

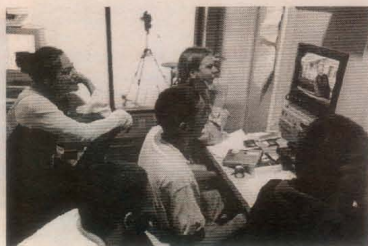


fantastic voyage

written by Justin Berton photos by S. Todd Rogers

Top: Jason Lewis has come halfway around the world using will power, foot power and help from others inspired by his journey.

Right: Photography instructor Theresa Ortolan watches as students from The Arthur Anderson Learning Center in Alameda edit "daily life" videos made by some of her students at the Richmond Arts Center.



Circumnavigating

Washing up on the shores of Miami beach after pedaling a small boat across the Atlantic Ocean with the help of a friend, Jason Lewis thinks to himself in the perfectly eloquent manner that only an Englishman can, "Well, why not buy a pair of roller blades?"

After falling and crashing for the first mile in his new shoes, he asks, "OK, well how hard can 1,400 more miles really be?"

And once he cuts into San Francisco, he realizes that if he wants to continue his journey to circumnavigate the globe by human power—and without the help of corporate sponsorship—he must find the solution to a design flaw in the pedal-drive mechanism of the boat he plans to launch from beneath the Golden Gate Bridge in just 11 days.

He says his mission is not to be the first or the fastest, but rather, to be the most altruistic person to circle the world, motivating and inspiring each person he encounters along the way. He relies on the donations, skills and craftsmanship of complete strangers, and in return, the voyagers get a piece of the voyage.

That's why he is standing in the center of a spacious design loft on the campus of Stanford University with three graduate students, all of whom are silent, in deep concentration, as they stare down at the metallic device with pedals, which sits motionless on a large white table.

One of the grad students, Garth Morgan, slowly outlines the edges of his brown goatee with the tips of his fingers and throws out a few ideas to the others.

Jason, being polite in the presence of his new-found friends, explains how Garth's ideas are valued, but ultimately, they would only create new problems, which means more solutions.

The men return to silence.

At 7:00 p.m., Jason is reminded that he is running late to give the slide presentation of his worldly travels.

He is off again, speeding across the campus in a red Honda Prelude as teams of young students jog along the streets.

Walking at a quick pace through the winding halls of a student dorm, Jason enters the lobby where 19 Stanford freshmen are slumped in a semicircle of chairs and couches that are facing a blank wall.

He apologizes for his tardiness and promptly begins to explain why he and a friend decided to circle the world.

After stumbling home from a pub in London five years ago with his friend Steven Smith, the two ended up in Jason's apartment sitting on the carpet, eating cheese sandwiches and discussing why their post-University lives seemed so mundane, so redundant.

Somewhere the idea of traveling around the world was slurred out, then the part about bicycles, then the part about a pedal-boat with no corporate sponsors.

He shows the students the slides of the boat being carefully crafted by friends. It is a small wooden boat, painted yellow that is no wider than 4 feet and runs no longer than 26 feet. While one pedaled, the other slept in the bow.

The students begin to show interest as he explains what it is like to float in the middle of the Atlantic, with nothing to hear and nothing to see but water for 360 degrees.

"After a while, you just fight it out of your head," he tells the students. "You're not going to see dry land for a long, long time, and you just better learn to focus on the here and now."

The students gasp when he says it took him 111 days to pedal the Atlantic and nine months to skate across the United States. It wouldn't have taken that long to get across North America if it weren't for the 82-year-old drunk driver who crashed into him in The Rockies and left him for dead.

As the slide appears of Jason recovering in the hospital (where a bone from each leg sliced out from beneath the skin), the students cringe—Jason directs the assistant to go on to the next slide.

While he is laid-up in Pueblo, Colorado, he meets a fifth-grade school teacher who is so inspired by his journey, she buys a bicycle and decides to join him for the rest of the way.

the globe by boat, bike and blade

He ends his presentation by showing a picture of school children playing with video cameras.

As he travels, he is allowing children to videotape themselves and then as he travels, he exchanges the tapes with different kids in different corners of the world. With the show ending on an emotional high-point, the students applaud, having never seen—or imagined—such an expedition.

Uneasy with this part of the show, he reminds the students that this is a human-powered adventure, and if willing, he has T-shirts for sale and donations are accepted.

Wearing a gray Stanford sweat shirt with red letters, a tall kid with sharp features and a blond patch of fuzz on his chin

At 9:00 a.m. on the slightly overcast morning of the launch, Jack W. Gill, a mechanic and sailor of 20 years, docks his boat behind Jason's on the Marin side of the Golden Gate.

A bit of a bashful man who punctuates his thoughts with sporadic laughter, he has come to know Jason through his yacht club where Jason sought help with transporting the boat around the Bay Area.

He freely admits his involvement with Jason is a "vicarious experience" and says maybe one day, when his daughter is grown, he wouldn't mind quitting his job to "chuck around the waters in my boat for a good amount of time."

Jack has brought his friend Corey, a woman he met at his local coffee shop located at the base of Portrero Hill in San Francisco. She had never been on a sailboat before, and Jack, telling her he was planning to escort Jason outside of the Bay, suggested this would be a perfect day for sailing.

With his new and improved pedal-drive mechanism installed, Jason and a friend pedal away from the pier, followed by a small racing boat that is overflowing with photographers and writers.

With the help of various partners, Jason will pedal first to Monterey, then to Santa Cruz, and eventually stop in Long Beach where he and Steven will reunite to ride bikes to Lima, Peru. From there, destination Australia, and after that, the plans are still being decided.

At just past 11:00 a.m. the three boats pass from beneath the Golden Gate and into the mouth of the Pacific Ocean, where the wind is blowing steadily outward, and the waters are just choppy enough to sway Jack's large sailboat side to side.

About the same time the media boat skipper finally decides to turn around, Jack tells Corey they, too, should be heading back.

Jack watches Jason pedal the thin yellow streak for a few moments and then, with no wind-thrust to catch, pulls down the front sail and motors his boat back toward The City. ■



Top: At the Stanford University Design Loft, graduate student Garth Morgan and Jason Lewis mull over the complications in changing to a new type of drive mechanism for the boat.

Above: Fifth grade students from the Neil-Cummins Elementary school laugh with Lewis prior to his departure from the Golden Gate Bridge.



Below: With Jason Lewis at the pedals, the Moksha quietly passes under the Golden Gate Bridge