

Comments from Rob Matthews
Yacht "Business Post Naiad" 29/1/99

- 1 Harness Lines See attached photos
 - a Photo 1

My (almost fatal) problem arose through the small notch (arrowed) in the clip catching in the stainless steel angle of the standard Burke harness. Both the harness and the clip were of the approved type. Whilst trapped under the upturned yacht and tethered at the end of the harness line, with the yacht being thrown about and surfing on its roof, I was unable to release the clip, under load, until I managed (with extreme difficulty) to get some slack in the line to release it.
 - b Photo 2

This is a better type of clip, as it has no notch to catch. However, the release spring is awkward to undo with one hand.
 - c Photos 3 & 3a

This type of clip is a better proposition than the clip in photo 1, and is already on some approved harness lines. However it has a similar problem to the clip in photo 1, in that, it can undo accidentally when clipped to a "U" bolt.
 - d Photo 4

This photo is fairly disturbing. It is a shot of both ends of Bruce Guy's (non-approved) harness line. The clip on the left has had the spring-loaded safety device push past the stopper lugs. There is no way this clip can be released without using a hammer or screwdriver. Bruce was not using a harness when he died as he was down below, so it is in no way connected with his death.
 - e Photos 5 & 5a

This is a clip, also from a non-approved harness line. I feel that it may be able to be damaged in a similar fashion to the clips in photo 4. Also the large notch is of extreme concern.
 - f

Naiad carried the required number of approved harnesses, but most of the crew chose to wear the built into jacket type, which, for the purposes of keeping people attached to the boat, worked adequately. As stated in (a), I was wearing an approved Burke harness & line.

As can be seen, I can offer no solutions. However, I feel that this enquiry is the proper forum to make people aware of the current clip's shortcomings
- 2 Sea Anchor

I would strongly recommend that a large sea anchor, with a very very very long line be part of a yachts mandatory safety gear.
- 3 E.P.I.R.B.s

I would recommend that personal E.P.I.R.B.s be considered, along with one for the yacht plus one for each raft.
- 4 "V" Sheets

The currently available crop of flimsy p.v.c. "V" sheets would not stand up to the extreme weather conditions encountered when they are most likely to be required.

5 Storm Sails & Stability

Either smaller storm sails are necessary or, preferably, the stability of the yachts be raised. Perhaps both are necessary.

6 Life Jackets

The Mae West style of life jacket works fine as a flotation device, but is dangerous when being winched out of the water with a Helicopter harness. Both myself and at least one other crewmember felt that our necks could have been snapped, and both of us had our wind pipes blocked, when the harness was pushed below the jacket, and the front section came up under the chin when being winched out of the water.

The helicopter frogman also experienced some difficulty in pushing the harness over our heads & chests.

Perhaps (unfortunately) the better quality (read more expensive) type of jacket should become mandatory.

7 Life Rafts

The positioning of rafts should be seriously looked at.

I personally believe they should be in the cockpit, in a canister. I used to be of the opinion that a frightened man would be able to throw a valise packed raft out through the hatch with ease. But, after personal experience, I have found that 3 frightened, tired men, barely have the strength to lift one outside, tie on the painter, then deploy a monster that seems to have a mind of its own, all the while being raked by huge seas.

After rolling 360 degrees, and discovering first hand, the extraordinary forces of the water, I also think that a raft tied (no matter how securely), like a pimple on a coach house roof is absolutely ridiculous. It would be swept away with ease, possibly even pulling off the cabin top.

Just one small point. One of our rafts appears to have been swept away when the painter chafed through, most likely over the sea rails. I am unaware of the reason the second raft was swept away.

8 Bilge Pumps

One of Naiad's bilge pumps was fitted under a settee berth, which was one metre under the water after the second roll and therefore would have been unusable. The deck bilge pump had the handle ripped from its rope & lost overboard. This was most likely caused by stray rigging. It should be noted that almost immediately after the first roll, both bilge pumps ceased to operate, most likely blocked by the large amounts of debris.

