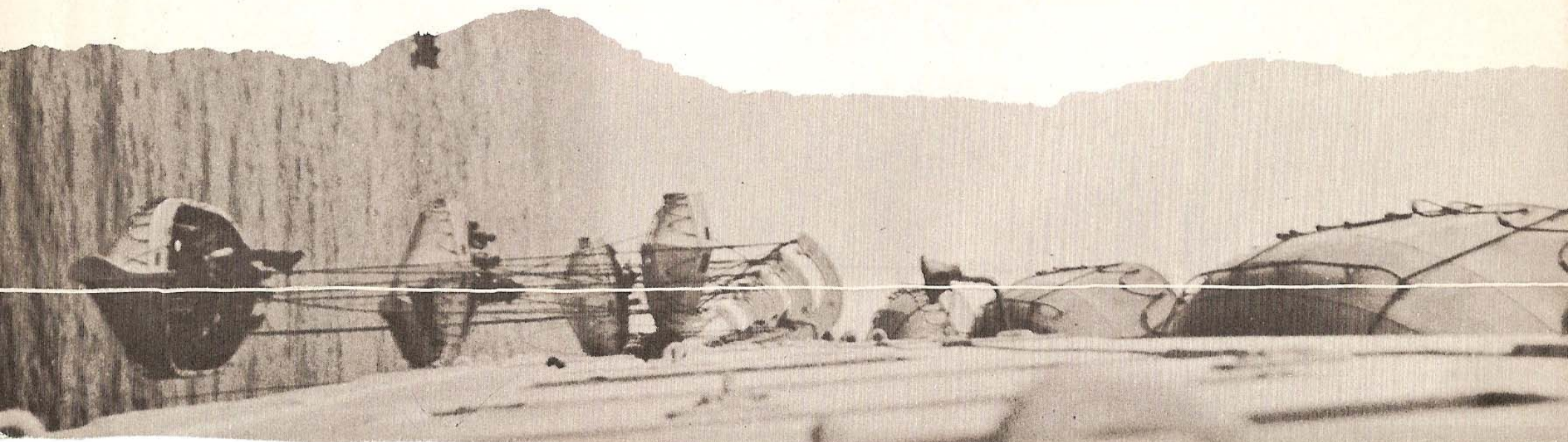


## Hours of Fear by Walter Lord

South of Cape Cod in Massachusetts lies the island of Nantucket, and a few miles off Nantucket the ocean liners ply the ship lanes between the United States and Europe. Here on the dark, foggy night of July 25, 1956, the Swedish motor ship *Stockholm*, bound for Europe, collided with the Italian liner *Andrea Doria*,<sup>1</sup> which was sailing toward New York.

In pictures and words on this and the following pages you can follow the grim story of the collision, the events that followed, and the ways various people lived through a night of terror.

<sup>1</sup>*Andrea Doria* (än drä' ä dö' ryä).



It was the last night out, and Giuseppe di Francesco,<sup>2</sup> an ex-florist from Lansdale, Pennsylvania, was just going to bed in Cabin 128. As he removed his clothes, he glanced casually out the porthole—and looked again. To him it looked like the lights of another ship heading straight for the *Andrea Doria*.

In the Belvedere lounge on the boat deck, as first-class passengers danced for the umpteenth time to “*Arrivederci, Roma*,”<sup>3</sup> Mrs. Grace McLean of Norfolk, Virginia, saw the same lights loom through the veranda windows when she looked over her partner’s shoulder. Looking out her porthole down below, Miss Frances Aljinavich,<sup>4</sup> a middle-aged lady from Cleveland, quickly sized up the situation for a friend: “Mary, it’s going to hit.”

Aboard the *Stockholm* the passengers were still getting accustomed to the ship on their first night out. In a lounge in the bow of the ship sat a group of nine Danish aviation cadets who had completed fifteen months NATO<sup>5</sup> training in Canada. One of them looked out the porthole. He shouted, “We’re going to crash!” The others laughed.

