

# Sea Tragedy Anniversary Recalls Ending Of An Era

BY CAROL KENNEDY  
LONDON (CP) — "They're breaking all records this time," said the people of Southampton that Wednesday morning in the spring of 1912. All eyes were drawn to the four huge funnels of the new White Star liner towering above the rooftops.

She was the largest, fastest and most glamorous ship in the world. At noon she would sail on her maiden voyage to New York.

Small boys whose parents took them down to the docks were to remember April 10, 1912, for the rest of their lives, and remember the stunner breakfast tables six days later when nothing would ever seem quite as safe or secure again.

The Titanic had cost £2,000,000 to build. Already legends were growing around her. Though only 1,064 tons bigger than her \$24-million sister the Olympic, she gave the impression of being twice as huge, twice as solid.

**COULD'NT SINK**  
She was 11 stories high and a sixth of a mile long. A reporter on the quay wrote: "It was like standing by the wall of St. Paul's Cathedral."

And she was unsinkable. Not only the travel brochures, but even such sober technical journals as the Shipbuilder said so. By moving an electric switch the captain could instantly close 15 bulkheads and divide the hull into a honeycomb of watertight compartments. The ship could float with as many as four of them flooded.

Pride in the "unsinkable ship" ran high, from ramrod, white-

bearded Capt. Edward J. Smith, commander of the White Star fleet, down to the deckhand who told a woman a passenger: "Lady, God Himself could not sink this ship."

Some travellers may have felt a twinge of uneasiness about all the hull-honors. There was a spate of last-minute cancellations and the first-class passenger list was less than half full.

But it was an impressive list, worth some \$250,000,000. There was New York millionaire John Jacob Astor and his wife returning from a European vacation; the British editor W. T. Stead; J. Bruce Ismay, chairman of the White Star Line, and Montreal magnate Charles M. Hoyt, president of the Grand Trunk Railroad.

**SUITE FOR \$350**  
Their accommodation afloat was more sumptuous than any London hotel.

The Georgian smoke-room was paneled in mahogany and inlaid with mother of pearl. There was a restaurant, run by Gatti's of London, lined ceiling to ceiling with rose-pink carpet in French figured walnut and hung with crystal chandeliers. A Turkish bath gleamed with mosaic, teak and antique bronzes. There was an open-air cafe Parisien wreathed in trailing ivy, a swimming pool — rare for the period — and two 2500 suites with their own private stretch of promenade deck.

But in all the new liner's costly equipment, two things had been overlooked. The look-out men had no binoculars. And under a set of antiquated board of trade rules, the 20 lifeboats

could carry only 1,178 people — a third of the liner's total capacity.

When the Titanic sailed for New York, she had 2,207 passengers and crew aboard.

She nearly didn't leave Southampton at all that April day. As she edged away from the quay the suction from her triple screws tore another steamer from its moorings and swung it wide yards of a collision.

**SIDE RIPPED OPEN**  
It was a sensational start to the most sensational maiden voyage of all that April day.

On the fifth night out, Sunday, April 14, the Titanic was racing at 22½ knots across a sea that looked like plate glass in the brilliant starlight.

Within three hours the temperature had dropped 11 degrees to freezing point. Look-out Frederick Fleet was on the alert for icebergs. But without binoculars he saw the black shape ahead just 15 seconds too late for the ship to swing aside.

At 11:40 p.m. the iceberg shaved along the starboard side with a sound like tearing calico and five of the 16 watertight compartments lay open to the sea.

Two hours and 40 minutes later the "unsinkable" Titanic went down, taking with her a cargo insured for £1,250,000 and 1,502 lives.

It was the worst sea disaster in history — and the one that could never have happened. What the papers called the "lifeboat scandal" was a bad enough, but when the full story came out it revealed a chain of almost unbelievable human er-

rors built on a blind faith in technology.

**ROCKETS IGNORED**  
The ice warnings that were tossed aside because the Marconi operator was too busy sending greeting cables; the distress rockets another ship saw but ignored; the way boats were put off half empty — all were partly due to the apparent inability of anyone to believe the Titanic could sink.

Efforts found it so hard to believe that the first news flashes got incredibly garbled. A shipping office in Montreal was the first to hear from one of its liners that the Titanic was hitting for help.

The first stories to hit New York and London papers reported the liner being towed a crippled wreck to Halifax with all her passengers rescued. In New York, crowds besieged the White Star offices on lower Broadway, but nobody there knew what was happening.

Twelve hours after the Titanic went down, special trains were still being chartered to meet her at Halifax.

**STUNNED WORLD**  
It took until April 18, when the 795 survivors reached New York on the Cunard liner Carpathia, for the full story to filter through to a stunned world.

Newspapers brought out one special edition after another as the details became known. The Illustrated London News and Daily Graphic issued black-edged editions in sympathy to the White Star Line. Its chairman had survived the wreck, but he was soon the victim of a public that seemed to think he should have gone down with his flagship. In-

stead returned the following year and eventually died in obscurity in Inman, a broken man.

In London, the much-heralded 1912 social season opened under a pall of national mourning. Society ladies cancelled balls and volunteered to help the Lord Mayor's fund for the bereaved.

At the memorial service held in St. Paul's April 19, the Titanic's designer, Alexander C. Carnegie, collapsed from shock.

**END OF AN ERA**  
Nobody could have foreseen how far the shock-waves of that April week would reach. Editorials of the time saw the sinking of the Titanic as a shattering lesson in humility, but the disaster was to echo down five decades as something more — the end of an snug and settled era in social history.

The curtain seemed to go down on a whole way of living that Atlantic night. Much of it was privileged, arrogant and riddled with prejudices that vanished with it. Never again on a sinking ship would a steward slam a door marked First Class Only in the face of steeved passengers rushing to the boat deck.

The night was hailed as a triumph for the code of "women and children first" — yet when

the final list of lost and saved went up the death rate was higher for Third-Class children than First-Class men.

But the curtain went down with a theatrical flourish that caught the world's imagination. Who could forget the picture of American mining millionaire Ben Guggenheim and his valet standing on deck in full evening dress declaring: "We have dressed in our best and are prepared to go down like gentlemen." They did.

**SENT FIRST 50 S**  
Or the scene in the Marconi room where young Jack Phillips stayed tapping at his set until the sea swirled in and all the lights went out. He was the first to send the new distress call that had just been introduced. "Try 50 S," jolied his colleague Harold Bride. "It may be your last chance to send it."

The survivors who drifted for four hours in the icy sea had a vivid tale to tell reporters in New York. The scene has haunted writers and movie-makers ever since.

The boats bobbing around the brightly lit liner, sagging at the bows but still so solid-looking that J. J. Astor called out confidently from the rails: "We are

safer here than in that little boat."

The band bravely churning out ragtime until the dramatic moment when they broke into a hymn just before the end, thought by most who heard it to have been Nearer My God to Thee.

And then the unearthly roar of boilers exploding and furniture crashing loose as the huge ship stood on end against the stars and slowly disappeared from view.

Inevitably, the eye-witness accounts left tantalizing gaps.

None of the survivors knew what happened to Capt. Smith or the first officer, who was rumored to have shot himself on the bridge. Only 206 bodies were brought to Halifax by the cableship Mackay Bennett, including those of Astor and C. M. Hoyt.

The story of the man who got off dressed as a woman was planned in a fairly on several prominent passengers. In fact, says Walter Lord in his book *A Night to Remember*, it was a frightened Irish lad from the (Continued on page 9)

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