

DETECTIVE SENIOR CONSTABLE GRAY

Q1 This is an electronically recorded interview between Detective Senior Constable Stuart Gray and Mr Anthony Walter Eginton at the Cruising Yacht Club of Australia, Rushcutters Bay, Sydney, on Thursday, the 11th of February, 1999. Also present seated to my right is Senior Constable David Upston from the New South Wales Water Police. The time by my watch now is 3.25pm. As I've already explained to you, Tony, Senior Constable Upston and myself are making inquiries in relation to the 1998 Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race and we've been tasked to speak to various members on boats, crews and others directly or indirectly involved with the race, and that's the reason why we're here today to speak to you, and in particular your involvement on Team Jaguar. Firstly, if I could just get you to, for the record, please state your full name?

A Anthony Walter Eginton.

Q2 And your date of birth?

A 12th of March, 1950.

Q3 And your address?

A 50 Newbeach Road, Darling Point.

Q4 And your occupation?

A Sales director, company director.

Q5 Now, could you give us a background in relation to your sailing experience?

A I guess I started sailing when I was about 14, so, it's a long while ago now. I sailed on, in New Guinea when

I was growing up on dragons, hobbies. I sailed in the US for a while, sailed here in Australia. I had my own boat, a 33-footer which I sailed extensively up and down the coast, short-handed and with crew, you know, but not necessarily racing. I got back into racing about six years ago. I joined Team Jaguar as mastman and I've stayed in that position, because mastman is a co-ordination point really, basically between the back end and the front end of the boat. Usually it's got young guys up the front 'cause us old dogers aren't good up there. And you've got back office, you have to have a co-ordination point. You have to have someone reasonably mature there. And I've stayed on, I've been on Team Jaguar now I guess four or five years, I'm not sure. And I organise the sponsorship for Jaguar through the boat because I drive a Jaguar and it seemed like a good idea at the time, so.

Q6 Yeah.

A We've sailed mostly off-shore races. We've been quite successful in the campaigns on Team Jaguar. And it's a very experienced crew. I mean the, the bulk of the crew is very experienced.

Q7 Right. And on this occasion, well, last year, can you say that it was a very experienced crew?

A Yeah, the elements, the top-end elements of the crew were very experienced, yeah.

Q8 And did you have any, any people on board that were doing a Hobart for the first time?

A Yeah. I believe we did have several but they did have, you know, fairly extensive off-shore crewing experience. There wasn't anybody, beside Lucy McCabe, she sort of won second prize I think. Apart from that and the cameraman, Joseph Thompson, yeah, the rest of the crew had all done extensive work with the boat prior to it. It wasn't as if we had any blow-ins that sort of turned up,

Q9 Yeah, O.K. If I can take you to probably the morning of the 27th, which would be the Sunday, of December, 1998. You might like to take us through that in relation to the dismasting?

A Yeah. I was, I was down below. I'd come off watch, and we'd lost a mast the previous year, a carbon fibre mast that, you know, had gone at deck level, and I heard a similar noise. I heard a shroud go, it may have been a spreader, but it went, I heard the bang, I heard the crash and I sort of knew what was happening. I came up on deck. At that point, the mast was down, leaning back towards the transom with the spreader down through the companionway. I ducked round that. I went back up to where the shrouds were. The shrouds, you know, I mean, it was a matter of really looking at getting rid of the damn thing. One of the guys was actually trying to get the boom off. He subsequently put it, you know, sort of lucky he didn't, but it was, the wind pressure was building and I think we were quite close to the centre of the storm. And generally

