



BJØRN-OWE HOLMBERG / VEIDEKKE ARCTIC

Jan Tore Sanner, center right, Norway's minister of Local Government and Regional Development, watches a worker weld the framework of Ny-Ålesund's new geodetic earth observatory during a ceremony laying the foundation stone of the facility Saturday. The center is scheduled to open in 2018.

A hot G-spot

Sparks fly as work starts on new geodetic observatory offering Ny-Ålesund precise climate data

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

For those aspiring to build one of the world's most advanced observatories, it helps to have experience with Legos.

Construction of a new geodetic earth ob-
See GEODETIC, page 4

LIQUID ASSETS

Annual charity events raising record sums for water projects despite struggles to find a leader

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

Seemingly everybody wants to give money. The hard part is finding somebody willing to take it.

See AUCTION, page 4



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Amber Maya, 6, shows a stuffed horse to Mikaela Olsen during a flea market Saturday at The University Centre in Svalbard to raise money as part of the annual NRK charity telethon.

Inside

- A new local record for hangovers?** Page 2
- Weather forecast** Page 3
- Events calendar** Page 4
- Aggressive bear alarms Pyramiden** Page 4

Scapegoat? Scoundrel? Hero!

Robert Hermansen gets loving homecoming as he touts book calling him a victim in scandal

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

A crook who spent 15 months prison for a corruption scandal that cost his company dearly? Or a hero cast out as a scapegoat by the company, which thrived when he was there

See SCAPEGOAT, page 3



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Otto Ulseth and Elin Olsrud interview Robert Hermansen, center, Thursday at Kulturhuset.

BREAKING: New government's '15 budget means cutbacks for Svalbard. See p. 3

Who's to blame and how to express your wrath

Editor

Mark Sabbatini

Principal of principles

Kristan Hutchison

Psychiatrist

Irene Gallion

Accomplice

Jeff Newsom

Mailing address

Icepeople
Vei 210 -2- 13
Longyearbyen, Svalbard
9170
Norway

Telephone

Norway: +47 41 51 46 38
U.S. +1 (970) 673-4472

E-mail

marksabbatini@yahoo.com

Web site

www.icepeople.net

Icepeople is published weekly (or thereabouts) on Tuesdays (or thereabouts), with printed copies available free on a limited basis in Longyearbyen. Additional printed copies are available locally and by mail upon request. Charges are on an "at cost" basis.

Copyright stuff

Original contents of this publication can be reproduced for non-commercial purposes free of charge if *Icepeople* is credited as the source. The original writers, photographers and other contributors retain their rights to all published works.

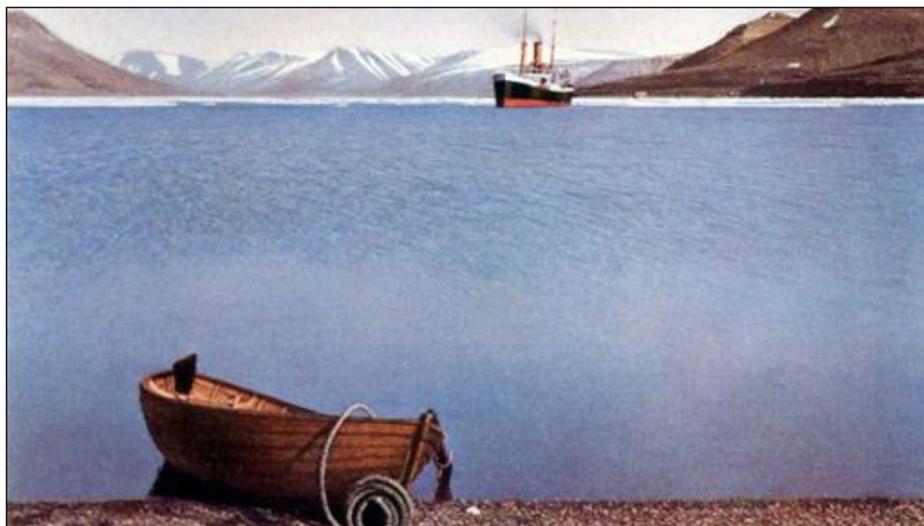
Corrections policy

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.

