funded? I. What kind of response team would we need, or response time would we need? What about ambulance services? What about fire services in the event that that occurred,

would we be in compliance with land use laws

at the time that this happened? This was a very volatile situation, and we were concerned, not only just from the standpoint of a large number of people, but there were also a number of citizens that were very concerned about the Rajneeshees, and some of them had said, in fact, that they might do bad things. So we were concerned about the possibility of

violence.

James Moore 5:45

Where did the concern that I've seen was especially citizens in Antelope who were given to taking their guns to public meetings. Did that spread over into Jefferson County? Or were you and the Wasco County people working together on a lot of this. We

Jim Sullivan 6:05

tried to mediate the disputes. We were concerned that nothing happened. I invited the mediation services the federal government, to come in and see if we could establish a dialog so that there wouldn't be any violence. I think Bob Lamb was the person who was in charge of that service, and he sent down a fellow, very confident fellow, named John. I forgot what John's last name was, but he came down, and we tried to have dialog to dissipate some of the really hard feelings that existed between local folks and Rajneesh.

James Moore 6:53

And from my reading of things, those tensions were pretty strong in the spring, there's a report from the Federal Mediation Service that puts it at a like a four on a scale of five, where five is an outright riot, but then they calm down as we got into the summer. Did you have a sense of that as you went on?

Jim Sullivan 7:19

Well, I think most people were satisfied that the government by the state of Oregon and the other jurisdiction in Wasco County and Jefferson County were trying to deal with the situation of compliance with the law. So many of the people back off. That doesn't mean that there wasn't really hard feelings, and I'm not suggesting that the folks who lived in Antelope weren't very, very concerned, as they certainly had the right to be, but we were concerned that there not be any unnecessary violence, and we were trying To make sure that that didn't occur.

James Moore 8:01

What did you hear from the governor's office during this? Bob Oliver was out there occasionally, but did you hear directly from him on things, or were you just reporting to them? How did that relationship work?

Jim Sullivan 8:18

Well, my recollection is that I actually had a number of conversations with Bob Oliver, and so I never spoke to the governor. I always spoke to Bob Oliver, who I believe was one of his key people, but that was my interpretation. And so he would ask me many questions, and I would give him my interpretation. I don't believe that Mr. Oliver relied on just my interpretation of facts. I think he asked for others as well, to include the Attorney General's Office, the state police. I don't know who he may have spoken to in Wasco County, but I but I know that when Mr. Oliver called, he was at the top of my list to return the phone call to and I never expected a call from the governor himself, right? But I knew that my concerns were getting through you.

James Moore 9:16

There was a sense. In fact, I just spent this morning with Gerry Thompson, who she sends her greetings. She realizes she really hasn't talked to you since she's left, since the governor left office, but she had great faith in you.

Well, yeah, go ahead. Go ahead.

Jim Sullivan 9:34

Well, I appreciate that, and I think there was a real sense, at least by me, that I can say a little more about that if you're interested the I was really, really trying to do the right thing, and I was a district attorney in my early 30s. You. And Dave from Meyer was the attorney general, had been one of my professors at the University of Oregon, and this, I just knew this was going to be a defining moment in the history of the state of Oregon, and I was really trying to do the right thing. And so I really did my best to work with the governor's office, the Attorney General's office and Secretary of State's office on policy. And of course, you know who the Ag was Dave from where? Who recently passed? Yeah,

James Moore 10:36

who else did you coordinate with inside of Jefferson County?

Jim Sullivan 10:41

Well, of course, the sheriff's office and the county commissioners and the local state police, and it depended on what issue it was, but I could be speaking with a trooper one day, and I might be speaking to, you know, one of their top people in the state police the next depending on what the particular issue was, I also coordinated with the local police department as well as the sheriff's office, and I would talk to Bernie Smith as well. I really didn't, I don't think I spoke that much to the county commissioners, because I felt like if I was going to be in touch with them, I should do it with Bernie Smith, who was the then District Attorney.

