

The Call to Remember

Newsletter - Vol. II No. 1

EASTLAND DISASTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

1st Quarter 2000

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Last fall we kicked off a contest to name our quarterly newsletter. Our thanks to those who submitted such neat and creative suggestions. Our newsletter's new name, "The Call to Remember," was chosen because it is so meaningful in many ways. First, because we personally feel that God has opened many doors for us, calling us to ensure that others remember the Eastland Disaster. Second, it is our wish and our call to each of you (and many others) to do what you can to ensure that the Eastland Disaster is remembered for generations to come. Third, "The Call to Remember" presents an interesting metaphor to Western Electric's primary and most well-known business - the telephone. Our congratulations to our con-test winner, who asked to remain nameless.

HELP SPREAD THE WORD

Did you know that a presentation on the Eastland Disaster can be hosted at your office, school, or church? This is a great way for you to personally have a hand in sharing the story of the Eastland Disaster with others. This dynamic, multi-media, 30-minute presentation will educate your group regarding the facts of the Eastland Disaster. Several personal accounts are also shared. Go to www.eastlanddisaster.org/presentations.htm to see our previous presentations as well as to see our schedule of upcoming presentations. Interested in scheduling a presentation for your group? Just contact us!

IN MEMORIAM



Grace (Rabe) Nilsen, 92, passed away on January 6. Grace was eight years old aboard the Eastland with her family. She appeared with her brother Ken in a recent videotaped interview with Chicago's Ron Magers.



Josephine (Polivka) Engenhardt, 103, passed away on February 10, a few days before her 104th birthday. Her story as a teen aboard the Eastland is available at www.eastlanddisaster.org/papagepolivka.htm.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

The response to our membership drive was incredible! Thank you! If you would like to support our Society, go to www.eastlanddisaster.org/membership.htm.

TITANIC: *THE EXHIBITION*

As was announced to this mailing list before the press release to the general public, the Titanic exhibit opened at the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago on Feb 18. Thousands are visiting this 25,000 sq. ft. showcase daily. Most importantly, these same thousands are learning about the Eastland Disaster as they tour the 1,000 sq. ft. Eastland Disaster section of the exhibit. Humbly, we were the exclusive partner to the Museum in designing this portion of the exhibit. Mike Conklin, Chicago Tribune, reviewed **TITANIC: The Exhibition** and said this: **"What turns out to be the show's most informative part has nothing to do with the Titanic. It is the section devoted to the SS Eastland...making it - for some - the highlight of the entire exhibit."**

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In previous newsletters we shared with you our intent to host a dinner/reception on Saturday evening July 22, at the Museum of Science and Industry. If you are a descendant or relative of someone who has a connection to the Eastland Disaster (a survivor, victim, or someone who assisted with the rescue and relief), this will be a uniquely special evening you will not want to miss. Reserve the date on your calendar now, and look for more details to follow soon. Seating will be limited - first come, first served.

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL DIVE

Before dawn on a mid-December Sunday morning, a team of volunteer divers and coordinators gathered along the South bank of the Chicago River. And likely for the first time, an [archaeological dive](#) was made at the site of the Eastland Disaster. Approximately 15 divers descended one by one into the 38 degree river water. Their bright, optic-colored diving suits disappeared immediately once below the surface of the river water. Several hours later, old bottles, shoes, license plates and other tidbits were brought up by the divers. However, none of these items could be traced back to the Eastland Disaster. The dive was spawned from a suggestion by Sam Frank to the EDHS. Sam, an amateur diving enthusiast and member of the Underwater Archaeological Society of Chicago, had attended an Eastland Disaster presentation given at the Shedd Aquarium in late September, 1999. And in ten weeks, Sam had obtained approvals from the U.S. Coast Guard, the Chicago Marine Police, the IL Historical Preservation Agency, and the Department of Natural Resources. While slightly disappointed at finding no artifacts, we nonetheless accomplished our primary objective of drawing attention to the Eastland Disaster. Chicago TV broadcast live coverage of the dive, it was spotlighted on the local evening news, and numerous radio stations and newspapers carried the story. When was the last time that the Eastland Disaster made local and suburban news - in December, no less?

TRIVIA PURSUIT

True or false? A World War I German submarine was fired upon and sunk in Lake Michigan? The answer can be found at www.eastlanddisaster.org/uc97.htm.

OUR GUESTS SAY

"I cannot begin to thank you for all you have done. You have brought together a side of my family that I never knew existed! THANK YOU THANK YOU!!" D. K., Bolingbrook, IL

"Your information filled a void in the memory of my grandfather." S. K., Martinsville, NJ

"I found your Eastland information to be fascinating." G. K., Covina, CA

"I am finding so much on the Eastland now, thanks to this page." J. R., Hobart, IN

"This was the first site I came to and it is so professional and extremely well done not to mention very informational." J. T., Ottawa, IL

"APPLAUSE! Excellent. Please keep the pages coming. Like to visit here often. Thanks for your work on this project." P. C., Chicago, IL.

"It is wonderful to find a site, that has so much info and history about the disaster. Thanks for the good work, and something to put in the memory book for my grandkids." S. S., Tinley Park, IL.

See more unsolicited guest testimonials in the **new** section of our web site at www.eastlanddisaster.org/testimonials.htm.

EASTLAND CORNER

Clara and Emma Reisner boarded the Eastland and found chairs at the back of the boat, near the railing. When the ship tipped so easily and smoothly, Clara did not get excited or panic. "I didn't think it was so serious. I didn't think we or anyone else would drown. I was going to grab for my purse, but Emma said, 'Forget the purse. Can't you see the boat is going down?'"

The two sisters were not on the side of the boat that went into the water, and when the boat started to tip, Emma told Clara to grab onto the railing. The chairs that they had been sitting on rolled away and slid off the boat. They held onto the railing, and the water was up to their knees.

Clara said she could see and hear people in the water, bobbing and screaming. Workmen began throwing boxes and pieces of wood into the water to help the people float, but the objects hit several people on the head.

Fire boats were there within minutes, and the two sisters were two of the first to be rescued. Clara told the rescuers to grab Emma first because she had just had an appendectomy three weeks before, and was, understandably, getting weak.

Once safely ashore, they began looking for a phone to call home and tell everyone they were safe, but they couldn't get to one because of the crowd, so they boarded a streetcar and were home by noon.