At that moment the 12,644-ton *Stockholm* smashed into the *Doria*’s starboard side.

On the *Andrea Doria*, Alfred Balboni<sup>6</sup> of Forestville, Connecticut, felt the ship take a “double crunch”—almost as

<sup>2</sup>*Giuseppe di Francesco* (jü sep’ pä dé fän che’ skö).

<sup>3</sup>*Arrivederci, Roma* (är rē vä der’chē rō’ miä).

<sup>4</sup>*Aljinavich* (al jin’ a vich).

<sup>5</sup>NATO, North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

<sup>6</sup>*Balboni* (bäl bö’ nē).





though the *Stockholm* had hit so hard she bounced away and struck again.

In the Belvedere lounge, screen actress Ruth Roman heard a bang "like a firecracker."

In the tourist-class dining salon, where the movie *Foxfire* was being shown, tables were pulled right out of their sockets. People fell and screamed.

Ellis D. Hill, an Aramco' official returning from Saudi Arabia on leave, was sleeping in a cabin with his two-month-old twins Timothy and Thomas. He woke and heard the babies' bottles sliding. Turning on the lights, he put the bottles on the top bunk so they would not break and ran down the corridor to the cabin his wife was occupying with their other three children. His wife already had the children up. Hill grabbed his wallet, passport, and the baby bag. He ran back for the twins, filled the bag with bottles, sterile water, and syrup, wrapped the twins up, re-joined the rest of his family—and only later realized he had forgotten the diapers.

"I think we hit an iceberg, like the *Titanic*," Mrs. Richardson Dilworth told her husband, as they picked themselves up from the floor of first-class State-room Number 80. Mr. Dilworth, mayor of Philadelphia, assured his wife that there were no icebergs just off Nantucket. Outside their stateroom, smoke and choking oil fumes were beginning to fill the long corridors.

On upper deck the *Stockholm's* heavy steel prow had knifed into all the cabins

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<sup>7</sup>*Aramco* (a ram' cō), Arabian-American Oil Company.

from 46 to 56. In Number 46, Colonel Walter G. Carlin, a Brooklyn politician, was brushing his teeth when the accident happened. Knocked from his feet, he looked to the seaward side of the cabin, where his wife had been reading in bed. There was only a gaping hole—Mrs. Carlin, with the bed and the bulkhead, had fallen into the sea.

In 54, Joan Cianfarra,<sup>8</sup> eight, daughter of the New York *Times* Madrid correspondent, was crushed. What happened to her fourteen-year-old step-sister, Linda Morgan, was almost impossible to believe. Somehow the tangled wreckage of the *Stockholm's* prow scooped her up, and as the Swedish liner backed away, the prow carried off Linda—unconscious but alive.

Mrs. Cianfarra was thrown inboard, pinned between her bedsprings and the shaft of a service elevator.

In 52, Mr. Cianfarra died instantly.

In 56, Dr. Thure S. Peterson, a chiropractor from New Jersey, was thrown through the wall into Cabin 58 next door, but Mrs. Peterson was pinned against the service elevator under Mrs. Cianfarra.

Dr. Peterson emerged from the debris and recruited steward Giovanni Rovelli<sup>9</sup> to help get the two women free. They had to work first on Mrs. Cianfarra, since she lay on top. Dr. Peterson got some wire cutters from the radio shack, and they managed to cut Mrs. Cianfarra free, except for her ankle. With a board they pried her completely loose.

<sup>8</sup>Cianfarra (chän fär' rä).

<sup>9</sup>Giovanni Rovelli (jō vän' nē rō vel' le).





Now they turned to Mrs. Peterson. But the lumber pinning her was jammed solid. The doctor finally got his hands on a hydraulic jack. Dr. Peterson and Rovelli dragged the 150-pound tool over the sloping decks. They set it up between the smashed partition and the elevator shaft, but before they could do more, Mrs. Peterson died.

