

# The Call to Remember

Newsletter - Vol. V, No. 4

EASTLAND DISASTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Jul/Aug 2003

## FOCUS ON MEMBERS

Those who start and maintain annual (paid) memberships with EDHS play a vital role in the success of the society. One-quarter to one-third of our total revenue each year is derived from this group of supporters.

Many of the articles in this edition of our newsletter relate stories about how members provide support in different ways. Please consider becoming a member of EDHS: A membership form has been included with this newsletter!

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

My Aunt Carol was a member of EDHS for several years. She supported our society's efforts not only through her donations but also through her words of encouragement. In one of her many cards and letters to us she said: *"We need to preserve history properly and you have done a magnanimous job."*



These words, along with those from a dozen other supporters, have been added as "testimonials" to the new design of our corporate brochure. Our brochure is distributed to thousands of people each year at our presentations, special events, and through the mail.

My Aunt Carol passed away earlier this year, but her memory and support of EDHS live on.

## HISTORICAL MARKER

A brand new historical marker was rededicated at the site of the *Eastland* Disaster during our program commemorating the 88th anniversary of the tragedy held Thursday, July 24. Beautiful weather and a fine turnout by our members, supporters, and the public made for a nearly perfect day. A full-page insert describing the event (the ceremony and the luncheon) has been included with this newsletter.

## EASTLAND CORNER

Robert Hicks was a deckhand on the *Eastland* and was on the bridge with Captain Pedersen and other members of the crew when the ship began to list. As the *Eastland* rolled over, Robert grabbed a chair and smashed out the wheelhouse windows and climbed out onto the side of the ship.



After the incident the ship owners knew that there would be extensive litigation and they did not want Robert around to testify. The owners gave Robert a sum of money and expressed their desire for him to leave the country as he was potentially a key witness. Robert went to New York and then to England and later on to Australia. He rarely spoke about the tragedy with his family. Robert always believed that the accident was caused by the overloading of the *Eastland*.

## PUBLIC PRESENTATION

The Cook Memorial Public Library in Libertyville, Illinois will host our award-winning program at the Libertyville Civic Center (directly across the street from the library at 413 N. Milwaukee Avenue). The program will be given Thursday, November 13, at 7:00 p.m. Call 847-362-2330 for more information. Please join us and bring your family and friends!

## EDHS RECEIVES DONATION

We recently received a donation of a complete *Chicago Sunday Herald* newspaper from Florence and Wilbert Angelica. We appreciate all donations of artifacts, but newspapers more than anything else contain information that is vital to our efforts to document the history of the *Eastland* Disaster. Newspapers generally include the names and/or faces of the people who were involved in the tragedy.



(Newspaper headline incorrectly places the death toll at 1,728, much higher than the actual 844 that perished.)

In the case of the newspaper donated by Florence and Wilbert, we were able to quickly pass along some of the information from the newspaper to other families. For example, one of the many photos that appeared in this newspaper was that of Martha Pfeiffer (a teenage victim of the *Eastland* Disaster). Once we had scanned Martha's photo, we forwarded it to Martha's niece. Martha's niece had never seen this particular photo of her aunt before and, upon receiving a copy of it she wrote, *"WOW! You've added to our family collection. Thank you so much. Martha's memory doesn't just live on, Martha herself does and, on behalf of all of my family, on both sides of the veil, thank you for all of your diligence and inspired work."*



**MEMBER BECOMES VOLUNTEER**

We have had numerous volunteers help us with the special events that we have hosted, and we have a board of trustees with each member volunteering his/her time to our society. We now have what we consider to be our first volunteer helping us with our daily operations: Mr. G. E. ("Van") Van Wissink has volunteered to be the editor for our bi-monthly newsletter.



(Van helping Barbara Decker Wachholz edit the newsletter.)

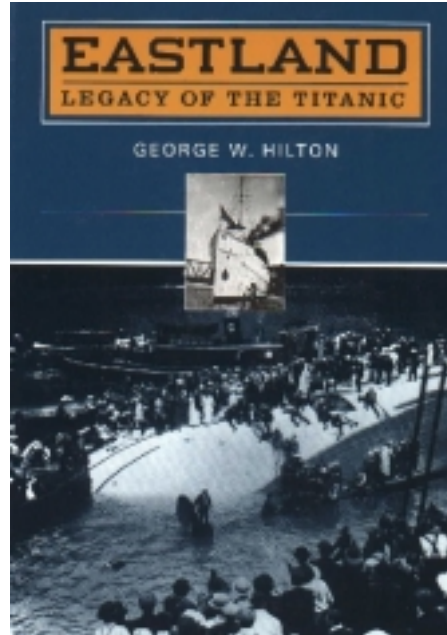
Van joined EDHS in 2001. He has been editing our newsletter, *The Call To Remember*, since early this year (2003). Van's volunteer work ensures that a higher-quality newsletter is distributed once every two months to over 1,600 people on our mailing list.

What is interesting about the volunteer work that Van is now doing is that *he* approached EDHS and offered his skill and expertise to us.

