

United States Senate Inquiry

Day 7

Testimony of George F. Crowe

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

(The witness was sworn by Senator Bourne.)

Senator BOURNE.

Kindly state your name, age, and occupation.

Mr. CROWE.

[George Frederick Crowe](#); 1809 Melton Road, Fitzhugh, Southampton, England; my age, 30; occupation, steward.

Senator BOURNE.

Were you on the *Titanic* at the time of the disaster?

Mr. CROWE.

Yes, sir.

Senator BOURNE.

How long have you been on that ship?

Mr. CROWE.

We sailed from Southampton April 10; two days previous to that I was working aboard ship, in and out, to the dock.

Senator BOURNE.

Had you been in the White Star service before?

Mr. CROWE.

No, sir.

Senator BOURNE.

This was your first voyage in the White Star service?

Mr. CROWE.

Yes, sir; I had been in the International Mercantile Marine Co.; that is connected with the American line.

Senator BOURNE.

How long have you followed the sea?

Mr. CROWE.

For about 11 years.

Senator BOURNE.

Always in the capacity of steward?

Mr. CROWE.

No, sir; I have always been in the steward's department, but on my last trip I was storekeeper and barkeeper.

Senator BOURNE.

But you were steward on the *Titanic*?

Mr. CROWE.

I was steward on the *Titanic*, yes.

Senator BOURNE.

What were the duties of steward on the *Titanic*?

Mr. CROWE.

To act in general and wait on tables.

Senator BOURNE.

Under what officer of the ship were you directly located, or to who were you responsible?

Mr. CROWE.

The chief steward. [[Andrew Latimer](#)]

26 Senator BOURNE.
Will you please state in your own way what knowledge you have in reference to the accident to the *Titanic*?

27 Mr. CROWE.
I was on duty up until about 10.30 on the night of the disaster, and I turned in about 11 o'clock; it might have been a little later. About 11.40 there was a kind of shaking of the ship and a little impact, from which I thought one of the propellers had been broken off.

28 Senator BOURNE.
You were in your berth at the time?

29 Mr. CROWE.
I was in my berth; yes.

30 Senator BOURNE.
And had gone to sleep?

31 Mr. CROWE.
No; I was just dozing.

32 Senator BOURNE.
Did it shake you out of your berth?

33 Mr. CROWE.
No, sir.

34 Senator BOURNE.
How much of a shock was it?

35 Mr. CROWE.
Well, had I been asleep I do not think it would have awakened me; that is, had I been in a heavy sleep.

36 Senator BOURNE.
What deck were you sleeping on?

37 Mr. CROWE.
On "[E](#)" deck.

38 Senator BOURNE.
How far away from the bow of the ship; amidship?

39 Mr. CROWE.
About amidship; yes. Probably 50 feet forward of amidship.

40 Senator BOURNE.
Now will you kindly go on?

41 Mr. CROWE.
I got out of my bed. I came out into the [alleyway](#) and saw quite a number of stewards and steerage passengers carrying their baggage from forward to aft. I inquired of the trouble and was told it was nothing, and to turn in again.

42 Senator BOURNE.
Who told you this, the steerage passengers?

43 Mr. CROWE.
No; somebody amongst the boys. The stewards were making quite a joke of it. They did not think of the seriousness of it at the time. I went back to my bunk again, and a saloon steward came down shortly afterwards and told me to come up on the upper deck with as much warm clothes on as I could get. I went up on the boat deck; when I got outside of the companionway, I saw them working on boat [No. 1](#). After that I went to boat [No. 14](#), the boat allotted to me - that is, in the case of fire or boat drill - and I stood by according to the proceedings of the drill. I assisted in handing the women and children into the boat, and was asked if I could take an oar, and I said "Yes." and was told to man the boat.

44 Senator BOURNE.
Who told you to man the boat?

45 Mr. CROWE.

The senior officer. I am not sure whether it was the first officer or the chief officer, sir, but I believe the man's name was [Murdoch](#).