When you reach 104, look as good you will not



ADOLF MIETHE

One of the first color photographs of Svalbard, taken by German astronomer and photographer Adolf Miethe during his voyage to the archipelago in 1910-11, is part of a collection commemorating the 100-year anniversary of a total solar eclipse in Norway in 1914. Miethe, who co-invented the first practical camera flash and was among those contributing to the development of color photography, traveled to Svalbard as part of an expedition to determine the possibility of reaching the North Pole in an airship. He returned to Norway with 13 tons of equipment to photograph the eclipse. A slideshow of his photos from Svalbard is available at tinyurl.com/ocm2nv8.

Icesheet

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

Even if they can't read a calendar when they're dead sober, **a hearty toast is merited to the organizers and more than 1,000 attendees who drank a record amount of beer during the annual three-day Oktoberfest at the Radisson during the last week of September.** Those packing into the Tent of Intoxication in the parking lot for the seventh-annual bash downed 2,250 liters of 131 types of beer from around the world. Stein-Ove Johannessen, food and drinks manager at Spitsbergen Travel, told *The Local Paper of Rehab* there were fewer than 50 types of beers at the inaugural festival in 2008, but as the crowd has grown – to the point where the hotel is sold out – so has the selection. But next year there may be only one brew that matters, as the long-awaited Svalbard Bryggeri is finally expected to be operating after more than four years of lurching through a fog of red tape and recipes ... Meanwhile, any lingering visitors, who surely ought to be over their hangovers by now, **can work those beer bellies off by going on a conquest to capture the throne in the inaugural Game of Svalbard competition.** Basically a gimmick by



VISIT SVALBARD

No chance HBO files a lawsuit, right? Still, in a duel between a big-city corporate lawyer and a burly guide with a rifle, we like our chances.



SPITSBERGEN TRAVEL

To see boob, buy a beer. Of course, you'll have to wait until next year since locals think Oktoberfest is supposed to be in September – and that's before they start drinking.

Visit Svalbard to get tourists into stores (made all the more obvious by the fact locals aren't eligible), participants storm the halls of 15 locations around Longyearbyen, writing the codes from at least 10 of them into an official mini-logbook. Showing a completed form to the folks at the tourist desk at Svalbard Museum reaps the spoils of a Game of Svalbard head-neck and a code allowing entry into an online drawing for a two-night trip here worth 15,000 kroner. All the usual details are available at svalbard.me ... In case you missed seeing it buried in this week's charity auction story, **a rousing sendoff is merited for the now out-of-business Barents Fashion, which donated all of its remaining spiffy clothes to the annual flea market at UNIS,** which almost certainly played a big role in its record sales. **But the "cloud containing a silver lining" may actually be the sign of an approaching storm,** as we're hearing whispers the new owner of Lompensenteret is making a change in the rent structure that could significantly hike what tenants pay, if they can afford to remain there.



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Robert Hermansen, at right in foreground, and author Otto Ulsleth sign copies of a new biography of Hermansen following a discussion Saturday at Kulturhuset. More than 100 copies were sold.

Hermansen gets a hero's welcome

SCAPEGOAT, from page 1
and is struggling mightily now?

Among Longyearbyen residents who showed up Thursday at Kulturhuset to hear Robert Hermansen talk about his new book, the verdict was practically unanimous – and expressed with hugs and roses.

"I think he's a very good man," said Ishak Atjluev, a miner at Store Norske's new Lunckeffell project, while buying two copies of the book after the discussion.

The biography by Otto Ulsleth, "Røde Robert Hermansen – Redningsmann og Syndebukk" ("Red Robert Hermansen – Savior and Scapegoat"), focuses mostly on adventures during his upbringing, and his work as a political activist and worker-oriented business leader.

About 40 of its 214 pages focus on the scandal – and a third of that the final chapter "Home - in triumph" – where he's portrayed as a victim of false accusations by his former employer.

The "question" portion of the discussion at Kulturhuset instead saw residents voicing praise to Hermansen, 74, for his efforts as administrative director of Store Norske from 1999 to 2008. Such expressions were common industrywide during his tenure when he made numerous operational improvements that boosted the company's profits significantly.

But audits in 2010 found he had negotiated agreements with subcontractors that were unusually long and far above market value. He was sent to prison after confessing to receiving

about four million kroner in bribes and was released in March of 2013.

Hermansen's portrayal as a victim may not be entirely accurate, but he's also not the lone villain, said Birger Amundsen, a longtime journalist who was the editor of *Svalbardposten* during much of Hermansen's tenure, and is writing his own book about Store Norske that will include a section focusing on the scandal.

