

United States Senate Inquiry

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Testimony of Dickinson H. Bishop

(The witness was sworn by Senator Smith.)

Senator SMITH.

Will you state your full name?

Mr. BISHOP.

[Dickinson H. Bishop](#).

Senator SMITH.

And your residence?

Mr. BISHOP.

Dowagiac, Mich.

Senator SMITH.

What is your business?

Mr. BISHOP.

The manufacturing business.

Senator SMITH.

What is your age?

Mr. BISHOP.

Twenty-five.

Senator SMITH.

Mr. Bishop, can you add anything to the statement [Mrs. Bishop](#) has made?

Mr. BISHOP.

I do not think I can.

Senator SMITH.

Is there any information beyond that which she has given which will throw any light or contribute to our investigation?

Mr. BISHOP.

There is one thing, in regard to the watertight compartments on E deck.

Senator SMITH.

You may state it.

Mr. BISHOP.

It has to do with the mechanical closing of them. Some way or other, it had a brass plate in the deck, and from what I know - I do not know from my own observation, but only from what I have heard from some other people I knew on the boat - immediately after the accident they saw the members of the crew trying to do something to these holes in the deck with a key such as they use in the shut-offs to the water system in cities, and placing the key down there, they failed to turn the one of that side, and they immediately went to the other side and could not close that. They said, "There is no use; we will try the other side." What it was or how serious it was I do not know.

Senator SMITH.
Did you notice any other defects of any kind?

Mr. BISHOP.
Not any. Leaving the boat as soon as we did, we had very little opportunity to observe what happened on the deck after the first lifeboat left.

Senator SMITH.
This plate to which you have referred was in the floor of [E deck](#)?

Mr. BISHOP.
In one of the passageways.

Senator SMITH.
In the floor?

Mr. BISHOP.
Yes.

Senator SMITH.
On E deck?

Mr. BISHOP.
As I understand it, yes, sir; or else on the wall.

Senator SMITH.
You say the crew could not turn this bolt or -

Mr. BISHOP.
Whatever it was; the shut-off.

Senator SMITH.
And what did they do when they found it could not be turned?

Mr. BISHOP.
One of the members of the crew who was engaged in trying to turn this, said to the other one, "It is no use; we will try the other side."

Senator SMITH.
What member of the crew was that, if you know?

Mr. BISHOP.
I could not answer that correctly. I do not know. As I said, my information came through other people, passengers.

Senator SMITH.
From what you saw of that, do you know whether this had to do in any way with the efficiency of the watertight compartments?

Mr. BISHOP.
Only in that the plates were marked -

Senator SMITH.*(interposing)*
"W"?

Mr. BISHOP.
With "W.T." or "W. T. C." The letters "W. T." I remember particularly.

Senator SMITH.

How long were the members of the crew trying to turn this plate or bolt?

Mr. BISHOP.

I do not know.

Senator SMITH.

Do you know the name of the person who saw the attempt made?

Mr. BISHOP.

Mr. Hardy. [[George A. Harder](#)]

Senator SMITH.

What are his initials?

Mr. BISHOP.

George A.

Senator SMITH.

And what is his address? Is it the Grosvenor; 27 Fifth Avenue, New York?

Mr. BISHOP.

That is correct.

Senator SMITH.

Who told you to get into the [lifeboat](#)?

Mr. BISHOP.

One of the officers in charge of the lowering; which one, I could not tell. There was some confusion there at the time, and I did not pay much attention. There was an officer stationed at the side of the lifeboat, and as my wife got in I followed immediately, and he helped me into the boat, or rather indicated, and I fell into the boat.

Senator SMITH.

Did [Mrs. Astor](#) get in the same lifeboat?

Mr. BISHOP.

No; she did not. I did not see Mrs. Astor except on the [A deck](#) earlier in the evening.

Senator SMITH.

What time?

Mr. BISHOP.

Just before the order to put on the lifebelts.

Senator SMITH.

After the collision?

Mr. BISHOP.

After the collision.

Senator SMITH.

