

SENIOR CONSTABLE UPSTON

Q1 This is an electronic record of interview between Senior Constable David Upston of the New South Wales Water Police and Bruce Douglas Gould on Sunday, the 17th of October, 1999 at the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron at Kirribilli. Also present seated directly opposite me is Detective Senior Constable Gray from Bega Detectives. Bruce, for the purpose of the interview, would you please state your full name?

A Bruce Douglas Gould.

Q2 And your date of birth?

A 3/10/43.

Q3 Address?

A 7 Warringah Road, Mosman.

Q4 And your occupation?

A Merchant banker.

Q5 Right. Bruce, as we explained prior to commencing the interview, Detective Senior Constable Gray and I are making inquiries into the 1998 Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race and it is our understanding that you were a participant in that race on the yacht Winston Churchill. Is that correct?

A That's correct.

Q6 And what part did you play in, as crew on that vessel?

A I was a watch captain.

Q7 O.K. Now could you just give us a little bit of a background on, on your experiences in, in yachting and, and owning vessels yourself, I understand.

A Well, I've done 32 Hobart's, so that was my 32nd Hobart. I've owned Margaret Rintoul, the original Margaret Rintoul, not Margaret Rintoul II, since 1980 and she's a wooden boat built in 1948 very similar to, construction wise to Winston Churchill.

Q8 And have you had a lot to do with repairing and maintaining timber boats?

A Yes, I have, 20 years of it.

Q9 O.K. All right. Let me just take you back to the, the Boxing Day, the 26th of December, and, and the the, commencement of the race and all the preparation that was, was going on around the dock at the C.Y.C. At what time did you get to the C.Y.C?

A I think we got there about 10 o'clock.

Q10 And what were your duties then?

A Oh, basic, get my gear on board, we really didn't have any duties for the boat, it was ready to go, we were, everything was packed ready to go. I really stepped on board, showed the kids the boat, showed the wife the boat, said hello to a few of my old mates at the club and I think we left about 11.30 I think or thereabouts.

Q11 All right. So you sailed out from the, from the dock at about 11.30?

A Yeah, motored out.

Q12 Well, motored out, O.K. Now what I'd like to do is to draw your attention to a document that I have here. It's been alleged that a maintenance worker from other vessels swam past the Winston Churchill and noticed

certain things on the bow of the vessel and that when he saw these things on the bow of the Winston Churchill he swam over, put his hand over where this alleged, what appeared to him as, as though there was some sort of anomaly - - -

A Mmm.

Q12 - - - on the vessel and then had a conversation with people on the boat, on the bow of the boat and also on the dock. What I'd like to do is first of all is to ask you did you have any conversation with anybody in the water on the morning of the race prior to leaving, motoring out from the dock?

A No, I didn't.

Q13 Did, have you had any conversation with anybody on board the Winston Churchill as a result of what we've just spoken about now?

A No, I haven't.

Q14 O.K. I'll show you this document here now which shows a hand sketch and it shows at the top of the page what appears to be a stem post - - -

A Mmm.

Q14 - - - and some planking.

A Yeah.

Q15 And then at the bottom of the page that has been recreated, redrawn in a different angle - - -

A Yeah.

Q15 - - - where you'll see the stem post, the water lines, some planks and you'll see some paint cracking - - -

A Mmm.

Q15 - - - and there's a darker line here which has the words and an arrow, missing caulking. Do - - -

A Yeah.

Q15 - - - can you understand what that, that diagram is trying to portray?

A Yes, I can.

Q16 O.K. What, to the best of your knowledge, what was the condition of Winston Churchill like prior to, to you leaving the dock?

A Oh, I thought she'd been well prepared and she was shipshape ready for the Hobart race, there'd been a lot of work done on the boat over the last 12 months and topside wise she, you know, she looked O.K. to me from what I saw of the boat. I mean I didn't, as far, I mean you don't often sort of stand around on the outside of the boat looking in because you're usually on the damn thing as you, as you probably gather. But from what I saw around the dock and so on, just when you step on board, things like that, she looked all right and I don't think I, I mean I never noticed anything on the stem at all because she was, from memory she was almost moored stern in where she was round at Greenwich. I really had no reason to go looking at the bow and you couldn't anyway 'cause it was in a pen with, between piles and moored stern in so that you stepped straight onto the stern to get on the boat. So I never noticed anything.

