

Unicycling Celebrity

When one of Australia's top actors decided to cycle from Sydney to Melbourne to raise money for charity, it seemed the main obstacle he faced was potential fatigue, but that wasn't all. LERON KORNREICH

After all, pedaling 1,000 kilometers is no easy feat. But while sore muscles certainly came into play over the course of the thirty-three day journey, so did legal issues. Police in New South Wales did not agree that Samuel Johnson's "LifeCycle" was a good idea. They determined it was too dangerous. After all, Johnson's mode of transport was not the two-wheeled variety complete with a handlebar and bell. It was a one-wheeled wonder with no gears, brakes, chains, or crossbar: a unicycle.

Taking on the challenge may have appeared risky to some but, as Johnson put it, "I'm of the opinion that if a 12-year-old can beat cancer, I can ride to Melbourne on a silly bike."

Johnson was not going to let anything stand in the way of his goal of raising AUS\$600,000 to help fund camps and other programs for the cancer charity CanTeen. Johnson pedaled through New South Wales without the support of local authorities, brushing with the law only once and getting away without a fine. During the rest of his journey, support was high from police and citizens alike. Crowds cheered him on, waving banners and clapping.

A Star is Born

Johnson gained fame Down Under for his starring role in the television drama, "The Secret Life of Us," and the hit movie, "Crackerjack." Last year, he decided to use his star status to shine a spotlight on a good cause. "There are plenty of people who have walked, ran and swam for charity but I wanted to do something different," Johnson explained. "I figured if I rode 1,000 kilometers on a unicycle people would notice me."

The idea for "LifeCycle" was born. After months of planning and mapping out routes, Johnson



Johnson (front), with a few of his protégés.

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hopped atop his unicycle outside Prince of Wales Hospital in Sydney and hit the road. Cameras rolled and paparazzi snapped away as Johnson took off for Melbourne and that was partially the point. Drawing media coverage of the celebrity's unicycling exploit was key to spreading the word about CanTeen.

In the Family

CanTeen is a national charity organization that provides support for nearly 2,000 people ages 12 to 24 who are living with cancer. It provides camps, activities, and workshops for

patients and their siblings. Young people whose parents are suffering from cancer are also invited to participate in CanTeen's programs. CanTeen was started nineteen years ago by six young patients along with several health professionals. Their purpose was to "focus on living with, not dying from cancer."

When Johnson was eleven-years-old, his then twelve-year-old sister, Constance, was diagnosed with cancer. Johnson and Constance attended Patients, Siblings and Offspring weekends organized by CanTeen.

"Often people forget that siblings of cancer patients need attention too," he said. "That's what is so great about CanTeen. From the word 'go' I was actively involved in camps and sibling weekends, talking and spending time with other young people that were in the same situation." Even as he dealt with his sister's illness, Johnson provided entertainment for others going through similar ordeals by riding his unicycle around camp.

Going for Gold

Years later, after the actor established his career, he decided to return to his previous antics and

climb aboard the unicycle. Only this time, he would do more than entertain. The star worked up a sweat pedaling an average of 37 kilometers a day for more than one month.

He posted a diary of highlights and challenges, including the brief encounter with police, at www.canteen.com.au. At times, he forced himself to ride despite pain from the exertion. While his cycle tour was difficult, it is his sister's journey that is truly remarkable.

Her cancer is in remission. And she was there, among the crowd, cheering on Johnson as he pedaled across the finish line.

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Hitting the Wall

Meanwhile, the pressure was on among Christian's friends and acquaintances. At one point, Christian happened to meet somebody in a bar and told him about the adventure. Drunk and incredulous, the man didn't have very positive things to say.

"I told him about the project... When he heard that I was doing it with a Mainland Chinese, he just started screaming, 'You're gonna die! You're gonna die!' A lot of people didn't give us much of a chance," Christian says.

Tensions built around them, but the two never wavered from their goal. Both Sun and Christian remained determined to succeed.

During their interviews, whenever asked if there was a point that they thought they couldn't make it, they hotly denied it.

They felt that if they failed, international understanding would have been proven impossible. All their friends would have laughed at them and said that it was unachievable. What kind of lesson would that show the joint-ventures in China? Neither of them would let that happen.

