

DETECTIVE SENIOR CONSTABLE GRAY

Q1 This is an electronically recorded interview between Detective Senior Constable Stuart Gray and Mr Andrew Marriette at the Adelaide C.I.B. building on Friday, the 23rd of April, 1999. The time on my watch is now 7.50pm. For the record, Andrew, would you mind just stating your full name?

A Andrew John Marriette.

Q2 And how do you spell your surname?

A M-A-R-R-I-E-T-T-E.

Q3 And your date of birth?

A

Q4 Your current address?

A

Q5 And your occupation?

A A sales representative.

Q6 O.K. And as I've already explained to you prior to the, prior to the interview, Senior Constable Upston and myself are making inquiries in relation to the 1998 Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race. Part of our taskings is to speak to people who were involved in the race, and in your case you were involved on the yacht, Stand Aside. O.K. Now can you give me some, some of your sailing background?

A I've been sailing since I was probably knee high to a boot.

Q7 Mmm.

A I've represented Australia a few times in World Championships. I've had South Australian titles, I have held some national titles, I've raced in races against New Zealand, Australia and New Zealand, and done extensive ocean racing.

Q8 O.K.

A Now three Sydney Hobarts.

Q9 Right. Now how was it you became a, a crew member of Stand Aside?

A They were after a foredeck crew at the time, going back probably about 2 years ago, I presume, 2 maybe 3 years ago, and I was available at that time because the boat that I was sailing on went to Queensland.

Q10 Right. So you've sailed with that crew for a couple of years now.

A Yes.

Q11 O.K. Now if I could take you to the 27th of December, 1998, you might like to take, take me through what happened prior to the rolling of the, of the vessel.

A At what time are we looking at? Are we looking at - -
-

Q12 Oh,

A - - - 2.30 in the, because we rolled at 2.15.

Q13 O.K. Well, say the morning, morning leading up to - -
-

A Morning leading up to it, the conditions were probably worsening. We had, we were sailing quite well, we were at some, some stages during the morning we actually

-
flagged our main down, put our storm jibs up and continued through, we were listening to all the reports on the way about the weather, keeping constant radio contact. We were probably one of the only ones, I'd say, that would have a crew member down below listening to the radio on radio watch, probably 80 per cent to 90 per cent of the time, there's - - -

Q14 Right.

A - - - somebody on radio at all times. The boat was going very well, it was riding high, she was doing everything correctly, it was just blowing. At 2 o'clock the, 2 o'clock in the afternoon the skip came over, gave us a, a weather forecast of what was happening at the time, and then they run through the, all the boats, and of course ours being Stand Aside, well, VC Offshore Stand Aside, we're right down the bottom, and we could hear boats saying they were having heavy weather, they were, some were turning back, but the majority of boats were cruising along quite nicely, and I was on the radio at the time down in the radio room, and I was about to say, Well, we're all fine - - -

Q15 Mmm.

A - - - and this would have been about quarter past 2.00 in the afternoon, and that's when she rolled.

Q16 Right. Can you take me through that roll?

A The roll was, I'd say it was a bit like riding a surfboard in a, in a pipeline, it sort of did a, a nose

dive barrel roll, and it was just one of those freak waves that came over the top, that broke at the same time, and it just swung us right over. It swung us over so fast that myself sitting in the radio room actually doing a radio check at the time, was still sitting in the same seat when it came up, I didn't move - - -

Q17

A - - - so the centrifugal force would have been terrific.

Q18 Right. So she went 360?

A Went a complete 360.

Q19 And how long do you estimate the roll was for, the duration of it?

A Oh, seconds.

Q20 O.K.

A It would be seconds, I'd say, you, time - - -

Q21 Yeah.

A - - - you know, I don't know what time really comes to when it's like that, and I don't think anybody does, their adrenalin's really - - -

Q22 Yeah.

A - - - rushing high. The other thing is that once the cabin top came in, it came into the radio room and blocked the radio room off full of water, so it's then a matter of survival, and trying to count your crew and making sure everybody's there and going into your survival mode, that you're actually trained for - - -

Q23 Yeah.

A - - - to do.

Q24 So how many people were downstairs at the time of the roll?

A Oh, what was it, one, two, three, four, there was five of us.

Q25 O.K. And that was seven on top then?

A That's seven on top, yes.

Q26 O.K. Now after the roll, what happened then?

