

DETECTIVE SENIOR CONSTABLE GRAY

Q1 This is an electronically recorded interview between Detective Senior Constable Stuart Gray and Mr Robert Brenac, that's B-R-E-N-A-C, at the Cruising Yacht Club of Australia in Sydney, on Friday, the 29th of January, 1999. Also present and seated to my left is Senior Constable Dave Upston from the New South Wales Water Police. The time on my watch is now 4.11pm. As I already explained to you, Mr Brenac, Senior Constable Upston and myself are making inquiries in relation to the Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race of 1998. And in particular in speaking to you we are conducting a number of inquiries in relation to the Business Post Niad, in which two lives were lost as a result of the race, during the race. And speak to you previously in the last couple of days, you indicated that you have some knowledge and some experience with that boat, personal experience with that boat, previous to this race. So, just for the record, if you could please state your full name?

A Robert William Brenac.

Q2 You're date of birth?

A 13th of the January, 1941.

Q3 Your current address?

A 4 Cottenham Avenue, Kensington.

Q4 And your occupation?

A Yacht administrator.

Q5 O.K. Firstly, if I could just sort of get some

background experience as far as sailing?

A Yeah, I probably, I've got a lot of sailing experience, I've sailed 14 Sydney/Hobarts most races out of this club over many years. Across, across the Pacific twice, across Bass, Bass Strait and the Great Australian Bight twice, and from Sydney to France and Los Angeles, New Zealand, and up and down the coast countless times, so a lot of racing and yacht, professional yacht deliveries I did for some years.

Q6 O.K. And what sort of boats, or yachts were you sailing?

A Most, mostly off-shore racing yachts.

Q7 O.K. Now, in a conversation we had the other day, or two days ago, you mentioned that you had some, some personal knowledge and experience with the Business Post Niad in 1994. I wonder if you could take us back to that time, and just explain to me your involvement with that vessel?

A It was prior to 1994, quite some years ago when the boat came here from New Zealand, I delivered it from Sydney, back to Auckland, for the owner. A couple of years later, I think it was, yeah, it would've been 1988, I sailed again, delivered the boat, after the Sydney/Hobart race, from Hobart to Sydney with my family as crew in the tall ships race, the bicentennial, the tall ships race. So, I brought the, you know, I've travelled quite a few miles on the boat.

Q8 O.K. Now, when you sailed it back from Hobart to

Sydney, that would be 1988?

A Yes, 1988, January, 1998.

Q9 O.K. Now, you've had your family on board the boat on that occasion?

A Yeah.

Q10 Can you give me some experiences that you had on that boat, or some, some expertise knowledge?

A The boat was, is typically towards the end of the IOR, international off-shore era, the IOR was faded out between, 1989 and 1992, when the new, IMS measurement system came into being. I've got some fairly strong feelings on the IOR it's, it's the sort of rule that, if you wanted to win races you had to build the boat, design and build the boat to suit the racing rule. And quite frankly the, the rule, because it was used for handicapping, it, anything that made a boat faster or, or appeared to make a boat faster obviously got a penalty, and conversely if it made a boat slower then it was given an advantage. What happened is, what they call the centre of gravity factor, if a yacht, when a yacht was measured and inclined to measure how, how tippy it is, the tippier it was, obviously the you could carry the slower it would be, so yachts were traditionally, or designed specifically to, to appear as though they'd tip over easily. So what you finished up with was yachts that were built very lightly, the hulls were built as light as possible, and then they inside it was

lead, and a lot of those IOR on toners of the 19, late 1980s were like that, and they have had problems with them.

Q11 O.K. When you say they tended to, to tip, did they in fact tip over more easily?

A No, no, well, no, they had, they had a, what they call a, not, not a very initial stability, they would keel very quickly, which would make them appear to be, and that's why they were very wide, and that's really why people have to sit on the side to keep them, keep them going fast. When I came back from Hobart with the kids, it was very obvious because they were all young, all youngsters at that stage, and of course, it was comfortable to sleep on the low side, not the high side, and you really, the boat just couldn't carry any gear at all, we were down to three reefs and the mainsail and a storm jib, and you know the boat was slow, that was because there was no weight sitting on the windward rail, you know the way most boats now, they still up on the windward rail, but it's not as important as it, as it was in those IOR boats.

