



Crossing bows in the 1977 America's Cup with *Courageous* on the right and *Independence* on the left

Gary Jobson – the Ambassador of Sailing

by
Lud Kimborough
Photos courtesy of Gary Jobson

“I’m six years old and I’m crewing with two other people on a Sneakbox sailboat, and the skipper tells me I have two jobs to do. Two jobs, no problem. Jeez, I’m six years old already, it’s not like I’m a kid. First, I need to know what the race course is, and second, I need to know where the next mark is. They give me the course diagram and I put it in my pocket. We tack up the first leg and we are beating the heck out of the other boats.

“ ‘Where’s the mark?’ the skipper asks. I reach in my pocket for the chart and it is gone, lost, evaporated. I scour the water ahead and point to our destination. The other boats don’t follow. I was wrong. We lost that race.”

Fifty-three years later, Gary Jobson recounts Life Lesson #1 as if it just occurred to him that morning: “Always know where you are and where you are going. You have to have a goal.” It is the first of many such lessons I absorb in a day at Jobson Sailing, Inc. in Annapolis, Maryland.

“The next defining moment of my life came at age 12, after my parents bought me a Penguin sailboat. I was cleaning my boat at the yacht club, and a family came up to me and started asking questions about my boat. I explained to them how it worked, what every part was for, and they soon joined the Yacht Club and became sailors themselves. At that moment, I knew

Jobson (at helm) in his Penguin sailboat in the early 1960s





Jobson at the helm of *Tenacious* in the 1979 Fastnet Race

that the promotion of sailing was a calling in my life.

“Since then, I have come to appreciate what a precious institution the yacht club is and how fortunate we are to have them. Water access, in general, is rare and expensive. Good yacht clubs facilitate access to boats and sailing knowledge and open the door to anyone who wants to be part of nautical tradition. They have youth sailing programs. They support the larger society by contributing to causes like the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. They

preserve tradition so that we can study the past to get a window on the future. And, absolutely most importantly, they allow us to go down to the water and sail from a dock in what remains an incomparable sanctuary of freedom.”

In 1966, Jobson was recognized as the Outstanding Junior Sailor of Barnegat Bay in New Jersey, no small feat in light of the nationally recognized competitive sailing programs in the area. The award helped Jobson realize that he could excel at this sport on a grand scale. He began

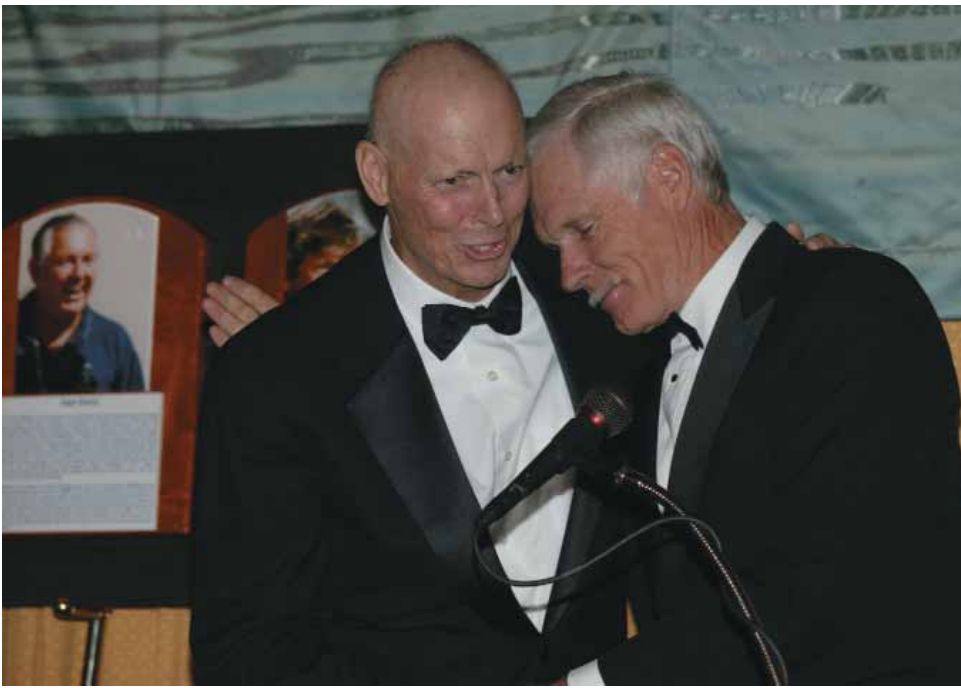
sailing year-round, not just when the weather suited. He began practicing – which was actually rare back in the ’60s – and kept detailed records of every race to track his progress towards being the best.

In 1974, George Hinman asked Jobson to be a sail trimmer in the 22nd America’s Cup campaign. At the same time, a nonprofit group in Association Island, New York, asked him to be their sailing camp director. What did the former College Sailor of the Year choose to do? Following the lesson learned at age six, Jobson followed his compass to Association Island on Lake Ontario. The teaching experience led him to begin a series of sailing clinics, conducted nationwide with a who’s who of sailing experts, including Ed Baird, Dave Perry, Peter Isler, and Stu Johnstone.