46 Senator BOURNE.
Was that his boat?

47 Mr. CROWE.
I do not think so, sir; no.

48 Senator BOURNE.
Who was in charge, during the drills, of boat No. 14; which officer?

49 Mr. CROWE.
The fifth officer, [Mr. Lowe](#).

50 Senator BOURNE.
That was his boat?

51 Mr. CROWE.
That was his boat; yes, sir. After getting the women and children in, we lowered down within 4 or 5 feet of the water and found the block and tackle had gotten twisted in some way, causing us to have to cut the ropes to allow the boat to get into the water.

52 Senator BOURNE.
Who called to you to do that?

53 Mr. CROWE.
The fifth officer, sir.

54 Senator BOURNE.
He was in the boat with you?

55 Mr. CROWE.
Yes, sir. I stood by the lever. The lever releases the blocks from the hooks in the boat, and he told me to wait, to get away and cut the line to raise the lever, thereby causing the hooks to open and allow the boat to drop in the water. After getting into the water we pushed out to the other boats. Fifth Officer Lowe suggested standing by in case of any necessity for us to do so.

56 Senator BOURNE.
How many occupants were in there in boat No. 14?

57 Mr. CROWE.
Fifty-seven women and children and about 6 men, including 1 officer, and I may have been 7; I am not quite sure about that.

58 Senator BOURNE.
How did you come to know there were 57 women and children?

59 Mr. CROWE.
When we got out a distance the officer asked me how many people we had in the boat, thinking the other boats had not got their number, and it was his idea to put our people into their boats and return back.

60 Senator BOURNE.
Feeling that you were overcrowded?

61 Mr. CROWE.
No, sir; his idea was to stand by in case of an emergency; that is anybody coming over the sides, with the idea of picking them up. I might state in between there the boat had sprung a leak and taken in water, probably 8 inches of water. That is, when the boat was released and fell, I think she must have sprung a leak.

62 Senator BOURNE.
How long after the boat fell in the water did you discover that there was probably 8 inches of water in the boat?

63 Mr. CROWE.
Well, sir, we did not keep time or anything like that, but I should imagine when we transferred our people was when we discovered the amount of water that was in the boat, because just prior to getting to the other boat a lady stated that there was some water coming over her ankles, and two men and this lady - I believe the lady - assisted in bailing it out with bails that were kept in the boat for that purpose.

- 64 Senator BOURNE.
Explain what you mean by when you transferred your people.
- 65 Mr. CROWE.
The officers on one of the boats that was near to us told them to stand by, and he got, I think, four or maybe five boats together. We transferred so many people from one boat to the other boats; we distributed from here to there.
- 66 Senator BOURNE.
Your reason for transferring was because of the 8 inches of water?
- 67 Mr. CROWE.
No; he decided to return to the wreckage and see if he ought to pick anybody up.
- 68 Senator BOURNE.
You had 57 men, women, and children in your boat, and 7 men in addition. You were pretty well loaded, were you not?
- 69 Mr. CROWE.
The officer said we could take 80 people in all, but the ladies seemed to make a protest at his idea of going back again with these people in the boat.
- 70 Senator BOURNE.
Would it not have been easier to take one of these boats that was not nearly as full as your boat and have them stand by the wreckage and have them try to pick up people?
- 71 Mr. CROWE.
No, because the other boats were without an officer. We were the only boat out of the bunch that was there with an officer.
- 72 Senator BOURNE.
Then it was discipline?
- 73 Mr. CROWE.
Just a matter of discipline.
- 74 Senator BOURNE.
Now, if you will, go on with the story.
- 75 Mr. CROWE.
Returning back to the wreckage, we heard various cries, and endeavored to get among them, and we were successful in doing so and in picking one body up that was floating around in the water; when we got him into the boat - after great difficulty, he being such a heavy man - he expired shortly afterwards. [\[William Hoyt\]](#) Going farther into the wreckage we came across a steward or one of the crew [\[Harold Phillimore\]](#), and we got him into the boat, and he was very cold and his hands were kind of stiff, but we got him in and he recovered by the time we got back to the [Carpathia](#).
- 76 Senator BOURNE.
Did he survive?
- 77 Mr. CROWE.
Yes, sir; also a Japanese or Chinese young fellow [\[Fang Lang\]](#) that we picked up on top of some of the wreckage - it might have been a sideboard or table - that was floating around. We stopped until daybreak, and we saw in the distance a raft or Berthon boat submerged, in the distance, with a crowd of men on it. We went over to the boat and found probably 20, or there might have been 25, men and 1 woman; also 3 or 4 dead bodies, which we left. Returning again under canvas sail - we stepped our mast at night - we took in tow a collapsible boat containing fully 60 people - women, children, and men.
- 78 Senator BOURNE.
How much water was there in your boat at that time? Was there still 8 inches, or had you any water in there at that time?
- 79 Mr. CROWE.
After we got some people out of our boat and returned to the wreck we did not take in so much water, because we bailed a certain amount of water out and no more seemed to come in.
- 80 Senator BOURNE.
Then you infer that the strain was among the upper timbers, near the gunwale?