Q17 O.K. Now from this diagram what would that indicate to you if missing caulking was in fact the situation and there's paint cracking around the planks above the waterline?

A Well, paint, you know, paint cracking above the waterline is, you know, is nothing major, any wooden boat will do that. So I wouldn't be worried about paint cracking, in fact I took, when I took my boat to Hobart in '89 we had, we had cracking all the way around the boat and we had a repair done in Hobart and sailed back and had no, no troubles at all with, with paint cracking, just a bloody nuisance when you get home you've got to repaint. And as far as the, the missing caulking there is concerned, well, I don't know whether he's talking about missing caulking or, or missing putty that's usually put over the caulking 'cause the caulking is done first and that's usually pounded in with a, with a caulking mallet into the, the stem and the plank and so it's wedged in very tight. Then what happens is that when you wedge, when you put your caulking in, when the water gets to it it then expands and that's what keeps the boat dry and usually to finish it off you put some putty around the outside of the, of the caulking. So the putty's purely cosmetic to fill the hole because you don't put your caulking all the way out to the surface, you usually put your caulking in because you're pounding it in and then the little gap that's left after you've caulked

the boat you, you put putty in and sometimes that putty falls out if the boat's been working or, of if you've been at sea or whatever. So if it was just putty missing I wouldn't have regarded that being, I mean if, you obviously would have liked to inspect it to make sure that the caulking was O.K. but missing putty, putty by itself is not necessarily a major issue because you can, you can certainly get putty missing out of a boat after, you know, a long, long race like a Hobart race, for instance, and all that, all that means is that, you know, the boat's worked a bit, the putty is purely a filling agent to give you a clean surface to paint, it's not, it's not structural by any means. But if the caulking was missing that's a different, different scenario.

Q18 Well, what can you tell me about if there, if in fact the caulking was missing and we've now established that, that the, the putty's purely cosmetic but if the caulking was missing what would that indicate to you?

A Oh, it indicates that the boat could be leaking in that area and you know, you, you, you would probably want to repair it, you know, particularly if it was missing completely because the boat would probably be leaking if it was missing completely.

Q19 What - - -

A To the best of my knowledge the boat wasn't leaking as far as I know and on the basis that it wasn't leaking I assume the caulking was still there.

Q20 O.K. Well, if the, if the putty, how, how deep would the putty normally be?

A Oh, could be a quarter to three-eighths.

Q21 Right. So it wouldn't, it wouldn't be very thick at all?

A No.

Q22 When you say a quarter to three-eighths in millimetres.

A In millimetres, well, all right, I don't think in millimetres, the putty would have been 5 or 6 millimetres.

Q23 Right. And the normal depth of the, and, you know, not being fully familiar with the construction of this vessel, of course, but normally do you know what the thickness of the planks would be?

A Oh, Winston Churchill, I don't know what they were, they were probably, they were probably at least an inch and a half, probably 2 inch max.

Q24 Right. So then the caulking then would be set right back?

A Yeah.

Q25 Yeah.

A The caulking would be - - -

Q26 Would be considerable - - -

A Mmm.

Q26 - - - if, if you've only got a couple of millimetres, 3 to 5 millimetres of putty and then you've got the - - -
-

A You're saying, you're saying three to five, I'm saying a bit more than that, I'm saying - - -

Q26 - - - the rest of it's filled with caulking. O.K.

A - - - I'm saying, you know, 5 to, to, you know, 5 to 7 millimetres - - -

Q27 Right.

A - - - is sort of about the normal putty line - - -

Q28 Yeah.

A - - - roughly.

Q29 O.K.

A Not, not 3 metres, 3 millimetres 'cause 3 millimetres is nothing, I mean, it's, you know, that's a thin skin.

Q30 Yes. O.K.

A Because, yeah. You, I'm sorry, I'm trying to bloody remember what mine looks like, but you're sort of talking, something like that would be a putty line.

