

## GLOBAL EXPEDITION FINDS EAGER V.I. ENTHUSIASTS

by Bill Curry

March 9, 2004 - "It takes a special heart and constitution to do what these two brave people are accomplishing," Sen. Louis Hill said at a Tuesday evening reception at the Fort Christian Museum for the ToptoTop Global Climate Expedition Team.

The leaders of the expedition -- Dario and Sabine Schworer -- are in the midst of a mission to climb the highest mountain on each of the seven continents in order to publicize the growing problem of climate change. Adding to the immensity of the undertaking is the fact that the Swiss husband-and-wife team is going from continent to continent using only muscle power and the wind. (See "[Global expedition set to arrive on Monday](#)".)

"We appreciate the work they're doing, highlighting the challenges we face as a human race," Hill said

Hill, who chairs the Senate Planning and Environmental Protection Committee, was joined by Sen. Ronald Russell and more than a hundred children from the Environmental Rangers, the Path Finders and the Boy Scouts, all of whom paid close attention to what the Schworers had to say.

In their presentation, Dario explained that ToptoTop is trying to "remind people of the Earth's natural beauty and to motivate them to act now to help try and preserve it." He said the team is going from summit to summit to show that every region is suffering from global warming -- whether it's the crumbling glaciers of the Matterhorn in Switzerland, the spread of malaria to southern Europe or the melting polar ice caps.

Forced to sail from Martinique in strong winds, the couple reached St. Thomas late Monday night. Martinique wasn't a planned stopover, but the expedition was forced to put in there in order to finish repairing their sailboat's rigging, which snapped during the Atlantic crossing, forcing the Schworers to use their climbing ropes to stabilize the failing steel structure.

Asked what has been the most satisfying aspect of their journey so far, Dario answered without hesitation. "Each day we work from early morning to late at night, and it is exhausting," he said. "But when you see the children's faces light up at the schools when we talk to them, and to see them work so hard on the different projects that we give to them -- they really help to give us energy and recharge our batteries."

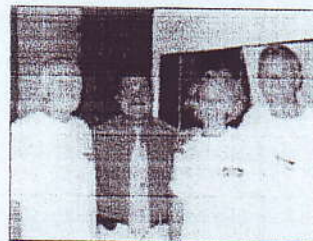
### ToptoTop's St. Thomas connection

Perhaps another energizing element for the Schworers is ToptoTop member and longtime St. Thomas resident Jean Braure. The expedition chose to come to St. Thomas largely to meet up with the 68-year-old Braure, who is both an expert sailor and an accomplished mountain climber. Originally from France, Braure made it his mission to help publicize the expedition's arrival, arrange the Fort Christian Museum reception, and schedule ToptoTop presentations at schools on the island.

Braure says he got involved with ToptoTop after answering an advertisement he saw in a Swiss newspaper "asking for mountaineers or sailors." Eventually he and the Schworers met up and went for a climb in Switzerland, after which the couple invited Braure to their home.

The Schworers were so impressed with the Frenchman's abilities that they allowed Braure and his wife, Chouquette, to use ToptoTop's sailboat, Pachamama, for a 10-day sail in Sicily.

Braure's latest involvement with ToptoTop is simply another chapter in a life filled with adventure and world travel. After arriving on St. Thomas in the early '60s, Braure soon found himself teaching French at



At the reception (from left):  
Jean Braure, Sen. Louis Hill  
and Sabine and Dario  
Schworer

what was then the College of the Virgin Islands. Eventually, however, the call of the outdoors won out over the classroom, and he started his own sailing charter business, which he continues to operate.

Also an accomplished competitive sailor, he was a member of the V.I. Olympic sailing teams in 1984, '88 and '92.

His mountaineering experience includes having scaled more than 20 summits higher than 4,000 meters, including Mont Blanc, the Matterhorn and the Jungfrau, all in the Alps.

And he is not even close to being done. In May, he plans to fly to Anchorage, Alaska, to meet up with the ToptoTop expedition, then cycle with the team 150 kilometers to Mount McKinley, which they'll climb.

Later in the year, Braure expects to join the expedition again, in South America, to climb Mount Aconcagua in Argentina. And he's hoping to connect for a third time when the Schworers tackle Mount Everest in the Great Himalayas of Asia.

"My dream is to climb Everest," Braure says. "Even if I don't climb the summit, I can help set up the advance camps and go up to six or seven thousand meters, but no further. At that point the air would be too thin for a man my age."

His affiliation with ToptoTop and the challenges ahead are "a dream come true" for him, Braure says. "Adventures like this give meaning to your life."

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