

DETECTIVE SENIOR CONSTABLE GRAY

Q1 This is an electronic interview between Detective Senior Constable Stuart Gray - (Tape beeping) - and Mr Don Buckley, at the Cruising Yacht Club of Australia, Rushcutters Bay, on Friday, the 29th of January, 1999. The time on my watch is now 10.22pm. Also present and seated to my left is Senior Constable David Upston, from the New South Wales Water Police. As I've explained to you, Mr Buckley, we're making inquiries in relation to the Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race of 1998, and we've been assigned to speak to various persons who were involved in the race, as to their involvement

- - -

A Yeah.

Q1 - - - and, and what occurred. Now, for the record, I'll just state your name, which is Don Buckley, is that correct?

A That is, yeah.

Q2 Your date of birth is the 20th of the 10th, '54?

A Correct.

Q3 And your address is 10 Marelyn Road, that's M-E-R-E-L-Y-N - - -

A Yeah.

Q3 - - - Road, Frenchs Forrest?

A That's correct.

Q4 O.K. If I could just start, could you give me some background, so far as your sailing is concerned?

A Surely, yeah. I've, I started sailing as a young guy,

I suppose eight years old. It was sort of a family interest in sailing and I sort of went on from there, sailed out in the country until my mid teens and then moved to Sydney and been actively involved in sailing and racing since then. I've actually am employed in the yachting industry, I look after yachts, that's the job I do. And that sort of is something that I was doing from, as an after school job from the time I came to Sydney, and so, you know, I, there have been periods in the, in off shore sailing where I've taken time out because I've been working all the time up to the Hobart to make sure all my customers are ready to go, and then, then come time I'll, I'll sort of, on Hobart morning I send them off and go home and lay on the lounge. But, basically my sailing experience is, is quite large by most peoples standards, I've been involved with the 18s for a long time here in Sydney for about nine years.

Q5 Right.

A After, after the 18 footers ended up in '85 I, my involvement with them, I was still working and servicing boats for people, I, I did the America's Cup in Fremantle and all the time doing sort of off shore races with various people along the way, because, you know, our main races are spread sort of throughout the year, three main races, and I'd sort of make myself available at that time. So - - -

Q6 Mm.

A - - - I managed to put a lot of miles up over the years. Went and lived in England in 1986, '87, after the America's Cup, and sailed a lot over there. I sailed the entire summer including the Admiral's Cup and the Fast Net race and all of that sort of stuff. So, I've had opportunity to sail most of the races around the world the people like to do, and a lot of miles and probably I've seen more of, of the yachts that race the most people through the nature of my job. I've done six Hobarts, typically it always clashed with the 18 footer season, or anything so it always ended up and I probably more enjoyed the races north, they were at a, sort of a nice time of the year and it's always a little bit, as you're heading north the shirts come off instead of the - - -

Q7 Mm.

A - - - wet weather gear goes on.

Q8 Mm.

A So, that was always fun, but I managed to squeeze in half a dozen Hobarts. My last one I actually went, I was looking through the, through my records and the last one I went was seven years ago, which was interesting for those people into seven year cycles - - -

Q9 Mm.

A - - - but, and I actually snapped my shoulder in that race, which was, I, I never really hurt myself and I've never injured myself until breaking my shoulder.

Q10 Mm.

A And I probably from that time on, you know, as I, I suppose I've become older and had family and all that I'm probably a little bit more conscious that you can hurt yourself.

Q11 Mm.

A The 18 foot skiff days were, were very good for experience 'cause they'd, everything happens so fast all the time that you learnt a lot of basic skills in just how to handle boats and, and you're always sailing on the edge, and you're sailing sort of out of control most of the time, and it's an interesting insight when you go and sail boats, you know, normal yacht sailing is quite a controlled sort of stage until you get what we got. So - - -

Q12 Mm.

A I, I went in the, the only other time I probably experienced as much wind or nearly as much wind, I sailed the 1984 Hobart race, which was a lot of wind, '91 when I broke my shoulder we had a fair amount, you know, we, we was, certainly it was another massive low had fallen, but we didn't experience anything like we experienced this time. In England during the Fast Net racing stuff, we, we had cold and, and quite a lot of wind but never anything like we saw here. But, my, you know, our, I wasn't even going to sail the race this year but one of my mates who's, who was involved with the boat he, he called me and asked me if I'd be able

to help them with some local knowledge during the series prior to the Hobart race, 'cause in particular there were a couple of harbour races and if you have someone who knows the harbour quite well there's some advantage in that, as you know, and so, I, I was going to be sailing the race north instead.

Q13 Mm.

A But the chap I was going with got sick three weeks before and it canned the whole program so, when the boys sort of, I sailed the regatta before the Hobart race and they asked me, well, I, I just told them that really I, I was happy to sail the Hobart. There were, I, I sort of, it was the smallest boat I'd, no, I had been on one boat smaller, but I'd always been of the view, you know, the larger the boat probably the faster you would arrive and the safer you would be, and - - -

Q14 Mm.

A - - - all of those things, but it didn't really ground any of that - - -

Q15 Yeah.

A - - - I think it was more that you're there a lot faster in a, in a larger boat, and I'd had opportunity to sail maxis and things over the years.

Q16 O.K. So, you, your sailing experience is certainly vast?

A Yeah.

Q17 Now, for the Hobart 1998, what boat were you in?

A I have trouble saying that one as well.

Q18 That's all right.

A I have trouble saying that name as well.

Q19 O.K. B-52?

A B-52, that's it.

Q20 O.K. Now, are you able to tell me who owns that boat?

A .....

Q21 That's all right.

A I would have to hold the - - -

Q22 You're right.

A - - - ..... - - -

Q23 That's fine.

A Here it is. Wayne, Wayne Miller.

Q24 O.K. Now, what size crew did you have on the boat on this occasion?

A We had a crew of 10.

Q25 Right.

A And I personally knew probably three or four of them, Wayne had been in doubt in the past with other boats he'd had - - -

Q26 Yeah.

A - - - and I'd, if he'd have me do various jobs on his boats so I knew him from then.

Q27 Mm.

A And the couple of the other guys I knew and we, you know, we sailed in this pre-series races, I felt very comfortable with everyone, it was a good outfit. Certainly lots of experience.

Q28 O.K. Can you give me some idea of the dimensions of

the boat?

A It's a 41 footer.

Q29 Right.

A It's interesting, I, I couldn't off the top of my head tell you how wide - - -

Q30 That's fine.

A - - - a, you know - - -

Q31 That's fine.

A - - - a 41 footer is, but it was a, we thought a very comfortable and good little - - -

Q32 Yeah.

A - - - sea boat and there were three boats the same in the race - - -

Q33 Right.

A So, you know, we thought we had some other guys that we could race and as it panned out in the first stages what we were doing - - -

Q34 Yeah.

A - - - ..... we were all right next to each other which is good fun.

Q35 So, what sort of boat is it, like, if it's, do they call them - - -

A It's a .....

Q36 Right.

A That some of them were sailing under IMS, some of our opposition we were ..... which is the other scoring system.

Q37 O.K. If I could just take you to 1300 on the 26th.

A           Yeah.

Q38         The gun was fired and you headed out. You might be able to sort of take us through to the time you ended up at Eden.

A           Yeah. One point that I explained to some people since coming back is, is one thing that I admired of Wayne as we, well, even in the lead up to the race, the boat was very well organised.

Q39         Right.

A           And every, you know, all the safety requirements were met, all the maintenance things, everything that could be done had been done.

Q40         Mm.

A           And they were a very organised outfit. I mean, I see boats from time to time where I think, well, they've got a lot on to get ready to go and others - - -

Q41         Mm.

A           - - - are fantastically organised and, you know, most people fall in between that. But these guys were very well set and some of them had time to go home and spend Christmas at home, so that they, you know, I felt that when we went to sea we were in, you know, quite organised shape. As we went out and it, we left the dock probably an hour and a half before the start, or maybe even a couple of hours, which is a little bit of a blur at the moment. But, Wayne took the time to make sure that we had a safety meeting, which a lot of boats would tend to try and do, sometimes on some boats I've



sailed it never happens, but we try and have those conversations, we, and we basically have a, had a sort of a pre-race run through of which we'd covered the safety issued and Wayne at that time said that he, there were three or four people who sailed with him a lot - - -

Q42 Mm.