The *Andrea Doria* was listing to starboard. On the decks far below, where a number of Italian immigrants occupied the cheapest tourist cabins, water surged into the cabin of Francesco Palsia,<sup>10</sup> a young Italian coming to New Jersey to join his American bride. In Mrs. Antonia Cavalli's<sup>11</sup> cabin the water quickly swirled up to her waist.

Farther forward, four Fulbright scholars<sup>12</sup> from Austria opened the door of Cabin 622 on a nightmare of dirt, oil, dust, smoke, the hissing of escaping air, screams, and crying children. They started up for their boat stations. People running down the stairs jammed into them. Blocked, the students gave way and turned to go back. Then the wooden walls of the cabin to starboard suddenly gave way and water surged into the corridor they had just left. Again they turned to struggle toward the boat deck.

No one on the *Andrea Doria* heard any general alarm ordering people to the boats, but the passengers, many of them skimpily clad, poured out of their cabins and up the steeply slanting stairs.

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<sup>10</sup>*Francesco Palsia* (frän che' skō pä'l syä).

<sup>11</sup>*Antonia Cavalli* (än tö' nyä kä väl' le).

<sup>12</sup>*Fulbright scholars*, students awarded scholarships by the United States government for study or teaching in other lands.

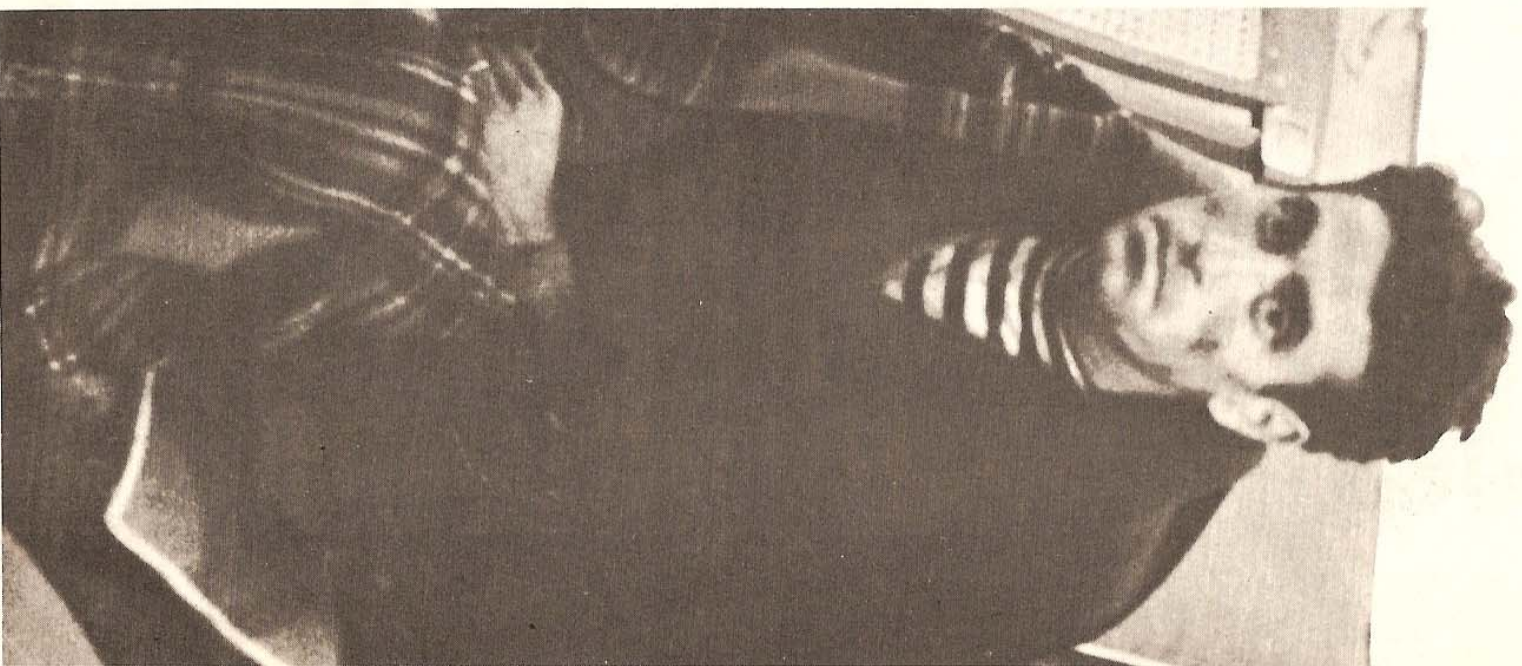
Slowly the passengers crept upward, fighting the list which had grown to 30 degrees. They crawled on hands and knees, clung to handrails and ledges along the walls, often hung on each other for support.

