

P O O P D E C K



Last transmission

After more than 11 years writing for TradeWinds, radio officer Bobby Khan is packing away her wireless to embark on a new career.

Dear Matey,

The absence of this column over the past few months might have given the impression that I had sailed to the edge of the world and fallen off.

No such luck, I'm afraid. Happily, I can report I am not only alive and kicking but about to embark on a new, exciting project. You see, it's time to hang up the old sea-boots, or rather, use them in a different way.

Having enjoyed sailing the oceans for the last 17 years, I feel it's time to give something back to the gods of the seas — specifically to conserve their domain before it starts to overflow with the rubbish that's being dumped into it by everyone and their uncle.

With this in mind, the GreenSeas Trust has been born — a non-profit charity dedicated to keeping the seas pollution free.

Gazing out over the calm ocean, the surface like a sheet of glass, only to see it marred by

plastic containers, bottles, cans and assorted flotsam has bugged me for years, as does the increasing deterioration of pristine beaches and coastal waters of far-flung islands.

I first voiced my concerns in TradeWinds in 1992. Ten years down the line and the problem has become progressively worse. Go to any Caribbean island and the evidence is there — plastics, polystyrenes, cans, carrier bags and junk thrown willy nilly into the sea or washed up between the rocks and crevices and beaches along the coast.

The result? Coral is suffocating and dying. The balance of algae and nutrients that in turn effect oxygen levels is being thrown out of sync, leading to the smothering of underlying corals and seagrasses and the proliferation of viruses that effect fish and shellfish.

Sure, beach clean-ups help but they are a short-term solution only. Many organisations are aware, of course, of the importance of recycling, and indeed there are many non-governmental bodies all over the world constantly talking about the problem, but little importance seems to be given to the roots of the problem — making local communities and visiting



NEW JOB: Bobby Khan

Photo: TradeWinds

tourists more aware of the repercussions of dumping rubbish in the sea.

This focus GreenSeas Trust aims to publicise, and the only way is through ongoing education starting at kindergarten level. Catch 'em young, I say!

With a pilot project in Trinidad and Tobago, it is my intention to visit schools, colleges and higher-education institutions to show through story-

board cartoons and visuals the damage chucking rubbish does to the islands' natural beauty and to the marine eco-system.

Nothing can substitute first-hand knowledge and, having sailed the seven seas and then some, I think I'm uniquely qualified to explain the scale of the problem in a personal way rather than rattling off bland statistics accompanied by bar graphs — which can frankly

come across like a lot of meaningless gobbledygook.

Education, however, is not enough by itself. The next step is to create an inter-island recycling strategy around the Caribbean. A single island may not generate enough plastics, cans or other recyclable waste to justify its own recycling plant but a scheme in which neighbouring islands share a facility could prove a viable alternative economically and ecologically.

Such are the issues I'm aiming to tackle through the GreenSeas Trust. But of course I need help. So if any owners or brokers would like to contribute either financially or intellectually to this worthy cause, don't let me stop you! Please email me at khanbobby@yahoo.com for further information about our projects and time scale.

Of course this means that I will no longer be tramping around on the poop decks, so sadly this column must come to an end. I hope you've enjoyed reading it as much as I have writing it. In true radio officer tradition, I'll therefore sign off this last transmission in Morse: 3 dots, dash, space, dot, dash (··· — · —). Good luck!

Best Regards,
Bobby Khan