

DETECTIVE SENIOR CONSTABLE GRAY

Q1 This is an electronically recorded interview between Detective Senior Constable Stuart Gray and Mr John Bennetto at Hobart CIB office on Sunday, the 14th of March, 1999. The time on my watch is 12.35pm. 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, John, Senior Constable Upston and myself are making inquiries in relation to the 1998 Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race in which a number of people died as a result of a number of issues, a number of incidents. We've been tasked by the New South Wales Coroner to investigate the race and part of our duties include speaking to a number of people who were either indirectly or directly involved with the yacht race.

A I understand.

Q2 And in your case you are directly involved in the race as you sailed in the 1998 Hobart. So, firstly, if I could just get you to place your particulars on the record. Your name, your date of birth and your address.

A John Bennetto, I was born 25th of August, '26. My address is 71 Penenjou Road, Otago, 7017, Tasmania.

Q3 O.K. Now, you agree that prior to this interview we've been having a few discussions and we've been going through a few documents?

A Yes.

Q4 O.K. We've discussed a number of issues. Now, first

if you could just give me some background in relation to your sailing experience, what you've achieved in sailing?

A I've been sailing since I was about 10 years old, principally on the Derwent, served a term in the Royal Australian Navy and, well, I learnt navigation and more extensive seamanship and since getting out of the navy I've been interested in off-shore yachts and first sailed in the Sydney to Hobart in 1947. And since that time I've sailed in 38 Sydney Hobart races, some have been calm, some have been rough. I've had the privilege and great benefit of, of sailing as forward hand with some very great old time skippers with whom I feel I have probably learnt ..... their craft. In that capacity we learnt to more rely on what we had rather than the mechanical aids of today.

Q5 Mm. O.K. Now, in relation to your yachting experience, in fact you've had a win in that race, have you, at some -?

A I've been first over, I've been from, from first to ninth over the line to finish and first to ninth coincidentally, on handicap at various times.

Q6 Right.

A I've been over a hundredth on other occasions too.

Q7 O.K. Now, the boat that you sailed last year was the Mirrabooka?

A Mirrabooka, yes.

Q8 O.K. Could you give me some specifications in relation

to that boat?

A Yes. The Mirrabooka is a ..... design, international designer, it's a, a cruiser, racer type yacht of 47 feet with 14 foot 6 beam, displacement of about twelve and a half thousand tonnes and very good cruising capacity. It carries 600 litres of water and 300 litres of fuel. And is well serviced with powerful winches.

Q9 Right. O.K. Now, how many crew did you have last year including yourself?

A Ten, all up.

Q10 O.K. And what was the experience of that crew collectively?

A The experience level I would say was high, was high in relation to sea-going experience including one master mariner. And a total of 145 Sydney Hobart yacht races between them, if that may be used as a measure.

Q11 Yeah. O.K. Very good. Now, in what category did you race?

A We raced at the IMS, the principal racing category.

Q12 Right.

A In division E, I think we were.

Q13 O.K. Now, I'll show you a document here, this is your entry form, Mirrabooka, entry form to last year's race.

A Yes.

Q14 And under this declaration of crew experience you have, you might be able to read that name, Lester Nills?

A Lester Nibbs.

Q15 Lester Nibbs.

A He unfortunately didn't sail with us, he became ill and had to retire.

Q16 Right. O.K. This is John -?

A John Solomon. He's a master mariner.

Q17 Yeah. And -?

A Perry Foster.

Q18 O.K. Now, on the day the race started Mr Solomon and Mr Foster were present?

A Yes.

Q19 O.K. That's fine. And how much earlier did Mr Nibbs contact you about not sailing?

A He came to Hobart to sail up with us - - -

Q20 Right.

A - - - and, the fortnight before the race and he had a cracked rib which deteriorated and we, we reluctantly had to ship him ashore.

Q21 Right. O.K. Did anybody take his place?

A Yes.

Q22 Do you recall who that was?

A Yes, it was a Bill Watson, a fellow with 17 or 18 Sydney Hobarts and good sea-going experience.