Q31 Right. And you're indicating - - -

A Because - - -

Q31 - - - you're indicating just on a piece of perspex - - -
-

A Mmm.

Q31 - - - perspex at least a minimum of 5 millimetres?

A 5 millimetres, yeah.

Q32 Yeah. That's fine.

A Because your planks usually, I mean I probably, my planks on Margaret Rintoul are probably, sorry, probably inch and a quarter so, you know, your

caulking's then taking up, say, three, three-quarters of an inch - - -

Q33 Yeah.

A - - - and then the last bit of a plank is where you, where you're filling - - -

Q34 Right.

A - - - putty.

Q35 Now if that was missing the, it wouldn't, if the caulking was missing to the best of your knowledge and it was above the waterline it wouldn't necessarily indicate a great deal of water coming in, would it?

A No.

Q36 But it would indicate, could it indicate some sort of structural problem if the caulking was missing from that area?

A Well, you know, it's pretty hard to say whether, whether a bit of caulking is going to be, is structural because all the caulking's doing is filling, is filling the hole.

Q37 O.K. If, let's not say that the caulking is, is holding the boat together - - -

A No, it's not.

Q37 - - - which it doesn't - - -

A No.

Q37 - - - from my recollection and what I've been told it's just to stop the, the influx of water.

A Mmm.

Q38 But what would normally cause caulking like that, if it was missing over, over a distance of, of, say, a foot or more, what would that indicate to you? Why, what, what would normally have caused the caulking to come out keeping in mind that you've replaced caulking in boats over, over a number of - - -

A Well, you know, if you, I suppose the, I think the thing that would, you know, create some caulking to come, not, not caulking, we're debating, look, caulking just doesn't fall out because it's, it's put in with a caulking mallet, with a bloody great big mallet so, you know - - -

Q39 Mmm.

A - - - it doesn't just sort of, it's not like putty that can fall out 'cause putty's got nothing to hold it in effectively. But what a boat can do particularly if you've, you know, if you're working a boat, particularly a wooden boat, and you've got your forestay on and you've got a big head sail on when that, the whole boat is sort of working in that bow section and with a big sail on - - -

Q40 When you say working, what do you mean working?

A Well - - -

Q41 Stressing?

A Stressing, yes.

Q42 O.K.

A 'Cause you've got a forestay wound up and, you know, you've, you've got a mast and you've got a forestay

tight because you're trying to, to keep your boat with a reasonably tight forestay. Now we wouldn't have overstretched our forestay on a wooden boat because, you know, the boat's pretty old. But, but even so, you know, reasonable tension on the forestay with a big head sail on and even if you go out to sea and you, you start pounding into the, you know, 20 knot southerly or a 20 knot north-easter, you're gunna get, the boat will work.

Q43 Right.

A So if, we'd been out sailing a couple of times before the Hobart race and, you know, I suppose we were outside the heads there having a bit of a training session doing, doing a bit of, doing crew training and so on before, before the race. We put on several head sails, we put our storm gear on and well, I can't remember exactly but I mean I think we were sailing against a reasonable breeze out there. I mean the boat could've worked a little bit on the bow.

Q44 O.K. And, and the vessel was, was rerigged 2 years ago?

A Yeah.

Q45 From old equipment - - -

A Yeah.

Q45 - - - to brand new modern equipment?

A Yeah.

Q46 On an old timber boat how do you feel that, that would overstress the boat, would it, would the boat normally

handle those conditions with all this new rigging keeping in mind it's an old timber boat that's, that's meant to give?

A Well, I don't think the rigging would be any different because all you've done is you've gone from a wooden mast to, to an aluminium mast. The aluminium mast would be lighter in weight wise and the rigging was one by 19 wide, I don't know what size it was but, but it was probably, probably had number 90 wire before and aft. But it's not as if we're using the old rope rigging, if you know what I mean. The wire probably was no different. So providing you're not, you know, you're not actually trying to wind, wind the forestay up as tight as, say, on a modern maxi or something like that, or a modern boat, the stresses and strains probably are about the same. But the thing you've got to remember these days are that, that in the old days with cotton sails and things like that everything stretched a bit. With the modern sails they're pretty bullet proof so you are putting a lot more strain on the boat because it, it doesn't give as much as it used to. So, you know, being a wooden boat, the places it's going to move and give a bit will be on, on the hull itself.

