

# BERMUDA Sun

## Honouring Hillary

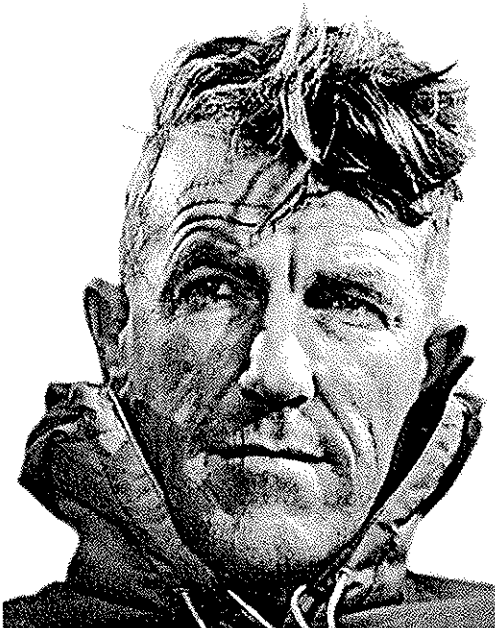
By Jeannine Klein

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WORLD renowned climbers and celebrities will land on the island in two weeks time for what organizers say will be a weekend the likes of which Bermuda has never seen before.

The last celebration of the 50th Anniversary of Tenzing Norgay Sherpa and Sir Edmund Hillary's first ascent of Mount Everest will see schoolchildren from around the island unite in a choir, performances by the world famous Aboriginal group Yothu Yindi, speeches by Sir Hillary's son Peter in addition to a talk by another renowned climber Brent Bishop. The weekend will be topped by a gala at the NATO hangar.

The organizers of the "White Ice and Fire" weekend are the well-connected Audette Exel and Sharon Beesley who run the charitable trust *ISIS Foundation* which works with local community groups in Uganda and Nepal to fund and support development projects focused on maternal and child health care and education.



*ISIS* CEO Ms Exel told the Bermuda Sun that they chose Bermuda for the last celebration of the first Everest ascent not only because *ISIS* is based here but also because "you can't picture a better place in the world to symbolize global partnership."

"This is the most diverse international community you would ever find. Why Bermuda? Yes because we're here. But why is everybody coming to support us? Because Bermuda is perfect. Everything everybody does here is intimately connected to the wider global world and that is basically the message we want to get out to people. The thing to celebrate here is global partnership," she said.

The highlight of the weekend will be a gala for 1,000 people on Saturday night. Ms Exel says that half the tickets – which cost \$350 or \$500 a pop — have already been sold but she keeps the list of celebrity invitees close to her chest stressing that it is important to ensure their privacy. Invitations have gone out to every celebrity who has a home on the island as well as many celebrities, climbers, media and politicians overseas. Several movie stars and music stars have confirmed their attendance but have requested not to be identified. The Bermuda Sun can report however that Alfred Gregory, member of the original expedition in 1953 with Sir Edmund Hillary, Pete Athans who summited Everest seven times and Roddy McKenzie, the Australian climber and photographer of famous the "Hillarys view" photo from the summit will attend as will Princess Hope Leezum of Sikim.

Cambridge Beaches is already onboard with accommodation while the Ministry of Tourism has endorsed the weekend. Countless other sponsors have gotten onboard to offer huge items for a charity auction which already includes a trip to Everest base Camp for six

people, personally escorted by Peter Hillary.

Government has even granted *ISIS* permission to use the NATO hangar for the gala which has previously only been used to house planes such as Ross Perot's. Ms Exel says the venue is "astonishing".

"The ball is a huge gala event. There will be 1,000 people. Bermuda will never have seen the likes of an event like this before. It is not just another black tie dinner."

Besides lining up Peter Hillary as the keynote speaker. Yotha Yindi will provide the music at the gala. The indigenous Australian group combines the sounds and instruments of western rock 'n' roll with songs and performances that date back thousands of years. *ISIS* is also arranging a choir of children selected from schools around the island to sing for their guests. Plans are already underway to decorate the hangar like the inside of a mountain — expect a lot of dry ice — and also show footage of the Mt Everest ascents in honour of Sir Edmund Hillary's first triumph on May 29, 1953. The affair is black tie/formal and guests are invited to dress to the theme of "White Ice and Fire". The gala is just one of the events planned for the weekend however. Ms Exel said, "If the ball is sort of out of people's current budget then they can still get close to meet, see and hear all these celebrities who are at all these different events who are all giving their time for free."

On November 21, Peter Hillary will speak to Bermudian children about both his father's ascent of Everest and his own climbing career which includes traversing the South Pole and also climbing Everest last year in honour of his father and Tenzing's achievement. He will speak again at BUEI on the Sunday while Brent Bishop, the first American legacy ever to summit Mt. Everest, will give a talk at the Aquarium on Saturday.

Mr Bishop is known for following his father Barry's summit up Mt Everest in addition starting an environmental foundation to clean up the mountain. *ISIS* executive director and general counsel Ms Beesley said: "Over the years they have taken 20,000 pounds of trash off the mountain and because of that he has become a leading global speaker on environmental issues. His talk will be of great interest to everyone interested in ecological issues, but also because of the climbers in Bermuda. There is quite a fraternity here." Schoolchildren will have further opportunity to interact with Yothu Yindi on Sunday through a series of music and dance workshops. The band will later give a public performance at Victoria Park following a walk by the Family Learning Centre to conclude the international year of the child.

Ms Beesley said, "We're hoping we can expose Bermudian children to Yothu Yindi, who are a cross cultural group and that it will be an inspirational weekend plus help them to understand Hillary's first climb of Everest and that challenges are surmountable."

All proceeds from the White Ice and Fire weekend will be split between the *ISIS Foundation* and The Hillary Himalayan Foundation which is a New Zealand-based charity founded by Peter Hillary to fund and support health and education projects in the Everest Region.