

STENDEL TELLS TRAGEDY STORY

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Home with Wife, Depicts Wreck Scenes and Perils of Survivors.

DEATH NEAR, VICTIMS JOKED

Days of suspense had been borne by the family and friends of Mr. and Mrs. C. E. Henry Stengel, of 1075 Broad street, and it was with no little apprehension that they waited on the pier for the big Cunarder to dock. Blankets were ready and the presence of ambulances and doctors heightened the anxiety. When the gangplank was lowered and the survivors started to mix with the crowd there were a few minutes of anxious waiting.

Then Mr. Stengel, his face aglow with joy, broke through the crowd. His arms were spread wide and he tried to embrace the entire party, calling: "Mother and I are safe and well and we thank God for it," as he hugged and kissed his relatives.

Mr. Stengel talked to his family with a deep sense of gratitude that he and Mrs. Stengel were among the luckiest of the ill-starred passengers and were restored to their loved ones after being well within the valley of the shadow of death.

Mr. Stengel told of the joking that was carried on as the boats were lowered by the unfortunates who were soon to meet their doom, but did not realize the danger. The sinking of the greatest ship that floated was described by Mr. Stengel and he told of the corpse-strewn main through which the Carpathia passed with her comparative handful of survivors.

When news of the time of the arrival of the Carpathia was received by Abraham Rothschild last night three automobiles set out from the Rothschild and Stengel homes in Broad street for the pier. They bore Mr. and Mrs. Rothschild, Raymond and Ivan Stengel, sons of the survivors; Mrs. C. E. Morris, Mrs. Stengel's mother; Mr. and Mrs. C. Alfred Stengel, Mr. and Mrs. Frank S. Budd, sister and brother-in-law of Mr. Stengel, and Lieutenant and Mrs. Paul J. Horton. Mrs. Horton was formerly Miss Inez Stengel, a daughter of the survivors.

Joy of Meeting

In all the assembled throng on the pier none had greater cause for joy than the little Newark party. Mr. Stengel showed it and after he greeted his family and personal friends he started a fruitless search for several survivors whom he had befriended aboard the Carpathia, and would not leave the pier until he was assured that they had been met by friends. [sic]

"Well, sons, I am glad that I am here with mother," he exclaimed, "we have been with dozens who had no husbands and fathers."

Newspaper men sought information and discussed the wreck with Mr. Stengel, who replied to questions until drawn away by his sons. Mrs. Stengel also told of experiences, how lifeboats capsized within view of those on her boat and how Chinese stokers concealed themselves in the lifeboats before they were

lowered and after their presence became known refused to row, saying they were tired.

"The loss of life in great part was due to overconfidence," said Mr. Stengel, "as every person on board thought the ship unsinkable. Then there were not enough life boats and those that were there were lowered in a sinister way and without any preparation. Some boats were lowered without plugs and they filled with water.

"Collapsible boats were there, but no one knew how to adjust them and they were next to useless. The men who lowered the boats did not seem to know how it should be done and if there had been a rough sea there would not have been a boat launched because no experience was shown in lowering them."

At his residence, 1075 Broad street, Mr. Stengel had better opportunity to tell of the accident. Surrounded by neighbors and friends who called to congratulate him and Mrs. Stengel on their safe homecoming, he narrated the events with some kind of eloquence.

"No Excuse for Accident"

"There was no excuse for the accident," Mr. Stengel declared. "The night was clear and fine; you could see for hundreds of yards and the officers of the ship knew that we were in the latitude where ice would be met, yet the ship proceeded at full speed. She struck a berg on the starboard side and must have been going almost twenty-two knots an hour. We were then surrounded by ice and the temperature had fallen Sunday afternoon. Some said it had gone down [40?] degrees.

"The shock was so slight that no one was jarred. It was not as great a shock as is produced by a ship tilting her propeller out of the water, and none thought of danger. One man picked up ice from the deck and said we must have struck a pretty high berg, while another man came from his cabin and said that the ice had forced its way through the port hole of his cabin. Engineers on the Carpathia said that the Titanic must have been ripped open along the side above the bulkheads, as she would have floated with her whole prow torn away.

"I know that the ship was going faster every day, as my stateroom was near the engines and I noticed that the pulsation was getting faster and that the bearings were working freer. Why she should have been making that speed where ice was known to exist is something that the company should answer, and Mr. Ismay might be able to explain.