Let's see

other folks that I spoke to would be representatives from the Oregon National Guard

James Moore 11:42

now with the Oregon National Guard, Bob Oliver talks about telling the guard just to make sure where their people were on weekends, in case they had to do a quick call up or, you know, respond to anything. What's the guard that you were dealing with, was there a Jefferson County group in Madras, or were you coordinating with the state guard as they were kind of looking over things?

Jim Sullivan 12:11

Well, as it turned out years later, I actually became a member of the Oregon National Guard. I was in the Reserves at that point. But when the search warrants were being executed, I actually were at meetings with the Oregon National Guard.

James Moore 12:29

Okay, so that's in 1985

Jim Sullivan 12:34

I don't remember the exact year, but when they served the search warrants, there was coordination that was done right? And it wasn't that it was done in secret. There I also spoke, I believe, to Charlie Turner, who is the US attorney, and there were FBI people who were doing their own investigation.

James Moore 13:00

When did you first become aware that at the ranch there may be kind of more going on in terms of what eventually we came to know as criminal conspiracies and things, there was an eavesdropping system, electronic eavesdropping going on. Eventually we discovered that there's the poisonings going on, and of course, you're involved in that directly, and I want to talk to you about that. There's also a sense that they're, they're using criminal activity to fund things. Sometimes there were accusations of drug running and all sorts of things like that. When did, when did that first really come to your attention? Any parts of that?

Jim Sullivan 13:47

I'm not aware of any drug funding allegations, but I, I think my wife and I were at home, and a representative from the Arizona called me a couple years after I had been sick, which I believe was 19.

Trying to remember, 83

said that Bhagwan had announced publicly that I had been poisoned by shear. And then it just seemed to cascade from that point forward, in terms of the wiretapping the salad bar in Wasco County, the situation with Judge Holtz, it just, it just snowballed

and so,

James Moore 14:41

so when you got there were, yeah, when you got sick,

did that

any alarm bells go off? Or were you just, you know, sick and feeling really bad, and, you know, reporting that Well,

Jim Sullivan 14:58

I was, I. Well, I was really sick, and I looked up some of the articles, and I'll be able to quote them to you, but there were a number of doctors that didn't expect me to recover. I mean, I was that sick, and Dr bud beamer came to my house and had me transported first I was stabilized to some degree at Madras, and then I went on to St Charles. And it was interesting, when I was reviewing these articles, kind of refreshed my memory to some degree. But there was a rise in issue. Doctor came in, very well educated man, and he thought at that point, he says, Could this be poisoning? And everybody kind of like, you got to be kidding me, nobody poisons an Oregon elected official. But as it turned out, I I recovered by the skin of my teeth, and I have to say that the doctors did an excellent job on me. St Charles did an excellent job. So did you know my local doctor, Bud Beamer and mount view hospital up in Madrid, but I recovered, and they diagnosed it as pneumococcal pneumonia. Well, I didn't care what they called it. I mean, I was concerned. You know, I was a new dad. Had young kids, and it was obvious to me, after what I gone through I knew I was almost dead, that they brought me back and and so I survived. So I do want to emphasize it was nip and tuck about whether I was going to survive. Yeah.

James Moore 16:37

Do you know that the governor was also poisoned, but they could never pin it on the Rajneeshees.

Jim Sullivan 16:45

Never heard that.

James Moore 16:47

The night before that 1985 legislative session, so it would be his last talk before a joint legislative session before he left office, he was giving a speech, And he got sicker than he'd ever been in his life, and he left the speech in an ambulance. And I did not know that. Yeah, it's, it's, it's, it's wild. They take him, they fill him full of fluids. It's not clear what's going on at all. He is able to get up and give the speech the next day.

Jim Sullivan 17:22

But they that's what they did. They gave me a lot of fluids, 40 liters, as a matter of fact,

James Moore 17:26

yeah, yeah. He wasn't in long enough to get that many fluids. But boy, and the it even becomes more interesting. Barbara Roberts has just been elected Secretary of State and taken office, so that night, and she doesn't know the Atiyeh side of the story either. That night, she got a call from Gerry Thompson saying, we have just taken the governor to the hospital. You need to be informed, because you're next in line. And Barbara Roberts says she doesn't even remember what the next sentence was. She was on the floor, but, but it was, it was, it was very much like the poisonings in The Dalles. They're only about maybe 20% of those poisonings. They were actually able to narrow down saying it was this, you know, strain of bacteria or whatever, that did it, and they could never identify as governor.

