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Local reunites with man he rescued 50 years ago

Local News

Local resident Abdul Sultan has always been "made fun" of for reading old newspapers.

Until one fateful day, a few weeks ago, when Mr Sultan read a two-week-old edition of the Coober Pedy Regional Times and found mention of a man he had saved from a car wreck 50 years ago.

"I always like reading about Coober Pedy because I spent time there when I was young," Mr Sultan said.

On this day, Mr Sultan did not believe the story was the same car rescue incident.

The story outlined how Jimmy Nikoloudis came to Coober Pedy in 1963 at the age of 18.

Mr Sultan read-on to discover that in that same year, Jimmy drove a truck from Adelaide to Coober Pedy with his brother John, two other mining workers and a load of batteries and other equipment.

It was about 40 kilometres south of Woomera when the truck struck trouble, rolling four times.

The article said a road construction crew found them and looked after them until the police and ambulance arrived.

Mr Sultan knew he was reading the story of one of the people he had rescued that day.

As one of the very construction crew mentioned, Mr Sultan had found Jimmy, his brother and the other two men.

Jimmy's brother John had broken his arm, one passenger had back injuries and most of their equipment and belongings were ruined by the tumbling and the battery acid.

"It wasn't until I read the story in the newspaper about the rollover and how Jimmy and the others were helped by a road crew that I realised he was talking about me," Mr Sultan said.

"It was in 1963, I was in that road crew along with Mark McKenzie, Colin Woodlands, Peter Rathman and Teddy Jonas.

"We were going back to our camps, it was about 20 kilometres away from our camp.

"That's when we saw the dust from the accident."

Mr Sultan said he was thrilled to read that Mr Nikoloudis was still alive and well today.

He set about writing to the Coober Pedy Regional Times to pass on his contact details to Mr Nikoloudis in the hopes he would want to get in touch with him.

Mr Sultan said he had not really thought of the men from the accident on that fateful day in Coober Pedy since then and he certainly did not believe he would ever really see any of them again.

The Coober Pedy Regional Times printed Mr Sultan's letter and he was even more excited when he received a call from Mr Nikoloudis.

Mr Nikoloudis called Mr Sultan from Adelaide and the two talked for over an hour.

Since that initial phone call, Mr Sultan and Mr Nikoloudis have met in person twice, once in Adelaide and once in Coober Pedy for the Opal festival.

Mr Sultan was so touched to be invited into Mr Nikoloudis' daughter's home in Adelaide for a big barbecue.

"We were treated just like family," Mr Sultan said.

After 50 years of no contact whatsoever, Mr Nikoloudis was equally happy to hear from and eventually see Mr Sultan again.

The two men reminisced and caught up on what had happened in the 50 year gap since fate last cross their paths.

"I'm glad to know that things turned out well for Jimmy and the others after the accident," Mr Sultan said.

REUNITED: After 50 years apart, Whyalla local Abdul Sultan (right) was reunited with Coober Pedy man Jimmy Nikoloudis.





50 YEAR SURPRISE: Abdul Sultan received a pleasant surprise while reading a two-week-old newspaper when he came across an article of a man he had rescued from a car accident 50 years earlier was alive and well.

BEFORE THE ACCIDENT: Jimmy Nikoloudis with his friends pictured with the truck before the accident.

