

United States Senate Inquiry

Day 12

Testimony of Mrs. J. Stuart White

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(Testimony taken separately before Senator William Alden Smith, chairman of the subcommittee.)

(The witness was sworn by Senator Smith.)

Senator SMITH.

Do you make the Waldorf-Astoria your permanent home, [Mrs. White](#)?

Mrs. WHITE.

My home really is Briarcliffe Lodge; Briarcliffe Manor, N. Y. That is my summer house. When I am in New York, I am always here at the Waldorf-Astoria..

Senator SMITH.

I want to ask one or two questions, Mrs. White, and let you answer them in your own way. You were a passenger on the [Titanic](#)?

Mrs. WHITE.

Yes.

Senator SMITH.

Where did you get aboard the ship?

Mrs. WHITE.

At Cherbourg.

Senator SMITH.

Where were your apartments on the *Titanic*? What deck were you on?

Mrs. WHITE.

We were on [deck C](#).

Senator SMITH.

Do you remember the number of the room? [\[C-32\]](#)

Mrs. WHITE.

I do not believe I could tell you with any degree of certainty, at all. [Miss Young](#) and my [maid](#) could tell you.

Senator SMITH.

Miss Young or your maid would know the number of your room?

Mrs. WHITE.

Yes. I never went out of my room from the time I went into it. I was never outside of the door until I came off the night of the collision.

Senator SMITH.

That was due, I believe, to a little accident that you had on entering the ship?

Mrs. WHITE.

Yes, sir.

Senator SMITH.

You went directly to your apartment and remained there?

Mrs. WHITE.

I remained in my room until I came out that night. I never took a step from my bed until that night.

Senator SMITH.

Were you aroused especially by the impact?

Mrs. WHITE.

No; not at all. I was just sitting on the bed, just ready to turn the lights out. It did not seem to me that there was any very great impact at all. It was just as though we went over about a thousand marbles. There was

nothing terrifying about it at all.

25 Senator SMITH.

Were you aroused by any one of the ship's officers or crew?

26 Mrs. WHITE.

No.

27 Senator SMITH.

Do you know whether there was any alarm turned in for the passengers?

28 Mrs. WHITE.

We heard no alarm whatever. We went immediately on deck ourselves.

29 Senator SMITH.

You went on deck?

30 Mrs. WHITE.

We went right up on deck ourselves.

31 Senator SMITH.

On the upper deck?

32 Mrs. WHITE.

Yes, sir.

33 Senator SMITH.

And Miss Young and your maid were with you?

34 Mrs. WHITE.

Yes; and my [manservant](#).

35 Senator SMITH.

What were they doing then?

36 Mrs. WHITE.

Simply all standing around.

37 Senator SMITH.

Was anything being done about the lifeboats?

38 Mrs. WHITE.

No; we were all standing around inside, waiting to know what the result was.

39 Senator SMITH.

The lifeboats had not been cleared?

40 Mrs. WHITE.

Nothing had been said about the lifeboats in any way, when suddenly [Capt. Smith](#) came down the stairway and ordered us all to put on our life preservers, which we did. We stood around for another 20 minutes, then, I should think.

41 Senator SMITH.

Still on that deck?

42 Mrs. WHITE.

No, on [deck B](#).

43 Senator SMITH.

You went down to deck B?

44 Mrs. WHITE.

Yes, he said we must go back again, then, to deck A, which we did, to get into the boats.

45 Senator SMITH.

Where did you enter the lifeboat?

46 Mrs. WHITE.

I entered the lifeboat from the top deck, where the boats were. We had to enter the boat there. There was no other deck to the steamer except the top deck. It was a perfect rat trap. There was no other deck that was open, at all.

47 Senator SMITH.
Do you recollect what boat you entered?

48 Mrs. WHITE.
[Boat 8](#), the second boat off.

49 Senator SMITH.
On which side of the ship?

50 Mrs. WHITE.
I could not tell you. It was the side going this way - the left side, as we were going.

51 Senator SMITH.
That would be the port side?

52 Mrs. WHITE.
Yes. I got in the second boat that was lowered.

53 Senator SMITH.
What officer stood there?

54 Mrs. WHITE.
I could not tell you that; I have no idea.

55 Senator SMITH.
What officer supervised this work?

56 Mrs. WHITE.
I have no idea. I could not even tell whether it was an officer or the captain. I know we were told to get into the boat.

57 Senator SMITH.
Did you have any difficulty in getting into the boat?

58 Mrs. WHITE.
None whatever. They handled me very carefully, because I could hardly step. They lifted me in very carefully and very nicely.

59 Senator SMITH.
How far out from the side of the ship did the lifeboat hang? Were you able to step into it?

60 Mrs. WHITE.
Oh, yes.

61 Senator SMITH.
Or were you passed into it?

62 Mrs. WHITE.
No we stepped into it. It did not hang far out.

63 Senator SMITH.
Did you see how far out it was?

64 Mrs. WHITE.
No, sir; I have no idea. We got into it very easily. We got into the lifeboat without any inconvenience whatever. As I said, my condition was such that I had to be handled rather carefully, and there was no inconvenience at all.

