

DETECTIVE SENIOR CONSTABLE GRAY

Q1 This is an electronically recorded interview between Detective Senior Constable Stuart Gray and a Mr Rod Hunter on Friday, the 23rd of April, 1999 at Adelaide C.I.B. The time on my watch is now 5.45pm. Also present, seated directly in front of me, is Senior Constable David Upston from the New South Wales Water Police. Just for the record, Rod, could you please state your full name?

A Roderick Craig Hunter.

Q2 Your date of birth?

A 8/7/55.

Q3 Your current address?

A 12 Walcott Street, .... Bay.

Q4 And your occupation?

A I'm a schoolteacher.

Q5 O.K. As I have already explained to you, Senior Constable Upston and myself have been assigned by the New South Wales Coroner to make investigations in relation to the 1998 Sydney to Hobart. And one of those taskings is to speak to a cross-section of members who sailed in the race, O.K? Now if we could just start by, if you could just explain your sailing background experience to us?

A O.K. My background is essentially living on a coast. I've been sailing big boats for 25 years and I was sailing in dinghies when I was walking. So I guess a whole lifetime of sailing in one form or the other.

I've, I've sailed to New Zealand, I've done a lot of offshore sailing around South Australian waters, and this was my second Sydney to Hobart race.

Q6 O.K. Now I believe that you sailed on the boat Stand Aside?

A That's correct.

Q7 Can you tell me how you ended up being on that boat?

A Being that I do the odd boat delivery around Adelaide and I'd done the race before and I've got navigation skills, I was asked by the owners to be the navigator and extra crew person for the, the race for this year.

Q8 All right. And who is the owner of that boat?

A There's three owners, there's Jim Hallion and his brother and .... brother Laurie and Bevan Thomson, a third silent partner.

Q9 O.K. Now if I could take you to the 27th of December, 1998, and we, we're aware that you were rescued from Stand Aside?

A That's right.

Q10 If I could take you to the period prior to that and if you could sort of flow on from there?

A O.K. I guess the, the, the summary of the story is that the Sunday morning of the 27th, the weather was what I'd call the predicted weather, the change had come in and we had 40 or 50 knots of weather, we were heavily reefed down. We were what's, in the conditions that people sort of expect to have in a, a Hobart southerly buster, but those sort of wind strengths and

conditions. We were, in the morning, were approaching I guess the bottom of Victoria, about to enter into Bass Strait. At that stage the conditions were the nasty conditions that you don't like, but nothing for us to consider to not continue the race. The, by late, late morning, around midday, the weather had certainly gone into far more extreme than would be expected. The boat, we'd gone to no sails then we'd put up a very small headsail just to give the boat better steerage. Discussion was made about what tactics to make. I was down below in the boat at this stage sort of plotting our course, and the decision was that we'd, you know, survival type mode, not in a drastic sense at that stage by any means, but our course was, was steering 140 degrees, from memory, which really was just putting the boat in the position of a big bottle, just going where, where the weather wanted us to go. The boat was sitting safely, we were doing between 4 and 6 knots, you know, not nice, it was grey and wet and murky and we were getting hit by sort of, had some nasty waves, but we hadn't laid over or anything. And at that, at that's, I guess the midday through to 2 o'clock was the nasty conditions which have come through ..... about there, extreme conditions where the wave heights increased and the wind velocity increased to enormous amounts.

Q11 O.K. As far as the wave heights?

A Look, I'm only talking from what the helicopter pilots said - - -

Q12 All right.

A - - - and they, they said they were, they were appearing to be 60 foot and the odd ones were 80 foot.

Q13 Right.

A You know, on, on a boat you're just not aware of it. I mean, they, they were big, but they were, I guess the difficulty was that they were, that they weren't as far between peaks as what you get in the ocean, in the ocean where you've got a long distance between the wave peaks. It makes a big difference with these, being in the position we were in, being on the edge of Bass Strait and 30 odd miles offshore, the seas were, you know, nastier, steeper and closer together.

Q14 Right. O.K.

