



A construction worker carries a plank toward Longyearbyen's new cultural center, scheduled to open in November. The center will become the primary location for stage performances and movies in place of the 60-year-old Huset building, which was purchased earlier this month by new owners who plan to restore it for future use.

Opening night and final curtain

'Experiment' play first at cultural center; Huset films end Sept. 12

This year darkness falls in late summer before light returns in November – at least for one aspect of life in Longyearbyen.

Movies will stop showing at the 60-year-old Huset building Sept. 12 so equipment can be transferred to the new cultural center, city officials announced this week. But residents feeling artistically deprived will get to indulge in a wealth of shows once the center opens,

including an experimental play Nov. 12 that is the first-announced performance on the new stage.

A nearly three-month gap between movies is necessary to make a transition to what will be a far superior setting, wrote Roger Ødegård, the city's cultural advisor, in an e-mail interview. The first movie at new center

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Seeking criminal inquiry

Store Norske to ask prosecutors about former director; he says company smearing him for profit

Store Norske's board of directors announced today they are seeking advice from prosecutors after reviewing an audit of "deplorable" agreements reached by former director Robert Hermansen.

The announcement following an "extraordinary" board meeting in Oslo stems from reports of numerous transactions where the mining company paid far above market value for services for unusually long periods without a competitive bidding process.

Hermansen, director of the company from 1999 to 2008, also is accused of arranging millions of kroner in questionable loans to other businesses he was involved with.

"The report discusses factors that have a potential criminal side," Store Norske's board said in prepared statement following the meeting. "The board of Store Norske has decided to launch a dialogue with the prosecutor to clarify the basis for review and investigation of any of the conditions."

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ROBERT HERMANSEN

Historic priest gets eternal digital life

Reunion, online archive part of daughter's project to preserve adventures from 50 years ago

If a confirmation ceremony at Svalbard Church this week sounds familiar, it's probably because you're among the handful of people participating in it 50 years ago.

Audio recordings from the ceremony, along with pictures and film from the era, will be presented at 5 p.m. Friday at the church as four surviving participants return for a reunion. The presentation is by Tone Nødtvedt, who has spent the past 10 months preserving thousands

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Erling Johan Nødtvedt, priest of Svalbard Church from 1951 to 1960, visits Kongsfjorden in 1959. Photo courtesy of Tone Nødtvedt.

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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.



This house at Vei 232 is believed to be the most expensive ever offered for sale in Longyearbyen. The three-level home occupying about one-third of the 780-square-meter land plot features six bedrooms, including a separate basement apartment. Photo courtesy of Finn.no.

Svalbard's priciest home for sale

4.8m kroner buys six bedrooms, two kitchens and one of two Longyearbyen private garages

Housing crunch? What housing crunch?

Those not feeling the pain from the global collapse in the market can live the high life in the High North for a mere 4.8 million kroner. That price, believed to be the highest ever for a Svalbard residence, buys a three-level house whose 280 square meters of floor space is described as equal to three or four average Longyearbyen homes.

The property at Vei 232 is about a five-minute walk from downtown Longyearbyen,

and offers scenic views of Isfjorden and Adventdalen. Built in 2003, it includes six bedrooms and two kitchens, including a basement apartment with a separate entrance. The purchaser also gets the key to one of Longyearbyen's two private garages.

"We have had it up for sale for 14 days," said Arne Kristoffersen, the property's owner, in an interview today with NRK. "There have been some calls, but it is not yet sold."

Kristoffersen said if he does not sell the home he may offer it as four subdivided units.

Full details and a photo slideshow of the home are available at www.finn.no/finn/realestate/homes/object?finnkode=22949456.

Briefly

Ny-Ålesund OKs science plan through 2013

A new science plan for Ny-Ålesund outlining educational, logistical and ethical goals as an international research hub is available online after being enacted earlier this month.

The plan, effective until 2013, was endorsed by the Ny-Ålesund Science Managers Committee and adopted by Svalbard Science Forum. It is a revision of the original plan adapted in 2006 that was in effect until this year.

The plan and details about specific research are available at www.ssf.npolar.no.

Web sites help ID Arctic plant, invertebrate life

Help recognizing 165 Svalbard plant species and more than 1,000 invertebrate species are being offered at two Web sites developed by scientists at The University Centre In Svalbard.

Svalbardflora.net, online since 2007, presents plant photos, distribution maps, scientific data, and names in Latin, English and Norwegian. Information about terrestrial or

freshwater invertebrate in Svalbard, including 230 species of insects and 19 species of spiders, is at svalbardinsects.net.

Oil experts get lesson from UNIS 'dinosaur man'

Svalbard's "dinosaur man" is taking oil experts back to the creation of crude with a presentation Friday at the ONS conference in Stavanger.

Jørn Hurum, a University of Oslo paleontologist whose speech is titled "From the Past to the Future," is credited with the 2007 discovery in Svalbard of "Predator X," the world's largest known pliosaur, and being part of the international team revealing the 47-million-year-old "Ida" primate fossil, touted as the "missing link" in human evolutionary history.

