

United States Senate Inquiry

Day 7

Testimony of John Collins

Source : <http://www.titanicinquiry.org/USInq/AmInq01Indxa.php>

(The witness was sworn by Senator Bourne.)

Senator BOURNE.
State your residence?

Mr. COLLINS.
No. 65 Bally Carry Street, Belfast.

Senator BOURNE.
How old are you?

Mr. COLLINS.
I will be 18 next November.

Senator BOURNE.
What is your occupation?

Mr. COLLINS.
Assistant cook, first class galley.

Senator BOURNE.
How long have you followed the sea?

Mr. COLLINS.
This was my first voyage, on the *Titanic*.

Senator BOURNE.
When did you ship?

Mr. COLLINS.
I signed on Thursday, and we sailed on Wednesday next. I signed on the 4th, and we sailed on the 10th.

Senator BOURNE.
Your first voyage, then, was on the *Titanic*?

Mr. COLLINS.
Yes.

Senator BOURNE.
You were on it at the time of the accident?

Mr. COLLINS.
I was, sir.

Senator BOURNE.
I wish you would tell the committee just what you were doing immediately prior to, and what you did after, the time that the catastrophe on the *Titanic* took place, in your own language?

Mr. COLLINS.
I stopped work at 9 o'clock on Sunday night, and I came up again and walked up and down the alleyway. I went into my bunk and fell asleep. That was about 10 o'clock - about a quarter to 10. I fell asleep, and was sound asleep, and exactly at a quarter past 11 I was wakened up. I had a clock by me, by my bed, and my clock was five minutes fast, and it was exactly a quarter past 11 when the ship struck the iceberg, and it wakened me. I put on my trousers, got out of bed, and they were letting off steam in the stoke hole. I asked what was the matter, and it seemed she struck an iceberg. The word came down the alleyway that there was no harm, and everyone returned to their bunks.

Senator BOURNE.
How long was that after the ship struck, which you say according to your clock was -

Mr. COLLINS.

About 10 or 15 minutes, sir.

24 Senator BOURNE.
You are certain from your clock you saw at the time of the accident took place at exactly 20 minutes past 11, not according to that clock, but allowing for the five minutes that the clock was slow?

25 Mr. COLLINS.
No; the clock was fast, sir.

26 Senator BOURNE.
I thought you said the clock showed 11.15, and the accident took place at 11.20?

27 Mr. COLLINS.
No, sir; the clock was 20 minutes pass 11, and the accident took place at a quarter past 11, if my clock was right. I could not exactly say. I put on my trousers and went up on to the deck, up forward, and I saw the deck almost packed with ice on the starboard side. [Collins seems to be referring to the [fore-well](#) deck]

28 Senator BOURNE.
What deck was this?

29 Mr. COLLINS.
I could not say what deck it was; it was on the same deck we slept on. Coming from the funnels it would be C deck, I think. I am not exactly sure. I was not too well acquainted with the decks.

30 Senator BOURNE.
You say the deck was packed with ice?

31 Mr. COLLINS.
Yes, on the starboard side.

32 Senator BOURNE.
How far aft from the bow?

33 Mr. COLLINS.
Well, it was just - I could not say exactly how far, but the deck came up like this (*indicating*) and then came down like this (*indicating*) to No. 1 alley. It was all along. I could not exactly explain right to tell you how far it was from the back.

34 Senator BOURNE.
Now, go on with your description.

35 Mr. COLLINS.
I went back into the bedroom and was told to lie down, and I got up again. I did not take off any of my clothes, and I came out again and saw the stewards in their white jackets in the passageway; the passengers were running forward, the stewards were steering them, and they made a joke of it, and we all turned in then and the word came in that we were to get out of our beds and get the lifebelts on and get up to the upper deck.