in a sailing boat, you sail into a storm, but when you have one actually build around you, it's quite eerie. So the pressure was building all the time. We made the decision to get rid of it. Masts on big boats don't, small boats it'd fall over the side and they're quite co-operative, but on big boats they almost take a life of their own. They get very dangerous. They, you know, they're swinging round, they're looking for people to knock over. We hack-sawed the shrouds on the starboard side first, went over to the portside, worked those off, the year before the last shroud to go you know, there was a lot of tension in it. This time there wasn't because the mast had finally got off the transom and gone down under the boat, and the sail was actually flying under the boat, so it was propping the mast up. We cut off the final shroud and it dropped, with very little drama to the boat. We cleaned up, in fact we extensively cleaned up, because you don't want to have things lying around, put a bucket over the top of the mast base, and then we motored immediately back to Eden. I think there was a radio call to say that we were withdrawing and going back. I guess it was a couple of hours after that, I'm not sure. I came up on deck, the forward hand was on deck, and that's Craig, can't think of his other name, he's one of sailmakers, but he's quite experienced, and Tim who's one of the most experienced helmsmen in the club, was steering.

I was centre cockpit, Craig was just ahead of me, in fact he had some halyards, he was throwing down below, which were, were sort of still cleaning up I guess and we caught a bad wave, and it came from a different quarter to the general direction of, you know, the wave patterns, and we went vertical. I think we had about 15 foot of wave under us, we had a 65 foot boat bear itself down almost to the companionway, which is about 50 foot in length. The wave then broke as it popped up, and it popped up like a kid's toy, it broke over, it pushed us into the wave on the other side. And, I've had a lot of experience in heavy weather. I had my arms around the, the primary winch drum and I really didn't think there was a problem. I was hooked on to the leeward side which turned out to be quite reasonable, after, after all it had been on the top side I would have been hurt. I just got hit. The next thing I know, I was in the water, under the safety lines, which were slack, so, you know what I mean, the force of that just dragged me straight off, there was no way I could do anything else. I went in the water. I climbed to the top of my, my tether, then popped out as the boat was back upright at that point, and then tried to get back on, and I noticed Craig was climbing up. I think that's when one of the went in prop. So I guess it took about three minutes to get back on to the boat. I'm 110 kilos, so another 20 kilos of water, I was, I anchored

a heel up in the, the stanchion D-frame and then, you know, sort of pulled, I actually just cut it my two fingers here, doing that, on the, the safety lines were slack. I got back on the boat and there were, I guess, about five people up at that point, you know, to help. they helped me up actually. I went down below and I was, you know, both of us, Craig and I were both in a sort of reasonable state of shock. The water wasn't that cold, but as soon as you got out of the water, it was absolutely deathly freezing and I think the wind was probably around about reaching its peak or, you know, at that level of peak, about 65, 70 knots. And it was really blowing. I went down below to get warm and put a blanket around myself, and these two fingers were curled up, so they were next to useless because they'd both been dislocated. I put some, at some stage later, I can't remember when, I put some tape around it. I then got asked about an hour later, just, you know, I was warming up at that point, to steer, you know, because we were, you know, getting short on steerers, because the weather conditions were so bad, people had been sort of working on the boat. I went up and I steered for about half an hour, and I only had two fingers on my left hand, and my right hand, so, and we were still getting these, not so bad, but you'd still get a rogue wave come around and caught on you, dump you in the cockpit, so I got one of those that washed me off the wheel, and it was on the side that I

had two fingers, so it hit me this way, you know, I had to hang on to, I sort of swung this way and went across the cockpit and landed on my ring finger on my left hand, and shattered it. It was badly broken and subsequently I, I had it put it into a splint in Eden and then I came back to Sydney and I had a two-and-a-half-hour operation at St Vincents with two days in hospital, with screws and Christ-knows-what, and you know, it's still not quite right. So at that point I was, you know, there was nothing much I could do that, the surgeon that operated on my finger said, you know, "In all intents and purposes you should have actually been in a sort of prone, and not able to move with the pain that you've been going through with that", so, I don't know whether it's no brain no pain or what, but you know, I mean, it, I did persevere with it, but it was, you know, it was pretty useless, they were both curled like that, there was nothing I could do. I'm only down below, and I guess at that point in time, we, we had, there, well, there was a reasonable amount of time there and I'm not sure how long it was. I did a few things, you know, sort of helped people doing things with one hand, which in that boat, you know, are pretty hard when you're not doing much. And we organised the, the radio had been swamped, because when we did the dive down, there were the top washboard got blown out through pressure, it just blew the, the wooden holders out and we'd taken a huge amount of