He has served as an adjunct professor at The University Centre In Svalbard and is continuing fossil research with students in the archipelago this year.

The international international oil, gas and energy conference, noting the theories about Ida are controversial among some researchers, states in a press release his ability to reach "new and wider audiences" are part of the reason for including his presentation.



Tone Nødtvedt presents a slideshow of photos taken by her father, Erling, who was the priest of Svalbard Church from 1951 to 1960, on June 17 at Svalbard Museum. A collection of thousands of photos and other documents by the priest that have been digitalized by his daughter will be available at the museum's Web site this fall.

Priest's work resurrected after 50 years

PHOTOS, from page 1

of photos and other materials from her father, Erling, who was the church's priest from 1951 to 1960.

"They were confirmed on July 3, 1960," said Nødtvedt, whose sister, Solveig, is among those returning. "The service on Sunday will also be a little bit special because of that."

The audio recording is being digitally preserved, a task Nødtvedt has already performed on about 3,800 photographs from her father's time in Svalbard. Some were presented at a slide show June 17 at Svalbard Museum, where residents got a look at a time when cows roamed Longyearbyen, along with the first bus and people building structures now considered historic.

Not only is her work preserving the images, but thanks to photo editing software "I'm seeing some of these in the proper colors for the first time," she said.

The photos and more material still being scanned will be available as an online exhibition at the museum's Web site this fall.

The display is more than a slideshow, as Nødtvedt is reconstructing her father's adventures in Svalbard by including narrative information about each photo. Much of it comes

from notes and camera settings her father wrote on the backs of photos or placed in envelopes of negatives.

"If I don't have the negative I'm not 100 percent sure, but I'm 99 percent sure," she said, adding people visiting the site will be able to add their own information to fill in any gaps.

Nødtvedt said she still has plenty of negatives and photos to scan – and more keep coming in from family and friends – along with about 200 pages of letters and articles written by her father.

"Some have to be censored because they're love letters for my mother," she said. "It's like a blog or Twitter – what he ate for dinner, how many children came to Sunday school, what boat is coming."

Nødtvedt, who obtained grant funding for the project, said she's ready to spend years more preserving historic images if the money is available.

"Since I started the project I have been in touch with others here my age and they also have photos," she said. "It's an avalanche."

Her work also led to the confirmation reunion, plus possibly one with old classmates.

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

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM

SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Food grinders likely to have major problems, experts say

Experts say the food grinders being installed in all Longyearbyen residences are likely to have major problems draining sludge and water properly. Engineers in Bardu, where residents have had grinders for more than 10 years, said pictures of those being installed in Longyearbyen show a two-pipe system that will leave sludge behind when water is not properly pumped out. "If you do not use lots of water the remains creep back, laying on the bottom and hardened," said Kyrre Halvorsen, Bardu's municipal technical director. Brynjulv Øverby, technical leader for Bydrift in Longyearbyen, said they went with the company with "the most economically advantageous" offer, although not necessarily the cheapest. He did not say if he is satisfied with installations done to date.

Rush to restore Amundsen villa before anniversary

Work on restoring a villa named after Roald Amundsen is in full swing in Ny-Ålesund, where the famed polar explorer lived in May of 1925 and 1926. Paintings for the battle for the North Pole were discovered on two walls of the house in 2002, with researchers saying they likely originated when the villa was used as a bar during the 1930s. Efforts to restore the building, including the paintings, began last summer. This year the structure has been stripped, with orange-yellow siding that wrapped the building in recent years removed to restore the original appearance. The project deadline is next May, the 100th anniversary of Amundsen's South Pole conquest.

Sailboat floats off safely after grounding next to glacier

A Polish sailing boat grounded Monday night in front of Conwaybreen managed to float off early this morning without assistance, but is being inspected in Ny-Ålesund for possible damage. The Svalbard governor's office received a call from the ship at 6:40 p.m. Monday, but were told there was no danger to the 17 passengers.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday

Partly sunny, then low clouds. E winds at 5 km/h. High 4C (3C wind chill), low 3C (2C wind chill).

Thursday

Low clouds breaking late. WSW winds at 5 km/h. High 3C (2C wind chill), low 1C (0C wind chill).

Friday

Low clouds. W winds at 8 km/h. High 4C (2C wind chill), low 2C (0C wind chill).

Saturday

Low clouds. WSW winds at 5 km/h. High 3C (2C wind chill), low 1C (0C wind chill).

Extended forecast: Sunday, sun and low clouds, 4C (3C), 2C (0C); Monday, showers turning to rain, 6C (4C), 6C (3C); Tuesday, low clouds and showers, 7C (5C), 5C (3C); Wednesday, rain and drizzle, 6C (4C), 1C (-1C).