A So I mean essentially we were sitting, you know, comfortably but not pleasant, knowing that, you know, the weather had gone more than predicted and we had decisions about what, what we'd do and the boat was comfortable sitting as it was. So it was a case of, look, don't force anything, let's just ride with it, sails down. Like I said, a small, small storm jib was put up just to give better steerage so that the person on the helm could steer the boat better. And then it was at 2 o'clock it was due for the radio sched and, so I was again in the navigation area where I'd been all morning, just plotting things and keeping a tab on

things. The, and they were going through all the boat positions. They'd put through the weather forecast. My recollection from that was that it was the formal weather forecast which, you know, everyone sort of knew, but we were obviously in harsher conditions. The weather, after the sched they also talked about the fact that the Tasman Island light was not operating and that was going to be another navigational hazard down the bottom of Tasmania when we got there. And then they started going through all the boat positions and I, I'm sort of guessing that at about 2.00, being, sort of Stand Aside was sort of at the bottom of the list, and it would have been 2.15, 2.20, there was just, you know, just a roar, a roar of water and the, the boat went over. So from down below it was just a case of sitting, I was in the navigation area, I knew the boat was racing down a wave, I know, I knew that it had flipped over and probably done a circle. You know, the quiet time. I, I really feel that we were only over for a matter of seconds, you know, 15, 20 seconds. It was a very violent sort of roll to port, port bow going in and it tumbled over and came back up and there was sort of water pouring in. Our cabin, two thirds of the cabin had crushed in and so the two of us in the navigation area sort of clambered through the, the, the roof that was then inside the boat. The, there was another crew member who was done below on a, in the, on the starboard side, he was O.K. Another person was in

the starboard quarter berth, he crawled out with a couple of cuts on his head. I sort of went straight onto the deck, the deck and there was eight, eight people who had been on, on deck were on the starboard side of the boat, and started pulling them in. Pulled a couple of them in, then went down below in the boat, the boat was, again from memory now, knee deep-ish sort of in water, sloshing around and bulkheads sort of cracked and, and with the roof in the, inside the boat it was, you know, a fair old mess, of course. I grabbed the E.P.I.R.B. and set that off straight away 'cause I knew that, you know, the boat half full of water in those conditions, it wasn't really a sort of a, a .... situation, it was an instant Mayday. Put a spare aerial in the back of the radio straight away and got a Mayday out on the main V.H.F. radio which then, the battery was underwater, that disappeared on us so whether or not we ever got a call out on that one or not I don't know. And that was giving our, the G.P.S. was still working so I gave the lat. and longitude on that. So the E.P.I.R.B. was set off, I get, I got that one call out on the V.H.F. I then found a grab bag which had a handheld V.H.F. in it and gave that to one of the crew and he started giving a Mayday out on the, the handheld V.H.F. We weren't receiving anything on it, but we maintained the main Mayday giving our, an update on the position 'cause the, the G.P.S. was ... and it seemed to be continuing to work. The spare

G.P.S. was also in the watertight bag so that was sort of ready to operate in case the other one packed up. And I guess we maintained that for, I figure, a half hour to three quarters of an hour, and that's when the A.B.C. helicopter, from E.P.I.R.B. or the calls, I'm not sure, came above us and we were able to communicate with them. So during that time it was, I'd started bailing, there was some medical attention given to people, the first aid kit was out, the life rafts had been deployed. One life raft, a brand new one, didn't deploy which has been followed up with the manufacturers who are highly embarrassed. The, the other, other life raft that was deployed, that was the one we used eventually for getting people sort of from the boat to the helicopter.

Q15 The life rafts that were there, that you had on, on board, how many men life rafts were they?

A Two, oh, six man.

Q16 Six man?

A So two, two lots of six man.

Q17 And how many crew?

A 12.

Q18 And when you say it didn't deploy, what do you mean? It, it just failed totally or .....

A ... it was, our hired one which was in a valise inside, that, that went up on deck straight away and that went out and that popped perfectly, that's the one that can be seen in photographs and everything.

Q19

Yeah.

A

The other one which was in a canister, that was, the cord was pulled and the canister, it didn't explode, so the guys, and I was, at this stage, I mean, I was inside the boat bucketing and all I knew was on deck someone said, Look, the thing's not exploding. So I said, O.K. look, pull the cord again, it's got to be a firm pull. In the end they, from what I'm told they pulled the fibreglass canister to bits to get the rubber mass out, pulled it again but it wouldn't, wouldn't deploy so that ended up sinking below the back of the boat and probably acted, acted as a sea anchor. Then I think it snapped off and went to the bottom as a lump of rubber. So we were, we were fortunate that we were rescued as it was 'cause we were left with one life raft. Now the one that didn't deploy, there's, like I say, we've been, the agents have gone all through it with the manufacturers and they checked all their safety records and weights of gas canisters. There's no reason that that should have happened, but the reality is it did, and fortunately we didn't need it.