Q23 Was that change up, upgraded with the CYCA from the original - - -

A Yes.

Q24 It was? O.K. Now, I wonder if I could take you to the 27/12, which would be Sunday - - -

A Yes.

Q24 - - - 1998, of December. And if you could sort of detail to us the events or the incidents of, of that to the finish, what you think's relevant to, you know, this inquiry?

A Well, we were aware from the weather briefing on the Christmas Eve that bad weather was expected in a few days time. And that we took keen interest in the weather forecast which was available at the CYC at about 09.00 hours on the 26th of December. And so we had that firmly in our mind that there was going to be a, a southerly to south westerly change well down the coast. With that in mind I monitored the conditions carefully from the minute we started to go southward on the 26th and paid particular attention to my barometer. Late on the evening of the 26th I noticed the barometer moving down fairly quickly so I decided I didn't wanna be too close to Gabo and we also got the weather forecast from the race officials, I think it was 20.00 on the 26th, not quite sure of the time, but we were aware it was going to blow. I, I felt, the next morning on the 27th the glass was continuing to fall quickly, that the blow might be harder than forecast. So I gave some warning to the crew, repeating my warnings at the pre-start, our own pre-start briefing. And decided to set a course that would take us about 40 miles east of Gabo, which was purely a guesstimate on my behalf as what I thought may be the best place to be. As it started to blow we reduced sail in the

-  
traditional manner, going from full, full headsail and full mainsail to the number 3 headsail and, and reef mainsail. And unfortunately I can't remember the timing when we went down to trysail, which was set above the mainsail with the mainsail lashed, taken ..... and lashed. And I, we did it, we were too busy, well, active to record accurately in our log when we did make those changes, I don't, just don't know. From a position point of view, I plotted our position on the chart which is my custom but with greater and greater reliance on the GPS unit, and it didn't occur to us at that stage on the 27th to listen, to try and listen to any of the emergency frequencies on the radio. It's not been our practice because one of our problems has always been to keep enough power to our radio to transmit when we're obliged to transmit or if we wanted to transmit. And with the mother ship et cetera, we don't feel it's our brief to keep any listening watches, as such. We certainly would have had we known someone was in a little bit of trouble around us. We went, during the afternoon of the 27th we went into what I call safety mode, as distinct from racing mode, we'd already done that to some extent because of the course I elected to take, some, some 12 or 14 hours earlier. Sounds a bit selfish when I'm telling it to you that we were, I was, I was looking at keeping our boat at sea and, and getting every mother's son home.

Q25

O.K. Now, what can you tell me about the sea, sea

conditions during the race?

A Well, the seas became steep and very confused. It is my feeling that we had early on the, relatively early on the 27th, say from at least midday, some sort of a south, south easterly swell and we were expecting westerly weather. And we were also approaching ..... Gabo with the, the southerly set coming down the New South Wales coast approaching the, the currents that come through Bass Strait. I knew it would be very lumpy and confused, which it was. I was very pleased that we had the experienced helmsmen on board that we had and we maintained a fairly easy and relatively steady course doing what I call keeping on looking at it which is looking at the breeze at about 70 to 80 degrees and normally the seas that go with it, to keep the boat comfortable.

Q26 Yeah.

A And not a lot of speed on to ensure that a very steep sea, like, breaking on board, the helmsman can throw it to windward and conversely ..... to skid down the other side of the wave. But the, the seas were very confused. At one time, on one occasion only we, we had a breaker that caught us too much and we skidded sideways down the side of a wave, threw all the drawers open down below. And the, well, the mast was nearly parallel to the water, which, the helmsman managed to get her right again. And it shook up the people below so I then requested he take a more cautious course.

-  
You do wonder when you're down below and you slip, fall off a wave you think how much longer the boat can take it. And, so we went, we steered more south rather than slightly south west, to get, in the interest of greater comfort for the vessel and obviously those on board.

Q27       Insofar as wave heights. Can you, be able to give us some sort of estimate?