A My big thing was, is that, to push the cabin top that had come in over the, over the doorway part of this radio room out of the way so I could actually drain the water out of it, because this was actually full of water. Then the other guy that was in the radio room with me, he, he went upstairs to check on people, to make sure everybody was there. I, I helped undo all the life raft, cut the life raft free, because we carry one life raft down in the radio room, and carry it upstairs. It's then checking on who's, I also deal with a lot of the first aid on the boat, so it's a matter of checking on who's got cuts, bruises, breaks, etc. and - - -

Q27 Yeah.

A - - - getting the first aid kit out, getting the flares out, getting grab bags out, now our grab bags contain things like handheld G.P.S, handheld radios, V.H.F. radios, and everything like that - - -

Q28 Mmm.

A - - - there's a grab bag for each life raft as well, so that if we do get parted or separated we have enough equipment on board each life raft to - - -

Q29 Right.

A - - - cope with that sort of procedure.

Q30 O.K. Now I believe that shortly thereafter a decision was made to deploy the life rafts?

A Yes, that's correct.

Q31 Can you take me through that?

A Well, as I say, I, I actually held, helped throw one up, upstairs. I didn't - - -

Q32 Right, O.K.

A - - - throw any in, I threw the new one which we actually had upstairs - - -

Q33 Yes.

A - - - of course it's tied still down below where I am - - -

Q34 Yes.

A - - - with its line, and I didn't actually see the deployment of the life rafts - - -

Q35 Right.

A - - - at all, because in the meantime I'm trying to help clean out the water that's in the boat, because at this stage we're actually over waist deep in water, so it's a matter of starting to bail the boat out.

Q36 Yeah.

A I'm also at the same time sort of looking around, I noticed that Mike Marshman had lost the top end of his

finger, so it's then, get the first aid kit and sort of fix his - - -

Q37 Mmm.

A - - - his problems up so he doesn't bleed to death in the meantime.

Q38 Yeah.

A I, most of them had already shouted down that everybody else was A.O.K. - - -

Q39 Yeah.

A - - - and they could wait until we'd actually bailed the - - -

Q40 Yeah.

A - - - the boat out in the meantime. In the state that the boat was in, the sensible thing was, was to deploy life rafts - - -

Q41 Yeah.

A - - - in case - - -

Q42 Yeah.

A - - - because all it would need was another wave to come over the top, probably, and roll it again, and it probably would have broken up even more.

Q43 Yeah.

A The wind was actually blowing hard enough that it was actually lifting the Kevlar on the deck, actually flapping it back. You could actually see it lifting and flapping, and that was Kevlar.

Q44 When did you become aware that the, one of the life rafts didn't deploy properly?

A Oh, when I popped my head up over the top.

Q45 Right.

A And then I went, Oh, shit.

Q46 Right. O.K. O.K. Now, so far, what, so what was the extent of damage

A Half the cabin top was gone - - -

Q47 Right.

A - - - totally gone, so it's like, an open, totally open dinghy.

Q48 Yeah.

A As I said, waist deep, just over waist deep in water.

Q49 Yeah. O.K. Now - - -

A We had, we had pumps and everything like that, so it's a matter of deploying the pumps, getting the pumps working, which they all worked properly, because we all, we all serviced properly before - - -

Q50 Right.

A - - - get your flares on top of the deck so that we know that we, if we hear anything we can actually start to fire flares off.

Q51 Mmm.

A We flew, flew a couple of flares off first off, just in case somebody was near the vicinity, just to let them know we were there.

Q52 Right.

A Because in those type of waves a boat that's just round the corner won't see you.

Q53 Mmm. Mmm. That's right.

-
A And I think Syndicate noticed that too, when they couldn't see us at one stage.

Q54 Yeah.

A And they were right on top of us.

Q55 O.K. Now shortly thereafter a helicopter arrived?

A Yes, Channel 2 helicopter.

Q56 Right.

A Nice lot of footage they've got.

Q57 Did you communicate with them?

A Yes, we did, it's the easiest way, they relayed all our messages across, because handheld V.H.F's are great, but they haven't got a lot of range so you need another vehicle to, to relay. They kept us informed of when the rescue helicopters were coming, asked us if there was anything they could actually do, they, there's not much they can really do, other than they were going to stay there and keep an eye on us until we, the rescue ones came, and told us what time they were coming. Our skipper is good in the way that he makes sure that we, and our safety line, that we've always got tons and tons of batteries, we probably had enough to run all of our portable gear for about 3, 4 days - - -

Q58 Mmm.

