



# Putting life on Pause

*Four-day arts and music fest to welcome polar night intersects past legends, future generation*

By **MARK SABBATINI**  
Editor

In some ways time has no meaning during a continuous four-month night. But that doesn't mean a chance to pause the clock isn't welcome.

Some of Longyearbyen's youngest residents will pay tribute to one of Norway's most historically famous artists and new revelations of youth inspired by a long-ago social reformer are part of this year's KunstPause festival beginning Thursday.

**Royal art:** Queen Sonja to open Polarjazz 2013, attend debut of her art exhibition

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The festival is designated as a rest from ordinary toils during the work-intensive period for many local residents during the polar night.

A familiar comfort will be offered at many events during the 11th annual festival, including an official opening at Galleri Svalbard featuring a multitude of art exhibition debuts plus a local crafts market. A chillier market and activities stalwart is scheduled at midday in town center,

See **FESTIVAL**, page 4



OLE MAGNUS RAPP / KINGS BAY

Berit Meland, at podium, sings during a memorial ceremony Monday observing the 50-year anniversary of an explosion that killed 21 miners in Kings Bay. Dignitaries attending the event included, from left, Norway's King Harald, Parliament President Dag Terje Andersen, Minister of Labour Anniken Huitfeldt, Svalbard Gov. Odd Olsen Ingerø and Kings Bay Chairman Knut Ore.

## 'We had only each other'

*50 years after Kings Bay mine tragedy, survivors focus on safety*

By **MARK SABBATINI**  
Editor

Three accidents in five years killed 43 people. Two years later the prime minister visited and, according to him, "nobody complained about safety conditions."

Seven years later Norway's biggest mining disaster occurred at Kings Bay when an explosion killed 21 more workers. In the aftermath

among officials, the miners were overlooked.

"We only had each other," said Oscar Bye, 87, a worker at the mine on Nov. 5, 1962, when the explosion occurred.

The state didn't assist victims and families then as they do now, Bye said, according to *Views and News From Norway*. Fortunately, when it came to peer support "we were like a

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## Burgers, beer and Barack 2.0

*Column: Big crowd packs into tiny flat for world's northernmost U.S. presidential election party*

By **BRENNAN PURTZER**  
Copy Editor

This week something astounding happened in America that will be felt around the world. Americans, those brave creatures, pushed aside their lives and their opinions and all the hype that the 24-hour media can buy, and re-elected a great man as president.

The world community recognizes Barack  
See **VOTE**, page 2



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

About 25 Longyearbyen residents, most foreign nationals, cram into a one-person flat to watch coverage of the U.S. presidential election.

## 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.



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Brennan Purtzer, right, discusses hosting the world's northernmost U.S. election party with journalists Kjersti Kvile, left, and Anders Fjellestad as David Fernandes, a resident from India, watches.

## A world of election fans in one tiny flat

### VOTE, from page 1

Obama for what and whom he is, and they see through the nonsense the often blinds Americans from pulling the facts from the abyss.

On Tuesday, Americans were able to do this also.

And here in Longyearbyen, a small group of international people who cared, for one reason or another, decided to get together and share the moment together. I was lucky enough to spend the evening in my tiny flat packed with as many as 25 people, including seven Americans, crammed together watching the live election returns projected onto my wall. None were supporters – at least not openly – of Mitt Romney, the Republican candidate.

They came in response to an open invitation on our community Facebook page, promising friends, burgers and beer. These are classic American staples, and the suggestion/invite was welcomed immediately by a large number of "likes" from faces both familiar and unfamiliar.

It was 6 a.m. by the time pundits could offi-

cially call the election, and by then I was again on my couch alone. But I didn't feel alone. I felt like I lived in a community with highly in-tuned international people who care about the world and were open to spending an evening with new friends, wherever they may be from.

In the past four election cycles, I have always had an engaging role. In 2010, I directed a campaign for U.S. Congress. In 2008, I was the assistant director of national media in a presidential primary campaign. In 2006, I wrote editorial endorsements for U.S. Senate that received statewide recognition and in 2004 I was a campaign worker on another presidential race.