Data provided by AccuWeather.com



Longyearbyen residents, above, celebrate Christmas in the main theater of Huset during the 1950s. The 60-year-old building, seen during a recent winter at right, is scheduled to stop showing movies Sept. 12. Photos courtesy of Huset.



Grand movie finale planned at Huset

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is scheduled Dec. 3.

"A lot of equipment will be added," he wrote. "Everything will be better – better sound, seats, viewing, location, sound studio, meeting rooms. Hopefully people (will be) there every afternoon/evening – not only (during) cinema/concerts."

The first movie at Huset was "Night Club Queen," a 1945 U.S. musical drama that was shown Oct. 14, 1951. Efforts to locate a copy to show as the finale at Huset have been unsuccessful, Ødegård wrote.

Instead, the city is trying to locate two movies – "Når Lyset Vender Tilbake" (When the Light Returns) and "Orion's Belt" – partially filmed in Svalbard. The latter, a 1985 drama about three workers on a Norwegian cargo ship unexpectedly caught in a warlike conflict, is scheduled as the finale at 8 p.m. Sept. 12.

Huset has been purchased by Bård Heio, Tollef Svenkerud and John-Einar Lockert, who are co-owners of the property company Saxifraga Eiendom, according to *Svalbardposten*. They plan to renovate it for future activities.

Store Norske, former director trade charges

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Hermansen has denied wrongdoing. His attorney said this week Store Norske has a vested interest in finding deplorable conditions during Hermansen's tenure so it can renegotiate more favorable contracts.

"This lies in the nature of things that Store Norske's interests are in the outcome of such a review," said Christian Hjort in an interview with TV 2 News, which broke the news of the original report.

Hjort declined to answer if he believes the audit is "purely a commissioned work."

Store Norske's decision was based on a report by auditor PricewaterhouseCoopers and law firm BA-HR, ordered after the questionable agreements were detailed in a separate review by the Norwegian Ministry of Trade and Industry.

The ministry's report was classified for more than a year before a Norwegian television station revealed the findings earlier this month.

The new audit "revealed deplorable conditions regarding the company's financial management, internal control, agreements and con-

"Huset is an underrated product," Heio told the newspaper. "It must be used as it is, but we want to get it more back to its original condition."

Cutting edge rather than tradition will be the theme of the debut performance at the new cultural center. "The Experiment," by Oslo's Jo Strømgren Kompani, is about "four patriotic women (who) have joined a secret experiment as volunteers."

"Even though the laboratory is warm and cozy, and at times filled with nice music, there is a growing concern – something is not quite right," a description by the group states. "Actually, something must be completely wrong."

The show will be part of Longyearbyen's annual KunstPause festival.

"We just realized that it would be great to test a theatre/dance performance," Ødegård wrote. "We have followed Jo Strømgren Kompani for a while and, in addition to being very interesting, it gives us the opportunity to test out several technical solutions."

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

tract extensions," the statement by Store Norske notes. "The report questions the motives behind these agreements."

"Nothing in the preliminary report means that Store Norske's confidence as a major contractor is significantly weakened. To the extent that there are grounds for continuing the agreements, these will be renegotiated. If talks do not give a satisfying result, it will be sought to have the agreements terminated."

Hjort said Hermansen has not seen the audit and cannot provide a response to specific findings without knowing their context.

Some are questioning if the audit's findings are truly surprising since the board had to approve the contracts and the ministry was apprised of them. A June 18 online poll by *Svalbardposten* found 73 percent of the 675 respondents weren't surprised by the revelations.

"It seems strange that these agreements come as a shock, not least to the industry minister," wrote Lars Egil Mogård in a column for NRK. "There are undoubtedly many who have known all."

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

What's up

July 2

5 p.m.: Reunion of 1960 confirmation with picture and video show by Tone Nødtvedt. Svalbard Church.

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.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Polanski's Shadow," U.S./German action/drama, ages 11 and up. Huset.

July 18

11 a.m.: Liturgy. Svalbard Church.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Prince of Persia," U.S. action/fantasy, ages 11 and up. Huset.

July 25

11 a.m.: Liturgy. Svalbard Church.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Sex and the City 2," U.S. comedy, ages 11 and up. Huset.

Aug. 1

11 a.m.: Liturgy. Svalbard Church.

8 p.m.: Movie: "The A Team," U.S. action/adventure, ages 15 and up. Huset.

Aug. 8

11 a.m.: Liturgy. Svalbard Church.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Cash," Swedish action/drama, ages 15 and up. Huset.

Aug. 14

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

Aug. 15

11 a.m.: Liturgy. Svalbard Church.

8 p.m.: Movie: "The Twilight Saga - Eclipse," U.S. fantasy/romance/thriller, ages 11 and up. Huset.

Aug. 22

11 a.m.: Liturgy. Svalbard Church.

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

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:

- *Nowhere, yet plugged in everywhere*
- *High time for a tough Arctic treaty?*
- *China becoming a new Arctic rival*
- *'Whitewashing' peaks slows glacier melt*