Jim Sullivan 18:25

Well, that's the first I had heard about that and but that doesn't surprise me, because, as I indicated on prior occasions, I wasn't in on the governor's inner circle, but I think,

by observation and

the governor played his cards very close to his chest. He wasn't the kind of guy who was going to say anything publicly unless there was a good reason for it.

James Moore 18:59

Did that stance ever cause you issues out in the field? No, when I'm talking to people who remember that time and who were covering it in journalism and things like that, nobody thinks that the governor ever did anything during the Rajneeshee time.

Jim Sullivan 19:17

Well, I disagree with I disagree with him, and I think he handled the situation well.

James Moore 19:23

So it was the behind the scenes thing that was the most important thing that he could have done,

Jim Sullivan 19:29

well, correct? And

the I think the governor had an obligation, and I think perhaps he understands it from his background better than most, is he couldn't be the state of Oregon, couldn't be perceived as engaging in religious prosecution

or persecution.

We had to make our decisions based on the evidence, and there will probably be many politicians who have used. This

is an excuse to give inflammatory statements the press, but he never sort of come to that temptation. It was the facts. It was well thought out. It was tempered by I for one, appreciated where he was coming from,

James Moore 20:21

in Jefferson County, did you encounter people who did not appreciate where he was coming from? You know,

Jim Sullivan 20:34

I don't have a specific recollection,

but I will tell you that as a new district attorney, what I didn't expect was that, when I was District Attorney, that I would have a copy of the United States Constitution and the Constitution and state of Oregon on my desk at all times explain to people why we did and didn't Do things at that point.

And I for one,

being a young district attorney and having many things to learn, I appreciated that we had a governor who was thoughtful and didn't overreact to different situations, and I'm sure was getting good advice in the Attorney General's office, because you just can't go in and start investigating people, religious groups, and that sort of thing, unless you've got evidence that, you know, some kind of evidence that crime has been committed. And so Bob Hamilton was one of the investigators would, I know, say, you know, we would receive these reports, but until we had credible evidence, there was no way that we could, you know, start this investigation. And then when the blog one announced that I had been poisoned, and there was some substantiation, then that was the basis of, I think, the huge investigation that took place, and although no one ever was convicted, I am I'm satisfied that there was a thorough investigation. Just because, you know, something happens, doesn't necessarily mean there's going to be enough evidence to prosecute someone successfully,

James Moore 22:18

right? Yeah, as they did the prosecutions, it seemed they they took the low hanging immigration fruit that the feds had been working on for a long time. Most of the time,

Jim Sullivan 22:28

yes, use them the word gaps, yeah,

James Moore 22:30

and the wire taps, yeah, yeah.

As you were going through this,

what did you think that the end of it would be? The reason I ask is the governor was convinced that this was a cult, and cults always burn themselves out. His job was just to make sure they didn't burn themselves out in a way that hurt other people. But he didn't know when it would end, but he knew it would come to an end. What was your sense as you were, you know, dealing with this thing right on your front door? I

Jim Sullivan 23:14

can't say that I had the experience that the governor did at that time. He was exactly correct in his evaluation. I think in retrospect, my concern was this in making sure that the situation didn't get out of hand, that we didn't have a situation where folks were being

persecuted, having violence committed on them.

It's easy to say that this was tense, but until you were there and dealing with this on a daily basis, tense

just doesn't

give the environment

a good description.

