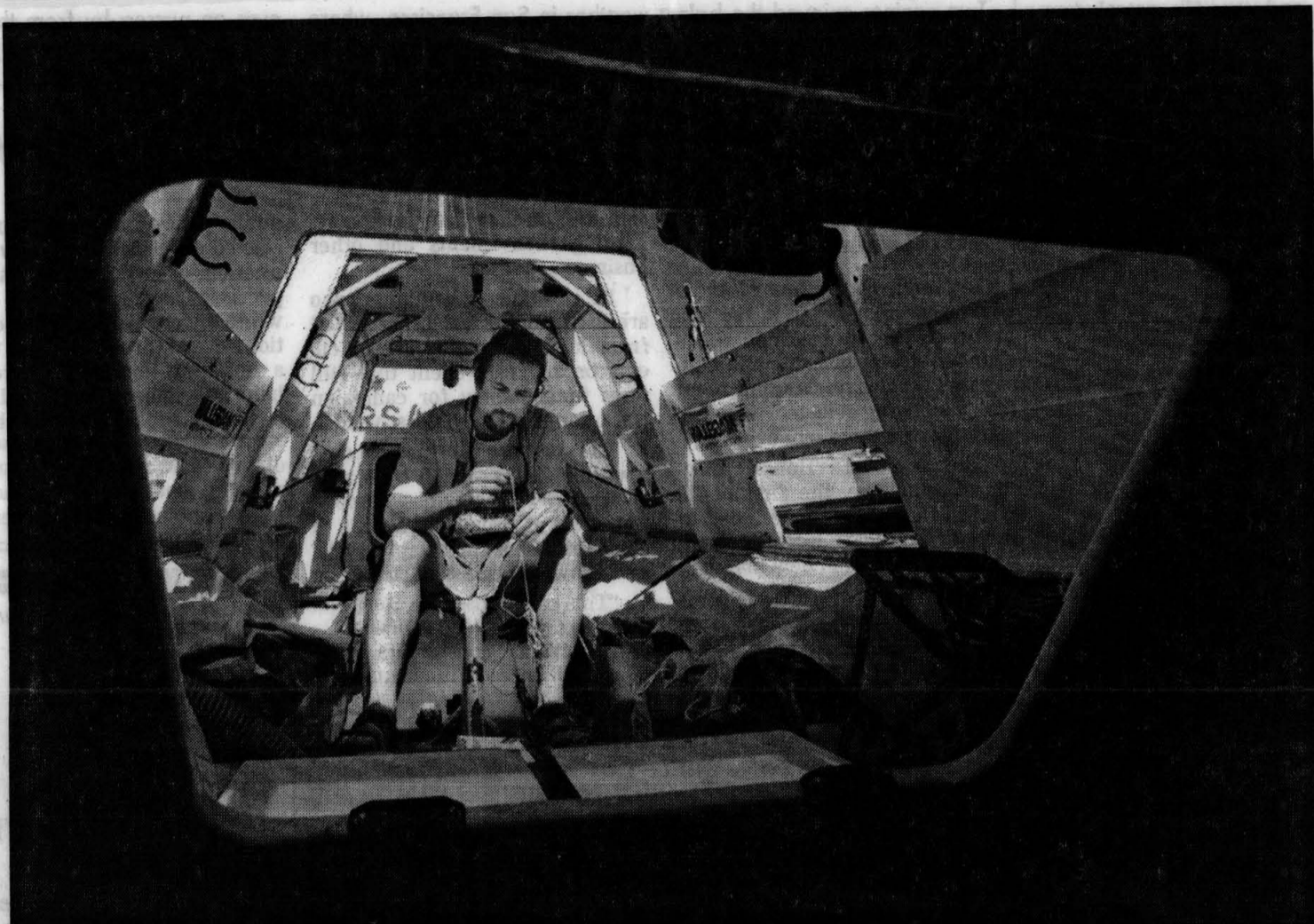


San Francisco Chronicle

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA'S LARGEST NEWSPAPER

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 16, 1996



PHOTOS BY MICHAEL MALONEY/THE CHRONICLE

Jason Lewis untangled fishing line in the cockpit of the pedal-boat he and Steve Smith powered across the Atlantic

PEDAL POWER, BY LAND OR SEA

English adventurers stop in S.F. on way around globe

By Carl Nolte
Chronicle Staff Writer

The adventure of two lifetimes is taking a short break for repairs these days in a boatyard on a back street of San Francisco's waterfront.

