

1 United States Senate Inquiry

2 Source : <http://www.titanicinquiry.org/USInq/AmInq01Indxa.php> Day 7

3 Testimony of Walter T. Brice

4 Senator BOURNE.
Kindly state your age?

5 Mr. BRICE.
Forty-two.

6 Senator BOURNE.
And your residence?

7 Mr. BRICE.
Eleven Lower Canal Walk, Southampton.

8 Senator BOURNE.
And your occupation?

9 Mr. BRICE.
Seaman, sir.

10 Senator BOURNE.
Able-bodied seaman?

11 Mr. BRICE.
Able-bodied seaman.

12 Senator BOURNE.
How long have you been rated as a first class, able-bodied seaman?

13 Mr. BRICE.
Twenty-two years, sir.

14 Senator BOURNE.
Have you been on sailing ships or steamships all the time?

15 Mr. BRICE.
Sailing and steam ships?

16 Senator BOURNE.
Both?

17 Mr. BRICE.
Yes, sir.

18 Senator BOURNE.
How long have you been with the White Star Co.?

19 Mr. BRICE.
I have been in three ships.

20 Senator BOURNE.
What ships?

21 Mr. BRICE.
The Majestic - twice in her - the Oceanic, and the Titanic.

22 Senator BOURNE.
When did you join the *Titanic*?

23 Mr. BRICE.
On Monday, sir. I signed on Monday and joined her on Wednesday.

24 Senator BOURNE.
You were on her at the time of the accident?

25 Mr. BRICE.
Yes, sir.

26 Senator BOURNE.
Were you on watch when the accident occurred?

27 Mr. BRICE.
I was on watch, sir.

28 Senator BOURNE.
How long watch did they have on the *Titanic*?

29 Mr. BRICE.
Four hours, sir.

30 Senator BOURNE.
Four on and four off?

31 Mr. BRICE.
Four on, sir, and four off, with the exception of double watches. Then you go two on and two off.

32 Senator BOURNE.
That is customary in all boats?

33 Mr. BRICE.
Yes, sir.

34 Senator BOURNE.
What time did you go on watch on the day the accident occurred?

35 Mr. BRICE.
Eight o'clock.

36 Senator BOURNE.
You were on until 12?

37 Mr. BRICE.
On until 12.

38 Senator BOURNE.
Where were you at the time of accident?

39 Mr. BRICE.
Outside of the seamen's mess room, sir.

40 Senator BOURNE.
What was your duty during that watch?

41 Mr. BRICE.
We were doing nothing, sir, as it was Sunday night.

42 Senator BOURNE.
If it had been a week night what would have been your duty?

43 Mr. BRICE.
We would have been washing the deck, sir.

44 Senator BOURNE.
Even though it was between 10 and 12 o'clock at night you would have been washing the deck?

45 Mr. BRICE.
Yes, sir.

46 Senator BOURNE.
On Sunday nights you do not do that?

47 Mr. BRICE.
They excuse us from washing deck Sunday night.

48 Senator BOURNE.
Will you kindly tell in your own way what occurred, and what impression it made on your mind, at the time of the occurrence of the accident, and what followed afterwards until you left the ship?

49 Mr. BRICE.
I went outside of the [seamen's mess room](#), when I heard a crash and felt the effect of the crash, as it were -