"The most important thing for me is what is his motivation for writing the book because it's very much a whitewashing book," he said.

The biography doesn't reveal much new information, said Amundsen, adding his research includes searching for Store Norske documents from 2006-10 that will offer a better idea of the roles everyone played in the scandal.

"There are still things to be answered about the whole process," he said. "There are a lot more people involved in this than Robert."

Amundsen said the warm reception from locals wasn't surprising.

"It's nice to see Robert in good shape and it's always nice to see him back north," he said. "Robert is back home. This is his community."

The scandal has been the primary focus of news coverage about the book in Norway, resulting in numerous locals filling the comments sections with remarks like "we are talking about a great person" and "I've never heard a boss get as much praise among employees."

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

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Svalbard sees cuts, but no big hardships, in '15 budget

The first budget crafted by Norway's Conservative-led government is proposing an allocation of 417.8 million kroner for Svalbard in 2015, 37.5 million less than this year. The current budget, however, includes funding for a new helicopter and service vessel for The Governor of Svalbard, plus extra funding for upgrades to Longyearbyen's power plant. The 2015 budget includes about 142 million kroner for the Longyearbyen Community Council, which requested 214 million, including 13.3 million that will cover about two-thirds of the cost of additional power plant upgrades. While the city must cover the remainder, Mayor Christin Kristoffersen said it does not appear a rate hike will be necessary. Similarly, while officials are generally expressing satisfaction with the proposed budget, two key items are being denied funds. One is a new station in Ny-Ålesund for Japanese researchers, which officials overseeing the international settlement say is urgently needed to replace the aging barracks now being used. There are also no funds allocated for the CO2 carbon capture facility now being developed in Adventdalen, meaning officials will need to seek funding from The Research Council of Norway and the EU instead.

Wildlife guides' disturbance of walrus proves outrage

Outrage about two wildlife guides who jumped into the water and disturbed three walrus to create a good photographic situation is being expressed by a passenger aboard the tourist cruise. Kate Reschner, in a letter to G Adventures and The Governor of Svalbard, stated the guides one of the guides did most of the barking and growling toward the walrus while the other took photos during the July 16 incident. When she objected, another employee said the guides knew what they were doing. Reschner is requesting the company retrain employees and send letters to all passengers on the cruise since they "now believe that grunting and disturbing wild animals is okay to take a good picture." The Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators is demanding an explanation of the incident from G Adventures and the governor's office plans to evaluate the manner after AECCO reports its findings.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Cloudy. SE winds to 18 km/h. High -4C (-8C wind chill), low -6C (-11C wind chill).	Rain/snow. S winds to 25 km/h. High 0C (-4C wind chill), low -4C (-8C wind chill).	Cloudy. Variable winds to 25 km/h. High 1C (-3C wind chill), low -1C (-5C wind chill).	Cloudy. Variable winds to 15 km/h. High -1C (-4C wind chill), low -7C (-10C wind chill).
Sunrise 8:29a; sunset 4:49p	Sunrise 8:37a; sunset 4:51p	Sunrise 8:46a; sunset 4:42p	Sunrise 8:54a; sunset 4:33p
Extended forecast: Sunday, snow, -2C (-7C), -6C (-10C), light 7:21h; Monday, p. cloudy, -2C (-6C), -5C (-9C), light 7:03h; Tuesday, cloudy, -5C (-10C), -8C (-14C), light 6:45h; Wednesday, cloudy, -6C (-11C), -8C (-12C), light 6:26h			
Data provided by storm.no			

Go ahead – tell him climate change is a hoax



ARLID LYSSAND / SYSSELMANNEN

A polar bear wanders along a road in Pyramiden, where it has visited for several days in a row despite efforts by The Governor of Svalbard to scare it away using a helicopter, vehicles and other resources. The bear broke into the newly refurbished Tulip Hotel where the 14 current residents of the long-ago Russian mining community stay, although they were able to chase the animal away without assistance. The governor's office, in a statement Tuesday, said it plans to tranquilize the bear with the assistance of the Norwegian Polar Institute and transport it via helicopter to a location far from the settlement. Bears have been increasingly aggressive in settled areas recently, including two notable incidents near Longyearbyen last month, possibly due to a loss of traditional feeding areas due to the rapid vanishing of the Arctic sea ice.

