

PART 1

00:01:51.06\00:01:52.22

<ALL><CO2>[Trevor Stephenson,
cruise director "Seabourn Spirit"]<CO>

00:03:10.12\00:03:14.03

At first,
the Isthmus of Corinth...

00:04:02.09\00:04:04.13

wasn't but a pile of stones and earth...

00:04:04.14\00:04:07.03

like those that blocks the mouths of a river.

00:04:07.04\00:04:10.01

According to Pindarus...

00:04:10.18\00:04:13.05

the ancient people thought of it like a bridge dropped to the sea.

00:04:13.06\00:04:17.12

And for centuries they went through and laid plans.

00:04:17.13\00:04:20.17

How to connect the two seas again.

00:04:20.29\00:04:23.10

Ancient Corinth, a renowned city...

00:04:26.05\00:04:28.13

was built next to two seas and two lands.

00:04:28.20\00:04:31.22

The routes of commerce between the Aegean Sea and the Ionian Sea,

00:04:32.06\00:04:35.17

the Greek North and South passed through Corinth.

00:04:36.01\00:04:38.22

The passage through Isthmus...

00:04:39.07\00:04:41.19

the straight zone which divided Aegean from Ionian Sea...

00:04:42.03\00:04:46.07

was a main concern of the seamen.

00:04:46.12\00:04:49.16

Thus, how they could detour the Cape Maleas.

00:04:49.28\00:04:52.17

(Theophanis Grispos, researcher, former technical manager]

00:04:53.04\00:04:56.12

The difficulty of the transportation of the goods...

00:04:56.20\00:04:59.03

by the method of transshipment...

00:04:59.04\00:05:01.12

led the ancient Corinthians to the construction of the Diolkos.

00:05:01.20\00:05:07.01

Diolkos was a paved trail...

00:05:07.13\00:05:10.18

through which the ships were carried by land..

00:05:10.25\00:05:15.17

with the use of wooden poles...

00:05:15.23\00:05:19.00

while the goods were transported on animals.

00:05:19.07\00:05:22.03

This transportation meant big profits for the Corinthians.

00:05:43.23\00:05:49.02

It was one of the main incomes for the city.

00:05:49.09\00:05:54.05

During the process of the transportation...

00:05:54.21\00:05:57.13

the merchants and seamen were having a good time...

00:05:57.21\00:06:00.23

and were making offers to the temples of the city.

00:06:01.06\00:06:03.22

The first who attempted the opening up of the Isthmus...

00:06:08.20\00:06:12.03

was the tyrant of Corinth, Periandros, in the 7th century BC.

00:06:12.12\00:06:15.17

At that time, as it is said, Pythia delivered an awesome oracle:

00:06:16.18\00:06:20.05

The Isthmus shouldn't be opened up...

00:06:20.13\00:06:23.09

and they shouldn't go against the will of Zeus.

00:06:23.20\00:06:27.03

The plan was abandoned.

00:06:27.12\00:06:29.09

Nowadays, the historians claim that the oracle was provoked...

00:06:29.23\00:06:33.09

by the local clergy, that was afraid of relinquishing the gifts

00:06:33.19\00:06:36.26

and the offerings of the traders.

00:06:37.07\00:06:39.13

After Periandros, Demetrius the Besieger in 307 BC...

00:06:41.14\00:06:45.02

Julius Caesar in 44 BC...

00:06:45.11\00:06:48.06

and Caligula in 37 BC also made plans of cutting the Isthmus...

00:06:48.13\00:06:53.04

but they didn't get along due to political and military reasons.

00:06:53.13\00:06:57.08

In 66 AD Nero will decide to bring the project to life...

00:06:58.21\00:07:02.01

and will base his attempt upon the plans of his forerunners.

00:07:02.11\00:07:05.03

A lot of laborers-among them 6000 slaves, convicts from Galilea-

00:07:05.04\00:07:09.10

are placed along the cutting line of the canal.

00:07:09.20\00:07:13.10

On 28th November 67 AD...

00:07:13.28\00:07:16.09

Nero himself will inaugurate the construction with a gold pickax.

00:07:16.18\00:07:20.09

Three months later, the emperor has to return to Rome...

00:07:21.20\00:07:25.10

in order to quell the mutiny of General Galva.

