

DETECTIVE SENIOR CONSTABLE GRAY

Q1 This is an electronically recorded interview between Detective Senior Constable Stuart Gray and Mr Steve Kulmar at Mosman on Monday, the 12th of April, 1999. Time on my watch is now 9.48am. O.K. As I've explained to you, Mr Kulmar, I'm making inquiries in relation to the 1998 Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race and in particular I'm speaking to a number of people who were involved either directly or indirectly with the race. And in your case I'm here to speak to you today in relation to the Sword of Orion and your involvement on that, on that boat. Firstly if I could just get you to state your full name, for the record?

A Steven Gary Kulmar.

Q2 And your address?

A Number 4 Tudor Street, Balgowlah Heights.

Q3 And your date of birth?

A Sydney, New South Wales.

Q4 Sorry - - -

A 22nd of January, 1993.

Q5 And your occupation?

A My occupation is I, I'm an owner operator of an advertising agency.

Q6 O.K. Now if I could just get some background from you in so far as your sailing experience.

A My, my sailing experience goes back a long way. I started sailing when I was about 8 years old in dinghies, matured through to skiffs, 12 foot skiffs, 18

foot skiffs, I was a world champion in the 18 foot skiffs, world champion in the 12 foot skiffs. In the late 70's I moved out of there into yachts, in fact '79 was my first Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race and that race, the last race was my 17th. Apart from a lot of sailing in and around and offshore of Sydney, I've also represented my country on a number of occasions at the Admiral's Cup in '83, '87, '91, '95 and '97 and at other events like the Kenwood Cup on six other occasions, Kenwood Cup being in Hawaii, World Championships in San Fransisco, Copenhagen, I've done an enormous amount of ocean racing, not just here in Australia, overseas and I guess in the last 5 years I've done more of my sailing outside of Australia than in Australia.

Q7 Right. Now how was it that you became involved with the Sword of Orion?

A I was invited on board the Sword of Orion by the owner, Rob Cothey and Ron Jacobs. Ron Jacobs is a sort of a professional boat sailing person who runs a business down in Pittwater called, P.B.S. Ron and I go back a long way with having sailed a lot with Ron both here in Australia and overseas and Ron asked me if I would consider sailing with Rob. I'd actually had a year off sailing after competing in the Admiral's Cup in 1997 I'd promised my wife I'd take one year off and it was almost a year then when Robert, when Ron approached me and Rob and I had a few beers with them and we had a

chat and I agreed that I'd do a few races with them and then I'd make up my mind whether I'd do the Hobart Race with them. And that's basically how it, how it came together, I started sailing with them in late September early October, did, did pretty much every race with them, well, not every race, on and off and through until November and then a heavy concentration leading up to the Telstra, I guess in all before the Hobart Race I'd probably sailed on the boat 12 to 15 times.

Q8 Right. And how well did you know Rob Cothey prior to -
- -

A No, not at all - - -

Q9 No.

A - - - I - - -

Q10 O.K.

A - - - in late September.

Q11 Now so far as Glen Charles was concerned, how did you meet Glen?

A Glen and myself go back a little way. In fact I, I was the person when, who invited Glen on the boat with Rob's approval. Glen sailed with myself in 1997 in the Australian Admiral's Cup team, as my tactician, so I spent a lot of time in the U.K. sailing with him in Cowles around the and we actually did the Fastnet Race together in 1997, finished second in the Fastnet Race that year. And I knew Glen was coming to Australia to coach Andy Deedsworth for the English Olympics, olympic team and I basically called him and

said, Look, would you be interested in staying on and maybe doing the Hobart Race? We can always use another good sailor, he inquired about the boat and its prospects and the boat and its prospects were quite good for this race and after negotiation, 'cause Glen's a full time professional sailor, Rob agreed to pay him to sail on the boat and he agreed to do the Hobart Race.

Q12 Right. And in what capacity?

