

Ethan Hart, Survivor

By Andrea Louise Watson

(Adapted from Eva Hart's own words)

Eva sits in an armchair recounting her story for a documentary.

EVA

We were due to sail to Canada to start a new life on the Philadelphia and my Mother did not want to go, she had an uneasy feeling about it all. A rather strong premonition if you will. Due to strikes of this and that, we were changed to a new boat called The Titanic. Well, my father was delighted, he thought it was fantastic. My Mother on the other hand, was not happy, her premonition got stronger. She never had premonitions before. She was a very grounded lady with both feet firmly on the ground. She begged my Father for three days not to go. The builders that made Titanic declared the ship "Unsinkable" and my Mother's expression to this was "to say such a thing is like flying in the face of God" Of course my Father poo pood my Mother's feelings and we went. On the morning of the departure, as we walked on the gangway she took my Father's arm and said "Look, I will ask you one last time, please let's not go on this ship" and my father said "No, we are going and that is that"

He was in awe of such a big and famous ship. I was only seven, so it didn't mean anything to me. I had never been on a ship before, so didn't know what to get so excited about. Once we got to our cabin, my Mother declared that she would not be sleeping at night; she had a strong sense that this was the right thing to do. She would stay up all night and be fully dressed and sleep during the day. And this is what she did. And this is why I am still alive

On the Sunday night my Mother was reading. My Father had gone to bed early, well early for him, and I of course was asleep. At ten minutes to twelve, she felt a slight bump. She said it was like a train entering a station, a slight jerk and she knew instinctively that this is what she was waiting for. She woke up my Father, who was not happy and woke me up too. To please her, he went up above to see what was going on, and mother dressed me. I was very sleepy and I did not want to be dressed. When he came back he told her to put on two warm coats and he would do the same. He wrapped me in a blanket as if I was a little baby and he carried me to the top deck. They never spoke about what he had seen or heard and I asked my Mother years later why she didn't ask, she said "she didn't need to know, she just knew it was IT."

He took us to the top deck and placed us near the lifeboats and told us not to move, no matter what we were told. People were still milling around and enjoying themselves. We were told we had hit an iceberg and that we would be put in lifeboats as a precaution and that we would be back by breakfast. It was bitterly cold. My Father put us into the boat and he told me I had to be a good boy and look after my Mummy. I remember his face as I looked up at him as the lifeboat was lowered into the darkness. That was the last time I saw my Father.

There was no panic as no-one thought the ship would sink. We rowed away quite quickly and quite far away. When it became clear that the ship was sinking we could hear people running around and panicking. You can imagine people came up from their cabins and the lifeboats had gone and they ran to the other side and they had gone. It was panic galore and we could hear them from the ocean. Gosh, such panic. And that's when the screams started.

The ship looked quite beautiful in the darkness all lit up. And we could see another ship clearly on the horizon, which we now know was The California. They said it was 19 miles away, but it was much closer as I could see it, and it sailed past us, ignoring us.

We could hear the band playing "nearer my god to thee" and for many years I would have to walk out of church if I heard it. We rowed away even further and very quickly so not to get sucked under when the ship came down. I didn't close my eyes, not once. I watched the ship sink.

The most awful sound you would ever hear is the sound of people drowning, the screams, it was absolutely ghastly. My mother used to say 'but can you remember the silence that followed it' and she was quite right. The silence was worse. Now the ship had gone, the lights had gone, and the silence, in that darkness. And I was only seven knowing my Father was on that ship.

All these years later, the interest in her is profound as no-one should have lost their lives. It was a calm night, we were there for two hours and if there had been lifeboats we would have all survived. And one life is worth more than one ship surely?