

United States Senate Inquiry

Day 18

Statement of Mrs. Lucian P. Smith

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

Statement of Mrs. Lucian P. Smith (First Class Passenger, SS Titanic)

At 7.30 p. m., as usual, my [husband](#) and I went to dinner in the [café](#). There was a dinner party going on, given by [Mr. Ismay](#) to the [captain](#) and various other people on board ship. This was an usual occurrence of the evening, so we paid no attention to it. The dinner did not seem to be particularly gay; while they had various wines to drink, I am positive none were intoxicated at a quarter of 9 o'clock, when we left the dining room. There was a coffee room directly outside of the [café](#), in which people sat and listened to the music and drank coffee and cordials after dinner. My husband was with some friends just outside of what I know as the Parisian Café. I stayed up until 10.30, and then went to bed. I passed through the coffee room, and [Mr. Ismay](#) and his party were still there. The reason I am positive about the different time is because I asked my husband at the three intervals what time it was. I went to bed, and my husband joined his friends. I was asleep when the crash came. It did not awaken me enough to frighten me; in fact, I went back to sleep again. Then I awakened again, because it seemed that the boat had stopped. About that time my husband come into the [room](#). Still I was not frightened, but thought he had come in to go to bed. I asked him why the boat had stopped, and, in a leisurely manner, he said; "We are in the north and have struck an iceberg: It does not amount to anything, but probably delay us a day getting into New York. However, as a matter of form, the captain has ordered all ladies on deck." That frightened me a little, but after being reassured there was no danger I took plenty of time in dressing - putting on all my heavy clothing, high shoes, and two coats, as well as a warm knit hood.

While I dressed, my husband and I talked of landing, not mentioning the iceberg. I started out, putting on my life preserver, when we met a steward, who was on his way to tell us to put on life preservers and come on deck. However, I returned to the room with the intention of bringing my jewelry, but my husband said not to delay with such trifles. However, I picked up two rings and went on deck. After getting to the top deck, the ladies were ordered on [Deck A](#) without our husbands. I refused to go; but, after being told by three or four officers, my husband insisted, and, along with another lady, we went down. After staying there some time with nothing seemingly going on, some one called saying they could not be lowered from that deck, for the reason it was inclosed in glass. That seemed to be the first time the officers and captain had thought of that, and hastened to order us all on the top deck again. There was some delay in getting lifeboats down: in fact, we had plenty of time to sit in the [gymnasium](#) and chat with another gentleman and his wife. I kept asking my husband if I could remain with him rather than go in a lifeboat. He promised me I could. There was no commotion, no panic, and no one seemed to be particularly frightened; in fact, most of the people seemed interested in the unusual occurrence, many having crossed 50 and 60 times. However, I noticed my husband was busy talking to any officer he came in contact with; still I had not the least suspicion of the scarcity of lifeboats, or I never should have left my husband.

When the first boat was lowered from the left-hand side I refused to get in, and they did not urge me particularly; in the second boat they kept calling for one more lady to fill it, and my husband insisted that I get in it, my friend having gotten in. I refused unless he would go with me. In the meantime Capt. Smith was standing with a megaphone on deck. I approached him and told him I was alone, and asked if my husband might be allowed to go in the boat with me. He ignored me personally, but shouted again through his megaphone, "Women and children first." My husband said, "Never mind, captain, about that; I will see that she gets in the boat." He then said, "I never expected to ask you to obey, but this is one time you must; it is only a matter of form to have women and children first. The boat is thoroughly equipped, and everyone on her will be saved." I asked him if that was absolutely honest, and he said, "Yes." I felt some better then, because I had absolute confidence in what he said. He kissed me good-by and placed me in the [lifeboat](#) with the assistance of an officer. As the boat was being lowered he yelled from the deck, "Keep your hands in your pockets it is very cold weather." That was the last I saw of him, and now I remember the many husbands that turned their backs as the small boat was lowered, the women blissfully innocent of their husbands peril, and said good-by with the expectation of seeing them within the next hour or two. By that time our interest was centered on the lowering of the lifeboat, which occurred to me - although I know very little about it - to be a very poor way to lower one. The end I was in was almost straight up, while the lower