36 Senator BOURNE.
At what time was it that this word came? How long after the ship struck?

37 Mr. COLLINS.
Well, it was exactly - I am sure - half an hour, sir. Quite half an hour, it was.

38 Senator BOURNE.
Go on.

39 Mr. COLLINS.
We went up to the deck when the word came. Then I met a companion of mine, a steward, and I asked him what number my boat was, and he said [No. 16](#); so I went up to No. 16 boat, and I seen both firemen and sailors with their bags ready for No. 16 boat. I said to myself, "There is no chance there," and I ran back to the deck, ran to the port side on the saloon deck with another steward and a woman and two children, and the steward had one of the children in his arms and the woman was crying. I took the child off of the woman and made for one of the boats. Then the word came around from the starboard side there was a collapsible boat getting launched on the starboard side and that all women and children were to make for it. So me and another steward and the two children and the woman came around on that side, the starboard side, and when we got around there we saw then that it was forward. We saw the [collapsible boat](#) taken off of the saloon deck, and then the sailors and the firemen that were forward seen the ship's bow in the water and seen that

she was intending to sink her bow, and they shouted out for all they were worth we were to go aft, and word came there was a boat getting launched, so we were told to go aft, and we were just turning around and making for the stern end when the wave washed us off the deck - washed us clear of it - and the child was washed out of my arms; and the wreckage and the people that was around me, they kept me down for at least two or three minutes under the water.

40 Senator BOURNE.
Two or three minutes?

41 Mr. COLLINS.
Yes; I am sure.

42 Senator BOURNE.
Were you unconscious?

43 Mr. COLLINS.
No; not at all. It did not affect me much, the salt water.

44 Senator BOURNE.
But you were under the water. You can not stay under the water two or three minutes, can you?

45 Mr. COLLINS.
Well, it seemed that to me. I could not exactly state how long, but it seemed that to me. When I came to the surface I saw this boat that had been taken off. I saw a man on it. They had been working on it taking it off of the saloon deck, and when the waves washed it off the deck they clung to that; then I made for it when I came to the surface and saw it, and I swam over to it.

46 Senator BOURNE.
Did you have a lifebelt on?

47 Mr. COLLINS.
I had, sir. I was only about 4 or 5 yards off of it, and I swam over to it and I got on to it.

48 Senator BOURNE.
How many were on the collapsible boat?

49 Mr. COLLINS.
Well, sir, I could not exactly say; but I am sure there was more than 15 or 16.

50 Senator BOURNE.
Did those who were on help you get on?

51 Mr. COLLINS.
No, sir; they were all watching the ship. I had not much to do. All I had to do was to give a spring and I got onto it; and we were drifting about for two hours on the water.

52 Senator BOURNE.
When you had the child in your arms and went to this collapsible boat that you understood was being launched, why did you not get into it?

53 Mr. COLLINS.
Sir, we had not time, sir; they had not got it off the deck until we were washed off the deck.

54 Senator BOURNE.
After the ship struck did you see any lights over the water anywhere before any of your boats were lowered?

55 Mr. COLLINS.
No, sir.

56 Senator BOURNE.
After the boats were lowered did you see any lights that you believed was a ship coming to your relief?

57 Mr. COLLINS.
Yes, sir; there was three boats lowered.

58 Senator BOURNE.
I do not mean of your own boats, but I mean any lights away from your own boats or your own ship. Did you see any light in the distance?

59 Mr. COLLINS.

I had the child in my arms, and I looked back at her stern end and I saw a green light.

60

Senator BOURNE.

What did you think it was, one of your own boats?

61

Mr. COLLINS.

No, sir; I did not really think of what it was until the firemen and sailors came up and said that it was a boat.

62

Senator BOURNE.

That is, a ship?

63

Mr. COLLINS.

Yes, sir.

64

Senator BOURNE.

What became of it?

65

Mr. COLLINS.

Sir, it disappeared.

66

Senator BOURNE.

How long was it visible?

67

Mr. COLLINS.

About 20 minutes or half an hour, I am sure it was.

68

Senator BOURNE.

How far away, would you think, from the [*Titanic*](#)?