Q47 Right.

A But when they put the, to my understanding when they put the mast in, the new mast, and they put new, new strapping in, in the boat, new chainplates in that went

right down to the keel. So, if anything, that should have strengthened the boat rather than weaken it.

Q48 Would it, would it have, how would you strengthen the bow section to cope with that, under your experiences, to cope with that sort of new rigging on an old boat?

A Oh, I don't think there's much you can do really. All you've got to do is just keep your eye on the caulking. In my particular experience on Margaret Rintoul, I mean I, I had a defective stop water which had just aged but that was replaced. I mean you could, you could argue that you could, you could strengthen the, the stem by putting it on a piece inside the stem but I think Winston Churchill was pretty solidly built so I don't think it'd make any difference.

Q49 Mmm. O.K. All right. Well, I think that, that basically covers that sort of thing as far as, as that's concerned and the, and the, the alleged missing caulking and, and what you've told is, is quite conclusive. Now let's go to the start of the race.

A Mmm.

Q50 You've cleared, oh, actually just prior to going into that, how many times did you go out do you think and try different sails prior to the race, a number of days, number of weeks?

A Yeah. We went out two weekends, I think, before the start of the race.

Q51 Right. Was there times that sails were, you felt were overpowering and, and you may have, you had to go to

smaller sails or anything like that? Was there anything that you had to - - -

A No, we just, we, we, we, we did actually put up our storm gear because we, 'cause I, when I'm on a boat like that I like the crew and everyone to know where everything is. So we took the storm gear out and put the tri sail up, we put the storm head sail up just to make sure everything fitted. We knew where it was going to sheet, I always do that before I go to sea.

Q52 O.K. O.K. Well, that's good. Now, now we'll go on to the start of the race and you're, you're sailing out through the heads and heading down and then we'll go to the heading down towards Eden.

A Mmm.

Q53 And we'll go to the 27th around about midday just prior to the, the storm approaching. What was happening then on the boat?

A Well, in the morning I can remember we woke up and we were, I was on watch, the boys had actually put a reef in the sail during the evening 'cause the breeze had come in a bit. We were down to a number 2 head sail. We shook out the reef in the morning, this is early morning and went to full gear and then gradually as the, as the breeze came in I then went off watch and when I came back on watch, which was after the storm had actually hit, we were down, they had taken all the gear off and we were down to a storm jib.

Q54 O.K. Then, then you were sailing down under storm jib?

A Yeah.

Q55 Then what happened?

A I did a trick of the helm when, you know, the real, when the real gale had hit us by that stage. We were sailing about, between 50 and 60 degrees, the wind coming from the west and I felt pretty comfortable but we had a discussion what else we could do. The wind was sort of getting up to, oh, 60, 65 knots and we, in fact Steve and I had a chat with Richard, we were debating whether we'd, what our next move would be if the breeze got any harder and we reckoned our next move was to actually heave to if the wind got over 70 knots but we never, it never got over 70 as far as we were concerned so we never hove to, we, we just kept going the way we were. I felt very comfortable with the boat at that stage, the boat was handling it well, we weren't pounding. We were sailing a good apparent angle to the sea so we were, I was, you know, I was quite, quite comfortable where we were at at that point of time.

Q56 O.K. So what was, what was the average wind speeds that you were experiencing then, you said it didn't reach 70 knots but - - -

A Oh, it was gusting between, between 60 and up to, up to 70 knots.

Q57 Right. So - - -

A We had an alarm I think set on the wind speed gauge at 65, so every time the alarm went off you knew you were hitting 65.

Q58 Yeah. So it was very, the conditions were extreme?

A They were extreme.

Q59 O.K. So then, then, then what happened after that?