A - - - and, and actually worked to prep the boat and make sure everything was ready and they, you know, basically said, you know, how on board rules will be that everyone has to know where the EPIRB is, everyone has to know how to work the toilet, the valves and all the safety stuff and harnesses were always on at night.

Q43 Yeah.

A It was our rule. Some boats I've sailed on over the years, that sort of not very well enforced, I think it's a, it's a very sound off-shore thing. And I remember it striking me at the time had he showed that, you know, he, he'd thought it all through and it was a very good thing to do.

Q44 Right.

A ..... to actually run through that.

Q45 M'mm.

A We then, as far as the weather, we'd been through the pre-race thing, we also had outside weather information - - -

Q46 Right.

A - - - and we, we had that updated on the morning of the

race. We knew out last, sort of, at 9.30, we had a, a last minute update and it, the night before it had been pre-empted that perhaps the low was forming and that would be the only spanner in the works, that we might have some, some hard stuff. When we saw our guy in the morning, he said, "Look, it's happening, it's happening so you could be", yeah, it was very, because it was happening so quickly, it was hard to know how strong it would be but certainly he said, "You'll get hammered". Now, for most people it certainly, I guess our thinking and certainly in the pre-race talk we had on the water, we just felt like most people, and probably a lot of the interviews you've had, most people expect at some time in the, in the Hobart race you'd have a southerly and it's just the cycle of the race. You know, you know as to whether you start in it or whether it happens - - -

Q47

Mm.

A

- - - 12 hours into the race or across the straight. So, I guess we didn't, it didn't ring any more alarm bells than O.K, it will hit us at some stage, we, we were able to pinpoint the time, we knew it would sort of happen in the night. So, we talked about that and we talked about what our plan would be, we said, "Let's not get caught around, caught mucking around going down through each of the jibs, as soon as we know the, or as soon as see the switches, you know, in the breeze, we see the sky changing we'll just go straight to storm

sails". So, we, we sort of pretty well, we felt comfortable, we'd gone through the safety stuff, we had a strategy and then we went through our basics, where do you think we should start and what's going to happen in the next 12 hours. And that, you know, and that's sort of where we started to focus, so we, we started off and, and off we went and, and we had, as I said, we had boats of our size right near us, we had to pick a little bit of a strategy as to whether we'd go off-shore or in-shore. There was a very strong southerly set, which had been going all week, we knew that. And we were, our instrumentation was showing at, the worse we saw was about 4.1 knots, which we knew was in talking about our next 12 hours amongst ourselves, we're going, "Well, if this is, if we hit something hard from the south and we've got all this southerly set going it, it will be rough", so we were talking about that sort of stuff. But, we basically put together a strategy of when we, when we get hit by the south we knew it would be in that south-west quadrant and we thought, you know, we didn't know that it would get round to the west, but we thought it would certainly be west of south so we decided to be on the western side of the, the actual line. We were, we were a bit twitchy about that because we were actually sailing in less current and some of our opposition were out there in more current, we're going, well, you know, from a tactical point they were making more speed over

the ground.

Q48 Mm.

A So, as most people would report, it was just for that first 12 hours just champagne sailing.

Q49 Mm.

A Fantastic, spinnakers up, just lovely ride, you could see what was happening, and then, you know, comments ..... that, you know, we started to hear the navigator that we had was very organised, he had all the electronics, as far as the onboard and he prepared all the schedules organised for all the input through his laptop, so, he, he had all the maps coming in, he had all the forecast, he was glued to the radio, he was either looking ahead and then I remember, it's interesting the time of the whole next 48 hours, I'm really lost on time lines.

Q50 Yeah.

A But, I remember, I remember him coming up to me, 'cause I'd sort of come on board as, as the sort of tactical side of things and the, the couple of the other boards had as much input as me, but as a team we were sort of taking about where we should be and what we should do. And I remember him saying that, you know, how stupid is this, here we are with 4 knots of current sailing in the right way, we're, we're making 20 knots across the ground, got some fantastic speed that way and we know that there's a hell of a lot of wind coming. We thought 60 was coming, you know, which was for any major

southerly to come through and I think people think they've got 60 in your mind, or, you know, hard at some point, and for the, for sailing people I think well, we always think that the boats would at some stage in you, in, in racing you'll get 60 knots. You don't sort of thing of that as being, you know, something as hard as what really happened and although the worst we think we recorded was 69, some people around are saying 80 and whatever it was, but certainly for us what I, I sort of jumping ahead slightly, we, we sort of kept this sailing mode into the evening and then as the shift started to happen, we then knew and we just started to change down through the sails in the pattern that we'd organised, you know, we knew we, what stage we'd reef, our navigator was, got some information, I forget whether it came off an oil rig or off one of the most southerly measuring points and he, he came up and said he'd heard 71 knots. And we thought, well, - (DEMONSTRATES VOCALLY) - none, none of us had really, I think one of the guys might have sailed in as much wind, but we heard that and went, that's nice, but I think the feeling on board was, you know, it's just a little bit more than 60 and, and it won't last long and it's, it's sort of normal, you know, you'd love to think you'd get all the way to Hobart, but it's just not likely. You will get hit by a southerly at some stage. So, we were thinking to ourselves well, it's probably not where we are, its' ..... I think

about it later, I think that's what it was, it's just sort of, not likely to hit us, you know.

Q51 Mm.

A And even if it is it's not that much more than what we're likely to encounter. The next thing that happened to me, I got crook, I got really sick, and, the sickest I've ever been by a long way, and I've sailed, in all of the sailing that I've done, I've had some races and some periods where I've been just queasy, but I can still sail and still think clearly. But the most noticeable thing for me was the fact that I got to, in the end a point which I used to become annoyed with people on board who were immobilised. And I was very, I, at the end I had reached that kind of a stage. Just hopeless, just almost as if I was frozen. I could hear and I could see and I could sort of think, sort of think, but couldn't move, and, and our, when we, our first watch, 'cause we went from 6.00 to 9.00 and then slept from 9.00 till 12.00 and that was sort of when we'd started to come on the wind in the, in the heavier air, and when we came on again at 12.00 it was really fresh and again, I'm, I'm loose on the times, but because I know my mind was just starting - - -

Q52 Mm.

A - - - to get lost with the sickness, and I just, just sort of, I was on deck but not really sticking much in at all. Talking about the decisions as to what sails and, and really it's quite interesting 'cause that, for

me, from that point on it just became, just, I was on the boat, really, I was hearing everything that was going on and I was just going through the motions of, I was sick. A lot of the other crew were in various stages of sickness, I've always had a pet thing and I, I think that it's, that not enough people own up to sickness and I think it has a major, major influence on how people are able to, it doesn't necessary cause boats to roll over, I don't think that at all, but I think what it does is it, when people end up in strife, it probably separates them from being able to survive or not.

Q53 M'mm.

A Or certainly must play on it. So we just, we were just coping through the day, we were just managing, you know, we're just no sail on, and or, we just had our storm sails and varying amounts of sail, and we were just making south and just kept hearing the forecast and it was getting rougher and rougher basically. I was not really able to stand my watch, I just sat below in my, in my sailing gear. Really what terrified me about that is I thought to myself, well, I'm probably on paper the most experienced person here and if I'd gone on a boat where there weren't other experienced people and they were relying on my experience there'd be some strife.

Q54 Mm.

A 'Cause I can't put in, you know.

Q55 Mm.

A And that, that really haunts me, and it haunted me at the time, I think I've got to do more, you know. I've never been like this. We just went through the day, and it got rougher and rougher and rougher and, you know, we hear, heard on the SKEDS that, you know, the first few boats had started to retire and they were heading in ..... I think they were just breaking stuff and in talking to a couple of them in Eden I think some of the boats that you probably wouldn't even hear about, you know, making headlines they retired just because they'd just not enough blokes left, you know, a lot of people sick. And, and small things started to break and it's, it just becomes unmanageable and then they probably make the right choice.

Q56 Mm.

A And the right choice is to head in. We felt good, you know, we were talking about ..... we were one of the boats that were in very good shape in terms of how we were going in the race, there's no doubt about that 'cause of the strategy we'd taken early to get on the western side. We felt very confident in the boat, we felt we had the right sails on, we had enough of the crew were able to sail so we were fine. So, we just sort of felt well let's keep on going and it should be just like a normal southerly and it'll end soon, you know.

Q57 Mm.