81 Mr. CROWE.
Yes, sir; I think, the boat being new, the wood had warped sufficiently to not prevent the water from coming in. Then we returned alongside the *Carpathia*, and then we landed our people. That is the story, sir.

82 Senator BOURNE.
You were in boat No. 14 when it was lowered?

83 Mr. CROWE.
Yes, sir.

84 Senator BOURNE.
Was there any shooting that occurred at the time the boat was lowered?

85 Mr. CROWE.
Yes, sir.

86 Senator BOURNE.
Explain to the committee what knowledge or information you have relative to that?

87 Mr. CROWE.
There were various men passengers, probably Italians or some foreign nationality other than English or American, who attempted to rush the boats. The officers threatened to shoot any man who put his foot into the boat. He fired the revolver, but either downward or upward, not shooting at any of the passengers at all and not injuring anybody. He fired perfectly clear, upward or downward.

88 Senator BOURNE.
Did that stop the rush?

89 Mr. CROWE.
Yes, sir.

90 Senator BOURNE.
There was no disorder after that?

91 Mr. CROWE.
No disorder. Well, one woman was crying, but that was all; no panic or anything in the boat.

92 Senator BOURNE.
You were assigned to boat No. 14?

93 Mr. CROWE.
Yes, sir.

94 Senator BOURNE.
As soon as you joined the ship?

95 Mr. CROWE.
Well, we sailed on Wednesday, and I probably saw the list on Thursday or Friday.

96 Senator BOURNE.
That is, of your assignment?

97 Mr. CROWE.
Yes, sir; because there was a notice there to the effect that we would have muster and fire drill on Sunday at 11.30, and I inquired whether we have it or not; but we did not, however.

98 Senator BOURNE.
You joined the ship on Tuesday, the ship sailed on Wednesday, April the 10th, and the first notification you had that that there would be a muster or fire drill on the boat, or information that you were allotted to boat No. 14, was what day?

99 Mr. CROWE.
It was either on Thursday or Friday, sir; I am not quite certain.

100 Senator BOURNE.
And that notification consisted of your seeing the station bill which contained the information that the muster or fire drill would be held on Sunday, at 11.30 o'clock?

101 Mr. CROWE.
Yes, sir.

102 Senator BOURNE.
A. m.

103 Mr. CROWE.
A. m.; yes, sir.

104 Senator BOURNE.
Did they hold drill that day?

105 Mr. CROWE.
No, sir.

106 Senator BOURNE.
Were there any musters or fire drills held on the ship during the trip, up to the time of the accident?

107 Mr. CROWE.
Yes; I believe it was customary for the bedroom stewards each morning, when the [captain](#) went around for inspection, to close all watertight doors and unroll the fire hose, or to stand by. I don't know exactly what they did.