So what I was trying to do as district attorney was keep the peace and make sure that no one got hurt. And then that's typically a law enforcement job, but in a small community, that district attorney is right there on the front line, so to speak. Now, don't get me wrong, I wasn't caring again, but I was the person that local law enforcement turned to for advice of these situations would come up, so I wasn't out there stopping cars or anything like that. But let me give you an example of how something would happen right outside of mattress Madras. There was a little way station, and that's where the Rajneeshee Babylon would drive in every day and turn around and drive back down. Of them in his Rolls Royce, and there'd be a couple cars. And so this got to be kind of area where lots people were docking at the Baltimore and there'd be a couple cars, and he'd be in a Rolls Royce, and so they needed a traffic control person. And so John Granby, who is an excellent state policeman, in my estimation, he was trying to do control the traffic out there. And one of the rise niches made a rush on John. And so John pushed the Rajneeshee off to the side, didn't draw his gun, didn't do anything except pushed him off to the side. And so the traffic situation resolved itself.

John did a good job. He's senior Trooper, and all of a sudden, everybody comes running down to my office. I mean, it was chaos in my office. You know, the rising issues are saying, you know, John pushed the rising issues. They're complaining about it. John said that he was, you know, doing his job, and the corporal was kind of like the person in charge for the local office, he comes running in. So I got state policemen. Otherwise she's all yelling, everybody. I got this small office, and I went, Oh my God, what's going on? I can't even figure what's going on in the race is so loud. And so I said, Okay, told me, staff, let's gather up all the chairs and move them into my office. And I said, what I'm going to do is I'm going to hear what everybody has to say, and nobody speaks unless they raise their hand and I recognize them. And so she was one of these people in my office screaming at the state police.

And of course, you know, Larry Atkins is another retired state policeman. He was the corporal, and you know, he was concerned about what was going on, because that is the station. I said, nobody speaks in this. I recognize you, and you can well imagine Sheila is not used to that. She's used she's used to 1000s of people bowing down to her, and she tried to interrupt, and I said, Now, Sheila, I told you, you don't get to speak until you raise your hand, until I recognize it. We got it all sorted out, but that was the kind of craziness that I was dealing with. And so can you imagine people just come? I mean, it was just like we're all standing there, and this huge number of people all come running to my office. And what's that big an office I had, I had two secretaries out in the front. My deputy was in a different office, separated by a few feet from where we were at but and then my office was adjoining the secretaries that being said that that's the kind of craziness where I'm having to say, Everybody sit down. State police, you sit down. Rising issues, you sit down. Nobody says anything until I recognize you. Nobody says anything. You know was just nutty. And of course, I'm getting all kinds of phone calls all the time, and then I prioritize the call like if Bob Oliver called, by God, his phone call was at the top of the list. Dave Frohnmayer's office called that was at the top of the list. I remember one morning I got out of the shower, my wife says to me, there's a congressman named Bob Smith.

I said, I'll take the phone call. So I'm sitting there wrapping a towel given you know Representative Bob Smith, who was a good guy by the way, I mean. And again, I didn't run in their circles. I wasn't in their circle their inner circle, but they, they weren't afraid to ask me questions and and I certainly wouldn't have expected the governor to call me, but I know that when I spoke to Bob Oliver, you know that information was going to was being passed on to the governor? Yeah,

James Moore 29:19

absolutely you know what you're you're talking about this. It sounds like an adult out on a playground. Well, it was,

Jim Sullivan 29:30

you know, I was, again,

we're talking about Governor Atiyeh, but I don't want to take away from the other three elected or the other two elected officials, Dave from Meyer and normal policy, I also have an enormous amount of respect for we couldn't have had a better group of elected officials there, from my point of view, and I it just seemed like any kind of political turf wars. Were exit were absolutely put aside, and everybody was doing trying to do the right thing for the right reasons. And I

was a student of Dave from ours. And I don't know if you know Dave from our but it you know

James Moore 30:18

he was my first girlfriend's babysitter. Oh, up. I grew up in Medford a generation after him, so my parents and his parents were good friends, and we've run into each other. So