Q20

What brand was that?

A

That's a, it was an R.F.D. So I mean, I, from what, I mean, it's, you know, it hasn't been something in my hands but from what I've heard they've sort of obviously gone through their process and are not happy

or are embarrassed about it and, and I guess the essential thing was that we didn't need it.

Q21 Yeah.

A Fortunately.

Q22 O.K. So you, you were on the boat and your life raft hasn't, hasn't fired properly. So what happened then?

A Well, at that stage we had the, the other life raft was floating behind the back of the boat.

Q23 And that was tied to the boat?

A That was tied to the boat and the helicopter was above us. At that stage we'd maintained getting the water level down. Every time the boat hit the top of a wave, it'd sort of slew up, a bit more water would come in. So it was a case of, we were, we were beating it, but the port hull had a big crack or two cracks that I could see in it and I guess ..... most of the port side of the boat was very wrecked. The deck was delaminating and so on, so another wave the size that clobbered us to start with would have put the whole thing to bits. So, so we maintained the water level, but in a pretty horrible situation. The A.B.C. helicopter was above us. We cut the mast off, that came off very easily with boltcutters. We were in a position where they went straight up on deck and that was chopped off. Guys were patched up as far as injuries, as much as we could do at that stage. There were also two other, two of the crew members had personal E.P.I.R.B's so we actually had three

E.P.I.R.B's going during all this, which we got told after, One might have been enough, fellas, but under the situation three beeping away was sort of reassuring. The, the grab bag we had was probably important, the fact that we had easy access to flares, the spare radio, had about 50 spare batteries and I changed the batteries probably two or three times in the V.H.F. radio. We had accumulated, you know, bottles of water and stuff before, and we were just putting bits and pieces aside in case we weren't going to be able to be taken off. I'd found the, the storm trisail that, 'cause that would have been thrown over the, the hole in the roof to try and stop the water coming in if, again if we were heading into a night time situation. So that was there, but it was such a huge mess inside that those sort of things evolved as I was bucketing and things would float past and I'd thrown them out, and anything that was floating I was throwing out, just to leave a trail of sort of rubbish ..... and we all had life jackets on, that's, we put the, once everyone was out of the water, that's when we passed all the, all the .... vests were in the starboard quarter berth. So they were just passed up and everybody put the yellow vests on. The majority of people had self inflating ones as well. I had a Stormy Seas one underneath that, so I had a sort of secondary device that I knew that if I was, the other one choked me or something I had the, the back up of that and

quite a few of the guys had various versions of that on. Once people were back in the boat they were all harnessed back on. I didn't, I had my wet weather jacket off being down inside which had an internal harness so, and that, my wet weather gear disappeared out of the boat with a rush of water, so, so I didn't have a harness on at that stage so I had to tie a rope around me. And that's, that's probably something, well, I know it's something I do, internal harness, I mean the, the harnesses and jackets are convenient but in that situation I was left without a, without a harness on. So I mean, I, I guess my personal thing is that in those situations you should leave, a race like that with a proper harness on, your jacket goes over the top and if you've got a secondary one, fine, but the harness situation needs to be, you've got to have it on all the time, inside the boat as well. So the helicopter was above us. He told us that there were two rescue helicopters on the way. We discussed the ways they might sort of get us off and, with the boat going up and down and crashing around, they said it was, We'll attempt to do things from the life raft. When they arrived Peter Davison, the paramedic from HeliMed 1, he came down and attempted to get, we put two of the, two of the guys with the major injuries, we put them in the dinghy, drifted them back out the back of the boat, Peter came down the wire and attempted to sort of get into the dinghy, had a second attempt and

-  
then, then was able to sort of get to them. So hooked one guy and took him up, came down again and continued to do that eight times - - -

Q24 Mmm.

A - - - so which is a bit of a feat as you can imagine. Meanwhile, the other helicopter was standing by and, and another four people were taken off by that, using the same method. So, which was difficult, but - - -

Q25 Mmm.

A - - - you know, achieved quite brilliantly.

Q26 Mmm. Now were you taken off in the first load or the second load?

A I was the eighth person, in the, the first load.

Q27 In the HeliMed?

A Yeah, with HeliMed.

Q28 Right.