9 Loose Equipment

One anchor broke free from where it had been securely tied under a settee berth. The stove, which had been securely pinned, still managed to break free and destroy itself during the first roll. All our food was lost in the first roll when the icebox lid burst open.

10 Batteries

The batteries would have operated, if they had been sited higher in the boat. I know this, because the lights on the switch panel flickered occasionally while water sloshed in & out over the batteries. Unfortunately we were still unable to operate the radios.

I hope that these comments are of some help.

Basically I feel that the current safety regulations are good, they just need some fine-tuning.

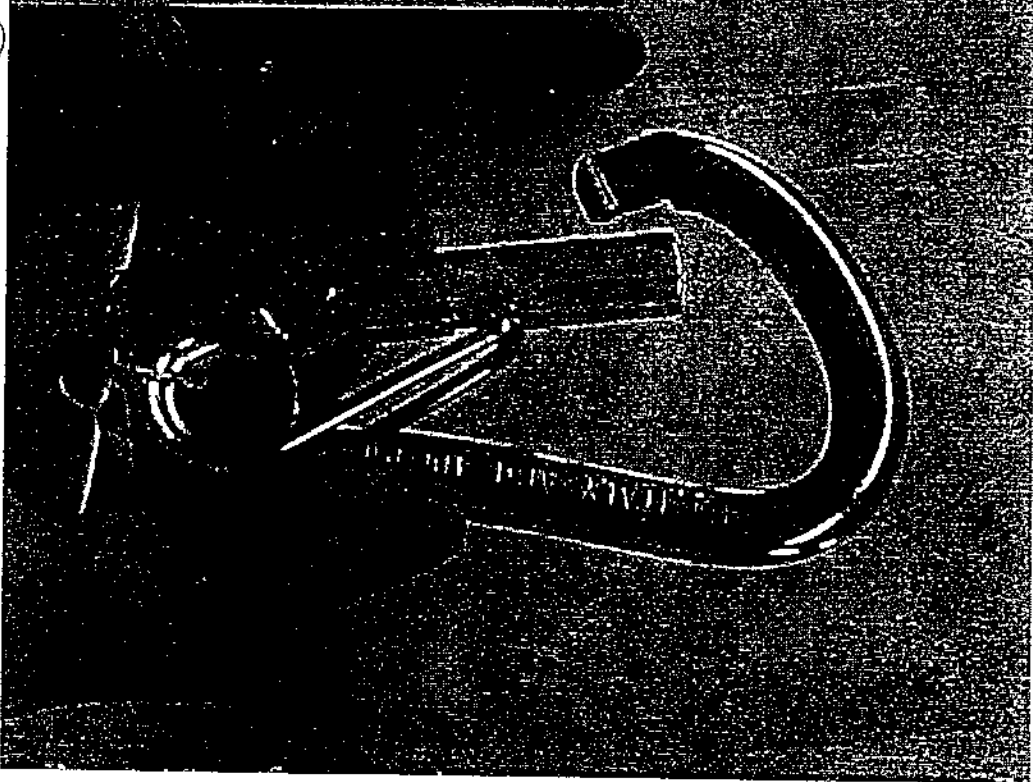
Yours sincerely

Rob Matthews

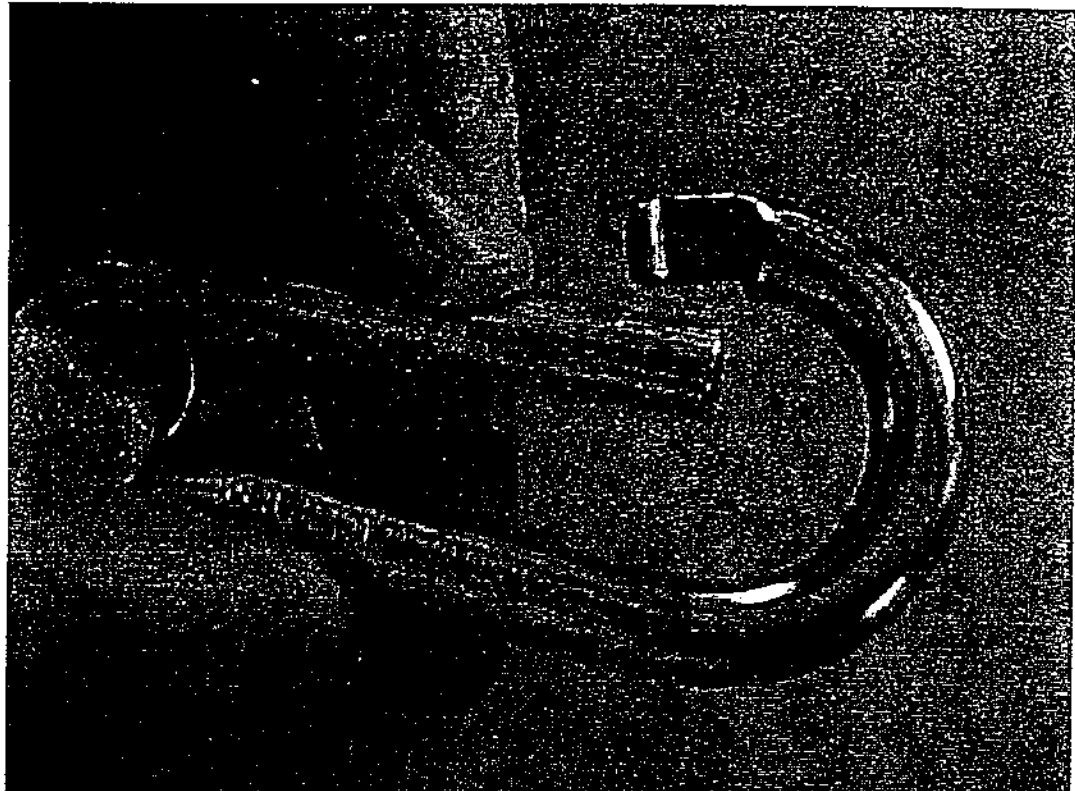
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