Van has worked in, or been involved in, editing and publications management since high school and is a Consulting Editor from his Mt. Prospect, Illinois home. Van became interested in Chicago's waterways and bridges in 1949, and began lecturing on waterways tours in 1970. He has written booklets on Journalism (1953), Genealogy (1959-99), Organizational Histories (1961-94), Chicago Waterways (1971-94), and Military Operational Procedures (1977). He has degrees from DePaul University (B.A., '54), U. S. Army Command & General Staff College (M.M.S., '78), and Roosevelt University (M.P.A., '91). Van retired in 1987 as a Lt. Col. after 33-½ years in the U. S. Army & Army Reserve.

**AUTHOR-SIGNED BOOKS**

As announced in our last newsletter, we have made arrangements with author George W. Hilton to sell signed copies of his book, *Eastland: Legacy of the Titanic*. Published in 1995, George's book is the only book today dedicated completely to the *Eastland* Disaster.



(George's book, published by Stanford University Press)

*Eastland: Legacy of the Titanic* is unquestionably the most authoritative and fact-filled source of information regarding the *Eastland* Disaster. There are three options for obtaining the hardcover book (see the merchandise order form included with this newsletter):

1. Unsigned.
2. Signed by the author.
3. Signed by the author (including a personalized request).

George, a member of EDHS since 2000, is continuing his support through this author signing: He has graciously offered that the proceeds from the sale of the book will go to EDHS.

Take advantage of this unique opportunity and order your book today! Quantities of the book are very limited. Priority will be given to EDHS members in good standing.

**GEORGIANA BECKER FELLOWSHIP**

To better recognize the support we receive each year and to provide additional giving opportunities (beyond our basic memberships), a new fellowship has been established with four categories of giving.

- Sustainer (\$1,000 – \$2,499)
- Sponsor (\$2,500 – \$4,999)
- Patron (\$5,000 – \$9,999)
- Benefactor (\$10,000+)

The fellowship has been named after Georgiana Becker, a member of EDHS since 2000. We chose to honor Georgiana because, to us, she is the epitome of what giving is all about. As Treasurer and board member of the Historical Society of Cicero, Georgiana willingly and enthusiastically gives her seemingly tireless efforts to help the Society. She volunteered for many years as the caretaker for the Western Electric Museum/Archives. She spent many hours turning her church's vacant, deteriorated, cement-filled courtyard into a beautiful garden of flowers and shrubs (which she also maintains). Georgiana volunteers in her community. Every Saturday, she hops in her car, picks up several people from her parish, drives them to church, and then takes them home afterward. We are pleased and honored to announce the *Georgiana Becker Fellowship*.



(Georgiana Becker holding vase following announcement of new fellowship in her name.)

After years of preparing and months of planning involving numerous organizations, the new historical marker was rededicated on Thursday morning, July 24, 2003. The new marker is located several yards to the west of where the original marker was erected. It is now located at the southeast corner of LaSalle Street and Wacker Drive in an alcove that looks almost as if it was designed specifically with the marker in mind. The marker is now a much more prominent part of this section of Wacker Drive. Pedestrians and vehicle traffic alike will find it hard to miss as they walk and drive by the area.

The weather for the ceremony was perfect - it was a warm summer day with a cool breeze and virtually no

humidity. As the morning progressed, the skyscrapers along Wacker Drive blocked the sun causing shadows to encompass the area where the ceremony was being held. Light sweaters and jackets were even used by many to provide a little warmth from the cool lake breezes. Our guest speakers came from near (4 blocks, the Chicago Department of Transportation office at 30 N. LaSalle) and far (200 miles, the Illinois State Historical Society offices in Springfield). After the guest speakers shared their comments, U.S. Coast Guard personnel saluted while they laid flowers in the river where the tragedy occurred: Tear-filled eyes were observed among the crowd. The Chicago Fire Department concluded the ceremony with a spectacular yet

respectful water display.

Immediately following the ceremony, a luncheon/program was convened at the Bob Chinn's of Chicago restaurant. Bob Chinn's is located directly across the river from the site where the *Eastland* rolled over, in the historic Reid Murdoch Center.

(During the aftermath of the tragedy, the Reid Murdoch building was used both as a temporary hospital and a temporary morgue.) Lunch was followed by a program that included a variety of speakers. Performances were given by Barbara Decker Wachholz singing, "*The Boat That Never Left Town*," and Jay Bonansinga reading several paragraphs from his book on the *Eastland* Disaster (to be published in 2004).



(The new marker at LaSalle and Wacker.)



(Chicago Fire Department water display.)



(Survivor Libby (Klucina) Hruby.)



(Guest speaker John Kociolko, Assessor and Historian, Town of Cicero.)



(l. to r. Guest speakers at the ceremony: Ted Wachholz, Susan Decker, Russell Lewis, Connie Hatcher, David Scott, and Miguel d'Escoto.)



(U.S. Coast Guard laying memorial flowers in river at the site of the *Eastland* Disaster.)



(Guests enjoying the luncheon/program at Bob Chinn's of Chicago.)