

DETECTIVE SENIOR CONSTABLE GRAY

Q1 This is an electronically recorded interview between Detective Senior Constable Stuart Gray and Mr John Stanley on Friday, the 23rd of July, 1999 at the Sydney Water Police section in Pyrmont. The time on my watch is 10.22am. Also present seated directly opposite me is Senior Constable David Upston from the New South Wales Water Police. For the purpose of the record, John, could you please state your full name?

A John Michael Stanley.

Q2 And your date of birth?

A 17th of the 5th, '47.

Q3 Your current address?

A 47 Baringa Avenue, Seaforth.

Q4 And your occupation?

A Waterfront manager.

Q5 O.K. As you aware Senior Constable Upston and myself are making inquiries in relation to the 1998 Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race and in particular your role on board the Winston Churchill. Previous to this interview you were interviewed by Senior Constable Stevenson at Pambula Hospital - -

A Yeah.

Q5 - - - some time after you were rescued and the reason we have you here today is to ask you some questions in relation to some abnormality, that's

probably the best way I can describe it - - -

A Yeah.

Q5 - - - in, in layman terms, which was seen on the stem of the Winston Churchill on the 26th of December, 1998, when it was docked at the C.Y.C.A.

And that's basically what we'll speak to you today about. Now if I could just tell you the information that we've received is that on the 26th of December last year, while the Winston was docked at the C.Y.C.A. a diver who had just finished cleaning a boat swam back towards the slip and noticed some, what he described as, filling or caulking missing from the front of the boat. He swam over and he had a closer look at this and he described it as being, the gap being the size of a pen, I suppose half an inch.

A Mmm.

Q6 And it covered three planks and there was paint which was cracking on those three planks further back from where the caulking was. He further describes it as looking into the hull, I suppose or the line, the rabbet line. He described it as being a dark background, O.K. So basically if you could just give me some information about that, if you know about it and what it may be?

A Well I don't know specifically what he was talking about - - -

Q7 O.K.

A - - - but the fact that there was in the stem of the boat where the plankings do go into the stem, there was, it'd been filled and patched a few times, it was just a slight concave of, of the planking there, over the years where it's been knocked and broken away in bits and pieces. But that's been filled a few times but structurally not a problem.

Q8 O.K.

A The boat had been up on the slip the week before -
- -

Q9 Yeah.

A - - - to get its final preparation and a check over of everything. That area up there had been refastened the year before - - -

Q10 Right.

A - - - and checked out thoroughly and recaulked, so there wasn't any, you get a cosmetic problem in the movement of planks and, and, and paint cracking and some of the filler at times that you put in there just for cosmetic purposes does fall out, but it's purely a cosmetic situation.

Q11 O.K.

A There's nothing structural problem with the boat.
If it had have been anything structural it would have been fixed - - -

Q12

A - - - it would have been observed by people that

are walking past it - - -

Q13 Mmm.

A - - - every day of the week over there while it was on the slip and it's, had been thoroughly checked out the boat, so - - -

Q14 O.K.

A - - - it was purely a cosmetic thing if he had have seen it. Also when you're around the harbour you'll, you'll run into bits and pieces of branches and a log or something like that and it'll, it'll take paint off and it'll look a little bit worse. You always get a crack on the, the plank lines of where the butt together, mainly because it's just expansion and contraction of timber in the water, in the sun, and it's just the general known fact that the, the planking always cracks, then the paint cracks and it looks worse than it quite often is.

Q15 O.K. Now so far as the caulking itself, can you describe what the caulking is or what caulking actually is?

A Well, caulking's a, it's, it's a cotton that is driven in, into a v shape of the planking. The planking on that boat was inch and a quarter, and, Huon pine and it was a very sound constructed boat, and 6 months out of the water. When it went back in it didn't leak a drop which is, really does prove how good it was built in the first

place. So structurally she was great.

Q16 O.K. So the caulking is actually driven in and then, and then there's some - - -

A

Q16 - - - putty to put over the top of it?

A Yeah. You mix up a putty - - -

Q17 Yeah.

A - - - and you usually mix it with anti-foul.

Q18 Right.

A You colour it.

Q19 Right.

A Because you can get a worm into the putty that actually eats it out over a - - -

Q20 Right.

A - - - period of time so you mix an anti-foul in with it to give it a bit more life. And that's just pushed in there, just purely for a cosmetic look.

Q21 Right.

A But that's just the normal practice - - -

Q22 O.K.

A - - - for that sort of boat.

Q23 Now I've been informed that the diver bought this to, to the attention of some people who he, he can't describe who were either on the boat or on the dock at the time. Were you - - -

A Yeah, no - - -

Q24 Was it bought to your attention?

A - - - I don't, I wasn't there at the time, so I don't recall anyone, I wasn't asked to sort of come and see - - -

Q25 Yeah.

A - - - someone so no, I didn't - - -

Q26 O.K.

A I only heard all this later on.

Q27 O.K. Now so far as the, the strengths and weaknesses of a boat like the Winston Churchill, is there a lot of pressure put on that area as an actual - - -

A No, not really. No, the most of the, the pressure that's really applied to boats is usually in a seaway, when you're crashing into a seaway and you come off a sea, it's usually when you're thumping to windward into a seaway, it's usually further back and it's, most of it's usually around the mast area, or forward of the mast. The bow does, I mean you really need to hit something before you spring a plank on the, on the stem.

Q28 Right.

A That's, yeah, you need to really hit something - - -
-

Q29 Yeah.

A - - - pretty substantial.

Q30 Yeah.

A But basically that's all usually O.K. That's not a problem. It's, it's further back that you,

you'll have problems if, if there's any, any problem, like, and you'll see a lot of the modern boats, they usually crack up around that mast area or the forward of the mast area, just forward of the mast area where the boat really lands down on its - - -

Q31 Mmm.

A And it comes out of the air and lands into a seaway, yeah.

Q32 Now the mast on that boat, was that in a sort of a fixed in the mast step?

A Oh, yeah, yeah.

Q33 O.K.

A There was a mast step and there was a channel through the middle of that boat which was I think 10 inches or 12 inches by 3 inches, channel, that went for 15 feet along the bottom of that boat and the mast steps sat into that.

Q34 Right.

A So, I mean that boat had been rebuilt quite substantially after Warner put it on beach some years ago down in Victoria.

Q35 Right.

A They had to drag it up the sand, put it on the low loader and then they rebuilt it. He actually hit something in, down in the bottom end of Bass Strait there and they sprung a leak and what he did in the middle of the night was he just drove

it straight up on the beach.

Q36 Right.

A Then they had to get it out and fortunately he was the Minister of Main Roads at the time, so he was able to organise the transport. But they, you know, they put a lot of, lot of steel, galv fixings into it and then they put channels into it and, in the rebuilding of it over there we went right through the lot of that and, and refastened the lot of it so - - -

Q37 Right.

A - - - yeah, she was, she was strong in that area.

Q38 And when you say fastenings, what exactly are fastenings?

A They're, we, we put about I think I was around about 3,000 bronze fixings, bronze screws - - -

Q39 Right.

A - - - back into the planking of the boat up in the bow and down in the stern area where, where the loads are.

Q40 Mmm.

A Yeah.

