

Titanic survivors . . .

Local man, saved from disaster, serves term in House

By Sandy Donovan

When former House member John Pillsbury Snyder died in 1959, his obituary touted the fact that he had bowled a perfect 300 game at the Minneapolis Athletic Club in 1942.

The obituary, which made the front page of the *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, also praised Snyder for his successful automobile business and his leadership of several mining corporations and noted that he was the grandson of former Minnesota Gov. John Sargent Pillsbury.

It was not until near the end of the article that a 1912 event that had put Snyder on the front page of newspapers around the country was mentioned. In April of that year, he and his wife, Nelle, were among the 705 survivors of the Titanic disaster.

The newly married couple had honeymooned in Europe in early 1912, traveling mostly through Italy to study how Fiats were made. Snyder's luxury-car dealership, Snyder Garage Inc. of 407 S. 10th St. in Minneapolis, was just beginning to sell the new brand of Italian cars.

For their return trip, the Snyders booked a first-class stateroom on the maiden voyage of the luxury liner Titanic. Those exclusive cabins cost up to \$5,000 for the six-day trip.

Nelle Snyder, who was only 20 at the time, later told reporters that she had been reluctant to travel on the highly touted but untested Titanic.

Soon after boarding the ship April 10, Snyder must have sat down to write a thank-you note to a London cigar merchant. His correspondence, on Titanic stationery, was among the few surviving letters from the doomed voyage. It was handed overboard at the dock before the ship sailed.

Today Snyder's grandson, Stevenson Miller, of Montana, owns the letter. He told the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* that he received it along with "a bunch of stuff nobody in the family wanted."



John Pillsbury Snyder

Three days after he wrote that letter, Snyder and his wife were walking along one of the liner's upper decks, about to return to their stateroom for the night, when they felt a crash. They later said they were told that there was no danger, and they retired to their cabin. It would have been just before midnight, April 13.

Within a few minutes, the Snyders later said, a steward knocked on their door and told them they should get up on deck. Snyder said there was general concern but not panic, and his wife, complaining of the cold, went back to the cabin to get warmer clothing and her jewelry box.

Snyder said the crew was by then telling people to get in the lifeboats, but most were resisting.

"The women, after looking over the rail into the water, refused to change their seeming safe position for the more precarious one in a lifeboat," he told reporters. "An officer pleaded, then ordered them into the boat. But still they refused to go."

While most newspaper stories at the time praised male passengers and crew as heroes for obeying the rule of the sea — and sacrificing their own lives to save women and chil-

dren — Snyder's accounts stressed that few people wanted to get in the lifeboats and that he was practically shoved into the first one to be lowered from the sinking liner.

"Somebody . . . called out that families should keep together in getting into the boats," he told the *Minneapolis Journal*. "The people were reluctant to get into the boats at first. Those in front stepped back."

"Some of them looked over the side of the vessel into the darkness of the night and were loath to trust themselves to the frail-looking boats swinging on the davits."

Snyder also said that people were calling for brides and grooms to get in the first boat.

"When the crowd in front turned aside, my wife and I were left at the front," he said. "The first thing we knew we were both assisted into the lifeboat. At that time there were not many men or women on the deck ready to go into the lifeboats."

"Those that did get into the boats felt that it was merely a measure of precaution — that they would be able to return to the ship within a couple of hours at the outside, when whatever damage that had been done had been remedied."

Snyder's version of events is likely close to the truth. When his lifeboat was lowered at about 12:45 a.m. it contained only 28 people, although it could have carried 65. After about five hours at sea in the leaking lifeboat — Nelle Snyder reported that she used her hat to bail out water — they were rescued by the *Carpathia*, the first ship to answer the Titanic's distress calls.

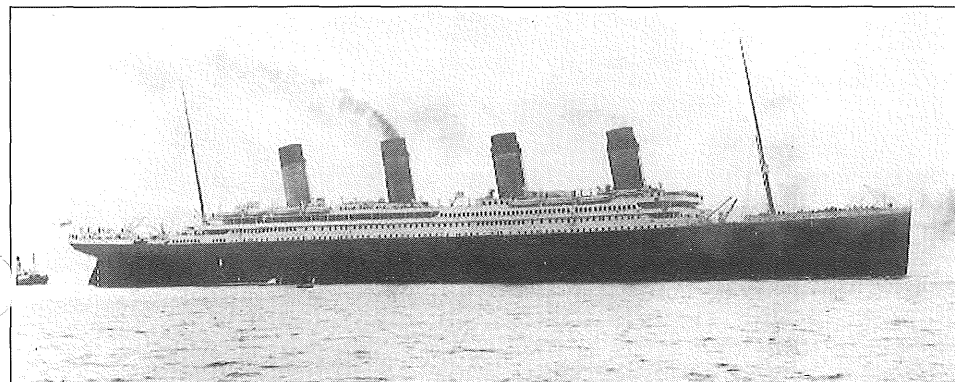
But whatever the circumstances, Snyder undoubtedly felt somewhat sheepish after surviving the tragedy. Following initial conversations with the press, neither of the Snyders discussed their rescue for several decades.

