



## Sweet(?) sounds of the sun

*Symphony of snowscooters and pipeline percussion highlights annual Solfestuka celebration*

By **MARK SABBATINI**  
Editor

We probably won't see the momentary appearance of the sun, even though technically it'll be above the horizon for more than nine hours. But we'll surely hear about it through the sweet choral voices of children and incessant racket of adults banging on things.

No, the latter reference isn't backwards.

A symphony of snowscooters and pipeline percussion may be the strangest part of a week known for strangeness during the annual Solfestuka celebration beginning Sunday. The March 8 performance of "Scootersymfonien" is scheduled at 5 p.m., five hours after Longyearbyen residents and visitors gather outside near Svalbard Church to welcome the first return of the sun after the three-and-a-half-month polar winter.

See **SOLAR**, page 4



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

A cold and overcast day, like this one at last year's Solfestuka celebration, is expected to greet those gathering near Svalbard Church at noon March 8 to welcome the return of the sun.

## Seed vault turns 3, evil not ruling Earth



JANE SIEGWARTH / B.T. ARBORETUM

Bill and Rena Edwards from the Navajo Reservation in Arizona bless seeds sent last month to the Svalbard Global Seed Vault.

*'Doomsday' facility gets huge deposit as looting of vault in Egypt, floods threaten elsewhere*

By **MARK SABBATINI**  
Editor

If Bill Gates and other Evil Geniuses are plotting to use the Svalbard Global Seed Vault to rule the world it's apparently taking a while.

Strangers were recently seen introducing foreign substances into the facility designed to withstand the worst global disasters. Officials responding to the scene learned the items were

tens of thousands of new seed samples from about 100 countries, including some rare lima beans – which, depending on your tastes, might be considered a threat.

The world's largest gene bank officially opened to worldwide attention and general acclaim Feb. 26, 2008, and now houses more than 600,000 seed samples. Skeptics attacked the vault as a conspiracy by governments and multinational corporations to destroy traditional farming and promote genetic engineering. Advocates celebrating its third anniversary say

See **ANNIVERSARY**, page 2

### Inside

'Poor people' dine richly in Svalbard  
Page 2

Headlines from *Svalbardposten*

- Store Norske makes 20-year Mine 7 pledge
- Longyearbyen Hospital to get more doctors
- LNS exonerated in company-funded study

Page 3

Weather forecast

Page 3

Events calendar

Page 4

## CNN anchor finds Svalbard a thriller

*Debut novel by award-winning journalist puts finale in far north, with video to prove 'it is real'*

By **MARK SABBATINI**  
Editor

Kitty Pilgrim spent a lot of time as a CNN anchor and reporter getting attacked by haters of the "liberal media" for espousing fiction. Now she's hoping to be renowned for it.

Pilgrim, who's covered events ranging from the end of apartheid in South Africa to the post-communist transformation of Russia's economy during her 24 years at the network, is

See **PILGRIM**, page 3



WILLIAM CROXTON

Kitty Pilgrim tours the Svalbard Global Seed Vault during a trip in February to gather material for her upcoming novel "The Explorer's Code."

## Who's to blame and how to express your wrath

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## Corrections policy

When we screw up you'll know about it – on the front page. One of the big complaints about newspapers is they tend to bury corrections and clarifications deep inside where few people who read the original article see them. If we need to fix something, an alert box on the front page will state what story is in error and where the full correction is printed.

## Submitting material

Letters, columns, photos and other material are welcome, but we can't offer pay for published items since nobody here is getting paid at the moment. Submissions in electronic form (text, Word documents, JPEGs, etc.) are highly preferred, although typing and/or scanning of items will be considered on a per-case basis. We reserve the right to edit submissions for length, clarity, accuracy, libel and other reasons, but we will also make every reasonable effort to contact the author about any changes prior to publication.

## 'Let the children come to me'



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Polargospel and the Hillesøy children's choir perform the finale of the musical "Å, Så Cakkert" ("Oh, So Beautiful") Saturday at Svalbard Church. The concert-driven show by singer/guitarist Hans Inge Fagervik (not shown) focuses on creation and the consequences of consumption. Polargosel is also one of the featured performers at the Solfestuka ceremony March 8.

## Not all festive as seed vault turns 3

### ANNIVERSARY, from page 1

there are indeed serious problems occurring with the world's seeds and crops – and the vault is helping safeguard against them.

'The optimism generated by the arrival of this incredible bumper crop of contributions is tempered by the threats that seem to emerge almost daily to seed collections around the world,' said Cary Fowler, executive director of the Global Crop Diversity Trust, which co-manages the seed vault with the Norwegian government and the Nordic Genetic Resources Center in Sweden. "As the threats to agriculture escalate, the importance of crop diversity grows."

