

Miss Anna Sofia Turja



Miss Anna Sofia Turja, 18, was born on 20 June 1893 and grew up in Oulainen, Oulu, Finland, the daughter of Heikki Turja and Sanna Hakala. Between this and another marriage Heikki had 21 children in total.

Anna was tempted to America by promise of a job with John Lundi the husband of her half-sister Maria in Ashtabula, OH. A brother, Matt Turja, lived in Conneaut, Ohio. Anna mailed a letter to her sister on 3 April 1912 from Hangö (also spelt Hanko) - a port and the Southernmost town in Finland - stating that she and about 100 other Finns were about to sail from there to make connections with the *Titanic* (Mrs Lundi received the letter on April 18th).

Anna boarded the *Titanic* in Southampton and travelled in third class. She shared a room with Maria Panula, her children and neighbour Sanni Riihivuori¹.

The women were all in the room when the *Titanic* struck the iceberg. Anna, who was woken by the collision, described it as like a shudder. Anna thought that there was something wrong with the engines. She got up and slowly dressed herself. The other women did the same thing. The brother of one of the women came to their cabin and told them that something was wrong and that they should wear warm clothing and put on their life jackets: 'Get up or soon you will be at the bottom of the ocean.'

Anna was not scared, but others were and she said some of them fainted. No one hurried to get dressed or go up on deck. She returned to the cabin and saw Maria Panula dressing her sleepy and crying children in a hopeless and panicky state: 'We will never get away from here alive', 'Do we all have to die by water?'

Maria had lost a teenage son to drowning back in Finland.

As they made their way towards the deck a seaman tried to bar their way but Anna and her party refused to obey. He didn't stop to argue with them but the doors were closed and chained behind them to prevent others from coming up. 'We were not told what had happened, and had to do our own thinking.'

It was, she said, pure chance that they emerged on the boat deck. They could hear the band playing although Anna was unable to identify any of the tunes. The language barrier - she spoke no English - made the situation more difficult for her. She recalled that generally the

Finns did not panic and that many had gathered in "*the music room*" [sic] on the deck to listen to music. As late as half past twelve in the night Anna had been listening to music.

Anna was rescued, probably in lifeboat 15

As they pulled away from the ship Anna heard loud explosions and saw the lights, which had until then been burning brightly, go out. The lifeboat was close to the *Titanic* when it sank. The moaning and calling for help were awful, she later described the cries in the water: "finally it was almost like an hymn, you could hear" which continued for what she thought was two or three hours. She was told they couldn't go back to rescue swimmers because the boat was full. In the boat, men and women burned hats and other items so that the other lifeboats would see them and keep close together.

On the *Carpathia*, she talked with a Finnish man who claimed to have been in the water for six hours. He claimed that there had been some shooting as the *Titanic* went down and that he had just escaped being shot for trying to get into a lifeboat that was lowering with plenty of room left in it.

Anna was taken from the *Carpathia* to St Vincent's Hospital, Anna and the other survivors, were spared the ordeal of most immigrants at Ellis Island. She wanted to go and see if anyone else she knew had been rescued, three of her roommates apparently perished, but the hospital personnel made her stay in her room, although she noted they were very kind to her.

Anna had lost everything she had except her clothes. The White Star Line paid for her train ticket to Ashtabula (because she spoke no English she had to be, literally, tagged) and for her hospital bill. Anna arrived in Ashtabula at 5:23 p.m. on the "*Nickel Plate*" train. She was greeted by her brother Matti Turja and taken to her sister's home at 81 Oak Street. Neighbours crowded in to see Anna, 'They marveled at the wisp of a girl they met.' Anna was described by a newspaper reporter as 'fair, slender, and exceedingly bashful.'

Anna's name had been on the lost passengers list, and it wasn't until 5 or 6 weeks later that her family in Finland received a letter from her that they found out she was alive. She never returned to Finland.

Anna did not go to work for her brother-in-law. She soon met her future husband (Emil Lundi) and they had seven children: Marvin Lundi and Ruth Eckhardt (both died pre-1982); Paul, who still lives in Ashtabula, Ohio; Martin, who now lives in Naples, Florida; Milton Lundi who was born 9 February 1914 and died 2 May 1996 in Long Beach, California; Ellen Harju of Garden Grove, California and Ethel Rudolph of San Diego, California.

Anna never became fluent in English and on attending the movie *Titanic* in 1953 her son had to interpret for her. When the movie ended she turned to her son with tears in her eyes and said "If they were so close to take those pictures, why didn't someone help us?)"

Emil Lundi died in 1952 and Anna Turja died, in Long Beach, California, on 20 December 1982, aged 89. She was buried in Edgewater Cemetery, Ashtabula, Ohio.

Notes

1. The family understand that Anna only met the Panula family on deck the night of the sinking
2. The lack of formal immigration procedure arose again when her son tried to enter the army. The FBI investigated why there was no record of Anna's citizen registration from entering the country, but he finally got clearance.

References and Sources

Ashtabula Beacon (Ohio), 18 April 1912, 24 April 1912

Uusi Suometar (Finland), June 2, 1912

Claes-Göran Wetterholm (1988, 1996, 1999) *Titanic*. Prisma, Stockholm. ISBN 91 518 3644 0

Credits

Phillip Gowan, USA

John Rudolph, USA (Anna Turja's Grandson)

Leif Snellman, Finland

Homer Thiel, USA

Kalman Tanito, Finland

Juho Peltonen, Finland

Claes-Göran Wetterholm, Sweden

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<http://www.encyclopedia-titanica.org/titanic-survivor/anna-sofia-turja.html>

Titanic Passenger Summary

Name: Miss Anna Sofia Turja

Titanic Survivor

Born: Tuesday 20th June 1893

Age: 18 years 9 months and 25 days (Female)

Marital Status: Single.

Last Residence: in Oulainen Finland

3rd Class Passengers

First Embarked: Southampton on Wednesday 10th April 1912

Ticket No. 4138, £9 16s 10d

Destination: Ashtabula Ohio United States

Rescued (boat 15)

Disembarked Carpathia: New York City on Thursday 18th April 1912

Died: Monday 20th December 1982 aged 89 years

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