

United States Senate Inquiry

Day 7

Testimony of Walter J. Perkis

Source : <http://www.titanicinquiry.org/USInq/AmInq01Indx2a.php>

(Mr. Perkis was sworn by Senator Perkins.)

Senator PERKINS.

What is your home port?

Mr. PERKIS.

In the town of Ryde, Isle of Wight.

Senator PERKINS.

How long have you followed the sea?

Mr. PERKIS.

Ever since I was 16 years of age.

Senator PERKINS.

How old are you?

Mr. PERKIS.

Thirty-nine years of age.

Senator PERKINS.

In what capacities have you served?

Mr. PERKIS.

As a sailor, all the time, sir.

Senator PERKINS.

Were you a quartermaster or a boatswain?

Mr. PERKIS.

I have been a quartermaster and an able seaman.

Senator PERKINS.

You were not one of the lookout men?

Mr. PERKIS.

I have been the lookout in White Star ships.

Senator PERKINS.

But you were not on this voyage?

Mr. PERKIS.

No, sir.

Senator PERKINS.

Where were you when the collision took place?

Mr. PERKIS.

I had turned in, sir; I was in the watch below.

Senator PERKINS.

You were in the watch below at what time?

Mr. PERKIS.

From 8 to 12.

Senator PERKINS.

You were one of the men for the first dog watch, from 4 to 6 o'clock?

Mr. PERKIS.

No, sir; from 6 to 8; the last dog watch I had on deck.

26 Senator PERKINS.
How many men were detailed for duty on deck aside from those on the lookout?

27 Mr. PERKIS.
There is a watch on deck.

28 Senator PERKINS.
How many was the watch composed of?

29 Mr. PERKIS.
I could not tell you exactly, sir.

30 Senator PERKINS.
It was given out that there were 83 sailormen on the ship. It was testified to before the committee here that there were 83 sailormen.

31 Mr. PERKIS.
I could not answer as to that.

32 Senator PERKINS.
How many were there in your watch?

33 Mr. PERKIS.
There were three in my watch; and three quartermasters in the watch below.

34 Senator PERKINS.
Were you one of the quartermasters?

35 Mr. PERKIS.
Yes, sir.

36 Senator PERKINS.
I did not understand that you were. Then, after you turned out the same as the other men, what occurred?

37 Mr. PERKIS.
I turned out after being called by the joiner of the ship. He came to the [room](#) and told us we had better turn out.

38 Senator PERKINS.
The joiner or carpenter of the ship told you that?

39 Mr. PERKIS.
Yes, sir. He told us, then, that we had struck something. I took no notice of it. I stayed there until I thought it was time to turn out to relieve the deck at 12 o'clock.

40 Senator PERKINS.
Did you not feel the jar of the ship when she struck the iceberg?

41 Mr. PERKIS.
No, sir; I did not feel anything at all.

42 Senator PERKINS.
When you went on deck, what was the number of the boat you were assigned to?

43 Mr. PERKIS.
[No. 4.](#)

44 Senator PERKINS.
Who gave you orders to take to her, [Mr. Murdoch](#)?

45 Mr. PERKIS.
No, sir; there was nobody. The boat was lowered. I lowered No. 4 into the water, and left that boat, and walked aft; and I came back, and a man that was in the boat, one of the seamen that was in the boat at the time, sung out to me, "We need another hand down here." So I slid down the life line there from the davit into the boat.

46 Senator PERKINS.
How far is the distance from the upper deck down to the water?

47 Mr. PERKIS.

About seventy-odd feet.

48 Senator PERKINS.
And you went hand over hand down?

49 Mr. PERKIS.
Down the life line; yes, sir.

50 Senator PERKINS.
It is quite a distance to go down in that way. You were a quartermaster?

51 Mr. PERKIS.
Yes, sir.

52 Senator PERKINS.
You had charge of the boat, did you not?

53 Mr. PERKIS.
I took charge of the boat after I got in.

54 Senator PERKINS.
How many sailor men were aboard of her?

55 Mr. PERKIS.
We left the ship with three sailormen, sir, two and myself.

56 Senator PERKINS.
How many were there when you lowered her down from the davits?

57 Mr. PERKIS.
One man was lowered in the boat?

58 Senator PERKINS.
How many passengers?

59 Mr. PERKIS.
All the passengers were lowered in the boat from the davits.

60 Senator PERKINS.
How many passengers did you have in the boat at this time?

61 Mr. PERKIS.
I should say about 42.

62 Senator PERKINS.
Forty-two, all told.

63 Mr. PERKIS.
Yes, sir.

64 Senator PERKINS.
That is, besides the three sailor men?

65 Mr. PERKIS.
That is, including all hands.

66 Senator PERKINS.
Did you take up any more people afterwards?

67 Mr. PERKIS.
Yes, sir.

68 Senator PERKINS.
Where did you get them?

69 Mr. PERKIS.
We picked up eight, sir.

70 Senator PERKINS.
You picked up eight men that were swimming with life preservers?

71 Mr. PERKIS.

Yes, sir.