A He came on board the boat in the capacity as a support helmsman.

Q13 Right. O.K. Now if I could take you to the 27th, 28th?

A Mmm.

Q14 You might like to go through your experience in that race on

A Well, we might start at about dawn, hey? Or - - -

Q15 O.K. No problem.

A - - - well, slightly after dawn.

Q16 Yeah.

A The conditions on a continual basis deteriorated in, in a rather odd manner in that it was quite an accelerated deterioration. We saw a change come through earlier on in the evening, the early morning about 3 o'clock which was of course the time that it was expected. We were surprisingly far south than we would normally have been and that was due to the strong nor'-easter and nor'-wester that we had running down the coast and the

assistance of maybe up to 2 and half to 3 and a half knots of current. So at around 8.00am in the morning we were already off or sort of off Disaster Bay between Eden and Gabo and I guess at that stage we were about 30 miles offshore approximately. The conditions deteriorated, they would go from like 35 to 40 knots and then they'd abate to sort of 25 for a short while and then they'd come back to sort of 45 to 50, abate to 30, come back at 55 to 60, abate back to 40. On almost a regular and continual basis over that period of sort of 8 through to 1300 hours. I had been I guess on deck for a fair amount of that time, I was actually off deck earlier in the morning, I'd been on deck I guess from I, I think roughly from about 9.00am through to the time that we retired which was at 1400 hours. I think I might have been off deck for 1 hour in that period between about 10.00am til 11.00am. There'd been, I mean as you'd well imagine in those conditions, I mean, 1, there's an incredible amount of noise, the boat's bounce around an enormous amount and, and although you have very able competent crew a lot of them still get seasick - - -

Q17 Mmm.

A - - - in fact Glen whose done a lot of sailing was quite violently ill and, and so we, we rested him.

Q18 Right.

A Along with most of the other crew. In those conditions what you tend to do is sail with a minimum amount of people on deck - - -

Q19 Mmm.

A - - - for safety.

Q20 Yeah.

A As I say the conditions got worse, we went from a small jib and a couple of reefs and the mainsail, in the end we'd pulled the mainsail off the boat and ended up just going to a storm headsail. We considered that to be the safest option because we weren't hard on a breeze, we were slightly cracked, the wind was probably at about true wind direction of about 250 to 260 and we were sailing at about 190 probably making good about 175, 178, so about 15 degrees of sideways movement on the boat, which is about normal for those type of conditions. And we were making reasonable progress and I know we were in a pretty competitive position at that time. However as I say the conditions deteriorated on a progressive basis, myself and another guy called Adam Brown did most of the helming that morning. We had, generally, at least one other person on deck with us, sometimes two other, but no more than three total on deck. All people were in harnesses at all times, generally attaching the harness below deck and then joining us on deck from, from there. Normal proven safety sailing, we had moved I would suggest to you from racing the boat to, to survival probably at around

sort of 10.00am in the morning. 'Cause the conditions by that stage were, were, were serious and the seas were still building on a, seas were still building on a continual basis. They really probably only settled down into that sort of west, west sou'-west sea direction at around sort of 9.30, 10.00 because of this, because the nor'-easter and the set running down the coast was very wobbly earlier on and that really on settled down in about continual direction and then started building and building and building.

Q21 Mmm.

A I spoke to Rob on a number of occasions, the owner, about considering our position. Only because, like, I'd seen, I'd been across Bass Strait 16 other times and but I'd never seen it quite like this and I'd done the 1993 Hobart, the, on a yacht called 1997, and we actually won that race that year and that was always recognised as the killer Hobart in '93 and I'd actually sailed in 1984 in a little boat called Indian Pacific, which was the other really tough Hobart Race and we'd won that one as well. I was a little uncomfortable with the conditions, even more so than normal and, you know, I, I spoke to Rob earlier on and we said we would consider it. We, we continued to sail on, as it appeared to be, you know, still prudent and safe to do so. We waited, we waited til about the sched 1300 sched and we were just hope, we were hopeful that maybe one of the yachts in front of us might have given us an

