

by Cynthia Ramu

for the Planet

"The first human powered round the World Expedition"

Jason Lewis and Steve Smith, from London, England had a vision. It was to reach beyond the lives they were living in London. Both graduates from London University, Steve had been trained as an environmental scientist and Jason went into the music industry. Late one night, five years ago, in a pub and after several beers, both Jason and Steve were very unhappy with their lives in general. It was on this evening that the vision of traveling the planet and integrating an environmental purpose was born.

The mission was to travel the planet with only human power, using bikes, boats and skates. At the same time as they traveled to each country, both Steve and Jason would visit school children sharing their vision that "one doesn't need big diesel engines or similar types of power to get across the oceans - let alone around town." Another message that Jason has inspired to kids is, "Do whatever you want to do in this life - 70 years isn't a long time to live and your only get one shot at it."

After two years of planning the expedition and building the boat, the journey was to begin. On July 12, 1994, Steve and Jason cycled from Greenwich Meridian Line to London to the south coast of England, beginning their three year marathon. On the following day, they pedaled the boat across the English Channel and spent six weeks cycling through France, Spain and Portugal.

On October 13, 1994, the Atlantic voyage began. 4,500 miles across the Atlantic Ocean and landing in Miami on February 17th after speeding 111 days at sea. The ocean voyage was filled with many adventures along with new challenges. Living in a cramped, tight space tended to create tension as the ocean whirled a constant rolling, rocking and pitching about the boat. "The huge seas of the first two weeks were stuff of nightmares; black monstrous waves, often as high as 30 to 40 feet, that came crashing onto the back of our boat. All that kept us afloat was our sea anchor and a car tire on a 100 meter length of rope tied to our stern. It kept the boat heading into, rather than parallel to the waves," says Jason.

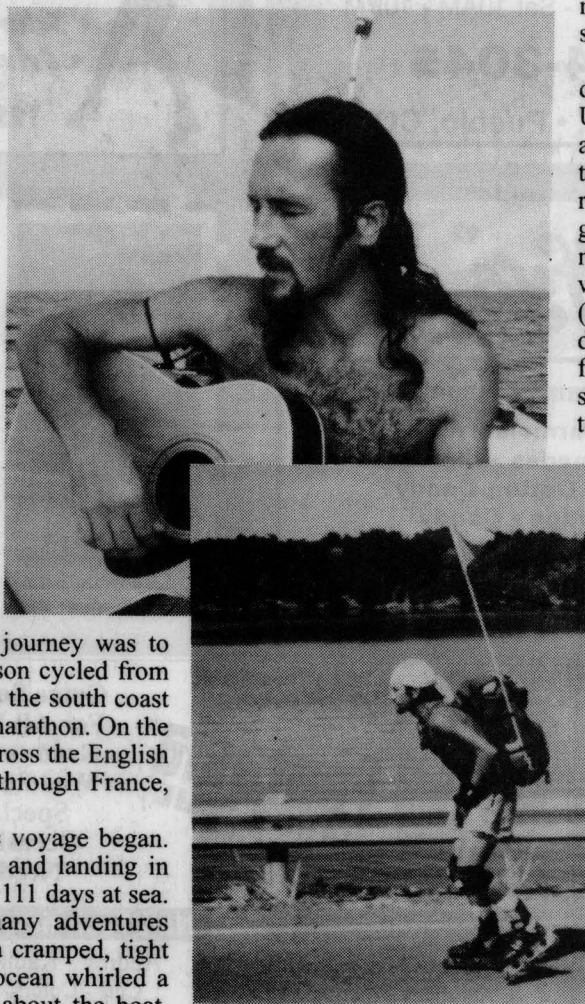
To stay motivated each day they decided to stay focused on little goals, such as the next cup of coffee or the next meal.

stop. He continued stupidly driving down the shoulder until a witness to the whole mess finally ran him off the road and held him until the police arrived. When the ambulance came, I was placed in the back and lay there, in shock, for what seemed like forever. I didn't realize why until later; the paramedics were searching through the grass for part of my ear."