Before they reached the ocean, they had passed through a gauntlet of obstacles - from visa problems to construction problems with the boat.

By the time they got to the boat, the rest was easy. All they had to do was row.

Crossing the Line

Along the way, they were accompanied by whales at one point, which they took to be a blessing on their trip. And they finished in 56 days, coming in 8th among 36 entries. 3 boats didn't even make it to the finish line. In the end, they raised US\$88,620 for scholarships.

In Christian's book, he writes, "Every time something out of the ordinary is attempted, people will go to great lengths to convince you that you cannot succeed, regardless of whether they have any knowledge of the subject, yet, it is only when people break the mould that significant progress is made, either personal or historic."

And both learned lessons along the way. Sun says, "Although China has had a long history of management knowledge, today, we don't emphasize it as much as Westerners do. Finishing the trip, I realized just how important it is."

He also says that he is more goal-oriented. Everything he does now, he learns what he's aiming for and wants a plan. He also says that he's more independent now, and doesn't let other people interfere with his plans.

And what's next for them? Well, Christian is planning more trips for charity, next time, with a handicapped Chinese person.

BOSTON

From Rinds to Riches

In fact, a survey by the Minute Maid juice company found that one out of every three American adults has operated a lemonade stand as a child.

The typical American lemonade stand is a very simple affair - there's the lemonade (usually made by combining a can of frozen concentrate with some water), a sign to advertise it, and a place to sell it.

From the most basic enterprise, like the folding table Mr. Jaffee's set up in front of his home, to a fancy wooden stand at a busy public park offering a variety of drinks and homemade snacks, lemonade stands are a popular summer pastime for American kids.

More than a way to earn a few pennies or spend a sunny afternoon, the traditional lemonade stand offers early business training. Setting out sweetened juice and cups on a tray may sound simple, but there are questions of pricing, how to advertise, sales location and the amount of inventory needed. These decisions are all made at a basic level, but they teach lessons.

Price too high, and no one will buy. Too low, and there won't be earnings to pay mom back for the can of frozen lemonade concentrate. You may want to set up shop in your neighborhood,

but which is the busiest corner for foot traffic?

Deciding how many hours to work and how much effort to put in, show a youngster the relationship between personal effort and results.

The ABC's of Capitalism

Parents and teachers agree that the hands-on aspect of running a lemonade stand engages a child in some educational concepts that no classroom can teach.

"When it comes to counting out change to see how much they've earned, they become very careful about their arithmetic," says Alice Hauschka who

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teaches seven and eight-year-old children in Washington state, "Lemonade stands are a great complement to school studies."

"Measuring the right amount of ingredients to make the best-tasting lemonade, or adding lemon slices to make it look more appealing, teaches

kids about product quality," says Michael Viola, the father of three lemonade stand aficionados. Each year his children's lemonade stand becomes a little more sophisticated with decorated signs, or a more careful accounting of costs.

The Money

"Children get excited when they see they can earn money through their own hard work. They get inspired to do more," says Jennifer Overholt, who has worked with teenage girls in California to start their own small businesses like dogwalking and greeting card design.

"These young people can gain self-esteem and problem solving skills. If sales are slow, they need to figure out why and what needs to change. Should they move to a new location? Change their price? Sell something else? Advertise with a fancier sign?" These are fundamentally the same product/place/price/promotion questions that MBA students examine in their graduate studies.

From his childhood lemonade stand, Mr. Jaffee, now 40, has graduated to running a multi-million dollar business. "That lemonade stand was my first lesson in customer service. I wanted to make people happy so they'd come back. Of course, I also wanted to make money."



Ah, the thrills of an American tradition.

Tom Jaffee, founder and CEO of a Boston-based internet company, 8minutedating.com remembers his first business. "I was seven years old, sitting at the bottom of our driveway with a folding table, a cardboard sign and a pitcher of sweet cold lemonade. Neighbors would buy a cup of it for 5 cents." Jaffee wasn't alone. Every summer, thousands of American kids set up their first "lemonade stand" and enter the world of capitalism. JULIE BRICK