



Authors Gary Jobson of Annapolis, Md., and Roy Wilkins of Island Heights pose for a photo with Nelson Hartranft of Ocean Gate, to whom the book is dedicated, and Peter Kellogg, a Bay Head sailor who sponsored the book.



(STAFF PHOTOS: BOB BIELK) Author Gary Jobson of Annapolis, Md., talks about the book he recently co-wrote with Roy Wilkins of Island Heights, "A Cats: A Century of Tradition" at a reception at Ocean County College in Dover Township on Saturday.

## Book on Barnegat Bay boats sets sail

*Authors launch book on A-cats, unique to region*

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BY MARGARET F. BONAFIDE AND KIRK MOORE  
TOMS RIVER BUREAU DOVER TOWNSHIP —

The Ocean County College gymnasium was transformed into a reception room Saturday for 700 guests who came for a book signing of "A Cats: A Century of Tradition." Authors Gary Jobson of Annapolis, Md., and Roy Wilkins of Island Heights were at the reception along with a long list of who's who in the sailing community. The book, which "tells the story of a class of wooden catboats unique to Barnegat Bay," according to the Nomad Press Web site, sold for \$49.95 and was autographed by the authors and other prominent members of the A-cat community. All proceeds from book sales will benefit the OCC sailing program, Jobson said Saturday. Jobson and Wilkins credit the idea for the book to Peter Kellogg, a Barnegat Bay sailor and A-cat patron who has owned classic and newly built examples and supported other A-cat projects. Kellogg helped support the book project. Both Jobson and Wilkins are well known among sailors. Jobson, who learned to sail on the Toms River, was Ted Turner's tactician during his 1977 America's Cup win, and has had a nearly 30-year career as a sailing writer, teacher and television commentator. "This is not a history book, although it has facts in it," Wilkins said. "It's not about the lives of people, it's about the lives of these catboats." Wilkins is the intercollegiate sailing coach for Ocean County College and Monmouth University, and former sailing coach for the New Jersey Special Olympics. He's been captain of the A-cat fleet for more than a decade and is co-owner of Spy II, the five-year-old namesake of the original Spy now on

display at the Toms River Seaport Society's Hankins Museum in Lavallette. "Peter said in an off-hand way, "Why don't you do a book about A-cats?" " said Jobson, an author of 14 previous books on sailing. "I think he thought of it as a kind of high school yearbook." Kellogg was indeed thinking of a coffee-table book of images, said Wilkins, who collected and edited about 3,000 photographs and other artwork for the book. "The most difficult part was IDing the people" in the photographs, many of whom had their backs turned to the camera, Wilkins said. The project was delayed for a year as Jobson battled lymphoma with chemotherapy and stem-cell treatment, and the authors started once he had begun to recover in late 2004. As Jobson began telephone interviews with their sources, the project grew into more of an oral history of the A-cats and their sailors. A sailing journalist and ESPN sports commentator, Jobson said he learned "the touchdown is exciting, but the most interesting thing is talking to the competitors. What I learned is the A-cats connect the generations. As a group, the owners are friendly — I wouldn't exactly call them a fraternity — and they're incredibly competitive. The A-cat kind of personifies human nature." Barnegat Bay was one of the earliest places for competitive yacht racing in America and the birthplace of the A-cat, said Jobson, 55, who learned to sail on the Toms River before going on to a professional career that included America's Cup races and coaching midshipmen at the U.S. Naval Academy. The first Toms River Challenge Cup was held in 1871 — just one year after the first America's Cup — and opened to sailboat owners from Bay Head to Tuckerton, Jobson writes. "It is the oldest continuously held sailing event in America," Jobson said. "They had the trophy, a silver cup, made at Tiffany's in New York for \$175, which was an enormous sum at the time." In 1922 Judge Charles McKeehan of Philadelphia hired Charles D. Mower, a well-known boat designer, to design a new boat specifically to win the Toms River cup. Mower's design became the Mary Ann, a 28-foot hull based on the traditional East Coast catboat lines. In place of the gaff-rigged catboat sail, the first A-cat was soon equipped with a powerful Marconi rig, a tall triangular sail on a 46-foot tall mast and sweeping 28-foot boom at its foot. After Mary Ann swept the race in July 1922, other racers started having their own versions built. The seven-boat fleet became a familiar sight during the 1920s, but the Great Depression put a damper on the race scene and no more A-cats were built. "I grew up admiring the boats," Jobson recalled. "Usually my view was from an E Scow or a Penguin (small open boats used by young sailors). They looked huge." Attrition reduced the fleet to four boats by the 1970s, when Toms River sailor Nelson R. Hartranft began to rescue the survivors, repair them, and pass them on to fellow enthusiasts at modest prices, Jobson wrote. Hartranft took another critical step when he approached Lachlan "Lolly" Beaton at the David Beaton & Sons boatworks in Brick about building the first new A-cat in 55 years. Beaton was hesitant to work without original drawings from the A-cat period, but then Hartranft learned about a set of plans for the 1924 A-cat Tamwock that a boatyard worker had found in a Route 9 antique shop in Beachwood. The arrival of Wasp in 1980 electrified the Barnegat sailing scene and attracted attention from wooden boat enthusiasts all over the East Coast. More new boats were built into the early years of this decade at Beaton's and the Philadelphia Maritime Museum, and the fleet has expanded to a dozen boats. "I realized," Jobson said, "that this is the golden age."