00:07:25.17\00:07:28.15

He dies mid-project and four centuries no one dares to continue.

00:07:30.16\00:07:37.07

After the end of the Turkish domination...

00:07:43.06\00:07:45.12

Greece stands on the threshold of the industrial age.

00:07:45.20\00:07:48.18

For the merchant ships becomes urgent...

00:07:49.06\00:07:51.25

the need for a shipping route that will spare effort, time, fuel...

00:07:52.07\00:07:56.12

and the hazardous by-passing the Cape Malea.

00:07:56.21\00:07:59.23

In 1869 the Zaimis Administration enacts a law entitled...

00:08:01.24\00:08:05.13

"The opening of the Isthmus of Corinth".

00:08:05.20\00:08:08.08

In 1881 the Greek State contracts with French constructors...

00:08:08.19\00:08:13.06

and concedes them the right of utilization of the canal for 99 years.

00:08:13.15\00:08:18.02

The works begin on 29th March 1882...

00:08:19.17\00:08:22.23

but will cease 7 years later due to lack of funding.

00:08:23.05\00:08:26.24

In 1890, a new, Greek company, under Andreas Syggros...

00:08:29.25\00:08:34.02

will assume to materialize the project.

00:08:34.10\00:08:36.21

The inauguration of the canal takes place on 25th July 1893...

00:08:54.01\00:08:58.16

with great pomp and circumstance.

00:08:58.23\00:09:01.05

2500 years have passed...

00:09:06.14\00:09:09.01

since wise Periandros dreamt of connecting the two seas.

00:09:09.08\00:09:14.05

The opening of the canal took 2.500 workers and 11 years.

00:09:19.18\00:09:25.14

12 million cubic meters of earth were excavated.

00:09:26.18\00:09:31.16

[Theophanis Grispos, researcher, former technical manager]

00:09:34.08\00:09:37.10

For the time, the opening of the canal was a great achievement...

00:09:37.19\00:09:41.05

considering that the best machinery of the time was used for the task.

00:09:41.14\00:09:45.09

The length of the canal is 6.343 meters.

00:09:45.16\00:09:49.18

The width on the surface is 24.6 meters...

00:09:49.25\00:09:53.01

the average depth is 7.5-8 meters..

00:09:53.07\00:09:57.03

while the maximum height of the slopes is 79 meters.

00:09:57.10\00:10:00.24

The difference from the other canals, like Suez...

00:10:02.10\00:10:04.24

is the big height of the slopes.

00:10:05.05\00:10:08.03

When the works started the contractor company...

00:10:15.05\00:10:17.07

faced the problem of the accommodation of the laborers.

00:10:17.08\00:10:21.03

So, a whole village with houses made of stone and wood..

00:10:23.03\00:10:28.07

and running water was built next to the future canal.

00:10:28.14\00:10:31.20

People and families connected their lives with the canal.

00:10:32.03\00:10:35.10

They, their children and their grandchildren.

00:10:35.13\00:10:38.07

(Yannoula Kakouri, habitant of Isthmus]

00:10:39.06\00:10:41.10

My father was working as a stroker on towboats.

00:10:41.17\00:10:44.21

I was cleaning the offices of the company for 30 years.

00:10:45.03\00:10:48.23

I was pensioned at the age of 55.

00:10:49.13\00:10:52.11

Both my sons work in the canal.

00:10:53.29\00:10:57.15

Even my son-in-law was working there, but now is in pension.

00:10:57.23\00:11:00.23

My older son was working as a pilot on the ships, but now is in pension.

00:11:00.24\00:11:04.24

Only my younger son still works there.

00:11:05.07\00:11:07.15

[Leonidas Kakouris, employed)

00:11:12.21\00:11:14.21

Before the war in 1940s, my grandpa was working here.

00:11:15.03\00:11:18.27

Then, my mother, my brother and me followed.

00:11:19.06\00:11:22.13

In the past, the village was full of life.

00:11:23.11\00:11:25.19

About 110-120 workers were living here.

00:11:26.01\00:11:28.12

Now, about 160 people work there.

00:11:28.18\00:11:32.22

My father started working here in 1924.

00:11:47.11\00:11:51.11

With his salary from the canal raised us, his children...

00:11:51.19\00:11:54.29

since there were not any other jobs in the country then.