An example, the trust said in a prepared statement, is the Egyptian crisis that resulted in

the looting of the Egyptian Desert Gene Bank in North Sinai, which contains a collection of fruit and medicinal plants. Looters stole equipment and damaged the facility's cooling system, effectively destroying data representing more than 10 years of research.

Catastrophic flood in Australia, one of the countries making a significant contribution to the recent deposit, has devastated crops there. Also, trust officials stated they are working to block a planned housing development that would wipe out the field collections at the Pavlovsk Experimental Station in Russia, which represent one of Europe's most important collections of fruits and berries.

**There's more! Visit [www.icepeople.net](http://www.icepeople.net) for the complete story.**

## Icesheet

### Random bits of the week's weirdness:

"Poor people in Svalbard. It's dark, it's cold. And they've just champagne and foie gras to comfort themselves with." So claims Yngve Ekern in an article headlined "Princes of Darkness" published today at [dinmat.no](http://dinmat.no). We're not entirely sure what crowd he runs with, but it sounds like strangers in a strange land to us. Cauliflower can cost 40 kroner, he writes, but "delicacies from around the globe are free game, at prices that will only be reflected in the local alcohol outlet." Locals apparently relish a "Svalbard Supplement" by dining on lobster gratin and baked cod with truffle. Also, if people go an hour without electricity they start talking about evacuation. About the only thing we could grok was the bottom line: "'Worth a detour,' as they say in the Michelin guide" .... There's a new newspaper in town – OK, not in

town, but planning to muckrake about it. *Nyttinord.no* is an online newspaper that debuts today and plans to cover the happenings of northern Norway, with the fact they'll include Svalbard singled out in the news reports we've seen. The only employees are the two co-founders, editor Espen Stenberg and general manager Jon Larsen, but they also plan to use freelancers. Stenberg told *Svalbardposten* "they are not going to steal anything of substance to *Svalbardposten*, but rather be a good competitor." So far it looks like they're mostly mainland, with the lone Svalbard piece being about Svea workers concerned about a polar bear. Good topic, but the story was short with no real details (nor any mention of the numerous incidents elsewhere recently). Then again, we didn't exactly set anything on fire – except our credibility – when we first came out.



Kitty Pilgrim guest hosts CNN's Lou Dobbs Tonight in one of numerous broadcasts attacked by skeptics of the "liberal media" for misrepresenting the truth about immigrants in the U.S., covering up Barack Obama's real birthplace and religion, the "hoax" of global warming, and other topics.

## Video adds novel dimension to book

### PILGRIM, from page 1

scheduled to release her first novel, "The Explorer's Code," in July. The science thriller, the first in a planned series, takes place in six global locations, concluding in Svalbard.

The book, to be available in paper and e-book formats, will feature more than text. A video featuring scenes from Svalbard where the narrative occurs – such as the town center, Spitsbergen Hotel and Svalbard Global Seed Vault – will be included.

"Everyone asks me if this place is real," she said. "The video will show it is real."

"I thought I would do the video for a website. (The publisher) said, 'No, by the time it comes out we can do an enhanced version.'"

Pilgrim, visiting in late February with her son, Willian Croxton, to take photos for the video, said a vacation here in 1999 resulted in the decision to send her protagonist as well.

"I thought 'Dammit, I'm writing my finale in Svalbard,'" said Pilgrim, who has departed CNN to focus on her writing.

The theme of the series is science and exploration, Pilgrim said. She said she wants to show "the real workings of the vault" – not the apocalyptic themes of other fiction – with the main character being an oceanographer who is also studying the decoding of the genome of

the 1918 flu epidemic in Longyearbyen.

"It's a thriller, but hopefully the science has been vetted by the scientists that do the work," she said.

Pilgrim said she wrote the novel after work in six months, starting on Christmas Day of 2009, and sold it to publisher Charles Scribner's Sons by September of 2010.

"He said 'This is highly commercial,'" Pilgrim said. "They wanted a series."

It appears to be getting major release treatment, with major retailers already taking pre-orders at their websites (\$16.98 hardcover, \$12.99 Kindle at Amazon), although predictably there's no picture of the cover or much information beyond a reported length of 320 pages.

Pilgrim joined CNN Business News in 1986 as a production assistant, working her way up to anchoring the network's main news channel, plus programs such as Headline News and Lou Dobbs Tonight. She's won numerous major awards, including sharing an Overseas Press Club Award for a week of live broadcasts from Havana.

But Google her and there's plenty of naysayers ranting about her reporting.