A Just sort of kept rolling on. And the day passed and it was just a blur as far as I'm concerned the day just ..... you know, just a lot of rough sailing and, and in between trying, I stayed in my sailing gear the whole time, and, and we just went on and on and on, and, and we realised it was just getting rough as hell and at about ..... the next watch that I was involved in or actually came on deck was the, between 3.00 and 6.00 that next afternoon, the, the guys just left me stay below during the day, so, between 3.00 and 6.00 everyone was just, you can only steer for half an hour and it was - - -

Q58 Mm.

A - - - so hard, and I came on deck to have a steer, they just said, "Mate, can you help us, can you steer", so I came up and I was really horrified with what I saw, it was very frightening, as much wind as I'd seen and the waves, I think wind has never really scared me, 'cause you know, we're out here skiff sailing - - -

Q59 Mm.

A - - - you get a southerly comes through and it all goes white and you sort of have a capsize and you swim out of it, but so, that didn't scare me as much as the waves, I thought, Jesus, this is no good. And the general air was certainly when is this going to end, this is no good at all. We'd put out a few ..... just, just, we hadn't fallen down any waves or anything but, every other, you know, every 10 minutes it was a,

you know, there was a pile of white water coming and we'd have to struggle over that one. So, I had a steer for about three quarters of an hour, all we had up at that stage was a storm jib, the biggest challenge that we'd got to at that point was it was even, you know, even if you wanted to go and change sails, who's going to do it, you know, because if it's as, ..... as extreme as you, you could imagine so, we, I was sort of, did my stint of steering and sort of nursed it over some waves and I, and we would, what our mode was while it was heavy which is most boats were doing is just one guy steering and another on deck with him. Just, as a security, that person, typically the boats were split, not everyone could steer, and when it gets windy like that a lot of people won't steer, they - - -

Q60 Mm.

A - - - just feel they haven't got the experience to, and as long as you've got more than three or four steerers on the boat you can manage, you know. So, I, I'd did my bit and felt very uneasy about how much wind we were sailing in and it just happened to coincide with the, the, I came down and let one of the other guys in our watch have a go and I just sat there down below, we had the radio on all the time, and we were just getting, just hearing Maydays and all this sort of stuff, and we heard one of the, it was a Melbourne yacht that it, it's name will come to me, and, and I knew the name of it, it was a cruising boat, sort of a cruiser racer

from Melbourne, a big solidly built thing. I heard him, I heard his Mayday, and he, he, he said, and he talked about how he'd been rolled, and he'd lost a guy in the water, and I'd just come down from steering just seen all this and we had this sail on and at times it was too much sail, and when I came downstairs I said, "Look", you know, "Has anyone any ideas, what's the next thing we do", you know, "Do we, how can we slow it down, how can we make sure we're safe", we were just trying to think and has anyone any real clues on this. And we were sort of thinking well, do we ..... and we pretty well decided that our next move was to get the storm jib off, so we had just nothing left, and, and then this Mayday comes on and then my heart sunk and talking with the other guys, you know, everyone, Jesus, this is not flash, especially the guys in the water part of it, and it seems like only minutes later and we were all coming to terms with exactly how much time is involved. We were, we just felt the boat roar up a wave and I think there were screams from the guy steering, "Look out", or something, then we just went straight over, upside down, and it was just mayhem. It was, it was half past 6.00, so it was still light. Interestingly it, it, you'd roll over as fast as you could possibly imagine so when we, we, awful dreadful cracking noises which we later found out was the, the cabin top, it was quite badly cracked, and I mean our boat, I don't know whether you have seen it .....

but it's written off now I believe, they just reckon there's too many problems. But it just it sounded like a motor accident, just as, as loud, it was just horrific. And the next thing was just slow motion, you know, like, you're quite used to the boat getting sort of put on it's side when it's windy and everyone sort of hanging on and scrambling, but then it just turned upside down really quickly, and we found ourselves just standing in it upside down and who, my instinct was to just open the hatch and swim out, 'cause that's my skiff sailing thing, if you're upside down, hop out there and hop on the centre board and haul it up and off you go again, you know. But luckily Wayne actually was, to his credit, he was sick, but he, you know, he struggled on, a good tough bloke and he struggled on and, and he, and a couple of them had seen various ..... but they'd seen some of the survival films, videos, and, and one of them said, "No", and it was actually Wayne, he said, "For Christ sake" ..... the hatches were all in, but for, to get breeze through just in the washboard and companion way we had sort of 100 mill screw type hatch that we had out just to get air through the boat, and I was nearest the hatch 'cause I had just come down then I was just slumped down the, the bottom of the stairs, 'cause I was still on watch. And I just stood up and all, all I wanted to do was swim out the hatch, and, you know, and really I, I think about it and think, you know, are you looking

after your mates and all that, but talking amongst us all, basically everyone was sort of thinking of themselves at that, that instant, thinking what happens now, and we're all very surprised as to that we were upside down, I think we were, and, you know, various comments in the time that it took, the, the time we were upside down and we, we, we could see we taking water, it was sort of coming up our legs, one of the guys had been sleeping in one of the quarter berths so he, when we'd gone upside down he had heavy sails and stuff that were stored there were actually on top of him, so we dragged him out all we could see is his head and he was screaming to, for us to drag him out, so we dragged him out, so everyone was just standing there, so there was eight of us inside, and we thought, what happens now.

Q61

Mm.

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One of the guys actually, just instinctively tried the Mayday, but, you know, obviously we didn't know at the time but the mast was snapped off it, even still obviously all the ..... was under water, so, unless we put some aerials in the ..... Mayday's not gonna work, or unless an aerial can, can be made that it won't have to be up the mast. So, he called Mayday, and someone looked at him and said, "Don't worry about that", and so, just thinking what do we do, 'cause it seemed like we were over for ages. Consensus is probably three to four minutes, it seems to be, and

when we talked about it in the hotel later it was some, somewhere between three minutes and three weeks, so

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Q62

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But for what happened and the amount of things we did it probably narrows down to, it was probably about three minutes. With all this water coming in, we're going, what the hell goes on now, and with my, I was claustrophobic at the idea of just bein' in there and, and sinking, 'cause we were taking water and the boat started to drop by the stern and so we got four people, we decided to leave the hatches in and just, you know, at least we got some trapped air, and, and then some sort of rational thinking came in, started to think well it should right itself. And then someone I think said how about if we've lost keel, but we decided, we just put that away because we couldn't see any holes out the top or anything like that it didn't appear, it was just not considered to be the case that the keel had fallen off. So, we, four people moved towards ..... down by the stern, four people went to the front, 'cause we knew we had a hatch there and a hatch here and whatever way it decided to go we had an escape route. We, and of course then we're thinkin' about the blokes up top and we thought, well, you know, and the boat seemed to level out a little bit ..... gunna happen next, you know, and then we, I think we talked about moving to one side and I think at that very time

the next large wave came through and it sort of, the boat sort of was, rode down the face and probably some white water hit the keel and drove the boat upright again, that seems to be what we think. When it came up it was probably worse than when we went down because we had a lot of water in it, and there was stuff everywhere, I was pinned, I had sails came down on top of me and I was up to neck in water, my head was out, so I wasn't worried about that, but I was trapped, I, I felt trapped under this and I, I'm every so slightly claustrophobic and that was about as claustrophobic as I've ever been, and I just, I was screaming at them to get the sails off me, so I could come out, all I wanted to do was run up the hatch. The girl who sails with us, she had actually been on the other side and the stove top had flipped off and hit her in the head and she was actually under water, they could, there was flapping around and I could hear them talking to try and drag me out and get her out as well, and talking with her later she was actually under water and she had the life flash before the eyes she reckons. But and she got a little cut from the stove which looked bad 'cause she came up with blood everywhere, but the reality of it was in the end it was the worlds smallest cut, it was just one of those ones that bled quite a lot. But she was more terrified of the fact that she was under water. There was probably two or three feet of water in the boat, you know, it sort of felt like to

was up to you knees, but, you know, it certainly had plenty in there and of course everything was sloshing around. Everything was just turmoil in the boat. Our instinct was to run up the stairs for our own sake and to find the blokes. One guy went before me and I went next and when we looked over there was some hands just hanging on the transom and we didn't see the other guy that, but we just saw the bloke on the back and Ray was the first guy, he just ran towards the back and, and dragged him onboard, it was Mark, who was steering at the time. The other chap who'd been sort of, just hanging on there, he'd, he'd just, he quite literally dragged himself on, he didn't need any help ..... he was, he was in enough shock that he found the energy and he, he got on very quick smart. Talking to Mark later on, yeah, I'll sort of cover the rig cutting off and stuff, but talking to Mark later on the, he found himself when the boat rolled, he found his head through the steering wheel. Now, the steering wheel's only got about five spokes in it so it's not as if he's jammed by his ears but, you know, his head through here and the boat's upside down and he's trying to get out and, and he and the other guy both sort of had the presence of mind they just snapped their harnesses off at their end, and, and realised that they had to get out of under there, 'cause there was no air pockets or anything, they just had to swim out. When Mark, sort of came out of flapping around under there, he found