Q41 What sort of length are those screws?

A They were 2 and a half inch, or possibly three from memory, might have put 3 inch in, yeah.

Q42 O.K. Now so far as the rigging, the, the Winston was re-rigged - - -

A Yeah.

Q42 - - - some time ago or - - -

A Yeah, yeah, it had a new mast put in it.

Q43 Yeah.

A That was the previous year, yeah.

Q44 O.K. And now the Winston Churchill, from my experience of sailing, which is not a great deal, but the Winston Churchill was a boat of some 50 years of age?

A 1942.

Q45 Yeah

A Yeah.

Q46 Now originally she would have been designed for a, for cloth sails?

A Oh, yes they were - - -

Q47 Is that right?

A - - - they were, yeah.

Q48 O.K.

A Yeah.

Q49 Now just for my information if, if you re-rig a boat of that age and you put modern sails on it - - -

A Yeah.

Q49 - - - is it true to say that there's a great amount of stress on the whole boat as a result of that?

A Well, it depends on how you sail it - - -

Q50 Right.

A - - - how much, how much you load them up.

Q51 O.K.

A And that's, that's, that's always a thing that you've got to be aware of.

Q52 Right.

A And so that's why the, the rig was put on and then, see the boat's angle of heel tells you that itself is that you've got, you've got the angle of heel, so when you've got more, more height on it, more, more sail area you get an angle of heel faster so you just reduce sail.

Q53 Right.

A So you try not to stress the boats, and you know that they're, there's, there's weaknesses so you've got to watch your loadings and the same thing is you don't do the rig tensions of it - - -

Q54 Right.

A - - - too much. You just do the rig tensions up to the point where you, you, you're comfortable with, with your mast.

Q55 Right.

A Yeah.

Q56 Now so far as re-rigging, is there a reinforcement process done as well - - -

A Yeah - - -

Q56 - - - to allow for the new rig?

A Yeah, yeah. We put chain plates, we put extra fastenings in the chain plates and we redid the chain plates. We did a deck collar and tied down

the deck collar to the bottom of the mast.

Q57 Right.

A Yeah, that was, that was done.

Q58 O.K. David, any questions on that?

SENIOR CONSTABLE UPSTON

Q59 With the, the rig tensions, did you personally do the rig tensioning yourself prior to - - -

A I did it with - - -

Q59 - - - the Sydney to Hobart Race?

A I did it with Joe Walsh, the rigger.

Q60 Oh, O.K.

A Yeah.

Q61 And, and how was that - - -

A We did, we basically stayed with the tensions we had. There was hardly any change in the rig tensions from the day the boat went in the mast, the mast went in the boat. We'd gone to Hobart the previous year and we've done the Southport Race, and so basically the, the tensions, you know, you might've taken half a turn or something like that which is nothing. So it was basically from the day, the rigs basically stayed the same from the time they went in the boat, the year before.

Q62 Right. And John, just to, just to qualify a couple of things, firstly of all with your, you had a, the boat was slipped and you did a lot of the work in regards to the, the slipping and the

refastening and the screwing?

A Yeah.

Q63 The screws.

A Yeah.

Q64 What are your marine qualifications as far as that?

A Well, only that I've been in the building game all my life, but I've been with, involved in boats for, you know, 30 odd years and that I'm surrounded by boats like and shipwrights that we have over at Woolwich, who are very professional at that and the other thing was the chap that designed the rig is a naval architect, so I got him to design the rig, David Lyons, and we, we just basically walked our way through the boat in regards to what we think was, was the right way to go, and along with the rigger who has been in the business for many years.

Q65 O.K. With the, the caulking in particular, in, in the bow section, did you personally put that caulking in?

A No, no. Frank, Gary Swindale and Frank Silvacci were the two people that did it and Frank served his time on Cockatoo Island is probably one of the best tradesmen I've seen.

Q66 Right. Were you present when any of that caulking was done?

A Yes, I was, I was there at the time. I didn't specifically watch but I mean a person like

Frank's ability - - -

Q67 Mmm.

A - - - you know that the job's perfect, and there's, that you, when you're involved in something like that you put the right people on the job, on the right job. And when the rudder was all rebuilt, we changed the rudder right over completely and, and we put wheel steering in it, whereas it had a wheel before but it was in a very bad position and we changed it like that, we put hydraulic steering in and, but it was a really well engineered piece of work, done by the boys at the, in the yard.

Q68 And with the, the, the rigging design and obviously that come with sail designs as well.

A Yeah.

Q69 David Lyons - - -

A David Lyons did the rig, designed the rig. Wales built the spar and, and Ian McDiamond designed the sails, yeah.

Q70 And David Lyons is a, is a professional - - -

A My word. On a - - -

Q70 - - - a shipwright - - -

A Well, he's a naval architect.

Q70 - - - correction, he's a naval architect?

A Naval architect, yeah.

Q71 Yes.

A Not as, not as some of them are yacht designers,

there is a difference.

Q72 O.K. Could, would you like to just expand on that slightly, perhaps not?

A Well, I mean you, you do your, you do your apprenticeship as a naval architect and you, and you learn, you have a degree of naval architecture whereas a lot of these people that are designing boats and organising them are designers, they actually haven't done a degree.

Q73 Mmm.

A That's the difference.

Q74 Is there many of those in, in Sydney or - - -

A Oh, I'm not really sure.

Q74 - - - yacht designers who build - - -

A I mean I, I could sort of, I could mention the bloke that won the Hobart but I don't know whether he's actually a, he, he's a builder and a designer but I don't know whether he's actually done it, is he a naval architect, I don't know.

Q75 Right.

A I really don't know. I don't know whether Ian Murray's a naval architect. You know, there is that difference.

Q76 Mmm.

A But I mean like a lot of these things, these, like John McConnoughy who is a boat builder and is probably one of the best now, you know 20 years ago when he started all this technology he learnt

from a lot of mistakes that, that happened from yacht designers and that and his construction, so they've been learning all the time - - -

Q77 Mmm.

A - - - and the biggest thing is make sure they don't go backwards in the sport.

Q78 Right.

A By chasing lightness and speed too much - - -

Q79 Mmm.

A - - - because it's, one thing that doesn't change is the wind and the water.

Q80 Mmm. Not having an opportunity to speak to you since you were spoken to at Pambula, have you had thoughts about what might have happened to the Winston on that day?

A Oh, only - - -

Q81 And sort of - - -

A Only that, you know, when you came up and observed the damage done on the leeward side of the boat you just, you just knew that if you were taking water that you've just sprung a plank somewhere.

Q82 Mmm.

A I mean there was to, to take 6, 7 feet of the bulwarks off completely, I mean you've got basically a 2 and a half inch or nearly a 3 inch post coming up 16 inches above the deck shelf.

Q83 Mmm.

A And on there it's sort of 16 inch centres and

you've got two planks attached to the outside of that and you've got a capping rail attached to the side of that, and then you've got a, a stainless steel track on top of that. And for 7 feet of that to be completely sheared off that's unbelievable force, I mean that's throwing 25 ton at a brick wall and that's exactly what happened.

Q84 Mmm.

A And it was the back end of the boat that seemed to have copped most of it because the boys got thrown out you know around the backstay.

Q85 Mmm.