Jim Sullivan 30:32

he was, he's just one of the smartest people. I mean, there's lots of people in in law school that are very intelligent, but I mean, he was, he was one level above us all and so and not just smart, wise, but ethical, and I was just trying to live up to the standard he had set when I was in law school. So I just tell you, so I was trying to do everything right, and the advice I got from Sage old circuit court judgment became appointed District Attorney in Jefferson County just days before I went over there, he said, and this was Gordon Cottrell. He was from Wayne County. He said, Mike, don't be sticking your finger up in the air licking it to see which way the wind is blowing. Do the right thing for the right reasons. And that just stuck with me. And that was back in 1977 and so I said, Okay, Judge, you got it. And so I was, I was, you know, thinking, you know, I think about these conversations I did with different folks, I said, God, I just got stand tall. I gotta do the right thing. It doesn't matter what I get reelected or not? This is too serious to be having concerns about whether you're going to be re elected or not. There's people who can get killed over some of the things that are said down here. Yeah, that's

James Moore 31:52

interesting. Say that the one of the governor had a set of principles that that he put together over the years. And in the middle of all this, Gerry Thompson was, I mean, the economy was collapsing, all this was happening. She was having a hard time sleeping and taking care of herself. And she said to the governor, you know, I can't sleep. And he said, Oh, I have no problem. I sleep like a baby. And she said, How do you do that? He said, It's my principles. And she thought to herself, you sob, but, but one of his principles was, govern as if you're not going to be reelected. You know, just do what you think is the right thing, and the voters will tell you one way or the other.

Jim Sullivan 32:39

Well, and again, I was, I think I may have showed governor at his hand a couple times going through receiving lines, but we were not buddy buddy. He was just someone I had a great deal of admiration for, and I tried to be prepared for this interview. And so I kept some of the articles that this one is the Oregonian. And this was October 11, 85 and if I can take this said, and I'm reading from the medical middle of the article, in addition to the federal grand jury to be impale next month, a state Grand Jury is to convene next week, possibly as early as Tuesday, in the daos to consider evidence against by the 15 member team of the law enforcement agency investigating the Guru's allegation upon doing the estimate to be presented Friday, the emergency board at its meeting in Salem covers only state costs to the pro. By the way, it's \$900,000 okay. The investigation was launched after the deadline for money request for the month emergency board meeting. Ray said in a formal request for the money will come later, possibly in December, and this is when they say, Ray, it's Marla Wright. Ray said the estimate, including cost of the Attorney General's Office, the Oregon State Police and possibly the court system, Governor at the last month ordered from Meyer to investigate the allegations, initially to handle a charge that Jefferson County District Attorney Michael Cecil and might have been a victim of poisoning when he was gravely on February three at said Thursday at his weekly news conference that he didn't expect that the state grand jury to issue indictments in the case. The subpoena last Friday for Rajneesh would have required the Indian mystic to appear in the federal grand jury in Portland. This week, his attorneys are over granted the 30 day delay. So I found that reference to Governor Atiyeh. And then I found another article that, if you'll bear with me for a second, and this was an article, September 22 1985, and this is in the Register Guard [Eugene newspaper].

Some accusations did show and this is from the middle of the article. Some accusations did show promise. There had been an outbreak of what was believed to be salmonella poisoning in the Dalles at or about the time he said the water supply was contaminated by Sheila's forces. And the Jefferson County District Attorney, who the bar one said had been poisoned, actually grew quite ill, although pneumonia was diagnosed at the time, certain Eva, and this is in quotes, certain evidence, independent of the bear allegations, coming from the rise niche tend to confirm that the district attorney was the subject of an assassination attempt boy and Governor Vic Atiyeh wrote Attorney General Dave Forhnmayr, calling for an investigation.