A I went off watch. By that stage we were doing about, oh, half to three-quarters of an hour on the helm and just relieving each other 'cause the conditions were pretty bad, it was very hard to see with the, with the, you know, with the, the waves and the wind were washing us, the seas coming straight at you and almost horizontal so it was very hard to see. So we were doing about, oh, three-quarters of an hour on the helm and then doing changes. I'd just gone down, down, I was still in my wet weather gear and I was lying on the cabin sole and then, oh, I could feel us coming up on a big wave, which you do, you sort of, you wait for it. Next thing I knew I'm flying across the cabin airborne so I ended up on a, I was sort of sitting near the, right near the companionway and I was sort of half laying across the, you know, fore and aft of the boat, next thing I know I'd been flipped across and across past the companionway ladder into the leeward bunk. That's when I dislocated my thumb. So once I shook myself up and sort of realised I was still in one piece except for my thumb I got Jimmy Law to put my thumb back in and then I went straight on deck, there was no

one at the helm, obviously we'd hit a monstrous sea 'cause the noise below was deafening and I knew we'd fallen off a big one. I took the helm because Richard and John Dean had been wrapped around the backstay. So then Steven came on deck, got the, untangled the boys, I took the helm 'cause obviously there was no one at the helm at that stage. It was obvious that we'd taken a lot of water. We got the boys off, sorted out, then we got, Richard and Steven went below to try and start the motor to see if we could get our mechanical pump going. Unfortunately for us, the battery's on the leeward side so we couldn't, we had, like, we had one kick in the motor and it just died and that was the end of it. The boat, I, I didn't go below so I can't tell you how much water was there but the boat was obviously, I think the water was above the floorboards at that stage and on the helm I felt the boat was, was getting heavier. So I knew we were in trouble. And I think after that I got some blokes on deck. We took the storm jib off because the mast was, was obviously stretched, the leeward rigging was slack, we took the storm jib off. I then got Richard to send a Mayday out and we proceeded to get our life jackets on and to get the life rafts on deck. At this stage I've run the boat, running before the breeze going due west with the wind coming across on us on the quarter 'cause I knew we were going to need a leeward side of the boat to, to actually launch the, the raft to get into. Richard I

think from memory it was, well, in fact it was a quarter to 5.00, I remember that 'cause the helicopter pilot confirmed that he heard our radio Mayday at quarter to 5.00. And my estimates are now, you're testing my memory a bit but I think we left the boat about 5.30 I think it was, somewhere about there. And we, a big sea had, had, because we were running before it a big sea had pooped us and a lot of water went into the boat so she was getting heavier and heavier. So when the last big one came and we got pooped and I said to the boys, This is it, fellows, launch the rafts. So we launched the rafts. I stayed at the helm until they, the rafts were launched. I then walked straight over to the side of the boat and dived into the nearest life raft. I think within, I would say within 2 or 3 minutes of that when I looked out, I turned around and helped Richard, he was sort of half in the raft and half out because I'd actually dived into the raft, I pulled him on board and I looked up and the, the water was sort of above the decks, then she's gone. She just disappeared.

Q60 Right. And which, which life raft did you dive into?

A The four man raft, the four man raft was Richard, Paul and Peter.

Q61 And that was a round raft?

A That was a round raft, yeah.

Q62 Now when, when you said that you, you were thrown below and you got up and gathered your thoughts, your thumb was placed back into its original position.

A Mmm.

Q63 You were saying then that, that there was water up to the floorboards?

A Well, there was water, there was a lot of water sloshed around the boat but to be honest with you I didn't take too much notice of that because I was heading - - -

Q64 Right.

A - - - straight for the deck.

Q65 Right.

A 'Cause you know, I didn't know what was going on up there, there was only two men on, on deck.

Q66 Mmm.

A There was enough blokes down below to sort of, you know, cater what's going there so I went straight on deck because I was nearest to the companionway.

Q67 Right. So there's a fair bit of water coming in the boat at this stage?

A Oh, yeah, there was water coming in because I can remember it to the, you know, sloshing through that after, after navigator's eerie where the three windows had been stove in.

Q68 O.K. So do you think most of the water that was in the boat at the time had come from that area?

A Yeah.

Q69 Or you don't know?

A Oh, well, obviously a lot came in those three, you know, we had three windows broken in by the force of the sea so there was just green water flowing in there.

Q70 Yeah.

A I mean I, I, I mean I don't obviously know but I mean the boat must have been at, almost flat in the water on its side.

