beautiful sight in the world, the lights of *Atara* as it came straight down to a position where I was able to yell to the crew. They spotted me but missed getting hold of me the first time they tried to pick me up. Then one of the guys got a rope to me. Someone fell overboard in their enthusiasm to pick me up and when they realized they couldn't lift me over the side, they had to work me hand-over-hand down the side of *Atara* to its stern. At one stage the rope was around my neck and I politely asked if they were trying to choke me. *Atara* had been dismasted, so the crew could not winch me aboard using a halyard. Fortunately she has a sloping stern with a cockpit open to the sea, so they were able to drag me up over the back of the boat and into the cockpit like a beached whale. One of the guys deliberately jumped over the stern to help me up out of the water. I had no energy left and could do very little to assist them. I was stuffed.

The guys on *Atara* were absolutely terrific. They half carried, half dragged me down below where the navigator, Lindsay May, began orchestrating proceedings. He had all the right books out and the radio was on so he could talk to doctors. They ripped all my gear off, rubbed me very hard, and threw me in a bunk. When they put the thermometer in my mouth and checked my temperature it was obvious to everyone I had a while to go before hypothermia might set in. Apparently, the big concern is that once you are out of the water and know that you are okay you tend to collapse through the onset of shock. All I wanted to do was go to sleep but they wouldn't let me do that — because the book said I shouldn't. Keeping me awake was crucial to my recovery.

They piled space blankets on top of me, put hot towels on my kidneys, and wrapped plastic bags around that area and my chest to keep the warmth in. Then came the big surprise. One of the guys stripped down into his jocks and leapt into the bunk with me for the big cuddle. I told him I didn't like the idea, that I didn't prefer men. The guys laughed and told me that was what "the book" said had to happen — to facilitate the transfer of body heat. It wasn't long before I realized just how warm the guy was so I stopped complaining immediately. (May has since told me that the *Atara* crew now jokes that when he called for a volunteer to get into the bunk with me they all found jobs they had to do on deck.)

I don't think I was making a lot of sense talking to the *Atara* guys when I was first onboard. I think I was a bit of a gibbering idiot. The one thing that did surprise me was how long I had been in the water. They told me it was five hours and I found that very hard to believe. I thought it was more like two or three hours. I did manage to speak to Shaw aboard *Ampol Sarel* by radio from *Atara* to thank him, but I don't know that I made a lot of sense in the conversation.

The crew kept me awake by talking to me all the time and feeding me hot tea. The first cup of tea came straight back up but I soon settled down. They kept me awake until my temperature reached an acceptable level and then they let me sleep. When I woke up four or five hours later they were cooking a meal and I tucked into that. I knew I was better then.

I guess it was in the last four hours of the 12-hour voyage to the port of Eden that I started feeling like my old self. By the time we docked I was fighting fit. I went straight to a motel where I had a good shower and shave and put on clean clothes. Next stop was the Fisherman's Club for a few beers, then I had a bloody big meal. After that I was feeling fantastic.

There are three reasons for me being alive today — luck and the very professional seamanship of the crews of *Ampol Sarel* and John Storey's *Atara*. Inevitably I have spent much time thinking about my swim during which some worrying thoughts have surfaced about the direction offshore racing is taking today.

SPECIAL REPORT: Sydney-Hobart

How Safe is the Fleet?

Only 38 of 105 starters finished the 1993 Sydney-Hobart Race. While an official inquiry is underway, here's a look at what happened and some expert opinions why. By Rob [illegible]

Four days after the Kodak Sydney-Hobart Race start on December 26, 1993, the history books were being rewritten while club officials, insurance assessors, yacht designers, and builders started to analyze the lessons that the 49th race had delivered. For what is probably the first time since the Fastnet Race disaster of 1979 there is an opportunity to carefully assess the status of every aspect of a major ocean race, from the people, yachts, and equipment through to safety gear, communications, search and rescue operations, and the safety network covering the fleet.