Did you see [Col. Astor](#) about that time?

Mr. BISHOP.

I did not.

Senator SMITH.

Do you know in which boat Mrs. Astor left the [Titanic](#)?

Mr. BISHOP.

I do not; no.

Senator SMITH.

Did you know anything about the people in your lifeboat, except yourselves? Did you know any of them except your wife?

Mr. BISHOP.

Yes; the French aviator - they called him "Marshall" [[Marachel](#)] - was in our boat. I could not pronounce his name.

Senator SMITH.

Anybody else?

Mr. BISHOP.

[Mr. Greenfield](#), with his mother, living in New York.

Senator SMITH.

Did anyone attempt to get into your lifeboat, either while it was being lowered or after it was in the water?

Mr. BISHOP.

There was a little confusion on the deck at that time. No one rushed the boats, at all.

Senator SMITH.

How long after the impact was it before the order was given to lower the lifeboats, or clear the lifeboats?

Mr. BISHOP.

I did not hear the order given.

Senator SMITH.

Did you hear anyone give any warning, or did you hear any alarm given to waken the passengers after the impact?

Mr. BISHOP.

I did not hear any alarm. The alarm we had was from another passenger, a friend of ours on the ship.

Senator SMITH.

What was his name?

Mr. BISHOP.

[Mr. Stewart](#). He was lost.

Senator SMITH.

Do you remember his first name?

Mr. BISHOP.

His initials were "A.A." Mr. A.A. Stewart, of New York.

Senator SMITH.

And he did not survive?

Mr. BISHOP.

He did not.

Senator SMITH.

Did anyone attempt to get out of your lifeboat after it reached the water?

Mr. BISHOP.

No.

Senator SMITH.

Do you agree with your wife that there were 28 people in your lifeboat?

Mr. BISHOP.

That was what the count was, after we took it.

Senator SMITH.

Did you count them?

Mr. BISHOP.

Each passenger was supposed to have counted one number, starting in the bow and going back.

Senator SMITH.

That is, they started with one to count, and it ran up to 28?

Mr. BISHOP.

Yes, sir; but there were some I know who were missed, and there is a possibility of there having been more people in that boat at the time. It was very difficult to take the number correctly on account of the scattered position of the passengers.

Senator SMITH.

Were there any children in that boat?

Mr. BISHOP.

There was a woman with her baby transferred from another lifeboat, I think.

Senator SMITH.

That is, after you reached the water?

Mr. BISHOP.

After the *Titanic* had sunk.

Senator SMITH.

After the sinking?

Mr. BISHOP.

Yes, sir.

Senator SMITH.

Can you tell how long it was after you left the side of the *Titanic* before she sank?

Mr. BISHOP.

I can not tell, exactly. I imagine the time the boat was lowered was about a quarter to 1, and the only information I have as to the time of the sinking comes through the reports, that it was probably in the neighborhood of 20 minutes after 2.

Senator SMITH.

Do you know, of your own knowledge, that lifeboat No. 7, in which Mrs. Bishop and yourself left the *Titanic*, was the first boat lowered on the starboard side?

Mr. BISHOP.

It was. We had been on the boat deck in the neighborhood of 10 minutes, watching them prepare the boats for lowering. At that time there were very few people up on deck, and from the testimony I have heard, and from what I have heard, it seems there were a good many people who did not get onto the boat deck until after they had started lowering the boats.

Senator SMITH.

Did you hear any order given by anyone for the men to stand back?

Mr. BISHOP.

I heard no such order.

Senator SMITH.

"Women first," or "Women and children first"?

Mr. BISHOP.

No.

Senator SMITH.

At the time the first lifeboat was lowered, are you willing to say that that order had not been made?

Mr. BISHOP.

Absolutely.

Senator SMITH.

Of the 13 passengers in your lifeboat, did you say you knew none except your wife?

Mr. BISHOP.

I knew a good many of them -

Senator SMITH. (*interposing*)

Your wife and this Frenchman?

Mr. BISHOP.

