

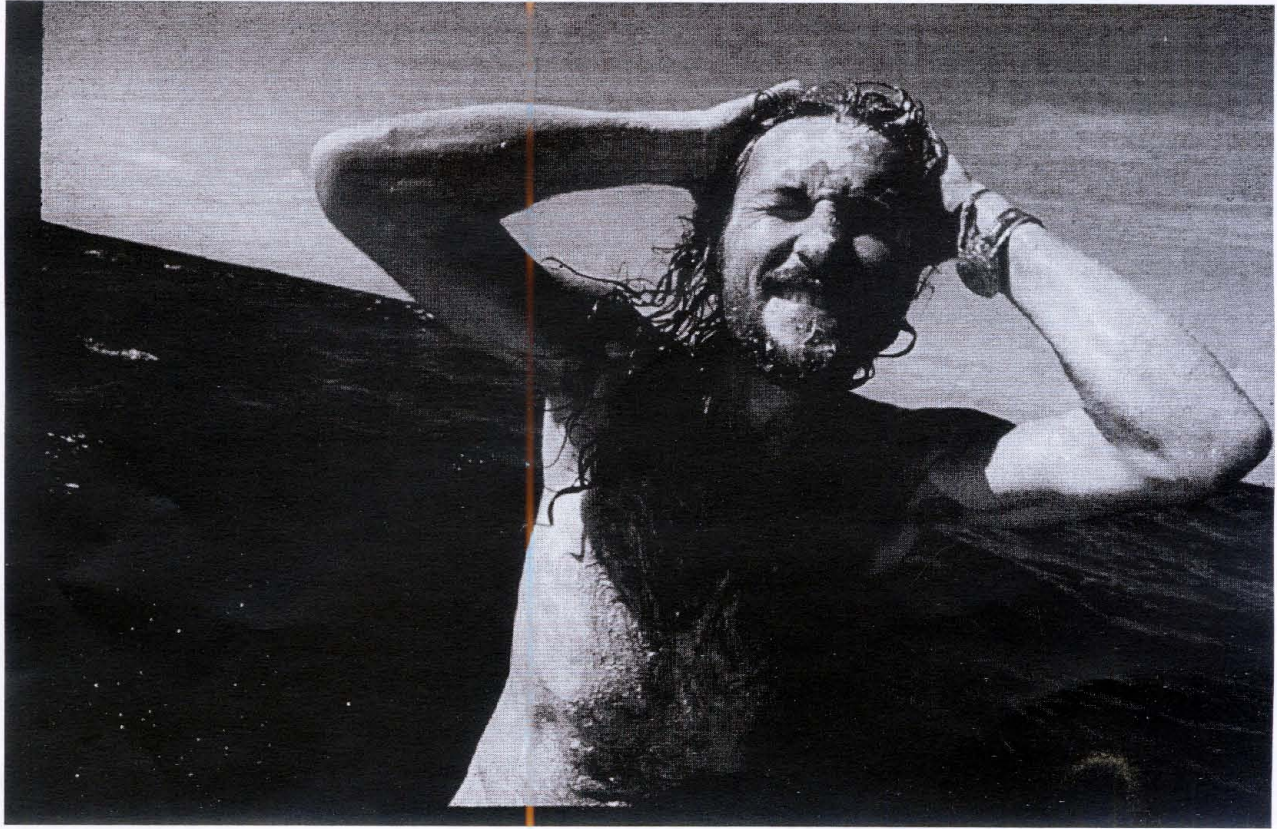
# Motion sickness

THE OTHER SIDE OF TRAVEL



Jason Lewis is a man on a mission. The mission is Expedition 360, his goal to circumnavigate the globe using only human power. In 10 years he has traveled over 28,000 miles, racked up an enormous debt, broken two legs, lost one partner and survived an armful of assorted mishaps.





For what purpose? According to the mission statement, it is five-fold: "To circle the world by means of human power alone, to use the adventure as a classroom learning tool, to encourage world citizenship between cultures, to promote environmental responsibility, and to live fully and enjoy the experience." Sound like lofty goals? Maybe, but for thirty-four year-old Jason Lewis, they are far from unattainable.

When Englishmen Jason Lewis and Steve Smith began talking about circumnavigating the world using only human power in 1992, people thought they were crazy. Jason says his parents were a "little apprehensive" because he and Steve were greenhorns; they had little nautical knowledge, and not much experience biking, walking, or rollerblading for long distances. Friends spent evenings in pubs, telling them they were ridiculous. But the naysayers didn't win out. In 1993, Steve and Jason set out from the Greenwich Meridian Line and biked to England's south coast. From there, they pedaled a specially created boat named Moksha across the English Channel. Though the expedition has been stopped several times for fundraising efforts, it has continued with fervor ever since.

Along with biking and pedal boating, members of the expedition have also hiked, kayaked, and rollerbladed—no motors or sails allowed. They have been through Western Europe, the Caribbean, the United States, Mexico and Central America, the Pacific Ocean and Solomon Islands, and Australia. Jason and Steve became the first people to pedal a boat across the Atlantic Ocean from East to West, crossing over 4300 miles in 84 days. Not only has the expedition been physically difficult thus far, but achieving the means to actually complete their dreams has proven more difficult for Jason and Steve than first anticipated.