himself about 40 metres away from the boat. He thought about dropping the seaboots and all that sort of stuff and he said, he's funny about it, he said, he said, "All this fear is about whether you leave the boots on or not", he said, "You have enough of a reason you'll get there pretty fast", so, he just swam, but he said he, he could see he, he saw the mast hanging in the water, he, so, he realised the mast had gone, but he saw the rudder was O.K. and the keel was O.K. and he was obviously thinking what the hell's gunna happen next as well, and he just sort of swam up to the boat and just found somewhere to hang on and he looked to see whether his mate was, had swum out and he was there and they just sort of spoke to each other very briefly, and they were sort of like us with this, this world's slowest sort of three minutes all happening and then the next thing it was sort of came up. It was decided then, obviously we had to take the mast off and, it was cracked off and all laying in the water, and ..... 5 knots of wind or 100 knots you just take the rig away, you just have to, I mean if it's calm you can pull 'em onboard and tie them in place but any, in any rough conditions standard thing is just drop it away, 'cause the mast can sort of break off and come up and punch holes through the boat and do all sorts of things. So, a number of us, probably I forget the numbers, but it felt like about half the crew were up top trying to tidy all that up, and half the crew were

inside trying to get pumps going and that sort of stuff. I think one of the guys probably tried the radio at that point just to see if he could make anything out of the broadcast, but that wasn't gonna work. Again, this is an area that I felt very inadequate with because I, I was able to get enough energy to running up the stairs and things but when it came to chopping the rig off and ..... in the nature of my job I take rigs out of boats, I do it all day long, I was the most experienced on how to take it all off, so really I just pretty well just sat there and told them what had to happen next. And Wayne and Mark they just, because that he owned the boat and ..... they just went up and I just kept handing tools to them and things, so we did the seamanship thing next, that was to get the rig away, cut away any ropes, now we just had all those, just all that was left on the side of the boat was snap shackles, you know, we just cut away ropes so if we could get the motor going, we didn't know if we could, but if we could get the motor going we would not have anything fowling the prop, which happened to a number of boats. So, the, that took a while, during that period, no, a couple of us on deck felt very vulnerable, some big crashing waves and it was just look up and go, Jesus, you know, hang on, and especially while the rig was not broken off felt, probably that was the scarest I've ever been and felt very, very real chance that we might

not make it. And when we got the rig away and then  
..... yeah, the boat's still sitting very low in  
the water and it was still screaming wind, and the  
waves, the actual swirls aren't quite as scary as the  
white water on top, that was the bit that terrified us.  
In speaking with Mark later on from steering he felt  
that what actually happened to us was that he went to  
go up over this wave and the, the point of breaking of  
the wave was actually right, ..... the boat at the  
lip, so the white water actually broke onto the rig and  
that's what snapped the rig and rolled us over, so,  
..... by the fact that with the waves are so steep  
at that point and then it rolled over and broke, so it  
broke all over the boat, and that sort of why we  
couldn't quite work out, 'cause the mast was broken  
when we sort of hit the water and I think that would,  
you know, that's how he pieced that part together from  
what he saw. But, then we're thinking what do we do  
next, making sure everyone was all right, no, no real  
set plan to go to, but still just using our joint  
seamanship and going well let's try and sort things  
out. The EPIRB was hit off then at that point, it was  
all very well, but, you know, that, a couple of people  
knew exactly where to find it, but everything was  
swamping around, but, so they eventually found it and  
fired that off. The guy who had went in the water, he  
had his own and, and he actually let his off, we still  
to this day don't know whether his was being tracked or

not, which is, you know, an interesting point. We had a suspicion that his person one was actually what was being tracked not us, but then later on we did find, I think we found that we were being tracked because ours was the advanced one where they, you know, has the boats number and all that sort of stuff on it, so, we hadn't, we haven't had that confirmed yet, but we think that's what happened. So, we were all just going well, we knew where we were, the navigator had sailed a couple of times around the world, very experienced bloke, and he knew exactly where we were at the time, he had some notes ..... he had a little note pad and, and he, he wrote himself notes, knew exactly where we were at. We were approximately 80 nautical miles sou, sou-east of Eden. Our view had been that we couldn't, you know, when people were turning in, we felt we'd get hammered more trying to return to Eden and that's why we had kept on sailing. We felt well it's going ..... we're a little boat and we're sort of running away before, we're trying to make some south, you know, while we could if it felt comfortable we'd make some south, but if we had to run away to ..... well that's what we'd do. The breeze, I think the breeze angle was 265 or something like that, so it was completely in the west. But that's why we were still sailing, but at the time that happened to us as close to what we can measure is roughly 80 miles. So, we thought well, if we get rescued or whether we

can get the motor going or what happens next, 'cause none of us had ever had to go through that. So, just the seamanship effort continued, I was terrified about going back downstairs, I think a couple of the other guys were as well, just didn't want to know about it, felt that it could happen again, interestingly later on I found that the Stand Aside thing had actually rolled again after it's mast was ripped off, I was trying to become rational based on experience and going well it's gotta be safer and warmer inside, and some five hours later I convinced myself of that, once I, because I was starting to get hyperthermic being up on deck. So, we just ..... around and, and sort of realised the boat was basically O.K, and a couple of the guys inside, the two who were really not, I don't think sick at all, they became legends, they just got everything going and, you know, the pumps were going and they, actually the other bloke who's fallen in the water, he manned the pump on deck and just through fear he pumped, I reckon for an hour and a half and didn't stop. People were saying, just have a rest, no, mate, as long as I'm pumping I know I'm right, you know, so, people working in shock no doubt everyone was in shock. And just trying to work out, you know, will it be all right, one of the guys was a bit, got a little bit flighty and you know, is this gunna happen or ..... just I didn't feel any more confident that him, but I think my experience told me that as long as

we stay afloat we probably should be all right. 'Cause usually, you know, ..... they found the boats, like they always find things, you know, even if the crew have been lifted off and wasn't there, so I said, well, you know, she'll be right, she'll be right and I was sort of having myself on I think, but so everyone was kind of all right, you know, we were battling with our own seasickness, incredible fear and shock all at the same time, trying to at the same time show a bit of seamanship and hope something happens, and ..... we got the life rafts up on deck, but had a universal cry which I'm sure you hear from everyone, life rafts are the last thing, 'cause we know that if you try to inflate them in a wind there's every chance they'll blow away, a lot of people don't want to know about them. You know, great things to hop in if you've got nothing left, but, quite a, quite a, you know, an attitude we have to be sinking even before thinking about inflating them, and we, and we rationalised that we weren't sinking, we can get the water out of it and let's just see what happens. Hopefully the wind will die, and that's all, that's all we thought should happen. So, we had the two lift rafts on deck, we, we put some proper ropes on them 'cause we thought, you know, the small little painters that were on them, they might not work, so we got some of the ropes we had left. So, we had some ropes ready to go, the EPIRB we, you know, put in the cockpit next to it and saw it

flashing away so that was, that was some comfort from that that it was, was flashing. And then we just hung on, and big waves were crashing on us every now and then and the boat would roll up on it's side, but you just went through the program. The girl with the nick in her head they just wrapped her head up and she was fine, and then we just sort of kept a look out. And at about 9.00, 9.30, in the evening, we saw a light, which we thought was a mast headlight, and it was, and all of a sudden we saw it heading towards us, it was a small plane, and it, and we actually fired off some flares at that point. Interestingly I'd never shot a flare in 30 years. I'd no, you know, it's, if someone had handed them to me I wouldn't have known how to shoot them off, I could read the instructions and I, and you know, a number of my boats I've got to take them off and replace them for people when they, you know, I can read the use by date, but, I, I, I've never actually fired one off in anger. Two of our people on the boat have been through the full survival course in, in the last 12 months, and they knew, and they had hopped in life rafts, they had shot off flares, they'd done all those things, and they were talking between themselves, going, "Yeah, here's what we do", you know, and, and I felt quite good that, that he's done that so at least the things would be shot off not shot in the water or something stupid.

