

The Call to Remember

Newsletter - Vol. VI, No. 5

EASTLAND DISASTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Sep/Oct 2004

IN MEMORIAM

Libby Klucina Hruby, age 99, passed away on Saturday, Nov. 6, 2004. As a young girl of nearly 10, Libby was with her sister and brother-in-law aboard the *Eastland*. When the ship capsized, Libby crawled through the starboard railing with a helping hand from her sister.



(Libby Hruby at the 89th anniversary commemoration and historical marker rededication on July 24, 2003.)

(Editor's note: While CBS-2 TV and WGN-9 TV in Chicago accurately reported that Mrs. Hruby was one of the last survivors of the *Eastland* Disaster, many other newspaper and television accounts of Mrs. Hruby's passing wrongly stated Libby was the last survivor. There are indeed survivors of the *Eastland* Disaster still living.)

FROM THE PRESIDENT

We first met Libby Hruby in 1999, shortly after our appearance on WGN Radio's *Wally Phillips* program. And while our access to Libby was quite constrained over the years, we did have the opportunity to speak with her several times.



In July 2000, Libby was one of our two special guests of honor at the EDHS commemoration of the 85th anniversary of the *Eastland* Disaster. That evening Libby met and sat with fellow survivor Marie Hrabacka, the only time the two would ever be together. We always wondered if Libby and Marie might have "bumped elbows" while boarding the ship for the excursion and picnic.



(Survivors Marie Hrabacka, right, and Libby Hruby meet on July 22, 2000.)

On another occasion, Libby wrote us a short note encouraging us in our endeavors by saying, "*We must never forget those friends and families who perished on that tragic day.*"

We won't forget, Libby.

EASTLAND CORNER

Mrs. Anna Fitzgerald of 5216 West Twenty-third Place told of saving herself and son, Edward, 5 years old, from the *Eastland* wreck. She watched her husband go down, but clung to her son. Her husband, William Fitzgerald, was missing, and she said he was drowned.

"*The three of us were on the deck, and we were thrown into the water,*" Mrs. Fitzgerald said. "*I seized my son, Edward, while the boat was tipping and after we struck the water I clung to him around the neck. We drifted toward the wharf, and I caught hold of some piling and half pulled myself up.*"

"*I shoved little Edward up to some men, who reached down and grabbed him.*"

That was the last time I saw him, but I know he was saved. I clung to some piling until some men pulled me up. My husband disappeared after I struck the water with my boy, and he was drowned, for he couldn't swim."



(Anna and William Joseph Fitzgerald)

Son William Walter Fitzgerald had to be at work and could not accompany his family to the picnic. He was at the wharf as the tragedy claimed the lives of his father and younger brother, James.



(William Walter Fitzgerald)

(To feature your family in the *Eastland Corner*, simply call us toll-free at 1-877-865-6295 or send an email to info@eastlanddisaster.org. If you have a personal connection to the *Eastland* Disaster, please consider submitting your family's story and photos to us.)

NEW TRUSTEES

To help continue the growth of the valued services that EDHS provides to the constituents we serve, we have been adding to our EDHS Board of Trustees. Two of our new Trustees are featured below, with others to follow in future editions.

Lani Gill Flesch has been with AT&T for over 20 years. A charter member of Friends of Bohemian National Cemetery, she is a descendant of Bohemians from Iowa.



Christine Harmon has been a longtime supporter of EDHS as a member and advocate. Christine has a well-known personal connection to the *Eastland* Disaster: Her great-great-grand-uncle was George Sindelar, Sr., who perished along with his wife, five children, and sister-in-law.



UPCOMING PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Tues., Feb. 1, 7:00 p.m. at the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy, Aurora, Ill.; Sat., Feb. 5, 7:30 p.m. at the Wisconsin Maritime Museum, Manitowoc. Please call toll-free 1-877-865-6295 for more information.

LUCENT ARCHIVES

Last summer, EDHS toured the Lucent Technologies archives. Started from scratch in 1996 when Lucent was spun off from AT&T, the Lucent Archives' collection includes artifacts from its corporate ancestor, Western Electric.



(Lucent Archives' state-of-the-art facility.)

Located in Holmdel, New Jersey, the Lucent Archives is home to a collection of over 20,000 items, with access to some 500,000 more through the AT&T Archives. *"Our mission is not only to document our business and R&D activities going forward, but to also rebuild the historical collection,"* said Ed Eckert, Lucent's Corporate Archivist. Eckert is in charge of the collection of Western Electric and Lucent artifacts, documents, photos, and film – dating from 1869 to present.



(A Western Electric "washer-wringer," one of the many home appliances built by the company.)

The largest artifact in the Lucent collection is the Horn Antenna located at the Crawford Hill location in Holmdel, a site that has been designated a U.S. National Historic Landmark. Using the 50-foot antenna, Arno Penzias and Robert Wilson found evidence for the Big Bang Theory – work that won them the Nobel Prize. The Archives is also home to some tiny innovations, including a tunable liquid microlens (about the size of a pencil point) from Lucent's ongoing microfluidics research.

The collection is now housed in a state-of-the-art temperature- and humidity-controlled facility. Items placed in the Archives are preserved and expected to last a thousand years.



(Rows and rows of boxes of stored paper documents pertinent to Western Electric and Lucent's lengthy corporate history.)

BOOK SIGNINGS

Author Jay Bonansinga will be appearing Sun., Jan. 30, 2:00 p.m. at Morton Grove (Ill.) Public Library; Tues., Feb. 1, 7:00 p.m. at the Illinois Mathematics & Science Academy, Aurora, Ill.; and Sun., Feb. 27, 2:00 p.m. at the Chicago Historical Society. Please call toll-free 1-877-865-6295 for more information.