

# No red carpet for Atiyeh

DAMASCUS, Syria (AP) — Oregon Gov. Vic Atiyeh arrived here Monday after completing a 10-day trade mission in Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

Atiyeh was greeted by two Syrian foreign ministry officials when he stepped out of a Cyprus Airlines jet. A larger welcome didn't come about as the result of confusion over the governor's travel plans, Syrian officials said.

"I had a wonderful dream the other night," said my very good friend Max Monda. "I dreamed I bought a new TV set at an out-of-the-way little electronics shop."

That Max!

My old pal had just read the article about the wandering governor and now he wanted to talk about it.

Naturally, I had to ask what Max's dream has to do with the governor's trip.

"Don't hurry me," snapped Max.

"You see, it started out this way. The salesman in the shop introduced himself as F. Sposea," said Max. "He was a strange little man, but friendly. Somehow he talked me into buying an off-brand TV set I'd never heard of before. The price was really low."

"When I got home and plugged the set in, I got quite a surprise," said Max. "The news was being broadcast, but it was different. It was like an instant replay. It showed what really happened — not just the stuff we're usually shown."

"Sometimes the TV set showed events as they really happened even before they happened," said Max. "Like this phony business about the Syrians failing to roll out the red carpet for Atiyeh because they were confused."

Phony confusion?

"Oh, yeah," said Max. "The program started by peeking right into the private office of the president of Syria, Hafez Assad himself."

"Assad looked so real you felt like



## ron blankenbaker

you could reach out and touch him," said Max. "There he was in his office in the presidential palace. There was a knock on the door and Assad asked who it was."

"It's me, Allbull Farouk, your appointments secretary," said the man at the door."

"I'm very busy just now with all this turmoil in Lebanon," said Assad. What is it you want, Allbull?"

"It's your appointments for Monday, your excellency," said Farouk.

"I thought we'd already gone over that," grumbled Assad. "The heavy weapons salesman will be here all morning. In the afternoon we've got Lebanon peace negotiations strategy to discuss with our war minister. What else?"

"Well, this little matter seems to have slipped in, your excellency," said Farouk. "For reasons not made clear to us, there's a visitor arriving at the airport — a governor from one of the small Western states in the United States."

"The staff report says his name's Oregon and he's the governor of Atiyeh, but I think that's a mistake," said Farouk. "I think it's the other way around."

"Get to it, Allbull. What's this Oregon, excuse me, Atiyeh want?"

"He wants you to greet him at the airport," said Farouk. "You know, the special red carpet treatment for politicians in trouble at home."

"Is that right?" said the president. "Well, tell me, Allbull, what do they produce in Oregon that we might be interested in — tanks, jet planes?"

"No, your excellency. States like California produce jet planes. According to our information, Oregon is noted for its timber, although this Atiyeh fellow has a man with him who'd like to peddle us some excess wheat."

"Well, that's simple enough. Send a man to the airport to tell Atiyeh to become governor of California. Then we'll give him the red carpet treatment."

"But, your excellency. Gov. Atiyeh is arriving Monday morning. And besides, his father was a native of Syria."

"Well, that's different," said the president. "Tell me, how long is this Atiyeh going to be governor?"

"Three more years, your excellency," said Farouk. "Then he goes back to being a rug merchant."

"Rug merchant? Did you say rug merchant?" bellowed the president.

"Yes, your excellency," responded Farouk.

"Well, forget about giving him the red carpet treatment."

"But, your excellency ..."

"No buts about it, Allbull," said the president. "Do you have any idea how many rug merchants we already have in Syria? Just send a couple of people out from the ministry with the usual excuse — confusion."

The president of Syria muttered to himself as his appointments secretary backed out of the office.

"Rug merchant," said the president, shaking his head. "Why, if we stopped to give special treatment to every rug merchant coming in and out of Syria we wouldn't have time to fight all these wars."