water down below, which had saturated the radio, almost all the electrics, were, you know, and nobody was sure when or where it'd come back, so. I got down there, there was water, sort of, above knee level in the boat. And the, the ring frame closest to the galley which is about two-thirds of the way back from the mast, the companionway, it shattered and the deck was working, so. And basically, nobody really knew the amount of damage we'd sustained because it's quite fearsome, if you look at a boat like that that's going like a vertical drop with its own weight, we figured it must be, the bow must be 50 foot under water, straight down. I mean, you don't know the stresses the boats are going through in that sort of scenario, so. But when the radio came back, we had enough radio to speak to, to Sword of Orion and it started to, I guess, as it dried out, we were getting better range. Finally, we were able to communicate with Telstra Control. We had no position-fixing mechanism left on the boat, bar the second GPS which, you know, was a waste of space, it was indicating 10 miles west from where we thought we were, and we were getting speed ranges, as it proved later when we brought the boat back to Sydney, at one stage we were getting 500 knots on the Princes Highway, which is quite ridiculous. So, you know, I mean, the position-fixing in that scenario is very hard. At, a little later, when I was down below, the Channel 2 chopper came over our stern,

hovered and actually gave a position which was quite good. But then the boat was actually doing around about three knots, just on hull and wind, and the boat was steering, so we were sort of tracking off at three knots, and I think we had a bit of, a bit of northbound current, so we were actually moving quite well. Telstra Race Control asked if we required a tow, which we did. And we organised for them to send out the Moira Elizabeth who came out. They had a lot of trouble finding us, and this is where I get back to the flares, you know, white flares. This, it was, it was getting to the point where it was getting a little tense, I guess, because at that point we figured there were people in the water who had been off red flares, and you know, I mean, it's, when you're asked to let off a red flare in that situation, it sort of makes you a little nervous. Finally, we got the, Moira Elizabeth found New Endeavour and tried to tow here, but they do the right thing, and they came down on us and then they located us. I think it was about 4.00 in the morning, Endeavour put a, run a line across our bows so we could get it up and engage a tow and you know, it was just one of the guys, the forward hand cut his finger open trying to it wasn't the right time to do it. So, he stood off us until first light, and then we hooked up the tow line, and then he towed us, round about five or six knots, back into Eden. At that point, you know, everything

was abating, so - - -

Q10 Mm.

A - - - as we came into Eden it was like a Sunday afternoon cruise, and you know, pretty well sort of, thinking you're in the sun and wondering what the hell had happened. And that's about it. The guys from Moira Elizabeth were good guys, we got on quite well with them, I heard subsequently there was some drama, but, that's about it. You know, it's kind of hard, there's, there's time lapses and things like that, because you're not quite sure where and what's happened.

Q11 Yeah.

A No, the boat was managed and in good shape. The problem I guess we had was, and I see by have secondary, you know, back-up GPSs, but the hand-held we had was a waste of space. And in those conditions, I, I think we were in some sort of a northerly set that was running at about two knots. We were heading north at about three knots with boat speed, but then it just, on the hull taking windage. And so I'd defy anybody to know exactly where they are when you got those sort of conditions, 'cause generally it's southerly set as you know, and you expect if you're doing three knots north, you may be doing a knot north, and as it was, we were probably, you know, up around four or four and a half or five.

Q12 Now, in relation to the storm or the bad weather, did

that come on rather quickly, in your recollection?

A Yeah, it, basically we were in, I think, where the cell built. You sail into weather and you know, you actually get a sudden increase, you know, sort of bit of pressure, you, you start doing things. I think we were in it when it was generated. I've looked at the map, satellite map from the Bureau of Meteorology that they've got on the website, and you can actually see where it's curling, the two fronts collapse into each other, then it starts into this almost cyclonic whirl, and that's about where we were, you know, coming along South Gabo, almost, just inside the runway. And to be in it, you, it just builds.

