

Solo sailor eyes Bermuda first

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Solo sailor hopes for a Bermuda first

By Stephen Breen

Ariel Sands general manager Alan Paris is hoping to become the first Bermudian to sail around the world solo, *The Royal Gazette* can reveal.

Mr. Paris will set sail from Charleston, South Carolina, on the gruelling 27,000 mile journey in a custom-built 40 foot yacht.

During the lonely six-month race, which begins in September 2002, he will eat and sleep in cramped living accommodation measuring just eight feet by nine feet.

The experienced sailor told *The Royal Gazette* the solo race is fulfilment of a long-standing dream.

"It is hard to put into words but it is an incredible challenge and it is a combination of all the elements of design technology and logistics," he said.

"You don't just hop on a boat and sail around the world. It is a learning curve in management of deep, in education of the weather, and in diet to keep fuelled up and ready to go."

Mr. Paris, 36, said his wife Becky has known about his plan since they married in 1996 and she's happy I'm doing it and getting it out of my system.

"Being the first Bermudian to do this isn't really part of the

goal. The whole thing about going by yourself means by definition you are not a show-off, but to be the first Bermudian to complete it would make me quite proud."

Mr. Paris, who is leaving his job at Ariel Sands at the end of March, has solo sailed 10,000 miles already and had a few hair-raising adventures along the way. He has struck a whale at sea and came within 20 feet of a submarine off Newport, Rhode Island.

He feels the challenges of running a busy hotel with the diverse problems which can arrive will stand him in good stead for the challenges ahead.

"Sailing has a lot of similarities in that you're not quite sure what will happen next. Planning and logistics are so important."

He flies to Brisbane, Australia, in July to collect his boat and carry out sea tests for a month.

He will then sail the yacht, *Bermuda Solo*, to Auckland, New Zealand, and dock it there until January next year, when he will again collect the Open 40 class vessel and sail it to Bermuda.

The round-the-world-solo race, known as Around Alone, is held every four years and begins in September next year from Charleston.

The first leg is to Cape Town,

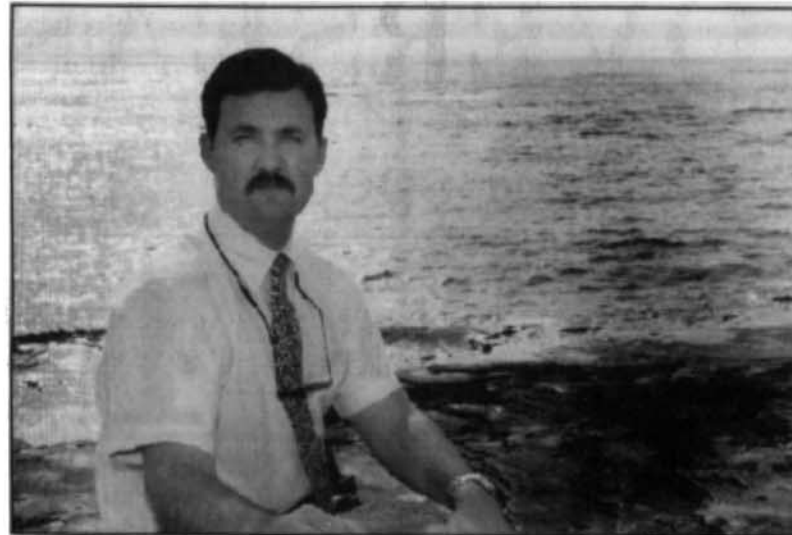


Photo by David Skinner

Around Alone: Alan Paris plans to quit his day job and fulfill his dream of sailing around the world, alone.

South Africa, then to Auckland, Punta del Este, Uruguay, and finally back to Charleston in April 2003.

The intrepid sailor is beginning to look for the \$300,000 sponsorship he needs to finance the epic journey, but he believes his yacht will be an ideal platform for international companies on the Island to market their business.

He points out that when the race was held in 1998-99, it generated 6,000 newspaper articles, more than 600 hours of television coverage, and 350 million hits on the official website.

"It will be incredible exposure for any company with global business to put Bermuda on the map around the world. This is

going to be a marketing platform for companies, not a charitable contribution.

"I'm only just beginning to look for finance and there are already some people considering it, but it is impossible to run a hotel full-time and begin a campaign like this."

Mr. Paris has a six month old son, Tucker, and he believes the solo voyage will give him time to assess what he will do with his life and decide whether he wants to continue his career in the hospitality industry when he returns.

"It will give me time to be introspective and analyse life. It will give me time to think about things and decide whether to continue in hospitality or not."