indication of the conditions. The only thing we knew obviously, we must have still been on the top end of the low pressure system, due to the fact that the breeze was still in the west and not in the east, so we knew we were on the top end of the low pressure system, we knew the conditions were still deteriorating, therefore we assumed that we were still heading towards the eye of the low pressure, well that seemed sort of logical, and what we didn't know of course was how far to the south the low pressure system actually was, it was to us and if, we were sort of hopeful that maybe at the 1300 sched maybe some of the yachts in front of us might have given us an indication of wind strength.

CONSTABLE KERR

Q22 Sorry to interrupt, I've got

A They're early. Would you let them know I'll be about 15 minutes.

Q23 O.K.

A Thank you. Sorry.

DETECTIVE SENIOR CONSTABLE GRAY

Q24 You're right.

A They've never, never, never been early for a meeting in their lives. The conditions were deteriorating, as I said, we waited for the 1300 sched. I came below deck then and Glen who'd been, who'd been below deck for most of the morning came up on deck - - -

Q25 Mmm.

A - - - he was in a harness, we, we had a chat when he came up on deck, he was, he was very concerned about the conditions and expressed that to me, you know, he'd had some friends who were lost at sea in the 1979 Fastnet Race and reminded me of that and said that he was very concerned and I said, Well, look, we're all concerned but we're not sure about whether we should be going south still or whether we should head north. And I explained to him that what we'd, I'd go below deck and listen into the sched with Rob and, and then we'd make a decision from there. I went below deck, I listened into the sched, went out, our sched came up, Rob and myself had discussed it before the sched and we agreed that we would give not just our position but the wind strength, both wind strength and sea direction and visibility, of which Rob requested Lou, he said to Lou that, you know, can we please, you know, we've given you our position, can we give you a weather forecast. And we did that intentionally - - -

Q26 Mmm.

A - - - hoping that one of the other yachts may have actually come back at us and said, Well, look, yeah, well, look we're 20 miles in front of you but there's less, less wind or more wind or whatever. We did it, you know, I believe our primary motivation was to do it, certainly my primary motivation as I understood it was to understand what might have been going on in front of us. We, we gave that weather forecast, we

didn't really hear any new information, I know one or two other yachts piped in and said, Yes, they had similar conditions and they were around us or behind us, but no one in front reported in. You may have realised that the yacht that was a line honours boat was actually about, Sayonara was sort of around us on the sched, so we, we maybe hoped that she might have, but it, we didn't hear anything. So we then said to ourselves, well, you know, Rob agreed at that time and it was a prudent and right decision from the owner's point of view, he said that, you know, he'd not had the experience of sailing in these conditions and he deferred the decision making to the helmsman.

Q27 Mmm.

A And the helmsman being myself, Glen and Brownie. I went on deck and I spoke to Glen and Glen said that that he thought the prudent decision was to retire and to make for Eden, because it was essentially, a reciprocal course. It wasn't as if we were running back to Eden - - -

Q28 Mmm.

A - - - the sea way was virtually a westerly sea way and we were going either south or north.

Q29 Mmm.

A And we would have had to point at about sort of 340 to make good north anyway - - -

Q30 Mmm.

A - - - from a slippage point of view. So I spoke to Glen, Glen was keen to retire, I, I had a chat with Brownie and Brownie said that he didn't feel that he was in a position to make that decision, that he deferred it to myself and I thought that the prudent thing to do was to retire. So we, we then retired, we, we notified Lou that we were retiring, this would have been I guess at about 13.40, 13.40, 13.45. He, he, he told us that he thought that was the right decision, obviously giving us some confidence, we then jibbed the boat and bore away, jibbed the boat, set the boat up for about a course of about 340, and headed back towards Eden. At that stage we were probably, I don't know, I would have to guess and say probably somewhere between 70 to 80 miles from Eden and about sort of 40 miles to sea, but, you know - - -

Q31 Mmm.