A So I was ..... Peter Davison, in his interview he said he didn't have enough strength left to give them the thumbs up, I said, Peter, when I spoke to him I said, could have told me, My thumbs are ready to sort of, I would have climbed up the rungs. But, yeah, it's pretty amazing what he did, so - - -

Q29 Now can you tell us, when you rolled was it 360?

A I, I feel it was, yeah.

Q30 Right. O.K. Now was there any panic on the boat after that?

A I wouldn't say so, I think there was a, I mean there's a whole range of, I guess, feelings there and then I

guess the, you know, the general thing is to say, No. I mean, people, people, injured people sat calmly, people that were O.K. did, did jobs. So there was, the case that I, I was down below in the boat, and I guess I played teachers and bossed everyone around and said, Right, let's bucket, let's do this, and so on - - -

Q31        Yeah.

A        - - - so, and the guys up on deck were either sitting because of their injuries or involved with getting the life rafts out and so on.

Q32        Yeah.

A        And, no, so it's, I don't know if it was shock or what, I mean, I, yeah, I've been asked that question a lot of times, I mean, Did your life flash past? I can't honestly say it did 'cause I was, I was aware that we had some debatable time about how long we had to do things and I, I, I guess I was aware that we might have had 2 minutes to do things, 5 minutes, or, or the boat was going to stay up. If the boat was going down, we had to do a lot of things very fast.

Q33        Mmm.

A        So there really wasn't time for discussion and people just seemed to be happy that we were just getting on with applying things that - - -

Q34        Mmm.

A        - - - you hoped to never do, but we, we did.

Q35        So there were no other problems associated after the roll and before being rescued?

A No. It's, I mean, it really was a case of, I just bucketed my butt off for about 3 hours from memory, so

- - -

Q36 O.K.

A - - - yeah, but people really were sitting on the radio was going. I mean, Charles maintained the radio backwards and forwards to the helicopter saying, you know, This will happen, yes, that's happening now, and, so that was great, that was a must.

Q37 Mmm.

A The handheld V.H.F. radio was, that's another thing I feel strongly about. If your batteries are gone, it doesn't matter how good your radio is in the boat.

Q38 Mmm.

A Your aerials are gone, batteries gone. You know, the handheld gave us that communication that probably enabled us to sort of perform the tasks we had to - -

-

Q39 Mmm.

A - - - quickly, I mean, 12 people off of a boat in whatever the time was - - -

Q40 Mmm.

A - - - because of that.

Q41 Now did the boat sink shortly thereafter, do you know?

A I've got no idea.

Q42 Got no idea?

A No.

Q43 When you left it was still floating?

A Yeah. Yeah. I guess we hovered around for a couple of minutes. There's, all I've seen is the photographs that were taken of, above us, and there's a photograph of us departing and the helicopter and the boat sitting in a big trough and the next wave has got the boat actually surfing up a wave, it's come down, and it's gone flying up a wave which, out of control like that it, it couldn't have lasted very long.

Q44 Mmm. Now the extent of the injuries, what were they?

A One of the guys lost the tip of a finger, a couple of us had cracked ribs, other guys, well, a couple of guys needed stitches, and, one a forehead and a couple of head sort of injuries as far as the stitches go. And one of the guys whose leg had got caught, he was sort of sitting on, on the rail and that's when the boat had gone over his leg had sort of twisted quite violently and he's, well, has hobbled around for a few months. He may need some leg reconstruction, but I haven't seen him for a few weeks.

Q45 Mmm.

A So, yeah, we were very lucky that we didn't sort of have what you'd call major - - -

Q46 Did anybody in the crew have any knowledge of the Fast Net inquiry so far as life rafts in boats?

A Probably not the inquiry, but I guess everyone's aware of that, that, I mean you stay off the boat, I mean -

Q47 Right.

A - - - everyone's very conscious that, you know, that, that's the biggest thing that, you know, I recall, is that you step off the boat when it goes down.

Q48 Yeah. That's right.

A So, you know, I guess the preparation, see, the boat had to be, the boat had to be organised to be able to sail it 1,200 miles from Adelaide to Sydney to start with.

Q49 Mmm.

A You know, to do that in itself it's harder than the 600 mile race in some, and in fact the boat only got as far as ..... and turned around and was trucked to Sydney because the, the weather was, south-easterlies, it's on the nose and just, the guys had worked out that the potential boat damage and crew fatigue sort of just to get it there wasn't sensible, so the owners had said, Right, we'll truck it, so - - -

Q50 Mmm.