A - - - on batteries.

Q59 Very good.

A Because everything needs batteries and everything would have supplies of batteries, it's - - -

Q60 Mmm.

A - - - it's like a battery shop.

Q61 Mmm. And then some time after that, approximately about an hour, the HeliMed - - -

A No, I think it was a bit over the hour actually.

Q62 Right.

A Yeah, it was probably about an hour and a half, maybe even two by the time - - -

Q63 Mmm.

A - - - because I'm just thinking about me tapes I've got from Channel 2, because they sent me all the video footage.

Q64 Mmm.

A And I got two, two hour tapes, so, yeah, it would be about 2 hours before the HeliMed came in.

Q65 O.K.

A And, yeah, she came down and picked up the first eight from the life raft - - -

Q66 Yeah.

A - - - and I was picked up second from last with the second helicopter which came from Canberra.

Q67 Would that be the Southcare helicopter?

A That's the Southcare, Southcare, Southcare or South Coast? Southcare?

Q68 Southcare, yeah.

A Yeah. The

Q69 O.K. Can you tell me, were there any problems, did you experience any problems getting to the life raft to be picked up by the helicopter?

A No, well, only when I got thrown out of the life raft.

Q70 Oh, right, you got thrown out of the life raft?

A I got thrown out of the life raft, I got thrown out twice.

Q71 Right.

A The first time the life raft tipped up, straight up over the top, and I was thrown out, so I had, I swam back. Luckily our life rafts do have lines that go out from them, so I was able to grab one of those and then help pull myself back to the life raft. The boys on the boat then pulled the life raft back into the boat, one of them jumped back into the life raft and then helped me back in. I don't know if you've - - -

Q72 Right.

A - - - ever tried getting into a life raft when it's in the water, it's a, they're harder than they look.

Q73 Mmm. So it actually capsized?

A Actually capsized totally.

Q74 So did you right the raft?

A Yeah, we righted the raft.

Q75 When you hopped back in?

A Yeah, basically, yeah.

Q76 O.K.

A And then it did it again - - -

Q77 Right.

A - - - on the second time, and that time I was actually trapped underneath the life raft and actually drank a bit of water - - -

Q78 Right.

A - - - and I'd said goodbye to everybody at that stage, and the life raft lifted back up, and I popped up alongside of it again.

Q79 Was that due to wind?

A Wave.

Q80 Wave, O.K.

A Yeah, it was more wave, and it was a wave again that curled over and broke, and it's - - -

Q81 Right. Yeah.

A Life rafts are great but they don't - - -

Q82 Yeah.

A - - - you know, they're not going to, they're not the be all and end all of everything, so - - -

Q83 Yeah. Now what was the, the highest wave that you saw, or, or can estimate on heights?

A Oh, I reckon five storeys.

Q84 Yeah.

A I reckon she was about 100, 120 feet.

Q85 Right.

A I know at one stage when I was downstairs looking at the instrument whilst I was doing the, the, the radio relay, that at one stage we had a gust up to 140 knots.

Q86 A gust to 140?

A Yeah.

Q87 And what was that recorded on?

A Just recorded off our instruments that we've got from up the top of the mast.

Q88 O.K. And did you actually see that recorded - - -

A I saw, saw it come across, yeah, but it was only a short period of time, you know, so it was sort of gusting in the sort of the 80's to 100's, I suppose, at times.

Q89 O.K. Now - - -

A The thing is, is these boats are built to do that type of thing, it is a Clearwater classic, no, it's no one's fault, as far as I can see - - -

Q90 No.

A - - - you know, it's just a thing of, we go out there, it's like climbing Mount Everest, I suppose.

Q91 Mmm. Mmm.

A You're going to lose some lives, in actual fact the Sydney Hobart, I'd say, would have to have the safest record around in, in yacht racing.

Q92 Mmm. Mmm.

A And it's mainly due to the Cruising Yacht Club being so tight on their rules and regulations of who can go in and who can't, and the safety requirements of their boats.

Q93 Mmm. Mmm.

A Because they make sure the safety equipment is up to date and up to scratch, so - - -

Q94 Mmm. Mmm. Do you have any suggestions or any views on the race last year which could be implemented in the upcoming races?

A I suppose the only is, is I look back probably at Winston Churchill, and the way that their boat, or their helmsman or skipper or whatever, and this isn't a blame to him or whatever - - -

Q95 Mmm.