## LOVE, LEGEND OF SAILING PUT INTO WORDS:

"A Cat" authors detail the impact, beauty of the boat

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By CAROLYNNE VANHOUTEN

Staff Writer



Roy Wilkins and Gary Jobson on Wednesday signed about 1,000 copies of "A Cats: A Century of Tradition" in anticipation of the launch of their book, christened yesterday at Ocean County College.

TOMS RIVER — Roy Wilkins told lively stories of sailing on the Barnegat Bay as he unpacked carton after carton of the new book he co-authored with Gary Jobson. "A Cats: A Century of Tradition" is the story of the class of sailboat that has sailed, raced and graced Barnegat Bay for nearly a century.

The book itself is substantial — much like the A Cat itself — beautiful in design and thorough in content. But Wilkins, the intercollegiate sailing coach at both Ocean County College, Toms River, and Monmouth University, West Long Branch, is so experienced in handling an A Cat that hoisting the cargo of books didn't pose much of a problem.

Jobson and Wilkins set aside some time on Wednesday to sign about 1,000 copies of "A Cats" in anticipation of the launch of their book, christened yesterday at Ocean County College. The event was hosted by Peter Kellogg, sailing enthusiast, inspiration for the A Cat book and No. 231 on the Forbes list of the world's richest people.

Originally, Kellogg hoped to compile a pictorial overview of the A Cat, plotting the course of its progression since it entered Barnegat Bay as a cargo ship. But as the authors became more deeply immersed in the project, they discovered the special affinity that continues to draw A Cat sailors back into its waters with equal zeal, year after year and generation after generation.

"Peter approached me about adding some commentary to a book about the A Cat and how it relates to the history of the Jersey Shore," Jobson said. "And I said something to the effect that it sounded like a worthy project — and certainly something well-worth considering.

"And, just informally, I jotted down a paragraph or two on a scrap of paper and put it on the back of my desk. And about a week later, Peter called me up to ask me how the book was coming along."

Jobson and Wilkins combined their sailing skills with their love of Barnegat Bay to form an impressive collaboration. Jobson, a former Toms River resident, has sailed the world over and was part of the crew that won the America's Cup in 1977. He has enjoyed a long stint as an ESPN sailing commentator and he is a sought-after authority on the topic of sailing. But although he has traversed just about every latitude and longitude of the Earth's surface, he still retains fond memories he has of the time he spent sailing in local waters.

