

Rajneeshpuram Continued from Page 1

vestment firm, which had used the land as a tax write-off for six years, according to the Rajneeshpuram Chamber of Commerce.

Soon, some of the bhagwan's followers began working with the land, restoring vegetation to an area prone to flash floods and making the area livable. They were preparing for the arrival of the bhagwan and more of his followers from their temporary commune in Montclair, N.J., where the bhagwan moved for health reasons from his first commune, or ashram, in Poona, India.

The commune was officially incorporated in May 1982 and since that time its population has soared to 6,350.

"Whatever skills we have are utilized for the better use of the land, to create this beautiful oasis," says Ma Anand Sheela, personal secretary to the bhagwan, who says it was "quite embarrassing to bring a man of his nature to this barren land," although now "it looks almost like the Himalayas."

The flash floods initially created the worst problem for the Rajneeshes, so they created a lake for drainage and a series of 200 check dams to reverse the erosion process.

The Rajneeshes have planted more than 1 million trees to bring some vegetation to the arid land, to restore the wildlife, and to keep the flash floods from destroying their work.

Seventy percent of all waste is recycled through their recycling center, and their sewage is purified in two centralized sewage tanks. It is then re-used to irrigate the pastures and the landscaping projects.

"Even when it comes to (recycling) garbage, we do it in the most beautiful way possible," says Ma Dhyana Rosalie, a commune tour-guide who shows some of the approximately 200 daily visitors around the city.

Technology and science are a large part of the Rajneesh philosophy, she

says. "We think you should move with life. It gives you more time to go inside and discover the luxuries within yourself," she says.

Each Rajneesh works 12 hours a day without pay at one of the commune's 47 businesses or 15 corporations or, more typically, in construction of the commune. To most Rajneeshes, however, their work is a form of worship and their jobs are their temples, Ma Dhyana Rosalie says.

When new Rajneeshes first arrive, they meet with counselors who assign jobs based on individual interests and on various needs for workers. Most people in the professional fields take breaks from their previous professions, Ma Dhyana Rosalie says.

People joining the religion must wear the colors of the sunrise and a mala, a beaded necklace with the bhagwan's picture, and must meditate at least one hour a day.

The Rajneeshes do take time out from their work to eat their meals in one of several communal dining areas and to attend their daily religious ceremony.

At 2 p.m. each day, everyone in the commune lines the streets to see the 52-year-old bhagwan drive through the city in one of 68 Rolls-Royces donated for his use by Rajneeshes. This event is known affectionately as the "drive by."

A helicopter precedes his car, flying overhead throughout the ceremony, and Rajneesh police patrol with a four-wheel-drive Scout, which has a submachine gun mounted prominently in a side window.

When Rajneesh drives by, he is benign and attentive to the crowd though silent and separated by closed windows. Following him are three walking security guards, one clutching a submachine gun tightly to his chest.

As the procession passes, the bhagwan stops his car occasionally, and waves his arms to the music



Visitors can sample vegetarian cooking at Zorba the Buddha, a Rajneesh restaurant located in what was formerly the city of Antelope.

played by members of the crowd. Almost everyone claps and dances. Some place roses on the hood of the car, others close their eyes and rock back and forth in time to the music emanating from tambourines, drums and saxophones.

"It's a chance for us to see our master and for him to see us. It's like a great big party," Ma Dhyana Rosalie says.

In addition to the work and religious ceremonies, the commune provides three types of living accommodations: small tent-like houses, which currently house the street people; a group of A-frames, each one with four bedrooms, a communal living room and air-conditioning; and a larger group of townhouses, which will be landscaped in either a Greek or French

motif or like Hyde Park in England, Ma Dhyana Rosalie says.

Currently there is a waiting list of people who want to live at Rajneeshpuram, which includes non-Rajneeshes. "We can only take in as many as we can comfortably house here, and we turn down a lot of people. The main thing is a person's readiness to be here," Ma Dhyana Rosalie says.

Rajneeshpuram also provides more than 60 varieties of vegetables for its residents, who are all vegetarians, and is 90 percent self-sufficient.

The Rajneeshes do their own freezing and storing of vegetables, although there are problems with keeping the food away from the animals, which are not controlled because no hunting or fishing is allowed on the ranch.

