

## Stewardesses Interviewed

### *Western Daily Mercury*

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Shortly before the special train steamed out of the docks, two of the stewardesses who are returning to their homes – Mrs. Gold and Mrs. Martin granted a brief interview, in which they narrated their experiences. They were first-class stewardesses on the Titanic, and were both saved in No. 11 boat. They had been old “shipmates,” having sailed together in the Olympic and Adriatic whilst earlier in their careers they were both on the Cedric, of the same line.

When the alarm, or the first idea of alarm, came to us,” said one, “we were sleeping. We received the notification with much amusement, and quite ignored what we thought was a joke. We were advised to get up and put our lifebelts on, but we did not stir. It was only when Mr. Andrews, one of the principals of Messers Harland and Wolff, the builders of the ship, came to us and told us to hurry up on deck that we began to realise the urgency of the situation.”

On deck, they continued, the bandsmen were playing “rag-time” music as the crew were getting out the boats, and it was a noteworthy fact that so interested and engrossed in their duty were these gallant musicians, that they would not stop playing to put on the life-belts which were brought to them. The ladies put on their own belts, yet were laughing and joking all the time, considering they were obeying orders which were part of drill. When ordered to the boats, though, they began to realise otherwise.

### **GERMANS HIDE IN A BOAT**

In No. 11 boat were seventy-five people, sixty-two being women. After pulling away from the side of the Titanic it was found two German males had concealed themselves in the boat before she was lowered. They were found under the seats, and one of them refused to come out, wrapping Mrs. Gold’s skirts around him for warmth. One of the crew prodded him several times with an oar yet failed to induce him to budge an inch. His compatriot did take his share of work at the oars, but the skulking fellow was permanently idle – except when he was once heard counting out his money!

The first boat to leave the ship was full of firemen, but that was because few ladies were willing to go, and it was imperative to fill the boats. The other members of the crew saved were those required to man the boats and those who saved themselves at the last moment by jumping overboard to chance being able to float until picked up. Many more could have been saved if the imminence of the danger had been realised at the time of the first alarm.

Why so many ladies hung back at first,” said one of the stewardesses, “was because the experience presenting itself was an awesome one, the mere act of getting into the boats being a difficult one, and the long lowering to the water presenting terrifying prospects.”

She confirmed the statement that it was a brilliant, star-lit night, and Mrs. Martin said she was almost the only woman insufficiently robed. At first she was little inconvenienced, but when the breeze sprang up they had the greatest difficulty in keeping up the circulation in the icy cold.

### **“ONLY STEWARDESSES”**

Mr. Bruce Ismay helped all he could to get the women into the boats. He implored one group of stewardesses to take their place with the others. The reply was: ‘But we are only stewardesses, sir!’ when he said: ‘you are women; please get in at once,’ and he insisted on their doing so.

We saw him later on when he was sitting on the gunwale of one of the last boats to leave. He had nothing on but his pyjamas and an overcoat and was blue with the cold.”

Mrs. Gold said they did not sight the Carpathia until just before the sun was rising. One of the sailors cause the only laugh that was heard in the boat when, as a bird rose from the water, he facetiously said: “I like a bird that sings in the morning.”

### **BEHAVIOUR OF THE CHILDREN**

We did not talk very much,” she added, “and almost the only sounds we had to attract our attention were the cries of the babies in the boat. This was, of course, after we had heard the last of the despairing shrieks of those who went down in the liner and those who were left swimming in the water when she disappeared.”

Mrs. Gold said the behaviour of the older children in the lifeboat was splendid, and they were a great consolation to the women. Other people, she continued, were Mrs. A. Ryerson, of Philadelphia, and her two daughters. Mr. Ryerson was a victim and went down with the ship. They had been coming over from Europe in consequence of a cablegram received announcing that one of the sons of Mr. Ryerson had been killed in a motor accident.

### **PORTUGUESE BRIDE’S GRIEF**

Another of the women passengers in this lifeboat was a Portuguese bride on her honeymoon, whose husband was lost. A pathetic scene was witnessed in the early morning when the Carpathia appeared in sight. The bride was full of joy in the belief that it was still the Titanic, and that her husband, consequently, was safe. When she was disillusioned her grief was something terrible to witness. She broke down and cried piteously, being quite inconsolable.

The steerage matron, Mrs. Wallis,” continued one of the stewardesses, “refused to leave her room when summoned to do so. She disregarded all warnings, and said ‘I am not going on deck. I am quite safe here.’”

Another person who refused to leave her bedroom was the second cabin stewardess, Mrs. Snape, a young widow, of Southampton, twenty-one years of age. She leaves a little girl. She was seen busy tying on lifebelts on her passengers, and as she did so she wished them all "Good-bye." She refused suggestions that she should hurry on deck herself, telling some of the passengers and the stewardesses that she did not expect to see them again.

With regard to the treatment of survivors on the Carpathia, it was mentioned that the stewardesses had to sleep on deck as there was no other accommodation for them, but some of the passengers of the Carpathia came out of their own rooms to enable the Titanic passengers to have the use of their bedrooms.

The special, which carried all the remaining survivors, was booked through to Southampton, and steamed out not many minutes after four o'clock. There were present to see them off Mr. James Nicholas, G.W. Docks superintendent, the Board of Trade officials, and Mr. Frank Phillips, local agent of the White Star Line.

Courtesy of Inger Sheil

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