Q12 So was the, the Niad a one toner?

A A one toner, yeah.

Q13 Right.

A Yeah. Far 40.

Q14 Far 40. Do you have any sort of knowledge about the far 40s, so far a stability problems?

A There were, there were as I say they were typical of

that era, they were built like that specifically to win races.

Q15 Yeah.

A It was flat out off-shore racing boat, and, and a lot of them sailed very successfully, and there are quite a few still sailing around here. It's not that they're bad boats,

Q16 Yeah.

A they're not good cruising boats put it that way, you'd have to do a lot with them. Most people have now taken the lead out of the inside, put it on, on the keel as a bulb, to make them stiffer.

Q17 When you say, "stiffer", what do you mean by that?

A More stable.

Q18 Right.

A So they won't keel as quickly.

Q19 O.K.

A Now if you can keep the boat upright, and put more sail in it, you know, it'll go faster.

Q20 Yeah.

A If you keep it standing up and if you don't have people sitting on the rail and what have you, and the boats too easily and then they just don't go, they're a bit slow. They're not unsafe, I wouldn't, would never say they were unsafe, but, it was just a characteristic of the IOR that, that they were designed and built that way.

Q21 Yeah.

A My personal feeling is that that's why the IOR failed, people just, people were just spending, you know, five and six and \$700,000 on a brand new boat designed to the racing rule, somebody would go and spend half that amount of money on a similar size boat and it would go faster, they couldn't handicap the boats would go faster.

Q22 Yeah.

A So, you know, these people were spending all this money just got, got sick of seeing boats the same size sail past them.

Q23 Yeah. Would you from your experience consider that the far 40 was a capable boat for a Sydney to Hobart?

A Yes, no doubt in the world, yeah.

Q24 Would you consider it a capable boat in the conditions in which you are now aware of from the previous Hobart?

A It's capable, yeah, as capable as any other boat.

Q25 Yeah.

A Certainly, yeah.

Q26 Would you be able to comment, or do you have an opinion so far as capsizing of that particular type of boat being more indicative in the recent Hobart weather?

A No, no, I don't believe so, I don't think, I don't think the style of boat had much to do with it at all quite frankly.

Q27 Yeah.

A It was just one of those unfortunate events where the, when you get big seas like that, there's only twice

I've ever been in that sort of weather, once going to Hobart in 1970, and the other time was off the west Australian coast. And you, it, it's the case and you really just have to be cautious about how you're sailing the boat.

Q28 Right.

A You know, you're not racing any more, I think the commodore mentioned that in one of his TV interviews once, it was over 40 knots and seas like that, you're not really racing you're just to nurse your boat and your crew through it.

Q29 And you agree with that?

A That's pretty true.

Q30 Yeah, yeah. You mentioned a short time ago that you, it was very important the way in which it was steered with waves, could you sort of expand on that for me?

A Yeah. I've heard, now, mind you, I wasn't out there, but I have heard that every boat that was badly damaged was actually heading back, in other words they were probably running across the seas - - -

Q31 Yeah.

A - - - rather than into them.

Q32 Right.

A This is a lot hard, it's a lot harder to control any boat under those conditions, you know, you get a breaking wave and it hits the stern, his you on the quarter stern, stern quarter, and it's very hard to keep the boat going, whereas if you heave to, for

example, you always heave to with the bow into the sea, or, you know, 30 degrees into the sea, and you usually won't come to any grief that way, it won't, the boat won't roll over. It's not as, not as comfortable obviously as running before it, running before big seas is quite dangerous, I feel. I wouldn't do it, I don't think. You know, I mean it's easy to say - - -

Q33 You wouldn't go back into it,
- - -

A No, I, you know, if they kept going, I think if all the boats had kept going there would've been less damage.

Q34 Yeah, yeah.

A Apart from Winston Churchill, which actually, you know, broke

Q35 Yeah.

