There is no question that a number of mistakes contributed to the sinking of The Titanic. Captain E. J. Smith was sailing his retirement voyage as the Titanic was making her maiden trip. Smith reportedly did not give orders to slow the ship despite reports of icebergs in the water, a common practice at the time. Smith also ignored a total of seven iceberg warnings from other ships and his own crew. Mr. J. Bruce Ismay, the Director of Titanic’s company, the White Star Line, was on board the ship. Some people think Ismay pressured Captain Smith to maintain high speed. He wanted to prove The Titanic could make a six-day crossing across the Atlantic Ocean.

Another mistake occurred during the building process. Substandard iron was used in the rivets holding the iron plates of the ship. The collision with the iceberg sheared the rivets and caused many sections of the ship to collapse. Yet another mistake was in the design of the watertight compartments. They did not reach as high as they should have because the increased height would have cut into the living quarters of the first class staterooms.

Besides the actual sinking, the ship carried only enough lifeboats for about one-third of the passengers and crew. This led to increased loss of life. There was only 20 lifeboats on the Titanic. That was enough to save only 1/3 of the crew and passengers on board the boat. It was originally designed to carry 32 boats, but the number was decreased because designers felt the deck would be extremely cluttered.

It was believed that ships were safer and less likely to require lifeboats. After the disaster, laws requiring a minimum number of lifeboats were changed immediately.

Not all the mistakes were made by people directly connected with the Titanic. Another ship, The Californian, had stopped for the night only 19 miles from the doomed ship. When the Titanic fired distress rockets, the Californian’s captain decided the rockets were being fired because the Titanic was partying. The Californian’s radio had been turned off, and she missed the Titanic’s distress call. If the radio been on, the Californian should have been able to save all the passengers.

Close to 100 years after the Titanic went down, yet another possible mistake was discovered. The granddaughter of an officer on board the Titanic claimed the man at the wheel turned right instead of left. This put the ship on a collision course with the iceberg. Louise Patten says her grandfather -- who survived the sinking -- lied about the mistake. He wanted to prevent lawsuits against his employers and to protect his job. If this is true, despite all the other mistakes, in the end it may have been a simple misunderstanding that led to a titanic mistake.
7 There will always be a certain element of mystery will always be part of the loss of the Titanic. Certain facts are known only to the dead captain and first officer. More answers are hidden forever at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean. However, some of the unknown is being cleared up by patient and thorough investigation. The world wants to know where to put the blame. As the passengers, officers, and members of the crew tell their stories and answer questions, the horror of the Titanic’s sinking only increases when the needless loss of life becomes more and more evident.

8 Passengers, owners, and officers all were obsessed with the idea that the ship was “unsinkable.” The design of modern passenger ships, with the new water-tight compartments, had kept authorities from requiring additional safety measures. However, the water-tight compartments were flawed. They were not built to original design specifications. The owners decided they wanted the decks to be less cluttered and more open for passengers to enjoy the views. Thinking the Titanic would never sink, they removed all but 20 lifeboats. This was not enough life boats, which meant not everyone could safely escape the sinking ship.

9 The Titanic was sailing at high speeds where icebergs were abundant. With no time to change direction or avoid hitting the iceberg, the ship became damaged beyond its ability to stay afloat. Even after the Titanic collided with the iceberg, the crew believed the water-tight compartments would keep the ship from sinking. They were wrong.

10 The lack of preparation before the collision and the crew not filling the life-boats to their capacity are both part of the deadly belief that the Titanic was unsinkable.

11 People do not want to just blame the faulty design of the “unsinkable ship.” They also want to know who is responsible. Two people have been mentioned as being partly to blame: Captain Smith and J. Bruce Ismay. The captain went down with his ship. Many of the public want to remember him in a respectful and loving way. However, the New York Times reported the following:

12 “Ice was in plain sight, floating ice and bergs. Not only that, by Captain Smith had received by wireless messages at least three warnings that icebergs were in his path... yet straight into the jaws of destruction he steamed at high speed...”

13 The New York Times also gives J. Bruce Ismay and the White Star Line, which owned the Titanic, some of the responsibility as well. The company pressured Captain Smith to complete the voyage at high speeds. Special reasons for desiring a speedy voyage on the Titanic’s maiden trip were found. The company’s financial condition was becoming more difficult. Investors thought it would be good for future business if the Titanic had a successful and fast passage from England to the United States. “Everybody learns from experience,” observed Mr. Ismay. He also believes that in this crisis, the steamship owners of the world have learned “that too much reliance has been placed on water-tight compartments and that they must equip every vessel with life-boats and rafts sufficient to provide for every soul on board...”

14 They have learned, too, that “there are no such things as unsinkable ships.”