Q63

Mm.

A

So, and they knew that, that, which none of us knew that there is, you know, there is some standard codes with the planes, if the plane flashes it's lights and flaps it's wings and all that sort of stuff, that it's seen you. So, we felt that was great. We didn't quite know what a small plane was going to do for us, we just probably felt good that it had seen us and that, and probably that meant that the EPIRB was working, either that one was or the small one was working. Everyone was still, you know, I, I think the spirits lifted at that point, the, sort of found that there was a theory that some of the light plane, planes are equipped with these towing lines, that they can drop some stuff on you, but again that was just theory amongst the boat. One guy thought he'd read that or heard that somewhere that they, the light planes can, can actually drop something to you. So, we, we just hung on, and quite enthused that we had been found. We then waited for some time and we saw again what we thought was a masthead light or something heading towards us, we thought it was another yacht been sent our way. And we, we were then happy that we saw it was a Navy chopper and that really lifted spirits. I, I had no hesitation as far as I was concerned I think, quite a number of the guys if the truth be known, I was happy to be lifted off. I was, I think what I was happy, I, I was, I'd been so crook and felt so dreadful and, and the feelings were high enough that if their instruction



was to us, leave your boat and hop off, mate I was with them. if I was just asked on my own what I wanted to do - (TIME SIGNAL) - I was gunna leave as well. Do you have to swap tapes?

Q64 The time is 11.06, just for a tape change, this interview is suspended.

INTERVIEW SUSPENDED

INTERVIEW RESUMED

DETECTIVE SENIOR CONSTABLE GRAY

Q65 The time is 11.14am. Interview between Graham Buckley is continued - (Tape beeping) - I think we're up to where you saw the chopper.

A Yeah.

Q66 O.K.

A O.K.

Q67 Carry on.

A So, the Navy chopper came overhead and we were, you know, obviously going O.K. What happens next, we thought they, you know, we, we thought whatever their plan is we'll slot in with that.

Q68 Mm.

A The first, obviously it's still very large swell at that point, which, you know, you obviously would have heard a lot about and you know, at times the chopper seemed about 10 feet off the water, the next thing he's 100, so, you know, it was obviously very extreme conditions for them. They spent a good deal of time, because it was 9.30, it was dark at that stage, they

spent quite a good amount of time just looking at us, are they, you know, trying to hold station on us and, I think that maybe in, maybe that's something that people would be interested in finding out as to whether they have a set strategy what they do, you know. But, they seemed to be just hovering and looking, one of our guys on board thought that they, you know, he could use some sort of sign language and he came up with some method of his own or, or maybe he's, he's been through something, I don't know, but he's, you know, tried to indicate to them that, how many people on board and that we were O.K. They started then to drop a, a line to us, we didn't know we could see they had all the stuff on it, because, you know, it was the full Navy job and they had, you know, you could see the red lights, their night vision and all that going, which was great. We thought, well O.K. it's all over, we don't have to do this any longer - - -

Q69 Mm.

A - - - or it was something will happen, you know. And we didn't now whether a guy would be dropped in and swim over to us or what was to happen next. Couldn't speak to 'em because we didn't have any radios, everything's swamped. And as you probably know, the, the, the handheld radios over and above the standard radios is optional in the, in the, in the sailing instructions, which only, only really needs a change in the rule and you'd have handhelds. Wayne has two

completely set up at home, which when they're doing general racing of their own, they always have, 'cause sometimes their phones are out of range, but when they were looking at the safety gear needed they just went through the list and went tick, tick, tick, tick, tick, made sure everything was there and left it at that. So, we got a chopper over the top of us and we can't talk to it, which was, you know - - -

Q70 Mm.

A - - - I suppose is a very simple thing, but we were frustrated by that. But we thought well these guys will know what's happening and we, you know, we indicated by sign language that we couldn't talk to them. Lines started to get dropped on us but they were, there was a lot of wind and they were really struggling to hold a station. I think we were moving more than they were, you know, we were - - -

Q71 Mm.

A - - - just getting swept with the waves. They dropped one line to us that some, some notes on it, but everything was moving, the downdraft, all the noise and confusion, you could sort of hardly read it, you know, it's, it was the instructions how to hop in the sling, it wasn't an instruction, it was sort of six or seven pages, it wasn't what they were asking of us or anything, it was just their standard operating mode, how you get in the sling and something else, I don't know what it was. And we were sort of all struggling

to, to sort of snaffle it and have a read. We decided that we knew we couldn't communicate so we decided let's get the, the girl off that had the hit, get her up in there to, out of the place anyway, I certainly had me hand up, I said, mate I'm happy to leave, 'cause I'm, and they knew I was struggling with sickness. So, we sort of just kept making ourselves available for whatever they wanted to do. They dropped the first line, we're tryin' to read these, next minute they got swept off or we were swept off and the line snapped in a little, they were, they fired that line off, we wound that one in, kept that onboard, and then they seemed to come and they tried to drop another one to us, which I don't think we ever, no, it did get to us, but one of the guys that grabbed it thought that there was a, a note written on paper on it, which of course, in that much wind and rain and everything was just gone, so we're going, what happens, and I have been sailing in one of the other, only two of us onboard had the inflatable life jackets, which I had fired, I think they would be a thing that should become a standard on every boat, because they're inflatable people will wear them, whereas, you know, we had everyone in their life jackets but they were the ship's life jackets, which you know aren't really a practicle thing to wear round for general use, so, I had mine inflated and I said to the guys, look if it makes it easier, I'll hop in the water and the guy can come and lift me off, and you

know, I can, I felt that, A, I wanted to hop off for myself, B, I could explain very well what the problem was, and I could give them practical input because I knew exactly what was happening from a mechanical point of view with the boat. I could explain what was wrong, where we're at and hop out of there.

Q72

Yeah.

A

They were probably, it seems they were with us for nearly an hour, they would have their records and I don't know, but it felt like an hour. Once this second line had gone we thought the next thing we'd see, thought we could see ..... we thought we'd have a bloke jump in the water and try and come to us, we didn't know whether they wanted to land someone on us, we just don't know. So, that was something we thought later if the, you know, if the Navy can tell us ..... tell us what they can do and what they can't do, that was probably helpful. And the next thing they headed off, and we thought well obviously they, everyone knows where we are, that's great. A little bit flat because they've gone, but then we thought well they've probably run out of fuel, 'cause we're a long way from shore and that's quite reasonable. So, I thought, Jesus, here we go, so we're stuck here. But, the boat was O.K, you know, we weren't sinking, we were just in a lot of strife with the amount of, amount of these big waves crashing over the place. And it was, I'd, so, what was that, about 9.30, 10.30, something

like that, it did appear to us at that time that there was a big lull and the wind had dropped right out, but then it, and it's a bit grey for all of us on that, but we think we're in the eye of the low, and, you know, it was very shortly it was the same amount of wind again, you know. But, the guys had been working and came up with the idea well, we'd need to try and, to make some headway, we needed to see if we could get the motor going, everything had been swamped. Some guys had felt some electrical charge through the water, so they switched everything off that had been on, you know, the instrumentation was on, obviously, and all that sort of stuff, so all that was switched off. But, we felt that we still had charge, 'cause the owner had swapped over his cells, six months ago he'd swapped over to these fully enclosed cells, which I think are a great thing. because there's no acid through the boat at all, so all we had to do is cut the current out and then we thought theoretically we, we will, 'cause the batteries will be O.K, if we can get it cleaned up and dry between the batteries and the engine, as long as the engine isn't stuffed we'll be O.K. I'm, and, one or two of them are quite mechanically minded and said, "Well, let's just turn it over and prime it", and sure enough not long later, - (DEMONSTRATES VOCALLY) - hit the button and it started. Which is a great thing, you know, after spending time upside down. And then everyone thought this is great. And then we decided well we just have