A - - - it came back and it was trucked over to Sydney.

Q51 Mmm.

A But because of that, having to get the boat there, you know, we'd spent quite a few weeks in tidying little things up that just had to be right, replacing things.

Q52 Now you mention the term, survival mode, what does that mean exactly?

A I guess you're talking about the concept of racing.

Q53 Right.

A I mean you're there in the sea, you know you can't say, Well, I've had enough, I'll go home now.

Q54 Mmm.

A You've just got to do what, what the weather wants you to do. You're just a minor part of what's happening.

Q55 Mmm.

A And a case of not fighting it. And when we discussed tactics, you know, and such, but I mean there's different versions and at the end of the day it was Jim's call to sort of say, Well, O.K. this is what we'll do.

Q56 Mmm.

A And, I mean, I respected that.

Q57 Was there, did all the crew accept the decision?

A Oh, there was pretty mixed opinions but I mean - - -

Q58 Yeah.

A - - - I think everyone in general said, Well, he's, he's the owner - - -

Q59 Mmm.

A - - - and someone's got to finally say, Well, this is what we'll do - - -

Q60 Mmm.

A - - - otherwise you could debate all day.

Q61 Mmm.

A There was certainly no huge discussion. Down below there wasn't, you know, it was a case of a few quick comments and whether or not there was more discussions on deck I don't know.

Q62 So there wasn't any sort of general disharmony, or, was a few - - -

A No.

Q62 - - - comments made and that was basically it?

A Yeah. I mean it sort of, it really wasn't sort of a debatable, you know, debating sort of situation.

Q63 Mmm. Are you able to tell me if there was an E.P.I.R.B. in the life raft?

A There wouldn't be, no.

Q64 No. Hypothetically speaking, would you have taken the E.P.I.R.B. with you from the vessel if you had to stay there .....

A Oh, yeah, definitely, definitely.

Q65 .....

A Definitely, yeah.

Q66 You knew there was no E.P.I.R.B. in the raft?

A Yeah. Yeah. We just knew they had basic rafts and that all the equipment was on board.

Q67 Yeah. Were there any discussions amongst the 12 of you when only one raft opened up, what you were going to do if you had to leave?

A I - - -

Q68 Do you recall?

A I really, no, all I can remember is sort of thinking, oh, this isn't good, and really not dwelling on what we might have to do. It was, and with the timelines on things it was really a case of doing what there was and if we have to deal with that, I was conscious that if

we had to get out there it was going to be probably squeeze eight in and hang four off the side and swap around.

Q69 Yeah.

A And it wasn't going to be nice, but - - -

Q70 Yeah.

A - - - you know, I was well aware of, you know, that sort of being the scenario, but it wasn't something that was, there was no reason to discuss it.

Q71 Mmm.

A So, I mean, you know, it certainly wasn't one of the happiest sort of points of the whole .... You know, I mean, I, I was aware that you stay off the boat no matter what and it's, our, our concern was that the boat, we had to keep that afloat, we had to sort of cover the hole up, and, and stay with that - - -

Q72 Mmm.

A - - - to the best of our ability.

Q73 O.K. All right. So far as wind speeds, did you recall any of the wind speeds when you were sailing?

A Oh, look, I can't, again I, I can't, I was recording bits and pieces and I mean, I know we were in 50s and 60s and - - -

Q74 Yeah.

A - - - gusts, but I guess they weren't, I was, down, down below I was sort of, I was sort of keeping an update on our position - - -

Q75 Mmm.

A - - - and, so that was our concern. I mean the guys on deck were dealing with sailing the boat - - -

Q76 Mmm.

A - - - and, well, floating it, as it was, so, no, sorry, I can't comment that I, I can't say, Yes, I saw a 80 knots.

Q77 Yeah.

A Again it's only from what the helicopter guys - - -

Q78 Right.

A - - - passed on to us.

Q79 O.K. Dave?

SENIOR CONSTABLE UPSTON

Q80 As far as the life raft is concerned, you, and you heard the call from above when you were down in the saloon - - -

A Mmm.

Q80 - - - that they, there was discussion that it wouldn't go off, that's what you said?

A Oh - - -

Q81 You heard, you heard them, the other crew calling it, that - - -

A Yeah.

Q81 - - - it won't go off?

A Yeah.

Q82 O.K. Did you actually go up on deck at that stage and tell them to, to pull it, the, the cord further?