A           Well, I, I didn't steer the boat myself at any time during - - -

Q28       Right.

A           - - - and when I looked out to look at them I thought the waves were 7 to 8 metres and some bigger ones. I don't have any better measure. There were some were certainly steeper than others and some were breaking on the top somewhat ominously. And that's one of the reasons I wanted to make sure we kept ..... we could at least shoot into or pull away from the breakers, the breaking tops of the seas.

Q29       O.K. Now, in relation to, to wind conditions. Are you able to sort of give us some idea as to what - - -

A           We, we recorded, the maximum we recorded was 72 knots of wind, and I believe that was in a west, north westerly direction.

Q30       Right. Now, so far as the, the incident with the storm and that, would you consider that your, you and your crew were comfortable through that or, or very uncomfortable?

A           We were, we were comfortable, we had one crew member



when reefing the mainsail or setting the trysail did crack a rib when he was thrown up ..... boom ..... , and he was thrown against the main boom

- - -

Q31 Right.

A - - - and he happened to be the radio operator among other things, and, and our master mariner, but he, I had to put him on reduced duties 24 hours later - - -

Q32 M'mm.

A - - - because he was in a lot of pain. Other than that some of them were silly enough to say they enjoyed themselves.

Q33 Now, can you remember in your, in your vast experience similar conditions in previous years?

A I think we had, we had somewhat similar conditions in the 1993 race, when our course on that occasion took us right through the eye of the storm, it wasn't till after we'd gone through the eye that I realised how, that we had gone through the eye, and the seas on that occasion were very steep and confused. But, generally speaking it would appear that the seas were far worse over a greater time and, and more difficult in the 1998 race.

Q34 Right.

A I think, in other words, in Mirrabooka's case, I think we had, we experienced the worst of the '93 but the easier side or not the worst side of '98.

Q35 Right. O.K. Now, were you satisfied with the initial

-  
weather report that was supplied to you prior to the race?

A Yes.

Q36 Did, did you have any, any worries about the weather becoming quite bad south?

A No.

Q37 No worries at all?

A Well, you, you always have a worry that - - -

Q38 But not to a point of saying, look, I don't think we should sail?

A I don't think we should sail?

Q39 Yeah.

A No.

Q40 Not to that point? .

A No.

Q41 No.

A Never think that we shouldn't continue at any time.

Q42 Are you aware of anybody that may have, offhand?

A I'm not aware - - -

Q43 Right.

A - - - I, I'm conceited enough to be aware that there are a few that I should have told.

Q44 O.K. Well, what's your view on that, like, I mean what's your - - -

A My, my view on that is that there a lot of modern racing yachts, more particularly the more modern lighter yachts, that, that need a, a crew of much higher rating experience than the, than the cruiser

type yachts. They're fast, they're, they're everything and they're terrific yachts, but, they need more than the average cruising sailor to sail it.

Q45        Yeah.

A            And they need very experienced helmsmen at an hour to an hour and a half each to keep them at sea in bad, very bad sea-going conditions.

Q46        Mm.

A            Is it a case that the modern racers, particularly so the, not the real large boats but some of the smaller boats, should they be in those sort of conditions?

A            Yes, they're all, the, basically, yes. Some of those smaller boats are probably the most sea-worthy boats there, but, they've still got to have the blokes to sail it in those conditions and, that have got the capability of A, setting the appropriate sail for conditions - - -

Q47        Yeah.

A            - - - be it a, be it a 40 square foot spitfire jib and, and then sailing a boat for as many hours to, to have every opportunity of a wave, a major wave not breaking on board.

Q48        So is it the situation then that you could have a, a boat which, which, upon looking at it you'd say, that'll never get to Hobart, but we'll put 150 Hobart blokes on it, who'd done 150 Hobarts, that they would get it there?

A            Yes, provided within those 150 Hobart there were enough

brains remaining and people who have done 150 Hobarts haven't got many - - -

Q49 Mm.