to start motoring, it's 80 miles and we'd worked it out, it's probably gonna take us, in those sea conditions, probably gonna take us 24 hours, which no-one was impressed by, but we thought it was safe that we'd been found at some stage and we thought well maybe another chopper will arrive in an hour, you know, and we'll all get lifted off or something will happen, you know. So, we just started making some way sort of towards home, and, and I just slumped out in the cockpit, I'm, I had all the, the good thermal gear and everything, still a number of the guys don't sail with the thermal underwear and all that stuff, which will keep you warm and there's still people sailing in tracksuits and cotton's very cold when you're wet. But the water wasn't cold, it was, you know, that's the most noticeable thing, it wasn't very cold, 'cause that big, that, that big warm current had been heading down, so I think had it have been colder there might have been more hyperthermia and stuff. But we just started motoring and then it was all a daze from that point on. We, my fear about going inside was very strong, a couple of the other guys were the same, I was really paranoid about that, but then I did rationalise that, O.K. it will be safer inside. Went down inside and half an hour later we got crashed on and went over to 90 degrees it felt like, and the two side ports in the cabin top, it was just small little opening side windows, they got pushed straight through the side of

the boat. And water just came massively in and, and I thought everything I'd been thinkin' is true, we're going over again, you know, this is not flash. And I, I was just laying there going, God, this is not nice at all. And anyway a couple of them who was still, sort of had some composure, we talked about it and what to do is to, we'd find some pieces of timber and go outside and tie 'em in, in position, and a couple of techniques were tried and one method of holding them in worked bloody well. Actually, in, for one of them got, 'cause we had cracks radiating out from where those had been pushed through, we had cracks running out to the side of the boat, we could see the cracks in the, the cabin top from the roll over, so the boat was really, we could feel it being a bit spongy. So, we're struggling but it was still sound. With the water coming in through these hatches and the fear that perhaps it could roll over again was quite strong, but we thought, it's got a keel and it hasn't got a mast. Since talking to some Naval architect mates of mine, and apparently boats can still, it's nearly, it's nearly more stable with the rig in them, which I would have thought was quite the opposite, but apparently they are, they, they are still vulnerable in that neck which had I've known at the time I wouldn't have been too happy. But they tried different methods to keep the water out because it became gaping holes in the cabin top, so every big white water that come we'd take



in a lot of water. Still pumping away and sort of keeping up to it, we weren't thinking at that time were we gunna sink or anything it was just how can we, you know, this has to stop.

Q73

Mm.

A

One of the guys actually put a sail bag up there it, it had big handles on the bottom and he pulled it through and sort of just stuffed the hole and tied a rope inside and that kept a lot of water coming, from coming through, and we just kept motoring, we just went through, just put a couple of people on, on deck at a time, just to steer it along. The steering wheel had been bent in the fall so we didn't have much steerage, we just sort of pulled it straight a little bit so you could sort of aim it in the right kind of direction. And of course no radios, nothing. And that's when we were missing then, which seemed strange to us in hindsight that we were thought of as being missing 'cause air safety or the, you know, whoever it is knew where we were, so somewhere between the two we were lost, which was certainly was the worry for our families. We just motored and motored and motored and got knocked around and crashed and carried on and then the next thing, the navigator, I remember him waking me up as I'm slopping around on the floor down in the sails he said, "Mate, I think you should go upstairs". And I said, "Yeah", and he, you know, I could tell we were much quieter, I'd just been asleep and I went

upstairs and we, it was, you could see Eden and it was just, you know, 12 knots and a lovely day. So, that was sort of we, we'd made it under our own steam. We were still quite a way out, we were probably, probably 20 miles or something like that, but, you know, it was quite a high, the land there, we could see the land. So, we tried all our mobiles, we had, half a dozen of us had mobiles on board, no analogues unfortunately. And three I think, there was only two of us who, two and a half of the phones were still, still operating O.K. 'Cause they'd been in a drawer but the drawer was all wet, three of them were just, throw 'em away, mine was still O.K, and eventually one got a signal, I think it was Wayne's, he got a signal, and we had the navigator then, I'd said, "Listen, just call, call through to Eden now, say, say we're coming in and we want to berth", all that sort of stuff, and that was the first they'd heard of us and they were very pleased. And I had even got a signal and I called home then, but I called my voice mail first and my wife's on there crying, where the hell are you, you know, all this. She had, she'd gone to, to bed that night and my mum lives in the same house as us in a separate flat, and she'd heard on the 11 o'clock news that all the strife and that our boat was missing. She called England where I've got my older brother and he hopped on the internet and he found out that we'd been, then the news he got that we'd been plucked off. So, he

said to my mother, "Look, I think they're all right, they've been rescued and have a sleep", but my mum, at 82 she didn't sleep too well and she decided not to, not to wake my wife up, we've got four little kids and just, you know, ..... but the phone started ringing from my wife the next morning and she was coping pretty well, 'cause she'd heard we had been lifted off.

Q74        Yeah.

A        And then people are saying, "No, they've been missing for 12 hours", and she eventually started to go, tried to make some calls, the switchboard here was obviously overwhelmed. I think she got through as, Johnny Morris, she did speak to Johnny Morris at some stage and I could ask her what, what the response was, but I can't remember whether they thought we were missing or not, but eventually she heard from me and she said, "Thank God", and she rang the club, she got through to someone and said, "Look, I've heard from them they're just heading into Eden". And, and that was the first they actually knew of us.

Q75        Mm.

A        But interesting there was no, it didn't seem there was a relationship between the chopper and the EPIRB and that's why we were a bit sus as the whether the EPIRBs had worked.

Q76        All right.

A        We actually spoke to an EPIRB manufacturer and asked

them whether you could have a, another light on them that would, that they could engage and say that, that they're actually locked onto you. You know, like a little green light comes on or something to say that they're on to you. It shows your transmitting, but you don't know.

Q77 Mm.

A So, we then just happily and the spirit's improved enormously ..... sight of land everyone, including my own, seasickness was just about gone, felt wretched because no-one had eaten for 48 hours essentially, everyone had, hadn't been drinking enough, which nobody, nobody ever seems to do when they're, it get's rough, so people were badly drained and just came ashore and started to just, saw all the mayhem, made ourselves and ship shape, and that's when it sort of led into that story ..... before we found transport, got every single thing off the boat, Wayne started the process, he rang the insurance company, the, insurance assessor was there, and he came on board and just had a quick look and I believe we were in the marina, I can't remember what time we came in, but it feels like it was sort of late morning or something like that. We were only at the dock for two or three hours as long as it took to clean all the stuff off the boat and we just, just left it there and off we went.

Q78 O.K. Just a couple of things. Who was the skipper of the boat?

A It was Wayne was the, he was the registered skipper, and then all of us, there was half a dozen of us who would steer.

Q79 O.K.

A So, and he was the skipper.

Q80 He was the skipper?

A Yeah.

Q81 Now, from your experience, Don - - -

A Yeah.

Q81 - - - and from the situation that for a race like this there's certain requirements to be sent to the race committee and all, you know, race organisers - - -

A Yeah.

Q81 - - - for a boat to be allowed to go into a race.

A Yeah.

Q82 And that includes safety checks, crew lists - - -

A Insurance forms or .....

Q82 - - - insurance forms - - -

A Yeah.

Q82 - - - IMS - - -

A Yeah.

Q82 - - - certificates - - -

A Yeah.

Q82 - - - and other paraphernalia.

A Yeah.

Q83 Now, obviously you as a member of the crew and others, when you step foot on a boat to go into they Sydney to Hobart, for argument sake - - -

A            Yeah.

Q83          - - - you assume - - -

A            Yeah.

Q83          - - - as a crewman - - -

A            Yeah.

Q83          - - - that that's all in order.

A            Yeah.

Q84          Is that correct?

A            Yes. And, and normally the crew is very much involved  
in that process. Some people might not have a job in  
that process.

Q85          Yeah.

A            But in most cases, most boats I've sailed over the  
years, everyone's involved in some aspect of the - - -

Q86          Yeah.

A            - - - get ready.

Q87          O.K.

A            Yeah.

Q88          Is it the case that everybody on board the yacht, apart  
from say the skipper and the nav, who may - - -

A            Yeah.

Q88          - - - put this information together and submit.

A            Yeah.

Q89          Would everybody be aware of the IMS rating to that  
boat?

A            The rating we would talk about it, some people aren't,  
aren't interested in the technical side of it all.

Q90          Yeah.

A You know, they'd be some of us who are involved in the industry know how we compare to another boat and all of those things.

Q91 Yes.

A But we knew we were actually on a probably a more conservative rating than the other two boats which were the same as us, they had lightened their boats up and they'd taken advantage of a rule change.

Q92 All right. So, is it the case that some people would say, yeah, well - - -

A Yeah. O.K.

Q92 - - - whatever that means - - -

A Yeah. Yes.