Upon landing in New York, they checked into a hotel, contacted family, and returned soon to Minneapolis. Once home they settled into Minneapolis society, had three children, and watched Snyder Garage flourish. During World War I Snyder served as a major in the infantry.

When he was elected to the House in 1926, Snyder was following family footsteps into public life. Not only had his maternal grandfather been governor, his father had also served in the House for one term in 1897-98.

Snyder represented part of Minneapolis in the state's 34th district and served on six House committees: civil administration, motor ve-

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The Titanic on April 10, 1912, as it prepares for its maiden voyage.

Photo from Eng Klat's Titanic HomePage at <http://web.singnet.com.sg/~ektcompq/>

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hicles and motor tax laws, reapportionment, reforestation, taxes and tax laws, and workmen's compensation.

He stepped down after one term in the House and turned much of his attention to the

state's iron ore resources. He and his wife made a second uneventful trip to Europe on the eve of World War II in 1938.

For the next 20 years, Snyder served as director of several mining corporations. He didn't speak publicly about his Titanic experi-

ence until a few years before he died, but spent his time bowling, golfing, hunting, and fishing.

He died on the 17th green of Orono's Woodhill Country Club golf course in July 1959. 

Tracking the Bills . . . March 27 - April 2, 1998

Governor's Desk

CH338-CH353

Bills await governor's action

Once a bill has passed both the House and Senate in identical form, it's ready to be sent to the governor for consideration. The governor, who has several options when considering a bill, can:

- sign the bill and it will become law;
- veto the bill;
- line-item veto individual items within an appropriations bill;
- or do nothing, which can have two different effects. The timing of these actions is as important as the actions themselves.

In the second year of the biennium (even-numbered years), a bill passed by the Legislature and presented to the governor before the final three days of the session will become law unless the governor vetoes it by returning it to the Legislature within three days. The governor normally signs the bills

and files them with the secretary of state, but his signature is not required.

But if a bill is passed during the last three days of session, the governor has a longer time to act on it. He or she must sign and deposit it with the secretary of state within 14 days after the Legislature adjourns "sine die" (Latin for adjournment "without a date certain"). If the governor does not sign a bill within this time frame, it will not become law, an action known as a "pocket veto." The governor is not required to provide a reason for the veto.

Only on appropriations bills can the governor exercise the line-item veto authority. This option allows the governor to eliminate the appropriation items to which he or she objects. As with all vetoes (save pocket vetoes) the governor must include a statement listing the reasons for the veto with the returned bill. Here, too, the timetable is either

14 days after adjournment for bills passed during the final three days of the session, or within three days after the governor receives the bill at any other time.

A two-thirds vote of the members in each house is needed to override a veto. But because only the governor can call a special session of the Legislature, anything vetoed after the Legislature adjourns is history — at least until the next year.

The governor's veto authority is outlined in the Minnesota constitution (Article IV, Section 23).

Internet access to this information is available at: <http://www.governor.state.mn.us> (select "legislative issues" folder)

Key:

CH=Chapter; HF=House File; SF=Senate File Res.=Resolution

CH	HF	SF	Description	Signed	Vetoed
Res. 8	3854*	3406	U.S. memorialized to resolve differences between province of Ontario and the state of Minnesota regarding Canadian waters and the taking of fish.	Filed without signature	
338	2861	3040*	Child and medical support enforcement administration process modification.	3/31/98	
339	2625	2267*	Workers' comp self insurance regulation provisions modification.	3/31/98	
340	2308*	2014	Accountant licensing provisions modified.	3/31/98	
341	3297*	2296	MERLA; statute of limitations provided for filing of actions under MERLA.	3/31/98	
342	113*	76	State lottery proceed dedication to Environmental and Natural Resources Trust Fund.	3/31/98	
343	2983	2966*	Minnesota Residential Mortgage Originator and Servicer Licensing Act.	3/31/98	
344	2971	2489*	Residential mortgage loans regulated, and table funding requirements established.	3/31/98	
345	3042*	2797	Long-distance telephone provider slamming and loading disclosure requirements expanded.	3/31/98	
346	2387	2149*	Voter record address change updates.		3/31/98
347	2567	2221*	Ramsey County open absentee ballot system pilot program extension.		3/31/98
348	3324	2445*	One call excavation notice system modification.	4/2/98	
349	2774	2302*	County optional forms of government adoption referendum procedure clarification.	4/2/98	
350	3070*	2847	Decorative gas lamp prohibition variance provided.	4/2/98	
351	3068*	2520	Public employee labor agreements ratified.	4/2/98	
352	2526	2148*	Absentee voting eligibility expansion.		4/2/98
353	3841	3397*	Air carriers agreements franchise law retroactive exemption application exclusions.	4/2/98	