A - - - and ability on the shore to, and ability in severe conditions to set the spitfire jib or the, the smaller the storm staysail, as it may be. Which is appropriate for that yacht.

Q50 O.K.

A What I've been really saying there is if you sit there on a light weight racing platform with a squarish stern and no weight on it, you're a sitting duck to be rolled over, in those steep seas.

Q51 Mm. And why's that?

A Because the seas are so steep - - -

Q52 Right.

A - - - the boat is so light and ..... and it's got a square stern - - -

Q53 Yeah.

A - - - the sea can pick up ..... and ..... it over.

Q54 O.K.

A That's why the Swedes used to build, Norwegians built those double enders in days gone by.

Q55 O.K. So far as communications and weather reporting during the race, and particularly during the, the storm, were you satisfied with the way in which it all worked, the communications?

A Well, it worked according to plan and according to the,

to the pre-race briefing and the radio instructions, but because of the problems and the pressure that the radio people were put under I felt that the, there should be an alternative bad weather or follow up or a different frequency follow up system - - -

Q56 Yeah.

A - - - that would be able to support the, the existing radio set up in bad conditions.

Q57 So basically the existing radio set up can maintain the day to day running of the race and have an emergency base - - -

A I think they did a wonderful job.

Q58 Yeah, most certainly.

A But they were, they were, they were pressured to the extent that there were people getting into trouble all roughly at the same time and it was, there was only the one bloke there trying to cope with it.

Q59 When did you realise the, the significance of what had happened?

A I think it was at the 03.00 sked on the 28th.

Q60 Yeah.

A I think, I'm sorry, my memory is not accurate on this. That we heard that, that one life raft from Winston Churchill had been recovered and they were still looking for the other. That made me think and put me immediately into a more conservative mode. I was already in a conservative, I had already had the boat in conservative non-racing mode, but I started to think

twice at that time, but we weren't aware of the, of any specifics of any other vessel. Although we did think there would be a few of them in trouble.

Q61 And that was all realised when you got to Hobart?

A Yes, the full significance of the volume of trouble. We, we realised in subsequent radio schedules that there were other people in trouble and of course the format is that the officer in charge of the relay ship reports he's retired, or whatever, and we got the volume of retirements as we were going down our radio sheets. You know that note that they give us - - -

Q62 Yes.

A - - - the sheets, to, to report . . . . ., we normally note other vessels' positions, particularly those that we're interested in from a racing point of view.

Q63 Now, during your trip down, did you, or any of the crew, that you're aware of, see any flares - - -

A No.

Q63 - - - being fired?

A No.

Q64 Are you aware of any, any Maydays which were called?

A No.

Q65 O.K.

A We didn't hear or, or see anything of a safety nature. We knew from our position reporting that we were one of the more easterly yachts.

Q66 Yeah.

A And we didn't appear to be in the, in the group that

were, had reported retired, of the major group, so we thought well, we had no reason or premonition to look out for anyone in trouble.

Q67 O.K.

A And I might add that we could have passed someone who was in trouble by as little as 200 metres without knowing it. 'Cause we would be looking to windward, the helmsman. I'd be very crook if he wasn't watching every single wave, his back up hand would be looking to windward and these, the fellow down below wouldn't be looking, his stand by man down below wouldn't be looking out. And we could have, we could have quite easily sailed to windward of someone in trouble and not known it.

Q68 Now, in relation to radios on board your, your boat. Which radios, or what sort of radios did you have?

A We had a, a VHF and a, radio, and an HF radio.

Q69 Right.

A Our HF radio was automatic tuning radio, ..... that's used in many of the yachts, ours is 11 years old. We have had a bit of trouble with the tuning box in relation to transmission. We can, we're receiving well but for some reason during the race they, they were receiving, transmitting well on our techs, we didn't appear to be transmitting well during, during the race.

Q70 Right.

A 'Cause the mother ship had trouble hearing us on one or

two occasions, to that end we were pre-charging the batteries just prior to the transmission times, to make sure we were giving it maximum power.

Q71 O.K. Now, in relation to the batteries on board. What type of batteries are they?