A So when you see that, God - - -

Q86 Yeah.

A - - - that's incredible. I mean, so to survive and not do more damage was quite, and then of course when you go downstairs you, you notice that you're taking water so you think where the hell are we taking water - - -

Q87 Mmm.

A - - - and I can only, you can only, it's guess work because you can't see because you've got inside linings and bunks, cupboards and all sorts of things, you can't go chasing - - -

Q88 Mmm.

A - - - where you think it is, but when you've got the bulwarks, which are posts that come down and they come down for about 3 feet, and fasten onto

the main, main rib front, they're wanting to, the waves pushing them in, these ones want to go out -
- -

Q89 Mmm.

A - - - they're bolted side by side, so that, that action there could have actually forced, there was in the construction of the boat, I'm not sure how many there were, but I mean there probably was a dozen, a dozen butt joints, what they call butt joints, where the planks butt each other.

Q90 Mmm.

A And in that sort of force it would be no, you know, this is possibly what I would feel what possibly happened is one of those, if that plank wants to push in there, this wants to go out, on one of those there could have been a butt joint and it's just thrown the butt joint out.

Q91 Mmm. Yeah.

A Any, it wasn't, it wasn't as if, it took quite, but it came up. I mean I observed where the water was after we couldn't get the motor started which was just drastic then. I mean that was, that was the end of the ball game, once that motor couldn't go and couldn't get that pump operating. I observed the water to see how fast it was and it was, it was coming in, but it wasn't, wasn't as if it was a great big gaping hole or something like that it was just a sprung plank somewhere, but it

was, it was too much water for you to do anything else without a pump. If you had a mechanical pump that would've, I reckon would've kept up with it.

You would have been able maybe look around and see what the story was but - - -

Q92 Mmm.

A Once you couldn't get the motor going - - -

Q93 Mmm.

A - - - you then were forced to bail out, and I, I don't know what the actual time was but getting all the gear on deck and the life rafts and then giving the boys the vests and getting organised, then the thing was there that we had to, if we were going to have to leave the boat, to make sure that we get our timing right and from all our experience we'd learnt that you just don't get off these boats. You don't throw the life raft in the water until the boat's at its maximum slowest.

Q94 Yeah.

A Which is what we waited for. We just waited for the, basically the decks were awash so that the boat, it comes to a standstill then you launch the raft and then you get into it 'cause if you do it prior to that and you've got travelling with speed, you quite easy could launch the life raft and you, the line could break and you've lost the raft and you're - - -

Q95 Yeah.

A - - - on a sinking boat so you're in no man's land, so you've got to make sure when you do that situation that you do it at the right time which is, I think, we did that quite well.

Q96 Mmm. Now so far as the, the weather situation, you described you know prior to this interview that you considered that in that area it was near cyclonic, the conditions down there.

A Mmm. Oh, there was no doubt about it, that, that weather pattern just changed into a low depression which became basically a cyclonic low.

Q97 Mmm.

A I mean there was no two ways about that.

Q98 Now - - -

A And it happened fast and, and, as we talked about just a while ago that, you know, that there's a report out that Wilsons Promitery had forecast it or not forecast it, had recorded 90 knots at 11.00am. Now if the fleet had known that they wouldn't have been putting themselves into those situations. I know we wouldn't have. We were still going on, on the 50 knots, possible 60 sou'-west, but then theoretically turning to the west, so I mean that's what we based our information on.

Q99 Do you put that down to an administrative and communications problem together?

A Oh, I believe so. I think it, I think they've addressed that situation of, of not being able to

get all this, this weather information from all these places and put it together and make sure that people are told.

Q100 Mmm.

A They sort of tended to rely a little bit on a professional person putting it together, but I mean also they've got three different weather charts these days, and all of them supposedly disagreed with each other.

Q101 Mmm.

A And when you get a low which becomes a cyclone as we all know, they can't predict which way they're going to go.

Q102 Mmm.

A Every time a cyclonic front gets together they don't know whether they're going to head into land, out to sea, north or south - - -

Q103 Mmm.

A - - - so when you get a low like that you're, you, you're really not quite sure what's going to happen, and when you, and also you don't know which way it's moving so in our situation you didn't know if you were going to turn around and you were going to go back into it or whether if you'd stayed on were you going to sail out of it.

Q104 Mmm.

A I mean there's a situation there where that can backfire sometimes if, if, if they were talking

about people telling each other how the conditions are. Well that's all very well but if you're, if the bloke up the front is leading, is 150 miles in front of you and he's in good conditions you think well, I'm O.K. so you think oh, he's all right we'll carry on - - -

Q105 Yeah.

A - - - 'cause we've only got a few hours to go and we'll be through this - - -

Q106 Yeah.

A - - - but that, like that, that sometimes can backfire, that sort of, that sort of, giving that information to each other.

Q107 Yeah. Do you think that had, the fleet had known about that a lot of boats would have gone into shelter?

A Yes, definitely.

Q108 And that'd be a seamanship issue?

A Yeah. Yeah. It'd be a common sense issue too.

Q109 Yeah, of course, yeah.

A Oh no, if you knew you were going to get those conditions in Bass Strait - - -

Q110 Yeah.

A - - - you would've, you would've got out of there.

Q111 Mmm.

A But that's what happened and you then had to cope with what you got, and those, those waves are O.K. but it's that one wave, that rogue wave which

you'll find that takes you out of plane and it doesn't matter how strong the boat is - - -

Q112 Mmm.

A - - - how good the boat is, you get one of these waves that pick you up and it'll throw you, you you'll, it'll put you in a 360 or - - -

Q113 Mmm.

A - - - or just pick you up and throw you and it's, it's, none, none of the boats are really built for that sort of - - -

Q114 Yeah.

A - - - those weather conditions.

DETECTIVE SENIOR CONSTABLE GRAY

Q115 John, you're aware obviously of the, of the topography and the, and the geographical location of Wilsons Prom, Wilsons Promitory - - -

A Yes, yes - - -

Q115 - - - is that, yeah.

A Yes.

Q116 And - - -

A And they always say that basically the weather at Wilsons Promitory, you always, they say that you always allow an extra 15 knots, once you hear a wind, the wind reading there, it's sort of 15 knots more than what it really is, sort of.

Q117 So what, what's recorded is more than what you're going to expect?

A So they say. I mean I don't know the truth of

that.

Q118 Yeah. Well I, I was just going to explain to you that would you be surprised if, if the situation with Wilsons Promitury as being 100 metres above sea level, where the recording station is - - -

A Mmm.

Q118 - - - that it acts like a high pressure, like a, like an air foil, like a wing so to speak - - -

A Yeah.

Q118 - - - like the shape of a sail - - -

A Well it's - - -

Q118 - - - and you get that - - -

A Well I think that's why generally they say - - -

Q118 - - - increase?

A Generally they say you allow 15, 15 knots, you know 15, 15 or possibly even 20, but I mean if it's got 90 you've got 70.

Q119 Mmm.

A So that's - - -

Q120 Mmm.

A - - - that's dangerous.

Q121 But is that - - -

A It's - - -

Q122 Is that the general consensus between a lot of, lot of - - -

A A lot of yachties sort of - - -

Q123 Do they know that?

A Oh, no, I'm not sure really.

