

# **EASTLAND DISASTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

04 January 2000

Dear Friends,

Happy New Year/Millennium! As President of the Eastland Disaster Historical Society, it is an incredible personal honor for me to share with you a recap of our 1999 business results. This message takes a look at the year 1999, with a sneak preview at 2000.

While this recap is somewhat lengthy (this is a good thing), I do ask that you take a few moments to print this and read through it. Only then will you be able to truly understand the significant role that our small but effective not-for-profit society played during 1999 in advancing the awareness of the Eastland Disaster.

Thank you for any help you gave the Eastland Disaster Historical Society during 1999. And in looking ahead we welcome you - we have much to do!

Regards,

Ted Wachholz  
President and Director

# EASTLAND DISASTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## 1999 A Year Of Success

We investigated and ultimately substantiated seven additional living survivors of the Eastland Disaster. We started the year with but one known living survivor.

We made arrangements for interviews with four of the eight living survivors, having the four professionally videotaped by ABC/Channel 7. One survivor was flown in from Florida, and we traveled to Central Michigan for another.

The Eastland Disaster was the opening segment for ABC's Ron Magers' *Chicago Century* show, a 30-minute program taking a look back at Chicago during the twentieth century. Three of the living survivors were featured on this program, with the Eastland Disaster accounting for 20% of the program.

We acted as a resource and assisted several students who chose to enter Eastland Disaster projects into the Chicago Metro History Fair. Two students (a sixth grader and a high school senior) advanced to the Illinois State Finals. One of these students won a blue ribbon (and would have advanced to the National History Fair had her project met the qualifications of the "Science and Technology" theme).

Three students contributed copies of their Eastland Disaster school projects to our "Educational Projects" section on the web. These projects are subsequently available to other students as reference material.

We added/substantiated 106 passengers to our Eastland Disaster Passenger List. Our one-of-a-kind Eastland Disaster Passenger List, the only one known to exist, now has 1,722 passengers (substantiated plus unsubstantiated).

We added/substantiated 62 people to our list of people who assisted during the rescue and recovery efforts.

We opened 175 new file folders for families who have one or more ancestors or relatives with a connection to the Eastland Disaster (survivor, victim, rescuer, bystander, crew).

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We added the following new sections to our Internet web site:

- Those Who Narrowly Missed Being Passengers
- Those Who Helped During the Rescue and the Relief
- City of Chicago Department of Health Rescue and Relief Efforts
- A Titanic Comparison
- Eastland Disaster Historical Society Postcard Collection
- Michigan Maritime Museum Postcard Collection
- Location of the Disaster
- Terminology

We added a "sneak preview" feature by which to view the 50+ postcards on our web site. This feature allows our guests a sneak preview of each postcard before selecting it for viewing, saving them the time to download each postcard.

We sent over 800 e-mail messages as part of our daily correspondence with guests, members, families, and students. This is an average of over 65 e-mail messages per month originated from our offices.

The average number of visitors who signed the guest book at our web site tripled. An average of ten people per month signed our guest book during the first six months of the year, tripling to an average of thirty people per month during the last six months of the year.

We prepared, edited, and issued quarterly newsletters.

We prepared, edited, and issued two special edition newsletters.

We reached an agreement with the *Michigan Maritime Museum* (located in South Haven, Michigan) to display on our web site their Eastland and Eastland Disaster postcard collection from their *Marialyce Canonie Research Center*. The several trips we made to South Haven now allow our members the opportunity to see this wonderful collection online and in their homes, foregoing the need to travel to Central Michigan.

We established and are continuing to build working relationships with the *Chicago Metro History Education Center*, the *Chicago Fire Department* historian, *Friends of the Chicago River*, the *Michigan Maritime Museum*, the *Historical Society of Cicero*, and the *Berwyn Historical Society*.

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We accepted as donations:

- A coroner's star (courtesy of the Klemak family)
- An original Western Electric News memorial newsletter (courtesy of the Schroeder family)
- A set of four original photographs of the Eastland Disaster taken by an amateur photographer (courtesy of the Tamm family)
- Several Western Electric Athletic Association medals and a trophy, plus original photographs (courtesy of the Watson family)
- A memorial card from 1940 in memoriam to Martin Pisano, a victim of the Eastland Disaster (courtesy of the Pisano family)
- An original United States Inspectors' License with an original signature of Ira B. Mansfield, Inspector of Hulls (courtesy of the Stein family)

We added to our Eastland Disaster *Collection of Artifacts*:

- *The Boat That Never Left Town*, original sheet music written in 1915 about the Eastland Disaster
- Twenty-one original postcards of the Eastland and the Eastland Disaster

We collaborated with the *Museum of Science and Industry* as the exclusive consultant in designing the Eastland Disaster portion of this coming summer's blockbuster exhibit, **TITANIC: The Exhibition**. Over one-half million visitors are projected to tour this exhibit during its six-month showcase in 2000. Photos and personal artifacts from twenty different families have been included in this exhibit, demonstrating once again our perspective that the Eastland Disaster is not a story about a ship, but that it is a story about people, their families, and their lives.

We gave numerous 60-minute presentations to a variety of Chicago-area groups such as the Seniors Club at *St. Peter Lutheran Church*, the *Arlington Heights Lions Club*, the *Buccaneers Dive Club*, the *Underwater Archaeological Society of Chicago*, and the *Berwyn Public Library*.

We set up and displayed Eastland Disaster artifacts and information in glass-enclosed cases at several Chicago-area public libraries including the *Arlington Heights Memorial Library* and the *Berwyn Public Library*.

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## 1999 A Year Of Success

We effectively gained support of the television and radio stations to draw attention to the (fading) history of the Eastland Disaster. As a result, the Eastland Disaster was featured in July, November, and December on:

- *CBS/TV*
- *NBC/TV*
- *ABC/TV*
- *WGN/TV*
- *Fox/TV*
- *CLTV*
- *WBBM/Radio*
- *WMAQ/Radio*
- *WGN/Radio*
- *WAIT/Radio*
- *WBEZ/Radio*
- as well as other television and radio stations in Chicago and around the country of which we are not aware.

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- *New York Times,*
- *Chicago Tribune,*
- *Chicago Sun-Times,*
- *Daily Herald,*
- *Arlington Heights POST,*
- *Rolling Meadows Review,*
- *Elm Leaves,*
- *Northlake Herald-Journal,*
- *Daily Commercial (Leesburg, Florida),*
- *Telegraph Herald Tribune (Dubuque, Iowa),*
- *Oswego-Montgomery Sun,*
- *Aurora Beacon News,*
- *Peoria Journal,*
- *Inside,*
- and many more newspapers in Chicago and around the country of which we are not aware.

We partnered with Mr. Sam Frank to perform an archaeological/historical dive in the Chicago River at the site of the Eastland Disaster. Several families whose ancestors dove in the rescue and recovery efforts of the Eastland Disaster were invited as our VIP guests.

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## 2000 A Sneak Preview

Beginning this month, our Eastland Disaster *Collection of Artifacts* will be on display at libraries in the Chicago-area throughout the year.

Our 60-minute presentation on the Eastland Disaster will be given at various public locations in the Chicago-area throughout the year.

"**TITANIC: *The Exhibition***" opens February 18 and runs through September 4 at the *Museum of Science and Industry*. The *Chicago Connections* portion of this exhibit features a room dedicated to the Eastland Disaster. See our home page (<http://www.eastlanddisaster.org>) for more details.

We continue to make plans for a dinner/reception to be held the evening of Saturday, July 22, at the *Museum of Science and Industry*. This will be by invitation only to those families whose ancestors have a connection to the Eastland Disaster.