Q13 Mm.

A I, I, I don't know why the rig fell, I, you know, but it's a D2 that failed, but there again if you look at the picture that they had on the TV, that Jason took, it's almost like the spreader may have failed. But something failed 15 foot off the deck.

Q14 Mm.

A And the spreader wrapped around the mast rotated, broke at the first spreader, half sheared at the deck level, and when we got rid of it, it just went the jagged stuff.

Q15 In relation to the wave heights, are you able to give us an estimation of the wave heights?

A Well, you know, I mean, people are going to laugh and I've said it to a number of people, and I've sort of

got these looks, like, you know, it's all over now, mate, you know, the story's got bigger, but the wave that we did the dive on, we were in the curling top and it was, it went like that, so we had 65 foot of boat, and there was 15 foot underneath. The closest I can put it to is if it come over the top, roller coasting sort of, and there was 15 feet, we fell over the top of the wave directly into the trough and went straight down, so, 65 and 15's 80.

Q16 Mm.

A So if you measure that at the mean, maybe 40 feet. But it was a big wave. But it didn't, it wasn't a big wave that came from the distance towards us. It leapt up.

Q17 You said there was some communication between the Sword of Orion. What was that all about?

A That was a relay.

Q18 That was a relay?

A Sword of Orion were fine, in fact it became, you know, if I'd looked at my watch I could have told you when Sword, you know, got hammered.

Q19 Yeah.

A They were relaying and suddenly they stopped and there was no call, nothing, just no more communications. And at that point, I guess, a couple of minutes before, Telstra Race Control were picking us up and we couldn't hear them, then we started to hear them faintly and then, then it was the HF drying out that I know about anyway, because there was an awful lot of

water went down below.

Q20 Were you aware of where the Sword was?

A No.

Q21 Are you aware now where it was?

A And I know all the guy, I went to a barbecue
Saturday night and I asked them.

Q22 Right.

A They don't know where they were either, I don't think.
The other thing, you know, I mean, that's the point
that I think a lot of the boats were
situation, of knowing a relative area but not knowing
exactly their position.

Q23 Mm.

A I've heard some, you know, rubbish from the media and
things, a boat sailed by, saw you know rigs
and everything. This is survival time. I mean, if a
boat did that, this is survival time, you really cannot
turn round and, because if you turn round, you're going
to run downhill, you're going to get pooped, you're
going to end up in worse shape than them, perhaps, so,
you know, I, I don't think there was any finger-
pointing exercise

Q24 Now, as an experienced crewman on board Team Jag, are
you aware of the stability index of Team Jag?

A The rate, yeah, basically I am, but I can't give you a
number, but I know it's well within the limits of the
IMS rule.

Q25 Can you give an estimate between?

A No. I know I've been out three inclines.

Q26 I just ask you that because - - -

A We done three inclinations on it, but I mean, it's well within the limits, and I know that because my 33-footer's not, the's why it doesn't go to Hobart.

Q27 All right.

A I don't think, look, to be quite honest, I think the stability ratings on these boats, the set figure they're never to exceed, or never to reach, they, you know, tip anchor on those things, it's very conservative. I don't have a problem with that at all. That's why I, you know, I mean, I don't walk round with the stability index in my mind. But we've never had a problem. And I mean, basically, we went through, from what I gather,

Q28 Yeah.

A Those sort of waves, they don't build a boat in the world to handle them. And I said to people, you know, in a 65-footer you'd be, you'd have to be unlucky to, you know, sort of, although we came close to losing the boat, but in anything from, you know, 45 down, I think those boats were very lucky to get through it. No matter what the stability index, who build them, what they were up against, because it's, some of those waves had people's sail numbers on. If one of those waves came through, then, you know, you, a lot of people got through without any of those waves hitting them. But all the ones that got hit with those, what they call a

rogue wave, all got badly damaged, so.