A - - - in that, in that position and we still would have been about 120 miles, 125 miles to Eddystone. And of course once you get on the Tasmanian Coast, you've got to go a lot further south before you can, there's any, any place where you can actually seek protection. So we thought the decision was the right decision at the time, as the conditions had only deteriorated on a progressive basis and we assumed the low pressure system was still to the south of us. After we jibbed the boat and we got the boom, we tied the boom, which had now become on the windward side, lifted it over,

put it over on the leeward side, tied it up. Glen, who as I say had been below deck most of the morning offered to helm the boat for the next, next couple of hours because I'd been the helmsman before Glen, Glen came, Glen was the next helmsman and then Brownie would have been the next one after that and we basically then set about sailing cautiously - - -

Q32 Mmm.

A - - - and I, and I know we sailed cautiously back to the coast. We put everybody else below deck, we left Glen at the, at the helm, in a harness and we left forward of Glen we had Darren Staulcer on deck with him as a second person and then we had Brownie, Adam Brown, in the hatchway. And basically the theory behind the person in the hatch is to keep an eye on the two people on deck.

Q33 Mmm.

A And then we set about sailing back to the shore. I, as I say I'd been on deck pretty well all morning on and off, I got up into one of the bunks, the weather forward bunk, upper weather forward bunk and the other crew, there was another three in the other bunks, Rob was still in the nav area to leeward and I think we had apart from Brownie we had one other guy bailing out the boat, just getting the water out of the boat 'cause you, they'd get a bit of water in them.

Q34 Mmm.

A And then we started sailing back. I can't tell you exactly how long it was before we struck disaster because I'd been asleep - - -

Q35 Asleep - - -

A - - - and I was woken by the, by the turn - - -

Q36 Yeah.

A - - - as the boat spun, I, I sort of heard this enormous noise first and then I was awoken as the boat went, this extraordinary 360 - - -

Q37 Mmm.

A - - - and it rolled over and then came up. I, I didn't think the roll took that long, I would have suggested to you it couldn't have taken much more than 3, 4 seconds in total - - -

Q38 Yeah.

A - - - I mean, some may say 10, it felt very quick to me.

Q39 Mmm.

A I mean but it was a timed roll - - -

Q40 Mmm.

A - - - you know, you felt the whole boat roll all the way through. When the boat came up I guess you sort of sit there for half a second or a second, a bit shocked, God knows what had, what had happened, you're just unsure because I've never rolled in a yacht before, it's a new experience. We, I then heard a shout from on deck, Man overboard. I, I jumped out of my bunk, there was somebody below me, I can't remember who that

was, but that person jumped out before me, so when I jumped out, I was sort of caught between them and the bunk.

Q41 Mmm.

A And into about, I guess knee deep water, there was a fair amount of water inside the boat. The boat was sort of yawning, you could tell the boat was in serious trouble, I jumped, I followed that person to the hatchway, the hatch was all, all the steps leading up on deck were all smashed and over to one side of the boat and the hatchway had been completely ripped off the boat. I managed to get up on deck, climb up on deck, it might have taken me 10 seconds to get up on deck, probably 15 seconds, I don't know, it wasn't, it wasn't unbelievably quick because the, as I say the steps in the, in the boat weren't there, to get up on deck. At that time I could see, it must have been Simon who was underneath me in the bunk, because I think Simon went up before me, Brownie was already on deck, and I think Nigel might have been on deck as well. And Darren was on deck and I could see out of the boat, almost dead astern somewhere between, somewhere around 30 metres I guess, yeah, about from here to that red sign - - -

Q42 Right.

A - - - over there, about 30 metres was, was Glen in, in the water. And he was, he was a fair way from the boat considering I guess how the boat had capsized, I

wouldn't have imagined he would have been that quick, that far, which led me to believe and Darren confirmed it later that he fell out of the boat as the boat capsized, not during the capsize.