This would be the tough little vessel Moksha, the centerpiece of a journey by two Englishmen who are circumnavigating the world by human power — by bike and roller skates on land, and by sea aboard the Moksha, which is 26 feet long, made of wood, painted bright yellow and powered by pedals.

The pedals are driven by Jason Lewis, 29, and his partner, Steve Smith, 30. They pedaled the Moksha (which means "liberation" in Sanskrit) across the Atlantic and now plan to pedal it across the Pacific.

Just now, the Moksha is at Pier 66 on Illinois Street. There seems to be a lot of work still needed, but the pedal boat is only part of the mosaic.

The two men are also traveling by foot, by bike, by in-line skates and by kayak, all powered by muscle. No one has ever made such a journey before, though the Guinness Book of Records contains listings of around-the-world walkers, around-the-world sailors and fliers. This expedition, the two men say, is "the last of the firsts."

It all started, as all adventures do, with a burning dissatisfaction with life. "The real reason why we did it," said Lewis, "is boredom. We were bored with our former lifestyle."

They had been friends for years, had gone to university together, gone camping and traveling. Smith was in environmental science, Lewis in the music business. "Burnt out by the rat race," Lewis said.

As boys, they had read books about adventures, "being out there, embracing the elements, being self-sufficient," Lewis said. The idea of a human-powered trip around the world came from Smith. The rest was details: obtaining patrons and backers, im-



Lewis climbed aboard the 26-foot pedal-boat Moksha at S.F.'s Pier 66, in preparation for a run across the Pacific

portant in the United Kingdom. "It opens doors," said Lewis.

They got the Duke of Gloucester as patron of the expedition, Sir Randolph Feinnes, who once walked across Antarctica, as president of their Pedal for the Planet foundation, and Sir Yehudi Menuhin as vice president. They raised money, built the boat of cedar and African kachimbo wood, launched it on the Thames in London, sailed past the Greenwich meridian, where longitude begins, and were off to France on July 12, 1994.

It has been no walk in the park. The trip across the Atlantic — 111 days pedaling a 26-foot boat 4,500 miles from Lagos, Portugal, to Miami was pretty tough.

When they got to Miami, they were so beat they could hardly walk. But the Times of London carried a page 1 story, as did the Miami papers. They got 25 seconds on CNN.

Then it was off, across America. Smith, now accompanied by Eilbhe Ni Dhonabhain, a 22-year-old Irish woman, bicycled across the country. Lewis went by roller blades. On Sept. 10, 1995, in Pueblo, Colo., an 18-year-old drunk driver hit Lewis with his car; he suffered compound fractures of both legs and was laid up for nine months.

"I spent four months in a wheelchair,"

Lewis said, and he has the scars to prove it. He's tough, though. "It was just a minor detail," he said. "Had I been killed, I would have at least been killed doing something I enjoy, rather than being hit by a bus in London."

Months later, he completed his skate across the United States. He arrived at the Golden Gate Bridge on September 7. The boat came by truck, and that was an adventure, too. It was rear-ended by another truck, necessitating some repairs.

When all is ready, the two men plan to sail out the Golden Gate for a test run by sea to Long Beach. The boat will then be shipped to Ecuador; they plan to bike there. Then it is off across the Pacific — nine months to Australia. To Malaysia by kayak, bicycle to France, maybe a pedal-powered Zeppelin — "that should be kind of weird," Lewis said — to England and home in 1998.

The two men are happy to talk about their expedition: Smith was off addressing an East Bay Rotary lunch yesterday. And what is an adventure these days without an 800 number and a page on the Internet?

To call the two, dial (800) 943-0114. Their Internet address is <http://www.tach.net/public/orgs/pedal/pedalplanet.html>