Q124 Mmm.

A I mean the guys that I mix with do.

Q125 Mmm.

A 'Cause they've been around for a long time, you know.

Q126 Yeah.

A But it's not the, it's not the wind, it's the sea conditions.

Q127 Mmm.

A That's the problem. It's the sea condition. And the longer the wind blows the bigger that sea gets and the bigger and the duration of the rogue wave gets less and less, so where it starts off in one in 50, the longer the, it blows that rogue wave comes down to something like one in 15, and that one in 15 is double the size of the sea conditions. I mean that's what you're looking at and we, we found that in the raft, once we got in that raft. About every 20 minutes or 30 minutes you'd just hear this enormous rolling sea coming -
- -

Q128 Mmm.

A - - - and you knew you had to hang on because it was one that was going to take you out of play every time.

Q129 Mmm.

A And it was, it was, you could you know, you could nearly set your watch by it. You could just hear

them coming, they'd just be like the roaring surf.

Q130 Can we just talk about that, and do you mind going back - - -

A No.

Q130 - - - and talking about the experience - - -

A No.

Q130 - - - that you had in the - - -

A No, I don't, I - - -

Q130 - - - in the life raft?

A No.

Q131 Just, just touching on that, with life rafts you've deployed them before in practice?

A I haven't actually done it. I've watched, I've stood by a chap who's done it and observed it down at Middle Harbour Yacht Club, and one or two other various places of the years, so generally yes, I have looked at it and heard about it. But like everyone else you should always do more of it of course and I think that's one of the things that will come out of things in future. But yes, I've, I do know basic, the basic set up with them. I haven't actually been in one before.

Q132 Right.

A It was my first experience in one.

Q133 O.K. Now you told us before that the raft was inverted for some time and you were, the five men were all inside - - -

A Mmm.

Q133 - - - floating with the, the bottom of the raft above your heads?

A Yeah.

Q134 How many times do you, do you feel that you rolled whilst in the raft?

A Well, we didn't actually, that, that was the first time. When we rolled upside down - - -

Q135 Yeah.

A - - - that was the first time, but we nearly went to the point of rolling several times. I mean first time was when I did all my damage to my limbs, it got, because my, my back was at the, at the waves, and Gibbo was alongside of me. So as the wave wants to roll you over it's lifting, it's lifting you first and it's sort of, if there's two people on this side and say three there, it's sort of trying to fold the thing in half before it lifts the whole thing over, so what had actually happened was it lifted us up and my legs were trapped under other people's legs, so the top of my body went up, the bottom didn't, that's where it ripped all the tendons and it broke, broke the bone. And then so that, that happened, we came back down again and that's I said we've got this wrong, we've got to sit parallel to each other so that we don't interfere with each other's bodies here. So we nearly got capsized a couple of times, well probably half a dozen times, but then

it - - -

Q136 When you're saying - - -

A - - - it was dark.

Q136 - - - capsized, do you - - -

A Well, to the point where you, you go up to nearly a vertical situation - - -

Q137 Yeah.

A - - - before you're going to go over but then you get to a sort of vertical and you come back down again.

Q138 Right.

A So you survive it, you know, you sort of, I don't know - - -

Q139 But the raft was, the raft was inverted at this stage so - - -

A No, no this is - - -

Q139 - - - you were in - - -

A This is before we, before we went right over.

Q140 O.K. So you're - - -

A This - - -

Q140 - - - the right way up at this stage?

A We're right way up and so - - -

Q141 Yeah.

A - - - I did a lot of damage to my, in one of our near capsizes.

Q142 Yes.

A Now that near capsizes probably happened, oh, I don't know six or seven times, so we survived it

but this particular one when it was dark, we could hear the surf coming, the roar of the surf coming again and then you just hang on and you go up and this time right over, so then you're upside down.

Q143 O.K. So then you were upside down. Was there an influx of water?

A Not so much an influx of water because the canopy on it is so light and the, the door opening was so flimsy that really all you did was you just went upside down and you just, and it, it just settled at whatever level the flotation settled you at.

Q144 O.K. So you're now upside down and there's not much water inside?

A Yeah. Yeah, you're, you're up to here in water.

Q145 You're up, so you're up to - - -

A Yeah, it's

Q145 - - - so there was a fair bit of ingress of water?

A Well, I, I think basically you just went straight upside down and the whole thing, all of a sudden you were in that much water.

Q146 Right.

A There was no ingress. I think it was just a case of water, came probably through the doorway or just through the cloth - - -

Q147 Yeah.

A - - - or whatever.

Q148 O.K.

A But basically what you were, is as you went upside

down - - -

Q149 Mmm.

A - - - and you sort of, you're hanging onto, hanging onto the rope, as you sort of come up all of a sudden the water's here.

Q150 All right.

A And you're standing on the roof frame - - -

Q151 Yeah.

A - - - hanging onto the rope, saying, Right. And then you started to think, righto, but the thing was it was just so much peaceful - - -

Q152 Mmm.

A - - - upside down.

Q153 Was everyone wearing a life jacket?

A Yeah, they were.

Q154 O.K.

A They were and the only chap that had a harness on was John - - -

Q155 Right.

A - - - Gibson.

Q156 John Gibson?

A Yeah. So we carried on like that for some time and you'd get a wave which would fall on top of your roof, on top of the roof and you'd put your hand up and shed the water off it and you'd sort of, then we'd start talking about how we're going to get out of this mess.

Q157 Right.

A And that's when we had this conversation - - -

Q158 Mmm.

A - - - and Jim was the closest to the, the opening, and he said, Well for me to get out of here I've got to take off this life vest, because I'm not going to fit through this thing to get out properly, so that's when we said, Gee, this is dangerous. You know, and it's still crashing and blowing a gale, and we're O.K. But the thing was, was the oxygen.

Q159 All right. Did anyone, just before we go onto that oxygen, did anyone know or did we all discuss on the methods of turning it over?

A No, we didn't really, we talked about it.

Q160 Yeah.

A But we didn't really, weren't 100 per cent, we weren't confident of, of how many would have to go out to do it.

Q161 All right.

A That was the problem. Whether it'd be one, two or possibly three would have to go out for us to try and turn this, physically turn this thing over, that's something we didn't know.

Q162 Right. But you thought about somebody actually going out - - -

A Oh, yeah.

Q162 - - - and having to turn it over?

A Yeah.

Q163 O.K.

A Yeah.

Q164 All right.

A Oh, we talked about that but as, as Jim said, I'm the closest to the door, I'll go out first - - -

Q165 Yeah.

A - - - but I'm going to have to take this vest off
- -
-

Q166 Yeah.

A - - - and that's when we said, That's dangerous, because there was no guarantee that while he was out there you weren't going to hit with another big wave and get tipped over and then you'd lose him, one. If two went out you could possibly lost two in that instance, so, and the, the other thing was that we felt a lot more comfortable - - -

Q167 Yeah.

A - - - where we were.

Q168 The raft was more stable - - -

A Oh - - -

Q168 - - - upside down?

A - - - yes, it has to be because - - -

Q169 Yes.

A - - - it was that much above the water - - -

Q170 Yeah.

A - - - all your body weight's inside, and you're standing on a, on a roof frame which is, which is

actually holding the thing stable.