Q29 Mm.

A Basically came down to, you know, good seamanship in every case.

Q30 Mm.

A But some luck too, and some of the guys that got to Hobart, you know, they, they probably didn't do any better a job than anyone else who got hammered at the back end, so.

Q31 When, when the main, when the main GPS unit failed, went out as a result of - - -

A Yeah.

Q31 - - - probably the water - - -

A Yeah.

Q31 - - - and then you used the portable - - -

A Yeah.

Q31 - - - hand-held, where was that deployed? Was that basically - - -

A That was - - -

Q31 - - - down below, or -

A Yeah. It was deployed in, in the, I mean, when it was deployed it was taken out that table - - -

Q32 Yeah.

A - - - and held at the companionway

Q33 O.K.

A We proved out that the thing was duff on the way back, bringing the boat back from Eden. It was, it was giving ranges of, we were always round about 10 degrees

west to where we should be, and we had speeds varying between .3 of a knot and 580 knots, 'cause you can use them in aeroplanes. So, I mean, it was a total, the one thing it was, was consistently 10 miles west.

Q34 Yeah.

A Maybe the variation is in right, it was all left.

Q35 Yeah.

A Interestingly enough, in the middle of the storm, in the aftermath, as it was dying, before we got towed, but you know, I mean, it was, the storm was coming down to a reasonable extent. The, somebody got on the radio and said something about a hand-held GPS, and I don't know whether they worked for them or they knew about them, but there's some trick to them. I mean, I've used GPSs navigation

Q36 Yeah.

A Years.

Q37 Yeah.

A And there's no way if it's set up properly it should give a false reading.

Q38 Yeah, false reading like that. And at any time, did they take the hand-held GPS on deck to see if it would work?

A It was held over the companionway, yeah, but those things are not weather-proof, so you take them out on deck and then you lose them, so you got two chances.

Q39 Yeah, yeah.

A But as I said, when we were coming back, it was out on deck and you could still, didn't know where it was.

Q40 Yeah, O.K.

A Mm.

Q41 Anything you'd like to say? Any ideas, views, you have on the whole thing?

A I just, I think there's a few things. I, I sort of said to Dave, I wrote a list out afterwards and, you know, there were a number of points, like parachute flares should be mandatory, of the location rather than for emergencies.

Q42 Right.

A I think some people should be briefed on the fact that distress Mayday calls which we didn't do, but an EPIRB being set off is, you know, sort of endangers life.

Q43 Mm.

A It is a distress call I had about 20 points at least, I can't think of any of them now. But there, you know, I mean, there are a number of small things. I don't think there's anything radically different. To be quite honest, I think if this race was held in some other countries in the world, with the way they build boats and their crews, there would have been more loss of life.

Q44 Maybe you'd like to make those points available to us at a later date.

A Yeah, I can address and I'll send them.

Q45 O.K.

A Yeah, 'cause, you know, I mean, there, there's nothing, there's no show-stoppers.

Q46 Mm.

A But they are things that, you know, if they get incorporated.

Q47 Mm.

A In aviation we know them as accident that shouldn't happen. I, I'm a little peeved about I get to say something, you know.

Q48 You can say what you want.

A I'm a little bit peeved with the media. I just thought that - - -

Q49 Yeah.

A - - - they were like cockroaches, you know.

Q50 Yeah.

A I asked a couple of them to get off the boat because they were going to the most junior members of crew and putting words in their mouths. Tracy Grimshaw's interview with a good friend of mine, Richard Winning, and he didn't know he'd lost one of his, at least one of his crew members.

Q51 Mm.

A It was disgusting as I know for a fact she knew. I think this whole thing about suing the CYC is an absolute bloody disgrace. I mean, if you take it to the ridiculous extreme, if I get, people that rescue people, do that as a job and they enjoy it.

Q52 Mm.

