



Armed and ready

Kevin Connolly's adventures after MSU

BY CAROL SCHMIDT

Kevin Connolly hosted a travel show, "Armed and Ready," on the Travel Channel.

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Kevin Michael Connolly, '08 F&Ph, is a man going places.

It has been that way from the time he went on his first international exchange when he was a student. Since then, he has literally crisscrossed the world many times, and the five years since graduation have not slowed him down.

"In the last couple of weeks, I've been in Los Angeles, Orlando, Poland, Telluride and now back to Montana," Connolly said recently from his parents' cabin on Canyon Ferry.

Back up a couple of months more and you would have found Connolly training with astronauts in Houston, Texas, cliff diving and surfing in Hawaii, climbing trees with lumberjacks in Tennessee and biking with disabled veterans near Walter Reed Military Medical Center in Maryland.

Connolly experienced many of the adventures as the host of the Travel Channel Show "Armed and Ready" that aired last winter.

"It was a blast to host a TV show just a couple of years after graduation," said Connolly, who is one of MSU's most widely recognized graduates. A published author, photographer and filmmaker, he is known for his no-holds barred approach to life, despite being born without legs.

And while his anatomy has resulted in people across the globe doing a "Double Take" when they first see him (that is also the title of his memoir published in 2009 by Harper Studio), it's Connolly's dynamic personality that really takes him places.

In between a hectic travel schedule, Connolly said he's "been doing a wild mix of stuff from television to developing another book and photo exhibition project."

He said while the content will differ, the project will be similar to his debut Rolling Exhibition photography project that featured photos that Connolly snapped around the world from the perspective of his skateboard, his favored form of transportation. The photo exhibition led to Connolly receiving a book contract and then a television show.

Connolly was also a very popular speaker at MSU's 2010 freshman convocation.

"It's been exciting," he said of his years since leaving MSU. "No doubt about it."

Connolly said "Armed and Ready" was well received, but was not renewed for next year by the Travel Channel. However, the show's production company, Crazy Legs, is currently negotiating to place it with another channel.

"It was a pretty crazy process making (the show)," Connolly said. He said that **Fritz Stadler**, '08 F&P, one of his best friends and colleagues from the MSU film program, was second camera on the series. "He and I would be hanging out at NASA. We would say, 'Good things can happen to you five years out of college, if you are lucky.'"

"There has been a lot of hard work but, also a certain amount of fortuitousness in my career that I am grateful for."

Another big change in Connolly's life is that he is moving this summer from Montana to Portland, Ore.

"With all of the creative industries that I work in...travel, photography, film, writing...it's important to be in a city."

Connolly said he looked at cities across the country, from New York and Boston to Los Angeles looking for a city where he would be able to skateboard every day.

"Portland just fit when I went there," Connolly said. "It reminded me of New Zealand, where I think I have been the happiest and healthiest."

Connolly said there are also a lot of MSU graduates and other Montanans now living in Portland, so he will find a ready community. Plus, if he gets really homesick, he said he can get in his car in the morning and be at his parents' home in Helena, Mont., by the end of the day.

"I love Montana. It's where I was born and raised. My entire family lives in Montana, and they are so important to me. I would love to settle down and live here one day, so I know I will come back."

In the meantime, Connolly is working on his second book proposal and would like to use his degree in some creative capacity, as a producer, director or screenwriter in film or television.

"I've been doing lots of crazy stunts in front of a camera, which have been fun, but I'm 27 now and need to ask: 'What is the end game?' So, my goals for Portland are to start a garden, have a dog and keep that dog happy and well exercised and work on my next project." 🐾