A got a hole in it. Not much you can do about that.

Q36 Now, are you aware that during the race the Niad rolled once?

A So I've heard, yeah.

Q37 Yeah. Right, I can tell you that the Niad rolled once and it righted itself fairly quickly.

A Yeah.

Q38 And then it rolled a second time and remained inverted for some 4 to 6 minutes, according to crewmen on that boat. Does that surprise you?

A Yeah, very much so, I would be surprised if it would

remain inverted for more than 20 or 30 seconds.

Q39 Right.

A At most.

Q40 Yeah. From your experience, what would be indicative of it being kept over for that time period?

A Just the motion of the sea and probably had a lot of water in it at that stage, and once you like, get a lot of water on the inside - - -

Q41 Yeah.

A - - - you know, all the stability curves and everything change quite dramatically.

Q42 Yeah.

A And you've got to have a lot of weight sitting on the top, top of the cabin, that you wouldn't normally have there.

Q43 Yeah.

A Which offsets the weight of the keel.

Q44 Yeah. Now, are you aware of the IMS rating on the boat, that's the limited positive stability rating?

A No, but I would imagine that most of those boats are towards the bottom end of it, they're down around 100, between 110 and 115.

Q45 Right. O.K.

A I, I don't believe that really has a great deal to do with it, quite frankly, the limited positive stability is purely a measure of how fast the boat will right, or whether it will right or continue to roll, when you're talking about being out on the ocean, waves and wind

like that, it's not quite the same as a stability curve in flat water.

Q46

Yeah.

A

It's quite meaningless.

Q47

Yeah.

A

Personal opinion, but I don't think it means a lot.

Q48

Yeah.

A

Was it under 115 that boat, do you know or -?

Q49

We're still looking into that at the moment.

A

Mm.

Q50

Yeah. Would you be surprised if it was under 115?

A

I'd be surprised if it was under 110, I would expect it to be around, between 110, 113 thereabouts.

Q51

In your experience, if it was under 110, what would that mean to you?

A

It would mean that it probably shouldn't have gone to Hobart, because the rule, the rule is that the boat that the lower limit is 115, that's reduced to 110 if the boat has been to Hobart before.

Q52

Yeah.

A

That's my understanding.

Q53

So what would, from your experience what would you consider if the, how would you consider the boat if the IMS was under 110?

A

Like I said, I don't think it has a lot of bearing on the safety issue.

Q54

Right.

A

I think it's more a, a speed issue than anything else.

Q55 Mm.

A When you're talking big waves and, you know, especially breaking waves like that, I don't think limited positive stability has a great, has any great meaning whatsoever.

Q56

A Unless it's very low.

Q57 What would you consider to be low?

A 100, 100 degrees, in fact you can't get a certificate I don't think under 103.

Q58 Right.

A 103 is the bottom limit.

Q59 Right. So anywhere between sort of 103 to say 105
- - -

A Mm.

Q59 - - - what would you consider, what would you - - -

A I wouldn't, not being a naval architect - - -

Q60 Yes, just from experience.

A Just from experience, I would be guided by the people who say, under 105 you shouldn't be going.

Q61 Yeah.

A But you know, the limit is 110 for even category two races, and that's - - -

Q62 Yeah.

A - - - that's, well, it was always enforced when I worked here.

Q63 Yeah. O.K. Supposing it had a, a IMS under 110, and you made comment that it shouldn't be allowed to,

perhaps shouldn't be allowed to go in the, the race due to certain rules and regulations?

A I'd say it shouldn't be allowed to go because the rules says it shouldn't be allowed to go, the, the, the conditions of entry say it shouldn't be allowed to go.

Q64 Yeah.

A And that's, all, all those rules - - -

Q65 Yeah.

A - - - have always been totally enforced.

Q66 Yeah. So why would they cut it off at 110, that's what I'm trying to say to you?

A Because the, they're graded. It's at 103 for category three and four races, 110 for category two races - - -

Q67 Right.

A - - - which are south, coast races.

Q68 Right.

A And 115 for category one races.