Jobson describes Wilkins, of Island Heights, as someone who "lives and breathes sailing," which is no understatement when you consider that Wilkins' daughter was married onboard the Spy — with full maritime honors that included a starting gun and a fully decorated mast.

Together, the authors have formed a very yar collaboration, with Jobson the introspective Melville to Wilkins' more animated "Old Salt" persona.

Originally, the "A Cats" project was intended as more of a coffee table book or a high school yearbook. But as Wilkins took on the responsibilities of collecting photographs and recording race results, Jobson became enchanted by the stories told by local A Cat sailors, and the book itself took on greater scope and significance. Wilkins gathered more than 3,000 photographs of A Cat boats, collected from libraries, maritime historical records and even old pictures housed in the attics of local sailors. When the authors recognized the unusually high concentration of sailing clubs within the short span of Barnegat Bay, they decided to devote a chapter to each of the clubs represented in the Barnegat Bay Yacht Racing Association as part of the A-Cat's legend and heritage.

"By nature, yacht clubs are tribal," Jobson writes. "I was intrigued to see Virginia Perle's fabulous watercolor paintings depicting the yacht clubs of Barnegat Bay. What an eclectic collection of architectural gems. Every club has its own personality. Members feel comfortable at their own clubs, and, not surprisingly, rivalries develop on the race course...Everyone knows that friendly rivalries are healthy, competition promotes excellence, and clubs learn from each other. This is what makes these yacht clubs great."

"When Gary and I first met, we had all of these photos all over the table — some that had been sitting in the back of desk drawers and in photo albums," Wilkins said. "But I didn't want to just show photographs of a boat on the water. I wanted photos with 'pop' — pictures that tell the story of what it's like to sail an A-Cat. So we narrowed it down from there. It wasn't an easy project but it's a book locals should enjoy because so many of them are actually in it."

Although at one point, Jobson had to undergo treatment for leukemia, he remained devoted to the book project. As accomplished a sailor as he is, Jobson had never ventured into the hull of a restored A Cat prior to writing the book.

"My perspective an A Cat had always been from a E-Scow or a Penguin," he said. "So I relished the opportunity to revisit Barnegat Bay from the vantage point of an A-Cat. It's an amazing boat with an amazing history. A Cats were built to transport cargo in the choppy waters of Barnegat Bay. Merchants wanted a sturdy boat that could carry cargo at a steady pace. And the A Cat could cut across choppy waters in any kind of wind. But what is also very interesting is that A Cats began sailing on the bay in 1871 — just one year after the America's Cup sailed in New York Harbor. So to me, it was inevitable that the A Cats would also become racing boats."

NEW YORK HARBOR. SO, TO ME, IT WAS INEVITABLE THAT THE A CATS WOULD ALSO BECOME RACING BOATS.

"The A Cat transcends time," Jobson added. "And in a way they also personify human nature. People are friendly but they also have competitive spirits. Everybody has an innate desire to win."

"This is not a history book," Wilkins said. "It's more about the lives of these Cat boats. If you were to run a marathon, you'd probably be asked how you did in the race. But with A Cats, it's always the boat that wins the race. People will ask: 'Which boat came in first?'"

The authors also said that in researching the book, they were not only impressed, but touched really, by the A Cat's ability to link generations.

"After talking with lots of Barnegat Bay sailors, I realize that the golden age of A Cat sailing is taking place during our lifetime," Jobson writes. "Who better than the owners and crews themselves to tell this story? It was most enjoyable to lob a question and sit back and listen as the stories of the sailors just spilled out into my tape machine....It makes me smile thinking about all the pride generated by these magnificent, single-sail boats. The fleet is certainly competitive and winning is important, but just being part of the fleet is an honor."

**"A Cats: A Century of Tradition" is available through Nomad Press ([www.nomadpress.net](http://www.nomadpress.net)).**

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