65 Senator SMITH.
Did you see anything after the accident bearing upon the discipline of the officers or crew, or their conduct, which you desire to speak of?

66 Mrs. WHITE.
Yes; lots about them.

67 Senator SMITH.
Tell me about that.

68 Mrs. WHITE.
For instance, before we cut loose from the ship two of the seamen with us - the men, I should say; I do not

call them seamen; I think they were dining-room stewards - before we were cut loose from the ship they took out cigarettes and lighted them on an occasion like that! That is one thing that we saw. All of those men escaped under the pretense of being oarsmen. The man who rowed me took his oar and rowed all over the boat, in every direction. I said to him, "Why don't you put the oar in the oarlock?" He said, "Do you put it in that hole?" I said "Certainly." He said, "I never had an oar in my hand before." I spoke to the other man and he said; "I have never had an oar in my hand before, but I think I can row." Those were the men that we were put to sea with at night - with all these magnificent fellows left on board, who would have been such a protection to us. Those were the kind of men with whom we were put out to sea that night.

69 Senator SMITH.

How many were there in your boat?

70 Mrs. WHITE.

There were 22 women and 4 men.

71 Senator SMITH.

None of the men seemed to understand the management of a boat?

72 Mrs. WHITE.

Yes; there was one there, one who was supposed to be a seaman, up at the end of our boat, who gave the orders.

73 Senator SMITH.

Do you know who he was?

74 Mrs. WHITE.

No; I do not know. I do not know the names of any of those men. But he seemed to know something about it.

75 Senator SMITH.

I wish you would describe, as nearly as you can, just what took place after your lifeboat got away from the *Titanic*.

76 Mrs. WHITE.

What took place between the passengers and the seamen?

77 Senator SMITH.

Yes.

78 Mrs. WHITE.

We simply rowed away. We had the order, on leaving the ship, to do that. The officer who put us in the boat - I do not know who he was - gave strict orders to the seamen, or the men, to make for the light opposite and land the passengers and get back just as soon as possible. That was the light that everybody saw in the distance.

79 Senator SMITH.

Did you see it?

80 Mrs. WHITE.

Yes; I saw it distinctly.

81 Senator SMITH.

What was it?

82 Mrs. WHITE.

It was a boat of some kind.

83 Senator SMITH.

How far away was it?

84 Mrs. WHITE.

Oh, it was 10 miles away, but we could see it distinctly. There was no doubt but that it was a boat. But we rowed and rowed and rowed, and then we all suggested that it was simply impossible for us to get to it; that we never could get to it, and the thing to do was to go back and see what we could do for the others. We only had 22 in our boat.

85 Then we turned and went back, and lingered around there for a long time, trying to locate the other boats, but we could not locate them except by hearing them. The only way they could locate us was by my electric

lamp. The lamp on the boat was absolutely worth nothing. They tinkered with it all along, but they could not get it in shape. I had an electric cane - a cane with an electric light in it - and that was the only light we had. We sat there for a long time, and we saw the ship go down, distinctly.

86 Senator SMITH.
What was your impression of it as it went down?

87 Mrs. WHITE.
It was something dreadful.

88 Nobody ever thought the ship was going down. I do not think there was a person that night, I do not think there was a man on the boat who thought the ship was going down. They speak of the bravery of the men. I do not think there was any particular bravery, because none of the men thought it was going down. If they had thought the ship was going down, they would not have frivoleed as they did about it. Some of them said, "When you come back you will need a pass," and, "You can not get on tomorrow morning without a pass." They never would have said these things if anybody had had any idea that the ship was going to sink.

89 In my opinion the ship when it went down was broken in two. I think very probably it broke in two.

90 I heard four distinct explosions, which we supposed were the boilers. Of course, we did not know anything about it.

91 Senator SMITH.
How loud were those explosions?

92 Mrs. WHITE.
They were tremendous.

93 We did what we were ordered to do. We went toward the light. That seemed to be the verdict of everybody in the boat. We had strict orders to do that from the officer or whoever started us off - land the passengers and come right back for the others. We all supposed that boat was coming toward us, on account of all the rockets that we had sent up.

94 Senator SMITH.
Did you urge the man in charge of your lifeboat to go back?

95 Mrs. WHITE.
One of us did.

96 Senator SMITH.
Did you urge him to go back to seek to pick up more people?

97 Mrs. WHITE.
Not until we had gone out for half an hour and found it perfectly useless to attempt to reach that boat or that light. Then everybody suggested going back and we did, too, but we could not.

98 Senator SMITH.
You went back?

99 Mrs. WHITE.
Yes. The sailor changed our course and tried to go back. That was after trying to reach that light for three-quarters of an hour. It was evidently impossible to reach it. It seemed to be going in the same direction in which we were going, and we made no headway toward it at all. Then we turned and tried to go back.