I knew other men in there, but I can not recall their names. I would like to revise that statement I just made, in a way, about the order, "Women first." I can say positively there was no such order given on the starboard side, near where our boat was lowered. What happened on the port side I knew nothing of, at all.

Senator SMITH.

Do you know what officer took charge of loading and lowering the boats on the starboard side?

Mr. BISHOP.

Only from what I have heard of the testimony.

Senator SMITH.

Was it [Mr. Murdoch](#) or [Mr. Lightoller](#)?

Mr. BISHOP.

I could not be sure who it was, from my own observation; only from the testimony here.

Senator SMITH.

Did you see the [captain](#) there superintending that part of the work, at any time?

Mr. BISHOP.

I did not see the captain after the accident.

Senator SMITH.
Did you see him before the accident?

Mr. BISHOP.
No.

Senator SMITH.
I think that is all, Mr. Bishop. We are very much obliged for your kindness in waiting so long.

(Witness excused.)

Mr. and Mrs. Bishop Give First Authentic Interview Concerning Titantic [sic] Disaster

Dowagiac Daily News

Saturday 20 April 1912

THEY RECITE A GRAPHIC TALE OF THE GREAT SEA DISASTER OF A WEEK AGO.

"Ladies and Grooms First" Was Order They Obeyed and Both Left the Ship Together

TELL EXPERIENCES WHILE AFLOAT

German Baron Would Not Assist With the Rowing and a French Aviator Never Dropped the Monocle From His Eye Throughout the Trying Hours

Mr. and Mrs. G. E. Bishop have today received telegraphic advices from Mr. and Mrs. D. H. Bishop in New York stating that they have decided to carry out their original intentions and motor home from New York in their Lozier car.

They will not, however, make the trip until next week. On landing from the steamship Carpathia they found themselves almost destitute of everything, all their personal belongings having gone down with the Titanic, and they will remain in New York City long enough to provide themselves with new wardrobes before starting west.

At first reports they had abandoned their motor trip and decided to come by rail, but on second consideration they will do as originally planned. Their chauffeur, Earl Patterson, is now in New York City with their Lozier car ready to make the drive through to Michigan.

Many supposed interviews with Mr. and Mrs. Bishop have been published since the Carpathia landed, but the only authentic one, according to Mr. and Mrs. G. E. Bishop, of this city, is the following one:

Mrs. Bishop's Narrative

"We had been in Europe since January," says Mrs. Bishop, "and had visited Egypt, Italy, France and Algiers. We sailed on the Titanic on the tenth and had had a most enjoyable voyage until the night of the disaster."

"I had retired when our ship struck the iceberg, but Mr. Bishop was sitting in our stateroom, reading. I didn't hear the shock, and it was several minutes before someone came to our door and told us to come on deck. I got up and dressed, then we went above. Officers told us we might as well go below and retire; that there was no danger. We did not do so for some time, however. Finally we did, and soon afterward we were again summoned. We dressed quietly and had plenty of time."

"The girl who occupied a stateroom across from us refused to get up and the stewards pulled her out of bed, she got back in and sank with the ship."

"When we got on deck there were few people there, but were tons of (unreadable) on the fore part of the ship. We were in the first lifeboat to be lowered over the side. Someone said, 'Put in the brides and grooms first.'

"There were three newly married couples who went in that boat. Altogether, there were 28 in our boat. There might as well have been 40 or so, but the half hundred men on deck refused to leave, even though there was room for them."

Astor at Foot Ladder

"John Jacob Astor was standing at the foot of the stairway as I started to go back the second time. He told us to get on our life belts and we did. Before our boat was lowered into the water, Mr. and Mrs. Astor were on the deck. She didn't want to go, saying that she thought we were all silly, that the Titanic couldn't sink. Because the Astor's stateroom was close to ours, we had had considerable to do with them on the voyage and I disliked to leave them on deck. As a matter of fact I believed much of as they did that there was little chance of being picked up in the lifeboats."