00:11:55.08\00:11:59.18

The Canal was like a paradise.

00:12:00.07\00:12:02.07

The management of the Canal appreciated the workers...

00:12:02.14\00:12:05.20

and were hiring even their children.

00:12:06.02\00:12:07.04

(Panagiotis Philis, pensioner)

00:12:07.05\00:12:08.19

I was working on small ships, my brother too.

00:12:09.01\00:12:11.08

Then, the manager of the Canal hired us and we became pilots.

00:12:11.17\00:12:17.20

I worked as a captain of a towboat for 4-5 years...

00:12:18.07\00:12:23.12

and as a pilot for 20 years.

00:12:23.19\00:12:26.04

During the first 50 years of its life...

00:12:30.17\00:12:32.13

the canal suffered several destructions.

00:12:32.14\00:12:35.11

Great clumps of earth fell, sometimes due to earthquakes...

00:12:38.18\00:12:41.20
and sometimes because of the geological formation of the slopes,

00:12:42.17\00:12:46.08
that is promiscuous and full of faults.

00:12:46.16\00:12:49.16
Since its opening until 1940...

00:12:50.10\00:12:54.21
the Canal was closed for 4 years, after several landslides.

00:12:55.04\00:13:00.05
(Theophanis Grispos, researcher, former technical manager)

00:13:00.26\00:13:02.25
The larger landslide was that of 1923...

00:13:03.06\00:13:05.12
when 41.000 cubic meters fell...

00:13:05.19\00:13:08.11
and the Canal was closed for 2 years.

00:13:08.27\00:13:11.21
Human wildness turned to be worse...

00:13:16.08\00:13:18.19
than the physical destruction.

00:13:19.01\00:13:21.02
In the autumn of 1944...

00:13:22.09\00:13:24.10
upon the retreat of the Occupation troops...

00:13:24.16\00:13:27.07
Germans, in order to cover up their rear...

00:13:27.13\00:13:29.17
blew up the slopes of the canal.

00:13:29.28\00:13:32.07
They had previously occluded the canal...

00:13:34.22\00:13:37.09
by dropping into train wagons and a ship.

00:13:37.17\00:13:40.01
The brought a ship in the canal and scuttled it...

00:13:59.28\00:14:02.14
(Yannoula Kakouri, habitant of Isthmus]

00:14:02.22\00:14:05.07
so that no ship could pass through.

00:14:05.14\00:14:08.13

(Panagiotis Philis, pensioner)

00:14:11.08\00:14:13.02

I saw how they blew up the bridges and the wagons.

00:14:13.08\00:14:15.25

It was a tremendous explosion and the wagons fell in...

00:14:16.06\00:14:20.08

and the water flooded over the canal...

00:14:20.16\00:14:24.18

while a huge cloud of dust was risen in the sky.

00:14:25.00\00:14:27.15

60.000 cubic meters of earth fell into the water.

00:14:42.03\00:14:45.03

The canal remained closed for 5 years.

00:14:49.25\00:14:53.14

The contemporary history of the canal begins in 1949.

00:14:59.03\00:15:02.12

Two great, new bridges...

00:15:02.19\00:15:04.24

a vehicular one and a railway one, are delivered.

00:15:05.05\00:15:09.01

Furthermore, two sinking bridges, at Isthmia and Poseidonia...

00:15:21.16\00:15:25.04

serve the communication and transport needs of the area.

00:15:25.12\00:15:28.17

Gradually the canal turns...

00:15:52.08\00:15:53.19

to an international junction of sea transport.

00:15:54.02\00:15:57.03

(Panagiotis Philis, pensioner)

00:15:58.29\00:16:00.18

Adriatica was the best client of the canal.

00:16:00.29\00:16:03.14

Four ships of Adriatica were passing through twice per week...

00:16:03.22\00:16:07.22

apart its other smaller boats.

00:16:08.06\00:16:10.22

I was working there for 25 years...

00:16:11.12\00:16:13.12

and I've been in pension for 21 years.

00:16:13.19\00:16:15.16

I see the ships and my soul rejoices!

00:16:15.17\00:16:18.10

I worked there since I was a kid.

00:16:18.16\00:16:20.22

It was my life. I loved my job.

