



Al-Ojairi's Museum — Photos by Yasser Al Zayyat

NAVIGATING THE PAST

Private collection catalogs astronomical moments of Kuwait

By Faten Omar

Artifacts and antiques are everywhere. Old and ancient astronomical devices along with historic pictures are on every wall. You will find this special collection with a beauty, age, rarity, utility, personal emotional connection and other unique features only in the museum of popular Kuwaiti astronomer Dr Saleh Al-Ojairi, which he established as a place to offer information and honor and reward his children with his efforts in the field of astronomy. Alas, the Ojairi collection is not open to the public – the collection is in a special place in his house, where one can find the splendors of history. Ojairi welcomed Kuwait Times to witness his world, his life and his work.



Saleh Al-Ojairi

The carefully-preserved antique astronomical devices have a degree of craftsmanship and a certain attention to design, and makes one wonder about their usage. "This antique is from the sixteenth century - it is called a sextant, which is a doubly reflecting navigation instrument used to measure the angle between an astronomical object

and the horizon for the purposes of celestial navigation. They used to use the sextant to sight the sun at solar noon or Polaris at night to determine latitude and to know their direction at sea" Ojairi explained.

Ojairi told Kuwait Times about this sextant's story, and how he tried hard to get it due to his intense love for all astronomical items. "My younger son insisted to take me to a special place he found that sells antiques. I was not into antiques, but still went there and checked the place out. When I saw this sextant, I turned into a child, and would not let go of it even though it had a high price of £6,000. But I bargained and bought it for £4,500," he said.

A tour of Ojairi's house is like a window into the past - certificates of honor on the walls, old identity papers, old passports (when passports were just pieces of paper), historical calendars from the 1930s and pictures of him with important figures and heads of state. Every image and piece of paper has its own story to tell. The museum was his dreams for a long time - one that finally came true.



Saleh Al-Ojairi inside his private museum