"An officer of the Titanic on board the Carpathia told me that they had figured that they would be in the latitude for ice between 10 and 12 o'clock Sunday night. It was reported on board ship that she had made 546 knots between Saturday noon and Sunday noon and she did not lower her speed from that time until the shock came.

"The boiler showed that she was carrying 210 pounds of steam Sunday night shortly before the accident, and I believe that a prudent seaman would not have done this where ice was known to exist, and that a prudent seaman would not have gone at anything but a careful rate of speed under the circumstances.

"There was no apprehension on deck and I did not feel that there was the slightest danger until Captain Smith came from below and said that the passengers should be told to put on life preservers and go on the upper decks while the women and children should be placed in the lifeboats as a matter of precaution. His face told me there was grave danger and that he knew more than he was telling.

Slow to See Danger

"It was a half hour after the shock that the boats were lowered. In the earlier parts of the night before

danger was realized by any except the higher officers of the ship there was perfect order. There did not appear to be any one to command and all hands grabbed ropes and lowered the boats. We were again told that there was no danger and that the boats were being put to sea merely as a precaution and the boats were told to keep about 200 yards off the ship as they would be recalled.

"At first the boats were loaded among joking crowds and some women refused to go into them, feeling safer aboard the ship, which they said was unsinkable. Some boats that could hold fifty were lowered with only twenty-five and even though there was room for men none was allowed to go. A mate said that only women and children could go after oars were manned and he said he would shoot any man who tried to get in. He fired a revolver off in the air to show it was loaded and that he meant business.

"Men parted from their wives with little thought that the parting was forever. The first sign of excitement was noticed when it was found that the boats were not ready for accident. One member of the crew was thoughtful enough to grab some green fires and these proved of great value later. Others shouted, 'Get the plugs,' but two boats were lowered without plugs and many lost their lives in consequence.

"When they began to lower the boats I concluded there was grave danger and I went to where the collapsible boats were but there was no one to show how they were to be adjusted. Then I saw a small boat being filled. I called out, 'Can I get in?' The mate in charge said "Yes, jump on," and I tried to. The side of the boat was high and it rolled and I rolled and then dropped to the bottom in a heap. Everybody laughed and the mate said it was the funniest thing he ever saw.

Four explosions

"The shock came at 11:40 and the ship sank at 2:20. We checked the time of both. While we kept the boats off from the ship we could plainly see her. There were four distinct explosions which must have been caused by the boilers exploding as the ice cold water touched them. Then the big ship reared up, her stern high in the air, and there came a wail across the sea that will haunt me till I die. It was awful. Crowds jumped from the stern and then the great hulk shot down and our boats trembled with the waves.

"Then men on rafts drifted about us. Some were washed into the sea as they were chilled with the ice cold waters. In one boat there were thirty-five when she was lowered, but the plugs were not in and the people stood in water until they were exhausted. Every one who sat down was chilled and died, or was washed into the sea by the waves. Out of the thirty-five, only seventeen or eighteen were saved, and of those one man who stood in the water had his feet frozen.

"In our boat there was Sir Cosmo Duff Gordon, Lady Duff Gordon, Miss Francatelle, A. L. Solomon, of 346 Broadway; three stokers and two seamen. We tried to keep all the boats together, knowing that a number of boats could be seen more readily than one. Three boats were lashed together to make a larger object to distinguish them from the ice that was floating all over the surface. Through the night we had great difficulty in keeping together and rowing to keep away from icebergs.

First Hope Vain

"A false light on one of the pieces of ice attracted us and we thought it was a ship. For a long time we rowed toward it but it seemed to get farther and farther away. Then the man with the green lights guided us and we gathered in a small fleet. Some boats still rowed for the false light and went far away.

"Dawn found us helpless and fearing a rough sea. The water which had been so smooth when the ship struck that you could count the stars in it became rougher as day broke and our little boat rocked badly. We tried to count the boats and then I saw that there were but few of these in sight.

"Women and children were the only ones allowed in the boats at first but there were many men. It appeared that stokers had sneaked on deck when the ship struck and had hid themselves in the boats and were there when they were lowered.

"Some of them were Chinamen and Asyrians and they even refused to row. We pounded them with oars and tried to force them to work but they did nothing, saying that they were tired. Five boats had been stripped form the side when the ship struck and these lessened the number available. The shortage of lifeboats was sinful. Every man could have been saved if there had been enough boats and enough competent men to lower them."

Here Mr. Stengel was asked if any shots were fired.