Q171 Right. Right. Now everyone was standing on that?

A Well I, I would say so. I mean you can't really tell. You've got one, I had one foot on it from memory. I think I might have one, might have had two on it.

Q172 Mmm.

A And then you were hanging onto the rope on the inside.

Q173 Right.

A But - - -

Q174 So there was an internal rope - - -

A Yeah.

Q174 - - - running around the inside?

A Yeah. Yeah, there was. I'm sure there was.

Q175 Yeah.

A We wouldn't have been able to hang onto it otherwise.

Q176 Yeah. O.K.

A There had to be.

Q177 Yeah. No, that's fine.

A So you, you're doing that and, and from what we'd just been experiencing, which was like a roller coaster ride, all of a sudden we're into a much smoother situation.

Q178 Yeah.

A And we thought this, this is much better, wouldn't mind staying here for a while which is

Q179 And the water was warm?

A Oh, the water was O.K.

Q180 Yeah.

A Yeah. Yeah, that wasn't an issue. Like 'cause I was, I had shorts on.

Q181 Mmm.

A And, and I didn't have any shoes or anything - - -

Q182

A - - - so I didn't, so that's why we talked about it and we said, We're, we're safer like this but we need oxygen - - -

Q183 Yeah.

A - - - and that's when we made the decision. Michael was probably the only one that, out of the five, we was, there was four of us that said let's cut it where the handle was.

Q184 Who said this?

A Michael Bannister was probably the one that didn't want to do it.

Q185 Yeah.

A But the four, the other four said, Yes.

Q186 O.K.

A I mean I would've gone out to try and ride it but I was, I was out of play.

Q187 Yeah.

A But that was basic, so we all sort of then said, yes, O.K. let's do it, and that's what we did and then we cut it.

Q188 Well who cut, who cut it?
A Jim cut it. He had the knife.
Q189 Jim?
A Jimmy Lawler.
Q190 Right.
A He cut it and made a, near a handle, there was a handle there, there was a fore and aft handle and, but it was obviously where there was more strength. So he cut it alongside that, about 4 inches, that's all - - -
Q191 And what was the handle made out of?
A Oh, it would've been rubber - - -
Q192 The same - - -
A It's rubber, yeah, it's just - - -
Q192 - - - the same material as the floor?
A - - - the same material as the floor, yeah.
Q193 O.K.
A Yeah. Yeah, I think it was a handle from memory. I'd have to, once I look at this thing again I'll - - -
Q194 Right. Yeah.
A - - - it'll come back to me.
Q195 O.K.
A So it was about that long. And then as soon as we we, we tended to, because of oxygen that was - - -
Q196 About that long, you, you're indicating?
A Yeah, 4 inches.

Q197 4 inches?

A About a 4 inch cut, that's all we needed. And then, then there was an escape of what air was left in there, so we went down, probably about, I don't know, about an inch, I s'pose. That was still O.K. but then you could feel the, now you could feel the thing getting tighter, that's why we had to do this.

Q198 What, what do you mean thing getting tighter?

A Well, your oxygen, lack of oxygen.

Q199 Right. Yeah.

A You know.

Q200 You found it - - -

A You're talking - - -

Q200 - - - more difficult to breathe?

A Exactly, you're talking and you're talking and you're using up all the air that's inside it.

Q201 Mmm.

A So we knew we had to do something and we had to, so we said, right, rather than trying to get out of here and try and get this thing up, it's, we're, we're happier where we are, we all agreed that we were, we're safer upside down than what we were right side up so we agreed then to cut the, cut the slip and then that was sufficient hole to let the oxygen So we carried on like that. Now I don't, this is where the timing's, you don't really know how long you go for. I mean Gibbo has

a slightly different view. I don't know how long we went for like that but we were, we went along and we were comfortable in that situation. And then bingo, another big one comes along and that, that's got to be big because you're upside down in a, probably in a situation where it's got to take a much bigger wave or a much different action to turn you up but I mean it quite easy could be that if you, you're like that and there's a big wave that you, you could do that on a face of a wave. I mean - - -

Q202 So you're indicating - - -

A face - - -

Q203 You're indicating tipping down the face of a wave?

A You'd have to do it to - - -

Q204 Yeah.

A To roll back up the other way - - -

Q205 Yeah.

A - - - you've got to basically go down the face of a wave to do it, I, I believe.

Q206 So it's actually, you're indicating there a curl?

A I'd say so.

Q207 So you're coming up - - -

A Yeah. See - - -

Q207 - - - the face of the wave.

A See, when - - -

Q208 Into a curl situation?

A Yeah. Well when you think about it, when you're

right side up - - -

Q209 Yes.

A - - - you're on top of it, so what it's trying to do is, is fold you over - - -

Q210 Yes.

A - - - which is, which is when it did all my damage, so it's trying to fold you over.

Q211 Yeah.

A And that doesn't take, that takes a big wave, but when you're in the reverse way and all your body weight's down in the water it's got to take a lot bigger wave, so the only way to really do that I reckon is to go down the face of a wave and then get flipped over.

Q212 Yes.

A Which is what we did again.

Q213 O.K. So, so you got, you flipped over?

A Yeah.

Q214 Or the, you, the motion came up, you felt yourself
- - -

A Yeah.

Q214 - - - rolling again - - -

A Yeah.

Q214 - - - to be inverted?

A Well you just get, you just get thrown.

Q215 Thrown over, yeah.

A Yeah.

Q216 O.K. Was there actually any, a free falling

effect there that you can recall?

A No, not really. I can't - - -

Q217 O.K.

A - - - say, oh, you, you just goin' everywhere and
- - -

Q218 Yeah.

A - - - you can't really tell which way you're
going.

Q219 It's, I know it may be difficult to try and - - -

A Yeah.

Q219 - - - recall - - -

A Yeah, yeah.

Q219 - - - exactly what happened - - -

A Yeah. No, but that's, I mean that's what would
have had to happen to, to get all that body weight
back up the right way. You would have had to sort
of go down the face and then be flicked over.

Q220 All right. And at that stage the floor was still
intact?

A Oh, yeah, yeah, well it was, and the you'd come
down - - -

Q221 And then what happened?

A - - - and your body weight, your body weight comes
down on top of it and then the roof's virtually
gone anyway, because it's only just lightweight
cloth, which your feet have been pushed through
and - - -

Q222 So that's when the floor, the roof ripped away?

A Well, I think the roof must've gone while we're probably upside down. It was, it was possibly there - - -

Q223 Yeah.

A - - - but it was just in bits and pieces and that sorts - - -

Q224 O.K.

A So you'd come up the other way, so you're back into this, you're back into this raft - - -

Q225 Which is now the right way up?

A Yeah. And then the rip is there. Now, I don't know how long it took but the rip slowly got bigger and bigger and bigger, just the body weight being, being in, in, in the raft itself. So eventually what you end up doing is you've got your hand, oh, probably the best way to do it, I think I used to put my hand over the top of the raft and hold onto the rope on the outside, right, like that. And you'd tuck one, one of your feet up into the corner because it's glued on all the way around and it's sort of ripped up the middle, so you've got a sort of a chute like that, you know what I mean? So you've got some sort of thingo, but basically you're in a round ring - - -

Q226 Yeah.

