

# Onassis Noted as Gracious Host

*He Often Entertains  
Guests on Private  
Island or Yacht*

By MURRAY SCHUMACH

To the innermost circle of the international jet set, the name "Ari" means Aristotle Socrates Onassis, who seems mainly concerned with using his vast wealth to indulge guests aboard the Christina, his 325-foot yacht; on Scorpios, his privately owned Ionian island, or at one of his palatial homes and apartments wherever he sets them up.

But to men who have clashed with this 62-year-old multimillionaire, his white hair is not symbolic of Santa Claus. They have found him a man of insatiable ambition, whose energy and wiles have created a vast fleet of oil tankers, an armada of whaling vessels, the privately owned Olympic Airways and more companies to control his enterprises than anyone except his closest associates knows.

That his exploits as a charming party-giver and shipping magnate should have made him an international figure does not surprise this stocky, eagle-nosed Greek, who is to marry Mrs. John F. Kennedy. But he does not seem to be enthusiastic about much of the publicity.

Recently, for instance, in an interview with Sanche de Gramont for The Saturday Evening Post, he said:

"The worst thing that can happen to a man is to become a celebrity. It's as though there was a law that you have to walk naked in public—no matter how well built you are, they make you look ridiculous."

## Rags to Riches

But whether people like him or not, it is difficult to deny that Mr. Onassis has earned the right to put an El Greco and golden faucets in his yacht; to greet Greta Garbo with a brass band; to entertain the late Sir Winston Churchill; to engage in a crockery-smashing frolic in a tavern with Melina Mercouri; to fly a party of friends to a two-week vacation on a whaler and to establish a friendship with Maria Callas that was joy to gossip-mongers.

For whatever Mr. Onassis has obtained he has obtained himself. His rise has been in the tradition revered in the United States—from poverty to \$300-million by work and intelligence. His most important decisions have been in the face of the flat contempt of men who were supposed to be experts.

In the depths of the Depres-



Camera Press-Pix

**Mr. Onassis' first wife, Ahina Mary Livanos. They were divorced in 1960 and she wed the Marquess of Blandford one year later.**

ness seemed hopeless, he bought freighters at ridiculously low figures. After World War II, he ignored the scorn of shippers who warned him against building huge tankers. Both decisions showed he was more astute than Wall Street experts or other shipping magnates.

Not too long ago, reflecting on the opposition to his plans to build 250,000-ton tankers, he said that shortly after World War II, the best minds in American shipping advised against tankers as large as 28,000 tons.

"They were shocked," he said, between puffs on a cigar. "They hardly thought it worthwhile to consider such designs."

At one point, to prove his theory about large tankers, he put his fortune on the line for \$60-million to build the ships.

Antagonism seems to whet his determination. In 1953, for instance, after he was refused a building in Monaco that he wanted to use for office space, he bought control of the Casino at Monte Carlo by secret purchases of stock in Societe des Bains de Mer. Eventually he sold the stock, but at a considerable profit. But he got his office space.

Mr. Onassis was born in comfortable circumstances in 1906, in Smyrna, now Izmir, a Turkish-dominated area in Asia Minor with a large Greek population. His father was a well-to-do tobacco importer.

However, after World War I, when the Turks slaughtered hundreds of thousands of Greeks there, he and his family escaped by boat to Greece. At

*Rivals Know Him  
for Vast Energy  
and His Wiles*

they were so impoverished that it was agreed the 16-year-old youth should migrate to Argentina — a land of tolerant immigration regulations — and try to build a family fortune.

From time to time one of the lesser mysteries surrounding Mr. Onassis has been his age. This, he has explained, is because after first arrived in Argentina he said he was six years older than he actually was to get credentials for a job he wanted.

The man who is now fluent in Greek, Spanish, French, Italian, and English — as well as Greek and Turkish — arrived in Buenos Aires with no knowledge of Spanish and only \$60. He worked as a laborer, then as a night telephone operator.

He joined a few other Greeks in an importing business and within three years he had saved \$20,000. Then he decided to go into the importing business. By the age of 26 he was a millionaire. His success brought him the post of Consul General for Greece in Argentina—and the opportunity to study the shipping industry.

His observations—and opportunities to acquire inside information—persuaded him to buy six Canadian freighters in 1931.

"You could get a 10,000-ton ship," he later said, "for the price of a Rolls-Royce."

In 1946, Mr. Onassis married Athina Livanos, the daughter of another Greek shipping figure, Stavros G. Livanos. They had a son, Alexander and a daughter Christina, before she divorced him on a charge of mental cruelty in 1960.

NYTIMES  
10/18/68