

Celebration set to put Island on top of the world

by Dan Rutstein

Five of the world's best climbers, leading environmentalists, a former Australian of the Year, scores of mountaineering enthusiasts and even royalty are jetting in to Bermuda to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the first ascent of Mount Everest. Peter Hillary, son of Sir Edmund Hillary (the first man to ascend Mt. Everest alongside Tenzing Norgay), arrived yesterday for a week of activities in honour of the historic climb.

Mr. Hillary has also climbed the challenging mountain – which has claimed 175 lives in the past half century – on two occasions and has written numerous books to raise awareness of the plight of the people of Nepal.

American Peter Athans, dubbed 'Mr. Everest' after a record-breaking seven visits to the summit, along with mountaineering equipment inventor Roddy Mackenzie and Brent Bishop, an environmentalist and fellow Everest conqueror, complete the five climbers visiting the Island.

These 'famous five' will participate in the 'White Ice and Fire' events including a Gala Ball at the NATO Hangar on Saturday.

The events are to benefit the ISIS Foundation, a local charity which works to improve the quality of life of children in Nepal.

The five climbers will also make presentations to local schoolchildren at the Ruth Seaton James Auditorium at CedarBridge Academy on Friday, and, to the public on Sunday at the Tradewinds Auditorium at the Bermuda Underwater Exploration Institute.

Brent Bishop will be speaking at the Bermuda Aquarium, Museum and Zoo on his mountaintop environmental work on Saturday.

Princess Hope Leezum of Sikkim, a principality bordering Nepal, is also attending the White Ice and Fire events.

And Mandawuy Yunupingu, lead singer of aboriginal band Yothu Yindi and Australian of the Year in 1992, will be performing at Saturday's ball.

Audette Exel, CEO of the ISIS Foundation, said Bermuda, itself bereft of mountains, had been chosen to stage the events due to its "role as a unique meeting ground" and the epitome of global partnership.

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