

The Enduring Wedding Dress at VOA Rhodes, Greece

Beginning September 7, 1952, the VOA used the USCGC *Courier* at the island of Rhodes, Greece, to relay America's voice deep into the Soviet Union. Rhodes is situated about 11 miles south of Turkey.



Using its 150-kW mediumwave broadcast transmitter, the *Courier* was most effective at nighttime for pushing its VOA signal into the Soviet Union.

The ship also used two 35 kW shortwave transmitters to relay programming from Bethany Station and the Edward R. Murrow Station in 13 languages.

Read about the [Soviet Union's extraordinary efforts to jam this voice of freedom.](#)

Today, the *Courier* holds a proud record for the longest deployment overseas, the most powerful communications radio transmitter ever installed on board a ship, and the most electrical power generating capacity in the hold of a ship: 1.5 MW.

In 1977, the VOA became the first international broadcaster to use a full-time satellite circuit to deliver programming from its studios to the Rhodes relay station.

On August 13, 1964, the *Courier* departed Rhodes because an onshore VOA broadcast station, shown to the right, became operational, remaining on the air until about 1993.



Several onshore social mixers for the *Courier* crew and women of Rhodes were arranged by the mayor of Rhodes and the ship's captain. Over 95 weddings resulted from developing relationships between crew members and women from Rhodes. The first bride to marry a *Courier* Coast Guardsman very much wanted to be married in an American wedding dress. That became possible when the groom's father purchased her wedding dress at Macy's in New York. Subsequently, future brides wanted to also be married in an American wedding dress. Consequently, the original dress was altered 16 times and worn again in as many weddings. In no

condition to be altered again, the dress had to be retired. Future brides decided to make their own dress.

Honeymoons were rare because grooms were off duty only a short time.

World War II decimated economic conditions on Rhodes. Arrival of the USS *Courier* crew and their families greatly enhanced the local economy and made life better for everyone on the island.

The introduction of more children required the building of schools and other social organizations that fostered integration of both cultures. Crew members and their families became part of the community and participated in Rhodian functions.



Leland L. Hite 9-28-2019

Source 1: Interview with the 85th Rhodian Bride, Mrs. Maria Kalafata Lowther, Chief Financial Officer for the USCGC Courier/VOA Memorial Association, at the September 21, 2019 VOA Museum Gala. Mrs. Lowther mentioned that her brother found employment on the ship and continued with the onshore VOA station, serving for 28 years.

Source 2: Courier Exhibit at the VOA Museum

[Source 3](#)

[Source 4](#)