108 Senator BOURNE.
That is the fire drill?

109 Mr. CROWE.
That is the fire drill; yes, sir.

110 Senator BOURNE.
It is your opinion that that was done every day, is it?

111 Mr. CROWE.
Well, I am under the impression that it was done. I can not answer for certain, sir.

112 Senator BOURNE.
So far as any boat maneuvers or any boat drills are concerned, did you have any?

113 Mr. CROWE.
None whatever, sir.

114 Senator BOURNE.
If there had been any you would have participated in the same, having been allotted to boat No. 14, would you not?

115 Mr. CROWE.
Exactly.

116 Senator BOURNE.
On other ships or lines in which you have sailed have you been allotted to lifeboats?

117 Mr. CROWE.
Yes, sir.

118 Senator BOURNE.
In such cases did they hold daily or weekly drills?

119 Mr. CROWE.
Once a week, sir, in port and out.

120 Senator BOURNE.
Once a week, in port and out. But there was no drill on the *Titanic*?

121 Mr. CROWE.
None whatever, sir.

122 Senator BOURNE.
Explain, if you will, the procedure of your lifeboat drills that you have participated in other trips?

123 Mr. CROWE.
It has always been the custom to put a notice in various parts of the ship that fire drill will be held at a certain time on a certain day. Five minutes previous to this time the bugle is sounded for fire drill, and all men go to fire drill. Either the chief officer or the officer in charge visits the various stations and sees that all

members of the crew are present. They satisfy themselves that all members of the crew are present, and report to the bridge to that effect. The fog horn or siren is blown for boat drill. All men proceed to boats. The captain, after the men are in readiness, inspects all men at the boats and sees if all men are present. In some cases he orders boats to be lowered and put back into their sockets if satisfactory at the time. If not, repeat. That is the custom of the American line.

124 Senator BOURNE.

That is the custom on the American line?

125 Mr. CROWE.

Yes, sir.

126 Senator BOURNE.

So far as you know, there is the same custom on the English lines, ordinarily?

127 Mr. CROWE.

Well, I believe so, ordinarily. I have not been on the English lines for quite a while. I ran out of London on the P. & O. Line to Australia some 12 years ago, but since then I have been on the American line.

128 Senator BOURNE.

The fact that they had no drills did not that create comment among your associates and the other stewards?

129 Mr. CROWE.

That I could not say, sir; it appears from everybody here that I know, that they were assigned.

130 Senator BOURNE.

Then you heard no comment among the men on the ship?

131 Mr. CROWE.

None whatever, sir.

132 Senator BOURNE.

Occasioned by the fact that there was no drill?

133 Mr. CROWE.

No, sir.

134 Senator BOURNE.

What explanation did you hear, if any, as to the reason why the call for muster and fire drill for Sunday at 11.30 was not carried out in accordance with your notice?

135 Mr. CROWE.

Well, I can not say, with the exception that they held church service at 10.30 Sunday morning.

136 Senator BOURNE.

And the service continued over the time?

137 Mr. CROWE.

No, sir; it was over soon after 11 o'clock.

138 Senator BOURNE.

And there was no explanation given for the suspension of the order?

139 Mr. CROWE.

None whatever, sir.

140 Senator BOURNE.

You know, however, the order was not carried out and there was no drill at that time, and you saw the official notice for the drill at that time?

141 Mr. CROWE.

Yes, sir.

142 Senator BOURNE.

You saw that notice a day or two before Sunday?

143 Mr. CROWE.

Yes, sir; I saw two notices, one put up in the crew's department - crew's quarters - and one in the first class service pantry.

144 Senator BOURNE.
Did you hear among the men or passengers any criticism toward any officer because of the accident, in any way?