"The water was like glass. There wasn't even the ripple usually found on a small lake. By the time we had pulled 100 yards the lower row of portholes had disappeared. When we were a mile away the second row had gone, but there was still no confusion. Indeed everything seemed to be quiet on the ship until her stern was raised out of the water by the list forward. Then a veritable wave of humanity surged up out of the steerage and shut the lights from our view. We were too far away to see the passengers individually, but we could see the black masses of human forms and hear their death cries and groans."

Look Like Huge Whale

"For a moment the ship seemed to be pointing straight down, looking like a gigantic whale submerging itself, head-first."

"One dining room steward, who was in our boat, was thoughtful enough to bring green lights – the kind you burn on the Fourth of July. They cast a ghastly light over the boat, but you know we had no light of any kind. I think all lifeboats ought to be equipped with lights, crackers and water and compasses. Whenever we would light one of these diminutive torches we would hear cries from the people perishing aboard. They thought it was help coming."

"We were afloat in the life boat from about 12:30 Sunday night until 5 o'clock Monday morning. Although we were the first boat to leave the Titanic, we were about the fourth picked up by the Carpathia . The scenes on that little craft adrift in mid-ocean with little hope of rescue were most heart-rending. Still the characteristics of the individuals appealed to me."

Strange Acts Of Rescued

"For instance, there was a German baron aboard who smoked an obnoxious pipe incessantly and refused to pull an oar. The men were worn out with the work, and I rowed for considerable time myself. There was a little French aviator in our boat, Pierre Marschal, a partner of Paulhan, who never took his monocle from his eye all the time we were on the water, but he did assist in the rowing."

"It broke my heart to leave my little dog 'Freu Freu' in my stateroom. I had purchased her in Florence, Italy, and she was the pet of the ship. The steward wouldn't let me take her to the butcher. He said she was too pretty, and she was the only one allowed to stay in the cabin. I made a little den for her in our room behind two of my suitcases, but when I started to leave her she tore my dress to bits, tugging at it. I realized, however, that there would be little sympathy for a woman carrying a dog in her arms when there were lives of women and children to be saved."

"Whenever a light, however small, was flashed in a lifeboat those in the other drifting crafts were given false hopes of rescue. After we had been afloat for several hours without food or water and everyone suffering from the cold, I felt certain we should all perish. I took off my stockings and gave them to a little girl who hadn't as much time to dress as I had."

"When the day broke and the Carpathia was sighted, there were indescribable scenes of joy. After we had pulled alongside of the rescue ship, many of the women were lifted aboard in chairs, tied to a rope. I was sufficiently composed to climb the ladder alongside to the deck. When the last of the survivors were taken on, the recounting of the experience began."

Gracie Proves A Swimmer

"Yes," said Mr. Bishop, "I think the story told us by Col. Archibald Gracie, of Washington D. C., was the most remarkable of any we heard. He remained on deck and clung to the rail until he struck the water. He must have been sucked under 50 or 60 feet, Col. Gracie told us. When he came to the surface he said he found himself among a mass of wreckage, but he is an excellent swimmer and finally succeeded in reaching a small collapsible which had a few passengers aboard. Imagine a man as old as Col. Gracie scrambling with 1,700 people in water two miles deep. It is remarkable that he succeeded."

"Col. Gracie was peevish, though," reminded Mrs. Bishop. "He did not want to tell of his experiences."

"Those on board the Carpathia did everything in their power for our comfort. They shared

everything with us and the captain of that boat was not like Capt. Smith of the Titanic. You didn't see him at fashionable dinners. He was always on duty."

"Mr. Lucien Smith of Huntington, W. Va., a dear little woman, who lost her husband in the disaster, said that before they parted on the deck he told her he had seen Capt. Smith at a dinner at 11 p.m. that night. When he left the dining room, the captain was still there, although he may have gone to the bridge before the collision, it doesn't seem likely. For some reason, for which we will probably never know, the bulkhead doors refused to work. I watched the men for several minutes endeavoring to turn the screws that would lower them and make the compartments water tight, but they were unsuccessful. It may be that the impact so wrenched them as to throw them out of line."

