

HOW WIRELESS SAVED LIVES

On Jan. 23, 1909, a small invention played a crucial role in saving 1,500 lives.

The New York-bound ocean liner, the *SS Florida*, rammed into the *RMS Republic*, a steam-powered ocean liner built in 1903 and sailing for the White Star Line.

The ship was equipped with a new Marconi wireless telegraphy transmitter and issued a CQD distress call. Known as the “Millionaires’ Ship” because of the number of wealthy Americans who traveled by her, she was described as a “palatial liner.”



Jack Binns, the *Republic's* new wireless radio man, reassembled his new contraption that had been destroyed in the collision. He sent out distress calls for the next 12 hours until the crew and passengers were rescued in the dawn light of Sunday morning. Three passengers on the *Republic* died and three crewmen on the *Florida*.



Jack Binns became a national hero. He was given a ticker-tape parade. Songs were written about him. He even testified before Congress on the importance of regulating wireless technology on all ships. Congress listened politely but ignored his message.

Binns gave up his quest, accepted no profit from his celebrity, and went back home to England to await reassignment. Three years later, he received an assignment aboard a ship

that he turned down. He had fallen in love and was soon to marry. The turned-down assignment? The *Titanic*.

It is now felt that Binn's message was ignored because so few lives were lost on the *Republic*. It took tragedy on the scale of the *Titanic* for the importance of wireless communication to be understood. Congress ignored wisdom.

Why are we like this? We ignore wisdom to our own peril. What is wisdom?

(more)

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines it as “Capacity of judging rightly in matters relating to life and conduct; soundness of judgment in the choice of means and ends; sometimes, less strictly, sound sense, especially in practical affairs.”

Charles Hadden Spurgeon – an English Baptist known as the “Prince of Preachers” – described wisdom as “the right use of knowledge.” To Socrates and Plato, philosophy was literally the love of wisdom.

In both our personal and professional lives, the pursuit of wisdom is much to be desired. The Bible tells us how: *Listen to advice and accept instruction, that you may gain wisdom in the future* (Proverbs 19:20 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter