

DETECTIVE SENIOR CONSTABLE GRAY

Q1 This is an electronically recorded interview between Detective Senior Constable Stuart Gray and Mr Colin Betts at the Cruising Yacht Club of Australia in Rushcutters Bay on Wednesday, the 10th of February, 1999. Also present, and seated to my left, is Senior Constable Dave Upston from the New South Wales Water Police. The time by my watch is now 3.50pm. As I've already explained to you, Mr Betts, Senior Constable Upston and myself are making inquiries in relation to the Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race of 1998, and we've been tasked to speak to a number of people who were involved in that race, crewman and other people who were directly or indirectly involved. O.K.

A I understand.

Q2 So, firstly, if I could, just for the purpose of the interview, could I get you please to state your full name?

A Colin Gilbert Betts.

Q3 Your date of birth?

A The 3rd of December, 1931.

Q4 And your current address?

A 64 Muston Street, Mosman.

Q5 And your occupation?

A I'm a production manager in a wholesale timber yard.

Q6 O.K. Now, if I could just get your background so far as sailing experience is concerned?

A I've been ocean racing since 1955, I did my first

Hobart race. I've competed in, excuse me, 34 Sydney/Hobart races, 8 as navigator and the rest of them I've always sailed as a helmsman. I finished in, completed 33 of those races. I've done 3 Admirals Cup trips, which include the fastnet trip as, as representing the Cruising Yacht Club and Australia, 1 Bermuda race, 1 Noumea race, 4 Lord Howe races, 8 Mooloolaba races, 5 South Port races and 12 Montague Island races, which is a discontinued race now. In addition to that I took a paid job in 1971 for four years and I cruised, I was in charge of a 71 foot cruising ketch, which I did 50,000 miles cruising around the world. I started sailing when I was, in racing when I was in dinghies when I was 10 years of age.

Q7 All right.

A So, that's, I, I've never added the miles up but - - -

Q8 There's certainly be a few there.

A - - - there's a few up.

Q9 O.K. Now how did you become involve with the Margaret Rintoul?

A A very good mate of mine, Dick Hammond, has sailed on several occasions with Richard Pursell and Richard was looking for a helmsman for a Lord Howe Island race, which was back on October, and I signed on for that as a helmsman, and we won that race and I did, we had some fairly rough weather there, the last half of that race was 45 knots plus, and which helped us to win that race

because the weather suits Margaret Rintoul. I did the trip back also from Lord Howe to Sydney with Richard and his brother and three others, and we got a dusting coming back the last 180 miles of that race also, but the boat handled that very well and Richard invited me to go to Hobart as a helmsman, thinking that Dick Hammond probably would be going as navigator, but Dick had had a prior commitment to race with Ian Kiernan on, on So, Richard's asked me would I, and slot in with the navigation position, which I, I'd previously done, so that was that.

Q10 O.K.

A And we did, after Lord Howe we did a number of short off shore races here just to get the crew worked up.

Q11 All right.

A But, of that 11 crew I think 7 or 8 of those guys had been to and done the Lord Howe race with us prior to that which is a 400 miles race and - - -

Q12 Right.

A - - - it's a sort of good tune up for a crew to - - -

Q13 Yeah.

A - - - preparation for Hobart, 'cause there's so few long races here on the calendar now compared to 20 years ago.

Q14 Have you got anything to, I mean, can you comment on that, do you think that's a good thing or a bad thing?

A No, I think it's, it's a bad thing, it's a, the Montague race is a bad time of the year in the long

weekend in October, it's, it's sort of in between the seasons a bit.

Q15 Mm.

A You could still get good strong westerlys or sou'westers or you could get the nor'easters not starting and you get light Barney's, not enough breeze. And the Prince Alfred Yacht Club ran that for many, well, they ran it always. But it, it finally the, as the newer lighter weight boats came along people didn't want to go in that race and it was a pretty hard race, but it was a great lead-up race for, for Hobart.

Q16 Yeah.

A And if you're starting to get your crew together.

Q17 Mm.

A Unfortunately with the modern boats, crews are losing interest in, apart from Hobart, doing the long races.

Q18 Mm.

A And this club now does a lot less long races than they did 20 years ago, and I think that is a bad thing.

Q19 Mm.

A Because people don't get the time and don't, don't learn, have the seamanship experience.

Q20 Yes. That's an important ingredient, I suppose, to train for the Hobart, so to speak.

A Yeah. And the only way you can do that is by going racing in the ocean.

Q21 That's right.

A And - - -

Q22 Mm. O.K. Now, as a navigator onboard a, on boat, in this case the Margaret Rintoul, you have in front of you a document here, which I believe is a race log book?

A That's correct.

Q23 Can you just sort of explain that book to me and how it works and the ins and outs of it and your duties so far as running that book during the race?

A Well, it started off in the front page there, it was just a list of the crew and it's, you can keep it hour by hour, showing the course you've steered and the, and the log reading from hour to hour, which gives you your distance over the ground you've covered and what the wind speed and wind direction and wind speed is, and in the old days when you did all your plotting on the chart and DR, it was important to keep a deck log on something that you could transfer into this and write this up every hour at least. Today, the, most navigators probably don't fill much in the log book, and I mean mine's sketchy, most of your navigation's on the chart because you read it straight off the GPS and plot your position straight onto the chart.

Q24 Mm.

A Our charts are still in Hobart, 'cause of the boat's still there, we had to pull the engine out down there and it's, it's only going back next week. But, in the old days you, you needed this information 'cause you, you had to plot your DR on the, on the chart all the

way until you got a celestial sight then you could correct that. But, no-one uses a sextant today and it's, it's only in recent years, it's not even compulsory to carry a sextant on the boat. But, you have to have a GPS and a hand held back-up one in case your, your ships power goes. 'Cause if your power goes, you've got not only no instruments, but you've got no GPS.

Q25 Right.

A You know, you're up shit street. That's about all, it's just a record of, of what happens hour by hour so you can make remarks about what sails you set and where you do sail changes and that sort of thing.

Q26 Yeah.

A But, I say mine, most of my navigation's on the chart.

Q27 Right.

A There's not a lot in the log book. But, I, I'd made notes of the, some of the sailing and things - - -

Q28 O.K.

A - - - as we went along.

Q29 Now, is it the case that the skipper of the boat would speak to you at various times and say, comment where are we or what course we're heading or he'd give you directions of a course to head and that sort of thing?

A No. That's, that's my job - - -

Q30 Right.

A - - - too, but we always discuss at the end of each watch, we discuss the position.

Q31 Yeah.

A If there's been a wind change, if there's no wind change and you've got a basic strategy you keep on that course and sail your, change your sails according to the wind strength. We always look, I always plotted after each sked whether the other boats are that are close to us or the boats that we're most interested in, and I put those on the chart for him to look at, or any other crewman that peer over our shoulder and so he knows what the situation is.

Q32 Yeah.

A 'Cause it's important that he, that's part of my job to keep him informed.

Q33 Right.

A And then we discuss the options if there's a position that we can see developing as to which way we want to go so we discuss the, what the options are and decided what, what plan we're going to make.

Q34 Right.

A But it, that's a team sort of - - -

Q35 Yeah.

A - - - usually two or three people in that sort of situation.

Q36 Yeah.

A So, that it's not a, the navigation's not a, a one-man band - - -

Q37 Yeah.

A - - - it's the navigators job to present the options

and then for two or three to weigh those up and say well, this is what we think we should do, if the wind's gunna do that, you've never quite sure of that.

Q38 Yeah.

A Ultimately though in the, on the safety of the boat that comes down to a, only one man can make that decision when, when the safety decision has to be made and that's the skipper.

Q39 Mm.

A Again, he can consult his most experienced crew people - - -

Q40 Mm.

A - - - but he alone can make that final, final decision. But the navigation thing is a team - - -

Q41 Yeah.

A - - - sort of situation.

Q42 So, is it the case that during the race that you spend most of your time down in the boat with all the instruments and the GPS and that sort of stuff, with your maps and plotting and recording while - - -

A Probably 50 per cent of my time that I'm working when I'm not - - -

Q43 right.

A - - - I put my head down. I did intend to do a bit more steering, but we had competent helmsman and up til we got to, to Eden the weather had been good and everyone was enjoying that and there was no, but I spent quite a bit of time on deck just the same. When

the weather got bad I did go up through Bass Strait and take my turn steering.

Q44 right.

A Just to help relieve the load a bit and the fact that I was one of the most experienced helmsman on board it just added a bit to keep our best guys at that.

Q45 Mm.

A So, again, it's not, there are other - - -

Q46 Yeah.

A - - - jobs always on the boat - - -

Q47 Right.

A - - - that you can help do.

Q48 Yeah. Now, prior to the, the race, did you attend a briefing so far as the weather was concerned?

A Yes, here at the club.

Q49 O.K.

A With Richard and, and his brother actually, the three of us, that's from our boat.

Q50 Now, do you recall or do have, have any documents in relation to what the weather predictions were for the race over the next couple of days? It doesn't matter if you don't, but I'm just, do you recall?

A No. We did, I did he's a independent weather forecaster and quite a number of the boats buy his forecast.

Q51 Right.

A Otherwise, well, I listen to the weather on the, at the briefing here, but that's invariably not right because

things change so quickly. Then we've got the weather at every sked - - -

Q52 Mm.

A - - - in which the weather bureau was, was issuing.

Q53 Do you recall whether there was any difference between Baddams weather prediction and the briefing weather predication here?

A Small differences, nothing that, but in neither case did we have any indication that the winds would be - - -

Q54 Mm.

A - - - I don't think either of them gave us any indication of the winds being stronger than 45 to 50 knots at the most.

Q55 All right. Now, were you in your capacity on the boat measuring wind speed?

A Well, it's constantly on the dial.

Q56 Right.

A The helmsman or anyone in the cockpit, that you've got four, you've got wind direction - - -

Q57 Yes.

A - - - and wind speed and you've got your boat speed and, and your course - - -

Q58 right.

A - - - comes up and you've got a range of options on those - - -

Q59 Yeah.

A - - - instruments but, they were they four that we had.

Q60 Right.

A And you also got your steering compass but, that, you get that on the digital readout as well.

Q61 Right.

A But that, there's a slight delay beside that, so you don't, anyone can see what course you're steering without having the helmsman steer strong, the, the steering compass on a pedestal.

Q62 So, do you recall at what speeds the winds got to at any time during that race?

A Well, the highest wind speed our instruments showed was 58 knots, but I'm quite sure the winds was between 60 and 70 knots.

A All right.

Q63 Then the, it's the strongest winds I've been in, in a Hobart race.

Q64 Yes.

A And the, the, like the wind was just lifting the spray off the water it was, like driving it.

Q65 Mm.

A It was very hard steering a boat, because it was driving that spray into you, and it was almost like a, a thin fog - - -

Q66 Mm.

A - - - the visibility, the cloud was low, this spray was just being driven so hard. I'm quite sure that, that the winds were in excess of 60 knots, quite a lot of that eight or nine hours that we had the bad weather.

Q67 Mm.

A I made a note here when after that 2 o'clock sked we had, I believe we had between 50 and 65 knots, Sword of Orion when they gave their position, it might have been they came back later in the sked, but I remember them saying, I don't know what the other boats are getting behind us but he said we're experiencing 70 to 78 knot winds. And they were only 21 miles ahead of us, and I made that note then - - -

Q68 Mm.

A - - - when he said that.

Q69 Mm.

A Carl Crawford, the navigator on Ragamuffin told me though, their highest wind speed was 68 knots, but they were about 40 miles ahead of us at, at that stage.

Q70 Mm.

A So, at, in the lower wind speeds and the rest of the race our wind instrument was, I'd say was spot on, so, I've got no reason to believe it was wrong.

Q71 Mm.

A But I think the wind in my own estimation, I, I think the wind was blowing harder than that.

Q72 Mm. Now, do you recall that storm coming on quickly or slowly?

A No. Quickly, again on this, as we got down the coast towards Eden at 8.00 in the morning the wind was round then to the nor'west, west/nor'west and we're reaching, and the wind had died during the night. At 8.00, 8.15

we had 18 knots of breeze, 9.15 there was 16 knots, 11.15 it was 15 knots, at midday it was 13 knots, that was true wind speed, at 1 o'clock it was 40 knots, at 2 o'clock it was 54 knots, but it, from midday to 1 o'clock as we got past Gabo Island the wind freshened in the, quite, quite quickly.

Q73 Right.

A It didn't come in like a southerly buster but it just
- - -

Q74 Yeah. Yeah.

A - - - kept growing at the same intensity.

Q75 Right. And from your experience in the Sydney to Hobarts have you ever experienced that sort of wind previous?

A I think the seas for, in that eight or nine hours, that it was bad, the seas were the biggest seas I've experienced in the Hobart race, and I'd say it's the strongest wind strength that I've been in the Hobart race, yes.

Q76 All right.

A I've done harder races - - -

Q77 Yeah.

A - - - where the hard conditions have lasted a lot longer, like for 36 hours.

Q78 Yeah.

A But, I, I haven't seen bigger seas and I haven't been in as quite as strong winds in any of those 34 Hobart races I've done.

Q79 Mm. Now, what about the seas, what can you tell me about the seas, from your observations?

A I don't know how people estimate the height of seas, because it's, you know, they just stop there, they sort of - - -

Q80 Yeah.

A - - - they were big seas and the bigger the seas the longer distance you get between the waves and the, the troughs, but the bad waves had like about 6 feet of surf breaking on top of them, and when that breaks over the boat it's, it sort of smothers you.

Q81 Mm.

A So, sailing the way we were at about 60 degrees to the wind, the wind was of our beam, out in the storm jib was set in a which means it's half way back between the bow of the boat and the mast. And with the longer keel on the older style of boat compared to the modern boat, it, the boat's easier to steer under that rig, which normally is not very efficient. And the fact that we weren't hard on a wind also helped. But, it was much easier to steer the boat safely through those waves than if we'd been trying to run downwind in that weather.

Q82 Mm. So, I mean, you said it's hard to sort of estimate the, the height of the waves, can you give me an estimation, I mean, compared to the mast on the boat, was it bigger than the mast or -?

A Well, if you were standing, if you imagine youse are

sitting in a boat in that carpark - - -

Q83 Yeah.

A - - - like the waves would have been as high or as higher as the roof of that building there.

Q84 Right, O.K. Now, did the seas come on big rather quickly as well, did that sort of run with the winds so to speak?

A Yes. The sea did build up quite quickly.

Q85 Right.

A But, Bass Strait's fairly shallow compared to the, the rest of the ocean.

Q86 Right.

A So, you always get big seas quickly in Bass Strait because of that, that shallow, shallower water. But the seas did come up quite quickly.

Q87 Right. O.K. Now, if I could take you to approximately 5.00pm, on the 27th, afternoon of the 27th, we've been informed that a, that a number of flares were set off from the Sword of Orion, and as you're aware we spoke to Richard Purcell and a couple of other blokes who were on the boat at the time. Two of them indicated to us that they observed flares, Richard Purcell indicated he wasn't quite sure which boat it was at some stage. Now, are you able to sort of take me from, from that position when you were notified or you become aware of it.

A From 2 o'clock to 4 o'clock I had gone on watch, I, I was doing a radio sked at 2.00 till maybe 3.15, and the

watch captain, Dick who I've done sailing with since we were kids, Dick asked me could I come up and steer next. He'd been steering for that hour and a quarter of that watch and he was finding it difficult, and I said, "Yes, Dick, I'll give you a break", so I put my waterproofs up, on, and went on deck. And I was sort of on watch with him through till 6 o'clock, which was his normal, and I steered two hours in that time. So, I went off at 6 o'clock and I'd probably, Richard went on deck with Bill Riley and David Wiggan and Bill took first trick on the helm, Richard hadn't been feeling too well, he, it's unlike him, but he was, had a bit of seasickness. He wasn't seasickness in the fact that he'd layed down and died like - - -

Q88

Mm.

A

- - - that's, but he was just throwing up a bit, but he was doing his job and otherwise unconcerned. I put my head down, no, I probably wasn't, I probably was still at the chart table, I was gunna try and get some sleep, but I, I was plotting what had happened in the last four, four hours. It was at quarter to 7.00, 6.00, 18.45, that Richard shouted to me that he'd seen a red flare, only one. He happened to be standing up in the cockpit at the time, Bill Riley was steering the boat. To my knowledge, neither, well, I'm sure, I know Bill didn't see it, and I don't think David did, but Richard called to me he said, "I've seen a red flare, will you

call Telstra Control", which is Young Endeavour, "And report the time and the position". And I immediately went and read the GPS to get the position and recorded the time and turned the radio on, but there was, I could hear Young Endeavour on the radio but there was a lot of traffic.

Q89 right.

A There were all sorts of people wanting to talk to them. And I said to Richard, "What are we going to do?", and that might have been three or four, five minutes later, and he said, "We are not going down to try and assist", and he said, "That is my", he said in a very loud voice because he had to speak loudly, he was calling to me and I was down below in the boat, and the noise of the wind and the water and the boat, and he said, "That is my call", and that was sort of, that's definite. Bill Riley, shortly after that he said to him, he said, "I think you've made the right decision", anyway it was 15 minutes, I could have, could have been a few minutes longer but it would have been 15 minutes before I got a chance to break into the traffic and, and speak to Young Endeavour, but they heard me straight away, and I spoke to Lou Carter who was on the radio. I said, "Lou, it's Colin Betts on Margaret Rintoul 11, we have just sighted one red flare, it's bearing 090 from our position, approximately half a mile", and I gave him the lat and long, and he repeated that to make sure he had it down right and to the best of my knowledge that

was, he said, "Thanks for that". And - - -

Q90 Mm.

A - - - I think that was the end of our conversation, I listened for quite a while, there was no, I didn't volunteer any information as to whether we were going down to see if we could see them and what their problem was. Richard did say he'd seen a dismasted yacht but he couldn't identify it.

Q91 All right.

A There was nothing back from Young Endeavour as, asking us were we going to stand by or asking us to do so. And I left the radio on for a while, but I didn't hear any more, so I turned the radio off and we carried on. I think he did make, in retrospect, did make the right decision. We were in very difficult to, we couldn't have tacked the boat, we'd have had to run away and jibe, but running back down wind would have made us more vulnerable to get rolled down, the way we were sailing we felt - - -

Q92 Mm.

A - - - fairly comfortable that the boat was handling it well. I had, when Lou came on, to digress, when Lou came on at that 2 o'clock sked, he drew everybody's attention to the sail instructions and I don't know the paragraph that says it's the onus of each skipper to, to make up his mind whether he wants to continue in a race when the conditions get that - - -

Q93 Mm.

A - - - unfavourable. And the, the club takes no responsibility.

Q94 Mm.

A But that's always been the case.

Q95 Yeah.

A And we all understand that.

Q96 Mm.

A And I called up to Richard that at that time and, no, he was just change of watch and he, he well, he hadn't come down he was still on deck, and I called up to him pointing out to this request had been made that I make him aware of it, and he said, 'That's fine", he said, "I'm quite happy we're, we're handling this quite well", he said, "We'll just keep going the way we are", I said, nothing was further from my mind but I just was asked to bring it to your attention.

Q97 Yeah.

A But in retrospect I think we had no motor we had tried to start the motor earlier in the afternoon to charge the batteries and after that when I went on deck and was steering Bill Riley and Richard and young Lars, the shipwright that works down there knows a bit about engines, they spent an hour trying to get the engine going, couldn't. There had been a lot of water around but we didn't know whether the starter motor had been immersed in the water and, and or the, the generator. But we, we had no engine to help and trying to manoeuvre with only a storm jib on would have been

quite difficult, and in those conditions again there's no way that you could possibly get near the, the other boat.

Q98 Mm.

A Without injuring people or doing severe damage to the boats. So, it's hard to say, but Richard, I, I think made the right decision and he had to consider the safety of his own boat and the, the people on board.

Q99 If your motor was working, would rescue have been easier of another boat? Do you think or -?

A It wouldn't have enabled us to get alongside the boat
- - -

Q100 Right.

A But if people had have been in a dinghy or something that it would have made it easier maybe to get alongside them to, to get closer to them.

Q101 Yeah.

A But it, it still would have been quite difficult.

Q102 Yeah. Were you aware or do you know if Richard was aware that in cases where assistance is given there would be time taken off their actual race time?

A Yes. We were all aware of that. I think, I don't think that even was a consideration, I think the safety of the boat, yes, his own crew I think were the paramount, I think that would have been the furthest thing from his mind.

Q103 Yeah. I just, I only asked that 'cause I just wanted to know if you knew that, that's all.

A Yeah. Well, we're all aware of that. It happens quite often.

Q104 Yeah. Now, are you aware of any discussion between Richard and anybody else after the, he made that decision to keep going and not assist, were there any further discussions that you were privy to or

A Not that I'm, not that I'm aware of, I know Bill Riley said, "I, I think you've made the right decision". But he said that on deck while they were on watch together.

Q105 Now, how were you, as you assessed the radio coms between the, all the boats and Telstra, were you satisfied with the, the radio coms set-up?

A Yes, I think, I don't know whether any of those people, Lou Carter particularly got any less if he did, I think they did an excellent job.

Q106 Right. Do you have any, any suggestions about the coms? How to better things or, you mentioned, you know, a lot of traffic on the, on the waves, can you see any sort of, any way that can be improved?

A No. There were just so many people involved in that
- - -

Q107 Yeah.

A - - - sort of that stage and boats in difficulties trying to relay messages and - - -

Q108 Yeah. Did you hear any other boats distressed, did you hear anything from the Naiad at all?

A No.

Q109 O.K.

A No. We didn't hear anything from Sword, I don't know whether they'd radioed, last I heard of Sword or Orion when they gave their position on the sked at 14.05.

Q110 Yeah.

A But when we didn't have our radio on all the time after that.

Q111 Right. O.K. Dave?

SENIOR CONSTABLE UPSTON

Q112 You mentioned earlier, after you spoke to Lou Carter, that you turned, what frequency was it that you spoke to Lou on?

A The race frequency, 4483.

Q113 O.K. And then you turned the HF set off after you spoke to him and gave him that position or and the indication of the red flare?

A Yes. When, he, he didn't come back and ask me anything more or, I turned the radio off because I was finished with it.

Q114 Yeah. Is that generally the case where you'll turn the radio off after conversation or giving a sked?

A Yes. Well, the radio doesn't use a lot on standby, but it sort of does on transmit, but if you're doing three skeds a day, it can take up to four hours of your time, you're interested where everybody else is just from the race point of view, apart from safety. But you're glad to turn it off because the guys that are trying to rest, you know, it interrupts their sleep

and, 'cause it goes right through the boat.

Q115

A So, it's just, when the skeds over, I'm quite glad to turn it off so I don't have to listen to it, but it's well there weren't that many towards the end of the race writing all that down and you sort of get sick of the sound of it.

Q116 Yeah. And, and in lieu of the situation where there's a lot of vessels in distress or in particular that you saw a red flare, do you think it was still wise to turn the radio off, knowing that there was vessels in distress?

A Well, in retrospect, maybe not.

Q117 Do you, do you have a VHF set on board?

A Yes.

Q118 And was that turned on at any time?

A No, 'cause in the middle of Bass Strait that would be the last thing you'd be thinking of

Q119 Yeah. And, and, like, VHF of course is just for close communication - - -

A Sure.

Q119 - - - that you know of and, and at the time where a red flare was sighted was the VHF radio on?

A No.

Q120 No.

A I don't think I turned it on the whole race.

Q121 O.K.

A No.

DETECTIVE SENIOR CONSTABLE GRAY

Q122 Have you got any views, ideas or anything you'd like to make comment on about the race? Well, you're a boat that finished obviously, but, so far as, you know, in general sort of, anything that you'd like to sort of mention that you think should be looked at, or -?

A Well, I think life rafts have got to be seriously looked at to be - - -

Q123 Right.

A To somehow upgrade their seaworthiness, I mean, it'll probably increase the cost tremendously, but - - -

Q124 Mm.