50 Senator BOURNE.
How severe a motion was it? Did it throw you off of your feet, at all?

51 Mr. BRICE.
No, sir. It was like a heavy vibration. It was not a violent shock.

52 Senator BOURNE.
There was no jar?

53 Mr. BRICE.
No, sir; not a bad jar, as you would call it.

54 Senator BOURNE.
But it made a noise?

55 Mr. BRICE.
A rumbling noise, sir.

56 Senator BOURNE.
That continued how long?

57 Mr. BRICE.
About 10 seconds; somewhere about that.

58 Senator BOURNE.
What did you think it was?

59 Mr. BRICE.
I had no idea, sir, at the time, until I went on the [forewell deck](#) and saw ice on the deck.

60 Senator BOURNE.
Which was your boat?

61 Mr. BRICE.
[No. 11](#) boat, sir.

62 Senator BOURNE.
That was your boat to which you were allotted when you joined the ship?

63 Mr. BRICE.
Yes, sir.

64 Senator BOURNE.
How soon after you joined the ship did you receive notice of your allotment to No. 11?

65 Mr. BRICE.
I joined the ship, and the lists were put up about Friday, you might say, sir; I will not be sure.

66 Senator BOURNE.
Was there any notice posted that any boat drill was to take place?

67 Mr. BRICE.
The only boat drill, sir, was on the day of leaving.

68 Senator BOURNE.
No notice was posted as to drills?

69 Mr. BRICE.
There was one notice given for the emergency boat crews. There were men told off.

70 Senator BOURNE.
What day was the notice posted for the emergency boat drill?

71 Mr. BRICE.
That would be the same day, Thursday morning; they were told off for the emergency boat crew in case of accident. They were mustered at the boats every evening at 6 o'clock; mustered by a junior officer, and then dismissed.

72 Senator BOURNE.
After you went to No. 11 boat, what did you do?

73 Mr. BRICE.

The boat was filled from [A deck](#), sir; there was an officer said, "Is there a sailor in the boat?" Which officer it was I could not say, amongst the crowd. There was only one officer that I knew, and that was [Mr. Lightoller](#). There was no answer. I jumped out and went down the fall into the bow of the boat. There was nobody in the stern of the boat. I went aft and shipped the rudder, and in that time the boat had been filled with women and children.

74 Senator BOURNE.

But before it was lowered?

75 Mr. BRICE.

It was lowered to A deck, sir.

76 Senator BOURNE.

You went down the fall, from where you were, down to A deck?

77 Mr. BRICE.

Yes, sir.

78 Senator BOURNE.

And shipped the rudder?

79 Mr. BRICE.

Shipped the rudder, sir.

80 Senator BOURNE.

Then you helped load the boat with women and children?

81 Mr. BRICE.

No, sir; I was in the boat.

82 Senator BOURNE.

I said, you helped load it?

83 Mr. BRICE.

No, sir; I was shipping the rudder, sir, during the time the boat was being filled.

84 Senator BOURNE.

Were you in the boat when it was lowered from the [boat deck](#) to A deck?

85 Mr. BRICE.

I helped to lower the boat from the boat deck to A deck.

86 Senator BOURNE.

You helped to lower the boat from the boat deck down to A deck?

87 Mr. BRICE.

Yes, sir.

88 Senator BOURNE.

Then you went down the fall?

89 Mr. BRICE.

Yes, sir.

90 Senator BOURNE.

And you went aft and began shipping the rudder?

91 Mr. BRICE.

I went aft and began shipping the rudder, and during the time I was shipping the rudder the boat was being filled. They lowered the boat, sir. We had a bit of difficulty in keeping the boat clear of an outlet, a big body of water coming from the ship's side. The after block got jammed, but I think that must have been on account of the trip not being pushed right down to disconnect the block from the boat. We managed to keep the boat clear from this body of water coming from the ship's side.

92 Senator BOURNE.

What was this body of water coming from the ship's side? Was it the bilge water, or what was it?

93 Mr. BRICE.

It was the pump discharge.