69

Mr. COLLINS.

I guess it would be about 4 miles; I am sure, 3 or 4 miles.

70

Senator BOURNE.

You say you were swept off of the *Titanic's* deck by a wave?

71

Mr. COLLINS.

Yes, sir.

72

Senator BOURNE.

How long after the accident occurred or at what time would you judge it was that you were swept off of the deck?

73

Mr. COLLINS.

Well, sir, I could not say; I am sure it was close on to 1 o'clock.

74

Senator BOURNE.

Was the ship sinking when you were swept off?

75

Mr. COLLINS.

She was, sir.

76

Senator BOURNE.

When you came up from the water and got on this collapsible boat, did you see any evidence of the ship as she sunk, then?

77

Mr. COLLINS.

I did, sir; I saw her stern end.

78

Senator BOURNE.

Were you on the boat at the time that you were washed off the ship?

79

Mr. COLLINS.

Amidships, sir.

80

Senator BOURNE.

You say you saw the stern end after you got on the collapsible boat?

81

Mr. COLLINS.

Yes, sir.

82

Senator BOURNE.

Did you see the bow?

83 Mr. COLLINS.
No, sir.

84 Senator BOURNE.
How far were you from the stern end of the ship when you came up and got into the collapsible boat, would you judge?

85 Mr. COLLINS.
We were about - I could not exactly state how far I was from the *Titanic* when I come up to the surface. I was not far, because her lights went out then. Her lights went out until the water almost got to amidships on her.

86 Senator BOURNE.
As I understand, you were amidships on the bow as the ship sank?

87 Mr. COLLINS.
Yes, sir.

88 Senator BOURNE.
You were washed off by a wave. You were under water, as you think, for two or three minutes, and then swam 5 or 6 yards to the collapsible boat and got aboard - and got into the boat. The stern of the ship was still afloat?

89 Mr. COLLINS.
The stern of the ship was still afloat.

90 Senator BOURNE.
The lights were burning?

91 Mr. COLLINS.
I came to the surface, sir, and I happened to look around and I just saw the lights and nothing more, and I looked in front of me and I saw the collapsible boat and I made for it.

92 Senator BOURNE.
After you got in the boat, did you see any lights on the *Titanic*?

93 Mr. COLLINS.
No, sir.

94 Senator BOURNE.
When you were in the water, after you came up above the surface of the water, you saw the lights on the *Titanic*?

95 Mr. COLLINS.
Just as I came up to the surface, sir. Her bow was in the water. She had not exploded then. Her bow was in the water, and I just looked around and saw the lights.

96 Senator BOURNE.
Had she broken in two?

97 Mr. COLLINS.
Her bow was in the water and her stern was up.

98 Senator BOURNE.
But you did not see any break? You did not think she had parted, and broken in two?

99 Mr. COLLINS.
Her bow was in the water. She exploded in the water. She exploded once in the water, and her stern end was up out of the water; and with the explosion out of the water it blew her stern up.

100 Senator BOURNE.
You saw it while it was up?

101 Mr. COLLINS.
Yes, sir; saw her stern up.

102 Senator BOURNE.
How long?

103 Mr. COLLINS.

I am sure it floated for at least a minute.