A - - - but he had two life rafts but he only had one set of radio, portable radio gear.

Q96 Mmm.

A Now, like, ours, we had twins of everything.

Q97 Mmm.

A We're very safety conscious, and I suppose because we, we deal with out here in Bass Strait we're, well, no, not Bass Strait, out here in the gulf, when we come up with the Antarctic weather and what have you, it's, it's big rollers that come in towards Kangaroo Island, comes around passage and that can get very, very rough. Not as rough as that, but it can get really rough.

Q98 Mmm.

A So we're used to howling big weather. And I suppose our skipper and our crew are all very, very safety conscious. I wear a totally inflatable jacket, once I put my safety harness on, it's an automatic, as soon as I hit the water it will inflate and roll me over.

Q99 Mmm.

A Most of our crew do have the same things. We have twins of everything for twin life rafts, it's - - -

Q100 Mmm.

A - - - it's just mandatory that, the way we run.

Q101 Mmm.

A So maybe Winston Churchill should have had - - -

Q102 Mmm.

A - - - two lots with each raft, because - - -

Q103 Mmm.

A - - - once they're separated, and you can't keep two rafts together - - -

Q104 Mmm.

A - - - and you being a Water Police you probably know a little bit about water safety.

Q105 Mmm.

A Trying to tie two rafts together in a situation like that is near impossible - - -

Q106 Mmm.

A - - - you know, there's got to be problems there.

Q107 Mmm.

A So maybe it, they should look at making sure that people do have twin lots - - -

Q108 Mmm.

A - - - if they've got twin life rafts.

Q109 Mmm.

A I'd like to see proper G.P.S's being mandatory on them, maybe E.B.I.R.P's even get put into them - - -

Q110 Mmm.

A - - - into the life raft itself - - -

Q111 Mmm. Mmm.

A - - - you know, because again we had three E.B.I.R.P's.

Q112 Mmm.

A We had one for the boat and one for each life raft.

Q113 Mmm. Mmm. Did you, did anybody have personal E.B.I.R.P's?

A Yeah, there was two personal E.B.I.R.P's and one boat locked E.B.I.R.P. That's why we had one for each - - -

Q114 Right. And - - -

A And again we had enough batteries to be able to supply - - -

Q115 Yeah.

A - - - everything.

Q116 Yeah.

A

Q117 Now so far as personal strobes, anybody have strobes?

A Everybody had strobes.

Q118 Right.

A And everybody had knives.

Q119 Right. O.K. Anything else you'd like to add?

A No, not really, I, like I said, I can't blame anybody and the - - -

Q120 Mmm.

A - - - rescue attempt went, they were great, yeah.

Q121 Mmm. That's good.

A

Q122 O.K.

A You know, but the Bureau of Meteorology could not forecast it, it doesn't matter how you look at it, they could not forecast what we hit.

Q123 Mmm.

A And I would say there was probably a mini cyclone, when those two lows hit together, there was a mini cyclone, and we, we knew we were going, we all knew we were going into rough weather. We, during that night, the night before, we were going down the New South Wales coast and we were doing 20 knots with the wind up your bum - - -

Q124 Mmm.

A - - - kite flying, at 20 knots for a 41 foot boat, is flying along quite nicely - - -

Q125 Mmm.

A - - - and we were pumping the kite really hard, and we went all the way down the New South Wales coast with two lightnings, two thunder and lightning storms, one on either side of us, and we went down the middle of it.

Q126 Mmm.

A You know, so we know what we're - - -

Q127 Mmm.

A - - - we're, we're sailors, it's - - -

Q128 Mmm. Mmm.

A And I think anybody that goes out there do, does know what they're going out for - - -

Q129 Mmm.

A - - - and it's, and it's just unfortunate that this year was a really bad year, it's one of those things, we lost people.

Q130 Mmm.

A But we'll all be there again next year.

Q131 Mmm.

A And it's a blue water classic, so it's, you can classify it as like a round the world trip.

Q132 Mmm.

A They don't stop round the world trips that's - - -

Q133 Mmm.

A How safe, the cruising yacht club's safety I would say for that race is probably more than doing the Whitbread - - -

Q134 Mmm.

A - - - because they are so safety conscious.

Q135 Mmm.

A So - - -

Q136 O.K.

A Yeah.

Q137 The time on my watch is now 6 minutes past 8.00. This interview is now concluded.

INTERVIEW CONCLUDED