



LEIF MAGNE HELGESEN / SVALBARD CHURCH

Espen Rotevatn, left, Torunn Sørensen, center, and Leif Magne Helgesen gather inside the San Carlo al Corso for one of four music performances during their October trip to the Vatican.

Doom show, again

Second movie in three months featuring Svalbard's seed vault debuts with usual ruminations

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

How many times can you tell the same story and have people fascinated by it?

At least once more, it seems, as the latest film about the Svalbard Global Seed Vault is getting lots of media attention, complete with the usual apocalyptic headlines.

"Seeds of Time," a 76-minute documentary, is debuting this week at the Copenhagen International Documentary Film Festival. It's the second movie featuring the vault released during the past three months, joining a plethora of other films since the facility opened in 2008 all following the same theme (aside from the occasional zombie or conspiracy flick).

The latest film keeps things simple, following "the quixotic journey of Cary Fowler... a man with a mission. A mission that is about securing the foundation of nothing less than earth's survival in the form of the world's smallest currency: seeds," an official synopsis

See **FOWLER**, page 4

Traveling Kirkes

Svalbard Kirkes Trio goes to the Vatican, gets the ears of the masses and eyes of the pope

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

They're used to singing in a small-town church, so they felt among friends going on the road to perform for a close-knit community of 1.2 billion people.

Not all of them fit into the Vatican at once, of course. But many of the 200,000 Roman Catholics who showed up for an audience with Pope Francis last month also got to hear four

See **PILGRIMAGE**, page 3



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Svalbard Church Priest Leif Magne Helgesen, left, greets Pope Francis during a visit to the Vatican in this photo shown during a presentation by the Svalbard Kirkes Trio of their October trip.

Inside

Storing seeds from eight continents
Page 2

Headlines from Svalbardposten
- Two trekkers rescued after spotting two bears
- New rules boost winter air ambulance service
- New Svalbard lieutenant governor named
Page 3

Weather forecast
Page 3

Events calendar
Page 4

Extraordinary tales, coolly told

Review: Fiennes' 'Cold' chilling but a bit numb; offers new details about fatal Svalbard bear attack

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

"So today at work we skydived onto a glacier from 10,000 feet and saw a topless woman climbing while we nearly died bumbling about due to our inexperience."

A story like that is unavoidably fascinating, even if narrated with all the emotion of an accountant at the dinner table.

See **REVIEW**, page 4



COURTESY OF SIR RANULPH FIENNES

Explorer Sir Ranulph Fiennes puts in just another day at the office in his new book "Cold."

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.

Just the start of our long night life



A family, above, eats waffles on a fur-lined log bench while listening to a women's a cappella concert in Longyearbyen's central square Saturday during this year's KunstPause festival. At bottom left, Blåmyra performs a bluegrass arrangement of "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" during a "Hymns in the Polar Night" concert Sunday at Svalbard Church during the festival. At bottom right, Sigfrid Hernes, art committee chair for Public Art Norway, introduces Svein Flygari Johansen's "Videoinstallasjon," a new video art display above the entrance at Kulturhuset that shows real-time images and their Google Map locations from around the world. Photos by Mark Sabbatini / Icepeople.

Icesheet

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

This might be the weirdest thing we've seen since arriving in Svalbard five years ago, which obviously is saying something. Our editor-in-competent was listening to the presentation about the new Kulturhuset art piece "Videoinstallasjon" (see above) when he suddenly realized one of the three images rotating at that moment looked a bit like – um, on closer inspection *exactly* like – the main street of a town near his childhood home. In fact, he was looking at his old bank, the sporting goods store where he bought skis and other landmarks in the U.S. town of Glenwood Springs, Colo., where he frequently visited and sometimes lived right up until moving to Svalbard. We'd go off on some "what are the odds" tangent, except we doubt anybody really cares to see a calculation of global webcams divided by the number of places our lunatic-in-chief has lived ... Regular readers (cough) know we hold people who scream "junk science" in a certain esteem. But they'll have plenty to gloat about if people watching the new documentaries about our Doomsday Vault get an inclination to visit the official online portal tracking seed deposits there (

MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Famous for its ski areas and hot springs: But for some reason this city near our editor's childhood home decided to point its webcam at a sporting goods store and a McBank.

www.nordgen.org/sgsv). As of this week, there are 798,190 seed samples from 231 countries of origin on eight continents. We'd say this doesn't need further explanation, but since two-thirds of Americans don't know who Russia's president is and only 15 percent believe humans evolved without God's help, there are, in fact, 196 countries and seven continents on Earth, according to the most generally accepted sources. We're guessing the portal may be using the same programmers responsible for the new U.S. health care system.



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Espen Rotevatn, left, Torunn Sørensen, center, and Leif Magne Helgesen perform one of the songs from their Vatican concert tour during a slideshow presentation of the trip Tuesday at Svalbard Church.