104 Senator BOURNE.
The lights were still burning?

105 Mr. COLLINS.
No, sir; the lights was out.

106 Senator BOURNE.
How could you see it?

107 Mr. COLLINS.
I was on the collapsible boat at the time.

108 Senator BOURNE.
If it was dark, how could you see?

109 Mr. COLLINS.
We were not too far off. I saw the white of the funnel. Then she turned over again, and down she went.

110 Senator BOURNE.
There was not much of a sea on at the time of the accident?

111 Mr. COLLINS.
It was as calm as that board.

112 Senator BOURNE.
How do you account for this wave that washed you off amidships?

113 Mr. COLLINS.
By the suction which took place when the bow went down in the water.

114 Senator BOURNE.
And the waves broke over the deck and washed you off?

115 Mr. COLLINS.
Washed the decks clear.

116 Senator BOURNE.
How many were around you at that time that were washed off?

117 Mr. COLLINS.
There were hundreds on the starboard side.

118 Senator BOURNE.
And you think every one of the hundreds were washed in the water?

119 Mr. COLLINS.
Yes, sir; they were washed off into the water.

120 Senator BOURNE.
The order had been given that every passenger and member of the crew should put on a lifebelt?

121 Mr. COLLINS.
Yes, sir.

122 Senator BOURNE.
What became of those hundreds that were washed off at the same time you were?

123 Mr. COLLINS.
I got on to the raft. I could see when I got on to the raft. I saw the stern of the boat, and I saw a mass of people and wreckage, and heard cries.

124 Senator BOURNE.
In the water?

125 Mr. COLLINS.
In the water.

126 Senator BOURNE.
How many were rescued from the water beside yourself, on the boat you got into, which I understand was No. 16?

127 Mr. COLLINS.
No, sir; the boat we got into was not No. 16.

128 Senator BOURNE.
What was the number?

129 Mr. COLLINS.
It was a collapsible boat.

130 Senator BOURNE.
Was it not numbered?

131 Mr. COLLINS.
No, sir; not that I know of.

132 Senator BOURNE.
The collapsible boats were not numbered?

133 Mr. COLLINS.
No, sir.

134 Senator BOURNE.
How many of the hundreds that were washed off of the ship at the same time with you got into the collapsible boat with you?

135 Mr. COLLINS.
Well, sir, the boat was taken off the saloon deck, and the wave came up and washed the boat right off, and she was upside down, sir, and the water washed over her. She was turned over, and we were standing on her.

136 Senator BOURNE.
You were standing on the bottom of the boat?

137 Mr. COLLINS.
Yes, sir.

138 Senator BOURNE.
The boat being upset?

139 Mr. COLLINS.
Yes, sir.

140 Senator BOURNE.
How many got on to the bottom of the boat with you?

141 Mr. COLLINS.
We lifted four people.

142 Senator BOURNE.
There were five on there, four beside yourself?

143 Mr. COLLINS.
Oh, sir, there was more.

144 Senator BOURNE.
There were probably 15 on there at the time you got on?

145 Mr. COLLINS.
Exactly, sir.

146 Senator BOURNE.
Then what did you do?

147 Mr. COLLINS.
We were drifting about there; we drifted, I am sure, a mile and a half from the *Titanic*, from where she sank, and there was some lifeboat that had a green light on it, and we thought it was a boat after the *Titanic* had sunk. We thought this green light was some boat, and we commenced to shout. All we saw was the green light. We were drifting about for two hours, and then we saw the lights of the *Carpathia*. We saw her topmast lights. Then came daylight, and we saw our own lifeboats, and we were very close to them. We were about from this window here to over there, almost opposite them; but in the dark we could not see them. When it became daylight, we spied them and shouted to them, and they came over to us, and there was two

of our lifeboats that lifted the whole lot that were on the collapsible boats. Then the *Carpathia* came into sight. We saw her masthead lights first and saw her starboard and port side lights. When she came near us, we saw her, and we did not know what boat it was. Then there was one of our own boats had got a sail, and we put up the sail. The fellow that was guiding this boat put up the sail. When he put up the sail, he told us he would come back and take us in tow. He did what he said; but we rowed for the *Carpathia*, and whenever we got in amongst a lot of wreckage we rowed on ahead. The wind rose, and the waves were coming up, and we were rowing for all we were worth. Then the *Carpathia* blew her horn, and we all seen the *Carpathia*. She stopped in the one place. We were at this time within a mile of her, and she did not make any sign of coming over near to us. She stopped in the one place, and, I think, lowered two or three of her own boats, and her own boats were kept in the water when one of our boats, the sailboat, went up alongside of her.

