

Jake Santing – the “Royal Mail” !!

(One of the most colourful characters in the Kingoonya area at the time was Jake Santing.) Now Jake was a fairly old Dutchman who had been servicing the area for years. He had the mail run for Kingoonya to Cooper Pedy as well as carting general goods from Port Augusta. When we gave Jake a pile of kangaroo skins for disposal, back would come a professional kangaroo shooter's licence plus a cheque for the skins.



It wasn't unusual for a person to find a wad of bank notes on the ground outside the Kingoonya pub of a Sunday morning. On handing them in to the hotel owner (there was no police station) one was told, "Oh they're Jakes. He carries them in his open shirt pocket for security. He loses them nearly every Saturday night when he crawls back to his truck for a sleep".

Sunday Morning at Kingoonya Hotel – circa 1947.

L-R: Harold Watts, Max Pickering, John Showers, Frank Cohen, Blue Hunter and Bill Fitzgerald.

Old Jake had two trucks. He drove one, whilst the other, was being driven by his mate. One day, both vehicles were being driven in opposite directions along the wheel ruts that were the main road to Cooper Pedy. Nothing obscured the horizon for miles around, just like driving across the Nullarbor Plain. Neither driver would give way and pull off the road. Crash! Jake was livid. He jumped out of his cab and abused his mate. "You always get off the road for the Royal Mail", he screamed. That both vehicles were his own was besides the point, Jake's truck had 'Royal Mail' painted across the cab and so had right of way.

At one time a fellow decided to open a general store in opposition to Jake at Cooper Pedy, but the only way he was able to get his supplies was to have Jake cart them for him. None of the tracks were sealed in those days and it was common for Jake to often be bogged. Guess whose stores were put under the wheels to extricate the truck? The poor chap only lasted in business a short while.