A No. I, I was down below until I was lifted off.

Q83 O.K. Did you see that life raft that didn't actually, the cylinder didn't go off and inflate the life raft, did you see that on deck at any time?

A No.

Q84 So as far as you're aware of the thing being put over the side and then going to the bottom, is only just from what the other fellows told you?

A Yeah. The fact that the raft wasn't in its position and it was - - -

Q85 Yeah.

A - - - it had been, you know, pulled over, the cord pulled, and there was no raft there.

Q86 Right.

A Mmm.

Q87 Do you know, did, did any of the persons tell you how much cord they pulled from the life raft?

A No. All I know is I, that, what I was told is that they'd, they ended up opening the canister - - -

Q88 Yeah.

A - - - taking the plastic off so they knew that they were clearly pulling the trigger - - -

Q89 Mmm.

A - - - ..... yeah, I, I guess, and you were saying things for future, it's probably, would be a valuable thing for people to see what's inside life rafts.

Q90 Yeah.

A You know, I, I knew 'cause I've seen them packed and I've got friends, that's their job, so I knew, you

know, what the mechanism was, to sort of say, Pull it harder, it's got, you know, and I ..... they, they've got a length of string and you've got to, you've got to pull that right out.

Q91 Mmm.

A So, yeah, but they, they had, from what I'm told, they'd literally unwrapped the plastic that it's in to get right through to pull it and the thing wouldn't.

Q92 Yeah.

A So I mean the next, next step would have been if it was possible to drag the thing up to the surface and try and hand pump it.

Q93 Yeah.

A So, but like I say, I was down below in the saloon so this is all from, you know, a 2 metre distance, just with - - -

Q94 Yeah.

A Yeah.

Q95 O.K. Are you aware of the, that there was a life raft demonstration at the C.Y.C.A. prior to the race?

A No. No, I wouldn't .....

Q96 How, how early were you, or were most of the people on the, on the crew at the C.Y.C. prior to the race?

A I, I guess we all progressively arrived over a week. I was there, what, for 4 days.

Q97 And you hadn't heard of a life raft display or flare demonstration?

A No.

Q98 O.K. Would you have gone if you thought that, if you would have known it was there?

A If it was at the club I probably would have gone just as a back up for a refresher, I've seen it a few times. Again, sort of knowing people that do the job I mean, I, I have seen it and done it and I sort of know it, so  
- - -

Q99 Right.

A But, yeah, I think it's, it's a valuable thing, and I'm surprised that you're sort of saying there was one 'cause I wasn't aware.

Q100 Mmm. Did Stand Aside, did she sail under a category in the race?

A It would have been whatever category was required for offshore, what, 1 or 2, whatever it is, yeah.

Q101 Do you know whether it entered a P.H.S. performance handicapping or a, or an I.M.S. category?

A I think, I mean, the boat was I.M.S. rated and that's what it's been sailing here, but I think it went under performance, I'm pretty sure Jim had put it in as a performance.

Q102 We'll check that with Jim.

A Yeah.

Q103 O.K. No, I have nothing further.

DETECTIVE SENIOR CONSTABLE GRAY

Q104 Have you got anything you'd like to add, Rod, in relation to future, anything that may assist us in our inquiry?

A

I mean, I, I guess, I mean, I was sort of hoping, sort of there's good outcomes from it and we've had a couple of safety forums here at ..... which have been brilliant, with sort of hundreds of people attending. We've had another good life raft demonstration that a local company put on, with people actually getting in the gear and in the water and a lot, at, at our local club, which was great, and people letting off flares, and, so I mean, that's been a good result of, you know, what did happen. A lot of people updated their equipment, looked at it and checked it and are aware of how fast things can happen. I've had a lot of people ask me to sort of look over their boats to sort of make comments on where they keep equipment and that. So I've been happy to do it and it's, so people have been refreshed by it. It's, but I mean, I guess personally, I mean, I think, I, I personally see no purpose in an E.P.I.R.B. in a, in a raft, but I think personal ones, one between two or something or other, or, I mean, most definitely one per life raft, I mean, that has to be the case, I mean, it's, and I think the, the harness situation, people have got to be aware of the fact if you've got your jacket off you haven't got a harness on, and that you can slip out of your harness, which, I mean, that's, there's been quite a few recordings of that happening even if, with your jacket on. I guess the other thing that's come out is people being very aware of how difficult it is to get someone out of the

water. We were, we probably only had 18 inches of .... water in the boat and so I had a line ahead sort of at deck level to try and drag people out with all their gear on and that was still a difficult task. A boat that's not flooded is going to be sitting a lot higher and I don't know how you'd, I don't know how we would have handled, if the boat wasn't half flooded, getting eight people back on board with the potential of another wave tumbling it, so I think people have been aware of and having, you know, jumped off in all their clothes and then someone saying, Let's get them back on, it's, it's almost something you sort of need to do, not wait to sort of have to do it.