Q69 O.K. And the Sydney to Hobart is in fact a category one?

A Is 100, yeah.

Q70 Right.

A They made, they made the, because like I say, the I, there was so may IOR boats sailing in the early days of IMS - - -

Q71 Yeah.

A - - - that didn't have a 115, but had been to Hobart successfully, and even won Hobart races, it was felt that it would be unfair to turn around after these

boats have maybe been down six or seven times and say, and say well, you know, you can't go any more, because we've upped the ante.

Q72 Yeah. Now, the term, grandfathering, are you able to enlighten me on that term?

A That's exactly what I mean by grandfathering.

Q73 Right.

A Boats who, that had been to Hobart before - - -

Q74 Yeah.

A - - - that didn't, that didn't meet the 115 degrees
- - -

Q75 Right.

A - - - but did meet 110 - - -

Q76 yes.

A - - - were allowed to go.

Q77 Right.

A They were grandfathered because they have been before.

Q78 Hence the term. O.K. Now, the, have you got an opinion so far as old yachts, new yachts, light yachts, heavy yachts?

A I like new yachts, I think they're better - - -

Q79 Right.

A - - - they're faster, they're stronger, they're, they've got a lot going for them, and people who you know, the traditionalists that like old, FJ Holdens, they say, they're better than the new Commodore, but, you know, what would you rather be in, an air conditioned Commodore with power steering or a

beautifully restored FJ.

Q80 Yeah, yeah.

A Which would you rather travel from here to Perth in.

Q81 Yeah. Right.

A Same thing.

Q82 Now, have you in you association with the CYCA been a member of the board?

A Yeah, yeah, I was on the board for two years.

Q83 Right. And have you been a, in a racing committee on this - - -

A No.

Q83 - - - in this club?

A Not, not on the board, only a sailing secretary and - - -

Q84 O.K.

A In that, in that capacity, you only do the bidding of the sailing committee.

Q85 Yeah. From your understanding of boats in the Sydney to Hobart, which is a category one race, and they submit certificates, IMS certificates to the racing committee prior to race, are you aware of that?

A Yes, yes.

Q86 It's then, as far as you're aware a situation where the racing committee look at those certificates and make a, a, a decision as to whether that yacht will race pending it's - - -

A Whether it meets the eligibility criteria that are set in the notice of race.

Q87 Right.

A The notice of race is a legal document setting out the conditions under which you may enter.

Q88 Right.

A It's very difficult, as a matter of fact, to change the notice of race, because once someone enters they can come back and say, well look, you know, you told us these were the conditions and now you've changed them.

Q89 Yeah.

A So it's not altogether correct to change a notice of race, although it is done if there's something glaringly obvious in it that's wrong.

Q90 Yeah. Is it a contract between the organisation and a individual boat?

A It is really, yes, yes.

Q91 Is it a signed document by both parties, do you know?

A Well the notice of race is published saying these are the conditions under which you may enter this event.

Q92 Right.

A And then someone, once someone fills in an entry form and says yes, I agree to abide by those conditions
- - -

Q93 Yeah,

A - - - and the club accepts the entry, that's why with the Hobart race it's done with, you make an application for entry rather than an entry form.

Q94 All right.

A You apply for an entry form, once you've given all your

details and the, they have a vetting committee in normally, or always did have, three people - - -

Q95 Yeah.

A - - - three experienced people who would look at each application for entrance, say, yes, you're O.K, here's your entry form - - -

Q96 Yeah.

A - - - or, they might say, well, you know, we want more detail on this, and that happened quite a lot in the 50th Hobart, because of the number of entries, and a lot of them came from all over the place.

Q97 Mm.

A There were probably, from memory I think, of the 400 applications there would've been probably 20 or 30, maybe even more that, the vetting committee looked at them and I had to write back to them, say, look, you know, you haven't given us enough information on this, or on this, or - - -

Q98 Mm.

A - - - your entry, your entry will be accepted subject to meeting conditions that you haven't yet met.

Q99 Right. So, it's a, an offer and acceptance type situation.

A Exactly.

Q100 Which is, I suppose similar to a civil sort of contract, you know, offer - - -

A Yeah.

Q100 - - - offer and acceptance.

A On the entry form it says, "I agree to abide by the rules and conditions" - - -

Q101 Yes.

A - - - "set out", et cetera.

Q102 And the discretion of course is, at the, the hands of the racing organisers.

A Exactly.

Q103 Who accept it, or, or don't accept it.

A Mm. M'mm.

Q104

A That's changed a little for, in the, in the most recent international yacht racing rules, it used to one of the fundamental that an entry may be rejected without giving a reason.

Q105 O.K.

A I think that had changed that when you reject an entry, you've got to tell the person why it's been rejected.

Q106 Right. Right. O.K.

A I think that's probably something - - -

Q107 So, go on.

A - - - that come, come out of a bit of civil action over - - -

Q108 Yeah.

A - - - someone wanting to get in the race and they weren't allowed, and they don't say why.

Q109 As a result of that, from a sailing point of view, there is a responsibility that you see involving those people that accept or deny applicants to take part in

the race?

A I guess so, yeah, yeah.

Q110 Yeah.

A But, like I say, once you set down the conditions
- - -

Q111 Yeah.

A - - - I think it is very hard to say, right, you know,
it meets the conditions but we don't like the colour of
his eyes so - - -

Q112 No, that's right.

A - - -

Q113 It's got to be real genuine - - -

A Mm, mm.

Q113 - - - reasons why you don't accept an entry - - -

A Mm.

Q113 - - - of course.

A Mm.

Q114 Now just back to the Niad for a second. When you
actually sailed that boat up from Hobart, did you have
any apprehension at all?

A No, No, I had, like I say, my daughter, my
youngest daughter was nine at the time.

Q115 Yeah.

A And most of the sailing I've done has been on spartan
racing boats like that.

Q116 Yeah.

A And so, you tend to get use to it.

Q117 Yeah.

A The kids were used to it to, I had the same sort of boats myself.

Q118 Yeah, yeah.

A But no, I, I didn't have any apprehension about it at all. Some of the lighter ones, you know there are lighter boats than that that I'd have second thoughts on, as you get older you get a little, a little bit smarter I think. I've had a couple of boats up here before that are, that have met the entry criteria that, the club really didn't want to go in the race, but
- - -

Q119 Yeah.

A - - - like I say, it's very hard to say no.

Q120 Yes.

A We had a couple of little half tonners I won't name them, but, everyone was so relieved when the first one lost its mast between the heads and the second one lost its mast a Bondi - - -

Q121 Yeah.

A - - - they both came, they were both back the same, on boxing day afternoon, I mean it was - - -

Q122 A relief.

A - - - a relief that they didn't go, yeah.

Q123 Have you got something to say about that so far as
- - -

A Well, like I say - - -

Q123 - - - what are your views and - - -

A My views, I'm still, you know, still a great believer

in people should take responsibility for themselves and

- - -

Q124 Yes.

A - - - if you set the conditions that, that you feel are safe enough, you know, to prevent total fools going, then if people want to take the risk and sail boats that meet those conditions that you might think really shouldn't be going, then it's up to them.

Q125 Yeah. Do you think there's room to class boats, to say, well look, this boats not going because of its size, its weight?

A Well that's there all ready, it's on place now.

Q126 But to prevent them going in the race, that's what I'm saying to you?

A Well it is there.

Q127 It is there.

A And I believe that the conditions that are set are as rigid as you can possibly get.

Q128 Yeah.

A I think to set standards even higher, you know, safety standards even higher again, it's really getting to the stage so you cant sell a motor car without air bags all around you and, you know, half inch steel plate.

Q129 Yeah.

A I think the standards are as high as anywhere in the world and I, I really see this situation particularly as being unfortunate. It could possibly be a little strengthening of the standards of experience, because

that's very hard to qualify.

Q130 Yeah.

A You know you say, you've got to have, there is a qualification in there for peoples experience.

Q131 Yeah.

A But it's, you know, well people say, we'll I've sailed across the Mediterranean, well they might have been up and down the Med three times in one boat or another.

Q132 Yeah.

A

Q133 Yeah.

A How do you know how much experience they really have, that's about the only thing that, it's a very grey area trying to qualify, or quantify people's experience.

Q134 So you think that, that that's something that should be looked at, and they should perhaps up the ante so far as - - -

A Yeah. I wouldn't , I wouldn't balk at that.

Q135 Yeah.

A But the boats, I, I don't think you would look at one boat that started in that race stand out to say, look, it shouldn't have gone, I don't believe that's true.

Q136 Yeah.

A Not for a minute, I think every single boat that started that race was quite capable of getting to Hobart, and like I say, a lot of them that turned back and came, came to grief I feel probably would not have

come to grief had they kept going, other than the fact they would be more uncomfortable, maybe very seasick.

Q137 Mm. O.K. So, so far as the safety equipment and that sort of thing on board the vessels, have you got anything to say that, you think, that things could improve there

A No, I don't, I think even then I think is, in some cases I think they're a little extreme, you know, fog horns and, you know, and that, and they're just of no use whatsoever, that are mandatory and I think are quite stupid.

Q138 Mm.

A And I think things have changed as well, in so much as EPIRBs, I mean, I, I would throw all the rubbish out of those life rafts and make sure they all had an EPIRB in them, I think that is absolutely essential. On that point, I did a lift raft exercise back in this club many years ago, probably 20 years ago, and as you can understand, most exercises are done in good conditions, you know, they throw 'em in a pond here and everyone jumps in and paddles around. This was done in quite severe conditions off the heads, they launched I think six rafts, there were to be seven and one group opted not to go, because they felt they wouldn't handle it. They had to call the exercise off after about an hour, because of the conditions, I think most, three of the six, three of the other five rafts turned, tipped over and tipped people in the water, broke drogues and got

washed, very, not as, obviously not the conditions as severe as Hobart, but quite severe and people who'd never been seasick, and, you know, what have you, got violently ill in those rafts, I was in a little four man experimental sailing raft, and I swear to God we didn't have a problem in the world, we had the fun of Cork, all afternoon.

Q139 Mm.

A And when we got back and had the debriefing, because you're occupied, you know, trying to make the stupid thing said, it didn't sail, it didn't said very well. But it was a different shape, it was boat shaped instead of being round, an aluminium telescopic thing poked in the middle and made a mast, we tried to tie it up, but broke that, mate, we had a lot of fun, that, that day, when, and not realising that the others were in quite, quite dire straits - - -

Q140 Yeah.

A - - - experienced people in those rafts. Tipping over and drogues breaking and the, the yachts there were about, they're keeping an eye on 'em, said, look, we just can't keep track of them now, they're starting to blow over the ocean and we can't see them. And so they had to call the exercise off and pick all the rafts up.

Q141 So, did you take part in that, sorry?

A Yeah. Now, the point I made, at the end, at the end of it we had a debriefing with the people from Canberra, sea safety people. And I made the point, I said, look,

I would never get in a raft now without a boat hook and an old bit of spinnaker to try and sail it. I don't know whether it's just the fact that you're occupied instead of just sitting there, in the, in the wet and spinning around and getting knocked about, but, he, his attitude was, we will never approve those things, because, and a valid reason, they didn't want them drifting away from where, where the boat sank, if someone gets in a raft, they want to know where they are, that, that's no longer a valid argument if you've got an EPIRB in there.

Q142 Mm.

A I mean, if you've got an EPIRB in that raft, somebody knows where you are all the time.

Q143 Mm.

A The fact that they may not be able to get to you, you know, if the conditions are bad, although they got to all those people out there, I mean that was quite astounding, those rescue operations.

Q144 Mm.

A I thought that was just wonderful, the way they went out picked people up I, I would've thought that they'd be left on their own for a while, but, but that, EPIRBs in life rafts I think should be mandatory, immediately.

Q145 Yeah.

A And also the EPIRBs should be identifiable EPIRBs rather than just, you know, there's somebody out there.

Q146 Yeah.