"I heard five revolver shots," he answered, "one of these was fired by a mate when he warned the men not to try to get into the boats and threatened to shoot them if they did, and four were fired by an officer when the green light was lit as he thought it was a vessel and wanted to indicate where his boat was. Those were the only shots I heard.

Carpathia Comes

"We were adrift in the water about four hours, I think. I cannot tell how long it was. It was terribly cold and we worked hard at the oars. Two English girls rowed one boat all night. The first we knew of the Carpathia's approach was when we saw a couple of rockets. Lady Gordon was ill and leaned from the boat. Suddenly she started up, exclaiming that she had seen a vessel, and was certain of it. Then we saw other rockets, and we burned green lights until the ship came and picked us up.

"The Californian was less than a mile away and came up to see if there were any survivors clinging to wreckage after the sea had been scoured for more boats. But there was none, and a doctor on the Carpathia said that a man could not live more than twenty minutes in the cold water.

"In searching for possible survivors the Carpathia passed through a sea littered with wreckage and bodies of men kept afloat by life preservers. They had evidently all died of cold. We were glad when the Carpathia turned homeward out of that awful haunted sea, with its bodies and ice chunks and the memory of that awful wail as the great ship plunged into the ocean."

Ismay and Astor

Questioned about J. Bruce Ismay, Mr. Stengel said that he was told he got into one of the first boats. Colonel Astor, he said, acted as though he had no more sense of danger than if he were walking on a stone pavement. When he was last seen by Mr. Stengel he was walking on the rear deck, apparently unconcerned.

Again referring to Mr. Ismay, Mr. Stengel said:

"Mr. Ismay was not seen on the Carpathia. Besides Mr. Ismay there were aboard the ship her architect and assistant architect and the builders' engineer. My impression is that it was a trial trip and that the ship had to make an average of a certain number of knots an hour to maintain its contract speed and to make a name for the line. I cannot believe that proper precautions were taken.

"The crew and passengers of the Carpathia cannot be commended too much. Cabin passengers gave up their berths for the women and slept on chairs, as I did the first night. The women had the best there was and the stewards and crew looked after the men. I shared a bunk with one of the engineers.

"After we had been taken on board the Carpathia we sailed about looking for other boats, and my wife was in the second picked up after my own. There were many meetings of members of families separated when women were forced into the boats. One of these was when a boy and his mother met. The mother was in a boat and her husband and son clung to a raft. We saw the father give up the struggle and sink into the sea, but the boy held on and was taken into one of the boats."

Mr. Stengel estimates his personal loss at about \$900. [?; could be \$300] He had about \$100 on his person when he left the Titanic, while on board his check was accepted.

No Press Messages

"They would not allow a press message," he declared, "and I spent about \$60 [?] in getting messages to friends for survivors who were unfortunate to have lost everything they had. A New York newspaper man was on board and kept busy interviewing persons and we thought that he was utilizing the wireless. The captain, however, posted a notice that on his word of honor not more than twenty words of press matter had gone from the vessel, and that all private messages would be handled first.

"Press boats met the Carpathia at Ambrose Channel Light, but only the pilot was allowed to board the ship. Somehow a reporter, an old man about seventy, made his appearance on the decks and sought news. How he got on is a mystery to me, but he was there.

"Another man that might interest the newspapers was Dr. Frank H. Blackmarr, of Chicago. He had a camera with him in the lifeboat and took pictures of the boats drifting, of the ice and the sea where the ship went down. He also photographed the survivors on the Carpathia.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Stengel have borne their experiences well, and further than the awful memory of the great tragedy and the excitement occasioned by their being restored to their families they appeared to be well and strong. Both suffered from the cold and left the Titanic with inadequate clothing to stand the exposure of the night in open boats. When the shock came they were retiring and hurriedly dressed to see what had happened.

Reading from notes he had taken on board the Carpathia, Mr. Stengel said that the total number saved was: First-class passengers, 210; second-class, 115; third-class, 136, and of the crew, 199. This makes a total of 660.

Miss Elizabeth M. Burns, trained nurse, who resided in this city, is among the survivors. There was some doubt as to her safety at first, because her name was wirelessed to land on the rescued list as "Mrs. G. M. Burns." With Mr. and Mrs. F. O. Spedden and their son, Robert Douglas, of Tuxedo Park, N. Y., Miss Burns was one of the first to leave the Carpathia. She has been in the employ of the Speddens for six years and has traveled with them extensively.

Courtesy of Mark Baber

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