

Heroism on the Sinking Lusitania

Alfred Vanderbilt was the great-grandson of billionaire businessman Cornelius Vanderbilt, who built his wealth in railroads and shipping. Cornelius Vanderbilt was one of the richest Americans in history; he provided the initial gift to found Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee.



There was nothing particularly praiseworthy about how Alfred lived his life. He used his massive inheritance to invest in real estate and horses, and to throw lavish parties. But here is why we remember Alfred Vanderbilt.

In 1915, he set sail on the British ocean liner, the *Lusitania*, heading toward London. At the time, Europe was embroiled in World War I, but nobody thought that enemy troops would attack a civilian ship. Sadly, they were wrong. German U-boats attacked the *Lusitania* as it sailed off the coast of Ireland.

As a first-class passenger, Vanderbilt was guaranteed a lifejacket and a seat on one of the first lifeboats leaving the ship. Vanderbilt, however, refused his rights. He gave away his lifejacket (to a woman holding a baby) and his seat on the lifeboat.

As the ship slowly sank into the water, Alfred Vanderbilt focused on getting as many children into the lifeboats as possible. He died saving others.

A *New York Times* journalist described his last moments as “gallantry which no words of mine can describe.”

How do you describe a love that is unearned, undeserved and given freely, generously and sacrificially for the sake of everyone, whether they can ever return that love or not?

That’s God’s love. God had a million reasons to condemn the world. But He didn’t.

God saved the world by giving the absolute greatest gift He could give. And God made us a promise that whoever believes – yes, *whoever* believes – in God’s Son, Jesus Christ, will not perish but have eternal life.

Have you accepted that promise in your own life?

– Beecher Hunter