end came near touching the water. Our seaman said, himself, at the time, that he did not know how to get the rope down, and asked for a knife. Some person in the boat happened to have a knife - a lady, I think - who gave it to him. He cut the rope, and we were about to hit bottom when someone spoke of the plug. After a few minutes excitement to find something to stop the hole in the bottom of the boat where the plug is, we reached the water all right. The captain looked over to see us, I suppose, or something of the kind, and noticed there was only one man in the boat. [Maj. Peuchen](#), of Canada, was then swung out to us as an experienced seaman. There was a small light on the horizon that we were told to row towards. Some people seemed to think it was a fishing smack or small boat of some description. However, we seemed to get no nearer the longer we rowed, and I am of the opinion it was a star.

9 Many people in our boat said they saw two lights. I could not until I had looked a long time; I think it was the way our eyes focused, and probably the hope for another boat. I do not believe it was anything but a star. There were 24 people in our boat - they are supposed to hold 50. During the night they looked for water and crackers and a compass, but they found none that night. We were some distance away when the [Titanic](#) went down. We watched with sorrow, and heard the many cries for help and pitied the captain, because we knew he would have to stay with his ship. The cries we heard I thought were seamen, or possibly steerage, who had overslept, it not occurring to me for a moment that my husband and my friends were not saved. It was bitterly cold, but I did not seem to mind it particularly. I was trying to locate my husband in all the boats that were near us. The night was beautiful; everything seemed to be with us in that respect, and a very calm sea. The icebergs on the horizon were all watched with interest; some seemed to be as tall as mountains, and reminded me of the pictures I had studied in geography. Then there were flat ones, round ones also. I am not exactly sure what time, but think it was between 5 and 5.30 when we sighted the [Carpathia](#). Our seaman suggested we drift and let them pick us up; however, the women refused and rowed toward it. Our seaman was [Hichens](#), who refused to row, but sat in the end of the boat wrapped in a blanket that one of the women had given him. I am not of the opinion that he was intoxicated, but a lazy, uncouth man, who had no respect for the ladies, and who was a thorough coward. We made no attempt to return to the sinking *Titanic*, because we supposed it was thoroughly equipped. Such a thought never entered my head. Nothing of the sort was mentioned in the boat, having left the ship so early we were innocent of the poor equipment that we now know of. The sea had started to get fairly rough by the time we were taken on the *Carpathia*, and we were quite cold and glad for the shelter and protection. I have every praise for the *Carpathia's* captain and its crew, as well as the passengers aboard. They were kindness itself to each and every one of us, regardless of position we occupied on boat. One lady very kindly gave me her berth, and I was as comfortable as can be expected under the circumstances until we arrived in New York. The ship's doctors were particularly nice to us. I know many women who slept on the floor in the smoking room while Mr. Ismay occupied the best room on the *Carpathia*, being in the center of the boat, with every attention, and a sign on the door. "Please do not knock." There were other men who were miraculously saved, and barely injured, sleeping on the engine room floor, and such places as that, as the ship was very crowded. The discipline coming into New York was excellent. We were carefully looked after in every way with the exception of a Marconigram I sent from the *Carpathia* on Monday morning, April 15, to my friends. Knowing of their anxiety, I borrowed money from a gentleman and took this Marconigram myself and asked the operator to send it for me, and he promised he would. However, it was not received. Had it been sent, it would have spared my family, as well as Mr. Smith's, the terrible anxiety which they went through for four days. This is the only complaint I have to make against the *Carpathia*. They did tell me they were near enough to land to send it, but would send it through other steamers, as they were cabling the list of the rescued that way. He also said it was not necessary to pay him, because the White Star Line was responsible. I insisted, however, because I thought that probably the money might have some weight with them, as the whole thing seemed to have been a monied accident.

10 MRS. LUCIAN P. SMITH (ELOISE HUGHES SMITH.)

11 Subscribed and sworn to before me this 20th day of May, 1912.

12 [SEAL.] E. A. JORDAN,
Notary Public, Cabell County, W. Va.

13 My commission expires October 26, 1916.