Catching the pope's eye, if not his ear

PILGRIMAGE, from page 1

performances by the Svalbard Kirkes Trio. The mostly a cappella trio, which formed in 2011 and released a 22-minute album last year, went to Rome on what they described as a "pilgrimage" with about 300 members of the church from Oslo and Tromsø.

"This is by far the most exclusive place I've played at," said Espen Rotevatn, Svalbard Church's catechist and music leader, echoing the sentiment of the other two members.

Despite the massive crowd there were plenty of surprisingly intimate moments during the trip, including when Priest Leif Magne Helgesen shook hands with Pope Francis from a near front-row position during the audience.

"It's so frank, him looking dark into your eyes and meeting each other," Helgesen said. "It's a kind of quality respect from him to me and me to him. It was a good moment."

Alas, the pontiff wasn't among those in the audience during the performances.

"He should regret it," Rotevatn quipped.

The trio gave short performances as part of longer programs in three cathedrals – Collegio Teutonico del Campo, San Girolamo dei Croati and San Carlo al Corso – plus the Istituto Maria SS Bambina covenant. Rotevatn said that despite the prodigious size of the venues and eminence of some in the audience, in some ways it wasn't all that much different than the many concerts they perform back home.

"It might sound strange, but singing is singing and playing is playing anywhere," he said.

What the audience actually heard, however, was another story.

"In Svalbard it's a wooden church," he said. "In those big cathedrals the song gets so much better because of the acoustics."

The trio has performed a few times in mainland Norway, but the unexpected invitation to Rome "is just things happening along the road," said Torunn Sørensen, Svalbard Church's deacon since 2008. She said she traveled all over the world while singing for many years with two choirs in Oslo, but "so far this is definitely the biggest one."

"It's quite different because we are a trio and we are working together as colleagues," unlike choirs where a group of 40 people may be in competitions against others.

There may be more foreign trips in the trio's future, as they have two invitations to Denmark and are hoping to perform in the United States, Helgesen said.

"We have some dreams," he said. "It's nice to be able to travel when you have the ability to be close to people, not just the monuments and sculptures, but the opportunity to be close to people, and that's what the trip to Rome was about."

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

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Two trekkers rescued after spotting nearby polar bears

Two people on a snowshoeing trek near Longyearbyen were brought back to town on snowmobiles by rescuers with the Svalbard governor's office after spotting two polar bears nearby Monday. The pair notified the governor's office after seeing the bears about 250 meters away at the foot of Hiorthfjellet. "They did the right thing and that was to warn us," said Lt. Christian Svarstad, who led the rescue. Officials, who also deployed a helicopter, searched the area during the afternoon for more signs of the bears.

New rules should improve winter air ambulance service

More reliable air ambulance service to the mainland will be possible this winter due to new procedures allowing flights during periods of extreme cold, according to officials with Helse Nord. The Beech 200 aircraft used by the agency for such flights are prohibited from flying in temperatures below minus 54 degrees Celsius, meaning they must fly at lower altitudes and burn more fuel during cold periods. The result was uncertainty about whether the planes would have sufficient fuel to return to the mainland if landing in Longyearbyen wasn't possible. Øyvind Juell, an air ambulance official, said the new procedures for Svalbard flights will allow the planes to carry up to 400 pounds of additional fuel. The ambulance contractor has been forced to lease planes from Scandinavian Air Ambulance during cold spells for the past two years.

Notorious attorney to be new Svalbard lieutenant governor

Jens Olav Vestgøte Sæther, 45, has accepted an offer to become Svalbard's next lieutenant governor, according to Gov. Odd Olsen Ingerø. Sæther, an attorney with the Oslo Public Prosecutor's Office, is a former chief prosecuting leader in Nord-Trøndelag police district. He also has previous experience as an attorney, including a high-profile case in 2004 where he served as counsel to the children of a woman killed in Iraq by her husband, working to bring the youths home to Norway. Sæther will begin working in Svalbard in mid January.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Partly cloudy. N winds to 24 km/h. High -11C (-17C wind chill), low -12C (-20C wind chill). 24-hour darkness	Cloudy. Variable winds to 29 km/h. High -10C (-15C wind chill), low -13C (-18C wind chill). 24-hour darkness	Partly cloudy. Variable winds to 25 km/h. High -9C (-14C wind chill), low -14C (-20C wind chill). 24-hour darkness	Cloudy. N winds to 59 km/h. High -5C (-14C wind chill), low -14C (-21C wind chill). 24-hour darkness
Extended forecast: Sunday, cloudy, -12C (-21C), -14C (-22C), light 0:00h; Monday, snow, -11C (-18C), -14C (-21C), light 0:00h; Tuesday, snow, -9C (-16C), -12C (-19C), light 0:00h; Wednesday, cloudy, -11C (-17C), -14C (-20C), light 0:00h			
Data provided by storm.no			



COURTESY OF HUNGRY INC.