With such an intimate relationship to political contests, I knew I couldn't sleep until I knew who my president would be anyway.

The effect of hosting Tuesday's gathering in Longyearbyen was a combined election party, housewarming (new resident) party, and finally a birthday party for myself. Obama's re-election and meeting so many kind people was all the birthday gift I could have asked for.

## Icesheet

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

It turns out we have a complete idiot on our staff (a.k.a. the editor) who thought few in Svalbard would care much about this week's U.S. presidential election. In light of that humiliation on a "God wants binders full of women to have those legitimate rape babies" scale, **we supplement our esteemed copy editor's party with some U.S. election obscurities with implications for Svalbard.** Topping the news is **a sharp drop in U.S. coal stocks** on The Day After, which was pretty lousy for the markets in general (and will no doubt bring glee to opponents of B. Hussein Obama as they proclaim their prophecy of doomsday for America is being fulfilled, without reading past the headline to learn it was caused by the ongoing train wreck in Europe). Sticking with the doomsday topic, the fifth best election-related Tweet out of millions, according to Salon.com, comes from @johnhawkinsrwn who writes **"this would be a great time to own a compa-**

**ny that makes survival seeds, guns, or that sells gold."** Hey, we're a one-stop up here for all that. It's also worth noting **GMOs won big in California** as Big Agriculture bought a victory against a mandatory labeling proposal that would have greatly hampered the industry (there's a legit argument for labeling, but the proposal was about as scientifically flawed as climate change denialism). On the other hand, **two renewable energy initiatives backed by environmentalists failed in Michigan and Arizona, perhaps due to economic concerns.** Finally, **the NASA folks who helped bring us the Mars rover should continue thriving on our alien landscapes as Obama wants them to get to an asteroid by 2025 and Mars by the early 2030s ...** Squeezing in the non-election oddity of the week: **a truck carrying more than 15 tons of explosives for coal mines in Svalbard crashed Friday into a herd of reindeer near Tromsø, killing eight of them.** The driver was uninjured.



OLE MAGNUS RAPP / KINGS BAY

Norway's King Harald lays a wreath Monday at the base of a memorial for 21 miners killed at in an explosion at Kings Bay on Nov. 5, 1962. An investigation revealed numerous safety violations at the mine, which continued to operate far longer than advisable due to the Cold War.

## Kings Bay tragedy changed mining

### MEMORIAL, from page 1

big family up here."

"If it hadn't been for the accident, I'd probably still be here," he said.

Bye, other surviving miners and their families, and dignitaries including Norway's King Harald gathered Monday and Tuesday in Ny-Ålesund to observe the 50-year anniversary of the accident. Those speaking at a memorial ceremony Monday focused on the emphasis on safety that developed following the tragedy.

"The mining accident was a brutal reminder of the importance of work safety and the role of government," said Parliament President Dag Terje Andersen, according to *Nordlys*.

King Harald, after speaking during a Monday evening dinner with the 29 miners at the site when the accident occurred, called the visit "a poignant moment."

"It was very nice to hear their stories," he said in a report at The Royal Family's website. "There were many who continued to be miners even after the experience they had here."

Mining in Kings Bay started in 1916, but struggled due to low coal prices and was halted in 1929. The Norwegian government acquired the mine's shares and in 1941 sent workers to resume summertime extraction there. But work was quickly halted again due to concerns the

area could not be adequately defended during World War II.

Work resumed when the war ended in 1945, but difficult operating conditions resulted in the mine's first major accident in 1948, when an explosion killed 15 people. Two more accidents in 1952 and 1953 killed 28 people.

Einar Gerhardsen, the prime minister at the time, visited the mine in 1955 and, following the 1962 explosion, said safety was not raised as an issue. But an investigation after the final disaster revealed numerous safety violations, and in 1963 Gerhardsen and his Cabinet resigned following a Parliament vote of no confidence.

