



A fast fall from gold to soot

Former Store Norske director quits public board positions after questions about contracts raised

"This is where Store Norske's heart beats at the moment," the article begins. "In time with Robert Hermansen's big heart."

The fawning 2008 profile in the industry publication *Geo* lauds the company's then-director for honoring mining culture traditions, excelling at worker treatment, achieving large profits through innovation and "not being afraid to get coal dust on his nose." But it wasn't just the industry heaping on praise.

Mainstream media coverage from *Afterposten* to the BBC focused on Hermansen's success in making Store Norske profitable and an enduring source for high-quality coal. He received the Norwegian Mining Association's

highest award in 2003 and last year a bust of him was placed in the main entrance of Longyearbyen's main municipal building.

The accolades came to a swift end this month.

Hermansen, 71, resigned all board positions in companies with a public interest last week after a government-ordered audit questioning hundreds of millions of kroner in subcontracts by Store Norske became public.

"I removed myself from all my public offices because it is too difficult for me and for the companies I'm involved in," Hermansen said in an interview Friday with NRK. "Such as the attention and media interest in me and my past in Store Norske has been, I cannot concentrate on the other duties."

Hermansen, Store Norske's director from **See HERMANSEN, page 4**



A bust of Robert Hermansen, former director of Store Norske, awaits visitors at the entrance of Longyearbyen's main municipal building.



Ida Vie, Mikaela Olsen, Marlene Mellam and Erle Haldersen (shown from left to right), take a swim in near-freezing temperatures Saturday during the annual Midsummerfest beach party at the Svalbard Sailing Club.

Summer gives cold shoulder, arms, legs, etc.

Annual solstice beach party draws hundreds, but only a brave few take a dip in near-freezing temps

The summer beach party was cold enough for snow to fall from the overcast skies, but Marlene Mellam, 15, said it was a much nicer day for a swim than last month when the water was filled with icebergs and predators.

Mellam, wearing a bikini revealing pen drawings by classmates over much of her body as a pre-holiday farewell, braved the waters more than

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Woman's classic Svalbard tale reborn

Christiane Ritter's book as an unlikely 1930s cabin housewife gets new printing in English

She came to Spitsbergen nearly 80 years ago for a one-year stay in an obscure cabin planning to knit, read and sleep a lot. Her husband, insisting nothing bad happened in the Arctic, told her to bring lots of toothpaste and forget about packing heavy clothes.

Safe to say, her prose from that visit resulted in a lasting legacy of admiration and bemusement.

"For having to pee in the cold, I blame Christiane Ritter," a Finnish reporter wrote during a visit in January of this year. But

there's little actual resentment for the Austrian woman who "spent a whole year in Spitsbergen in the 1930s, mostly in a tiny hunter's hut with only the light of petroleum lamps to break up a five-month darkness."

"A painter, Ritter describes the light of the Arctic winter in extraordinary detail, from the magical bright light of the moon flooding over vast snow to a twilight that makes you hallucinate, or the light of the distant sun illuminating the mountains in unearthly colours," wrote Antje Neumann in an article for the Oulu publication *65 Degrees North*.

Ritter's book, "A Woman in the Polar Night," is being republished in English more **See RITTER, page 3**

Who's to blame and how to express your wrath

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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.

A more solid cold-day prospect than lemonade



Pauline Skreslett, left, Frida Krystad, center, and Anna Beatrit Gorter, all 10 (or thereabouts), sell coal and fossils Thursday outside Svalbardbutikken. Collecting and selling samples is a common moneymaker for local youths during tourist season.

Crown prince joins climate leaders

Dozens of global experts gather in Ny-Ålesund to assess politics and science of Arctic warming

Norwegian Crown Prince Haakon admits he lacks the expertise of most in the room. But his royal experiences in the Arctic easily rival anyone's at drawing attention to the cause.