72 Senator PERKINS.
How far was this away from the ship?

73 Mr. PERKIS.
I should saw about the length of the ship away, sir.

74 Senator PERKINS.
That was soon after you went down into the boat, then?

75 Mr. PERKIS.
Yes, sir.

76 Senator PERKINS.
What number did your boat get away? How many boats did you get away from the ship first?

77 Mr. PERKIS.
No. 4 was the boat I got away in; the last big boat on the port side to leave the ship.

78 Senator PERKINS.
You picked up eight in the water?

79 Mr. PERKIS.
Yes; and two died afterwards, in the boat.

80 Senator PERKINS.
Were they passengers or men of the crew?

81 Mr. PERKIS.
No, sir; one was a fireman and one was a steward.

82 Senator PERKINS.
The others were all passengers?

83 Mr. PERKIS.
Yes, sir.

84 Senator PERKINS.
Tell us what you did after that.

85 Mr. PERKIS.
After that, after we had picked up the men, I could not hear any more cries anywhere. Everything was over. I waited then until daylight, or just before daylight, when we saw the lights of the [Carpathia](#).

86 Senator PERKINS.
Did you see the [Titanic](#) go down?

87 Mr. PERKIS.
Yes, sir.

88 Senator PERKINS.
And you were how far from her at that time?

89 Mr. PERKIS.
Six lengths from her, sir.

90 Senator PERKINS.
Did you feel any suction?

91 Mr. PERKIS.
No, sir.

92 Senator PERKINS.
You heard the cries of the people around her?

93 Mr. PERKIS.
Yes, sir; and we picked up eight out of the water.

94 Senator PERKINS.
Did those people have life preservers on?

95 Mr. PERKIS.
Yes, sir.

96 Senator PERKINS.
All eight persons had life preservers on?

97 Mr. PERKIS.
Yes, sir.

98 Senator PERKINS.
Could you not have found more of them?

99 Mr. PERKIS.
We stopped picking up. The last man we picked up, we heard a cry, and we did not hear any more cries after we had picked up the last man.

100 Senator PERKINS.
How was the discipline on board ship?

101 Mr. PERKIS.
Excellent, sir.

102 Senator PERKINS.
Every man knew his station and took it?

103 Mr. PERKIS.
Every man knew his station and took it.

104 Senator PERKINS.
Was there any excitement among the crew?

105 Mr. PERKIS.
No, sir; none whatever.

106 Senator PERKINS.
Or among the officers?

107 Mr. PERKIS.
None at all, sir.

108 Senator PERKINS.
Or among the firemen and stewards?

109 Mr. PERKIS.
No, sir; they conducted themselves the same as they would if it were an ordinary everyday occurrence.

110 Senator PERKINS.
Is there any particular incident that occurred that the public would be interested in knowing that you can relate to us?

111 Mr. PERKIS.
No, sir.

112 Senator PERKINS.
All three of you seem to be pretty capable young men, and have had a good deal of experience at sea, and yet you have never been wrecked?

113 Mr. PERKIS.
Yes, sir.

114 (Witness Excused.)

115 Day 7

116 Testimony of G. Hogg, W. Perkis and G. Symons - Taken Together

117 (Further examined by Senator Perkins - Testimony taken as a group.)

118 Senator PERKINS.
Is there any other one of you who has been in a shipwreck?

119 Mr. HOGG.
I have been in a collision, Senator, but with no loss of life.

120 Senator PERKINS.
On the lookout in the crow's nest did you see any ice?

121 Mr. HOGG.
No, sir; I never seen any ice when I relieved that lookout.

122 Senator PERKINS.
Were instructions given you to keep a sharp lookout?

123 Mr. HOGG.
When I relieved the lookout at 12 o'clock that night I had instructions from my relief.

124 Senator PERKINS.
You men have all had experience, more or less, as lookouts. Is it customary to furnish you with night glasses?

125 Mr. HOGG.
We never had night glasses.

126 Senator PERKINS.
Just the naked eye?

127 Mr. HOGG.
Just the naked eye. I have always had night glasses in the White Star boats. I asked for the glasses, and I did not see why I should not have them. I had them from Belfast to Southampton; but from Southampton to where the accident occurred we never had them.

128 Senator PERKINS.
You were instructed to report immediately to the officer on the bridge anything that occurred or any object on the horizon?