Q43 Right.

A Anyway, so we, we had no motor, no batteries, the boat was completely disabled, the mast was, was wrapped around the, the side of the boat. Darren had a line around him and Darren wanted to go and swim after Glen. Simon I think was the one who stopped him and said, you can't do that, you can't do that, I mean, I guess by the time he would have got to him, the two of them might have been, if he'd got to him at all, would have been more than 100 yards from the boat.

Q44 Mmm.

A And he had his full wet weather gear on and lines and whatever and we thought that we were endangering his life as well. I think we attempted to start the motor, I think that's what went on below deck, I can't, I can't confirm that 'cause I wasn't below deck. I, I was pretty much in a state of shock to be perfectly honest - - -

Q45 Mmm.

A - - - I spoke to a psychologist about it later. She said, it's not uncommon - - -

Q46 Mmm.

A - - - in those circumstances, you know, both to see a, a very dear and good friend floating over the horizon - - -

Q47 Mmm.

A - - - I really felt like I was almost like completely disassociated from everything that was going on - - -

Q48 Mmm.

A - - - around the boat, and she said, that's not unusual - - -

Q49 Mmm.

A - - - for the human mind to act that way. Simon stayed aft, keeping an eye out from Glen, to see where he was at all times until we lost him over the horizon. I can't be specific about how long that would have been. It might have been, it might have been 8 minutes, it could have been 15 minutes, it could have been 20 minutes, I doubt if it had been much, much more time than that. While that was happening we then identified that the boat was severely leaking. I went below deck and found out where the leak was, it was coming in through the wheel housing, the wheel housing had driven itself down, and that must have been the boom that came over the boat, must have driven the wheel housing down and opened up all of the housing area. So every wave that came over the boat just sort of went straight in this area. We found a way of blocking that, at that time I identified that a lot of the starboard side of the boat, the hull and the deck had separated and a

number of the ring frames on the starboard side were severely cracked, or crushed and the boat was, was yawning pretty severely. We, we bailed, myself and two or three other guys bailed continually for about the next hour. While I think Darren and Nigel and Adam cut the rig away from the boat. We then identified that we needed to get some sails out of the boat, as you're probably aware Rob was pretty severely damaged - - -

Q50 Mmm.

A - - - we carted him aft and put him into a bunk, strapped him up and gave him some drugs, I think, I didn't do that. He'd actually attempted to radio out but he was, he was probably in as bad if not worse a way than I was, and he was just picking up the receiver and screaming and shouting into it. One of the other crew took that from him and, and took control of the whole radio thing in a much more sensible way. After we'd cut the rig away myself and Nigel were still on deck and at that time we identified another yacht, now I can't tell you if this is, it would have been more than an hour after, I would have thought it would have been more than an hour after the capsize because when the boat capsized it was reasonably clear skies, when we actually saw this yacht it was very cloudy and raining.

Q51 Mmm.

A We, we first of all identified the yacht coming straight towards us. At that stage he would have been

half a kilometre off, through the rain. We drifted down sea, he, he sort of sailed through there, he probably got within, I guess probably the closest he would have got to us was, was probably 300 metres. We got some flares on deck, we let our flares off, we could, we could see them, there was two people on deck, both in yellow jackets. I can't honestly say whether they saw us or not, I couldn't say that, I guess it's easy for us to say, why didn't they see us, but that wouldn't have been what they'd been looking at, or looking for, and they sailed past us and out of sight within a period of about 15 minutes. Soon after that, I don't know maybe, maybe within half an hour of that, we had a, a small plane overhead, I beg your pardon, after we'd capsized and before we'd started bailing the boat, I actually got the E.P.I.R.B. out and got the E.P.I.R.B. and turned the E.P.I.R.B. on and put it over on the weather side of the boat and tied it to the storm jib. So we probably had the E.P.I.R.B. in the water, well within the 10 minutes of the capsize. Once we'd sort of identified the damage for the boat - - -

Q52

Mmm.