Q105 Mmm.

A So it gets down to style of boats. Our starboard railing was all knocked out so that wasn't in the way. If your railing's still there, well, that's in the way of getting a person in as well. So that, getting someone on board is important. I guess, you know, the V.H.F. radio, easy access to a secondary radio aerial, we were able to get a second aerial into the back of the V.H.F in, you know, 30 seconds. We just ripped the spare aerial off, plugged it in and it was, it was there, now ..... sort of got a radio sticking straight in, and it's nice timberwork and so on, you can't get to the back of it to quickly put one in, but this one -

- -

Q106 Mmm.

- - - was set up so you could. Equipment, well, all the equipment needs to be very much around the companionway. You can't expect to go up forward, to some nice spot to find some item that's been left in a good place 'cause if the front of the boat's not there any more you can't get it quickly. So all the safety equipment, I think, needs to be located around the companionway.

Q107 Mmm.

A Yeah. So there's, and I, and I guess we had, you know, there was a few Hobarts between us on the boat so the experience was there. The boat was strong, but essentially those conditions were such that I don't know what would have survived it. I guess personally, I mean I guess a personal thing is that I think 12 hours between radio scheds is too long on that type of race even in good weather. I mean, I, I would have been a lot happier to be, even if it's not boat positions, 6 hourly at least radios on just in case something needs to be told. I think with the bigger boats with, that are professional boats with a lot of equipment, I think there should be some obligation for them to pass on information, as much as people don't turn motors on, because it's the honourable thing, I think there should be, sort of, forget, you know, sneaking down the coast, I think it's, there should be some obligation on the bigger boats to, to give reports. I wouldn't have felt uncomfortable for the,

for the weather forecasters to give their formal thing, which I accept what they did, and I don't place any blame at all on them. They recorded what was there, not what was hearsay. I wouldn't have had any problem, though, with after that, the radio report then saying, Now the unofficial radio, or the, the unofficial weather which we'd like to tell you - - -

Q108 Mmm.

A - - - is that Sayonara is hitting 70 knots in Bass Strait. I mean, something along that calibre with us 50 miles behind would have been, Well, let's, before we go on the Bass Strait - - -

Q109 Mmm.

A - - - let's pull the pin and get out of here.

Q110 Mmm.

A So I mean, I think, I mean, you go racing 'cause you, you choose to, but I mean if this is the sort of thing with unpredictable weather, is, I think there can be a bit more feedback.

Q111 Mmm.

A And again I mean, and that wouldn't be difficult to do. So, interboat thing, I think, you know, the skipper's got to be responsible and it generally happens that people do sort of communicate quite readily. I mean, you forget about the race very quickly if you have to.

Q112 Mmm.

A I'd say that's 99 percent of people, you just don't do that sort of thing otherwise.

Q113 O.K. Did you hear any weather report that was put over the air by Doctel Rager?

A No.

Q114 Sword of Orion?

A No. The only ones I heard were the official ones from the relay boat.

Q115 Mmm. O.K.

SENIOR CONSTABLE UPSTON

Q116 You, you said earlier that you, you took your own life harness and lanyard?

A Mmm.

Q117 Do you know if there was one supplied for you on the boat?

A No. I don't know if there would have been or not. I mean, it's just, I guess all of us that race sort of, you have your own 'cause you know it's O.K.

Q118 Do you know if, and I know that there's no one here that you can ask, but do you know if everyone brought their own harnesses on board - - -

A Oh - - -

Q118 - - - with the entire crew? You don't know?

A I don't know if they were all personal ones or whether they were boat ones.

Q119 O.K.

DETECTIVE SENIOR CONSTABLE GRAY

Q120 Anything else you'd like to add?

A No. That's my part of the story and I'm glad it's all in the past.

Q121 O.K. Time on my watch now is 6.23. This interview is  
now concluded.

INTERVIEW CONCLUDED