

“Living the Titanic: The Centennial Memorial Cruise Travelogue”

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The Lebanese Emigration Research Center invited Mr. Raed Sharafeddine, first Vice Governor of the Central Bank, to Notre Dame University to give a lecture about his trip as a passenger on the Memorial Cruise aboard the *Baltimore Sun* which retraced the voyage of the ship *Titanic* in April 2012 in order to commemorate the centenary of the loss of the mighty vessel.

To open proceedings, LERC Director Guita Hourani introduced Mr. Sharafeddine with a short biography listing his qualifications and accomplishments. She also welcomed ex-Ambassador Farid Samaha, the businessman Mr. Georges Bachir, the banker Mr. Tony Choueiri, Dr. Hala Badreddine, Vice President of LENIFRA (Lebanese Nigerian Friendship Association) Mr. Mounir Hamzeh, Vice President for Research and Development Dr. Assaad Eid, Vice President for Public Relations Mr. Suheil Matar, Director of the International Affairs Office Dr. Michel Nehme, and the Dean of the Faculty of Political Science – Public Administration and Diplomacy Dr. Chahine Ghaith, in addition to the audience of University professors, staff and students.



(Mr. Raed Sharafeddine giving a lecture at Notre Dame University, October 2012)

Mr. Sharafeddine commenced his talk by telling the story of how his adventure started: “I was reading the newspaper one morning when an article caught my attention. It said that a company was organizing a trip similar to that of the *Titanic* for the centenary commemoration of its sinking.” Out of interest, he immediately made reservations for the trip for his two daughters and for himself. The two-week journey began from the port of Southampton. The cruise ship made a call at the port of Cobh (Queenstown) in Ireland, followed by a short stop over the spot where the Titanic actually sank in 1912. From there the ship sailed to Port Halifax in Canada and eventually to New York, which was the intended destination of the *Titanic*.

Mr. Sharafeddine divided his lecture into two main parts. In the first part he talked about the experience of being on the Centenary Cruise with his daughters and in the second part he talked about the Lebanese who were on board the Titanic at the time of the disaster, the reasons for their emigration, their number, and the villages they came from.



(Audience to Mr. Sharafeddine Lecture at Pierre Abou Khater Auditorium, Notre Dame University)

During the first part of the lecture, Mr. Sharafeddine, who had been the only Lebanese on the cruise ship, presented the trip in general through some pictures he had taken on board. There were 1254 passengers of twenty-seven different nationalities. The most emotional part of the eleven-day trip was when they commemorated the sinking of the *Titanic* at the

very spot where it went down by throwing flowers overboard in memory of the people who had perished there one hundred years previously.

In the second part of his lecture, Mr. Sharafeddine talked about the Lebanese on board the *Titanic*; he said that they numbered over one hundred and came from different Lebanese towns and villages in both the North and the South of the country. They were traveling third-class and among them were men, women and children. He also said that thirty-nine Lebanese survived and so gave evidence of the hardships they had faced. He said that it was unfortunate that there was not a complete list of the names of the Lebanese passengers in spite of the research that had been done on the subject.

Mr. Sharafeddine said that during his voyage he had discovered fifteen factors related to management and communication which had led to the sinking of the Titanic.

At the end of his lecture, Mr. Sharafeddine presented items collected from his trip, such as the boarding pass, newspapers, and other material, to the Lebanon Migration Nucleus Museum. He also expressed his readiness to cooperate with the Lebanese Emigration Research Center in its future efforts aimed at expanding the research on the Lebanese on board of the *Titanic*.

Following the lecture, Director Guita Hourani presented a collection of LERC publications to Mr. Raed Sharafeddine and escorted him together with the other guests to the Lebanese Migration Nucleus Museum.