A

- - - identified that we couldn't start the motor or the batteries and we had no way of getting contact back out 'cause obviously the U.H.F. was gone, we're down to a V.H.F. which is much shorter range, and we put the E.P.I.R.B. in the water. So I guess probably from the time we put the E.P.I.R.B. in the water to the time the

plane was over top, was certainly less than 2 hours - -

-

Q53 Mmm.

A - - - I would have thought. Now we had a small plane overheard, at that time we spoke to them on the V.H.F. We informed them that we were O.K. We informed them that we had one or two injured crewmen but we gave them the details of, of Glen, because we had actually hit the, the man overboard button.

Q54 Yeah.

A And I actually found the chart on the boat, I went hunting through the boat and found the chart, because everything was strewn everywhere and put the chart up on the chart table and mark the position the man overboard position and then every hour or so I'd put our position on the chart.

Q55 Mmm.

A So I always knew where we were

Q56 Have you still got that chart?

A No, we didn't take the chart off the boat.

Q57 Right.

A A bit hard to get anything off the boat. In fact when they pulled me off the boat, I thought I'd left my wallet there and I thought I'd left my sunglasses there and somebody took my sunglasses and somebody got my wallet, but they thought it was their wallet and their sunglasses, so - - -

Q58 O.K.

A But yeah, we did, we kept a chart and the chart was, I, I maintained 'cause the G.P.S. worked the whole time, which was interesting 'cause I think that's on a separate power source in those situations anyway, but yeah, I, I kept us marked. It was sort of something for me to do too, because obviously once we'd tidied the boat up and it had been after dark and it started to get dark it just, you know, was an easy thing to do every hour I just made a point of every hour of putting our position on this chart - - -

Q59 Mmm.

A - - - to get an idea of where we were drifting - - -

Q60 Mmm.

A - - - we were drifting virtually straight down their line at about sort of 3 and a half knots, quite, quite quick. You're probably aware we had a chopper come over, over us after dark, inquire, we basically told 'em about our two injured crewmen. Again, we asked them how the search was going for Glen, they said, they'd had no luck, well, I believe that's what we said.

Q61 Yeah.

A We then settled down for the night, they told us they'd be back in the morning or someone would come back in the morning for us. At 2.00am in the morning another chopper appeared and took three of us off, off the boat at that time. Darren went first, then Nigel went second and I went third and then after that they'd

identified that really, what they doing was very dangerous for that time of the day 2.00am in the morning under one search light and they then came back after dawn to pick the other, the others off the boat.

Q62 Right. O.K. Just a few things. So far as the, the wind speed when you were trying to contact or when you contacted the radio relay ship, what was that - - -

A At that, at that - - -

Q62 - - - speed, do you recall?

A - - - stage, I believe we actually recorded in and we said to them something like, That the wind direction was basically 250, and the wind strength was between 65 and 70 knots, which it was at the time, the sea conditions were treacherous with seas between sort of 8 to 12 metres and the visibility was low - - -

Q63 Right.

A - - - because it was raining as well.

Q64 Yeah. Are you aware if that information was passed on to other yachts generally?

A I understand that a number of other yachts heard us give that weather forecast.

Q65 Right.

A And made their decision, the yachts behind us, 20 and 30 miles behind us then made their decision to go to Eden, based on the information, the weather information that we imparted.

Q66 All right. Now it's a rule, is it not, that you're not supposed to pass on weather?

A Yeah, well, it is a rule.

Q67 Right.

A However because they didn't, they didn't seek outside information or support - - -

Q68 Yeah.

A - - - we, we gave it.

Q69 Right.

A I'm not sure exactly, I mean I'm reasonably familiar with the rule book.

Q70 And what do you think about that, I mean that's - - -

A I actually think it's prudent, prudent and wise to be perfectly - - -

Q71 Right.