Q71 Mmm.

A So the pressure on the amount of water that was spewing in was, you know, quite dramatic and then I remember I got on the helm, I then looked up and after we'd sort of settled down a bit, don't ask me what time 'cause I can't remember, but I remember looking at the bulwark and the bulwark had been pushed in at a right angle about 6 feet aft to the shrouds and I mean to bend that flat stainless steel plate on the flat, whatever was happening, mate, it was big.

Q72 Mmm.

A And that's what I think the, that's why I say to you I think, excuse me, whatever damage was done below was done at that time and my guess is that we probably, you know, that was the thing that found the weak link in the, the boat and if there was, you know, any fittings that were slightly weak with age or whatever we certainly found them. That's why she was leaking.

Q73 Mmm.

A I mean if you can imagine on Steiner's boat there where it sort of, where the planks come down and join the

keel on that, that flat section, that's where I think that we sprung planks and probably sprung, you know, we'd have sprung 10 or 15 or 20 feet of that over, say, two or three planks, it doesn't take long for the water to piss in, I can tell you.

Q74 So you're talking about, you're pointing over to a boat that's on, on the hard stand area - - -

A Yeah.

Q74 - - - where the keel comes up and obviously they're all planks - - -

A Yeah.

Q74 - - - and as the keel comes up to a possibly - - -

A If you sort of, if you took the - - -

Q74 - - - a third - - -

A - - - waterline to the, to the bottom - - -

Q75 Yes.

A - - - and went about halfway - - -

Q76 Yes.

A - - - you'll see where she sort of comes in and starts to join the keel.

Q77 Where she curves out.

A Where she curves out, that's where I reckon when, on a piece of paper looking sideways she comes down like that, I reckon we're talking about the planks here.

Q78 We might just get a, a piece of paper here and I'll get you to sketch that.

A

Q79 This area that you're about to sketch now for us - - -

A Mmm.

Q79 - - - do you feel that that's where the water was mostly coming in at first? Did you actually see the water coming in - - -

A No.

Q79 - - - to this area? O.K. Well, I'll let you just draw the sketch here and - - -

A Oh, you can imagine inside - - -

Q79 - - - just describe it as you draw.

A - - - you know, that's the inside of the boat there with the furniture and the walls here. So you, I mean you really can't, I mean there's no way you can see these planks here - - -

Q80 Right.

A - - - because they're under everything, right.

Q81 Right. So - - -

A Unless you tear half the inside - - -

Q81 - - - this is the keel coming down here?

A This is the keel here.

Q82 Right.

A My guess and this is assumption on my part, I mean I've got no evidence of this - - -

Q83 Mmm.

A - - - to prove it one way or the other but my guess is I reckon that we probably sprung some seams here along the length of the boat, I don't know how far. But if you spring seams like that and, and you've got 6 or 8 or 10 feet of, of seam open with water, you know,

spewing in those seams well, you're not going to stop the boat sinking.

Q84 Right. Now I'll, I'll, just on your sketch there I'll draw your attention to the side of the boat here - - -

A Mmm.

Q84 - - - where the bulwark continues above the deck.

A Yeah.

Q85 Right, which you're just drawing in there now for us.

A Yeah.

Q86 Did you see at any time these planks just from the deck down ever open up?

A No.

Q87 Did you go down below at that time or did you see, did you go below and see any of that area?

A I never went below.

Q88 You never went below?

A After I went on to the helm I stayed on the helm til the boat sank.

Q89 All right.

A I never left the helm.

Q90 Did you see this bulwark above deck damaged in any way?

A Yes.

Q91 Right. What sort of damage did you see?

A Well, if you, there's the, there's the rigging, the bulwark sort of runs, runs this way and about 6 feet - - -

Q92 This is to indicate looking down?

A Looking straight down on the boat and if you looked down the boat that bulwark was bent like that.

Q93 O.K.

A About 6 feet aft of the shrouds.

Q94 Were the planking all broken or was it just the bulwark?

A No, it was the - - -

Q95 So what we can say is the, what, just on tape could you indicate what a bulwark is?