00:16:21.03\00:16:24.01

I was getting on board and piloting the ship through the canal.

00:16:25.09\00:16:30.17

The captain of the ship stood aside...

00:16:31.01\00:16:33.20

I was in charge of the pilothouse and the engines of the ship.

00:16:34.03\00:16:37.12

The captain wasn't aware of the secrets of the canal...

00:16:37.21\00:16:41.03

where the ship deepens and where not.

00:16:41.10\00:16:44.06

As a pilot, I passed many times through the canal...

00:16:50.01\00:16:53.11

the ships of Onasis and Niarhos.

00:16:53.19\00:16:56.05

On New Year's Eve, Onasis was passing through...

00:16:59.29\00:17:02.21

with Jacquelyn, from Scorpios Island.

00:17:03.03\00:17:05.17

I was wishing her in English: "Happy New Year"...

00:17:05.28\00:17:08.14

and she was wishing back in Greek.

00:17:08.21\00:17:11.00

I also piloted many times Niarhos and Latsis.

00:17:11.16\00:17:14.11

He didn't liked to be called "Mr Latsis", but "Captain Yannis".

00:17:15.17\00:17:19.02

The ships, the commerce, the new roads bring people.

00:17:24.02\00:17:27.04

The canal of Corinth steps in the tourist map of Greece...

00:17:30.27\00:17:33.27
is developing as a tourist attraction.

00:17:34.08\00:17:36.15
The village of Isthmia is growing.

00:17:36.23\00:17:38.25
New hotel units are inaugurated..

00:17:39.27\00:17:42.20
the retail trade is flourishing.

00:17:43.01\00:17:45.15
The construction of a new highway road in the 90's...

00:18:35.18\00:18:39.17
gives an impulse to the transports...

00:18:39.27\00:18:42.08
but leads the local economy into decay.

00:18:42.14\00:18:45.19
Since 1970s until now...

00:19:03.15\00:19:05.22
millions of people have visited this place.

00:19:06.03\00:19:09.17
A stop at the Isthmus was a must in peoples' journey...

(Gerasimos Nastoulis, entrepreneur)

00:19:12.24\00:19:14.24
and the stores were earning big money then.

00:19:15.06\00:19:17.25
They were selling 15-20.000 souvlakia per day.

00:19:18.08\00:19:21.02
When the new highway opened the loss was enormous...

00:19:21.10\00:19:25.04
but little by little the people is coming back.

00:19:25.12\00:19:28.12
Fantastic!

00:19:30.00\00:19:31.05
It's wonderful! The best place in Greece.

00:19:31.19\00:19:33.26
Nowadays, tourists come back...

00:19:35.01\00:19:37.20
and the store owners can work again.

00:19:38.00\00:19:44.05
The crossing of the canal...

00:20:06.06\00:20:07.20
enters the programs of cruise ships.

00:20:08.01\00:20:10.12
The voyagers are ecstatic over to this task...

00:20:21.07\00:20:24.13
a brilliant work of the mechanics of the 19th century.

00:20:24.20\00:20:28.14
On a small clime of Earth, where man dared to object God.

00:20:29.01\00:20:34.07
The canal is impressing. It's the first time we've been here.

00:20:40.14\00:20:46.23
We had heard and read a lot about the canal...

00:20:47.07\00:20:50.09
but now we can admire it.

00:20:50.17\00:20:53.07
Wonderful!

00:21:00.06\00:21:01.08
Very interesting.

00:21:02.06\00:21:04.02
I've never seen something like that before.

00:21:05.00\00:21:08.04
It's really amazing!

00:21:15.03\00:21:16.20
Very nice!

00:21:20.04\00:21:21.08
It's amazing!

00:21:29.07\00:21:30.18
Wonderful! Really impressing!

00:21:38.13\00:21:40.26
The rights of exploitation of the canal...

00:22:02.23\00:22:04.22
that firstly were assigned to the "Company of the Corinth Canal"...

00:22:05.06\00:22:07.19
passed to the National Bank and then to the Greek State.

00:22:08.04\00:22:11.14
After 2001, the rights were accorded after a herd to Periandros Inc.,

00:22:12.09\00:22:15.21

a company of British interests for thirty years.

00:22:16.03\00:22:19.11

The new company declares...

00:22:21.18\00:22:22.25

that aims to make the canal a standard hub...

