

Pedal Power Brings Adventurers to TCI from England

By Kathy Matusik

"I probably have the strongest legs in the Caribbean, but I can't walk." That was Jason Lewis' first comment after stepping onto the dock at Turtle Cove, following his and partner Steve Smith's voyage across the Atlantic in a pedal-powered vessel.

The pair left Portugal on October 13, 1994 aboard the 26' *Moksha*, a boat specially designed by an English naval architect in which bicycle-like pedals turn a propeller which carries the boat forward at a speed of two to three knots.

The intrepid voyagers were headed for Florida, but made a surprise stop on Providenciales on January 26, after spending 97 days at sea.

Jason and Steve dubbed their

project "Pedal for the Planet," with the ambitious goal of being the first to use human power to circumnavigate the globe. Their journey began at the Greenwich Observatory in London, zero degrees longitude. From there, they bicycled to the south coast of England, used the pedal-boat to cross the English Channel to France, then cycled to Portugal for the epic sea voyage.

Their high-noon arrival in the Turks & Caicos was slightly delayed as high waves prevented a reef crossing at Sellar's Cut and necessitated a return to Stubb's Cut. Even so, damage to the centreboard was sustained as rollers caused the small boat to ground on the reef.

The tired pedalers were welcomed ashore by dozens of observ-

ers and the foghorn-like wail of the conch horn, about which Jason commented that "it sounded better than the harmonica and guitar Steve's been playing for the past three months."

All supplies used for the crossing were carried aboard the efficiently designed craft, including 400 pounds of dehydrated food, (supplemented by the occasional fish catch) and a reverse osmosis machine for generating drinking water, propane stove, GPS navigation system and electronic tracking device.

The daily routine revolved around two-hour pedaling/steering shifts, which increased to four hours after dark, to allow the resting partner to nab some much needed sleep.

Although many sceptics, including Jason's "mum," thought it was very dangerous and couldn't be done, the ocean crossing actually went quite smoothly — save for a force-seven storm which flipped the boat 180 degrees onto its head, filled it with water and threw Steve overboard. He was saved from getting swept away when his shoe caught on a hose, dragging him through the water like a giant anchor.

The boat went upside down and I couldn't see for a couple of seconds. When I opened my eyes, Steve had disappeared. It was like one of those old mystery spoofs — one minute he was there, then next he was gone. But he would have been lost if his foot hadn't caught. There was no way I could have turned the boat around and pedalled back into the wind to rescue him," Jason recalls.

Actually, the body part that has (and will) sustain the most damage are the pedalers' knees. Jason explains, "Our kneecaps are constantly clicking. I think we'll be on crutches

by the time we're done."

The sailors' time on Provo was spent resupplying, attending to numerous minor repairs, eating regular meals again, looking for potential sponsors and answering the myriad questions asked by residents and visitors.

Several local businesses, including Turtle Cove Inn, Erebus Inn, Tiki Hut, Provo Turtle Divers, Sew What, Provo Eats and John Redmond and Associates, as well as Ian Miller, Dr. Sam Slattery and others, generously donated rooms, meals and other support to help make the sailors stay more comfortable. An auction at the Tiki Hut raised \$600 — enough to help Jason and Steve continue their journey on to Miami.

But the next stop will involve more extensive fund-raising. With almost \$45,000 already laid out to build the boat and carry the journey this far, "Pedal for the Planet," desperately needs corporate sponsors to allow it to continue. However, Jason and Steve do feel that conquering the Atlantic has proved their dedication and ability and will make sponsors take the project more seriously than when "we were two young college students taking a big risk."

Besides attempting to set a record, "Pedal for the Planet" is also striving to raise money for a U.K. charity called "The Council for Education and World Citizenship." The organisation's goal is to promote international awareness of other cultures among British schoolchildren.

In each country they visit, Jason and Steve will take questionnaires to the local schools to discover what students think about their lives and what they believe the future will hold. Ken Brown, the project's videographer/photographer films their responses for an eventual documentary. Jason also records an ongoing log on cassette for a BBC radio show and the crew maintains a newsletter to keep supporters and new friends informed of their progress.

In Provo, a number of students were treated to tales of the journey and a peek inside the boat. Many wanted to know what led Jason and Steve to undertake the three and one-half year voyage. As Steve put it, "All little boys grow up wanting something out of life — an adventure. It's something you do to enjoy life, something a little different . . .

and we hope to learn a lot as well. But Christopher Columbus was a lot braver than we are because he didn't have any special electronic beams with which to navigate. He had to use the stars and didn't know exactly where he was going to end up."

Although it's hard to imagine, life aboard the *Moksha* was quite peaceful and, according to Jason, "not at all boring."

"I listened to music on the Walkman, read books while I pedalled, but the main thing we got into was the mind. The lack of distractions allowed us to focus on the smallest of actions and get pleasure from simple things such as making a cup of tea. The voyage was an excellent way to sort out a lot of things about my life . . . everything was so clear." In fact, he claims the first day or so in Provo was rather overwhelming, "everything had been so simplified, then suddenly you get this sensory overload."

But overall, the pair found



Jason Lewis (in pedal-powered "Moksha") and partner Steve Smith (shirtless on wharf) at Turtle Cove shortly after making their first landfall after their 105-days voyage across the Atlantic from Portugal

Provoites friendly, generous and very supportive of their venture, while the island itself was close to their dream of the tropics. Jason recalls, "As we were approaching, from about two miles away we saw these palm trees and sand . . . it was like an oasis."

But all oases must be eventually left and, following successful fund-raising in Florida, Jason and Steve plan to cycle across the United States to Alaska, from where they will pedal-boat across the northwest Pacific to Japan, then cycle on through China, Tibet, India, central Asia, Europe and back to the U.K.

If you wish to make a donation to help Jason and Steve complete their journey, send cheque or money order to: Pedal for the Planet, c/o The Council for Education and World Citizenship, Seymour Mews House, Seymour Mews, London, U.K. W1A For a \$20 donation you will have your name signed on the side of the boat; \$50 will bring you a subscription to their newsletter.