A We've got two banks of batteries. One, one bank which is the engine starting bank, is the hard hit type batteries such as used in tractors for major power to turn the engine over. And the other is the longer life of the, used for the nav lights and the, and the navigational equipment such as the gps and, and your speedo gadgetry. We very strictly used the engine batteries for engine starting only because that's the key to our generating obviously. And, but we did at one, one occasion when we weren't transmitting well used the engine batteries for a very short period to transmit.

Q72 All right. Are those batteries sealed, are they a sealed unit or are they - - -

A No, they're, they're in waterproof - - -

Q73 Right.

A - - - fibreglass containers.

Q74 Right.

A But they're not sealed on top.

Q75 Right. O.K. Now, you mentioned earlier that you made a decision to stay clear of Gabo. What was that based on and why?

A Well, maybe I don't like Gabo, no, given the, given the



conditions we had - - -

Q76 Yeah.

A - - - and that we were rolling along mainly in north east to north west winds on the, on the 26th and the AM of the 27th, given the forecast and given the fact that the, the bottom was falling out of my barometer, Gabo was going to be a real mix up of seas and winds depending. And I thought it logical to keep out of what was going to be a real mix up.

Q77 That's fine.

A And, and so I set course to do just that.

Q78 Right. O.K. Now, have any of your crew or the crew that were in your boat last year, had experience in discharging of firing flares, are you aware of?

A Well, we've got the master mariner, John Solomon - - -

Q79 Yes.

A - - - had cracked ribs accidentally.

Q80 Yeah.

A Whatever his, his experience I would assume so.

Q81 Yeah.

A I have been to some yacht club demonstrations of firing flares and one of my crew members, Foster, has been, but I don't, I have no knowledge of any of the others.

Q82 O.K. Now, what about the deployment of life rafts?

A We've never - - -

Q83 Anybody - - -

A We've never deployed a life raft ....., and I did mention to the crew that, an expression later in the

dock, "I bet you couldn't get in the thing in Constitution Dock".

Q84 Right.

A Without getting in the water.

Q85 Yeah. Were you aware that there was a safety demonstration at the cruising yacht club prior to the race?

A No.

Q86 You weren't aware of that?

A I don't recall being aware of it.

Q87 Right.

A But I know there have been demonstrations from time to time but I, I wasn't aware of that particular one.

Q88 I can tell you there was one organised, that's all. Now, did you recently complete a, a blue coloured survey from the Cruising Yacht Club of Australia?

A Yes.

Q89 And you forwarded that back to them?

A Yes.

Q90 And no doubt you put a number of comments on that survey in relation to the, the various aspects of the -?

A Yeah, I'd forgotten what I commented on.

Q91 You're right. Did you keep a copy of that yourself or -?

A Yes, I did.

Q92 Right, O.K, that's fine. Now, you mentioned, prior to the interview we were looking at a document here, a

-  
plotting ..... form document here in relation to a  
sked, a sked 4 positions at 3.00am on the 28th of  
December, 1998. Was that correct?

A Yes.

Q93 Now, in fact this land file analysis which has been  
given to you indicates that your boat, which is  
indicated by a red triangle at location - - -

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Q94 At a, at a latitude and longitude position on the, on  
the map.

A Yeah.

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Q95 O.K.

SENIOR CONSTABLE UPSTON

Q96 So it's on a particular latitude and longitude. Is  
that right?

A Yes. The, the, it, it was 1 degree at longitude, it  
was plotted 1 degree at longitude incorrectly from  
where we were.

DETECTIVE SENIOR CONSTABLE GRAY

Q97 O.K.

A We were aware that the radio mother ship had, when  
repeating our position, repeated 1 degree wrong - - -

Q98 Right.

A - - - we went back to them and said, no, you're wrong,  
correction, and we were drowned out by someone else.

Q99 Right.

A We had another try at repeating our correct position

and then we were, we were drowned out again and, or the mother called a boat that was in trouble or, so we left it there.