A - - - and what we did - - -

Q227 Was it square or round?

A It was square.

Q228 Right.

A Square, yeah. But you could pull the roof frame down.

Q229 Right.

A And so that's what we used to do is pull the roof frame down and use that to put your foot on as well and then hang on.

Q230 Right.

A And you sort of did that to try and get the best.
So - - -

Q231 How far do you think the tear was before the next time you were hit by a wave?

A Wouldn't have a clue.

Q232 You can't recall?

A No, it was something, you just didn't even - - -

Q233 Would - - -

A I don't even remember, you know

Q234 Would it have been from one side to the other?

A Oh, would've gone that far eventually, yeah, it would've gone just straight across.

Q235 Yeah.

A It's all it could've done.

Q236 Right.

A Is gone to the other side and stopped. Yeah.

Q237 So that's - - -

A No, that, that happened.

Q238 So you were holding yourself onto the raft - - -

A Yeah.

Q238 - - - with one arm through the hole - - -

A No, no - - -

Q239 No?

A - - - I just had it over the top from memory. I just had it over - - -

Q240 Over the top?

A - - - the top and, and then one foot down there on, on the roof frame.

Q241 O.K. So at that time the, the canopy had gone, it was in - - -

A Oh, I think so, I think from memory, yeah.

Q242 Otherwise - - -

A

Q242 - - - you wouldn't have been able to put your hand around it, would you?

A No, no.

Q243 Yeah.

A Before that, when we came up the right way we would've, we would've had our hand over the outside and the roof frame could have been there a little bit, you know, and we could've gone on and on and on and then eventually the, the rip got bigger. It didn't happen automatically. I'm sure it happened over a period of time, different, different wind, wave conditions. And then, and then we got, so that was like that for a while. Then we got rolled again, rolled completely over again, upside down and that's when the roof frame

was on the bottom and that's when we sort of put our feet on it again and we hung on, and at that stage I, I got to a situation where I, I was, as the roof frame came down in an upside condition I actually, where it came around the raft, I got in there and I hung onto the roof frame like that.

Q244 Right. So you looped, you're looping - - -

A I'm

Q244 - - - your arm around the roof - - -

A I had this arm around the roof frame - - -

Q245 Yeah.

A - - - and sort of got probably one cheek on the roof frame and then, and then hung onto the, to the rope, right, like that. And the other boys were sort of, there was one on the other side and one around there. I remember holding onto Deanie, he was sort of just tryin' to put his body over the top of the, of the, of the rubber ring, and he couldn't get up and I was, I was holding him there, and he couldn't do it, he was getting very tired.

Q246 And this ring, this raft now has got, we've got -
- -

A Sort of two.

Q246 - - - two portions.

A Two portion like that, that's right.

Q247 O.K. Yeah. Yeah.

A So he was just tryin' to sort of droop himself

over it like straddle it with his, but he couldn't get up and over so I was hanging onto him there, like, like that. I was like that holding him there.

Q248 So your arms wrapped around - - -

A I'm wrapped around him.

Q248 - - - and holding with the other? Yeah.

A And I, and I was holding his back, I'm holding him up there against it. And saying, Are you right? We were, we were, it was good spirits.

Q249 Mmm.

A Really, really.

Q250 There was no panic?

A No, no, no. None of that.

Q251 Yeah.

A Everyone right, and everyone you know trying to help each other. (Tape Beeping)

Q252 Right.

A So that was that situation and then, I don't know how long that went on for, I really don't but I mean then all of a sudden this, this wave just came out of nowhere. There was no warning with this one, this time. Every time we'd get a warning of a rolling surf, but there was no warning at all with this one and I think once again you've gone up the face of a wave and it's broken, you've broken on the top and that's the only way I could, could describe it. There was no

warning. So I'm around here like that, Gibbo's got his vest, his harness and literally clipped it around the roof frame and clipped it onto himself so he's actually secured but he's still hanging somewhere, hanging on, trying to hang on.

Q253 Right.

A Like the rest of them. And I've got my arm around there and then we've gone up the face of this wave and then I reckon it's broken like that, and the way we've gone, and I'll tell you what it's just, was like going down a big, face of a big wave, it was just white water foam and I just hung on. I'm in the surf and I'm in a big wave action.

Q254 Mmm.

A And I hung and hung and hung and there's no way, I lost my, I had my vest on but it was one of those more west ones.

Q255 This is a P.F.D.?

A Yeah.

Q256 Personal Flotation Device?

A Yeah.

Q257 Yeah.

A And I didn't tie it on at any stage. I never tied it on because it, they want to rip your head off -
- -

Q258 Yeah.

A - - - so I was quite happy just to lose that. I, I did lose it in that wave but I wasn't going to

let my, this arm go, so I ended up puttin' this arm onto this one, I think from memory, and I'd lock them, the two were together. So it just took me through the surf and it seemed to go forever, and then finally it sort of flattened out and I'm hanging on, I'm still hanging on but I'm on the outside of the raft and I'm, and this, this, I've sort of, must've pulled the roof frame over here and I'm on the outside of it so here.

Q259 Mmm.

A So when I've put my head up to get air the, the raft's there.

Q260 In front of you?

A Or the raft's there. In front of me.

Q261 Yeah.

A And I'm still hanging - - -

Q262 And you're on the outside of the rail?

A I'm still hanging, so I've actually pulled the roof frame down, sort of one sided a little bit.

Q263 Yeah.

A And I, and I'm on the outside and I yelled out, Are you all there? Something like that. And the only answer was Gibbo, and after that I looked back and there was white water for probably 300 yards or something like that, and I could see two people right back there just with their heads above.

Q264 Mmm.

A And they were yelling out. And then I, I thought, I'm no good out here, I've got to get back underneath so I, I let, dived back underneath here and Gibbo was inside. That's when I said to Gibbo, I said, Jeez, we're by ourself here, mate. We can't do anything for those blokes - - -

Q265 Mmm.

A - - - the wind's blown us, gunna blow us, the wave actually's going to blow us.

Q266 Yeah.

A We can't go back, can't do anything, can only hope that, that, I didn't know what time it was. I really, I, I thought it was probably around 2 o'clock maybe a bit later in the morning. John thinks it was earlier so, but that happened and then we went on and we just got rolled. Before daybreak I think we got rolled about another two, three times, I'm not 100 per cent sure of that, and then daybreak came. We'd worked out a system and we were, and when the raft was right side up we'd pull the roof frame down and we sat back to back on it, straddled the, back to back like that, and when we were up the other way I, I'd go up to the other end and straddle one end of it and put my legs against him and pin him against the other end. So that's how we did it.

Q267 Right. We'll just suspend the interview due to a tape change.

A yeah.

Q268 The time is 5 minutes past 11.00. This interview,
this interview is suspended.

INTERVIEW SUSPENDED

INTERVIEW RESUMED

DETECTIVE SENIOR CONSTABLE GRAY

Q269 Interview between Detective Senior Constable Gray
and Mr John Stanley is continued. The time is
11.11am.

DETECTIVE SENIOR CONSTABLE UPSTON

Q270 John, we were discussing prior to the tape change
your experience in the lift raft.

A Yeah.