So the few nine Rajneeshee residents of town, formerly called Antelope, wait to see approach to the Bob wants offer of truth, which included a call to restore town's original name. They made so many statements I don't pay any attention anymore. Said, tell him how I retired county worker. He estimates his family is only one of four left out of the 23 living in Antelope women, rising issues, begin to buy a property as a first step to eventually taking over the town's city council and police force. Let's see if I can see anything else that the governor said, Well, I'm sure you have access to that. But here's what I like about what the governor did. He didn't overstate it. He did it the right way. He asked that the attorney general conduct an investigation. His comments were prudent and well thought out. I believe that he coordinated the efforts to include the state police, because ultimately, in the executive department, he would tell the superintendent of the state police what to do. He made sure that they were resourced and work with the Secretary of State on the palace when a whole situation about the attempted voter fraud came into play. So

I'm one of those people who thinks that we're fortunate to have Governor Atiyeh as the head of our state at the time this occurred. I think, personally that the reason why so many people have forgotten about this so quickly is that we, we had a government at that point that worked well together and did the right thing and handled the situation according to law and observed people's rights during the process. And sometimes, when you do exactly what you're supposed to do, people tend to forget it, especially given the nature of our gotcha journalism these days and back in those days as well people doing the right thing for the right reasons and doing it well doesn't always make the news. Yeah,

James Moore 38:18
absolutely, that kind of sums up Vic's entire two terms in office,

Jim Sullivan 38:22
yeah, and so again, I'm, you know, a young district attorney then saying, Thank goodness we had our governor at that time. And I've always thought that when I spoke the public, I've said we were fortunate that we had a person without the helm who could have made a lot of political mileage by Starting off political nonsense, but never did that. Everything he said was well thought out and for the right reasons. And I was thinking, thank goodness, goodness we have this gentleman there. Yeah,

James Moore 39:13
a little bit more on Frohmayer in the fall of 1983, September 1983, he comes up with an opinion, an official opinion, that says Rajneeshpuram itself is illegal because it is a religious establishment, and you can't have religious establishments as cities. And so that goes off, and eventually a court upholds that several years later, but one of the immediate effects was that the state denied Rajneeshpuram regular state money to do things like help to fund the 911, system and for law enforcement. Did you see that? Happening and have a reaction to that as it was going on.

Jim Sullivan 40:04
Well, not only that, but I think they were denied access to the,

James Moore 40:09
well, yeah, the feds, the feds, you can't get into the database too,

Jim Sullivan 40:13
right? And, and so I thought,

I thought Dave from Meyer was right.

Antelope was across the county line in Moscow County, so

I thought he was exactly right.

James Moore 40:36
There was a concern that was raised at the time by Krishna Deva, KD, who was the mayor of Rajneeshpuram, that the state of Oregon was wrong to deny the money because the statute said, and it actually said, it pretty clearly that it had to be resolved by a court or by something authoritative, not just by an attorney general's opinion. Did that come up as you

were looking at that?

Jim Sullivan 41:07

Sorry, I don't have a recollection of that. Okay,

James Moore 41:10

yeah, just one of those things. I mean, when talking about Dave Frohnmayer, the morning that we learned he had died was the afternoon I was going to call him to set up an interview.

So one of those things

Jim Sullivan 41:29

I'm trying to think of the reporter at The Oregonian, Les Zeitz, that's the fella, yep, is I've been trying to get him to write a book on writing issues. You know, I every time I talk to him, I say, you need to write this book. I think he would do a good job.

James Moore 41:49

Yeah, absolutely,

yeah. And I'm now getting Gerry Thompson to really seriously begin to give me all the files that she has, which is what less needs to make a full book out for me, it's going to be a chapter, but there's, there's a there's a lot to be said in here. And just one more thing before we end. By the time we get to 1984 1985 in the governor's office. There is actually an amazing amount of coordination going on with the federal government. They're having daily phone calls. This is separate from the Rajneeshpuram Task Force, which is basically the state police and local government. Did you ever get a sense of the role of the federal government in any of this as it was going along.

Jim Sullivan 42:45

Yes, I knew that they were involved significantly.