All mining in Ny-Ålesund was halted the same year and it has since become an international science research base.

The cause of the 1962 accident is still officially undetermined. But Monica Kristensen, in a new book titled "Kings Bay – Case," writes the conditions were due to Norway's efforts against the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

"There were almost daily problems of different natures at the bottom of the mine, but only a few weeks to go before the coal was brought out and the section could be abandoned," she wrote.

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

## HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

### Playground, outdoor stage part of town center proposal

Revamping the center of Longyearbyen with a playground, outdoor stage and plaza, and new lighting and trash bins is among the recommendations of a consulting group hired by the city to study improvements. A draft report submitted in October by LPO Arkitekter, following a series of discussions with business and residents, recommends the playground in a space between the municipal building and Lompensenteret now occupied by dumpsters and parked cars. A "Tundra Market" adjacent to the post office/bank building, where a skate ramp now exists, would become a stage area for concerts and other events. A lower priority project would be a tourist information center between the stage area and Svalbardbutikken. Some of the upgrades could be completed by next summer, but funding from the cash-strapped city is an obstacle. Bydrift is applying to the Svalbard Environmental Protection Fund for some of the money.

### Higher power, car fees again sought to fund maintenance

A continuing backlog of infrastructure projects means Bydrift is again proposing increased utility rates for the coming year, including an electricity rate of 1.57 kroner per kilowatt hour, up from 1.42 kroner this year. The rate was 1.17 kroner in 2011. Passenger vehicle registration fees would increase three percent and trucks would be hit with a 53 percent hike.

### Conservatives hot, Labor not in poll a year after election

The "Right wave" may have reached Longyearbyen, as an online *Svalbardposten* poll shows the Conservative Party is far more in favor than during last year's municipal election. A total of 34.3 percent of 589 respondents declared they would support Conservatives, up from the 17.5 percent the party received in the election. The ruling Labor Party was favored by 27.7 percent in the survey, compared to 43.6 percent in the election. Labor backers may have also organized a late rally, as the party was at about 20 percent in the poll until the last day of voting.

## Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Snow. NE winds to 35 km/h. High -4C (-9C wind chill), low -9C (-15C wind chill).	Cloudy. N winds to 49 km/h. High -8C (-15C wind chill), low -12C (-20C wind chill).	Cloudy. NW winds to 45 km/h. High -12C (-19C wind chill), low -14C (-21C wind chill).	Cloudy. N winds to 35 km/h. High -12C (-18C wind chill), low -16C (-22C wind chill).
24-hour darkness	24-hour darkness	24-hour darkness	24-hour darkness
<b>Extended forecast:</b> Sunday, cloudy, -12C (-17C), -16C (-22C), light 0:00h; Monday, p. cloudy, -10C (-15C), -12C (-16C), light 0:00h; Tuesday, p. cloudy, -9C (-13C), -10C (-15C), light 0:00h; Wednesday, p. cloudy, -8C (-13C), -12C (-18C), light 0:00h			
<b>Data provided by storm.no</b>			

## Saints and sinners



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Priest Leif Magne Helgesen leads a torchlight procession from Svalbard Church to Longyearbyen during an All Saints' Day service Sunday. The holiday as observed by Western Christianity is the midpoint of the three-day Hallowmas, which begins with All Hallow's Eve on Oct. 31 and concludes with All Souls' Day on Nov. 2. The pagan roots of former were celebrated Saturday night in Longyearbyen with the customary costume party at Barentz Pub, trick or treating and other events.

## KunstPause features new and familiar

### FESTIVAL, from page 1

where a fire and a tent presentation about the 1902-03 Norwegian Aurora Polaris Expedition will be offered.

One of the most popular repeat events is Saturday evening's "Tregangertre," this year at Kulturhuset, which features a formal dinner with an art auction and concert by Jonas Fjeld and Ole Paus between courses. As usual, the festival will conclude Sunday night with a Psalms in the Polar Night concert at Svalbard Church.

