

United States Senate Inquiry

Day 15

Affidavit of A. H. Weikman

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

APRIL 24, 1912.

Mr. A. H. WEIKMAN:

I certify that my occupation on the *Titanic* was known as the saloon barber. I was sitting in my [barber shop](#) on Sunday night, April 14, 1912, at 11.40 p. m., when the collision occurred. I went forward to the steerage on "[G](#)" [deck](#) and saw one of the baggage-masters, and he told me that water was coming in in the baggage room on the deck below. I think the baggageman's name was [Bessant](#). I then went upstairs and met [Mr. Andrews](#), the "builder," and he was giving instructions to get the steerage passengers "on deck." I proceeded along "[E](#)" [deck](#) to my room on "[C](#)" [deck](#). I went on the main deck and saw some ice laying there. Orders were given, "All hands to man the lifeboats, also to put on lifebelts." Who gave the orders? "[Mr. Dodd](#)", second steward."

I helped to launch the boats, and there seemed to be a shortage of women. When I was on "E" deck I met the [captain](#) returning from "G" deck, who had been there with Mr. Andrews, and the captain was on the [bridge](#) at that time. I did not think there was any danger. What happened after the orders were given? Instructions were given to get the passengers into lifebelts and get on deck from all the staterooms. Did you see [Mr. Ismay](#)? Yes. I saw Mr. Ismay helping to load the boats. Did you see him get in a boat? Yes; he got in along with [Mr. Carter](#), because there were no women in the vicinity of the boat. This boat was the last to leave, to the best of my knowledge. He was ordered into the boat by the officer in charge. I think that Mr. Ismay was justified in getting in that boat at that time.

I was proceeding to launch the next boat when the ship suddenly sank at the bow and there was a rush of water that washed me overboard, and therefore the boat was not launched by human hands. The men were trying to pull up the sides when the rush of water came, and that was the last moment it was possible to launch any more boats, because the ship was at an angle that it was impossible for anybody to remain on deck. State further what you know about the case. After I was washed overboard I started to swim, when there was a pile of ropes fell upon me, and I managed to get clear of these and started to swim for some dark object in the water. It was dark. This was about 1.50 a. m. toward the stern. How do you know it was 1.50 a. m.? Because my watch was stopped at that time by the water. Did you hear any noise? Yes; I was about 15 feet away from the ship when I heard a second explosion. What caused the explosion? I think the boilers blew up about in the middle of the ship. The explosion blew me along with a wall of water toward the dark object I was swimming to, which proved to be a bundle of deck chairs, which I managed to climb on. While on the chairs I heard terrible groans and cries coming from people in the water. Was it possible to help them? No; it was not. The lifeboats were too far away. Do you think if the lifeboats were nearer they could render any assistance? Yes; had the lifeboats remained close to the *Titanic* they could have take 10 to 15 or maybe 20 more passengers to each boat. There was a great number of people killed by the explosion, and there was a great number that managed to get far enough away that the explosion did not injure them, and these are the people that I think could have been saved had the lifeboats been close. Did you see the ship go down? I mean the *Titanic*. Yes; I was afloat on chairs about 100 feet away, looking toward the ship. I seen her sink. Did you feel any suction? No; but there was some waves come toward me caused by the ship going own, and not enough to knock me off of the chairs. How many lifeboats were there on the *Titanic*? About 18 or 20 and four collapsible boats, and the best equipment possible to put on a ship. Do you think there was enough lifeboats? No.

Do you know anything about the watertight doors? Yes; she had self-closing doors of the latest type, and they all worked, to the best of my knowledge. How fast was she going when she struck the iceberg? I think about 20 knots per hour. I was told by Mr. Ismay that she was limited to 75 revolutions several days before.

A. H. WEIKMAN.

Subscribed and sworn to this 24th day of April, A. D. 1912.

ED. O'DONNELL.