Steve Smith decided to leave the expedition in February of 1999, mainly because the effort of seeking funding was becoming a grind. He states in his biography on the Expedition 360 web site, "I imagined a life mastering the arts of survival and companionship, living close to the earth with the wind on my skin. Across 2 oceans and 3 continents, I have found this and feel so incredibly blessed. But for several years now, I have become more aware of the costs of planning such an ambitious, expensive goal. I realize that the goal—to go around the world by human power, contradicts my aim—to find happiness in simplicity."



Steve may have left, but Jason isn't alone in his mission. He continues to be helped by many diverse people along the way, from fishmongers, writers and teachers to high school students. The expedition crew is decidedly international as well, with varying home countries of England, the United States, France, and Australia. Though some may have mocked him in the beginning, there seem to be no shortage of people who are just crazy enough to help Jason achieve his ten-year dream.

Fundraising continues to act as the group's biggest obstacle. "The easiest part has been traveling," says Jason. "The hardest has been the money." The journey has never been corporately sponsored. Subsequently, they have always been in debt. They have come up with some creative fundraising techniques, such as selling t-shirts in various areas they stop in, and exhibiting their pedal boat, *Moksha*. For \$20, you can also get your name etched onto the boat. Jason continues to seek financial assistance in order to begin the next leg of the journey.

There have been many obstacles of the non-

financial variety, however. In 1997, *Moksha* capsized while two members of the expedition team were attempting to pedal from California to Hawaii. In 2000, Jason and another crewmember, Chris Tipper, landed *Moksha* in the Solomon Islands in the midst of a civil war. In September of 1995, Jason was rollerblading alone through Colorado and was hit by a car. Both of his legs were broken. I asked Jason, after ten years, Steve leaving, having his legs broken, and a mountain of debt, why does he continue to strive for this dream?

"I like to finish what I say I'm going to do," he says. He also enjoys the actual traveling, "finding a way to get out on the next leg." The educational components of the trip are also very important to him, as well as the encouragement and life-lessons the expedition imparts to young people.

From the very beginning, the trip was planned to be adapted as a classroom-learning tool. Aimed at 8-14 year-olds, the classroom lessons are part geography, part cultural exchange. Jason enjoys working with young people and "encourages children to follow their dreams." His talks at schools around

I met Jason Lewis about eight years ago on the beach in Baja California. I was finishing a two-month kayaking trip when Jason, Steve, and three women arrived on bicycles looking for a way to cross the Sea of Cortez by kayak. It seemed somewhat naive to me at first. They had obviously formed the plan to cross the Sea of Cortez by kayak, were obviously aware of the islands that allow one to "hop" across in three days and have a place to sleep each night, but they hadn't arranged anyone to meet them, they hadn't purchased any kayaking gear, and in fact, none of them had been in a kayak before.

However, they had exquisite timing, and I saw happening before me that beautiful arrangement of coincidences that does seem to happen when one is traveling. Ed Gillette, a long-distance ocean kayaker, happened to be returning from leading a trip in the area, and stopped to talk to the cyclists. Gillette, who paddled the entire west coast of South America and kayaked from California to Hawaii, was able to give them advice on the crossing. Another kayaker volunteered to loan them some boats and lead them across. This man happened to be traveling with his father who volunteered to drive

around to the other coast to pick up the boats.

All of this happened within a half hour of their arrival.

After we got home I followed their progress. Jason had capsized during the first crossing, and had paddled cold until landfall and a fire could warm him. A strong northerly wind kept them island-bound until their water ran out. After a rescue by fishing boat, they continued the trip and reached the Mexican mainland.

To me this was very inspiring. Not just the grand gesture of attempting to circumnavigate the globe under human power, but their confidence in their abilities. Steve and Jason had no idea how the kayak trip would work out, but they set out to do it and when they arrived on the beach in Baja everything they needed was waiting for them, as it somehow always is when traveling purposefully towards a goal.

Meeting Jason put some of my own dreams into perspective, but most of all, his attitude that things would work out if he continued forging ahead was a reminder that, at least while traveling, they usually do. ■







the globe are also focused on promoting cross-cultural awareness, and bridging the gaps of language.

When asked what he wants people of all ages to get from Expedition 360, Jason says, "One of the fundamental lessons I've learned is the whole concept of people's [perceptions] as a citizen of the world. In this day and age and the amount of tension between countries, people have to think about who they are [in relation to the rest of the world]". He hopes that the educational effort of Expedition 360 will make children more aware of who they are as individuals, and how they relate to their neighbors around the globe. He also makes note that "right now, we are using natural resources at an alarming rate." By setting the example that people can travel using their own power, even as far as around the planet, perhaps more people will see the conservation of fossil fuels as a worthy cause.

I also asked Jason if he has thought about

what he'll do when the expedition finally finishes what it set out to do. He said he would like to work with teenagers, possibly taking them on expeditions, or hosting a television series continuing the educational work Expedition 360 has begun. He has also thought about teaching, though the politics and administration involved seem insurmountable. It is certain, however, that Jason Lewis will never forget the lessons Expedition 360 has taught him about who he is as an individual and as a global citizen.

But there are still miles to go before he sleeps. Since October of 2001, the expedition has been on hiatus. Jason Lewis is currently living in Colorado, fundraising and waiting for the Indonesian leg of the journey to begin. Factors such as the war in Iraq have contributed to the delay. But, rest assured, it will go on. Roughly 22,000 miles are still left in this 40,000-mile journey, and no one is ready to cast this dream aside. M



Photos courtesy of Jason Lewis and Expedition 360.