An observatory a mother can love

GEODETIC, from page 1

servatory in Ny-Ålesund, which will drastically upgrade the quantity and precision of climate and geological data collected by the international research community, is underway after a ceremony to lay the foundational stone Saturday. Or, more precisely, the assembly of the facility is underway, since much of it consists of prefabricated units built on the mainland to avoid the problems, such as getting concrete to set, working in the Arctic would present.

The 300-million-kroner observatory, scheduled for completion in 2018, will be part of a global network of about 30 stations that, by targeting quasars up to 13 billion light years in space, will offer pinpoint tracking of glacier movement, water levels, climate and other data.

"This is far more important than most of us really understand," said Jan Tore Sanner, Norway's minister of Local Government and

Regional Development, said in an interview with *Teknisk Ukeblad* during the ceremony. "The data collected here is essential for GPS, navigation, environmental monitoring and research. Today the observatory is 20 years old, and the data is collected on disks and sent out manually. When we get the new observatory in place there will be more precise data, in addition to the new fiber optic cable being laid from Longyearbyen making it possible to collect data continuously."

Work on the prefab units started in August in Harstad, wrote Martin Nerhus Øen, an official with Veidekke Arctic, at the contractor's website. That allows "good access to stable fresh concrete, fewer hours worked under miserable conditions in Ny-Ålesund, and the formwork carpenters can go home to mother on weekends."

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

Lots of givers, but hard to find a taker

AUCTION, from page 1

A flea market that's part of a month-long series of charity fundraising events generated a record 85,000 kroner in sales during the weekend, despite little advance notice and a struggle to find a leader to organize the effort. The fundraisers are annual NRK charity telethon Oct. 19, with proceeds this year going toward providing clean water and sanitation facilities in several countries.

Anne Lise Sandvik, who said she reluctantly agreed to oversee this year's efforts when nobody else would, said Longyearbyen residents have always been the most generous in Norway on a per-person basis, but it takes an enormous amount of time to contact all those willing to donate or otherwise help.

"If you're asking for items for the lottery or auction people will give them, but you have to go and talk to them," she said.

One of the reasons for this year's record flea market may have been the donation of a large amount of new clothing by Barents Fashion of its entire clothing inventory after going out of business after many years of operation in Lompensenteret.

This year's events are essentially the same as in recent years, including:

- A car wash hosted by The Governor of Svalbard starting at 10:30 a.m. on Sunday.
- Sales of crafts and reindeer stew, plus a lottery and performances, by students at Longyearbyen School from 4 to 8 p.m. Oct. 16.
- An auction at the Radisson Polar Blu Hotel at 6 p.m. Oct. 19. Items range from small goods and services from local businesses to major offerings such as use of the governor's new service vessel for a day by up to 35 people.

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

What's up

Oct. 8

6 p.m.: Movie: "Kaptein Sabeltann og Skatten i Rama Lama," Norwegian adventure/family film, ages 7 and up. Kulturhuset.

Oct. 11

Noon-3 p.m.: Open day at Longyearbyen Hundeklubb's kennels, featuring dog grooming, a raffle and other activities.

11 p.m.-4 a.m.: '50s party to celebrate 53rd birthday of Huset.

Oct. 12

11 a.m.: Family Mass w/ music by Polargospel. Svalbard Church.

5 p.m.: Movie: "Planes 2: Fire & Rescue," U.S. animated film dubbed in Norwegian, ages 7 and up. Kulturhuset.

7 p.m.: Movie: "Boyhood," U.S. drama, ages 7 and up. Kulturhuset.

Oct. 13

7:30 p.m.: Concert by Lars Winnerbäck, Sweden's national troubadour. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Trivia quiz. Barentz Pub.

Oct. 14

6 p.m.: Presentation on Svalbard Global Seed Vault at Svalbard Museum. Also includes free admission to the museum.

7 p.m.: Evening Mass and fireplace social. Svalbard Church.

7 p.m.: Longyearbyen Community Council meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.

Oct. 15

6 p.m.: Movie: "Skumringslandet," Norwegian drama/adventure, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

Oct. 16

4-8 p.m.: Sales of food and crafts, plus a lottery drawing by local students to raise funds for the annual NRK telethon. Longyearbyen School.

8 p.m.: Theater performance: "Æ Har Rett," starring Trine Lise Olsen and focusing on growing up in an orphanage during the 1980s. 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:

- *U.S. Russian nukes in Arctic rising fast*
- *35K Alaskan walrus stuck on beach*
- *Oceans warming faster than expected*
- *Warming may alter male-female ratio*