

Fascinating Story of Three Greek Shippers Retold

By CHARLES W. RIDLEY
United Press International
One of the "Golden Greeks" is gone and the question now is how will this affect the fabulous shipping empires of his dynastic survivors?

Stavros Livanos, 72-year-old patriarch of the Greek oil-tanker millionaires, died in Lausanne, Switzerland, in late May. And with his passing the spotlight was turned again on the two other "Golden Greeks" who married his daughters—then surpassed him in empire building. They are Aristotle So-

crates Onassis, now 57, and Spyros Niarchos, 54. The stories of the three men are fascinating. Livanos started life as a crewman with his brothers on a small ship his father operated out of the tiny Greek island of Chios, where Livanos was born. Little ship by little ship, he and his brothers—with Stavros always the guiding genius—built up a merchant fleet that eventually turned him into one of the world's richest men, controlling more than 70 tankers and freighters. Aristotle Onassis married

—and later divorced—Livanos' younger daughter Athina in 1948, and in 1947 Niarchos married Eugenia Livanos, one year older than her sister. Onassis and Niarchos, long bitter rivals, now each have shipping fortunes estimated at about \$300 million. Niarchos has the world's largest privately-owned tanker fleet. Onassis' fleet is almost as big. Their home and business headquarters are scattered in seven capitals across the globe. Niarchos' 190-foot three-masted schooner "Cre-

ole" is the biggest private sailing ship in the world. Onassis' yacht "Christina," a converted 303-foot Canadian destroyer, is equally spectacular. In addition to his merchant fleets, Onassis also successfully operated a whaling fleet for a time, owns a large part of Monte Carlo, including the casino and the Hotel de Paris, and runs the Greek "Olympic Airways" on a 10-year lease "as a hobby." The vivacious, frank and friendly Onassis, a five-foot, three-inch bundle of energy and charm, also has found

time to monopolize the international society columns. His romance with Greek-American opera soprano Maria Callas, which led to the break-up of his marriage to "Tina" Livanos in 1959, has frequently claimed the attention of the world press. So has Onassis' friendship for Sir Winston Churchill, frequent guest during his old age aboard the Onassis yacht and at Monte Carlo. Explaining his close attachment to Churchill, an individualist and a flamboyant personality after Onassis'

own heart, the Greek magnate once said: "We are all deeply indebted to him for the system of life we enjoy. He has given us an extension of life. Let us hope that the extension will last long." Onassis was born in Smyrna, son of Homer Socrates and Penelope Onassis, who owned a flourishing tobacco trading business. In 1922, when Onassis was 16, the Greco-Turkish war ended with Smyrna under Turkish domination. Onassis, his father and other members of the family

were jailed, but on account of his youth "Ari" Onassis was quickly released. Through a friendship with the American consul in Athens and other influential people, he managed to buy his father out of the Turkish jail. But Onassis fell out with his family and shipped to Buenos Aires aboard a crowded emigrant ship, with \$60 in his pocket. In Buenos Aires, though he spoke no Spanish at the time, Onassis got a job as night switchboard operator with British telephone company for a wage of \$75 a month.

Allowing himself only three hours sleep a day, he set out to sell tobacco from the Balkans during his hours away from the switchboard. He was soon free-wheeling and in the first year he sold \$200,000 worth of Balkan tobacco to the Argentines. His commission was \$10,000. Using this capital he shipped back grain and hides to Europe. By 1930, seven years after arriving virtually penniless in Argentina, Onassis' trading skill had made him a millionaire. It was then that he started his shipping empire by buying six freighters from the Canadian National Railways for \$20,000 each. The ships had cost the Canadian government \$2 million each to build. In 1936 he built his first tanker, the 15,500-ton Ariston in Sweden. He built two more before war came to Europe in 1939 and blocked his ships for most of the duration. With the end of the war, Onassis' career became mingled with that of Niarchos, when both saw a great future for oil tankers at a time when other shipping men did not. Instead of building tankers at first, Onassis joined Niarchos—by then his brother-in-law—in buying up surplus 16,500-ton tankers from the United States. But both ran afoul of U.S. laws which stipulated war surplus must be sold only to American citizens or American-dominated companies. In the end they settled with the U.S. government out of court when Niarchos paid \$12 million in fines and penalties and Onassis \$7 million. Borrow Capital Then both went on to bigger success by ordering new tankers at a time when shipbuilding yards were idle, and with capital largely borrowed from banks. By comparison with Onassis, Niarchos, a brown-eyed charmer who shuns publicity, had an easy road to success. He was born in 1909 at Piraeus, the port of Athens, three months after his parents returned to Greece from the United States, where they ran a small hotel at Buffalo, N.Y. In Greece the Niarchos family was prosperous, but not fabulously wealthy, through a grain and shipping business. After getting a lawyer's degree at Athens university, Niarchos entered the family business at the age of 20. In the depression year of 1930, he persuaded the family to buy ships of their own to transport their own grain at cut freight rates. Profits Soar Profits of the family business soared 400 per cent and by 1938, Niarchos was operating a fleet of his own. Niarchos' fleet was composed of only two tankers and a few freighters at the time war broke out. He turned the fleet over to the Allies and joined the Royal Hellenic Navy. When Niarchos was mustered out as a Lieut. Commander, he collected \$2 million insurance for six of his ships sunk during the war. Like Onassis, he also collected one of the daughters of Stavros Livanos, then the undisputed Greek shipping king. The insurance capital was enough to start Niarchos off on his post-war enterprise. "But money is not necessary to success," Niarchos once said in his quiet, pensive manner. "To get ahead in life you need foresight and timing." Foresight and timing are what Niarchos and Onassis showed they have plenty of—and a knack for making the right connections.

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Dunes City Votes For Incorporation

Dunes City, Ore.—(AP)—Residents of this 1,800-acre tract around Washink lake near Florence have voted 143-74 to incorporate as a town and call it Dunes City.

The area has 274 eligible voters.

Next step will be certification of the vote by Lane county commissioners and election of five city councilmen.

Supporters of incorporation contended they were mainly interested in home rule, zoning and planning and a spokesman denied the move was aimed at blocking a national seashore in the dunes area. A small part of the area is included in a bill by Sen. Maurine Neuberger (D-Ore.), to establish a seashore.

VOICE IMPROVES

New York—(AP)—Metropolitan soprano Roberta Peters, who has received critic's raves for her "Carousel" album on Command, comments: "It's because of my children. I found that after giving birth to my two sons my voice became much richer in quality."