But plenty of new activities will also be offered, including Longyearbyen youths performing an "Egner-Potpourri" show Thursday afternoon commemorating the 100th birthday of Torbjørn Egner, a Norwegian playwright, songwriter and illustrator known for his books, plays and musicals for children.

A featured visiting performer is Edvard Hoem, who will offer a presentation Thursday night about unknown aspects of Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, hailed as a "prince of the Norwegian society" for his social reforms and other work. Hoem will also perform a song and poetry concert Friday night, accompanied by singer Hilde Brunsvik and pianist Dag-Filip Roaldsnes.

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

## Queen to visit Jan. 31 for jazz, art events

Queen Sonja will visit Longyearbyen on Jan. 31 to preside over the opening of Polarjazz and an art project based on photos she took during Svalbard trips, according to city officials.

The exhibition, "Tre Reiser - Tre Landskap," is a project by the queen, Kjell Nupen and Ørnulf Opdahl now appearing in Norway for the first time. Her landscape photos

## KunstPause schedule

### Thursday

- 2 p.m.: Photo exhibit opening by Tommy Simonsen. Arctic Bay Galleri.
- 4:30 p.m.: "Egner-Potpourri" performance by Culture School students commemorating the 100th birthday of Torbjørn Egner. Kulturhuset.
- 6 p.m.: Opening ceremony, with debut of multiple arts and photo exhibits, and market of local art and crafts. Galleri Svalbard.
- 8 p.m.: Presentation about historically acclaimed poet and social reformer Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson by Edvard Hoem. Kulturhuset.

### Friday

- 12:30 p.m.: Opening of interactive children's art exhibit "Army of Mothers." Kulturhuset.
- 8 p.m.: Song and poetry concert by Edvard Hoem. Galleri Svalbard.

### Saturday

- 11 a.m.: Torchlight procession from Titan crane to town center.
- Noon: Market and activities in town center.
- 2 p.m.: Presentation about 1902-03 Norwegian Aurora Polaris Expedition. Tent in town center.
- 7:30 p.m.: Tregangertre dinner, art auction and concert by Jonas Fjeld and Ole Paus. Kulturhuset.

### Sunday

- Open day at Galleri Svalbard (11 a.m.-5 p.m) and Svalbard Museum (noon-5 p.m.).
- 7 p.m.: Psalms in the Polar Night concert by local musicians. Svalbard Church.

## What's up

### Nov. 6

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

### Nov. 8-11

KunstPause. See full schedule, at left. Additional details at [kunstpause.no](http://kunstpause.no).

6 p.m.: Snowscooter evening for girls. SSU garage.

### Nov. 9

7 p.m.: Prologue excursion for Spitsbergen Up And Down race. Scouting trip of route from Nybyen to Trollsteinen via any means of transport open to all without registration.

### Nov. 11

11 a.m.: Baptism Mass and concert by Polargospel. Svalbard Church.

5 p.m.: Movie: "Reisen Til Julestjernen," Norwegian family film, all ages. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Looper," U.S. action/sci-fi, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

### Nov. 12

8 p.m.: Trivia quiz. Kulturhuset cafe.

### Nov. 13

7 p.m.: Solo concert by bassist Magnus Rosén. Svalbard Church.

### Nov. 14

6 p.m.: Movie: "Beasts of the Southern Wild," U.S. drama, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

### Nov. 18

6 p.m.: Movie: "Tinker Bell - Secret of the Wings" (3D), U.S. family film, all ages. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Sinister," U.S. horror/crime/thriller, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

### Nov. 19

8 p.m.: Trivia quiz. Kulturhuset cafe.

### Nov. 20

1 p.m.: Administration Committee meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.

## What's online

[Icepeople.net](http://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:

- *Bad Hurtigruten year, except Svalbard*
- *How polar bears became political symbol*
- *Inuits block Big Oil's seismic testing*
- *Polar bear wins wild election in Alaska*