

# WEEKLY

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## Feature

# Pedal Power

*Expedition aims to traverse the world—using pedals.* By Laurel Chesky

Once upon a time, Steve Smith was a British research scientist chained to a desk in Paris, but was becoming increasingly dissatisfied with life. Something was missing, and he wanted more.

"I was bored with office work and theory," says Smith. "I asked myself 'What would really float my boat?'"

Smith was researching the effects of air pollution in Paris when an idea began brewing in his head. He wanted to do something ambitious, something that had never been done before. He wanted to see if it was possible to travel around the world relying totally on human power. Thus, expedition "Pedal for the Planet," was born, a six-year journey that will circumvent the world via pedal boat, bicycle, in-line skates and kayak and that is temporarily taking a break in Monterey.

In July, 1994 "Pedal for the Planet" became a reality when Smith and former schoolmate, Jason Lewis, launched Moksha, a 26-foot-long boat, from London and headed across the English Channel. Moksha,

West Coast. The boat was shipped west, and is currently on display outside of the Monterey Maritime Museum.

But Smith and Lewis will pedal no further for now because something unexpected happened along the way: The expedition began to take on a life of its own. As the duo pedaled across the globe, people everywhere gravitated toward the travelers and wanted to take part. The expedition became bigger than just two people. In Colorado, Lewis met a teacher who encouraged him to add an educational aspect to the expedition. In California, the team met a student, a British naval officer and another teacher who would add a new dynamic to their journey.

"It evolved from a typical expedition about individual accomplishment," says Smith. "By San Francisco, a lot of egotism was knocked out of us. We began to think about how other people could benefit from our space and freedom."

Somehow, the expedition became less of a physical entity and more of a metaphor for the expedition of life. Smith and Lewis found that they inspired people, adults and



Casey Dunn and John Walker will pedal from Monterey to Hawaii later this month. Dunn estimates the trip will take up to two months with 22 hours of pedaling each day.

children alike. And they've found that sharing their experiences with others is more satisfying than the expedition itself. Originally intending to visit two or three schools in each country along the way, Lewis says that team members have visited with thousands of children in nearly 300 schools, mostly in the United States.

"I started out for selfish reasons, I had no delusions of changing the world," admits Lewis. "But I discovered that bicycling 100 miles a day wasn't fulfilling anymore. It was time to give back. I get an amazing kick out of seeing the kids' enthusiasm. When they get inspired, I get inspired. It's a mutually beneficial thing."

Therefore, it was decided that new recruits would pedal the next leg of the journey, leaving Smith and Lewis to concentrate on educational efforts. Casey Dunn, a Stanford biology student, and John Walker, a British naval officer who met the team while attending the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, are scheduled to launch the Moksha from Monterey some time between Nov. 10 and 14, weather permitting. They will pedal the boat to Hilo, Hawaii.

Smith's father, Stuart Smith, who signed on the expedition as a coordinator, chose Monterey as the West Coast base camp. The team has lived in Monterey for eight months while repairing and upgrading the boat. Smith says that he chose Monterey because the sense of community he felt here.

Avoiding ownership of a single corporate sponsor, the expedition relies solely on individual and business contributions. Since in Monterey, says Smith, the team has received \$60,000 worth of donated equipment, and has raised about \$10,000 in cash, mostly from the sale of "Pedal for the Planet" T-shirts. Business people have contributed everything from free haircuts to a Website ([www.pedalplanet.com](http://www.pedalplanet.com)). "I've had a fantastic time here," he says. "I want to send out a sincere thank you to the people of this community."

Expanding the educational vision, a local teacher is working with the team to create an experimental interactive Web Site that will link students to the crew via a satellite dish aboard the boat as they cross the Pacific. Suzanne Geller's fourth grade class at Santa Catalina Elementary in Monterey will become vicarious explorers, logging on each day to check expedition progress and gather information that will be applied to their daily lessons. Geller plans to tie in lessons in math, weather, geography, environmental issues and creative writing. Students will also learn the importance of setting goals and following through to attain those goals. "The students will learn to create their own expedition and to think creatively to set goals for themselves," says Geller.

"This expedition is just a tangible manifestation of a vision," says Lewis. "Anyone can do it if they have the passion. That's what it's all about."

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Jason Lewis

meaning "liberation" in Sanskrit, has no motor or sail, but is completely powered with pedals, like a bicycle. After landing in France, Smith and Lewis peddled south through Europe. From Lisbon they again boarded Moksha and pedaled across the Atlantic in 111 days, landing in Miami. Smith's girlfriend, Eilbhe Donovan, flew from Ireland to join him on a cross-country bicycling journey ending in San Francisco while Lewis in-line skated his way to the

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