145 Mr. CROWE.
None whatever, sir.

146 Senator BOURNE.
Was there any blame centralized on the company or any individual because of the accident?

147 Mr. CROWE.
Not that I know of, sir.

148 Senator BOURNE.
Did you yourself see the iceberg?

149 Mr. CROWE.
No, sir; not the one that struck the ship - or, the ship struck the berg. Of course, there were two or three bergs around and one man pointed out that that must have been the berg and another man pointed out another berg. Really, I do not think anybody knew which one struck the ship.

150 Senator BOURNE.
When it became daylight and you could see, were there a number of bergs around you?

151 Mr. CROWE.
Yes, sir; I think there were three very large bergs.

152 Senator BOURNE.
Where was the station drill for fire and boats posted?

153 Mr. CROWE.
In the first class service pantry and in the crew's quarters.

154 Senator BOURNE.
Do you know when the bills were posted?

155 Mr. CROWE.
Either Thursday or Friday?

156 Senator BOURNE.
After sailing?

157 Mr. CROWE.
After sailing, yes.

158 Senator BOURNE.
Did you and boat No. 14, with those that were with you manning the boat, return to the wreck as soon as your passengers were shifted into the other boat?

159 Mr. CROWE.
Yes, sir; almost immediately. There might have been a lapse of 5 or 10 minutes, perhaps.

160 Senator BOURNE.
For what reason was that lapse; for the purpose of shifting your passengers to the other boat so you could return to the wreckage?

161 Mr. CROWE.
Because, endeavoring to get the other boats together, we were making a circle after each other, and consequently we lost our bearings, and we did not know in which direction to go.

162 Senator BOURNE.
Did you know of any water on [E deck](#)?

163 Mr. CROWE.
Only from hearing other people speak of it.

164 Senator BOURNE.
Would you state what you heard in reference to water being on E deck?

165 Mr. CROWE.

A stewardess - I do not know her name - said that as she came from her cabin she could see the water coming up.

166 Senator BOURNE.
Could see it coming up?

167 Mr. CROWE.
Yes, sir.

168 Senator BOURNE.
On E deck?

169 Mr. CROWE.
On E deck.

170 Senator BOURNE.
And that was all?

171 Mr. CROWE.
That was all, yes.

172 Senator BOURNE.
Did you see the ship sink?

173 Mr. CROWE.
I did, sir.

174 Senator BOURNE.
Would you explain in your own way how it appeared to you?

175 Mr. CROWE.
When we left the ship her head was down in the water probably several feet; I could not say the distance, or any angle.

176 Senator BOURNE.
And you left the ship how many minutes or hours after she struck?

177 Mr. CROWE.
It might have been an hour; it might have been more. After getting clear of the ship the lights were still burning very bright, but as we got away she seemed to go lower and lower, and she almost stood up perpendicular, and her lights went dim, and presently she broke clean in two, probably two-thirds of the length of the ship.

178 Senator BOURNE.
That is, two-thirds out of the water or two-thirds in the water?

179 Mr. CROWE.
Two-thirds in the water, one-third of the aft funnel sticking up.

180 Senator BOURNE.
How long did that third stick up?

181 Mr. CROWE.
After she floated back again.

182 Senator BOURNE.
She floated back?

183 Mr. CROWE.
She broke, and the after part floated back.

184 Senator BOURNE.
And the bow part, two-thirds of the ship, sank.

185 Mr. CROWE.
Yes, sir; then there was an explosion, and the aft part turned on end and sank.

186 Senator BOURNE.
Then you attribute the sinking to the explosion. You believe it would have floated, had it not been for the explosion?

187 Mr. CROWE.
That I can not say, sir.

188 Senator BOURNE.
Did the officer in charge of your boat express any opinion on that, at all?

189 Mr. CROWE.
He said he thought it best to return back to the wreckage and see if we could save any lives. At that time we had not put our people into the other boats.

190 Senator BOURNE.
How long a time after you left the ship did it break and the explosion and sinking of the aft part of the ship take place, would you judge?