Q100        Yeah.  So - - -

A            We, we knew that they had recorded at 03.00 hours, 1 degree of longitude further west than we really were.

Q101        Right.

SENIOR CONSTABLE UPSTON

Q102        And in fact that would equate to approximately 43 or 44 nautical miles.  Would that be right?

A            Take a rough ....., yeah, 45 nautical knots.

Q103        Mm.

DETECTIVE SENIOR CONSTABLE GRAY

Q104        It's certainly significant, isn't it, so far as - - -

A            Well, it had been if anyone was looking for us.

Q105        Exactly right, had, had something happened to your, to your boat it would have been significant in the search.

A            I appreciate we didn't do the right thing, we didn't, we didn't persevere as we might have later on after the sked, after the sked there were numerous calls going on for half an hour, we were running out of battery power, and we said, look, look, we said to ourself, let him look after the poor buggers who are in trouble.

Q106        Mm.

SENIOR CONSTABLE UPSTON

Q107        So in fact a, a reasoning behind your not correcting it, you weren't in any danger?

A            No.

Q108 And there was a lot of radio talk about other vessels in distress?

A Yeah.

Q109 And that was the reasoning why you didn't correct the positioning from the radio relay vessel?

A Yes. We didn't persevere doing it, plus the fact we knew we were running out of transmitting power.

Q110 Yeah. In lieu of that, do you feel that you will upgrade your radio and navigation batteries?

A Um -

Q111 If you feel that you only had about half an hour or so of reserve power?

A Yeah, I, I've already taken steps to have the radio looked at ..... the transmissions. I feel that our power was all right, but some, something not working well in the transmitting area of the, not working as efficiently as it should.

Q112 But obviously at the time you were concerned about the length of time that you would have for constant radio listening or transmitting power?

A Yeah. And David, I was also concerned that there were lots of boats coming and reporting that Jimmy ..... had a sprained ankle or something that I thought wasn't relevant to the significance of the moment. And we didn't want to be one of those contributors, contributing 'cause you're actually, when you're reporting that you're holding up everyone else who wants to report.

Q113 That, that brings me to a, a point in the sailing instructions headed, "Radio instructions" under point, 4.3, where it says, correction, 41.3 where it says, "A yacht shall maintain a listening watch on 4125 kilohertz or VHF channel 16 during the silence periods". What have you got to say about that?

A I feel, I've, A, we didn't fully comply with it. And I feel it's observed more in the breach than in the observance.

Q114 Would it be fair to say that that is a, a general thing that happened across the board?

A I think, I think so. Other than in the bigger yachts that have got reserve power and men.

Q115 Yeah, yeah.

A You've got a yacht with seven people on board, they're struggling to keep fit enough to take their turn on the helm.

Q116 Yeah. So you feel that provisions really should be made, that maintaining watch on the, during the silence period is, you're saying is not necessary?

A No, I'm saying it should be more practical.

Q117 All right. But then that would instigate stronger battery period life?

A Yeah.

Q118 And also - - -

A No, to come on 48 times a day.

Q119 Yeah, is in impractical, you say?

A Yeah.

Q120        Yeah.

A            So I'm saying if they were more practical, they're more likely to be observed and take less battery power.

Q121        Mm. O.K.

DETECTIVE SENIOR CONSTABLE GRAY

Q122        Now - - -

A            But - - -

Q123        Sorry.

A            Manpower's another thing in a small boat. You see, I can't give you the numbers without the research of ..... but there would be well over half the fleet would have eight hands or less on board.

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Q124        Mm.

A            Well, eight hands get pretty busy when all of this is going on.

Q125        Mm.

A            What you should do is .....

DETECTIVE SENIOR CONSTABLE GRAY

Q126        But isn't it a, a, a radio instruction when a person obtains a radio operator's licence that it is a requirement at the time for them to listen out on those, that radio silence period, and maybe that's why that the race instructions included that - - -

A            Yeah, it could well be - - -

Q126        - - - as a rule?