100 Senator SMITH.
Did anybody try to get in or get out of your boat?

101 Mrs. WHITE.
No.

102 Senator SMITH.
Did you land alongside the [*Carpathia*](#) with the same party with which you started from the boat deck of the *Titanic*?

103 Mrs. WHITE.
Exactly.

104 Senator SMITH.
You all landed safely?

105 Mrs. WHITE.
We all landed safely. We had a great deal of trouble, but we all landed safely.

106 Senator SMITH.
How many were there in your party?

107 Mrs. WHITE.
Three; Miss Young, myself, and my maid. My valet was lost.

108 Senator SMITH.
Did you make any attempt to communicate with your friends, after you got aboard the *Carpathia*, by wireless or otherwise?

109 Mrs. WHITE.
That was the first thing we did.

110 Senator SMITH.
Did you succeed?

111 Mrs. WHITE.
No; we did not succeed. They never received the telegram until last Monday night in this hotel. They took our telegram first thing when we got on board the *Carpathia*, Monday morning. They took our Marconigram. I think the people on land had a much more serious time than we had, so far as real suffering was concerned.

112 Senator SMITH.
Will you describe what you saw after daybreak, with regard to ice or icebergs?

113 Mrs. WHITE.
We saw one iceberg in front of us. Of course, we could not see it, because I was standing this way (*indicating*). I did not even see the *Carpathia* until my attention was called to her. I stood up all night long because I could not get up onto the seats which were very high, on account of my foot being bound up. I had no strength in my foot, and I stood all night long.

114 After we got aboard the *Carpathia*, we could see 13 icebergs and 45 miles of floating ice, distinctly, right around us in every direction.

115 Everybody knew we were in the vicinity of icebergs. Even in our staterooms it was so cold that we could not leave the port hole open. It was terribly cold. I made the remark to Miss Young, on Sunday morning: "We must be very near icebergs to have such cold weather as this." It was unusually cold.

116 It was a careless, reckless thing. It seems almost useless to speak of it.

117 No one was frightened on the ship. There was no panic. I insisted on Miss Young getting into something warm, and I got into something warm, and we locked our trunks and bags and went on deck.

118 There was no excitement whatever. Nobody seemed frightened. Nobody was panic-stricken. There was a lot of pathos when husbands and wives kissed each other goodbye, of course.

119 We were the second boat pushed away from the ship, and we saw nothing that happened after that. We were not near enough. We heard the yells of the steerage passengers as they went down, but we saw none of the harrowing part of it at all.

120 As I have said before, the men in our boat were anything but seamen, with the exception of one man. The women all rowed, every one of them. Miss Young rowed every mile. The men could not row. They did not know the first thing about it. [Miss Swift](#), from Brooklyn, rowed every mile, from the steamer to the *Carpathia*. Miss Young rowed every minute also, except when she was throwing up, which she did six or seven times, [Countess Rothe](#) stood at the tiller. Where would we have been if it had not been for our women, with such men as that put in charge of the boat? Our head seaman would give an order and those men who knew nothing about the handling of a boat would say, "If you don't stop talking through that hole in your face there will be one less in the boat." We were in the hands of men of that kind. I settled two or three fights between them, and quieted them down. Imagine getting right out there and taking out a pipe and filling it and standing there smoking, with the women rowing, which was most dangerous; we had woolen rugs all around us.

121 Another thing which I think is a disgraceful point. The men were asked, when they got into our boat, if they could row. Imagine asking men that who are supposed to be at the head of lifeboats - imagine asking them if they can row.

122 There is another point that has never been brought out in regard to this accident and that is that that steamer had no open decks except the top deck. How could they fill the lifeboats properly? They could not lower a lifeboat 70 feet with any degree of safety with more than 20 people in it. Where were they going to get any more in them on the way down? There were no other open decks.

123 Just to think that on a beautiful starlit night - you could see the stars reflected in the water - with all those Marconi warnings, that they would allow such an accident to happen, with such a terrible loss of life and property.

124 It is simply unbearable, I think.

125 Senator SMITH.
There were no male passengers in your boat?

126 Mrs. WHITE.
Not one.

127 Senator SMITH.
Do you know who any of the other women were in your boat?

128 Mrs. WHITE.
[Mrs. Kenyon](#), [Mrs. Dr. Leder](#), of Brooklyn; Mrs. Swift, and the Countess Rothe, who was at the tiller, and her [maid](#), and Miss Young, my maid, and myself. I did not know any other ladies. Those were the ladies right around me.

129 I never saw a finer body of men in my life than the men passengers on this trip - athletes and men of sense - and if they had been permitted to enter these lifeboats with their families the boats would have been appropriately manned and many more lives saved, instead of allowing the stewards to get in the boats and save their lives, under the pretense that they could row, when they knew nothing whatever about it.

130 Senator SMITH.
I am very much obliged to you for your statement, Mrs. White.

131 (Witness Excused.)