

SENIOR CONSTABLE UPSTON

Q1 This is an electronically recorded interview between Senior Constable David Upston and Scott Bugg on Thursday, the 22nd of the 4th, 1999 at Number 10 Squadron R.A.A.F. base, Edinburgh in South Australia. Scott, for the purpose of the interview, could you please state your full name?

A Scott Nelson Bugg.

Q2 And your date of birth?

A 8th of October, 1971.

Q3 And your address?

A It's number 70 DeSassenay Crescent Modbury Heights.

Q4 O.K. The time on my watch is now 2.05pm and also present and seated to my immediate right is Detective Senior Constable Stuart Gray from Bega Detectives. Scott, as I have already explained to you, Detective Gray and myself are making inquiries into the 1998 Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race and we are speaking to people either directly or indirectly involved in the race and your case as R.A.A.F. officer in the search field of, of the race. Could you please give me your ranking and your occupation in the R.A.A.F?

A A Sergeant and I'm an A.E.A, which is Airborn Electronics Analyst.

Q5 O.K. And how long have you been with the R.A.A.F?

A I've been with the R.A.A.F. since January, 1988 and I've been in my current, I've been in A.E.A. for the last 8 months.

Q6 All right. And as part of those duties what, could you please explain to me what you actually do on the aircraft?

A My primary job is to be a radar operator which is tracking ships surface ships, on the radar and also I.F.F. watches which is Identification Friend or Foe which all civilian aircraft have, tracking them on the radar basically keeping us out of danger and, and, yeah, tracking - - -

Q7 Mmm.

A - - - ships.

Q8 O.K. All right. I'll take you to the 27th of December - - -

A Mmm.

Q8 - - - where you were tasked to do certain things. Could you explain to us what those taskings were?

A Basically before we went on task we were told that we were going to act as a comms relay, sit up above everybody else and control everything but, when we got over there we told that we had, we had an assigned search area. And basically our job was to go in there and search the area. The sea state was too high for the radio to operate effectively to get a good return off the yachts and yachts don't give out a very good radar return anyway 'cause they are basically made out of wood, wood, etcetera. But, so we were in there using visual as our means of finding the yachts and also as another part of my role I was basically

keeping tabs on the other aircraft in the area and where they were us.

Q9 All right. So you were tasked to fly from the base here - - -

A Yes.

Q9 - - - into an area?

A That's correct.

Q10 And the other air crew were tasked to plot positions and, and follow search patterns?

A Mmm.

Q11 O.K.

A

Q12 And were you tasked to actually look for any vessel in particular or any types of vessels?

A The, the first day we went out there, on, on our first flight we weren't, as far as I remember we weren't tasked with anything in particular, we were just going out there and any vessel that we seen we were havin', checkin' 'em out and making', if they were under, identify they were moving through the water we weren't worryin' about 'em, if they were looking, if they were looking good. But the ones that were just dead in the water, they were the ones that we were tasked to, to look out for, get, get their name and try and get in, to get into communication with them.

Q13 O.K. Do you have a viewing port from your station?

A No, not, not one that I can see out, no.

Q14 O.K. Well, you mentioned earlier that the radar effectiveness was hampered due to the sea conditions.

A Mmm.

Q15 How did you derive that?

A Basically our radar isn't that flash a radar and anything over sea state 3, from a small vessel like a yacht you're, you're gonna be very, very lucky to, to pick it up. So, yeah, anything sea state 3, the radar isn't much use at all in that sort of search so that's why we went visual primary.

Q16 A sea state 3, what's your understanding of a sea state 3?

A I don't know, the, it's basically when the, when you're just starting to get white caps on top of your waves?

Q17 So that could effectively be a, a wind - - -

A Yes, that's - - -

Q17 - - - generated sea state.

A Yes, it's a wind, wind generated sea state and I don't know their numbers right off the top of my head, sorry.

Q18 Yeah. Yeah. But it's, it's enough that the, the, correct me if I'm wrong, that the, that caps have blown off - - -

A Mmm.

Q18 - - - at a particular wind force - - -

A Mmm.

Q18 - - - and it then, as, just to recoup it makes the radar ineffective as - - -

A Yes.

Q18 - - - looking for, for that, for yachts in particular.
A In particular. A, a merchant vessel we would have no problems at all finding in sea state 3. It's just due to the, the inherent nature of what the yacht's made out of.

Q19 Yes.
A It's not a very good radar reflector.

Q20 Yes.
A And so that, that was our major problem. The two, combination of the two.

Q21 How long have you been based at, at, on aircraft as a radar operator?
A Only about 6 months at that time. Yeah. I'd graduated just, only just graduated in June - - -

Q22 O.K.
A - - - '98

Q23 And have, have you been tasked to conduct other search operations prior to this 1998 one within that 6 month period?
A As far as search and rescue, no, but looking for other things, small vessels, etc, yeah.

Q24 Mmm. So what you say is, is, is, is from absolute experience of the ineffective, and also from training that the radar is ineffective?
A It's not - - -

Q25 That sea state 3?
A That was more than sea state 3 that day.

Q26 Yeah. Yeah.

A I'm very sure it was. The, I wasn't, I wasn't on the radar all the time. I had other more senior operators and also I have the, what's called a system employment manager who is my boss, he basically looks after, over my shoulder so, yeah, he, he knows what's goin' on as well.

Q27 O.K. Did you pick up any targets at all on those, on those sorties?

A No, I, that first day, no. We didn't pick up, didn't pick up the yachts on radar at all. The second day the sea state had dropped down and, yeah, we could pick up, pick up contacts that day.