148 Senator BOURNE.

Why did the *Carpathia* lower any of her boats as long as none of your boats were in distress?

149 Mr. COLLINS.

To take up some of the bodies that had been washed up by the side of her.

150 Senator BOURNE.

How near was she to the place where the *Titanic* sank?

151 Mr. COLLINS.

I could not say; it was dark when the *Titanic* sank.

152 Senator BOURNE.

I understand; but it was light when you got on the *Carpathia*?

153 Mr. COLLINS.

Yes. I could not say.

154 Senator BOURNE.

Did the men on the bottom of the collapsible boat refuse to let others get on from the water?

155 Mr. COLLINS.

Only one, sir. If a gentleman had got on we would all have been turned over. We were all on the boat. One was running from one side to the other to keep her steady. If this man had caught hold of her he would have tumbled the whole lot of us off.

156 Senator BOURNE.

Who prevented him?

157 Mr. COLLINS.

We were all telling him not to get on. He said, "That is all right, boys, keep cool," he said; "God bless you," and he bid us good-by and he swam along for about two minutes and we seen him, but did not see him moving off; we saw his head, but we did not see him moving his hands. Then we were washed out of his road.

158 Senator BOURNE.

There was only this one instance, then, when one tried to get on?

159 Mr. COLLINS.

There were others that tried to get on, but we would not let them on. A big foreigner came up; I think he was a Dutchman. He came up to the stern and he hung on to me all the time.

160 Senator BOURNE.

Was he saved?

161 Mr. COLLINS.

He was, sir.

162 Senator BOURNE.

Then all those who wanted to get on and tried to get on, got on, with the exception of only one?

163 Mr. COLLINS.

Only one, sir.

164 Senator BOURNE.

That was when you had all on the boat that she could support?

165 Mr. COLLINS.

Yes, sir.

166 Senator BOURNE.
He was not pushed off by anyone, but those on the boat asked him not to try to get on?

167 Mr. COLLINS.
Yes, sir.

168 Senator BOURNE.
And he [acquiesced](#)?

169 Mr. COLLINS.
Yes, sir.

170 Senator BOURNE.
You do not know whether he was saved or not?

171 Mr. COLLINS.
No, sir; I do not think he was.

172 Senator BOURNE.
You say this was your first cruise?

173 Mr. COLLINS.
It was.

174 Senator BOURNE.
On any ship?

175 Mr. COLLINS.
On any ship.

176 Senator BOURNE.
How do you know you had a numbered boat?

177 Mr. COLLINS.
By my companion, sir; by my companion on the saloon deck.

178 Senator BOURNE.
By your companion you mean whom?

179 Mr. COLLINS.
My mate.

180 Senator BOURNE.
And he had sailed a number of voyages, I suppose, and he was familiar?

181 Mr. COLLINS.
Yes; he was an old hand at it.

182 Senator BOURNE.
And he told you --

183 Mr. COLLINS.
My number was No. 16.

184 Senator BOURNE.
Did you know where No. 16 was located, or did he show you?

185 Mr. COLLINS.
He showed me, sir.

186 Senator BOURNE.
You two went together?

187 Mr. COLLINS.
The two of us went together, sir, until I was washed off the deck.

188 Senator BOURNE.
Was he saved?

189 Mr. COLLINS.

No, sir.

190 Senator BOURNE.
He was washed off at the same time you were?

191 Mr. COLLINS.
He was washed off at the same time.

192 Senator BOURNE.
Why did you wait until Sunday morning to find your boat number?

193 Mr. COLLINS.
Sir, the boat had struck, sir, before I heard tell of my number.

194 Senator BOURNE.
No one informed you that you were assigned to any boat at all until your mate told you, the night of the accident?

195 Mr. COLLINS.
Yes, sir; we were to muster on Sunday at 11 o'clock for the fire and boat drill, and it did not come off.

196 Senator BOURNE.
That is all. We are much obliged to you.

197 (Witness Excused.)