Can hypothermia ever save lives?

“. . . and finally the ghastly noise of the people thrashing about and screaming and drowning, that finally ceased. I remember saying to my mother once, ‘How dreadful that noise was,’ and I always remember her reply, and she said, ‘Yes, but think back about the silence that followed it . . .’ ”

Survivor Eva Hart, a seven-year-old second-class passenger

From New York, some survivors went to Washington, D.C., to testify about what had happened. Others went to Plymouth, England, aboard the Lapland. At Plymouth, they were taken to the train station (left) before going to testify at the British inquiry into the disaster.

3:30 a.m. Survivors in the lifeboats see signal rockets from the rescue ship, Carpathia.

4:10 a.m. Lifeboat No. 2 is the first picked up by the Carpathia.

8:30 a.m. Lifeboat No. 12 is the last one rescued. Three days later, the Carpathia arrives in New York with 705 Titanic survivors.

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In the early 1900s, science and technology seemed to be making the world better all the time. New drugs eliminated diseases, and new inventions like the automobile made life easier. However, the sinking of the "unsinkable" Titanic rattled everyone's confidence in progress. The march of technology did not stop after April 15, 1912, but it did pause to learn a few lessons. The Titanic has remained a source of curiosity ever since.

In 1985, Frenchman Jean-Louis Michel and American Robert Ballard led the team of scientists who discovered the wreck of the Titanic, two and a half miles below the surface of the Atlantic. Underwater cameras were lowered to explore the wreck. In 1986, Ballard returned to the site, this time with a submersible, Alvin, which for the first time enabled humans to visit the wreck.

At one time, scientists studying the wreck believed that the iceberg did so much damage to the Titanic because the ship's steel had become brittle in cold water. However, newer research suggests that the steel was not likely to crack in cold temperatures. More likely, the steel bent or gave way due to the incredible force of the flooding water.

A Florida-based RMS Titanic, Inc. owns salvage rights to the Titanic. It has retrieved more than six thousand objects from the wreck. The company vowed not to sell objects with historical importance. However, saying that the Titanic's wreck is a gravesite. Others say the recovered objects themselves serve as a memorial to the Titanic's passengers and crew and provide valuable insights into life aboard the ship in 1912.

Lesson 10: Titanic (11 of 12)
Almost as soon as the Titanic’s survivors reached New York, the press began looking for someone to blame. Survivor J. Bruce Ismay, managing director of the White Star Line, was their top target. The American press criticized him for boarding a lifeboat when so many others died. While the Titanic was sinking, some on board saw the lights of a ship in the distance. The Californian was accused of being the mystery ship that left the Titanic to its fate. Later investigations found that this probably was not true: a third ship may have moved between them. Even so, the Californian may have seen the Titanic’s distress rockets. Also, the Californian’s radio operator had shut down its wireless for the night, as usual, so he never heard the Titanic’s calls for help.

The Titanic has inspired books, poems, plays, films, and songs. The first movie came out just one month after the ship sank and starred survivor Dorothy Gibson. Most people today know about the disaster through the 1997 hit movie Titanic, starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Kate Winslet.

Two investigations into the sinking—one British, one American—led to big changes in how ships operated. Almost immediately, all ships had to carry enough lifeboats for all passengers, and lifeboat drills became mandatory. Every large ship also had to keep its wireless working at all times. Shipping lanes were shifted farther south to avoid icebergs, and an iceberg patrol was set up to chart and follow icebergs and issue warnings.

The Californian may have seen the Titanic’s distress rockets. Also, the Californian’s radio operator had shut down its wireless for the night, as usual, so he never heard the Titanic’s calls for help. What happened to the Titanic’s sister ships, Olympic and Gigantic?