

**Robert Gordon JP
95 Parklands Rd
Mount Colah NSW 2079
Ph: 02 9476 6226**

8 January 1999

Dr Brian Emerson
36 Warrimoo Ave
St Ives NSW 2075

Dear Brian,

Notes on the loss of Miintinta

I am almost 42 years old and have lived at or near the water for most of my life. I have always been involved with some sort of water sport or passtime; from surfing, swimming, scuba diving, rowing (racing sculls), ski boat racing, inflatable surf boats, and sailing. I have sailed all manner of craft from small catamaran to three masted tall ship. For the past 22 years I have been involved in some way in yacht racing, from winter series to twilights, both in Sydney Harbour and Pittwater, and occasionally offshore. I have delivered boats from Southport to Sydney and have sailed the Barquentine "Our Svanen" extensively offshore.

I have no formal qualification in "seamanship" but would consider myself rather experienced on (and under) the water.

Going to sea in a race such as the Sydney-Hobart takes quite an amount of preparation, both for the vessel and for the crew. As you know, since you asked me to join your crew for the last race I have been sailing with you or helping to prepare the boat every weekend (except one). I watched with great interest the improvements made to the boat every time we boarded it. You were obviously intent on making the boat as perfect as it could be for such a trip. By the time we left the boat was in good order, parts had been restored or replaced as necessary, and I considered that the refit had left the boat seaworthy.

Our trip down the coast was fairly rapid in the prevailing conditions and even the 50 knott Southerly didn't worry us too much. We had ample warning from other boats of the approach of the 70 knott winds, we were able to make everything secure and get our storm gear up.

A decision was made to alter course toward Eden due to the strength of the breeze and the size of the seas, so we motor-sailed toward Eden. During

the late afternoon/evening on Sunday the motor stopped, at which time we realized that we were taking water. We radioed the Coastal Patrol to advise them of our situation and kept in touch with them constantly throughout the night.

Failures of various safety items made it terribly difficult to remove the incoming water. Firstly the large electric bilge pump (which was brand new) failed, then the external manual bilge pump (which was also brand new), followed by the large manual bilge pump in the aft cabin (recently overhauled). The bottom also fell out of one of our seabuckets on our first attempt at lifting it. The (new) deckwash pump failed also. We were left to bail using cordial containers into the sink. The flares were also difficult to use as the firing mechanism first bent then fell apart, I was left to hitting the base of the parachute flares against a winch handle to make them fire.

Had some of the above items not failed, I believe that we could have saved the boat.

Our thanks must go to the crew of the trawler which came to our aid at approximately 2.00am Monday morning, they tried as best they could to tow the boat to port but due to the conditions of the sea and the rising water level in our boat they were unable to save her. They did save six lives.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'R Gordon', written in black ink.

Robert Gordon