A If I go down to the beach, I go down to Bondi, and I have to walk up to the lifesaver and give him \$20 and he puts a stamp on my forehead, so that when I go in the water, if I get into trouble, he'll look through his binoculars, if I've got a stamp, he'll come out and save me. The media thing about, you know, about the boats being up a \$1 million-worth of insurance, I think is just outrageous.

Q53 Mm.

A Because I think there were probably about the same people lost on Sydney beaches over that period of time as there were in the Hobart.

Q54 Right.

A And it is the best-run race. I still don't know why two Poms went out of Sydney Harbour and turned right instead of left, but they did it a long time ago, so we all do it.

Q55 Yeah.

A Things happen, and I also don't think that the met department's got any, should be criticised in any way. The basis of that storm and, you know, I mean, if the coroner wants to take a look at that weather loop, that storm came out of nowhere, and I believe it got down to 954 millibars and it's lower than Cyclone Tracy. And any weather, any met man who can go out and predict that, you know, ought to make them Prime Minister or something, 'cause it's, this stuff happens.

Q56 Mm.

A But it'll only happen once every so often, you know, and, I mean, you can have a massive pile-up on the road and kill 20 people, so it's, you know - - -

Q57 Did you attend the weather briefing?

A No. But I did get, I did get the weather briefing second-hand from the guys, you know. And I mean, 55 knots would have been what we were looking at.

Q58 Yeah.

A Those first two fronts that went through, didn't have any more than that in them, they collapsed into each other and formed this bloody, you know, intense low.

Q59 Mm.

A And that, that happens. It doesn't happen, you know, it might happen once in 100 years. I've never seen anything like it. I mean, that was a northern weather pattern. When it kicked in, it was just outrageous. And if you were in that area, it built round you, it didn't, it didn't swing across and, you could see this, you know, major front coming at you. It was actually developing where you were. I mean, that's very hard.

Q60 Yes. Can you just give me some information about the Grimshaw, Grimshaw interview?

A I don't, I know about it, but not much.

Q61 Yeah.

A In fact, I'd like this to be known, there, there was some radio broadcasts that came out and there's no fault of anyone, but you know, there are a lot of

people worried about other people.

Q62 Yeah.

A As we came into Eden, there was something came over that they had found, they, they'd taken, the raft with Richard Winning had been sighted, or two rafts had been sighted.

Q63 Yeah.

A My wife, I rang as we came into Eden, you see our phones weren't, we had a satellite phone that hadn't been connected Jesus, and we had mobile phones, but none of them were, they were a low range, and as we come into Eden, I rang my wife and I said, you know, she said, "Stephanie Winning's been on the phone. She's really upset". I said, "Well, you know, look, if it's any consolation, they found at least one of the rafts, five-man raft, and I think it's the one with the EPIRB so Richard would probably be in that". So she said, "I'll let her know". I got on the hard and then found out there'd been no raft sighted. So I tried to ring her back, she'd gone out and I thought, oh, Christ, this is not good, but that afternoon they found Richard's raft. They took him, I think, to Merimbula hospital, I'm not sure which hospital. He went to bed that night. They'd sighted the other raft.

Q64 M'mm

A He woke up and within a couple of minutes of waking up, they interviewed him, and Tracy Grimshaw knew that he'd gone to sleep without knowing that they'd found the,

that they'd located his crew members, and she, I don't know if you seen the interview, she, she's on the phone and she said, he said, "Well, you know, they sighted the other raft as I went to bed and I expect the crew to be fine". She said, "Oh, you don't know then? They've recovered the body of one of your guys", you know, and I mean then she sort of, you know, realised I think, and then sort of, she said, "Oh, maybe you don't want to continue the interview". He said, "No, I don't". I didn't see the TV interview, but I have heard fact that she knew and that her co-host, Liebmann, backed right off it. So I just thought that was just disgusting, you know. It's wrong. And Richard is a very good friend of mine, so.

Q65 O.K.

A Yeah.

Q66 Time is now 3.53pm. This interview is concluded.

INTERVIEW CONCLUDED