

# George Rizek



## The Fantastical Abu Mitri



George Rizek, commonly known as Abu Mitri, could have made it anywhere. But he always said it wouldn't mean a thing

unless it was in Palestine.

Chances are that you have never seen or heard of Abu Mitri, but you have quite certainly felt his impact. Having completed a mechanical engineering degree in London, he returned to Jerusalem to work at his father's famous car repair shop near Salah El-Din Street. Dimitri Rizek's workshop was well known as a place where the craft of car-fixing was carried out with utmost seriousness. To this day, I get stopped on Salah El-Din Street by people asking me "Are you related to Dimitri?"

Abu Mitri was the first to sell elevators here in Palestine. He also introduced an eco-friendly shared living community here. He even established the water park with the most slides in all of the Middle East here. Seriously!

But his accomplishments alone don't quite explain his impact.

Abu Mitri was a presence; an undeniable positivity in any room he entered. He was a person who did not need to know the words to a song to chime in, insisting that Abdel Halim Hafez's "Ana kol ma gol el-Tobah" can be interjected in lieu of any lyrics. He was an innovator who believed that nothing is too big to be done in Palestine, and a charmer who left an impression on any person fortunate enough to have met him.

Just as the mythological winged steed once roamed the skies of Jerusalem, so too will Abu Mitri roam its streets. His passing was not the end, but rather the day when he was promoted to the status of a fantastical being. To the average person, the stories and memories of George Rizek are so outlandish that Abu Mitri seems nothing short of mythical. And as long as his story is told, this brazen, unprecedented, over-the-top man will be embedded in the fabric of Palestine. I am certain that my children, my nieces, and my nephews will be stopped in the streets and asked "Are you related to George?" – only to be showered with the enduring love that so many people have for the fantastical Abu Mitri.

*By Elias Rizek*