I was on very good terms with the FBI as when I was District Attorney. They would intimate what was going on, but they would never give me specific information. But when the when the search warrants were to be served on the Rajneeshees, I was told that there was a SWAT team there, a special team that was there from the FBI, and so I was given a lot of information. We set up an area for the state police to be there, because that was the staging area, but they told me and that they had one of their special teams there, and one of the local folks called up and they said, We just saw about 12 guys going by, and they don't look like the kind of people who hang around madders. They've got tiny, tiny little waist in their shoulders look like they play football. So the NFL. And I said, Of course, I knew who they were talking about. I said, Well, I can't tell you what they're doing, but I don't want you to bother them. But let me just assure you they're here because they need to be here, and that's all you need to know. And I appreciate if you wouldn't speak to anybody else about your observations. Yeah, yeah. And so I, you know, I knew that the of course, I was on good terms with Charlie Turner, the guy, and some of the senior folks who had actually been deaf in district attorneys around the state. I mean, he had an awesome office. Charlie did, and they did a good job. So I had a feel for where they were at. It doesn't surprise me that on a daily contact I knew just two other folks in the Attorney General's office that there were coordination going on, but they were close to keep their cars the table, and after the allegations came out that I had been poisoned, I specifically. Talked to the Attorney General's office, because I said it would be improper for me to conduct my own investigation while I'm the victim. I said it just simply would be improper, and I asked for the Attorney General's help, and they were very helpful when they came over. I think if you were to talk to Bob Hamilton, or anybody who came over it, they said they were impressed by the amount of help that they got from Jefferson County, and were very pleased by the reception that they received.

James Moore 45:31

Yeah, one of the things that we do have is we have the letter from the governor to the Attorney General saying, under the power vested in me, you know, go do this investigation, because it had to be activated a little bit because of, you know, just jurisdictional things like that, but amazing times, and I,

Jim Sullivan 45:54

and I, and I have a recollection of that, and the Attorney General's office was welcomed when they got to Jefferson County, and I felt like I had an excellent relationship with Dave from Meyer, Marla Ray, all of Dave's, you know, chief deputies and everybody in the criminal section of the Attorney General's office. I am an immense amount of faith. I knew Dave Frohnmayer a lot better than I knew Victor Atiyeh, but it doesn't take away from the respect that I that I had for Victor Atiyeh, because I thought he was doing everything right.

James Moore 46:29

Yeah. Yeah. Wonderful. So any last last things,

Jim Sullivan 46:40

let's see, yeah, I want to just emphasize sometimes it's easy for people to remember when a big mistake was made if somebody didn't do their job properly. And I think the state of Oregon owes Vic Atiyeh a thanks, a belated thanks for the excellent job that he did in handling the rising issue situation that's not to take anything away from Dave Frohnmayer, or Norma Paulus or any of the other people who worked on this, but he was the head of state at that point, and we were fortunate to have somebody that really was instrumental in making government work the right way at the right time, and we ended up with a situation where it resolved itself peacefully. Now this is somebody who lived through what I considered a very, very volatile time and so many people don't even remember it now, yeah, yeah.

James Moore 48:07

For people, it's like it, you know, it with all these things, it hits the local people differently than it does those who just saw it through the media or saw the occasional red shirt go through the Portland airport or something so

Jim Sullivan 48:25

well we, this was a well known story at the time, but like a lot of things, it was soon forgotten because it was handled well, yeah, yeah. But if we, if we had had something terrible shoot out I could Waco, yeah, be a different scenario here. Yeah, and nobody's going to forget. Nobody's going to forget Waco, but it's easy to forget when somebody does their job well. And you know, we can say thanks to Governor Atiyeh, because he did his job. Well, yeah,

James Moore 49:03

one of the interesting things in this is that because the thing that people had in the back of their minds in 1981 through 85 was Jonestown, where everybody drank the Kool Aid and Congressman Ryan, who was killed as he went down to visit the people of Jonestown. His daughter was actually a member of the Rajneeshees. So it just gets weirder and weirder and weirder the more you look at it.

