

Thomas Whiteley : DESCRIBES LAST MEAL ON TITANIC

Washington Herald

Sunday 21 April 1912

"It Was the Gayest Night of Trip Among Diners," Says Assistant Steward

New York, N. Y., April 20---Propped up on pillows in a bed in St. Vincent's Hospital this afternoon, Thomas Whiteley, an assistant steward in the first saloon of the Titanic, told a reporter the first authentic story of the scene in the dining-room of the ship on the night of the disaster. He said:

"It was the gayest night of the trip among the diners. We had made great time, and the probability was the trip would be a record-breaker.

"Orders had been issued Sunday to make the dinner the finest [sic] ever served on a ship, regardless of expense, and the orders were carried out. I believe it was soon after 6:30 when the passengers strolled in. Mr. Ismay sat alone at a table a few feet away from that of Mr. and Mrs. Astor. He was in a corner. The Astor table was to the right and the captain's table was in the center. At Mr. Astor's table Dr. O'Loughlin, the ship's surgeon, was seated with his assistant.

"There were some other people there, but I don't know who they were. Soon after the dinner was served the fun commenced. Wine was served at the Astor table, and the conversation was very animated. The captain talked and joked with Mr. Astor, and occasionally Mr. Ismay spoke. The one topic of conversation was the new boat and the speed she was making. I did not see the captain drink anything; I do not think he ever indulged. As dinner progressed, the gayety increased, and I believe some bets were made as to the speed of the boat. At one time Dr. O'Loughlin stood up, and, raising a glass of champagne, cried, 'Let us drink to the mighty Titanic.'

"With cries of approval, everybody drank to the toast. I believe it was generally thought by all of those at the tables that the Titanic would reach New York late Tuesday or early Wednesday morning, and the captain and other officers were planning a big banquet after the landing in anticipation of the trip record breaker. The dinner broke up shortly before 9 o'clock, and the men retired to the smoking rooms, while some of the women went to their staterooms, and others strolled along the promenade. We cleared the dining-room about 10 o'clock and soon after I went to bed, to be awakened by the shock when we struck the iceberg.

"When I last saw the captain he was in the water trying to place a baby in one of the lifeboats crowded with people. Some women tried to drag him on the boat, but he pulled away from them and said: 'Save yourselves.'

"I saw him go under, and he never came up."

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