94 Senator BOURNE.
Then what?

95 Mr. BRICE.
When we got the block clear of the boat, we pulled away from the ship.

96 Senator BOURNE.
Did the officer know that you were in the boat?

97 Mr. BRICE.
Well, I do not know which officer it was, sir, because I could not see who it was.

98 Senator BOURNE.
Did you have your complement in that boat that you were in the stern of?

99 Mr. BRICE.
I was in the bow of the boat in the first place, and then I went to the stern, and there I remained.

100 Senator BOURNE.
When did the man who was in the bow of the boat get in? Did he get in on the A deck?

101 Mr. BRICE.
He was not in the boat above the A deck. He must have got in from the A deck.

102 Senator BOURNE.
There were only two seamen in the boat, then?

103 Mr. BRICE.
Two seamen.

104 Senator BOURNE.
Were there any others besides those and the women and children already in?

105 Mr. BRICE.
Only a fireman and about six stewards.

106 Senator BOURNE.
There were directed by the officer to get in?

107 Mr. BRICE.
I could not say, sir. I was busy shipping the rudder during the time the boat was being filled.

108 Senator BOURNE.
How many passengers did you get into No. 11 boat?

109 Mr. BRICE.
About 60, sir.

110 Senator BOURNE.
Sixty?

111 Mr. BRICE.
Yes, sir.

112 Senator BOURNE.
Then you had, besides, 60 passengers -

113 Mr. BRICE.
I mean 60 all told, sir.

114 Senator BOURNE.
Fifty-two passengers, 6 stewards, yourself, and your mate?

115 Mr. BRICE.
And one fireman, sir.

116 Senator BOURNE.
Then you had only 51 passengers?

117 Mr. BRICE.
Yes.

118 Senator BOURNE.
Were there any women or children who tried to get into the boat, who were unable to do so?

119 Mr. BRICE.
Not that I saw, sir.

120 Senator BOURNE.
Or any other passengers?

121 Mr. BRICE.
No, sir; there was no rush, or any panic whatever, that I saw. Everything was done quietly.

122 Senator BOURNE.
There was perfect order and discipline?

123 Mr. BRICE.
Yes, sir.

124 Senator BOURNE.
Were the other boats, or any of the other boats, loaded from the A deck, except your boat, No. 11?

125 Mr. BRICE.
[No. 9](#) went out from A deck. I lowered the boat from the boat deck to A deck - No. 9. When it was loaded, I lowered it down to the water.

126 Senator BOURNE.
You lowered it; but I say were any of the other boats filled with passengers from the A deck?

127 Mr. BRICE.
I think they were all lowered to A deck, as it was easier for passengers to get in from A deck.

128 Senator BOURNE.
Then the passengers got aboard from A deck?

129 Mr. BRICE.
Yes, sir.

130 Senator BOURNE.
Who had charge of the boat?

131 Mr. BRICE.
[Mr. Humphreys](#).

132 Senator BOURNE.
What was his position?

133 Mr. BRICE.
He was an able seaman.

134 Senator BOURNE.
Who designated him to take charge of the boat, the officer?

135 Mr. BRICE.
No, sir.

136 Senator BOURNE.
He took charge?

137 Mr. BRICE.
He took charge himself.

138 Senator BOURNE.
Why did he take charge in preference to you? Did he rank you?

139 Mr. BRICE.
No, sir.

140 Senator BOURNE.
You were equal in rank?

141 Mr. BRICE.
The only difference was that he was on the saloon deck.

142 Senator BOURNE.
He took charge?

143 Mr. BRICE.
He took charge.

144 Senator BOURNE.
What did you do after you reached the water with the boat?

145 Mr. BRICE.
We pulled away from the ship, sir.

146 Senator BOURNE.
How far?

147 Mr. BRICE.
I suppose about a quarter of a mile from the ship.

148 Senator BOURNE.
Under Mr. Humphreys direction, or were you directed from the ship?

149 Mr. BRICE.
Under our own direction. We had nobody to give us any orders at all.

150 Senator BOURNE.
You pulled away about a quarter of a mile?

151 Mr. BRICE.
Yes, sir.

152 Senator BOURNE.
Were there other boats pulling away about the same time?

153 Mr. BRICE.
There was one boat ahead of us that we could see.

154 Senator BOURNE.
Did you have a light on your boat?

155 Mr. BRICE.
No, sir; no lantern, sir. I searched for the lantern. I cut the lashing from the oil bottle and cut rope and made torches.

156 Senator BOURNE.
Any provisions and water in the boat at all?

157 Mr. BRICE.
I could not say that, sir, because we never bothered to look.

158 Senator BOURNE.
Was it your impression that the [*Titanic*](#) was going to sink, or did you think she would float; that she was non-sinkable?

159 Mr. BRICE.
I did not think she was going to sink.

160 Senator BOURNE.
Did you see her sink?

161 Mr. BRICE.
I saw her sink.

162 Senator BOURNE.
Did she go bow down first?

163 Mr. BRICE.
Bow down first.

164 Senator BOURNE.
Did her stern rise in the air?

165 Mr. BRICE.

She went down almost perpendicular.