The annual race has had an impressive safety record in its 49-year history. Despite the race course being hammered by some of the worst weather imaginable over the years, only two lives had been lost — both due to accidents — and no yacht had ever been sunk. The Cruising YC of Australia's (CYCA) highly efficient communications network requiring position reports twice a day had always resulted in there being relatively accurate information on the whereabouts of all yachts at all times.

This year was different though. Just 38 of 105 starters (34 percent) finished the race, making its retirement rate second to the 1984 Hobart when 31 percent finished. Two boats sank, more than 30 lost their rigs, and at least a dozen withdrew because the integrity of their hulls was in question, either from delamination or bulkhead failure. What contrasted this race to the '79 Fastnet, however, was that the conditions weren't necessarily severe. The storm was categorized as a whole gale meaning the wind averaged between 40 and 45 knots, with the exception [illegible] what [illegible] com[illegible] the [illegible] quadrant [illegible] flowing Eastern [illegible] duced [illegible] on top [illegible] square waves [illegible]

The [illegible] entrants suffered [illegible] that today's IMS racers [illegible] to win short, windward-leeward [illegible] around inshore buoys [illegible] boat that can easily [illegible] weather offshore events. IMS designs [illegible] generally lighter displacement [illegible] shape, and more stable than their [illegible] predecessors. At speed they are [illegible] efficient sailing craft, but in heavy [illegible]

[illegible]

News Ltd. Australia photo

John Quinn (second from left, in companionway) finally returned to shore aboard his rescuers' yacht *Atara*. Although shaken from his five-hour swim, Quinn checked into a hotel, took a shower, and then downed a few pints at the local pub.

ing them are not changed — yet the yachts still meet race entry requirements because they were built to ABS. The Tasmanian 36-footer *Clwyd*, which capsized and sank when its keel fell off after reportedly hitting a semi-submerged object, is said to have had a sizable lead shoe added to the bottom of its keel, but no internal structural changes to accommodate the added weight and righting force. It is now inevitable that a condition of race entry will be that any modification made to a yacht must be approved by the ABS or another recognized international body.

The staggering number of supposedly modern yachts forced out with their composite hulls delaminating must also ring alarm bells. Maybe the test requirements for composite panels to be used in a yacht's hull are not in touch with the real loads exerted on the hulls on a rough race track.

"I believe that IMS yachts are far from perfect in extreme weather, but only a rule change can alter that," said Australian naval architect Iain Murray, a veteran America's Cup designer. "In the meantime, all crews racing across open waters should have a better understanding of the type of yacht they are aboard. IMS yachts are snappy little beasts out on the ocean. They are very light and have a high righting moment, so they throw themselves around very easily. Crews [illegible]

[illegible] Simmer [illegible] navigator [illegible] rector of [illegible] says it is [illegible] re-think [illegible] equipment carried on offshore ya[illegible]

"The man-overboard gear ca[illegible] launched quickly enough when [illegible] ed," Simmer said. "Half the time [illegible] rough the guys tie it onto the yacht [illegible] doesn't get washed over the side [illegible] they have to untie it before it can [illegible] That's dangerous as well as illegal. [illegible] Remember that the *MEM's* man-over[illegible] board pole was lost early in the storm.

"The other problem," continued Simmer, "is that when it's rough all the gear tends to get tangled in a mess in the cockpit. You couldn't use it even if you wanted to."

One encouraging sign was that the [illegible] communications and safety [illegible] CYCA has developed over [illegible] test. Before the start [illegible] insisted that all owners [illegible] provide evidence that their [illegible] to the maximum of [illegible] undoubtedly helped [illegible] their worst and yachts were [illegible]

It could be said that the [illegible] Andrew Strachan's [illegible] (smallest elapsed-time win [illegible]) and Nigel Holman's [illegible] *Cuckoo's Nest* (overall race [illegible]) demolish many of these opinions. But when one looks at the overall results [illegible] number of new, good yachts [illegible] finish, the consensus [illegible]

The final analysis on what forced so many of the competing yachts out [illegible] race will come from an extensive [illegible] initiated by the CYCA, which will [illegible] accounted in *Sailing World* [illegible]

Rob Mundle is a free[illegible] New South Wales, Austr[illegible]