Svalbard’s (hopeful) emergence from COVID-19 symboizes a new era; is it for better and/or worse?

By MARK SABBATINI

Grizzled Norwegians who’ve been here for decades and feel Svalbard long ago lost what made it “special” are still discovering heartfelt reasons to stay. Outsiders here only a few years feel things have changed so much their ambition of being old-timers is waning.

Those are hardly dominant examples, but do reflect the enormous range of issues and emotions for residents as Svalbard is arguably at the dawn of a dramatic new era.

As the world’s northernmost community can at least envision emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic that has crippled life, it is one where rebuilding both literally in the form of new buildings and figuratively in the makeup of its residents are beyond what anyone imagined a decade ago.

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

Our editor gets exiled

What it’s like when the governor forces someone to leave Svalbard

By MARK SABBATINI

Editor

I heard a vehicle approaching sometime after 11 p.m. while laying in my bed of cushions and sleeping bags on the porch of the campsite. The sound of tires taking abuse on the poorly maintained dirt road was the same as the occasional other vehicles passing by to reach the maintained dirt road was the same as the occasional other vehicles passing by to reach the

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‘I'm leaving, Icepeople definitely is not’: From here and afar, latest local lunacy lives … See P3

‘That’ bank taunts with virtual mining

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Our new no-sex governor

Also vows to be no-nonsense in tough times

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10 years after Utøya

Survivors take on bullying… and budgeting

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Going after your guns

Shooting ban now in most settlements

icepeople.net
Who's to blame and how to express your wrath

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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.

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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.

‘Sustainability edition?’

This limited-size print issue is intended to summarize highlights of Icepeople’s full content at icepeople.net, and in full-size print editions available as PDFs and upon request.

Goodbye coal, hello crypto mining…

It takes a mother lode of chutzpah for a bank to shut down a small town’s only way many residents can get cash, loans and other financial services, only to resurface months later with a virtual campaign literally making fun of the community’s lack of traditional money and near-total loss of the industry that was the primary source of jobs. But head to www.svalbard.money and the digital dorks at SpareBank1 are offering the opportunity to “generate your own digital Svalbard money based on the Ethereum blockchain platform.” Essentially you need coal to obtain that money, which can be obtained “by working – reading texts, answering questions, listening to podcasts, viewing art.” You can also – wow, huge shock – buy Ether online for real sums of cash.

Random bits of weirdness

We’d say having our editor-in-exile write a “straight” feature profile of the new governor who just evicted him from this place is about as weird as it gets this week. But since, to quote the cliché of journalists that “we’re not the story” (oh, crap…we just saw the bottom of page one AND the rant below the governor’s piece), to hell with him and we’ll get on as usual in this mucking cold space…

Colin Farrell, an Irish actor none of us in the dungeon know anything about because our dashingly deportee was too cheap a bastard to buy us a TV, is currently small-screening it as some guy named Henry Drax (no relation to Hugo Drax who nearly killed everyone on Earth until really bad acting by Roger Moore sent him into space) in the 1850s drama “The North Water.” Since other media care what it’s actually about, we’ll just note it’s the furthest north drama series ever filmed (500 miles from the North Pole) and the coolest quote we saw from the star set to play The Penguin in the next Batman movie (thanks Wikipedia!) is “I thought, ‘This is going to be so brutal, unrelentingly so,’ but also there was some strange beauty at the center of it.” The most alarming is the polar bear lookouts he hired were ready to fire their rifles at anything “pear-shaped,” which we’re pretty sure wouldn’t exclude our departed despot (not actually troubling to us except that lone human quality he possesses also applies to others here we like). A New York Times review, BTW, says the moment-by-moment adventure scenes are “plausible and engrossing,” but ultimately it drags on like a five-hour movie that “feels like a story you’ve read before.”…Speaking of tales retold, our website headline “Folk Songs For A Nuclear Village” for the next item is an act of theft nobody caught on to (oh, wait…maybe that’s why all the police have been stalking us this week). It refers to something that probably won’t be a contender for a planned “doomsday music vault” designed to protect the world’s landmark recordings for up to 1,000 years in the abandoned Mine 3 inside a mountain above Svalbard Airport set to open in 2022. It uses the same digitalization process as a data vault that opened in the same location in 2017. Both will be adjacent to the more famous “Doomsday Vault” that since its debut in 2008 has inspired numerous other projects including a proposed sperm vault in outer space and an “all of the above” vault on the moon staffed by robots. But the ultimate cool thing about the music vault is the intent to have the deposits available for free streaming when legally possible – as if we’ve been instructed to care about such trifling things.