The commune has its own vineyard with five varieties of grapes, and the residents hope to produce more than 20,000 bottles of wine by 1986.

Rajneeshes also produce all of their dairy products and eggs. The ranch owns more than 2,800 chickens that listen to classical music and the bhagwan's lectures to stimulate their productivity, Ma Dhyana Rosalie says.

To improve their commune's landscape, the Rajneeshes also will employ a computerized planting system called hydro-seeding after most of the building is completed. Hydro-seeding is used to plant lawns on the sides of freeways because it can produce a carpet of grass within a month.

"If you can envision one continuous park all the way down these valleys, that's what it's going to be like," Ma Dhyana Rosalie says. "The intent of what we're doing here is to turn this place into a garden."

The bhagwan doesn't closely follow the progress in his commune, but his

ideas form the basis for building the city, she says. "He had a vision to create in the desert an oasis — we take his teachings and manifest them physically," she says. "Our religion is based on materialistic spiritualism."

The commune has the largest private airstrip and the second-largest bus transit system in Oregon: Rajneeshes who live at the ranch generally give up their cars, though they are free to come and go at will, Ma Dhyana Rosalie says.

There are about 150 children in Rajneeshpuram. Kindergarten through fourth-grade students attend the school in the city of Rajneesh and supposedly are integrated with Antelope children, but many of the residents have pulled their children out of the district and sent them to The Dalles or Madras schools, Ma Dhyana Rosalie says.

"Those of us that are Rajneeshes have never really experienced prejudice up until the time when we became Rajneeshes. It's quite an experience to be on the other side of prejudice," she says.

Older children attend a school in Rajneeshpuram in the morning, and in the afternoon they work at the various businesses and corporations to learn business skills and other topics not taught in a classroom setting, Ma Dhyana Rosalie says.

The Rajneesh International Meditation University draws 30,000 people every year from all over the world — Rajneeshes and non-Rajneeshes alike. Meditation and inner growth programs last anywhere from one day to three months.

Students can stay in the tent-housing group or in the 145-room Hotel Rajneesh, which features round and teardrop-shaped beds "just for fun," Ma Dhyana Rosalie says.

One of the students, Martin Forgnoni, a former University student, is staying in one of the tent-houses and taking some of the seminars that are offered through the Rajneesh university.

A former religious studies major at the University, Forgnoni is at Rajneeshpuram for a three-month program to study the Rajneeshes' religious beliefs.

"It's kind of like a Grateful Dead concert — there's a lot of energy," Forgnoni says. "Except nobody's on acid."

Everything is provided for the commune residents, from food to towels and toothpaste, says Forgnoni, who plays in a band at the commune. He says there is a lot of freedom and free time.

The commune also offers a disco, where Forgnoni's band often plays, a cocktail lounge, and a casino that features blackjack and poker. Several eateries, including a pizzeria, an ice cream parlor and a posh restaurant featuring international cuisine, are also located in Rajneeshpuram.

A shopping mall features a boutique that sells all red clothing, a beauty salon, a jewelry shop and a beer-and-wine shop.

"(The bhagwan) is teaching us to live luxuriously, to live beautifully. We don't renounce life," says Ma

Dhyana Rosalie, who was a clothing designer in Los Angeles before she became a Rajneesh four years ago.