**There's more! Visit [www.icepeople.net](http://www.icepeople.net) for the complete story.**

## HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

### Store Norske makes 20-year commitment to Mine 7

Store Norske's board of directors is planning to invest 100 million kroner to continue operating Mine 7 for at least 20 years, according to Bjørn Arnestad, the company's administrative director. "During the Store Norske board meeting last Thursday it was decided to support development, not liquidation, of the mine," he said. A year ago "it was clear that profitability must be increased, otherwise there was pretty much no doubt about the danger of shutting down." Mine 7 Manager Håvard Dyrkolbotn said the decision was greeted with "thumbs up and smiles in the faces of all the men." Arnestad said the mine, which produces 70,000 to 90,000 tons of coal annually, has a reserve of 2 million tons. A *Svalbardposten* internet poll with 785 respondents at press time shows 85 percent approving and six percent disapproving the decision.

### Longyearbyen Hospital to get more doctors and nurses

Longyearbyen Hospital will be getting more doctors and nurses so they are able to handle two emergency events at once, according to Norway's Ministry of Health and Care Services. Currently when the hospital's on-duty doctor responds to a scene there is not another at the facility. Ministry officials said money has been set aside for the additional personnel, who could begin working sometime this year, with the exact number and work plan still to be determined.

### LNS exonerated in report?

A report paid for by LNS claims the company was not overpaid by "several hundred million" kroner in its contracts with Store Norske, as alleged by prosecutors, but underpaid by nearly 200 million kroner. The report was commissioned by Wiersholm, Mellbye & Bech, the law firm representing LNS in the case. Jan Fougner, an attorney with the firm, said "it is absolutely independent" and LNS "has not in any way set guidelines for the work" done by consulting company Econ Pöyry. The allegations are part of a corruption investigation of Store Norske contracts negotiated by its former administrative director.

## Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Snow possible. S winds to 15 km/h. High -6C (-12C wind chill), low -11C (-15C wind chill). Sunrise: 8:21a Sunset 4:01p	Snow ending. NE winds to 21 km/h. High -10C (-14C wind chill), low -18C (-25C wind chill). Sunrise: 8:12a Sunset 4:10p	Cloudy. N winds at 11 km/h. High -20C (-28C wind chill), low -20C (-28C wind chill). Sunrise: 8:03a Sunset 4:18p	Cloudy. N winds at 11 km/h. High -20C (-28C wind chill), low -21C (-29C wind chill). Sunrise: 7:55a Sunset 4:26p
<b>Extended forecast:</b> Sunday, cloudy, -18C (-23C), -21C (-29C), light 8:48h; Monday, p. cloudy, -23C (-31C), -25C (-34C), light 9:04h; Tuesday, snow, -21C (-29C), -23C (-31C), light 9:20h; Wednesday, cloudy, -21C (-29C), -23C (-31C), light 9:36h.			
<b>Data provided by yr.no</b>			



ROGER ØDEGÅRD / LONGYEARBYEN LOKALSTYRE

Roy Waade, left, will conduct "Scootersymfonien," featuring snowscooters and pipeline percussion, March 8 during Solfestuka. At right, a team competes in a previous "Take A Chance" sled contest.

## Sun or not, moods likely to be light

### SOLAR, from page 1

But the forecast calls for snow, meaning the sun isn't likely to show. And if it does, it won't be for the first time this year since the official sunrise was Feb. 16 – the mountains just do a nice job of shielding most of the town.

Still, it's all in fun, with residents in an online *Svalbardposten* poll overwhelmingly choosing Solfestuka as their favorite event of the year. There are 25 events this year ranging from works by new artists and musicians to perennial favorites such as a lighthearted sledding competition and a variety show spoofing the past year's events.

"Scootersymfonien" is the composition of Roy Waade, who as the headmaster of arts in Longyearbyen from 2001 to 2003 was challenged by then-colleague Kjell Mork (now the mayor) to make "some music that was typical of Svalbard," according to a description of the show. The result was an hour-long show with about 40 participants in 2004 featuring choirs, snowscooter drivers and a section of the above-ground pipeline in the center of town.

"Since then almost the entire piece has been rewritten," Waade said in an interview this week with *Trønder-Avisa*. "About 80 percent is completely new."

The lineup will remain the same, with visiting singers comprising Røra Songlag joining a two local choirs, in addition to the unique sounds of the inhabited Arctic. The symphony consists of 11 movements with names (if translated in English) such as "Large White Glaciers," "Cruising Speed" and "Snowscooter in Loose Snow."

Solfestuka begins on a much more subdued note, with a pre-Lent Mass followed by the opening of exhibits at Svalbard Museum, Galleri Svalbard, and the Arts and Crafts center in Nybyen. The day concludes with the movie "Black Swan," the first of two films screened at the Tromsø International Film Festival that will show during the week.

