



Running Across the World

By day, Michael Clinton oversees a publishing empire. But his other passion is racing across every continent.

LAST YEAR IN AUGUST, Michael Clinton woke up at 4 AM, snapped on a headlamp, pulled on a 10-pound backpack, and began running up a wooded mountainside in Mongolia's annual Sunrise to Sunset marathon. "I had no freaking clue what I was getting myself into," says Clinton, the 58-year-old president and director of publishing and marketing for Hearst Magazines. It was the most dangerous run of his life. Over six hours and 47 minutes (the average Mongolian race time is 50 percent longer than road marathons due to the altitude), he completed a remote trail course along steep ledges where runners have fallen and broken bones. He ultimately placed third in his age group. "It was as spartan and rugged as you can get," he says. "Hands down the toughest course I've ever seen."

Clinton should know. Last March, he reached his goal of running a marathon on

all seven continents, joining an elite club of only 440 runners to have ever done so. Most people racing across the continents tend to be serious athletes looking to combine a difficult marathon with an exotic, once-in-a-lifetime destination trip — a perfect fit for the globe-trotting executive. "I thought it would be a neat life goal," says Clinton, who in the past three decades has visited

123 countries, trekking the Himalayas in Nepal and Bhutan, hiking glaciers in Patagonia, and flying a Cessna 210 over the Skeleton Coast in Namibia. "The point is to keep pushing your limits."

For most men his age, it would be enough to sit atop a media empire like Hearst Magazines, where Clinton oversees 21 titles, including *Popular Mechanics* and *Road & Track*, that

pull in a collective \$1 billion in annual revenue. But he has also spent the past seven years combining two passions, running and adventure travel, into a single-minded pursuit.

"I seem to make life's big decisions when I run," says Clinton. "You reach this clarity of thinking. Seeing things at street level is the way to know the world." Clinton travels more than 75,000 miles a year for business meetings, conducting many of them while jogging. "It's non-stop talking with Michael," says Kevin O'Malley, publisher of *Elle* magazine, who runs up to six miles with Clinton around Central Park during work lunches. "We'll talk about anything that needs tackling."

Though he runs as many as 40 miles a week, Clinton hadn't tried a marathon in decades when his sister proposed doing London's in 2008. One year later, they ran Buenos Aires. The next year, they ran the Gold Coast of Australia. Then they figured, why not do all

seven continents? In a global sprint, Clinton chased that goal for the next 16 months — including a repeat trip to South Africa after a race there was rained out. "Thank God for frequent-flier miles," he says.

In 2016, he plans to hike to Mount Everest base camp and then run its annual marathon down to the Sherpa town of Namche Bazaar. It's the highest marathon on the planet, starting at 17,000 feet, and also one of the toughest: It draws about 100 runners a year. "I always know what I'm doing," says Clinton, sitting in a chrome and leather chair in his 43rd-floor office overlooking Central Park. "To me, it's all about the pursuit of a busy life. Every minute of every day, I know what I'm doing." ■

PROFILE

Clinton at the starting line in Antarctica, his final marathon on all seven continents