Haakon is the patron of this week's annual symposium in Ny-Ålesund where more than 40 global political and science leaders are focusing on "The Changing Arctic and Its Global Implications." His northern expeditions in 2008 and 2009 with Crown Prince Frederik of Denmark and Crown Princess Victoria of Sweden resulted in their authoring the book "Royal Polar Expedition" last year.

The symposium, now in its fifth year,

seeks to share updated studies and spread political awareness about issues facing the High North. It also emphasizes Ny-Ålesund's role as an international research hub and allows participants to observe effects of climate change firsthand.

Presentations and other information from the current and past symposiums are available at www.ny-aalesundsymposium.no.

Among this year's featured speakers was U.S. Undersecretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs María Otero. While she hailed some efforts as successes that others call failures – such as last year's Copenhagen climate accord – she also noted the intensity of discussions is a plus.

There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.

Briefly

300,000-kroner fine for tour company upheld

A 300,000-kroner fine has been upheld against a tour company for cruising too close to a glacier during a 2007 voyage, resulting in injuries to 23 of the 73 passengers onboard.

Oceanwide Expeditions was ordered to pay the fine by the Hålogaland court of appeal, according to a statement today from the Svalbard governor's office. The company was absolved in Nord-Troms District Court last November, but prosecutors appealed the ruling.

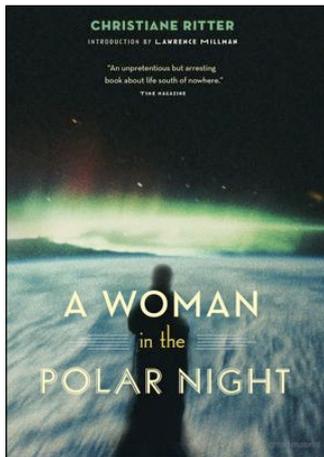
The case involves the Aug. 8, 2007, voyage of the Russian passenger ship *Aleksey Maryshev*, which was hit by waves and calving ice while cruising about 35 meters from Storbreen. Prosecutors said the company had inadequate procedures for navigating in glacial ar-

eas and establishing responsibility between the expedition crew and tour company.

High-speed ticket proves costly for man in court

Contesting a ticket for driving 71 km/h in a 30 km/h zone has proved costly for a Longyearbyen man in his 20s, who was fined 2,000 kroner, ordered to perform 36 hours of community service and has lost his driver's license for nine months.

The man was clocked in March driving about 80 km/h on Hilmar Rekstens Vei. He rejected an offer by the Svalbard governor's office to pay an 8,000-kroner fine and lose his license for six months, contesting the matter in Nord-Troms District Court. Officials prosecuted him for a 71-km/h violation.



Hermann and Christiane Ritter, above right, pose for a 1933 summer photograph in front of the same cabin buried during the winter at Grahuken that is the focus of her book "A Woman in the Polar Night," which is being republished in English and expected to be available in Longyearbyen this summer. Photos courtesy of the University of Alaska Press.

Modern Arctic author revives classic

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than 50 years after the first such translation, which has been out-of-print for decades. The effort was initiated by Lawrence Millman, an adventure travel writer in the United States with a lengthy list of Arctic books and expeditions to his credit.

"What I've been doing for last 10 or 11 years is finding Arctic books out of print I consider genuine classics or real classics that have sunk without a trace," he said. "What I try to do is interest publishers to restock them."

Millman said he's successfully revived about 10 books so far. He discovered Ritter's book inadvertently, borrowing it from a friend who checked it out of a library.

"From the very first sentence I was a convert," he said. "I really do feel it's the best book about the Arctic from a woman's point of view. Most men's books tend to be driven. She appreciates the aesthetics of the north, the color, the auroras, the light. Her sense of it is it's a very sensual place."

The new English edition, which includes an introduction by Millman, is scheduled for release July 15 from the University of Alaska Press. It will be sold at the Svalbard Museum, where in-print translations in Norwegian are available, although employees are not certain when they will be available.

Ritter's book centers around life in a tiny cabin at Grahuken, at the north end of Spitsbergen, that is still standing today.

There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.

'Bring enough toothpaste'

The following are excerpts from the opening chapter of Christiane Ritter's "A Woman in the Polar Night."