129 Mr. HOGG.
No, sir. I asked for the glasses several times.

130 Senator PERKINS.
What were your instructions when you went into the crow's nest, given to you by the officer?

131 Mr. HOGG.
None; but my opposite member gave me instructions, "Keep a sharp lookout for ice."

132 Senator PERKINS.
When you saw the ice ahead, you struck three bells?

133 Mr. HOGG.
The last lookout, the 6 to 8, was my lookout.

134 Senator PERKINS.
That is the last dog watch.

135 Mr. HOGG.
I got a warning, then, to keep a sharp lookout for ice, and I said, "Very good."

136 Senator PERKINS.
Did you discover any ice?

137 Mr. HOGG.
None, sir. It was very, very cold, and I said "There is plenty of ice about here, because it is so cold." That is what I said to my mate.

138 Senator PERKINS.
How far is the foremast, that the crow's nest is on, from the bridge? What is the distance.

139 Mr. HOGG.
I am not good at judging distances, sir.

140 Senator PERKINS.
You know pretty nearly? This room, perhaps, is 30 feet long. Was it as far as from this door to that window (indicating)?

141 Mr. HOGG.

I could not swear to that. I should think, however, that it was about 50 feet. That is what I should think about it. I could not swear to it.

142 Senator PERKINS.
There was a telephone from the crow's nest to the officer on the bridge?

143 Mr. HOGG.
Yes, sir.

144 Senator PERKINS.
Was the telephone always in working order?

145 Mr. HOGG.
The telephone was in working order; yes, sir.

146 Senator PERKINS.
And where they had no telephone, then you hailed, with calls to the bridge?

147 Mr. HOGG.
No, sir; we struck a bell. We never used the phone, only in going into harbors, or into ports, or in the case of anything serious.

148 Senator PERKINS.
And you struck the bell every half hour?

149 Mr. HOGG.
Yes. And for reporting ships you struck one, port; two, starboard; and three, right ahead.

150 Senator PERKINS.
That is your signal to the bridge, which is understood, of course?

151 Mr. HOGG.
Yes, sir; that is the signal that you have seen something.

152 Senator PERKINS.
Yes.

153 Can either one of you men suggest anything by which this accident could have been avoided, or by which more lives could have been saved? You are all good sailormen, and have had large experience. Could anything have been done to save more lives than were saved?

154 Mr. HOGG.
No, sir. The only thing I can suggest is in regard to the glasses. If we had had the glasses, we might have seen the berg before?

155 Senator PERKINS.
The officers on the bridge had glasses?

156 Mr. HOGG.
They had, yes, sir.

157 Mr. SYMONS.
It is always customary to have glasses in the crow's nest.

158 Senator PERKINS.
That has been the custom of the White Star Line?

159 Mr. SYMONS.
Yes. I served three years and five months on the [Oceanic](#), and they had glasses all the time.

160 Senator PERKINS.
Did she belong to the White Star Line?

161 Mr. SYMONS.
Yes, sir.

162 Senator PERKINS.
Also in regard to other ships, do you know?

163 Mr. SYMONS.

As far as I have heard from other people, they have glasses in all the other ships.

164 Senator PERKINS.
Your eyes were tested, were they?

165 Mr. SYMONS.
Last September they were tested by the board of trade by the new test, the latest test out.

166 Senator PERKINS.
They gave you a certificate that you were qualified as a good lookout?

167 Mr. SYMONS.
Yes, sir.

168 Senator PERKINS.
And it was the same way with both of you men?

169 Mr. HOGG.
Yes; about two months ago, I think, my eyes were tested.

170 Senator PERKINS.
In an ordinary way, can you not see better with your plain eyes than you can with artificial glasses?

171 Mr. HOGG.
But the idea of the glasses, sir, is that if you happen to see something on the horizon you can pick your ship out, if it is a ship, for instance.

172 Senator PERKINS.
As soon as you see anything, you signal the officer on the bridge, do you not?

173 Mr. HOGG.
Yes, sir; you would strike the bell. But you would make sure, if you had the glasses that it was a vessel and not a piece of cloud on the horizon.

174 On a very nice night, with the stars shining, sometimes you might think it was a ship when it was a star on the horizon. If you had glasses, you could soon find out whether it was a ship or not.

175 Senator SMITH.
As soon as you discover anything unusual, however, you call the attention of the officer on the bridge to it, do you not?

176 Mr. HOGG.
Quite so.

177 Senator PERKINS.
And he had glasses, of course?

178 Mr. HOGG.
He has glasses, sir; yes sir.

179 Senator PERKINS.
Is there anything that you want to state the could have been done to save these people, aside from that?

180 Mr. HOGG.
That is all that I can suggest.

181 Senator PERKINS.
If you had had life rafts on board more could have been saved, could they not?

182 Mr. HOGG.
If we had had more boats I dare say that we could have got away with a lot more.

183 Senator PERKINS.
The general feeling, though, you said, was that the ship was safe, and that she was not going to sink. What was the general opinion that prevailed as to the seaworthiness of the ship?