Q28 O.K. So you were tasked on the 28th.

A Mmm.

Q29 O.K. And, and could you please run through what your taskings were and what you actually found on the 28th?

A Basically from my point of view that day we went out and it seemed a lot more organised and we were given a, a particular search area in which they, sorry, I'll start again. The, first off we went out there and we were tasked to go out and, with the, assist the Newcastle in tracking out a particular vessel which was a Solo Globe Challenger - - -

Q30 Mmm.

A - - - from memory and we went, we went out, we picked, we just did a, a search of the area. From memory we got a beaking, a beacon, a beacon, picked up with

the equipment and we used direction find to, used the direction finding equipment to - - -

Q31 Yeah.

A - - - track that beacon down. And we also, when we got closer we picked up the contact on radar and basically that's when we found the Solo Globe Challenger. We proceeded in. They could, they had a sign up for us. We couldn't read the sign so we basically dropped a radio to 'em. After that we went to, and we, they gave us a particular search area to search on this grid and we went and tracked up and down our search area on this grid. And I was told afterwards that because we rely on inertial navigation and not G.P.S. like all the other aircraft. We were, we weren't exactly on our grid, our inertials had drifted, to the certain extent I'm not sure of how much and so we weren't probably, we probably weren't searching the correct area that we thought at the time we were.

Q32 O.K. So you, you, you did locate some targets - - -

A Mmm.

Q32 - - - the following day?

A Yeah. That's correct.

Q33 The sea state, the sea state had abated.

A Mmm.

Q34 And what did you do when you were alerted to targets from the radar?

A We, we tracked over to them, did a fly past, read the name, see if they were under power or not and if they

were under power we were keeping on going and, but all vessels we were trying to get in radar, radio contact from memory, yeah

Q35 All right. Were you listening to any, any of the radio communications at the time?

A I was but I didn't, I didn't, I wasn't giving it 100 per cent, 100 per cent of my attention 'cause I was - -
-

Q36 Yeah.

A - - - pretty busy.

Q37 Yeah. Yeah. You also, as part of the radar detection, you also looked for other radar, aircraft in the air?

A Yes, that's correct.

Q38 Was there an incident, incident where the, the aircraft that you were flying in had to deviate from it's course for any particular reason?

A That is correct. I wasn't on the radar at the time I was on a visual station. But there was another guy who was on the, on the radar and, yes, from memory, yeah, well, basically, he was tracking behind us at, I think it was 1 nautical mile, he was tracking behind us and basically following the same search pattern as what we were. And initially I don't think he had his, I, or we weren't picking up his I.F.F.

Q39 The I.F.F.?

A Which is Identification Friend or Foe. Basically, instead of trying to pick up a small mark off the, that the aircraft will return on radar, you'll have two

rings. Basically the, we send an interrogation signal just like the traffic control do and the aircraft sends back a, a return. And, yeah, later on he, either he'd turn it on or we picked it up but, and when I jumped back on radar after that I was basically keepin' an eye on everything and making sure we had separation but there was an incident there that happened.

Q40 O.K. So that was, was, if you can just rehash. You were following him or he was following you or was it a head on situation?

A When I got on, I was told, I was on a visual station up the back. I was told it's a, it was a head on type situation. When I got onto, we did a changeover and when I got on, when I got on radar we were in front of him and he was tracking behind us at 1 nautical mile.

Q41 O.K.

A But I'm unsure of what happened, what exactly happened.

Q42 Were you at any time using, pardon me, any other instrumentation to plot or to attempt to plot and locate vessels?

A Myself personally?

Q43 Mmm.

A No. No. Just the radar.

Q44 Stuart?

DETECTIVE SENIOR CONSTABLE GRAY

Q45 So far as the radar's concerned, you were checking other aircraft in the area?

A Mmm.

Q46 Was it a congested situation?

A Yeah, there was quite a lot of aircraft around.

Q47 Right. Did that cause you any concern?

A Not at the time 'cause we had, we, we knew we had a set grid to, and just, I was tracking the aircraft and making sure that they weren't - - -

Q48 Mmm.

A - - - on a, on a converging sort of track.

Q49 Mmm.

A And I was happy with, that there wasn't anything in the, but I wouldn't have liked to have been in aircrafts that didn't have that sort of as what as what we had.

Q50 So were the other aircraft in actual fact in the same grid as you for

A

Q50 - - - search with - - -

A That guy 'cause we'd had - - -

Q51 Apart from him?

Q52

Q53 No, O.K. Did you happen to see any of the yachts in the water on the 27th?

A Yes, yes, I did.

Q54 And what sort of condition were they in so far as as the sea? How was it effecting the yachts all.

A Well, the yachts just seemed to be all over the place.

Q55 Right.

A I, we seen I think it was, oh, I seen personally about one or two dismasted yachts.

Q56 Yeah.

A Most of them were, yeah, had to haul their sail down and they were just under power with outboards.

Q57 Yeah. O.K.

SENIOR CONSTABLE UPSTON

Q58 Is there anything you'd like to add, Scott, to this that may assist us or that you feel that can, where we can assist you in recommending that certain things be done to, to improve the rescue, search rescue capabilities?

A Well, overall, no, I don't. As far as the employment, our employment goes we really need to have a better G.P.S. to fit in with, like, all the other aircraft are on, are on G.P.S. which we really need to be doing that as well.

DETECTIVE SENIOR CONSTABLE GRAY

Q59 Mmm. O.K.

SENIOR CONSTABLE UPSTON

Q60 O.K. All right. The time on my watch is now 2.19pm. This interview is now concluded.

INTERVIEW CONCLUDED.