A A bulwark is a, you got a, the, the deck of a boat and then the outside planks around the outside of the boat go up and in Winston Churchill's case they were about 18 inches, I think, or thereabouts, high above the deck and they're freestanding and they, and they run around the, the whole length of the boat. So you've got a sort of high freeboard sitting above the deck by about sort of 18 inches or thereabouts and in our case we had a stainless steel track running around the top of the bulwark that took all our braces, head sail sheets, in fact all our running gear ran off the top of the bulwarks and there was a piece of stainless steel there about, oh, I don't know, 4 inches by about three-eighths of an inch thick and that was bent at about 90 degrees about 6 feet aft of the shrouds.

Q96 So that piece of timber on, on top of the combing and all, and - - -

A The whole lot of that was stove in so - - -

Q97 So - - -

A - - - in other words this piece here - - -

Q98 Yeah.

A - - - was, well, sort of that beam there was - - -

Q99 Stoved in?

A - - - stove in sort of, the whole piece.

Q100 Right. The, the planking, the, the combing, the bulwark - - -

A Yeah.

Q100 - - - and everything was all stoved in?

A Mmm.

Q101 So would that indicate to you that there would have been any damage under the deck?

A Well, could have been but I, I - - -

Q102 Or it's - - -

A I don't know.

Q102 - - - but you can't say that, O.K. No. That's fine. All right. Well, now, then you got into the life raft. What happened then?

A The life rafts were joined together and we only had one E.P.I.R.B. but fortunately the, the life rafts separated anyway on the first wave. If they hadn't have separated I would have cut them adrift anyway because it would have been suicide to have the two rafts together. So we, we cut a, well, we didn't cut ourselves adrift, we, the two rafts actually separated. We sort of sat in the raft for a while and sort of, you know, cogitated where we were. We looked at what gear we had, there was a package laying in the raft, we had

a bit of look at what, what, what safety gear we had. We set the E.P.I.R.B. off and then we could, we could still see the other raft for a while and then we started our, our drift east.

Q103 Yeah. Then what happened?

A About 9 o'clock or just after it got dark we, or just on dusk, right at, right, almost dusk, almost dark, we did your first flip so we ended up upside down which is a pretty horrific experience, the worst part of it, I think, from my memory. And we had a big debate about we were going to do because we had a, we sort of almost felt like we were better upside down than we were right way up. But we knew we couldn't stay that way because we'd run out of air so we undid the tent, the little tent flap and Richard went out and righted the raft. Then we stayed upright for, for quite some time after that but in fear and trepidation at every bloody great wave that came through because you, you know, you're wondering whether you'd going to be tipped again. And then finally I, I don't know what time it was but 1 o'clock in the morning, or whatever time it was, we flipped a second time.

Q104 And then what happened?

A We righted the boat, the raft again and that was the last time that we flipped over.

Q105 Right. O.K.

A And then we stayed there til dawn and then during the day I could tell that the breeze had gone around to the

south-west a bit and the sting had started to come out of it by sort of about lunch time and, you know, we could sort of tell that we'd been through the worst of the gale and then we saw a plane at, oh, I don't know what time it was, 3 o'clock in the afternoon that flew over us. And then we, we fired a flare off, they didn't see the flare. He then circled around and came back and we fired a second flare and finally he turned his landing lights on and he'd seen us and then I don't know how long after that it was, probably half an hour or something like that, when the helicopter arrived, sweetest sound on earth. And then we were, we left, we took it in turns, we, we left the raft and swam out to the guy on, on the wire and they'd hoist us into the helicopter.

Q106 O.K. And then you were taken back to where?

A Mallacoota.

Q107 O.K. And what, you were hospitalised there or did - -
-

A No, we - - -

Q107 - - - they transported you somewhere?

A Yeah. They took us to the, or they had an ambulance there that took us, oh, it wasn't far, across the paddock to the, to the community centre.

Q108 Right.

A And we stayed in the community centre, we never went to hospital.

Q109 O.K. What, what major things went wrong in the life raft, do you feel?