Q92 - - - I don't care.

A Exactly. Exactly.

Q93 But others would take interest in that?

A Yeah. Yeah.

Q94 O.K. Now, you said that you received some outside weather information - - -

A Yeah.

Q94 - - - prior to the race.

A Yeah.

Q95 Where did that come from?

A Well, as you know, there's about, you know, there's the main weather forecast at the club in, as organised.

Q96 Yes.

A And then there's the, you know, the main stuff from MET.

Q97           Yeah.

A             And then their chap, I'll write his name down for you. He, he was involved in a lot of meteorology, he's a friend of mine and he's, he offered us a, he helped us right through the series in the meantime and, and the regatta.

Q98           Right. So, that's Roger .....?

A             Yeah.

Q99           Now, did he give you any indication as to the weather speeds, predictions?

A             Yeah. Well, he, he said when, when he talked to us on the afternoon prior, you know, that was his last upgrade to everyone - - -

Q100          Yeah.

A             - - - except for just a fleeting talk with him in the morning.

Q101          Yeah.

A             He actually emailed us, we had an email forecast from him, a private forecast from his the morning of the race.

Q102          Right.

A             And he talked about this low lurking, and that, you know, we'd certainly have some wind involved with it and the, how much would happen would depend on intensity, and then the ..... all that came in our, the email pack that we had on the morning of the race.

Q103          Mm.



A And we saw him as I said, just before we left - - -

Q104 Yeah.

A - - - at the dock, he was, he came round to see all the people he was serving and he said, "Look, you know, it's, I'm sure you'll end up being hammered", and Rob Mundle actually mentioned that on his thing, he said that on his .....

Q105 Yeah.

A Because he, you know, most of us know Roger, and he said he'd been talking to Roger and Roger was saying that we're gunna be hammered.

Q106 And when he said hammered, what did you sort of - - -

A Well, we thought, well it's not gunna be 30 knots, it might be 50 to 60, and you know, he was saying that, he said it would be, you know, It's looking like it will form to be very intense and we just again went through this thing, well, O.K. we're gunna be faced with a lot of wind and think well probably the worst that will happen is something will snap and we'll have to head in, you know.

Q107 Yeah. Yeah.

A That's kind of the way that you think about those things, yeah.

Q108 So, you recall what the predication was from the, the official briefing here, so far as wind speed?

A I didn't come to the briefing here.

Q109 Yeah.

A The navigator and the skipper came to that and then,

then we all talked about it on the way out, but the briefing here was certainly and the last upgrades were that there was the chance for a, for it to form pretty much like we, we ended up with. I think, but no-one would, it hadn't been really obvious because the low formed so quickly or strengthened so quickly as to how strong it would, how intense it would be. Most of us knew that about midnight some form of a southerly would come through.

Q110 Yeah.

A And that's so normal for Hobart forecast that we were, it's almost a bit sickening, you go, yeah, another one, you know, that's the way people think about it.

Q111 Now, what's the name of the navigator?

A ..... there we are.

Q112 That's Will Oxley.

A Yeah.

Q113 O.K. Now you said earlier that speed, a wind speed of 69 was recorded.

A Yeah.

Q114 How was that recorded?

A The instruments on our boat.

Q115 Right. Did that give a, does that give a printout?

A As to whether his laptop was still going and it was swamped after - - -

Q116 Right.

A - - - ..... it shows on the basic instruments on the boat.

Q117 Right.

A And then he had it running through the laptop, but we weren't actually storing our information - - -

Q118 Right.

A What the software will do is it will plot it and we'll know what's happened in the last hour and all this sort of stuff.

Q119 Mm.

A It will show where it's moving to, it's more or less sort of a, it's, you know, it's how to sort of manage your race more than a, a recorded thing.

Q120 Now, the size of the waves that you - - -

A That's a good one, isn't it. We feel that you'd have to say that we had waves as, looked as though they were as tall as the rig.

Q121 When you say rig, that's the mast?

A Yeah.

Q122 If the boat was sort of in the bottom of the trough I guess, I don't know, what are we talking, we're talking 20 metre, maybe. The most, the most noticeable thing was, you know, the waves varied in size and maybe a lot of them were 10 metres or 15 metres but the, the worst damaging stuff was the white water. And the white water, we feel we had white water at times that, you know, you'd see the wave coming towards you and it looked as high as the, the boat and the boat's 40 feet long, the rig's probably about another 10 or 12 longer than the boat, so it's that sort of size, and you think

well, it, it looks as high as, it's up here - - -

Q123 Mm.

A - - - and then you'd see probably two or three metres of white water on the top of that.

Q124 Right.

A So, it's the whit water that rolling down. The swirls never concerned us, 'cause you can just sort of flop up and down over them.

Q125 Yeah.

A But when the white water comes to you that was the, the major worry.

Q126 So, they were breaking - - -

A Breaking waves.

Q127 Yeah. Now, was everybody harnessed - - -

A Yeah.

Q127 - - - during the rough seas?

A Yeah. .... as I mentioned earlier, we had a standing, our, our race rule, even if the conditions were good, that after 6.00, in the evening we had harnesses on and snapped on.

Q128 All right. Now, what type of radios did you have onboard?

A We had the, as far as the race, you know, the safety specs, there was an HF and VHF and all that sort of stuff.

Q129 Right.

A All the standard safety gear.

Q130 Sorry?

A Just all the standard safety gear ..... further  
- - -

Q131 O.K.

A - - - .....

Q132 Now there was two on deck at the time of the roll over  
- - -

A Yeah.

Q132 - - - that's right, isn't it?

A Yeah.

Q133 Do they have life jackets, do you know? On or just  
- - -

A Weren't wearing life jackets at that time, no.

Q134 O.K. Now, was there a spare aerial onboard the vessel?

A Yeah.

Q135 Where was that stowed or where was that situated?

A It was stored inside in a predetermined spot.

Q136 Right.

A And when we saw the rig was going we got the aerial up,  
we shoved it on the ..... we then realised the  
radios had been lost as a result of the water.

Q137 O.K. Now, for your recollection, the, the being  
inverted was for approximately three to four minutes?

A Yeah.

Q138 Is that a usual time to be inverted?

A I've never been inverted before.

Q139 Right, O.K. That's fine.

A People would, we would like to think you wouldn't stay  
inverted.

Q140        Yeah.

A            And, and at, you know, I mean, we, you know.

Q141        O.K.

A            That's the best answer.

Q142        Now, so far as supplies and food onboard the, the boat  
             - - -

A            Yeah.

Q143        Was it adequate - - -

A            Well - - -

Q143        - - - could you have gone a few more days?

A            Well, a lot of it was wrecked.

Q144        Yes.

A            However, of course we knew we had the, we, we had the  
             safety stuff in the life rafts - - -

Q145        Right.

A            - - - if we were in problem, no-one was eating anyway.

Q146        Right. O.K.

A            No-one felt like it, one guy felt like eating and  
             something he craved for which he knew was on the boat  
             he'd found it had been completely swept away, so, we  
             pulled a few dry crackers out - - -

Q147        Yeah.

A            - - - and we were nibbling on those and stuff, but no-  
             one was eating.

Q148        Now, the sickness that you refer to to yourself - - -

A            Yeah.

Q148        - - - was that seasickness?

A            Yeah.

Q149 It wasn't a bug or anything?

A No.

Q150 Right.

A And I think something that's attributal to that is that, the, the short break between your work mode at Christmas and the starting the race.

Q151 Right.

A I think that that, you know, has a, has an impact and, and that's what the, the guys who sail around the world say, you know, that when they go racing they get some extreme conditions but they, they just lead up in it and they might leave a port and they'll have a week of fair sailing until they get down in the roaring 40s, you know - - -

Q152 Mm.

A - - - so, we go from, well in my particular case I worked til 9.30 on Christmas Eve here on some people's, and shoving life lines on boats on things like that and then came in and had a meal here, went home, had my children up screaming at 4 o'clock in the morning, and then just had lunch through the day and the next day it's sailing.

Q153 Yeah.

A So, I think a lot of people probably do struggle with that and I feel it's seasickness isn't owned up to nearly enough.

Q154 Right. Now, from your experience, how did you feel being told, or it was intimated to you that winds could

have been up to 69. Did it have any bearing on whether you wanted to continue or - - -

A We felt, we talked about that and we felt well, the, when we heard, you know, we, we were always comfortable that, if you get 60, it's the most you're gunna sail in but you'll get through that and it never seems to last long.

