



Fleece of foot

Sun-worshipping surfer dude Sean Berg has happy feet to go along with a streak of Type A entrepreneurship

Sun-worshipping surfer dude Sean Berg ('92) has a streak of Type A personality lurking in that mellow lifestyle he espouses. This drive gives Berg the warmth to wiggle his toes freely and make his feet - and heart - happy even in the dead of winter. He is the not-so-laidback founder of Olas Sol Socks, a company that makes wool socks designed especially for flip-flops.

Yep, socks for flip-flops.

Berg has built the company on his love of surfing and the "lifestyle that flip-flops suggest." A full-time teacher in inner city Baltimore, Berg is also pursuing his Master of Arts in Teaching through the Project Site Program at Johns Hopkins University.

"Olas Sol Socks is still growing," says Berg, a political science graduate. "We're finding new ways to sell the socks every week. I just know that the socks are going to 'pop' soon. Pretty soon you will see Oprah wearing a pair."

Olas Sol Socks come in five colors, in winter and mid-weight fleece and in men's and women's sizes. The company is managed by Berg and his wife, who, he says, "has been super supportive and often takes business calls and runs to the Post Office to mail the socks every day." The Bergs outsource the manufacturing of the socks to a company in southwestern Virginia. The Olas Sol Socks Web site <<http://www.olassolsocks.com/>> is managed by a company in Columbia, Md., though Berg provided the layout idea, sketched the drawings and decided on the colors. "I wanted to set a tone to show people that you should be able to wear flip-flops no matter what the weather," says Berg. "Be what you believe and wear what you want to wear. Be an original sol. That's our motto."

The company's name is based on Spanish words for "wave" (olas) and "sun" (sol). "I thought it was cool that 'sol' reminds us of soul and sole, too," says Berg. "They both fit our image."

Berg has "had the entrepreneurial bug," from the time that he started *Village News*, which delivered newspapers to vacationers on the Outer Banks of North Carolina. "I really loved being my own boss and making all of the decisions," he says. "But I didn't love newspapers enough, and the early mornings were tough. I knew that when I started another company it would have to be doing something that I really loved."

Berg's love of surfing began in 1989 when he lived oceanfront with 12 friends. "Olas Sol Socks started about six years ago, when I tried to find socks to wear with my flip-flops. I couldn't find anything. I thought that somewhere on this earth I could find socks specifically made for my flip-flops. Not one company I could find made the socks, so I took it upon myself to make them."

His entrepreneurial spirit helps Berg in his full-time job as a teacher. He teaches third grade in Baltimore city, which he describes as "a very difficult school system. It's frustrating to see students at the third-grade level already saying that 'school isn't important.' ... Many of my kids never have pencils or paper - I just try daily to make a difference in their lives."

Outside the classroom, Berg can be found - clad in surfer socks - at the computer writing a book "to help other people see the good in their lives," he says.

The teacher and sol-searching entrepreneur adds, "You see, I had to start this company. If I didn't, I would regret it for the rest of my life. I personally guarantee your satisfaction."

Allison Mall ('04)