They had to get by other people trying to work their way down. Mr. Marion Boyer, one of several Standard Oil executives on board, rushed down to his stateroom from the lounge, where he had been patiently waiting for his wife to have a last cigarette. The corridor outside his cabin was a mass of debris, but he worked his way to the door, threw it open, and saw only the open ocean. The whole outside wall had caved out. Stepping over the splintered furniture, he tried to open his closet door for life belts. It was jammed, so he tore it off, got the belts, and struggled back up to Mrs. Boyer on the promenade deck.

In the Belvedere lounge, actress Ruth Roman took off her high heels, groped her way down to Number 82 for her three-and-one-half-year-old son Dickie.

"We're going on a picnic," she told him. She grabbed life belts, blankets, and her son and headed back up again. When they finally reached the top deck, they sat down on the grand staircase. A red balloon was lying nearby. She picked it up, gave it to him, and told him to blow it up.

Aboard the *Stockholm* Captain Nordenson had announced over the public address system: "Attention, please. This is the captain speaking. We have had a collision with the *Andrea Doria*, but we are in no danger." Most of the passen-



gers sighed and relaxed. Some even took off the life jackets they had rushed to put on.

Meanwhile, from the *Stockholm's* radio shack the SOS had gone out: WE HAVE COLLIDED WITH ANOTHER SHIP. PLEASE. SHIP IN COLLISION.

At the U.S. Coast Guard station at East Moriches,<sup>13</sup> Long Island, Radioman First Class Robroy A. Todd was on duty. He heard the SOS, immediately notified the supervisor of the watch, who passed it on to the Coast Guard Rescue Coordination Center in New York City. There the officer on duty, Lieutenant Harold W. Parker, Jr., ordered eleven rescue vessels dispatched from various ports. At headquarters reinforcements were called in.

Aboard the *Stockholm*, Captain Nordenson had his radiomen speak to the *Andrea Doria*: IF YOU CAN LOWER LIFEBOATS, WE CAN PICK YOU UP.

She replied: WE ARE TOO BENDING [listing]. IMPOSSIBLE TO PUT LIFEBOATS AT SEA. PLEASE SEND IMMEDIATE ASSISTANCE . . . LIFEBOATS.

On the deck of the *Andrea Doria* the passengers battled to keep their footing. The list had increased to 35 degrees and the people kept slipping and falling on decks slick with oil. When Mrs. Robert Holt of Oxford, California, fell, her son cried, "Mummy, please don't die." Mrs. Dilworth banged into something and got a black eye. Sister Callistus<sup>14</sup> and Sister Marie Raymond crept across the cabin-class ballroom, from pillar to pillar, working toward their boat station.

Raymond Water, a young seminarian from Philadelphia, like scores of other passengers, took off his shoes to get a better footing. He carefully tucked the shoes into his pockets. ("You know," he explained later, "on a seminarian's salary you can't afford to lose your shoes.")

Answers to the distress signals of the *Stockholm* and *Andrea Doria* were now crackling in from all points of the compass.

