

SCIENCE & ENVIRONMENT



Truly riveting

A new interpretation to the sinking of the Titanic

BY LAURA CLENCH AND KRISTA COLLINS

Long has the human aspect of the sinking of the Titanic been explored in stories, songs, and movies. On October 7th at 8 p.m. in the Rebecca Cohn auditorium, William H. Garzke, Junior Chairperson of the Marine Forensic Panel of the Society of Naval Architects and Marine Engineers, gave a riveting lecture on the lesser-known aspect of the sinking of the Titanic; the physical reality of the event.

Arguably the foremost authority on the Titanic, Garzke spoke for a little over two hours to an interested crowd. Using overheads and video clips, Garzke presented his lecture titled "Exploring the Titanic: A new interpretation", the third and final lecture in the annual Killam lecture series. Although this year's lecture theme, Spirits in the Material World, was not evident

throughout Garzke's presentation, he was nonetheless an expert orator.

Maneuvering through topics associated with marine forensics, such as techniques and analysis, the importance of witness testimony in corroborating physical evidence and the contributions of advanced science, not to mention findings and conclusions as to what really caused the Titanic to sink, Garzke held audience attention well.

Garzke dispelled the popular myth that the Titanic stood nearly perpendicular to the ocean's surface while sinking. Recent advancements in marine forensics indicate that its actual elevation was only between eleven and fourteen degrees.

Forensics have also shed light on the fact that the Titanic did not sink due to a puncture

hole, but rather due to some poor quality rivets. As Garzke explained, the collision with the iceberg caused the heads of the rivets to pop off. This happened relatively easily due to the poor quality iron of the rivets. This poor quality also contributed to the rivets being unequipped to handle the stress of the collision. Rivets were then lost, causing the seams of the hull's steel plates to separate, and the vessel to take on water. There were also miniscule cracks around the rivet holes which formed when the steel was drilled while cold, which further weakened the ship's integrity.

Other interesting points discussed by Garzke included the fact that the resulting gash in the Titanic measured only 110 feet, contrary to the 300-foot gash that comprises popular belief. Also, the actual flooding was not a

continuous event, but was a period of decline and stability before the final onslaught of water.

This highly technical lecture was also peppered with almost anecdotal tales that included the baker who sent bread to the lifeboats, the lying witness and the lax leadership qualities of Captain Smith. These tales of human nature, however, could not compare to the image created by Garzke of this massive 'unsinkable' ship literally coming loose at the seams, ripping apart and finally sinking.


Overall, Dalhousie was extremely fortunate to have such an exemplary expert as William H. Garzke. His presentation was informative, entertaining and received appreciably. It would be an honor to have him return.

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