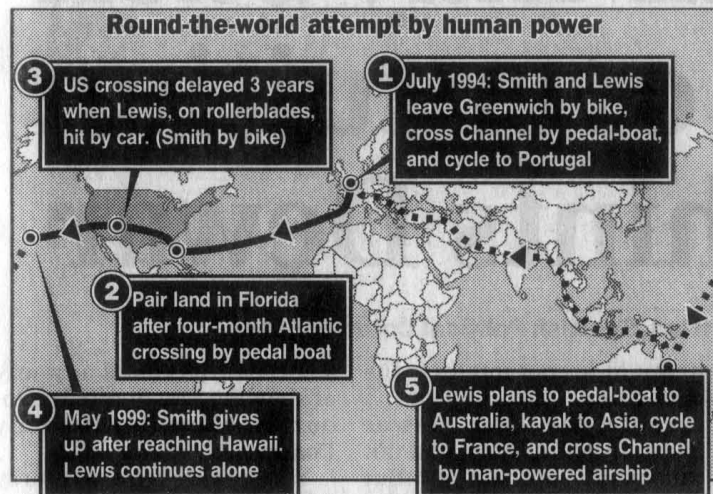


NEWS

Round-the-world pedaller quits in Hawaii

Picture: BRIAN SMITH



Dream of the simple life ends in the doldrums

By Michael Smith

ONE half of a British partnership attempting to make the first human-powered circumnavigation of the globe has given up halfway through, saying he felt like "a hamster in a wheel".

Steve Smith, 32, who conceived the 29,000-mile Pedal for the Planet expedition seven years ago, jumped ship in Hawaii, claiming that he had created a monster he could no longer control.

His erstwhile partner, Jason Lewis, is determined to continue his now solo pedal boat journey across the Pacific. But Mr Smith, from Bewdley, West Midlands, said: "I find the thought of spending another five years on the water unacceptable.

"For me the expedition was always intended as an attempt to live close to the earth. But by day two, the harsh realities hit — seasickness, chronic fatigue and no variety of colour, sound or smell. The deep ocean is a lifeless desert. A gale with

20-30ft waves would focus our attention for a few days but mostly we trundled on from week to week, like hamsters on a wheel."

Mr Smith, who was raising money for the Council for Education in World Citizenship, added: "My goal — to circumnavigate the globe by human power — contradicted my aim of finding happiness in simplicity."

But despite Mr Smith's disillusionment, 31-year-old Mr Lewis, of Bridport, Dorset, is determined to continue with his friend's dream.

Speaking by satellite phone, Mr Lewis said the two had not fallen out. "We embarked on this to re-find our passions and direction in life and Steve has simply found a different passion than being on a pedal boat."

The attempt began more than seven years ago, when Mr Smith quit his post as an environmental researcher in Paris. "I was tired of office life and the whole process of



Steve Smith, left, and Jason Lewis launch their epic pedal boat trip in London in January 1994. Smith has abandoned the project but Lewis is continuing solo

the career ladder," he said. "I wanted to do something really different. I was amazed to discover that no one had ever circumnavigated the globe entirely by human power."

After several years of planning, he and Mr Lewis finished construction of their 26ft wooden pedal boat Moksha, named after the Sanskrit word for liberation.

It was built from hardwoods from community-managed sustainable forests

in Ecuador and Peru. The pedals supplied power to a single propeller.

The communication system was powered by photovoltaic cells built into the deck and a wind generator on the mast. Dehydrated rations and other supplies sufficient for 100 days were packed along the hull. A reverse osmosis water-maker converted seawater into fresh water.

They started out by mountain bike from Greenwich

Observatory in London in July 1994, using the pedal boat to cross the Channel before continuing to Portugal by mountain bike. They then spent four months crossing the Atlantic, living on rice, tofu, peanut butter and home-made bread.

After landing in Florida, they headed for San Francisco, Mr Smith going by mountain bike, Mr Lewis by rollerblades.

But in Colorado, Mr Lewis was hit by a car, breaking

both legs. It was three years before they could continue their journey, leaving the Golden Gate Bridge in September.

They intended to reach Australia by the Millennium, but by the time they reached Hawaii, Mr Smith had suffered enough. The Moksha had turned from a liberator into a "rolling torture machine", he recorded in his diary.

Mr Smith said yesterday that he was now heading for

New Zealand, where he hoped to set up "a sustainable living centre".

Mr Lewis meanwhile was pedalling furiously on the 2,200-mile next leg of the journey to the tiny atoll of Tarawa in Kiribati. "Although I am a little apprehensive, I am hopeful I can continue the journey," he said.

Even if he makes it to Australia, Mr Lewis will still have to kayak through the Indonesian islands and cycle

through Asia and Europe before finally crossing the Channel, this time by a man-powered airship.

A spokesman for the Council for Education in World Citizenship said it was delighted that someone was so keen to raise money for it. "We have a sort of a worry that he's got so far to go," he said.

"But there is this element of eccentricity about it. We Brits do seem to have a market on that sort of thing."