A - - - honest I, I think that that information should be given on a more regular basis.

Q72 Yeah. But so far as that rule's concerned it's probably a waste of time that rule?

A Well, yeah, I don't think hey, yeah, well, that's true, but I think as a maybe there might be something that'll come out of this is that in those circumstances and conditions the race committee should select certain boats on the - - -

Q73 Mmm.

A - - - on the course to broadcast their weather information.

Q74 Mmm.

A Because I do know that the weather information can be, they play around with it an enormous amount - - -

Q75 Mmm.

A - - - because they're obviously far wiser people than we are in, in understanding what the circumstance and conditions were but I always thought it was rather odd that at Wilsons Prom that morning, I understand, I didn't hear the weather forecast, but I understand that they had a weather forecast there of 82 knots - - -

Q76 Yeah.

A - - - 82 knots - - -

Q77 9.00am.

A - - - 9.00am in the morning and the weather bureau chose to grade it down by 30 knots claiming friction. Well, my understanding is that it actually goes the other way. When the wind hits the land it slows down, it doesn't accelerate - - -

Q78 Mmm.

A - - - so if it was 82 knots on the, up on the lighthouse, I'm bloody sure that 400 metres out there in front of it, it was at least 20 knots more.

Q79 Mmm.

A But that's my knowledge goes, my knowledge is that it's generally more not less - - -

Q80 Mmm.

A - - - and they, they rated it down to 60. Well, that's what I was told.

Q81 Mmm.

A So I thought that was rather interesting. I kind of think in those circumstances, I think the facts and the

truth are more important than what the experts feel that it should be.

Q82 Yes. Mmm. I agree. Now so far as communications are concerned, were you happy with communications on the sea, with the radio relay ship and that sort of thing?

A Well, we had - - -

Q83

A - - - no problems talking with the radio relay ship up until the time we lost our mast.

Q84 Yeah.

A We, we sched in on time, we spoke to Lou, he was polite, he agreed to let us give our weather forecast. We then waited til the end of the sched, at that time we elected to retire and we, and we notified Lou and we talked to him and he talked to us and he understood that we were heading back to Eden. So we had no problems from that, we had no problems there whatsoever - - -

Q85 Mmm.

A - - - and we knew where we were and we'd notified the sailing committee of what we were doing, we were heading back to Eden, I mean once we'd lost our mast it's a little hard, isn't it?

Q86 Mmm.

A with U.H.F. but the V.H.F. was working and as soon as we, we talked to the plane that came overhead, we talked to the helicopter at 8.00pm that night and we

talked to the helicopter at 2.00am in the morning, before they took us off the boat.

Q87 Mmm.

A So the V.H.F. the support V.H.F. at short distance was fine.

Q88 Mmm. So far as the use of one radio by the radio relay ship for all, you know, conversations, or scheds or weather reports to land, to air, to sea, have you got any views on that?

A Oh, well, only so, in so much that what we were discussing in so much that clearly, you know, one channel and one V.H.F. unit to take all that information in and out is really asking a hell of a lot
- - -

Q89 Yeah.

A - - - particularly if someone gets into distress. And they need to talk to the radio relay vessel.

Q90 Yeah. Did you at that stage hear any unnecessary chatter on the radio?

A Not me personally, because I wasn't the navigator -
- -

Q91 Mmm.

A - - - I just do remember that after the capsized we had a lot of trouble getting through but then in hindsight, you know, if you think about it, we've lost our, our U.H.F - - -

Q92 Yeah.

A - - - and really what was, what was our saviour there was the E.P.I.R.B - - -

Q93 Mmm.

A - - - putting the E.P.I.R.B. in the water set it off, so they knew where we were - - -

Q94 Mmm.

A - - - and then, you know, I was grateful to see an aeroplane over the top of us and a couple of hours later - - -

Q95 Mmm.