Editor: Hey! it’s an eviction, not exile

EXPPELED, from page 1

scattering of cabins beyond. Like the others, as soon as the vehicle passed the building the sound vanished like it’d been turned off like a light switch.

But seconds later the sound of tires coming to a halt came from the other side of the building, followed immediately by two doors of something heavy-duty slamming shut. And I thought “this is it.”

There’s more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.
Lars Fause returns to changes needing tough resolve as governor

By MARK SABBATINI

Editor

The first act of a newly elected governor generally isn’t telling constituents he’s going to do a lot of things they don’t like.

But Lars Fause isn’t elected or a politician, and he is starting his term as The Governor of Svalbard when the world’s northernmost community is facing a range of new issues requiring cold, harsh realism when making rulings.

He raised eyebrows – and a lot of concerns - with his immediate vow of unpopularity, while declining to specify what issues and how he might rule on them.

“Some people may see it as a cruel thing to do,” he said in a subsequent interview three weeks into his new job.

But Fause also emphasized a strong desire to preserve the unique and enticing environment of the archipelago – in all senses.

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

‘Alas, I am leaving Svalbard…’

By MARK SABBATINI

Editor: My finances and health can’t fulfill the self-sufficiency rules

After 13 years and the hope I could publish Icepeople for the rest of my life in Svalbard, I am departing next Wednesday on orders from the governor because my finances and health have deteriorated to the point I can’t exist under the self-sufficiency rules here.

I cannot emphasize enough: this is not the end of Icepeople, as I will continue to publish news about Svalbard (thanks to the virus and my health I’ve been doing a lot of it by email, phone, etc. the past year or so anyhow) – and more importantly there are people here who will be contributing material of the sort that can only come from folks who are actually here.

I also cannot emphasize enough I believe his decision is fair, he and his staff have handled my case with remarkable consideration, and I’m at peace with it. That might not have been the case a couple of years ago.

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

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

**Wednesday**
Partly cloudy. NW winds to 32 km/h. High 9C (4C wind chill), low 6C (3C wind chill).

**Thursday**
Mostly clear. Variable winds to 29 km/h. High 10C (8C wind chill), low 5C (3C wind chill).

**Friday**
Mostly clear. Variable winds to 29 km/h. High 9C (7C wind chill), low 6C (4C wind chill).

**Saturday**
Partly cloudy. SE winds to 25 km/h. High 7C (6C wind chill), low 5C (5C wind chill).

**Extended forecast:** Sunday, cloudy, 6C (6C), 5C (5C), light 24:00h; Monday, cloudy, 6C (6C), 5C (5C), light 24:00h; Tuesday, cloudy, 6C (6C), 6C (6C), light 24:00h; Wednesday, cloudy, 6C (6C), 5C (5C), light 24:00h

Data provided by yr.no
10 years of anti-terror

Svalbard’s survivors of Utøya terrorist attack keep looking to future, seeking changes of past

Ten years after Norway’s deadliest terrorist attack Viljar Hanssen, 27, is still coping enormous challenges...like helping get a municipal budget passed. And completing a marathon that a decade ago would have been unthinkable when being hit by five bullets cost him an eye and partial use of his motor functions.

Hanssen is one of five Longyearbyen youths who were at the Utøya island youth camp on July 22, 2011, when 69 people were killed by a terrorist gunman. Politically active then and now, he has consistently said over the years he’s looking ahead instead of back — yet the impact of that day continues to be a constant subject in his public activities as he seeks to counter the attitudes prompting such extremism.