When the next America’s Cup defense took place in 1977, Ted Turner acknowledged his respect for Jobson’s decision to choose teaching over racing, and offered him a spot. With Jobson as tactician, Turner’s *Courageous* beat Australia 4-0. Turner was the last amateur skipper in an America’s Cup campaign. “It was un-cool to be perceived as a professional sailor in those days,” Jobson reflects, “but teaching and lecturing about sailing was OK. It was not like getting paid to race.” The following year he gave 100 lectures at various yacht clubs and other venues, a pace that has continued, carrying him to 370 different yacht clubs as of this writing.

Polishing his articulation and presentation skills with the same deliberation and practice that carried him to the top of competitive sailing, Jobson began to get noticed. *Good Morning America* and *Nightline* put him in front of a national audience, the TV debut of the ambassador of sailing.

The 1987 America’s Cup promised to be the most important international sailing competition ever held. The Aussies held the Auld Mug and the U.S. was obsessed with getting it back. It was to this



**Jobson and Ted Turner at the America's Cup Hall of Fame induction, October, 2003
(Photo by Daniel Forster)**



**Jobson family members
Ashleigh, Brooke, Janice,
Gary, and Kristi**

**Jobson with Alan Castro
(center) and production
engineer Rick Larmore**



end that Buddy Melges, revered by many as one of the greatest sailors of all time, asked Jobson to be tactician for his Cup campaign. It seemed to be the offer of a lifetime.

And then one Friday the phone rang. Geoff Mason of ESPN explained that they had purchased the rights to broadcast the Cup, and they wanted Jobson to be the commentator, live from Australia. "Take the weekend, Gary. I will call you Monday at 10:00 a.m. for an answer."

Jobson flew to Chicago to meet Melges and tell him of the ESPN offer. "Good idea. Do it," Melges encouraged. The television coverage pioneered live on-board cameras and 3-D graphics of boat positions on the racecourse, techniques that would lead to live video in NASCAR cockpits and first-down field-line graphics for football broadcasts.

"The aspects of sailing for broadcast television were compelling. Man against the sea. Big boats. Speed. Compelling characters. Tight competition." Jobson won an Award for Cable Excellence for the 1987 coverage, and the following year won an Emmy for his coverage of the Seoul Olympic Games, crystallized by his story about a Finn sailor who left his racecourse, forsaking gold, to assist another boat whose crew was obviously struggling after a capsized.

In 1994 Jobson became the national chairman of the Leukemia Cup Regatta, which conducts fund-raising sailing competitions nationwide to benefit the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. "That first year we were amazed that we were able to raise \$100,000. In 2009, the 8,400 sailors who participated raised over \$3.8 million. In aggregate, we have raised about \$34 million, of which over 80% has gone for research."

"So it was ironic that, in 2003, my world came crashing down around me when I was diagnosed with lymphoma. I was in a wheelchair. I was depressed. And in the most important flex point of my life, I resolved that, if I could overcome this

cancer, I would rededicate my life to strengthening my relationships with the people who matter most to me, my family, and would seek ways to give more to others, through philanthropy and volunteering to help where I can do the most good. Serving as president of U.S. Sailing is an example of that." At a recent U.S. Sailing Board retreat, Jobson led participants through think sessions covering 31 topics in two days, essentially a strategic brainstorming event to steer the future of the sport of sailing. In 2011 Jobson is inviting every yacht club in the United States to participate in a summit conference in Chicago towards the same end.

When not serving as tactician for the sport of sailing, spending time with his wife, Janice, and their three daughters, lecturing, or going to award ceremonies, Jobson produces video works in the studio at his office in Annapolis, Maryland. The day I visited, Alan Castro had flown from Sweden to start the process of developing a series of video vignettes for Sperry Topsider's celebration of its 75th anniversary. Rick Larmore, Jobson's video wizard, cues a 5-minute clip taken during a recent Newport-to-Bermuda race.

"This piece is 'Light Air,'" Jobson explains to Castro. As the clip proceeds, Jobson barks edits at Larmore. "Cut that. Cut that. This is good. Cut the dialog. . ." His technician takes no notes, nor does he even acknowledge that he hears Jobson. After the clip completes, Larmore makes all the edits and cues up the new version for another trial run. I ask Larmore how he manages to make all the edits with no notes, and he just smiles back at me. "We've been together 22 years," Jobson explains. "We're like a helmsman and a main trimmer. After sailing together long enough, we don't need to talk that much."

Gary calls his assistant of 27 years, Kathy Lambert, on the intercom. "Kathy, what's the music from the 'Light Air' section of Bermuda? We've cut so


much we need to re-record the soundtrack. I need to call the composer." From the thousands of musical selections Jobson has either commissioned or subscribes to, Kathy quickly produces the composer, disk, and track.



The next vignette is "Classic Yachts," helicopter footage of a race around the Isle of Wight. The video is tantalizing. "I use several photographers depending on where I am shooting, but there are only a select few who really are good enough and have the right equipment to make top-quality video of sailing. It's hard. Salt water, aerial footage, windy conditions, they all conspire to degrade the quality of the video; but we just cannot allow that to happen. Not for my business and not for the sport."



Jobson's production expertise is now taking him to new projects beyond the world of sailing. His most recent project, seen at www.EnergyOnTrial.org, is an independent production designed to teach the need to

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With 35 years of leadership and thousands touched by this influential powerhouse, one might say that Gary Jobson is himself a demonstration of the powerful good that can be driven by the power of wind.

Lud Kimbrough has sailed for 40 years, taught junior sailing, and served Fishing Bay Yacht Club in various capacities including commodore. When not sailing, Lud is a managing director at The Gladstone Companies, where he oversees the firm's equity investment portfolio.

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