Q155 Right.

A You know, you might get it for six hours or something, and we talked about what sails we'll have on and we talked about what it, you know, that, O.K, we'll just get through that. When we heard 71 knots or whatever we heard - - -

Q156 Yeah.

A - - - we thought to ourselves, well, that's hopefully not where we are. In terms of when we started to hear a lot of boats on the SKED we, that were retiring we considered our position and felt well, we were in good shape, we're comfortable, I mean we were as comfortable as you can be in those circumstances, nothing's broken, we were in, you know, in a, in a good strong place in the race. We felt we, our early strategy had worked that we had put ourselves in a position where for the period of being swept out to sea we were still, we'd end up tactically O.K.

Q157 Mm.

A No, you know, no-one was injured, so we added up everything and felt well, all that said and there was



nothing really to say that we were ..... to return, probably when it got to a stage where we were hearing Maydays and realising how extreme it was, then we decided that we were too far south.

Q158        Yeah.

A            We were gunna have to go too far straight into it and we decided it was safer for us to run away and wait for it to stop.

Q159        Right. A hypothetical question for you.

A            Yeah.

Q160        From your experience, if you were told prior to the race commencing that there was 70 knots winds expected in the next 24 hours - - -

A            Wouldn't go.

Q160        - - - would you go?

A            No.

Q161        Would that be the view of most of the crew, do you think?

A            I think you'd have a lot of drop outs, yeah.

Q162        Yeah. Across the race?

A            Yeah. Yeah. I think so.

Q163        O.K. Don, were, were there any first time Sydney to Hobart starters onboard the B-52?

A            I think there could have been a couple of people who it was their first Hobart, but they had all sailed a lot, they'd sailed a lot of other races. They'd done Lord Howe's and stuff like that, you know, so, they might not have had the mileage or the might not have had the

Hobart race on their score sheet, but they'd certainly done some rough miles, and, and, and had sailed with the same group of guys, 'cause they're all from North Queensland and sailed with each other.

Q164 Mm.

A Which is quite good, they all, they're all mates, all knew one another - - -

Q165 Yeah.

A - - - and as I say that was quite a - - -

Q166 But, so you felt the experience of the crew was - - -

A Oh, yeah.

Q166 - - - sufficient to, to, to conduct the Sydney to Hobart without - - -

A Their experience level was certainly higher than probably, you know, a great number of boats in the race.

Q167 O.K. And just to clarify another point, you mentioned at one time when the winds were, were blowing quite strongly you were, decided to stay to the west of the line.

A Yeah.

Q168 Would that be the run line - - -

A Yes.

Q168 - - - which is a direct line from Sydney to Hobart?

A That's right, yeah.

Q169 And, were you aware of the nav officer actually plotting the, your course as you progressed down the coast on chart or was that done through electronic

instruments?

A There was electronic, he also, I, I, I'd have to check, and I know that throughout he had the paper charts and I think he was, he was putting it on paper as well. 'Cause he, you know, he's sort of trained that way.

Q170 Yeah. All right. And when the helicopter came over and was with you for the, some time and - - -

A Yeah.

Q170 - - - and then you left, did you switch, or was the EPIRB switched off at that time or was it - - -

A We talked about that and my memory of it and I, we were talking about this recently, we think he left it on the whole time, we think we thought that let's leave it on, 'cause who knows, you know.

Q171 Yeah.

A That was the view, I'm not sure what happened with the personal one.

Q172 O.K. And just one final point, were you aware of the life raft and flare display that was held at the CYCA only just a couple of days prior to the race?

A No.

Q173 Do you think if you would be, have been made aware of that you would have attended and possibly gained some sort of knowledge from that?

A I personally probably wouldn't have, because I would have thought that I'm a very experienced person and that it's probably, you know, and I'm flat out here and, no.

Q174 But, but having that in mind, you said earlier that  
- - -

A Now, I would.

Q174 - - - that, that you'd never fired a flare - - -

A No, that's right, no.

Q174 - - - and you've never seen a flare - - -

A I've seen a flare - - -

Q174 - - - and probably - - -

A - - - but I've never sailed on a boat where they've  
been fired.

Q175 O.K. Just, just on that - - -

A Yeah.

Q175 - - - could you see some benefit from a club point of  
view, or from, from members - - -

A Yeah.

Q175 - - - that that being a compulsory type of attendance?

A Absolutely, absolutely. I mean, the, as I said, we had  
two people who'd been through these courses - - -

Q176 Yeah.

A - - - and between the two of them - - -

Q177 Yeah.

A - - - they'd nussed it out so, if it had just have been  
one of them, you probably might not have made it  
happen, you know.

Q178 Yeah.

A And they knew the sequence, they knew the right type of  
flare to shoot off, knew how to aim it, how to light it  
and all that sort of stuff, so, yeah.

Q179 But of course, if, if the whole crew were privy of all that information - - -

A Yeah.

Q179 - - - of course then it would make for a much more professional crew and, and in the event of - - -

A I would agree with that.

Q179 - - - maybe two people being injured - - -

A That's right.

Q179 - - - it could have been those two people.

A That's what I was saying, I mean, if, if the people were relying on my experience and it, and in my niche, I was not able to contribute enough.

Q180 Mm.

A So, certainly that could happen, so if everyone were to do a course or, or you know, have to sign off as having some knowledge - - -

Q181 Yeah.

A - - - these, these two people who had done the survival course had also mentioned that that experience I think, one of them went through ..... here, reckons it was terrifying in the, you know, in the life raft, it was quite, quite real, and, and really hard being chucked in the water upside down and all that sort of stuff. So, they felt that it was real, but it certainly helped them in - - -

Q182 Yeah.

A - - - their understanding.

Q183 Do you think it would be a good idea to have on board

every vessel that takes part in this race, some sort of kit or standard operating procedure so far as signalling is concerned to aircraft. A, a common

- - -

A Yeah.

Q183 - - - signalling pattern between - - -

A I think people, it's hard to think that people would learn the sign languages and things like that, but I think if, I think as a, as a bare minimum some of the conversation we've had around is that if there were a grab bag type thing onboard - - -

Q184 Yeah.

A - - - then it, that you knew had a radio without question floating radio capable of talking or whatever - - -

Q185 Yeah.

A - - - bands necessary, talking and maybe a, you know, not a full size ..... bag, 'cause, you know, it would be hard to find somewhere to put it, but just the basics. A radio, maybe an extra torch - - -

Q186 Yeah.

A - - - and certainly if the, from our experience, everyone thought what a fantastic job the rescue people were doing, but if we had more understanding of - - -

Q187 Yes.

A - - - of what they do, what their limitations were, and how we could effectively work with them, great.

Q188 Yeah. So, there's, there's no doubt that a handheld

VHF radio - - -

A No question.

Q188 - - - would, would've assisted you - - -

A Yeah.

Q188 - - - to no end.

A Yeah. Absolutely.

Q189 Mm. And you think that's the situation of the members should be looking at - - -

A Quite a - - -

Q189 - - - it as compulsory?

A Quite a number of boats might have had them.

Q190 Right.

A Because it's optional.

Q191 Do you think that should be a compulsory - - -

A Yeah.

Q192 Yeah.

A I mean, it's such a simple thing and, and most everyone owns one.

Q193 Mm.

A You know, all of 'em have 'em.

Q194 Mm.

A And it's, you know, just a standard thing that most people know how to work.

Q195 Yeah.

A It's not a problem at all.

Q196 O.K. Anything further you want to say?

A No, I think the, our, our experience was that just, you know, obviously the, the, well, once the strife

happened to communicate between all the people involved became the greatest chore, because no-one said, I guess, the club had never had to experience it, the safety people had, you know, had their problems which they have to deal with, but the, I think the sheer scale of the whole exercise - - -

Q197        Yeah.

A            - - - was probably a great test of, of, of all the basic systems. The main one being get 'em all talking to each other.

Q198        Yeah.

A            And I, I guess in all these rescue type thing, and disaster type planning and handling that maybe it's a thing where some other group with more training in those fields can be of great help in advising, you know, I don't know - - -

Q199        Mm.

A            - - - what group it is, but just someone to make that happen, because as far as my family were concerned we were missing.

Q200        Mm.

A            Communications basically.

Q201        Yeah. O.K. All right. The time is now 11.48, this view is now concluded.

A            Not a problem.

INTERVIEW CONCLUDED