

Captain Leonidas K Douris

1908 - 1978

Leonidas Douris was born in Evdilos Ikaria on the 23rd July 1908. He worked on his father's sailing boat and then went to sea, first as a sailor and then after taking the necessary exams became a Master Mariner. Leonidas was named for his uncle, his father's brother, Leondias I Douris, whose story is that of Shorty Davis.

When World War II started Leonidas was in Europe and could not get back to Greece. He spent those years working on Greek Merchant Vessels that were used to bring Food etc supplies from Canada to the UK. It was a dangerous job as the German U-boats would attack them even though they were in convoy with protection from the Royal Navy. He lost many friends. He was based in Liverpool where he met his wife Angeliki Kattoula; her father had a Ship Chandlers as well as a Seaman's Hotel. They married during the war and had three children.

Leonidas spent his working life as a Captain on Greek Merchant Vessels. In 1958 he went to Japan to take possession of a brand new ship the "Panaghia Theoskepasti" for the owner Capt. Peter Kydonefs. In the summer of 1960 the ship loaded grain in Vancouver, Canada with a destination of Durban, South Africa. On arriving in Durban, to his surprise, a reporter was waiting on the quayside to interview him. The reporter had come as the Panaghia Theoskepasti was the largest grain vessel, at that time, ever to have docked in Durban. After boarding and speaking with Captain Douris he left with an entirely different story.

The following is the transcript of that article that appeared in the local paper on the 18th August 1960. (see Picture)

An Act of God Gave a Ship its Name

An interesting story lies behind the name of the Liberian Freighter Panaghia Theoskepasti, which is now discharging wheat in Durban harbour.

The Greek master, Captain L. Douris, explained yesterday that Panaghia in Greek is "Our Lady" and Theoskepasti means "covered by God".

"It is the name of a Greek Orthodox church in the island of Andros" the captain said. "About 150 years ago someone dreamt that an Ikon was buried near the town of Andros. The site was later located and in time the Ikon was dug up. It was decided to build a church on the exact spot and after many months the building was completed except for the roof.

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The town was short of timber at the time and when a sailing ship entered the port loaded with this cargo the captain was asked to sell some to the church committee to complete the church. He refused because his timber was destined for another port. The ship sailed but capsized in storm close to the island. A few days later part of the timber cargo was washed ashore - just sufficient for the villager to complete the roof"

This "act of God" prompted the townspeople to call the church "Panaghia Theoskepasti" and this name has been adopted by the ship.

Captain Douris has a copy of the Ikon in his cabin and me yesterday that annual parades and celebrations take place at this church in Andros and are attended by royalty and dignitaries from all over Greece.