During recovery time, Jason spent October and November in Rye, Colorado on the bison ranch owned by Dr. Kenneth Danylchuk soaking in the Rocky Mountains that Jason had envisioned, but not from a wheel chair. By November, Jason was on crutches and made his way to over 90% of the schools in Rye and Pueblo sharing his vision and adventures with the students. There is no greater motivation for a child than to have someone such as Jason and his Pedal for the Planet Expedition share his ideals and obstacles as he meets each child. I was very fortunate to travel with Jason to many of the schools that I paint the Levee with. The magic that Jason made up his mind to create a dream and follow it, no matter what the obstacle. I could hear their minds churning their own possibilities.

Since December, Jason has worked closely with Rye Elementary on a very unique project along with Rye Elementary teacher, April Mann. "The students at the School for the Deaf and Blind were so overwhelmed that students from another school would take the time to create a 3-dimensional map detailing the human-powered expedition to Pueblo and continuing to San Francisco," state teacher April Mann.

As an extension of the Expedition, in conjunction with schools around the world, Jason incorporated the Pedal for the



"Our lives became incredibly regimented and broken up into small psychological carrots. It was the best frame of mind I've ever experienced and the most fulfilled I've ever felt. I wasn't living in the future or the past; my goals were one hour ahead, in the here and now. Very fulfilling," explained Jason as he sat back on the futon that engulfed him and smiled.

After arriving in Ft. Lauderdale, Steve and Jason spent the next three months lecturing schools and touring the boat to raise money for the expedition. They sold t-shirts for \$15 and held shows of the boat, where for \$20 people could put their names on the side of the boat and sign up for biannual newsletter.

On June 18th the pair decided to separate across the United States. Steve on his bike and Jason on rollerblades. Since this was Jason's first experience on rollerblades, it took a few days to get over the blisters and keep momentum. "In the beginning, I was logging 30 to 40 miles a day (later, I averaged 80 to 90 miles a day). Typically, I'd get up by the first light, around 5:30 am and skate until 11:30 (by then, temperatures would be over 105 degrees and add humidity and we're talking 120 degree). I'd set out around 3:00 pm and skate until dark. I quickly learned the peril of skating at night and always tried to make camp by dark," says Jason. On occasion someone would invite him to stay or eat at their home.

As the months rolled by with endless adventures, on September 10, just three days before Jason's 28th birthday, the expedition took an about face turn. Jason describes, "With 85 miles down, I had just two to go. Exhausted and skating against my better judgement, I carried on. I stopped to attach my flashing lights to the back of my pack and proceed

along the running shoulder of Highway 50."

"That's when I got hit from behind. The police say the car that broke both of my legs was going over 50 miles an hour. It hit me in the back of the legs, snapping the bones in the lower part of both legs and sending them right through the skin. A split second later, my body smashed into the car's windshield, shattering it, and I flew over the roof. The driver didn't even

Planet Youth Network. One project, with Rye Elementary 5th graders, were given his video camera to tape their home environment to share with students in various countries as the expedition evolves to such places as Central and South America and on to the South Pacific and Australia.

As these past seven months have passed, Jason has shared his journey with hundred of Puebloans, and I constantly hear him say that this town has become his idea of home and he always comments of the generosity that the community has extended to him and has considered coming back and settling in a few years after completing the world expedition. "This is a very special place in the world," he repeats.

On April 17, Jason and Chris, one of the boat builders, left Pueblo to transport the pedal boat to San Francisco, where his partner, Steve Smith, has been waiting for Jason. Steve traveled from Ft. Lauderdale across the northern United States to San Francisco. The plan thus far is that Jason and Chris will bike back to Pueblo and arrive late May to finish the Pueblo-San Francisco leg of the expedition. Steve will spend the summer in San Francisco lecturing and planning to bike from San Francisco, in the fall, to Mexico and on the Chile and resume the pedal boat on the Pacific.

We would like to encourage anyone interested in greeting Jason as he returns through Pueblo on his bike to contact Cynthia at 546-0315. We will have a gathering in Mesa Junction on Union Avenue in front of the Record Reunion Store with festivities for the day. There will be t-shirts available. Also, anyone who is interested in having a presentation or to help sponsor the Pedal for the Planet Expedition, contact April Mann at Rye Elementary, 489-2272.