166 Senator BOURNE.
Were the lights still in the stern as she sank?

167 Mr. BRICE.
No, sir; she became a black mass before she made the final plunge.

168 Senator BOURNE.
You were about a quarter of a mile away?

169 Mr. BRICE.
Yes, sir.

170 Senator BOURNE.
Was there any explosion that you heard?

171 Mr. BRICE.
I heard two rumbling noises.

172 Senator BOURNE.
After she began to go bow down or before?

173 Mr. BRICE.
She was well down.

174 Senator BOURNE.
How far apart in time, probably, were the two explosions?

175 Mr. BRICE.
From 8 to 10 minutes.

176 Senator BOURNE.
The lights were out?

177 Mr. BRICE.
Yes, sir.

178 Senator BOURNE.
When the first explosion occurred, were the lights out?

179 Mr. BRICE.
The lights were still on in the after-end of the ship after the first and second explosions.

180 Senator BOURNE.
Have you any idea whether she broke in two or not?

181 Mr. BRICE.
That I could not say, sir.

182 Senator BOURNE.
Did you figure that your boat was loaded to full capacity when you rowed away from the ship?

183 Mr. BRICE.
You could not get to pull a stroke on the oar at all; she was packed.

184 Senator BOURNE.
What made you assume it would have been dangerous to take on another passenger?

185 Mr. BRICE.
It would not have been dangerous to take two or three, but there was somebody there giving orders about the boat, whoever he was; I do not know; I could not say. When you are loading a boat it all depends on the weather how many you can load on a boat.

186 Senator BOURNE.
How long did you rest on your oars after you had gotten about a mile from the ship?

187 Mr. BRICE.
We did not do any pulling at all, sir; only keeping the boat up head to the wind.

188 Senator BOURNE.
How long did you remain that way?

189 Mr. BRICE.
Until we saw the [*Carpathia*](#).

190 Senator BOURNE.
A couple of hours?

191 Mr. BRICE.
I suppose it would be, sir, a couple of hours or more.

192 Senator BOURNE.
Did any other boat come in your vicinity?

193 Mr. BRICE.
No, sir. There was one ahead of us and one directly astern of us.

194 Senator BOURNE.
None of the regular ship's officers took charge of your boat, at all?

195 Mr. BRICE.
None at all, sir.

196 Senator BOURNE.
Have you heard any criticism raised on the part of the men as to the management of the ship, at all, or any blame attached to anyone because of this catastrophe, in any way?

197 Mr. BRICE.
I have not, sir.

198 Senator BOURNE.
And the *Titanic* was as well managed as any of the ships you have sailed on in the 22 years you have been an able seaman?

199 Mr. BRICE.
Yes, sir.

200 Senator BOURNE.
Did you ever serve as a lookout and go into the eyes of a ship to look out for ice, or in a fog?

201 Mr. BRICE.
I have served as lookout, but not on the White Star Line.

202 Senator BOURNE.
Those are the crow's-nest men?

203 Mr. BRICE.
Yes, sir.

204 Senator BOURNE.
Had you ever had any experience with ice before?

205 Mr. BRICE.
Never, sir.

206 Senator BOURNE.
You never went down in the boiler room?

207 Mr. BRICE.
No, sir.

208 Senator BOURNE.
The White Star management has a good reputation among the mariners and sailors; I mean, the boys like to ship on their line?

209 Mr. BRICE.
I never have heard anything bad said about them.

210 Senator BOURNE.
They stand as well as any line, so far as their treatment of their men is concerned and the wages paid, and all?

211 Mr. BRICE.

Yes, sir; in all of the ships I have been in.

212 Senator BOURNE.
After you left the ship were there any of the passengers or men transferred from No. 11 to any other boat?

213 Mr. BRICE.
None at all, sir.

214 Senator BOURNE.
And you picked up none from the sea?

215 Mr. BRICE.
We picked up none; no, sir.

216 Senator BOURNE.
Did not see any?

217 Mr. BRICE.
We did not see any.

218 Senator BOURNE.
What was the idea of going a quarter of a mile away from the ship when she was sinking? Did you fear the suction of her going down?

219 Mr. BRICE.
Well, that is the idea, sir; the suction.

220 Senator BOURNE.
The general impression is that in the sinking of a ship an enormous suction is created that may take down other boats in the vicinity?

221 Mr. BRICE.
Yes, sir.

222 Senator BOURNE.
How many male passengers did you have among the 51 passengers that you had in the boat? Were they all women and children?

223 Mr. BRICE.
Well, about 45 women and about 4 or 5 children in arms.

224 Senator BOURNE.
Any male passengers at all?

225 Mr. BRICE.
None at all, sir; not that I saw.

226 Senator BOURNE.
We are very much obliged to you.

227 (Witness Excused.)