Liner's Last Moments Graphically Described

Daily Enterprise

Saturday 20 April 1912

Palmyra Resident, Titantic's [sic] Barber, Tells of Thrilling Experience; Shock on Striking Iceberg was Slight; Saw Officer Shoot Man Who Tried to Climb Into Life Boat; Two Explosions Occurred

August H. Weikman, of Palmyra, ship's barber on the Titanic, who was among those rescued, graphically described at his home yesterday the wrecking and sinking of the Titanic.

Weikman, who declares that he had crossed the ocean 705 times, is 56 years old. For the last 34 years he has been employed in the capacity of ship's barber by the White Star Line and served under Captain Smith, of the ill-fated Titanic, when the latter was in command of the Olympic at the time she rammed the British cruiser Hawke.

According to Weikman he was the last man on the Titanic who spoke to Colonel John Jacob Astor and George D. Widener as the two stood side by side waiting for the leviathan to settle beneath the waves. Both men, he declared, calmly awaited the end, each one having given way to women in the lifeboats.

At the time the Titanic struck the iceberg, Weikman declares, the huge screws were turning 75 revolutions per minute. This was 15 revolutions per minute less than their maximum. The reason for this, Weikman states, was due to orders issued to Captain Smith that he husband all the coal possible, fear of the labor troubles here and in England leading the steamship officials to believe that it would be a difficult matter to obtain coal in the future.

In describing the work of rescue Weikman was emphatic in declaring that J. Bruce Ismay, managing director of the International Mercantile Marine Company, who was among those saved, did not try to get into any of the lifeboats, and only took his place among the women and children when ordered to do so by one of the ship's officers. Of Major Archibald Butt, aid to President Taft, Weikman declares he saw nothing.

In speaking of what happened on board the Titanic Weikman said:

"When we struck there was a slight shock. The stewards went from cabin to cabin to get everybody out on deck. This was shortly after 10 o'clock in the evening. When the passengers responded to the calls of the stewards they were told to put on life belts.

"There was no alarm, no confusion. Everything worked smoothly. The passengers once on deck were not allowed to go below again. Some of the crew started to lower the lifeboats from the davits. There was a terrible lot of ropes that got all tangled.

"Many of the passengers stood watching us undo them, and several times we asked them why they did not help. Mr. Astor was standing in the crowd around the davits.

"One hour after the collision the chief steward was found asleep, so slight had been the jar.

"They put the women and the children in the lifeboats and then they started to put in the crew with them. One man to every five women. When no women were near the boats they took the men, whether they were passengers or crew, anybody who stood nearest, and this accounts for the three Chinamen who were taken off. First Officer Murdock [sic] shot a foreigner who tried to climb over the rail into a boat.

"There were two explosions, the first one a little one, but it must have blown in the bulkhead to the main boilers. Then there came the big explosion. The pumps had been going full tilt, sending out a great stream of water. The band was playing and about 30 people were standing there.

"While this was going on I was on the upper deck assisting the passengers to the boats. I had a life belt on, and when the forward part of the ship listed I was washed overboard by a huge wave. Looking backward, I could see Captain Smith, who had been standing on the bridge, swimming back to the place where he had stood, having been washed off the Titanic by the same wave that had washed me from the ship into the water.

"When I slipped off the deck into the water, I tried to swim away from the ship. The wash of the waves when the second explosion occurred pushed me on to a lot of wreckage and debris, to which I clung until I was hauled into one of the lifeboats.

"The accident, in my mind, was unavoidable. The iceberg we struck was one of the kind which has submerged projections, which extend for hundreds of feet in the water. The crash started the plates at the bottom of the ship and the water poured in as through a sieve."

Weikman was accompanied to his home by his brothers-in-law, A. H. and John Hendricks. His brother, William Weikman, is ship's barber aboard the Cedric, which sailed but recently from New York.

The barber of the Titanic will not go to sea again. He said the finish of his 706th sea voyage was enough to shake his determination to follow the sea in the future.

Weikman will be tendered a reception by his neighbors. All day yesterday Mr. and Mrs. Weikman were the recipients of many congratulatory messages. Weikman's escape is considered as miraculous by all friends.

Courtesy of Mark Baber

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