“I honestly don’t think it has changed much, but the real debates and public conversations surrounding this years ‘markering’ is very promising,” he stated in an online interview.

Among the other local victims was Johannes Buø, 14, who was one of the youngest fatalities on that day that killed a total of 77 people at Utøya and in an Oslo bombing.

A memorial for local residents affected by the attack is scheduled at 2 p.m. Thursday at the memorial for Buø outside Svalbard Church.

‘Record’ reindeer, but 2 tragic

Annual Svalbard count shows Mother Nature kind, but humans discarding metal wires are fatal

It was a highly favorable winter for nearly 1,700 Svalbard reindeer, the second-highest count ever in an annual census, but for researchers conducting the count it’s two reindeer who didn’t survive who are much in mind as they were fatally snagged in wires discarded by humans.

“This year’s counting team has recorded record numbers of animals and two cruel deaths.” the researchers noted on the Norwegian Polar Institute’s Facebook page. e “record” isn’t quite that, since this year’s count is just shy of the record 1,700 reindeer in the 2018 census.

Taxation without representation?

Gov’t wants residents to reside on mainland for three years to vote and run for local office

Foreign residents in Longyearbyen will lose their right to vote and run for office in local elections if a proposal by Norway’s Ministry of Justice and Emergency Preparedness published Wednesday is enacted.

Numerous residents and Longyearbyen’s mayor expressed dismay at what the latter called an unexpected proposal released without notifying local officials in advance.

The proposal, which would be effective as of the next local council election in 2023, would require residents to reside in a mainland municipality for at least three years to be eligible to vote and run for office. Currently anyone living in Longyearbyen for at least three years has such rights. The ministry is accepting public comments on the proposal until Oct. 25.

The percentage of foreigners who’ve moved here from abroad has risen significantly during the past decade.

Town sends a metropolis of microfibers into the sea

A lot of folks think it’s pretty crappy Longyearbyen doesn’t treat its wastewater before discharging it into the supposedly pristine waters at its edge, but it turns out locals doing a different type of water cleansing are contributing to the problem in the form of microfibers coming loose from clothes they wash. Because the water containing those fibers is untreated, the amount generated by Longyearbyen’s 2,400 residents is the same as the 1.3 million residents who live in Vancouver, Canada, according to a new study.

Norway to UK: ‘We will not give them a single crab!’

Norwegian fishermen have complained about the lack of a UK-Norway fisheries deal being signed after talks broke down earlier this year due to issues over quotas. UK and Norway fleets have no access to each other’s waters at the moment, forcing fishing chiefs to pressure both sides to make an agreement.

Kjell Ingebrigtsen, leader of the Norwegian Fishermen’s Association, said: “It is not Norway who asked for Brexit.” Norway and the UK are seeking a new agreement for the early part of 2022. Norway is also entangled in a years-long dispute the European Union about fishing rights, which is seen as a proxy to the battle for more lucrative resources such as oil.

How climate science has changed due to COVID-19

When COVID-19 restrictions kicked in, governments and scientists globally recalled almost all research ships. Commercial ships and airplanes ordinarily also contribute to ocean and weather observations, but with cruise ships not traveling and a massive reduction in commercial flights due to travel restrictions, there were fewer resources all around.

“In terms of the observing system as a whole, the major thing is aircraft observations from commercial aircraft, they fell by about 90 percent,” said Peter Thorne, professor of physical geography at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth, who also chairs the International Surface Temperature Initiative.

7-day weather forecast now equals 3-day one 20 yrs. ago

Researchers of a Svalbard weather project say technology advances mean “the 7-day forecast is as skilful as the 3-day forecast was 20 years ago.” But those looking at yr.no for long-term local weather need to know “it remains challenging due to several reasons,” said Lukas Frank, a PhD candidate at The University Centre in Svalbard.

REMINDER: Full versions of all stories are at icepeople.net.