Things get noisier Monday with two concerts and an always-lively trivia contest.

**There's more! Visit [www.icepeople.net](http://www.icepeople.net) for the complete story.**

## Solfestuka schedule

### March 6

- 11 a.m.: Sunday before Lent service. Svalbard Church.
- 4 p.m.: "Greetings From Svalbard" display of postcards, stamps and postmarks. Svalbard Museum.
- 6 p.m.: Official Solfestuka opening by Arne Rennedal, with exhibition debut by Monika Verde and Thomas Widerberg, and music by Lerkekvarteren. Galleri Svalbard.
- 7 p.m.: Opening of exhibit "'Svalbard På Langs" by the Longyearbyen Photo Club. Arts and Crafts Center in Nybyen.
- 8 p.m.: Movie: "Black Swan," U.S. drama. Was part of the Tromsø International Film Festival. Kulturhuset.

### March 7

- 11:30 a.m.: Concert by Lerkekvarteren. Kulturhuset cafe.
- 8 p.m.: Solcafe with the Store Norske men's choir and Longyearbyen mixed choir. Huset.
- 8 p.m.: Solquiz. Barentz Pub.

### March 8

- Noon: Return of the sun celebration. Old hospital steps outside Svalbard Church.
- 12:30 p.m.: Solfest gathering with toddy and waffles. Svalbard Church.
- 5 p.m.: "Scootersymfonien," featuring Røra Songlag and the Longyearbyen youth choir. Outside at the Melkeveien junction in the center of town.
- 7 p.m.: Catholic/Lutheran Mass with Bishop Per Oskar Kjøllås and Bishop Berislav Grgic. Svalbard Church.

### March 9

- 6:30: "Polar Eufori" video/music show. Kulturhuset.
- 8 p.m.: Movie: "127 Hours," U.S. drama. Part of TIFF. Kulturhuset.

### March 10

- 10:15 a.m.: Sun-themed activities for children ages 1-3. Longyearbyen Library.
- 10:15 a.m.: Outdoor sun-themed activities for children ages 3-6. Hill at rear of Radisson Blu Polar Hotel.
- 5 p.m.: Youth talent show. Kulturhuset.
- 8:30 p.m.: "Moonlight Serenade" concert by MiNensemblet (Musikk i Nordland) and the Army band. Kulturhuset.

### March 11

- 6 p.m.: Solfest party for junior students. Ungdomsklubb.
- 7:30 p.m.: Variety show "Coal Age and Uproar," spoofing events of the past year. Huset.
- 9 p.m.: Solfest party for senior students. Ungdomsklubb.

### March 12

- 1 p.m.: "Take A Chance" sled contest. Hiorthhamn.
- 7:30 p.m.: "Coal Age and Uproar." Huset.
- 10 p.m.: Hellbillies concert. Huset. **Sold out.**
- Midnight: Solfest party. Both floors of Huset.

## What's up

### March 2

8 p.m.: Movie: "The Green Hornet" (3D), U.S. action/thriller. Kulturhuset.

### March 4

6 p.m.: Movie: "Rango," U.S. animated action/adventure, ages 7 and up. Kulturhuset.

### March 6-12

Solfestuka, featuring concerts, sledding contest and other events. See schedule at left.

### March 6

7 p.m.: Opening of "'Svalbard På Langs" exhibition by the Longyearbyen Photo Club. Arts and Crafts Center in Nybyen.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Black Swan," U.S. drama/thriller, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

### March 8

7 p.m.: Catholic/Lutheran Mass with Bishop Kjølås and Bishop Grgic. Svalbard Church.

### March 9

8 p.m.: Movie: "127 Hours," U.S. drama, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

### March 13

11 a.m.: Liturgy. Svalbard Church.

6 p.m.: Movie: "Toy Story 3" (3D), U.S. animated/family, ages 7 and up. Winner of two Oscars including best animated film. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "The King's Speech," U.S./British drama, all ages. Winner of four Oscars including best picture. Kulturhuset.

### March 15

Official opening of "Trash People" art exhibit in Adventfjorden. Project features 500 "people" made of trash in the last stop of a 15-year global tour. Will remain on display through March 20.

### March 16

8 p.m.: Movie: "Burlesque," U.S. musical/drama/romance, all ages. Kulturhuset.

## What's online

**Icepeople.net** provides daily updates of news about Svalbard and the world's polar regions, plus extras for articles from the print edition. Among the latest news:

- *3 die on Norwegian voyage in Antarctica*
- *Svalbard test site for improved beacons*
- *Arctic ice ties for record low in February*
- *U.K. climatologists seek bubble blowers*