A            I'm sorry, I'm not aware of the precise rules, I know it's generally accepted that, to listen during the

silence periods is, is the right thing to do. But like in so many aspects of our life when the rules are totally impractical they're not observed.

Q127 Would it be a fair comment to say that it's generally yachting practice to turn the radios off for a number of reasons, not only just to conserve power, but to rest those that may be down below and they're not listening - - -

A Yeah.

Q127 - - - to procedures going on around them?

A I, it, it's, we find with a crew of 10, it's a positive obligation which we're conscious of, of charging, giving the charge to batteries, boosting batteries and to have a man who understands the radio well listening three times a day. I'm not saying that we shouldn't, it wouldn't be better to listen six, but I'm saying it's ridiculous to line up for 48.

Q128 Yeah. Do you have anything further you'd like to say or any ideas or any views that you have for the future?

A Yes, I, I would like the, the, we as yachtsmen to endorse our committees activities, to improve training in racing and off-shore activities. To institute more courses for people to qualify in going off-shore. I would like to see them trained in, in situations where things go wrong and certainly in handling in life raft procedure. But, I think that by improved seamanship and helmsmanship capabilities and improved safety harness life jacket types, we would, hopefully you'd



-  
have to use the life rafts a lot less than they were on this occasion. I do think this was an absolutely extraordinary occasion. But coupled with what we've, we've got and coupled with the statistics that I've shown you about the, the number of races and experienced people got through where inexperienced people didn't, and, and ensuring that you've got enough helmsmen on every yacht to cater for that yacht in stormy conditions of 48 hours or more.

Q129 Would you know why they've reduced the number of ocean-going races in clubs, is it a cost factor or is it -?

A No, it's like everything else, where the population's getting sissier, and, and they can get a lot of fun out of racing around Sydney Harbour and Hobart and the, the time factor, everyone seems busier. And it's harder to get a crew of experienced people other than for races like the Sydney to Hobart where people like to be in it. If I said I was racing around at ..... next weekend, I, I couldn't get a crew ..... A crew that I would be happy to take.

Q130 Will you be racing next year, or this year?

A Well, I had, I'd like to make a point, I had negotiated with a boat broker in Sydney in December, last to put our boat on the market and I've got a cruising yacht and I'm always racing, I want to, I'm silly enough to be thinking of a race ..... yacht, if I can make those negotiations, yes, I'll be there next year.

Q131 O.K.

SENIOR CONSTABLE UPSTON

Q132 Just, just one point, you mentioned about safety harnesses.

A Yeah.

Q133 You were present at a safety, where safety precautions were made and a safety check list was taken on your vessel were you, prior to the commencement of the race?

A There was one taken on board, I wasn't there at the time.

Q134 O.K. And safety lines were looked at?

A Yes.

Q135 And you're quite satisfied about the condition in all those safety lines, or did you experience troubles with your safety lines and harnesses?

A No. No, we, A, we complied totally with the, with the safety requirements, but, B, the harness themselves, difficult contraptions to get into - - -

Q136 Mm.

A - - - over and above your oilskin shirt.

Q137 M'mm.

A When I was an all hands on deck call there comes a ..... debate we've got to spend and extra two minutes struggling into my harness, or I race up without it and those, those conditions arise. I think the design of the harnesses can be improved dramatically. I understand that the American yacht Sayonara had some magnificent equipment on board and some now has been coupled with a, an oilskin jacket or

a waterproof jacket which has also got a buoyancy factor in it.

Q138 Right. Do you know the name of that do you?

A I don't know the name of it.

Q139 No. But we can find out anyway.

A Yeah. But it's a great improvement, it's a real struggle. If you've got, cold night, get your gear on, get your oilskins on, ..... frig around getting into a harness.

Q140 Harness as well. O.K.

DETECTIVE SENIOR CONSTABLE GRAY

Q141 Anything else you'd like to say?

A No, thanks. I think I've said more than enough.

Q142 O.K. The time by my watch now is 1.16. This interview is now concluded.

INTERVIEW CONCLUDED