

## WOMEN REVEALED AS HEROINES BY WRECK

*New York Times*

Saturday 20 April 1912

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Mrs. Cornell Among Those Who Worked at the Oars

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WOMEN MANNED LIFEBOATS

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Forced to Oars by Lack of Proper Crew---Girl Who Gave Up Her Seat

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Magistrate Robert C. Cornell said yesterday that his wife, who with her two sisters, Mrs. Edward Appleton and Mrs. John Murray Brown, were among the survivors, had passed a comfortable night and was in as good condition as could be expected. The mental strain on Mrs. Cornell, the Magistrate said, during the trip in on the Carpathia, was frightful.

"Mrs. Cornell," said the Magistrate, "is of the same opinion as many others of the survivors, that many of the lifeboats left the side of the Titanic before they had nearly their capacity.

"With Mrs. Appleton, she was assigned to a place in the second boat. This boat when it was lowered contained twenty-three persons, and she says there was room for at least seventeen more without overcrowding. In fact, all of the boats my wife says, could have carried many more passengers with safety.

"There were three oars in the boat which my wife and her sister were put in, and no food, water, nor covering of any sort to keep out the cold. The crew of this boat consisted of one sailor and one petty officer.

"When the boat was lowered into the water an Italian was seen struggling in the water and he was picked up. The three men then each took an oar and did the best they could.

"Mrs. Cornell and her sister, who have a slight knowledge of rowing, took turns at the oars, as did the other women in the boat, and after drifting about the sea for about four hours were picked up by the Carpathia.

"Miss Edith Evans, a niece of Mrs. Cornell and her sisters, was traveling with them, and she and Mrs. Brown were assigned to places in one of the boats which left after the one in which Mrs. Cornell and Mrs. Appleton were placed. When this boat was about to be lowered it was found that it contained one more passenger than it could carry. Then the question came as to

who should leave.

Miss Evans, who was a splendid girl of 25, said to Mrs. Brown that she had children at home and should be the one to remain. Miss Evans left the boat, saying that she would take a chance of getting in a boat later. It seems that this brave girl never got that chance, but went down to her death with the other heroes and heroines on the Titanic."

Through her son-in-law, H. C. Hutton of Winnipeg, Manitoba, Mrs. Mark Fortune told how she and her three daughters, Lucille, Mabel and Alice, now stopping at the Hotel Belmont, were rescued from the Titanic and after being separated from her husband and son Charles, were placed in a boat with a Chinaman, an Italian stoker, and a man dressed in woman's clothing. Of all the occupants of this lifeboat, only one, the stoker, could row. Mrs. Fortune's daughters took turns at the oars.

Mrs. Fortune said that she was asleep in her cabin with her daughters when the collision occurred. She felt the great ship shiver violently. She heard her son knock on the door of her cabin and inform her that he was going up to find out what the trouble was. In a few minutes he returned with the information that the Titanic had struck an iceberg.

The women were not inclined to take things as calmly as the steward wanted them to, and hurriedly dressed. On their way up to the deck they were joined by Mr. Fortune and Charles Fortune. At the stairway to the boat deck, Fortune and his son were stopped by group of officers, who told them they would not be permitted to ascend further. The women were instructed to go up and get into the boats. At that time the women did not realize that the ship was in danger, and did not even say good-bye to each other as they parted at the foot of the stairs. One of the Fortune girls, indeed, called back to Charles, 'Look after father.' That was the only message passed between them.

Mrs. Fortune and her three daughters were placed in the tenth boat that was lowered away. They said it was "terribly overcrowded." Four members of the crew who had been assigned to their boat, were transferred to another as soon as the craft struck the water.

The women saw changes being made in the loading of several other boats, and finally saw that the collapsible craft were proving unseaworthy. Some began to leak as soon as they stood away from the side of the liner, Mrs. Fortune asserted, and their occupants had to be taken into other boats.

There was consternation among the passengers on their boat, most of whom were women, when it was ascertained that four of the crew would have to be taken off to man another boat. That left but one member of the crew to navigate. The stoker knew how to handle an oar, but the Chinaman was of little use. The man dressed in woman's clothing did his best to row, but did not seem familiar with an oar. This man wore a woman's bonnet and a veil, in addition to a skirt and blouse, which he had evidently picked up in a hurry as he ran through the ship.

One of the Fortune girls and another girl got out an oar, and helped to pull away from the wreck. The family agreed that they were in the boat within one hour after the liner struck. About

2:30 o'clock, as far as they can remember, they saw the stern of the Titanic hoist itself in the air. A crowd could be seen struggling. Shrieks came across the water to the crew of the Fortune boat. The band continued playing to the last, some with life preservers on their arms as they worked their instruments, and others with the belts around their waists. Not one made an attempt to save himself.

Mrs. Fortune was of the opinion that no discrimination was made between passengers of the first, second, or third class in making allotments for seats in the boats. That rule applied only to the women, however. When the ship struck several men in the steerage tried to rush the officers in charge of the lifeboats, Mrs. Fortune remembered. At first the officers were able to keep them off by slugging them, but the passengers grew more terrified. Then the officers made use of their revolvers, first to fire in the air, and then to aim at the bodies of the men.

[Note: This is one of four articles that appeared under this general headline. The other three relate to (1) Margaret Brown, (2) the Countess of Rothes, and (3) the Graham family, and can be found through those passengers' summary pages]

Courtesy of Mark Baber

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