A Well, tipping over wasn't, wasn't too exciting, I can tell you that. I reckon the, the big thing I thought in the life rafts were that there was nowhere to put anything, everything was floating around the life raft loose, the sea anchor broke at about the third wave so that was absolutely hopeless. Anyone that used that nylon cord ought to have his whatsit's cut off, it is terrible stuff. And there was, my biggest criticism of the raft, there was nowhere to put anything, there was no pockets with lanyards. I mean to me everything in that raft should have had a pocket and had a lanyard tied to it, and, and the lanyard would have been made of sort of some decent rope not that nylon stuff, that was my big - - -

Q110 Well, what would you use that for?

A The rope?

Q111 Mmm.

A Oh, the, so you've got a pocket to hold the thing in and if it does come out of the pocket it doesn't float out. We lost half our gear because the, the stuff floated out of the raft - - -

Q112 Right.

A - - - when we tipped over.

Q113 So you're saying all the - - -

A

Q113 - - - all the items in the raft should be secured properly?

A Yeah.

Q114 O.K.

A Yes. Instead of, like, it was in one bag that wasn't secured, chucked in the bottom of the life raft. I tried to tie, I remember at one stage there a, a red flare was floating around. I used some of this nylon line to try and, you know, make the flares, the flares fast, God, I got them tied up and turned around about 5 minutes later, they're floating past me again.

Q115 Mmm.

A Absolutely hopeless and we lost one vital thing, it was a little adaptor to pump up the life raft when the, when the bottom rung of the life raft started to go down. Well, we didn't have that, it went over the side.

Q116 What caused the bottom portion of the life raft to go, to uninflate?

A Don't know.

Q117 Did at any time your E.P.I.R.B. have it, did the aerial break on the E.P.I.R.B?

A Yeah. We broke the aerial, yeah. But that happened very early in the piece when we rolled over the first time.

Q118 Right. And that was a telescopic aerial?

A Yeah, a telescopic aerial.

Q119 Right.

A Totally useless.

Q120 Yeah. Did that, do you believe that that may have pierced the, the tubing in the life raft? There is, there is words to that effect, that that may have happened.

A Yeah. That could have happened, I suppose.

Q121 But you're unsure?

A Unsure.

Q122 O.K. All right then, Bruce. Is there anything else that you feel that you'd like to add that may assist us with our inquiries, any, anything that you could feel that would - - -

A Oh, I think I - - -

Q122 - - - go towards recommendations perhaps?

A Well, well, I think what they should do with life rafts is, I think that we've got to stop kidding ourselves that the Hobart race is, you know, a drift down the coast. It is, you know, you can get some terribly bad weather, I've proved that over 30 years, though never as bad as this one I might add, but I think that they ought to get a standard of life raft that at least got two, two floors in the life raft rather than a single floor. I think the life raft should have, and I think the more, the more modern ones have, where you can use velcro for the tent flaps so when you do undo it you can do it back up again. We couldn't redo our life raft hatch up because when we cut it to get out to like, right the raft we couldn't do it back up again so

we got a wave break over us, it filled up with water. So we were sort of constantly bailing. Here's another thought, they ought to have a decent bailer in the life raft and the best thing we had was a plastic bag and we took that with us, that was a sheer fluke. The, and I think the standard should be set that, that when you do a Hobart race you take a quality of raft that's going to at least have some chance of survival in those sea conditions and they should all be standard. And I mean a lot of them are going for weight, weight, weight, which is the modern trend but my attitude is if you're all carrying the same weight life raft what difference does it make 'cause you've all got the same handicap then. And I'd just like to see a better quality raft for a race like the Hobart race. Now I'm not an expert on life rafts but I think twin floors would be a starter and the gear, actually having a pocket for it, tied in. When we, it was interesting when we spoke to the helicopter pilots they told us that everything that's in that helicopter or on their personal self is tied on and it's got a pocket for itself. Now with velcro these days you could have flaps all around the life raft with the first aid bit in it, the life flares in it, you know, all the bits and pieces and have a lanyard tied to them so if they do come adrift they're, and you do turn over they're still in the life raft and you don't lose them.

Q123 O.K. Anything else?

A No.

Q124 All right. The time on my watch is now 10.52am. This interview is now concluded.

INTERVIEW CONCLUDED