A - - - that's cheap in view of the - - -

Q125 Yeah.

A - - - the saving of the lives.

Q126 In what way do you mean that life rafts have got to be looked at? What, what are you views and what, what, how do you feel

A get into a life raft, but obviously they didn't all perform as well as they should have. The, the two on Winston Churchill, I mean, the, the raft that was lost that had the problem there was the newer of the two rafts. But they, they don't perform well in the, in the seaway like that.

Q127 But, what, what, what, what are you views on the, sorry, we'll go to the Winston Churchill, and what are you aware of the life rafts in particular on Winston Churchill?

A Only what John Stanley told me.

Q128 right.

A But I mean the fact that they can overturn so easily.

Q129 Yeah. Yeah.

A I mean there, there must be some way of designing a life raft that's more stable or more seaworthy - - -

Q130 Yeah.

A - - - than that.

Q131 Yeah. Yeah.

A And if it's going to cost more well so be it.

Q132 Yeah.

A I mean, that's, that's a very important part of the cost of running a boat.

Q133 Mm.

A And maybe the club's got to look seriously at, at the crew list when they take entries and the, the amount of experience that is collectively amongst a group that there are enough - - -

Q134 Mm.

A - - - experienced guys on board that, that can handle a boat in these extreme conditions.

Q135 Mm.

A I don't know whether that was a factor anywhere, I have no idea, but obviously this inquiry will - - -

Q136 Mm.

A - - - will highlight that if it is. Other than that, apart from that 10 hours, it was a fairly easy race.

Q137 Yeah.

A But I mean that 10 hours sort of created mayhem.

Q138 Yeah.

A Yeah. I don't think, I think the radio relay should, and all those rescue people just did a most fantastic job and I think the co-ordination of all that was also excellent.

Q139 Mm.

A But, I mean that's in hindsight of what I read and saw on the TV when I came home.

Q140 Yeah.

A 'Cause during the race you're, you hear very little of the outside world really, you know, you're in a little world of your own.

Q141 Mm.

A You're aware of each sked that things are going on and more boats have retired and people have been in trouble, but you, unless you sit on that radio that whole time you, you're not completely up to date with that.

Q142 Were you aware, aware of any, any flare display or life raft display that was held at the CYC a couple of days prior to the race commencing?

A I think I did read about it, but I didn't attend it, no.

Q143 further to that would you, not attending that particular briefing, would you feel somewhat reluctant to hop into a life raft knowing that you, they're not seaworthy and that sort of thing? Would

that have any bearing on the way you feel that you have to abandon the vessel so to speak?

A Well, if the boat's sinking, you've got no option, so - - -

Q144 That's right.

A - - - I mean that's the last resort, but that is the last resort - - -

Q145 It is

A - - - and as far as I'm concerned until the boat's actually you're certain that it's going down, you're safer on the boat than - - -

Q146 Yeah.

A - - - in a life raft I think.

Q147 Mm.

A But it's nice to know the life raft's there as a last resort - - -

Q148 Yeah.

A - - - if you've got to get into them.

Q149 Mm. Yeah.

A But it proved in the fastnet race, I think, that too many people abandon their boats and got into life rafts too soon, the boats were still afloat days later.

Q150 Mm. Yeah. So, you've been made aware that as a result of the fastnets, the fastnet or have you always been of that view?

A I think the fastnet race sort of reinforced that, or made it more pronounced - - -

Q151 Yeah.

A But I think people generally are saying you're - - -
Q152 Yeah.

A - - - you're want to have the life raft's got to be at
knee height so your, the boat's going down and you just
step into it.

Q153 Yeah. O.K. And just a question off the cuff here.
Are you aware of the limit of positive stability or the
calculated limit of positive stability of the Margaret
Rintoul?

A No, I'm not. I'm, I'm not a student of the, the
.....

Q154 That's all right. I'm just asking you that, that's
all, I'm just asking if you're aware of it.

A No.

Q155 That's fine, I have nothing else.

DETECTIVE SENIOR CONSTABLE GRAY

Q156 No, I have no further questions. The time is now
4,26pm, this interview is now concluded.

INTERVIEW CONCLUDED