

TimesPeople



The Moment

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Catching Up With | Phil Keoghan

By [George Gene Gustines](#)



Monty Brinton Phil Keoghan, the host of "The Amazing Race," at Los Angeles International Airport.

No one travels the world quite like the competitors of [“The Amazing Race”](#) on CBS. This season, which concludes on Sunday at 8 p.m., the teams have done everything from transporting cheese down a steep hill in Switzerland (hilarious!) to running through Siberia in their underwear (tempting!) to eating fried starfish in China (no thanks!). The man who sees them through it all is Phil Keoghan, the host of the show, who himself has been on a cross-country bike tour since March 28. Sponsored by GNC, the trip is part book tour for Keoghan’s “No Opportunity Wasted,” part casting call for season 15, and part fundraiser for MS research. During a pit stop in Baltimore – “We didn’t have to bike in the rain today; that was a blessing” – Mr. Keoghan called in to answer a few questions.

What was your first passport stamp?

It would’ve been Papeete or Vancouver. When I was three years old, I traveled from New Zealand to live in Canada. I ultimately ended up in Toronto. I found a photograph the other day of my very first plane ride in 1970.

How many passports have you gone through because of the show?

I have a shoebox full – a dozen passports. I actually owned a British passport for a very short time living in the Caribbean. Stamps are becoming a thing of the past because everything is electronic. I made 12 trips to New Zealand last year and I didn’t get one stamp.

How do you spend your day while waiting for the team to check in to a pit stop?

I guess I would counter your question with a question. What makes you assume I’m not doing anything during the day? I think because the show is weekly people assume there is a lot of waiting around. I can assure you that every moment is spent rushing. The whole series is shot in about 28 days, so that’s about 2.3 days per show. Some shows stretch over two countries, some more. I have to go to every roadblock, detour, yield. I have to get to every pit stop before the team gets there and be there for the last team. If the first team leaves on the next leg and gets a head start on me, then I have to leap frog over a detour or roadblock and then backtrack. It’s not like being in a television studio. We can never stop them; we can never interfere. If we miss them running in, we miss them running in. The reality is that we’re trying to capture things in real time, having to rely on weather, mechanicals, planes, people getting lost.

The teams have a set period of down time when they land. The production team doesn’t necessarily. I remember back in season four, we didn’t get to a hotel room for five days. The longest piece of sleep I got was in Morocco, in the back of a van. You get very used to sleeping anywhere and washing your hair at the side of the road.

Have you tried any of the physical or mental speed bumps, roadblocks or detours that the contestants are asked to do? Are there any that you’ve wanted to try?

I have. I started working in front of a camera when I was 19, and I spent the majority of my career doing many of the things that they do and have done. I wrote a list of the things I wanted to do before I died, which is in my book, and I tried to turn the list into a career. I have a few of

them under the belt – breaking a bungee jumping record with nine other people, spending several days in a nudist resort. When I'm out working, there isn't time for me to do things like that. But to be honest with you, I get more of a kick out of other people doing it. My whole philosophy is getting people out of their comfort zone.

Did you already know sign language or did you learn it for this season in order to communicate with Luke?

I didn't actually think of it until I was on the plane. There's always a rush to get going and so much going on. As I was flying across the Atlantic, it suddenly occurred to me that I needed to make an effort to communicate with him the way he was used to communicating. I quickly got together with a woman who was assigned to help us communicate with Luke and I got her to teach me some basics.

Do you ever find yourself rooting for or against a particular team?

Oh sure. You always do. Sometimes I'm frustrated with teams that are almost too carefree yet do well. I see other teams struggling and I want to them to do well because you want the underdog to win. I think our show gives a lot of opportunities to the underdog. There's a lot of luck in the show and there's a lot of luck in life.

I love that our show is about the everyman doing extraordinary things. This is about your great uncle Bob and people that you know and work with or the construction guy or a coal miner. They're doing things that maybe they never imaged they would do: owning a passport for the first time; getting on a plane for the first time. Some of them actually end up becoming quite extraordinary as a result.