Q271 And we got up to a situation where you were
rolled, that your fellow comrades in the life raft
were washed away - - -

A Yeah.

Q271 - - - and, and you and John Gibson were left in
the lift raft and you were supporting each other.

A Yeah.

Q272 Physically supporting, not mentally supporting,
but physically supporting each other - - -

A Yeah.

Q272 - - - at the time of the roll. Is that correct?

A Yeah. Well, we worked out a system of when the
raft, raft was up one way we would sit one way and
when the raft was upside down the other way we
would then have to, have to work, work out another

system. So that's what we did, and when it was upside down we sat opposite each other with my legs in his groin to force him against the other end to sort of hold him back, sitting, straddling this roof frame. And when it was right side up we would pull the roof frame down and we would straddle that back to back and then hang onto the sides. So that was the system that we ended up using, and a couple of times in that situation with the, with the wind blowing it would just get underneath the floor, which was left of the floor.

If it rode up a little bit, there was just, there was, the wind would just literally be enough wind underneath that little bit of sail area there to blow us over. So we, you know, we must've gone oh over it, probably during the course of the day, probably about another six, six to, six or seven times.

Q273 Right. Now, John, when you were inside the raft and I'll, I'll pass you a blank piece of paper.

A Mmm.

Q274 If you can sketch and it's not an art test or anything like this - - -

A No.

Q274 - - - but if you can sketch first of all the shape of the raft - - -

A The - - -

Q274 - - - maybe on, on - - -

A The shape of the raft's a bit of a, still a bit of a, I believe it was - - -

Q275 This is at the time, I'll, it's a, pass you up a blue pen.

A I'm just trying to think now. I'm pretty sure, 'cause once you lose the floor, see that's the, see the, the only thing that holds the shape is the floor.

Q276 Right. Well if you can - - -

A That's

Q277 If you can draw for me, first of all - - -

A Well, I presume it was basically like this.

Q278 So it's a - - -

A I'm just trying to think.

Q278 - - - square or rectangular - - -

A Rectangular.

Q279 Right.

A I'm just trying to think where the door would've been. The door would have had to have been here, and you got into the thing. That's basically the way it was. I mean when, when we were, when we were sitting in it - - -

Q280 You can draw stick figures if you like - - -

A Yeah.

Q280 - - - just to indicate where you and - - -

A I'll just, well I was - - -

Q280 - - - and John Gibson were.

A - - - if I was here with my back to it, back to

the water. I'm just trying to think whether it was really, might have even been a bit smaller than that. I don't know, probably, it must've been smaller because there didn't seem to be all that much room. Like it must've been like, more like that.

Q281 So it was a more square than rectangular?

A Yeah, it could've been, I just - - -

Q282 Yeah.

A There's, there's, there was myself and Gibbo, there was Bannister, there was Deanie and there was Jim. So it's, I mean you really make that a lot bigger. That's basically where it was. So the door would have been here. Yeah. Jim, Jim was near the door. There was a flap thing here, which was like a, I don't know what it is, it's like a funnel. Must be to, to catch water or - - -
-

Q283 Right.

A - - - or look out or do something, but it was like that. And I, I had to hang onto it because the water was pouring in there and it was pouring in here.

Q284 Right.

A And so I was hanging onto this thing. I did, I didn't have enough length to tie a knot in it, so I had to hang onto it. And then when, when the first wave tries to get you or when it tries to,

first time it capsized, you sort of, my legs, my legs, they would have been there. Bannister's would have been over mine and possibly Gibbo's over his, and then they were like that, sort of thing.

Q285 All right. So all your legs were basically pointing into - - -

A Well, basically into, into - - -

Q285 - - - the centre?

A - - - the middle. That's right. That's right.

Q286 All right.

A So then when it tries to fold you like that, lift you up like that - - -

Q287 And turn you over, yes?

A - - - you, my feet are trapped under these feet, and that's why I sustained all these damages, so then I said, Well what we should do is you put your feet this way, so that's what I decided, we ended up, he might have moved down a little bit but we ended up doing, doing that, sort of thing.

Q288 Right.

A So, so that you weren't interfering with each other as you got rolled.

Q289 All right.

A That was basically

Q290 O.K. Will - - -

A Yeah.

Q290 - - - will you just initial, would you just sign

that and just so that we can, we might refer to
this - - -

A Yeah, sure.

Q290 - - - later on.

A Yeah. Yeah.

Q291 And just put your - - -

A Yeah, that was - - -

Q291 - - - where you were.

A - - - yeah, O.K.

Q292 Yeah.

A That's John, that's Gibson and that would have
been Deanie, I'll write Dean, and that was Jimmy
Lawler. Jimmy was, Dean was his brother that
and this was Mike B, Bannister.

Q293 And just the date, today is the 23rd.

A 23rd

Q294 And the reason why I asked you to do this - - -

A Yeah.

Q294 - - - is because we'll, we'll refer back to this
when we're doing the - - -

A Yeah, sure.

Q294 - - - life raft testing.

A Sure. Yeah.

Q295 And any other purposes that we may have.

A All right. Well the other thing when, when we
were, the two of us, it's like this, so that's
the, that's the frame, right. So when you're
upside down the roof frame's like, like that, or

it sort of comes down, I think it goes across then it comes back up. So what we had to do was literally, I had to, to, to sort of get flotation you would sit there like that, and you'd hang onto here and then I would put my feet across here and pin, pin Gibbo's body here, into there, so I'm pushing him against that - - -

Q296 Right.

A - - - and hanging onto the sides. So when it - - -
-

Q297 So there was enough room to do that when you're even seated?

A Well, yeah, this is - - -

Q298 Well when you were supporting yourselves?

A Well, yeah. I mean the thing now is probably, the, the thing now has turned into a round shape, see because - - -

Q299 O.K. So that's - - -

A - - - of the floor.

Q300 That's my next question.

A The floor - - -

Q301 So the raft - - -

A The floor's the only thing that keeps it the shape.

Q302 Right.

A Because what happens is they make a, I'm told that they make up a, whatever size, and then that's glued, glued right around to this thing and then,

then they blow it up, that's the shape. So once you've split it, I just forget which way the split went, like probably went longways, I s'pose, I just forget now which way - - -

Q303 Can I get another coloured pen for you, perhaps a black pen here.

A Mmm.

Q304 And if you can - - -

A But anyway, it turns into a round shape - - -

Q305 Right.

A - - - now. Then when you're the other way up, when the, when the roof frame's the other way up like, like so, like that.

Q306 And that's the roof frame that you're drawing there?

A That's the roof frame, yeah, which comes up over here.

Q307 Yeah.

A Which holds this thing up. Now when it's like that and we're in the water, what we had to do was to literally pull it down like this.

Q308 Right.

A And then the only way we could do it was we sat like that, back to back to straddle this thing - - -

Q309 Mmm.

A - - - and then, then hold onto the sides.

Q310 Right.

A So you were able to sort of do that, and then when, when you went over the other way it's in the water down there so you can't, it's down there, so you virtually can only sit on the, on the edge of the thing and push each other against each other, and that's the system that we worked out.

Q311 So you could pull the life raft in - - -

A But you could hang onto the sides of it.

Q312 Quite easily? Yeah.