Cary Fowler walks the lonely path to the Svalbard Global Seed Vault in the new documentary "Seeds of Time," which follows his efforts of "securing the foundation of nothing less than Earth's survival."

New film shows familiar vault story

FOWLER, from page 1

of the film notes. The portrayal is typical for Fowler, who as chair of vault's International Advisory Council has essentially been the public face for the facility since its opening, a role he says he embraces as essential for generating much-needed attention and support.

"Seeds of Time" also narrows the 800,000 seed species from 56 depositor institutes down to a single entity where "a group of indigenous Peruvian farmers work to preserve over 1,500 native varieties of potato." Struggling with the loss of cultivable land due to climate change, they form a new conservation ground and become "the first indigenous community to send samples of their potato diversity to the vault."

'Cold' exposes bear attack details

REVIEW, from page 1

Sir Ranulph Fiennes, described by the Guinness Book of Records as "the world's greatest living explorer," isn't that dull. But his new book "Cold: Extreme Adventures at the Lowest Temperatures on Earth" is a dense read, offering detailed narratives of extraordinary experiences in a rather detached tone.

For fans of Fiennes that's not necessarily bad – indeed, adventuring purists may appreciate the absence of dramatizing and sensationalism. But it also means the book lacks the mass audience accessibility of some of his earlier works such as "Captain Scott," a gripping 2004 recounting and defense of history's most famous doomed Antarctic expedition.

"Cold" is a compilation of Fiennes' work and expeditions in frigid places during the past 40 years, beginning with the aforementioned glacier skydive to conduct surveys of two glaciers in Norway. From there he literally proceeds from Pole to Pole, becoming the first person to reach both by surface means.

His narration suffers from two flaws. First, the retelling of so many adventures often long after they occurred frequently sounds like the recitation of stories told many times before. Second, Fiennes seems determined not just to detail all of his cold-weather exploits, but the history of every other notable expedition as

The film is getting better early notices than the recently released "GMO OMG," described by the *Hollywood Reporter* as "Jeremy Seifert dumbs down the debate over genetically modified organisms" to the point making one sympathize with the vault's eye-rollers. And its Copenhagen debut probably means it won't disappear without a trace like "The Nightmare Of Noah," a 2009 project involving ice zombies from the vault terrorizing Longyearbyen after an actual apocalypse.

The film's official website, featuring a trailer and other information, is available at www.seedsoftimemovie.com.

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

well. He does so in a less than well-structured fashion, constantly interrupting present narratives with passages from other times and places.

Still, Fiennes' level of writing is accessible to laypersons and it's impossible for patient readers not to emerge impressed with a man still attempting landmark expeditions across Antarctica as he nears 70.

Some of the best narratives are contributions and journals from others, including the first-ever written description of a polar bear attack at a youth campsite in Spitsbergen in 2011 that resulted in the death of 17-year-old Horatio Chapple. Spike Reid, one of expedition's two leaders, admits they didn't set up a night watch and a tripwire alarm around the tents failed to work properly.

"The first thing I saw was a huge polar bear, meters away," Reid wrote in his nearly two-page account. "It was towering over a young man, who I later learned to be Horatio, a superb man and team member, who had been dragged from his tent."

Reid wrote he tried shooting the bear, but all four bullets in his rifle's magazine failed to fire. The bear bit his head and "swiped me several times with its mighty paws" before the other team leader intervened.

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

What's up

Nov. 13

6 p.m.: Movie: "The Family," U.S./French gangster/crime, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

Nov. 14

6 p.m.: Dance performance: "Dances With Polar Bears" by 55 students from various arts groups, with a theme focusing on climate change. Kulturhuset.

Nov. 15-17

Swing dance course for beginners and those with limited experience. Partner not required. Register at boyeb@lokalstyre.no or wesoeren@online.no.

Nov. 17

6 p.m.: Movie: "Detektiv Downs," Norwegian drama/comedy, age 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "2 Guns," U.S. action/drama, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

Nov. 18

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

Nov. 19

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

Nov. 20

6 p.m.: Movie: "The Hunger Games: Catching Fire," U.S. action/adventure, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

Nov. 21

7 p.m.: Lecture by Dag Nævestad about whaling and other activities in Svalbard during the 17th and 18th centuries. Svalbard Museum.

Nov. 24

11 a.m.: Family Mass w/ baptism. Svalbard Church.

4 p.m.: Movie: "Wadжда," Arab/German film, all ages. Kulturhuset.

6 p.m.: Movie: "Vi Er Best!" Swedish drama, no age limit specified. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "The Hunger Games: Catching Fire," U.S. action/adventure, ages 11 and up. 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:

- *Typhoon Haiyan's link to climate change*
- *Whalers land lots of Arctic 'butterballs'*
- *Tour de Arctic: Like France 60 years ago*
- *Elvis the dog sniffs out pregnant bears*