184 Mr. HOGG.

I should say that I never thought she was going to sink. I went to relieve the lookout 20 minutes after accident. I thought she was not going down.

185 Senator PERKINS.
There was a general feeling of confidence among the sailormen that she was perfectly secure?

186 Mr. HOGG.
Yes, sir.

187 Senator PERKINS.
And unsinkable?

188 Mr. HOGG.
Yes, sir; that she was unsinkable.

189 Senator PERKINS.
Unless you have something more to state that you think will throw light on this subject, that will be all; and we thank you for what you have said.

190 Mr. HOGG.
That is all I have to say, except this: I think all the women ought to have a gold medal on their breasts. God bless them. I will always raise my hat to a woman, after what I saw.

191 Senator PERKINS.
What country women were they?

192 Mr. HOGG.
They were American women that I had in mind. They were all Americans.

193 Senator PERKINS.
Did they man the oars? Did they take the oars and pull?

194 Mr. HOGG.
Yes, sir. I took the oar all the time, myself, and one lady steered. Then I got another lady to steer, and she gave me a hand on the oar, to keep herself warm.

195 Senator PERKINS.
One of the boats picked up a lot of people that were on the upturned collapsible boat?
[Collapsible B]

196 Mr. HOGG.
I did not see that. I believe that is so.

197 Senator PERKINS.
You people had no buoy, nor anything but the life preservers that you picked up?

198 Mr. HOGG.
That is all.

199 Senator PERKINS.
Is there anything else that you can think of, any recommendation or suggestion that you have to make? If so, we would like to have you do so.

200 Mr. HOGG.
That is all, sir.

201 Senator PERKINS.
I say that because you are good practical men, and have had a great deal of experience.

202 I thank you very much. We will excuse you now. That is all. Tomorrow morning we will take up this matter, and probably you can go home. You want to go home to England, all of you, do you?

203 Mr. HOGG.
Yes, sir; we are all married men, waiting to get back home.

204 Senator PERKINS.
Are you a married man, Mr. Symons?

205 Mr. SYMONS.

No, sir; but I have my mother and father waiting for me.

206 Senator PERKINS.
You are a married man, Mr. Hogg?

207 Mr. HOGG.
Yes, sir.

208 Senator PERKINS.
And you have a wife and children?

209 Mr. HOGG.
Yes, sir.

210 Senator PERKINS.
How many children?

211 Mr. HOGG.
Two, sir.

212 Senator PERKINS.
Your home is in Hull, also?

213 Mr. HOGG.
All my people are there, but my wife is in Southampton. I make Southampton my home now. I married a Hampshire woman.

214 Senator PERKINS.
I thank you very much for your statement.

215 There is one other thing I wanted to ask. Are you all temperate men? I want to ask whether there was any drunkenness among any of the crew?

216 Mr. SYMONS.
None whatever, sir.

217 Senator PERKINS.
You are personally acquainted with the habits of the crew. Were there any drinking men among them?

218 Mr. SYMONS.
We never allowed it to be served on board the ship, sir.

219 Senator PERKINS.
No liquor whatever was allowed to be served to them?

220 Mr. SYMONS.
No, sir.

221 Senator PERKINS.
There was none in the fore-castle or in the mess room with you?

222 Mr. SYMONS.
No, sir.

223 Senator PERKINS.
You never saw a man under the influence of liquor on the voyage?

224 Mr. HOGG.
No, sir; I do not see where they could get it from.

225 Senator PERKINS.
None was permitted or allowed on board?

226 Mr. HOGG.
No, sir.

227 Senator PERKINS.
One of you has stated that his boat picked up eight people and the other that he did not pick up any. Could you not have picked up some people just as well as this other man? Could you not have done it just as well as this other man?

228 Mr. HOGG.

I wanted to assist in picking up people, but I had an order from the boat: "We have done our best; go on to the [Carpathia](#); we have picked up all we can find;" and I said "Very good."

229 Senator PERKINS.

Who gave you that order?

230 Mr. HOGG.

Somebody in the boat - I do not know who it was - said not to take any more, that we had done our best.

231 Senator PERKINS.

I merely asked the question because of the natural thought that if one boat picked up eight persons, the other boat might have been able to do so.

232 You did not get any orders, Mr. Symons, not to pick up any more people?

233 Mr. SYMONS.

No, sir; there were no more around about where I was.

234 Senator PERKINS.

Were those two boats the same size?

235 Mr. HOGG.

They were the same size.

236 Senator PERKINS.

As I understand, one of the boats had more packed into it than the other.

237 As I understand it, Mr. Symons pulled away from the ship; and then, when he came back there, they picked up all the people there were around.

238 (Witnesses Excused.)