The Navy transport *Pvt. William H. Thomas*: TEN MILES AWAY. HAVE EIGHT BOATS.

The liner *Ile de France*:<sup>15</sup> WE SHALL BE IN THE AREA AT 1:45. WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP?

The freighter *Cape Ann*: WE HAVE TWO BOATS FOR ANDREA.

The tanker *Robert E. Hopkins*: ABOUT EIGHTEEN OR NINETEEN MILES EAST. WILL ARRIVE IN ABOUT ONE HOUR. HAVE TWO LIFEBOATS.

The Danish freighter *Laura Maersk*: WE WILL BE THERE IN TWO HOURS.

But the *Andrea Doria* passengers were told nothing. They just waited, roosting on the high side of the boat deck, hanging onto the rail, clinging to hatches, ventilators, and to each other.

Some began to sing, mostly old favorites like "Smiles," "It's a Long, Long Way to Tipperary," "There's a Long, Long Trail." Two middle-aged ladies from Cleveland took up "The Darktown Strutters' Ball."

The *Andrea's* lights grew dim. Occasional red rockets sputtered off into

<sup>13</sup>*Moriches* (mar i' chez).

<sup>14</sup>*Callistus* (ka liss' tas).

<sup>15</sup>*Ile de France* (el' da frañs').

the night and were quickly swallowed by the fog. Italian immigrants sobbed and prayed and kissed the pictures of saints. Sister Callistus and Sister Marie Raymond, clinging to their ballroom pillar, recited the rosary for those nearby. The ship's chaplain, the Reverend Sebastian Natta,<sup>16</sup> went around giving out Holy Communion. Father Daniel Markham of Troy, New York, led a group in prayers. A few non-Catholics said they were praying "if not with him, at least at the same time."

Help was nearer now, though the fog was still too thick for the rescue vessels to be made out from the sinking *Andrea Doria*.

*Ile de France*: WE ARE NINE MILES FROM YOU. WILL LAUNCH AS MANY BOATS AS POSSIBLE.

Unidentified ship: TWO LIFEBOATS ON WAY TO YOU.

The *Stockholm*, too, joined in the rescue, nudging back near the *Andrea Doria* and lowering her boats.

And then, as the dozens of lifeboats crawled about among the ships head- ing for the *Andrea Doria*, the fog sud- denly lifted. The sky blazed with stars and a bright yellow moon. But the people on the deck of the *Andrea Doria* saw only the far more welcome lights that shimmered across the calm, black sea—from the United Fruit freighter *Cape Ann*, the Navy transport *Pvt. William H. Thomas*, the tanker *Robert E. Hopkins*, the cutter *Owasco*,<sup>17</sup> the wounded *Stockholm*.

Looming largest out of the night was the massive, majestic shape of a giant liner. Her two big red funnels were bathed in floodlights. The portholes of all the public rooms were alight, their reflections dancing on the water stirred up by her wake as she slowed from the 22 knots at which she had come pound- ing onto the scene. And along her towering side, huge electrically lit letters proudly emblazoned her great name on the night: ILE DE FRANCE.



### Talking it over

1. a. Do you think the author of this selection is more interested in the disaster itself or in the reactions of the people to the disaster?  
b. Why do you think so?
2. Which people's reactions to the peril interest you most?
3. In reading about the collision between the *Stockholm* and the *Andrea Doria*, you have had two kinds of pictures to make the situation clear to you: photographs and word pictures. Just as the photographer uses his camera to show you what happened, so the writer uses words to help you visualize people or events.
  - a. What photograph succeeds best in making this disaster at sea clear to you?
  - b. What word picture gives you the most vivid impression? Prepare to read it to the class.

### More about peril at sea

If you found this story of the collision of the *Andrea Doria* with the *Stockholm* interesting, you will want to read a more

<sup>16</sup>*Sebastian Natta* (sā bā styän' nāt' tä).

<sup>17</sup>*Owasco* (ō wäs' kō).