"To live in a hut in the Arctic had always been my husband's wish-dream. Whenever anything went wrong in our European home, a short circuit, a burst pipe, or even if the rent was raised, he would always say that nothing like that could ever happen in the Arctic."

"But for me at that time, as for all central Europeans, the Arctic was just another word for freezing and forsaken solitude ... then gradually the diaries that arrived in the summer from the far north began to fascinate me ... In his descriptions there was practically never any mention of cold or darkness, of storms or hardships."

"The little winter hut appeared to me in a more and more friendly light. As housewife I would not have to accompany him on the dangerous winter excursions. I could stay by the warm stove in the hut, knit socks, paint from the window, read thick books in the remote quiet and, not least, sleep to my heart's content."

The latest letter arrived from my husband ... 'Apart from your ski boots, you don't need to bring anything ... (but) if you still have room in your rucksack bring enough toothpaste for two people for a year, and also sewing needles.'"

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Passports to be required for Svalbard-mainland travel

Passport control will be enacted for those traveling between Svalbard and the mainland, with Norwegian officials saying the intent is to reduce the chances of criminals or terrorists moving between the two areas. Internal documents obtained by *Svalbardposten* indicate the new rule will be implemented by the Justice Ministry, although officials say it has not been officially adopted. Resistance to the new policy has been voiced by Longyearbyen residents and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, since it requires people to show passports while traveling within Norway and implements enforcement at odds with the Svalbard Treaty.

Longyearbyen's population remains young, mostly male

The ratio of men to women in Longyearbyen is about the same as 10 years ago, according to a survey of living conditions indicating home ownership is up and low taxes are a declining reason for living here. A total of 57 percent of 372 people responding to the survey last fall are men, compared to 58 percent in 2000. The ratio for employment is more heavily male, with 2008 figures showing men held 64 percent of all jobs and more than 90 percent of those in mining and construction. The most recent survey shows nearly half of Svalbard's population is ages 25 to 44, compared to about 30 percent on the mainland, with figures for those over 65 respectively at two percent and 15 percent.

Youth-oriented music room coming to cultural center

A soundproof music room for recording and rehearsing aimed at youths will be part of the new Longyearbyen cultural center scheduled to open in December. Kongsberg Satellite Services and Svallsat donated 150,000 kroner for the space, which will be available free at scheduled times. "This has been on the wish list," said Roger Zahl Ødegaard, the city's cultural consultant. "Now young people can make use of the rooms at once. It's awesome."

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Clouds and breaks of sun. WSW winds at 5 km/h. High 4C (3C wind chill), low 1C (0C wind chill).	Clouds and sunshine. WNW winds at 8 km/h. High 2C (0C wind chill), low 1C (-2C wind chill).	Low clouds. W winds at 11 km/h. High 3C (-1C wind chill), low 1C (-2C wind chill).	Low clouds. W winds at 10 km/h. High 2C (-1C wind chill), low 1C (-2C wind chill).

Extended forecast: Sunday, low clouds, 3C (1C), 0C (-2C); Monday, sun and areas of low clouds, 5C (5C), 3C (3C); Tuesday, low clouds, 5C (5C), 4C (4C); Wednesday, partly cloudy clearing overnight, 4C (4C), 3C (3C).

Data provided by AccuWeather.com



Youths feed a bonfire on the beach near the Svalbard Sailing Club during the organization's annual Midsummerfest party. The fire offered warmth for hundreds of locals and visitors gathering in near-freezing temperatures for a barbecue, music and occasional dip in the frigid water.

'Longest day' makes Arctic life a beach

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once with a group of friends Saturday during the annual Midsummerfest hosted by the Svalbard Sailing Club. She said it was her fourth swimming excursion of the year, including one last month where they were diving off ice chunks thick in the bay at the time.

"It was the day the polar bear was out there," she said.