191 Mr. CROWE.
She sank around half-past 2, from statements made by a man that was supposed to have jumped from the [poop](#) of the ship - that is, the quarter deck - into the water. He had a watch on, and as his watch stopped at 20 minutes past 2, he said she was in a sinking condition then and her stern on end - a man named Burnett, a storekeeper aboard ship.

192 Senator BOURNE.
Did you, yourself, hear the explosion?

193 Mr. CROWE.
Yes, sir.

194 Senator BOURNE.
Was there one, or more?

195 Mr. CROWE.
There were several explosions.

196 Senator BOURNE.
Were they loud, like a cannon?

197 Mr. CROWE.
Not so loud as that, sir.

198 Senator BOURNE.
Muffled?

199 Mr. CROWE.
A kind of muffled explosion. It seemed to be an explosion at a very great distance, although we were not very far away.

200 Senator BOURNE.
How far, would you judge; about a quarter of a mile?

201 Mr. CROWE.
About a mile.

202 Senator BOURNE.
You were about a mile away?

203 Mr. CROWE.
Yes, sir.

204 Senator BOURNE.
Officer Lowe, you say, was in charge of your boat?

205 Mr. CROWE.
Yes, sir; I am certain of it.

206 Senator BOURNE.
The fifth officer?

207 Mr. CROWE.
The fifth officer, Mr. Lowe.

208 Senator BOURNE.

And that was his boat?

209 Mr. CROWE.
That was his boat.

210 Senator BOURNE.
There were six officers on the ship, were there?

211 Mr. CROWE.
Seven, I think, sir.

212 Senator BOURNE.
And the captain?

213 Mr. CROWE.
And the captain.

214 Senator BOURNE.
Now, taking the 20 boats, were there several of the boats allotted to each officer, under his direction?

215 Mr. CROWE.
Each officer takes charge of one boat, including the captain.

216 Senator BOURNE.
That would account for 8 out of the 20 boats. Who had charge of the remaining 12 boats?

217 Mr. CROWE.
Either a quartermaster, or an engineer, or a senior man that may likely be in the boat.

218 Senator BOURNE.
They have their allotment prior to sailing, or soon after sailing?

219 Mr. CROWE.
Yes, sir.

220 Senator BOURNE.
So that each man knows his station?

221 Mr. CROWE.
Yes, sir.

222 Senator BOURNE.
And is responsible for that boat?

223 Mr. CROWE.
Yes, sir.

224 Senator BOURNE.
Did Officer Lowe call for volunteers to return to the wreck?

225 Mr. CROWE.
No, sir; he impressed upon us that we must go back to the wreck.

226 Senator BOURNE.
Was there any protest?

227 Mr. CROWE.
None whatever, sir. A second class passenger named Williams [[Richard N. Williams](#)], the champion racket player of England, returned with us.

228 Senator BOURNE.
He volunteered his service?

229 Mr. CROWE.
Yes, sir.

230 Senator BOURNE.
He was not requested by Officer Lowe?

231 Mr. CROWE.
Not at all, sir.

232 Senator BOURNE.
He did so of his own volition?

233 Mr. CROWE.
Yes.

234 Senator BOURNE.
Did you find ice on the ship before you left it?

235 Mr. CROWE.
I did not find it myself, sir. Another man brought a piece along from the forward part of the ship.

236 Senator BOURNE.
On what deck?

237 Mr. CROWE.
On E deck.

238 Senator BOURNE.
He took it from E deck?

239 Mr. CROWE.
I could not be certain about that, sir.

240 Senator BOURNE.
But it is your impression he got it from E deck, but you do not know?

241 Mr. CROWE.
I was on E deck when he came along with it.

242 Senator BOURNE.
Do you know of ice being found on any of the higher decks above E deck?

243 Mr. CROWE.
I heard there was several hundred tons of ice found.

244 Senator BOURNE.
That will be all now, thank you.

245 (Witness Excused.)