Jim Sullivan 49:32

Yeah. And now let me ask you to i are the people you speaking? Do? Do they interpret the situation differently than i The people on the inside who could know what was going

James Moore 49:44

the people on the inside don't at all, but people who were on the outside, and unless Zeitz does this too, because he doesn't have the documents that Gerry Thompson has very little. Is there a mention? Of the governor, it's Forhnmeyer and Paulus and sometimes Vern Duncan were the people who were the faces that people saw. And then in the governor's office, Gerry Thompson and Bob Oliver were the point people. And the governor made it very clear that he wasn't going to say anything unless, for instance, at a media event, somebody might ask him a question, and he had quick answers ready, but he wasn't going to give him any publicity. He wasn't going to give them anything. But they were, you know, until they really broke the law, they had as much right to be here as anybody else. So

Jim Sullivan 50:38

exactly, and he handled the situation very well. So I'm glad that the people in the know, and Marla Ray was certainly one of those people in the know, and it's sad that you didn't have an opportunity to speak to day before it passed on. There's a person who spent a couple years of his life in the Attorney General's Office, Bob Hamilton, right? And he was, I don't know if you've heard that name before, but he was one of the assistant HPs, but I remember speaking to him, and I said, because we went to a lot of committee meetings, and I'd say, Bob, this is a really big thing that's happening over

here. And he said, most people don't have any idea, but it's going to be a big thing. He said, Oh, Mike, your hand went just fine. I said, I remember these words.

James Moore 51:28

That's great. Yeah, very since sundry times, members of Atiyeh's own family went over there. His nephew and his wife went and spent the night there once. And because, you know, the Rajneeshees were inviting people to come over and go to the restaurant and see what was going on. And at Thanksgiving in 1983 or that happened at Thanksgiving, at Christmas in 1983 the nephew was saying to uncle, Vic, you know, you should really go over there and see the other doing amazing things, are making the desert bloom. And Vic, the nephew, says that Vic looked at him and his eyes got really cold, and he said, those are bad, bad people over there.

Don't Well, go back.

Jim Sullivan 52:16

Well, he was, you know, just one thought, the inner circle on the rise. Knee sheets were really bad, yeah, but most of the people who were the followers, they were the rank and file, were taken advantage of. And it's pretty sad what happened. And a lot of these people were Yeah.

James Moore 52:34

Vic saw the same thing. He called them the innocents, yeah?

Jim Sullivan 52:38

And they were sterilized, arranged marriages, severed contacts with their families, gave away family and fortunes, and just they gave it all for a fake It's tragic, but there were certainly a lot of bad people in the inner circle. No question about it, the rank and file, most of them, were decent folks that were just kind of on, as far as I'm concerned, on the long channel, absolutely.

James Moore 53:13

Well, thank you very much. This has been very helpful.

Jim Sullivan 53:17

Well, I hope so. And like I said, Gosh, I will look forward to that. And you know, we spent a lot of time. But you know, if you think my comments are worthy of putting the book, fine. If they're not, that's fine too. But I just really feel like I owed it to the governor again, I didn't know him personally, to really show some respect and appreciation for what he did as a governor. Great. Well, yeah, a lot of people may not have,

James Moore 53:49

Yep, absolutely. One of the advantages the governor actually had was that he lived so long after he left the governor's office, and so as the farther went along, people looked back and said, huh, you did some amazing things. So he was, he lived long enough to have actually, people begin to say that to him, but the Rajneeshees once again that his side of the story has just never, ever been told. And so I hope to be the one who does that

Jim Sullivan 54:19

great I'll look for it. When do you think your book might come

James Moore 54:22

out? I hope next year, but I'm a full time academic. I just finished a sabbatical, and so, you know, balancing classes and writing is just one of those things. So I hope next year, but books are books, so we'll see what happens.

Jim Sullivan 54:37

Well, I hope that you'll keep just a suggestion. You keep a list for everybody who contacted and send out an email blast, because probably every single person you have contacted will buy that book.

James Moore 54:48

Oh, yeah, absolutely. You're actually my 56th interview, so that's great.

Jim Sullivan 54:53

Well, I will buy the book, so just put me on the email blast list. Okay?

James Moore 54:59

And. Fantastic, fantastic. Well, thank you very much. All right,

Jim Sullivan 55:03

I look forward to the book and good luck. I'm sure you'll do justice to the memory of Governor Atiyeh,

James Moore 55:10

absolutely. I'll give it my best shot. Thanks. Okay,

Jim Sullivan 55:13

sounds good. Bye. Now.

[Recording ends.]