A Oh, not so much pull it in, you could just hang onto the sides of it like that.

Q313 Right.

A And, and straddle this frame but rather than, to stop yourself slipping down into it you had to put your feet out - - -

Q314 Mmm.

A - - - to stop yourself slipping down.

Q315 Mmm.

A So I just put my feet straight in his crotch and he put his feet into mine or on top of mine I think, from memory, and you were able to do it, you were able to sit there - - -

Q316 Mmm.

A - - - literally sit there for, you know, for hours.

Q317 So at this stage the, the tear is right across - - -

-

A Oh, it's right across.

Q317 - - - right across the bottom?

A Yeah, it's right across the bottom and there's bits and pieces, like it's coming off.

Q318 Yeah.

A In shreds.

Q319 Right. So, so the, the floor is basically shredded? Would, that's how you'd explain it?

A Shreds, yeah, yeah, but, yes, it started, rather than sort of one split just like - - -

Q320 Yes.

A - - - all, everyone's weight, it's just split here, and it's, it's basically gone that way but then it's torn off that way and that way, so yeah, it's sort of shredded.

Q321 And from that main cut can you recall whether the, the, the tears or the shreds were actually leading back to the, to the cylindrical portions of the raft?

A Oh, yeah, yeah, basically it goes out - - -

Q322 Right.

A - - - in different areas.

Q323 So it was all jagged?

A Yeah.

Q324 O.K. Yeah. Yeah.

A Yeah. That, I mean that went on all day. I mean I, I thought we might see someone by 10 o'clock. I thought, I'd thought we, but 10 o'clock went - - -

Q325 Mmm.

A 11.00, 12.00 didn't see anyone and then the afternoon came on and it started, it was getting lighter and lighter a lot, breeze was dying
- - -

Q326 Mmm.

A - - - so then it was, then the, the test of hanging in there but we managed to do that quite all right.

Q327 Right. From, from when the guys that were lost, you didn't see them again - - -

A Mmm.

Q327 - - - what was the period of time, do you recall, that you were picked up? Can you recall that?

A When we were picked up out of the water?

Q328 Yes.

A I think it was about half past 9.00 at night, because it came on dark and about, probably about half past 5.00, 6.00 it started to get dark, and I saw a plane before it got dark, I saw a plane coming which was the one I thought spotted us, 'cause that put, put hope in the job. But then he didn't see us.

Q329 Mmm.

A And then it got darker and then I saw a helicopter and a plane going past us about a mile away going East, and I thought well they must be able to see Richard first, thinking that we're going to be

next sort of thing, they're going down to get Richard. So at this time I'm thinking yeah, we've been sighted, they've got their plan under it, they're going to get Richard first, then get, get us. So the helicopter and plane went down there and then never saw the helicopter again, so he must have then speared off to Mallacoota and then I saw this plane coming back up the track, going down and then I said to Gibbo, Get the strobe light out and turn it on, and I had my mag light and I put it onto ... beam and I pointed it straight at it, and coming up that's when he spotted those lights, those two lights, and then theoretically I'm told that that's the first time that we were seen.

Q330 Right.

A 'Cause then, and then, then he buzzed us about eight times, went out and do a loop, and come back just to sort of say that I'm still around boys. And then finally, and then it was dark for, for some time. So I would have thought about 9 o'clock.

Q331 Mmm.

A That the chopper arrived and then we went through the proceedings of getting hauled out which was something else too.

Q332 Yeah. Right.

A Yeah.

Q333 Right. O.K. Now I'll just ask you one more thing before Senior Constable Gray might have a few things to mention. Can you recall the, the clothing that you were wearing and also the rest of the guys were wearing - - -

A Well - - -

Q333 - - - in particular the fellows that have been lost?

A I was, I was clad the least of all. I had a pair of shorts - - -

Q334 Just whilst the, the noise is going - - -

A Yeah.

Q334 - - - can you just keep your voice up, please?

A Yeah. I only had a pair of shorts and a T-shirt with a, with a doona type sleeveless, like a, like a doona vest it is, and then a wet weather jacket over the top of that, that's all I had.

Q335 No shoes?

A No, no shoes.

Q336 O.K.

A And no wet weather pants. 'Cause I didn't get time to get them on. I sort of, getting all the gear together, I just sort of jumped in without getting those, and I don't particular, I like to have my legs free a lot of that time in that situation. The rest of the boys were all, Gibbo had the full rig on, he had everything, and the other boys, I think another, one of the boys had

boots on and the other two had shoes, I think from memory. But they all had full wet weather gear on and then whatever clothing they, they had underneath, you know - - -

Q337 Mmm.

A - - - it's hard to tell because they've got their wet weather jacket on, but they would have had you know proper, proper flannel and just enough to be warm.

Q338 Yeah.

A Yeah. So I don't know exactly what they had.

Q339 Mmm.

A But they were all rugged up. I was the least of all of them, rugged up.

Q340 Right.

A Yeah.

DETECTIVE SENIOR CONSTABLE GRAY

Q341 What colour was that gear, John, do you recall - -
-

A

Q341 - - - the, the other boys had on?

A Oh, no, it was just the standard sort of must - -
-

Q342 Mmm.

A - - - jacket, sort of thing. I don't, you know, all that, all of the Henry Lloyd stuff all of them had good, you know, good gear 'cause they'd all been out there before and done it.

Q343 Mmm. If I could just take you back to the weather for a second, you recall the release of the Bureau's report as far as the inquiry's concerned

- - -

A Mmm.

Q343 - - - when they mentioned this, add 40 per cent to wind - - -

A Yeah.

Q343 - - - and 87 per cent to, to waves.

A Yeah.

Q344 You as an experienced sailor, did - - -

A That's the, the first time, the first time any of us have ever, ever been told that information, and I really think that the poor old Weather Bureau, especially after the hail storm, and the scenario with the hail storm and no warning is that they really had to come up with some answers and that was one of the ones that they came up with, which I just think is a bit poor on their behalf and, you know, when you go back to the hail storm situation, that can work both ways again, it's, it's a, it's another scenario where if, if they had've been able to predict exactly what was going to happen and had it given people 2 hours' notice we could've had half a dozen people dead because they were trying to save some washing off the line, they're hit by one of those hail stones, so, so you can't, you know, in hindsight you really,

did the right thing happen or did we, should we have got the warning and tried to run, run for cover and tried to save all our belongings and - - -

Q345 Mmm.

A - - - you know, I'm surprised no one was killed in that hail storm when you look at the size of the hail storms, stones. It's just like a cricket ball, when you're hit at 300 mile an hour, if it hits you in the head you're dead.

Q346 Right.

A So no one was, it was just incredible. If, if, if the Weather Bureau had have given you 2 hours' notice you might've tried to park your car somewhere and smashed into someone or killed someone trying to do it, or you know, you could have had that mass hysteria, a bit like the Orson Wells production many years ago.

Q347 Mmm.

A Yeah.

Q348 O.K. Anything else you'd like to add to this interview today?

A Not really. I mean we've talked about it all pretty generally, I think so - - -

Q349 O.K.

A - - - it's what I can do, I can look forward to the, to the tank testing.

Q350 O.K. The time on my watch is now 11.27. This

interview is concluded.

INTERVIEW CONCLUDED