Nearly all of the several hundred locals and visitors at the party were content to watch the bathers, take pictures, eat barbecue and gather around a massive bonfire. Very few of the dippers were men, prompting accusations of "cowards" from some members of the fairer sex, but Haakon Sandvik said experience gives

him a reality check on the so-called virtues.

"Refreshing is an exaggeration," he said.

The "midsummer" bash actually occurs near the summer solstice marking the official beginning of summer. The solstice is also the longest day of the year, a designation that means little in Longyearbyen where the 24-hour sun of polar summer shines from April 19 to Aug. 23 and continuous light lasts for weeks more. The polar night lasts from Nov. 14 to Jan. 29.

The continuous light is more disturbing for many Arctic dwellers, with sleeplessness, depression and other problems at their peak.

There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.

'Hectic' situation follows resignations

HERMANSEN, from page 1

1999 to 2008, was on the board of 25 companies and chairman of nine, according to *Svalbardposten*.

The audit states he made long-term agreements with subcontractors who received far above market value and arranged millions of kroner in private loans from at least one of them to invest in other businesses he was affiliated with.

Hermansen, in the NRK interview, denies receiving any personal economic benefit from the deals, which he said were approved by Store Norske's board and contained in public documents. The value of the agreements, he said, were the best that could be achieved.

Among those getting the most initial public scrutiny are a 1 million kroner loan to a Sami reindeer herder cooperative Hermansen was the chairman of in 2004 and 2 million kroner to a quarry in Kautokeino that eventually went bankrupt.

Funding for both came from Leonard Nilsen and Sons (LNS), which has a long-term coal transportation contract with Store Norske. LNS has stated they were misled about the

loans. But TV 2, which first reported the audit's findings, stated this week LNS is declining to show the loans have been repaid or otherwise remedied.

"We are in a good dialogue with Store Norske and want to concentrate on this process," wrote Beate Bø Nilsen, an LNS spokesperson, in an e-mail to the station. "It is therefore not appropriate to give any comments or suggestions from our side now."

All relationships between Hermansen and companies subcontracting with Store Norske are expected to be scrutinized, said Trond Giske, head of the Norwegian Ministry of Trade and Industry, in an interview with NRK.

"I think it's best for the company that all information is reviewed," Giske said.

Store Norske is also reviewing past agreements to determine the possibility of renegotiating those found to be inappropriate or above market value. In addition, NRK describes as "hectic" the situation at Troms Kraft, a Troms district company Hermansen was the chairman of until his abrupt resignation.

There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.

What's up

June 27

11 a.m.: Liturgy. Svalbard Church.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Clash of the Titans," U.S. fantasy/adventure, ages 11 and up. Huset.

July 4

11 a.m.: Liturgy. Svalbard Church.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Robin Hood," U.S. action/drama, ages 11 and up. Huset.

July 11

11 a.m.: Liturgy. Svalbard Church.

July 18

11 a.m.: Liturgy. Svalbard Church.

July 25

11 a.m.: Liturgy. Svalbard Church.

Aug. 1

11 a.m.: Liturgy. Svalbard Church.

Aug. 8

11 a.m.: Liturgy. Svalbard Church.

Aug. 14

Svalbard's National Day celebration. Details to be published at www.svalbardkirke.no.

Aug. 15

11 a.m.: Liturgy. Svalbard Church.

Aug. 22

11 a.m.: Liturgy. Svalbard Church.

6 p.m.: Movie: "Operasjon Froskeegg," Norwegian family film, all ages. Huset.

Aug. 29

11 a.m.: Liturgy. Svalbard Church.

Sept. 5

6 p.m.: Movie: "Shrek – Happily Ever After," U.S. animated film with Norwegian subtitles, no age limit. Huset.

Sept. 7

10 a.m.: Administration Committee meeting. Næringsbygget 1, Tundra room.

Sept. 21

7 p.m.: Local Board meeting. Lompensenteret, Mediateket.

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:

- *Norway starts oil spill response review*
- *Tromsø seeks researcher accountability*
- *Video: Nat'l Geographic visits seed vault*
- *Talks on whaling quotas collapse*