

Taft's Tribute to Butt

New York Times

Saturday 20 April 1912

WASHINGTON, April 19---President Taft was notified as soon as the Carpathia docked and the corrected list of survivors was made public that Major Butt was not on board. With all hope for the rescue of his aid abandoned, the President to-day issued a statement showing the high regard in which he held him and his belief that he died as a man should die in the face of such a disaster as that of the Titanic. The President said:

"Major Archie Butt was my military aid. He was like a member of my family, and I feel his loss as if he had been a younger brother. The chief trait of his character was loyalty to his ideals, his cloth, and his friends. His character was a simple one, in the sense that he was incapable of intrigue or insincerity.

"After I heard that part of the ship's company had gone down I gave up hope for the rescue of Major Butt, unless by accident. I knew that he would certainly remain on the ship's deck until every duty had been performed and every sacrifice made that properly fell on one charged, as he would feel himself charged, with responsibility for the rescue of others.

"He leaves the widest circle of friends, whose memory of him is sweet in every particular."

Whatever was the mission of Major Butt from the President to Rome---and all sorts of false and conflicting stories have been printed about it---the President is advised in a general way of its outcome by the letter he received yesterday from the Major dated at Rome and mailed just before he sailed.

What is in this letter is closely guarded. It is understood however, that in it the Major revealed the result of his mission and stated the substance of what was in the letters which he carried and which probably went down with him on the Titanic.

A belief held by some that Major Butt handed letters in his possession to some one who escaped, with a request to deliver them to the President, is considered improbable.

Gen. Clarence R. Edwards, Chief of the Bureau of Insular Affairs, a close personal friend of Maj. Butt, who frequently played golf in foursomes with Maj. Butt, President Taft and Vice President Sherman, said to-night:

"The best thing about Maj. Butt was the fact that he was always cheerful, loyal and discreet. He did not advance his opinions, but when asked for, he gave them. He had a jolly sense of humor all the time and could not be angered by being guyed or joked."

Courtesy of Mark Baber

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