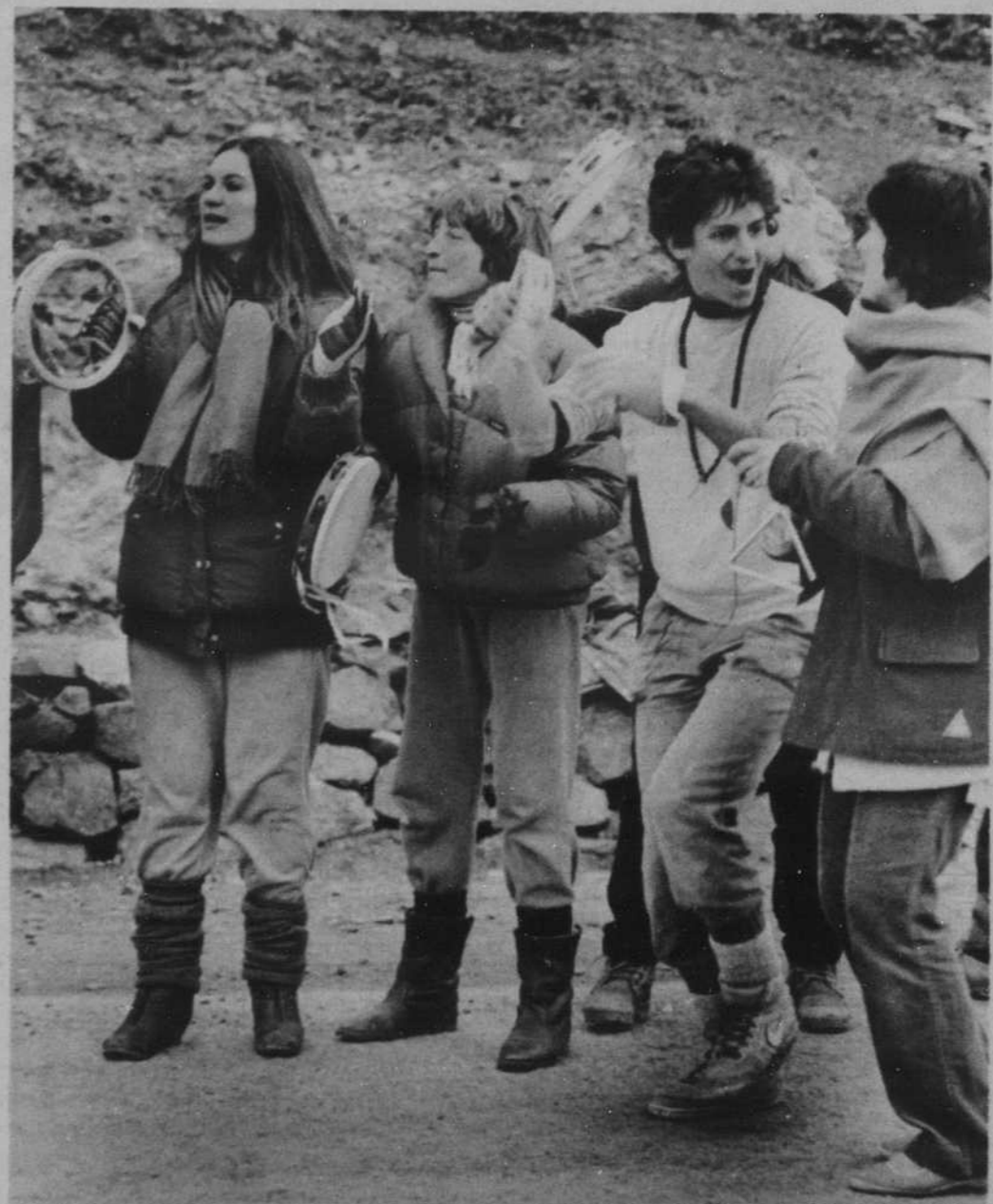
"I love wearing beautiful clothes, I love fine wines, I love going out for dinner, and I didn't want to give anything up," she says. "That's why Bhagwan is so right for me, because I could in fact keep all those worldly luxuries and also live a highly spiritual lifestyle and taste a bit of the divine," she says.

At the same time, Rajneeshpuram is not for everybody, Ma Dhyana Rosalie says.

"This is for the one with the pioneering spirit," she says. "There are other people whose lives aren't complete unless they live out some fantasies first. So if you want that type of life with 2.2 kids and a white-picket fence, live it out and feel good about where you are. And if you are ready, this is your home."

Rajneeshes from all over the world number about 500,000, and about 15,000 come to Rajneeshpuram for the annual week-long World Celebration in July. Many stay to take additional seminars or move permanently to Rajneeshpuram.

Rajneeshes have communes in Holland, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, England, Japan and other places all over Europe, as well as in the United States.



A crowd of onlookers make music and rejoice at Rajneeshpuram as they await the Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh's daily "drive by."

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Near the commune Rajneeshes pitch hay as part of their 12 hours of daily work. The tent-like buildings in the background house some of the street people bussed in during Rajneeshpuram's recent "Sharing a Home" program.

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