A - - - so they'd obviously picked up our E.P.I.R.B. and were sent out, which is what they said they'd and so they had our position then, I felt confident then that we would, we'd be recovered.

Q96 Have you ever, in your sailing career deployed a, a life raft?

A No, never.

Q97 Do you know how to do it?

A Yes, I do.

Q98 Did you - - -

A Only because I've been well trained by the R.O.R.C. in the U.K. not, not in Australia.

Q99 O.K. Did you attend the safety demonstration at the C.Y.C. prior to the race?

A No, I did not.

Q100 Were you aware of a safety demonstration?

A No, I was not.

Q101 You weren't told about one?

A No, I was not aware of it.

Q102 O.K. You've obviously discharged flares before?

A Yes, I have.

Q103 O.K. Do you recall whether the sail, what sail was up, when she capsized

A Yes, I do, yes, I do. We only had one sail up on the boat and that was the storm jib.

Q104 Right. And - - -

A And the mainsail was down - - -

Q105 Yeah.

A - - - the mainsail was lashed, the mainsail was folded and lashed to the boom - - -

Q106 Yeah.

A - - - and the boom was lashed to the little stanchion.

Q107 Right.

A And in actual fact when the boat fell down the sea and capsized the leeward stanchion and the rope were pulled out - - -

Q108 Mmm.

A - - - and they broke and the boom rolled across the boat.

Q109 Right.

A 'Cause the boom was on the other side of the boat when the boat came up.

Q110 Now I believe Glen Charles' lanyard was still attached - - -

A Yeah, attached - - -

Q110 - - - in the

A - - - to where his, their fastening point was.

Q111 Yeah.

A On the stanchion, on the port side helmsman stanchion.

Q112 Yeah. O.K. Anything else you'd like to say, have you got any views or ideas or anything that you'd like to tell me about?

A Nothing that, I'm sure, I mean, nothing that I'm sure you wouldn't have already heard or, or had discussed. I guess the whole thing to be perfectly honest just gets down to accurate timely information on the race course.

Q113 Mmm.

A You know, and that's the primary reason we gave our weather forecast, in the hope or endeavour that some of the boats in front of us might have come back and said, Look, it's not 80 knots up here, it's only 50 and we knew where they were 'cause we plotted all the other boats, so anyone in front of us had come up with their weather, with a weather forecast we would have been able to ascertain whether it was going to be windy or lighter, in front - - -

Q114 Mmm.

A - - - or behind.

Q115 Mmm. What, from your experience how would you rate Bass Strait?

A As a sailing - - -

Q116 Yes.

A - - - piece of water?

Q117 Yeah. As a sea - - -

A By far and away the most single most treacherous piece of sailing water in the world.

Q118 You say that?

A In the world.

Q119 Yeah.

A People talk about the Irish Sea, look, I've done seven Fastnet Races and I've had one windy Fastnet. One windy Fastnet, two absolutely joyful sails and the rest sort of in between that.

Q120 Mmm.

A You get the shit kicked out of you every, every Hobart Race, I mean it has a reputation around the world as the toughest ocean race.

Q121 Yeah.

A And it's because you're, look, you cop a southerly somewhere on that course.

Q122 Yeah.

A But normally you see a southerly of around 30 to 40 knots. '93 was a windy year it got up to 65 knots but it, you know, it was nowhere near the conditions, the sea conditions were nowhere near as treacherous as the one this time around. That intense low pressure just created absolute havoc.

Q123 Would you have raced if you'd known that the weather or the wind speeds were going to be 70 to 80 knots?

A No. No, if we'd known, if we'd known as we were entering Bass Strait that the weather conditions would

deteriorate further from the 50 knots we had, I would have encouraged Rob to have sailed either to Eden or Disaster Bay or in behind Gabo, drop the anchor and wait.

Q124 Mmm. O.K. The time is now 10.23am, this interview is concluded.

INTERVIEW CONCLUDED