

Mrs. Hirvonen Tells Story of Harrowing Scenes in Latest Great Ocean Disaster.

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SAW BIG STEAMER SINK

Hundreds Leaped Into Water When Gigantic Steamer Went Down ---Says Ismay Was In Same Boat

Shuddering as she recalled the awful scenes of Monday morning when the fated steamer Titanic sunk with over 1,700 persons off Cape Race, Mrs. Helka Hirvonen, a well educated Finnish woman of Monessen who was the last woman to be placed in the last life boat to leave the side of the big vessel, related her story to a newspaper man at her home at Monessen Monday evening. She told of the disaster from a new point of view. As she mentioned the name of a bride of three months, Mrs. Ellen Ajkarainen, who was parted from her husband when the waves enveloped the costly [unreadable word], Mrs. Hirvonen shed tears. Others from Monessen who were saved from drowning were the three months old baby of Mrs Hirvonen, her brother, Einer Lingweist, who was picked up after he had been in the water over six hours and Eick Jussila. All belong to well educated and comparatively well-to-do Finnish families. Mrs. Ajkarainen lost all when she lost her husband and was thrown destitute upon the mercy of friends. Mrs. Hirvonen is taking care of her temporarily The entire family of John Panula, the Coal Centre Finlander was lost, Mrs. Hirvonen says partly because of the woman's inability to comprehend orders shouted by officers to the third cabin passengers. In her own words, Mrs. Hirvonen told of the disaster. She said:

"Most of the third cabin passengers were awakened I guess about Mid-night on that last Sunday. Grabbing whatever clothing they could they rushed forth. They were met by officers of the ship who said: 'Get back to you places; there's nothing wrong,' All went back. However there was considerable excitement. Some time later - I don't know just how long - it seemed that the big steamer was tilting. Then there was another rush for the promenade deck. The officers couldn't drive us back then. After some time there came a shouted order for the women to come up on another deck. Some of us understood and started. There was great confusion and a babble of tongues. Many of the third cabin passengers could not understand English and didn't know what was being shouted to them. The rest of us were too badly frightened and excited I suppose to help them much, and as a result half of the women and children and a majority of the men did not get away from the steerage at all. One of the last persons I saw before leaving was Mrs. John Panula, I knew her well. She was so much confused that, poor woman, she hardly knew which way to turn. She was one of the last to come on deck.

I presume she was trying to collect her family. None of them escaped. All this time it seemed to me I could hear a piano playing up on another deck. Finally when I got to the deck I could see people being put in life boats. Two or three men when they found out they couldn't get off the doomed steamer until after the women robed themselves in women's clothing. I saw a man disappear from my side. A few seconds later he reappeared with a boy whom he had dressed in girl's clothing. The boy was saved. I was the last woman to be given a place in the last life boat. I was very carefully picked up because I had my baby with me. Mrs. Alkarainen was seized by the neck and foot, I believe, and tossed in a life boat. She fainted. Her husband bade her a fond goodbye. He intended to get into a lifeboat but heroically gave way to others.

I suppose we had been away from the Titanic 20 minutes when it went down. I saw it plainly. When it took

its final dive, people were leaping from all sides into the water. Some of them were saved. When our life boat left the Titanic's side it was only about half filled. It wasn't long however, until we had picked up enough to completely fill it. My brother was found on a raft after we had been six and a half hours at sea. I saw those millionaires on the deck, but I could not distinguish any of them, because they had simply been pointed out to me before and [I] was not familiar with their figures. They were helping place women in lifeboats. I was in the boat with the managing director of the steamship company, J. Bruce Ismay, although at the time I didn't know it. The iceberg looked to me to be sort of triangular shaped. It seemed the Titanic was in about the middle of it."

Mrs. Hirvonen and party were met in New York City by Peter Hirvonen, her husband, who is a prosperous tin mill worker. She said that a number had been sent to a hospital in New York and that she had been there a short time. The Hirvonens and all but one of the party with them saved are among the best known Finlanders in Monessen. The bride of three months, however was not of Monessen. She was coming from Finland for the first time, intending to locate in Monessen with her husband.

Courtesy of Mary Mason

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