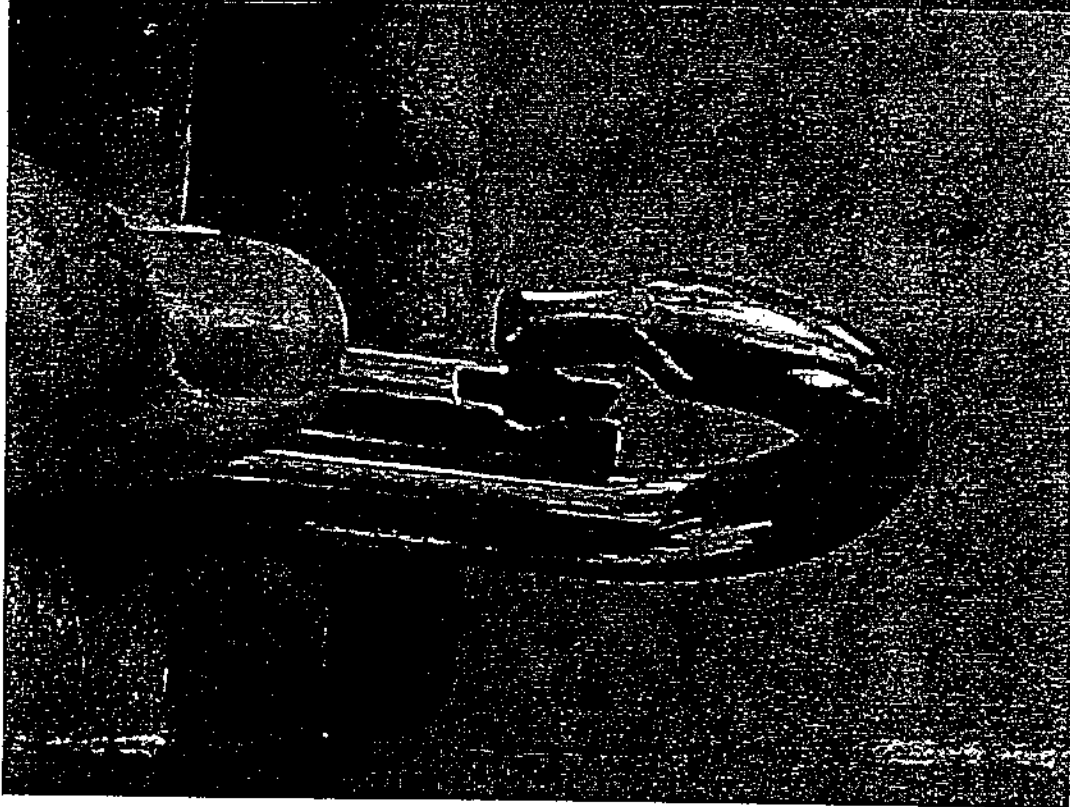
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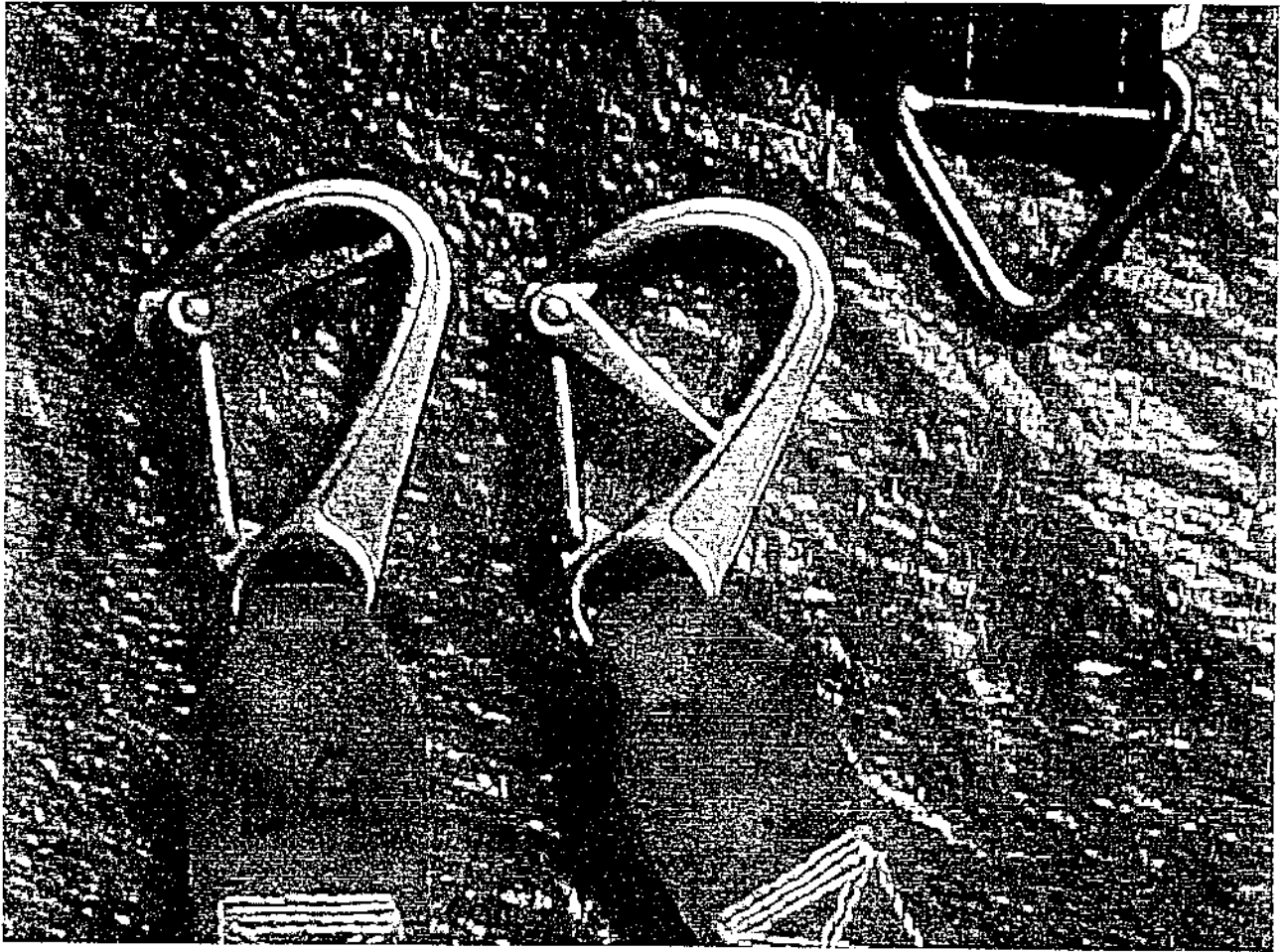
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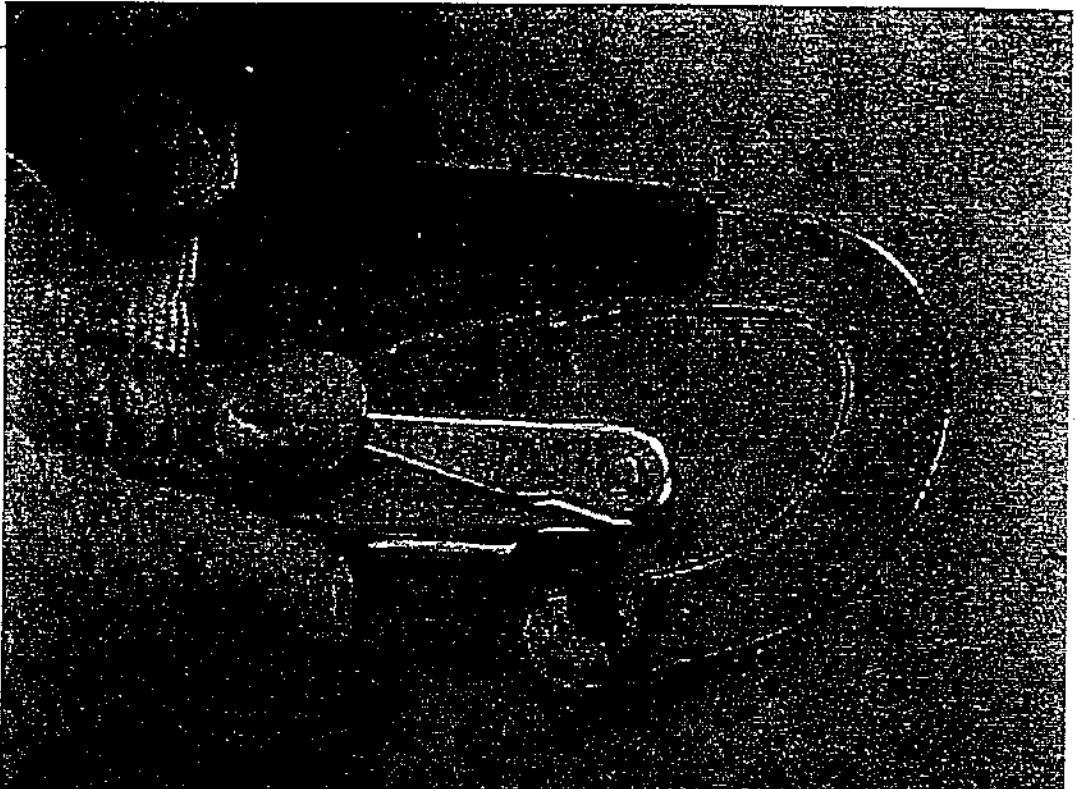
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