00:22:23.07\00:22:26.17

in service of the world shipping.

00:22:26.26\00:22:29.18

The main concern of Periandros Inc...

00:22:31.05\00:22:33.04

which runs the Isthmus of Corinth...

00:22:33.12\00:22:35.20

is to keep the canal open.

00:22:35.29\00:22:38.13

(Phaedon Kyriakidis, technical manager "Periandros Inc"]

00:22:41.06\00:22:44.03

It's a tourist attraction...

00:22:44.11\00:22:45.23

whether they pass through the canal...

00:22:46.05\00:22:48.29

or they watch the ships passing through from the bridges above.

00:22:49.09\00:22:53.11

So, our concern is to keep the canal open...

00:22:53.20\00:22:56.27

both for touristic exploitation and for the national economy.

00:22:57.06\00:23:01.11

But most of all, because it's a part of the cultural history of Greece.

00:23:01.21\00:23:07.02

Every day we check the situation of the slopes.

00:23:21.05\00:23:25.16

We are in touch with the canal every day for 8 hours...

00:23:26.17\00:23:30.17

observing closely for problems that may occur...

00:23:30.28\00:23:34.09

before the consequences of these problems become serious.

00:23:34.18\00:23:40.03

We regularly fathom the canal so that the depth remains the same...

00:23:59.05\00:24:02.29
for the safe passage-by of the ships.

00:24:03.09\00:24:06.07
The 80% of the activities done with floating bridges and vehicles

00:24:55.08\00:25:00.03
are executed by our personnel who are all well trained.

00:25:00.12\00:25:07.16
Nowadays, the routes have changed, the ships are larger in size..

00:25:20.03\00:25:25.00
the canal, with its dimensions, can service ships of a certain size.

00:25:25.22\00:25:31.07
We can service ships with waterline up to 22,5 meters.

00:25:35.17\00:25:42.21
We can't service all ships, as we used to a hundred years ago,

00:25:43.17\00:25:47.20
yet, we can service most of ships sailing the Greek seas...

00:25:47.24\00:25:54.24
in safety.

00:25:55.26\00:25:57.14
Today, 112 years since the canal was opened..

00:26:04.08\00:26:07.05
12.000 ships cross the canal annually.

00:26:07.13\00:26:11.01
Vessel of every kind and under every flag.

00:26:11.25\00:26:14.18
Cruises, excursions are taking place...

00:26:15.16\00:26:18.08
drills of the Greek rescue squad are organized..

00:26:18.24\00:26:22.04
and bungee jumping falls.

00:26:26.19\00:26:28.18
The canal is taking a leap into time.

00:26:31.19\00:26:34.06
And gets into the New Age.

00:26:35.09\00:26:37.15
I thought it was like the canal of Panama...

00:27:13.24\00:27:16.15
but this is smaller.

00:27:16.23\00:27:18.18
But it's very beautiful.

00:27:20.13\00:27:21.24
I can't imagine how they managed to open it...

00:27:36.24\00:27:41.12
so many years ago.

00:27:41.24\00:27:43.22
Along the canal, from the bottom of the sea...

00:28:29.00\00:28:32.20
until two meters over the surface of the sea...

00:28:33.03\00:28:37.20
a stone wall is constructed...

00:28:38.02\00:28:41.05
for the protection of the foot of the slopes...

00:28:41.13\00:28:44.18
called groundwork.

00:28:45.00\00:28:46.29
Most of this groundwork has been destroyed.

00:28:50.03\00:28:54.08
(Theophanis Grispos, researcher, former technical manager]

00:28:57.10\00:28:59.16
A series of environmental, technical and economic studies...

00:28:59.27\00:29:03.13
have been made for the repair of the groundwork.

00:29:03.22\00:29:07.01
Since the cost of the task is about 300 million Euros...

00:29:07.11\00:29:10.19
we expect for a proper financing...

00:29:11.02\00:29:13.26
while the management of the canal...

00:29:14.06\00:29:16.24
is trying to get this task financed by the European Union.

00:29:17.08\00:29:21.05
EU has declared the Isthmus a historic monument...

00:29:22.03\00:29:28.20
and expressed the will to finance the repairs of its groundwork.

00:29:31.03\00:29:36.19
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