

Going around the world

English traveler 'human-powered'

An English visitor gave special programs for Watonga students on Monday about his unique around-the-world journey.

Jason Lewis, 27, says he has taken a leave from his music industry career to take control of his life and is traveling around the world strictly by human-powered locomotion.

He happened to stop in at Midway Grocery for a cup of coffee last weekend while rollerblading through. After meeting proprietor John Giles, he ended up staying overnight with the Giles family and giving programs in the local school before setting out again. John Giles also took him to the Barefoot Power near Canton.

Lewis said the meeting was coincidental because he just happened to like the dinosaur emblem on Midway Grocery's gasoline sign and decided to stop there. He was also interested in the dome building John Giles had built.

He and a college classmate, Steve Smith, 28, also of London, set out on their ocean journey on Oct. 13, 1994, from Portugal in a 26-foot wood boat, "Moksha," that is powered by means of pedaling on a bicycle frame.

Their 111-day journey to Miami, Fla., that ended in March included "a couple of dodgie times," Lewis said. The boat was once capsized by a whale in the middle of the night, and on another occasion was almost run over by an oil tanker. Because the boat is self-enclosed and is self-righting, the two sailors didn't even get wet when they overturned.

Most of the voyage consisted of arduous and agonizingly slow progress across the Atlantic and battles with winds, currents and weather.

Lewis is rollerblading from Florida to San Francisco through Colorado. His associate is also rollerblading to San Francisco but is going by a more southern route.

In part, they were ready for some time apart after spending 111 days in close quarters, Lewis said, but also wanted to cover different routes and thereby visit twice as many schools.

Lewis said rollerblading is "physically demanding," especially in hot weather.

From San Francisco, they will resume travel in their small boat. They will head for Hawaii, Honk Kong and then China. They plan to cover the remainder of their trip back towards England on mountain bikes and hope to finish their 29,000-mile travels in 1998.

Asked why they were making the ambitious journey, Lewis said, "In part for personal reasons. Steve and I got disillusioned with our lifestyles and wanted to see the world and visit schools and encourage other young people to take control of their own lives and choose a career that is good for themselves. Instead of just doing what other people think you should do, you should do whatever makes you happy."

His classroom presentation includes a slide show and short video. Lewis' stop here happened to be while Dianna Giles' students and other third-graders were studying

human-powered vehicles and his visit therefore fit right in with the course work. Erin Giles also took him to the high school to visit Peggy Alexander's science classes in the afternoon.

Helping sponsor their travels is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) that is based in Paris.

Steve Smith was working as an environmental scientist before they set out on their travels, and their message includes an earth-oriented angle.

The venture is billed as "Pedal for the Planet: The first human-powered round-the-world expedition."

"We're showing that you don't have to use a big diesel engine to get across oceans or continents," Lewis said. "The power of the mind alone is sufficient."

Lewis said his music industry career consisted of operating a record label company that specialized in producing "New Age garage dance" music. He says he may or

may not resume that career after completing his world travels, depending upon how he feels then.

He has sometimes stayed with people he meets along the way, as he did with the John and Dianna Giles family, but also frequently camps out in a small tent and cooks rice and other foods on his portable stove.

Having made two previous trips to the US, Lewis said he is drawn to this country by "the mystical appeal of it — its enormousness and vast expanse." Rollerblading through all that spaciousness this trip should leave him with an intimate experience of it...

Dianna Giles said Lewis was very impressed with the school here and the friendliness of the people, including at Clewell's Family Hardware, where he got help repairing his rollerblades. The Englishmen have appeared on a "Discovery" program and will continue to be featured as their journey progresses.



School
visitor

JASON LEWIS, London, England, visited with Jamie Coley and Cody Parker at Watonga Grade School in the midst of his rollerblading trip across the US. He and a partner had arrived in Florida from Portugal in a pedal-powered boat. They are traveling around the world strictly by "human power."