Waltons To Motor Home

Mr. and Mrs. J. F. Walton, of Sturgis, parents of Mrs. Bishop, will motor home with Mr. and Mrs. Bishop. They have been in Florida during the winter, but came to New York about ten days ago to meet their daughter and her husband.

They became almost frantic when they learned of the Titanic disaster, but it was only a few hours after the first news of the disaster that intelligence came that Mr. and Mrs. Bishop were saved. With this assurance they went to the theatre that night and there heard later news.

"I suppose," said Mrs. Walton, "that we bought one thousand newspapers in our anxiety to get assurance that our children were among the ones rescued."

As soon as they landed, Mr. and Mrs. Bishop hastened to the Waldorf-Astoria where Mr. and Mrs. Walton have been stopping, and there they are now established.

Mr. and Mrs. D. H. Bishop were married four months ago and they were returning from their honeymoon trip. The time of their arrival home is not definite, but it will be sometime the latter part of next week, so their Dowagiac relatives expect.

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BISHOP'S ARRIVE HOME AND RELATE MANY THINGS ABOUT TITANIC NOT BEFORE TOLD

Dowagiac Daily News

Friday 10 May 1912

Waited Over to Take Passage on This Ship From Cherbourg

DETAILS RESCUE

Ship Slowly Sank to Watery Grave While They Watched One Mile Away - Did Not Break In Two

Mr. and Mrs. D. H. Bishop, who were among the fortunate ones to escape the Wreck of the Titanic, are once more among their Dowagiac relatives and friends.

They arrived home this morning at 8:52, having made the trip aboard train from Buffalo. [They] came that far from New York in their their car, but such was the condition of the roads and the weather that they abandoned the auto and shipped it home.

Mr. Bishop relates some interesting things about their experiences aboard the Titanic and after leaving the wrecked ship which had never appeared in print.

"We waited over to take passage on this particular ship," said Mr. Bishop in talking to the Daily News.

"We could have sailed earlier, but waited at Cherbourg to come across on this monster new passenger boat, which was the largest and most sumptuous of the trans-Atlantic boats.

"Up to the time af the wreck we had a beautified passage. The sea was delightful. It was delightful that Sunday night, as calm and as quiet as a mill pond. I will never forget the sunset that night Everybody had enjoyed it.

"We had spent the evening in the 'lounge,' and at 11 o'clock retired to our stateroom on 'B' deck. I sat up in bed and read until 11:40 when the ship struck the iceberg.

"I hurriedly dressed and told Mrs. Bishop to do the same. I then went to the 'A' deck, and finally to the boat deck. There seemed to be no commotion. The stewards laughed at the suggestion of danger.

"I felt assured all was safe and returned to our stateroom. We both undressed and retired. I once more began to read and so occupied myself for ten minutes. Presently Mr. Stewart, a friend we had made on board ship, who had been across the ocean many times rapped at the door and called me outside. He informed me we had best get up and dress. He then called my attention to the listing of the boat which began soon after the iceberg was struck.

"We then dressed completely and prepared for comfort in an emergency. We went up to the boat deck but no preparation had been made for lowering any of the boats. We returned to 'A' deck and there met Mr. and Mrs. Astor who seemed to feel little alarm. Mrs. Bishop wished a muff and I went for it, and while in the stateroom she came in and said we had been ordered to put on life belts. This we did and again went to the boat deck.

"The lowering of the life boats was done deliberately, and it was not even commenced until we had been on deck for several minutes. It was then almost impossible to get people to venture into them. We entered the first boat lowered, and I am sure there were six or seven single men in the boat with us. The officers implored people to get aboard, but they seemed to fear hanging out over the water at a height of seventy-five feet, and the officers ordered the boat lowered away with only a small portion of what it could carry."

Mr. Bishop declares there was no explosion when the ship sank. It settled gradually, until finally the bow plunged downward and the stem stood high in the air. Strange as it may seem, the lights burned brilliantly to the last.

"It was exceedingly difficult to be understood on the deck, such was the noise from the escaping steam which began [to] blow off as soon as the engines stopped."

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