A We had a problem in 1993 with people setting off EPIRBs and flares and what have you, it was hard to know who was who, whether it was, you know, you get reports from boats saying, we see a flare here, this is our position, then you get another report from another boat saying they've seen a flare here, and you, you would have to figure out, is it the same incident, so that took maybe an hour figure out there were three incidents going on at the same time. People were calling for help, with EPIRBs that identify, you know, that ones him, this is another one, straight away, instantly.

Q147 Is that capability available?

A Yeah.

Q148 It is?

A Yeah, yeah.

SENIOR CONSTABLE UPSTON

Q149 I think you're talking about the 406 EPIRB. Is that correct?

A That's correct, yeah. And they're not a big price to, I mean a normal EPIRB's 250 bucks, 300 bucks and they're six or 700, think, I think, I'm not sure of that, but -

Q150 I think they're a little bit dearer than that, but
- - -

A Are they.

Q151 Mm.

A Well, they're not over \$1,000.

Q152 No, well the price is certainly coming down.

A Mm. Mm. And reckon that is, that would probably be the greatest step forward.

Q153 Mm.

A So that you knew exactly who was where.

Q154 Mm.

A If they were in trouble.

DETECTIVE SENIOR CONSTABLE GRAY

Q155 What about handheld radios, do you think for short range communications that they should actually be made compulsory and not - - -

A VHF?

Q156 Yeah. VHF.

A Handheld VHF?

Q157 Handheld VHF, just a small radio for perhaps communication between aircraft, or other search craft?

A Yeah, I always take a handheld VHF, mm. But I think that's a matter of opinion or, you know, personal choice, I think when you're jumping into a life raft and you're underwater, I'm not sure it would last very long anyway, unless it's a very good one, one of them waterproof ones which are seven or 800 bucks as well. Was there a problem with communication between the rafts, I suppose there was

DETECTIVE SENIOR CONSTABLE GRAY

Q158 Some did indeed they, in fact they had no communication at all.

A Yeah, yeah, well, imagine that.

Q159 There was a chopper flying above them, so - - -
A if they took a handheld with them anyway,
 'cause it probably would've gone for a swim.

Q160 They didn't.
A Mm?

Q161 They didn't take a handheld with them.
A No, but even if they had, my guess is the handheld
 wouldn't have been working at that stage.

Q162 Yeah.
A It may.

Q163 Yeah, but we don't know that, do we?
A No.

Q164 Mm.
A But certainly it's nice to have communication, if
 you're in a raft and you can talk to a helicopter.

Q165 Mm. Just back to that life raft experiment, did any of
 those life rafts continue in service, the ones that you
 used?
A The sailing raft, no, no, no.

Q166 And what about the life rafts that they did the
 experiments in?
A Yeah, yeah, they were all on loan from RFD.

Q167 All right. Are they still used, do you know? Those
 sorts of lift raft?
A I think so, yeah, yeah. I think after that they put
 the, you know the water bags on the bottom, to try and
 make them, stop them flipping over.

Q168 Right.

A You know, like I say, once you get big waves it makes so much difference, it's on, it's one thing to do it in flat water.

Q169 Yeah.

A The thing's very very stable when it's got bags of water hanging off the bottom, and the theory is that once it tips over the bags all empty so you can, you can right the raft again,

Q170 Yeah.

A 'Cause you could never right it, if the bags stayed full of water.

Q171 Yeah.

A If it had ballast weights on it, you'd never get it back up again.

Q172 Right. O.K. I've got nothing else to ask.

SENIOR CONSTABLE UPSTON

No, that's, I'm happy.

DETECTIVE SENIOR CONSTABLE GRAY

Q173 Anything else you'd like to

A No, not that's about all I, like I said I don't think you could, anyone would've rejected any of those boats going to hobart, they're all tried and proven, it's just one of those unfortunate things, and apart from the crew experience, I wouldn't change too much. Except the, except the EPIRB, I would never leave a boat without one.

Q174 Yeah. O.K. Time is now 4.43, this interview is now concluded.

INTERVIEW CONCLUDED