



Viljar on comeback trail

Utøya survivor hopes to be in Longyearbyen by election day, already campaigning at hospital

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

There's no question that just being alive to focus on rehabilitation is the most important thing for Viljar Hanssen. But after that the youth's priorities are getting back to normal in a hurry.

"Make use of your right to decide today," the survivor of the Utøya shooting July 22 reminded his sizable Facebook audience as the two-day municipal elections started on the mainland Monday. "With your vote you are helping to shape the future in addition to sup-



Viljar Hanssen, left, discusses his activities with Svalbard's Youth Labor Party in a TV interview before becoming a victim of the Utøya shooting.

port for democracy :)"

There's also chocolate.

"Ate a quart of chocolate pudding for

dessert after breakfast," he noted in one of numerous references to the sweet stuff in the days before the election.

Hanssen, 18, was one of five Longyearbyen teens at the Utøya political youth camp when the shooting occurred that killed 69 people, including local resident Johannes Buø, 14. Hanssen was operated on eight times during the ten days he was in critical condition.

He remains in an Oslo hospital where his family tries to limit visitors to one group a day as he rehabilitates. But the teen, who is ranked fourth on Longyearbyen's Labor Party list, hopes to return to the city before it has its municipal election Oct. 9 and 10.

"If everything goes quite perfectly the way we want it to we would be home in October,"

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Campaign start is end for mayor

Kjell Mork plans to be active for his party from sidelines, but looking forward to retirement

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

Kjell Mork has the job the candidates want and this time he's happy to give it to one of them.

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MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Longyearbyen Mayor Kjell Mork unpacks Labor Party campaign fliers from his car Friday in the municipal building parking lot. The fliers are available in Norwegian, Russian and Thai.

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Taking an island (on) vacation

Nowhereisland project to 'pack' and tow Svalbard terrain to U.K. for tour during 2012 Olympics

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

Given the journey they've had so far, it's little wonder they're so passionate about collecting enough rocks and dirt to build an island of solid land.

Weather-rattled flights, seasickness *en masse* and feasting on rotten fish are how members of the Nowhereisland project are being introduced to Svalbard. The expedition
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MAX MCCLURE / NOWHEREISLAND

A dizzying view from the mast of the *Noorderlicht* captures a sense of how participants in the Nowhereisland expedition are faring while traveling through rough seas this week.

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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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.

The efforts of the fearless crew



ELIN A. AMUNDSEN

Students from Barentsburg try their hand at the wheel of the *Polargirl* during a Sept. 6 voyage to Grøn fjorden as the vessel's captain keeps watch on them. All 22 students from the Russian mining community were invited on the voyage and a barbecue lunch while aboard, as well as an opportunity to play with the ship's computer and other equipment. The youths' competitive efforts to guide the wheel were not, according to an adult participant, being used to actually steer the vessel.

Briefly

Local events for annual TV auction start Saturday

A month of local activities related to an annual telethon to raise money for troubled areas worldwide begins with an opening gathering from noon to 6 p.m. Saturday in the Longyearbyen central square.

The telethon, scheduled Oct. 23 and hosted by NRK, is raising funds on behalf of Norwegian People's Aid. This year's proceeds will be used to help remove land mines and cluster bombs from war-torn areas.

Other major local events include a car wash by the governor's office Oct. 3, a furniture auction Oct. 6, a general auction at the Radisson Blu Polar Hotel Oct. 16 and an international food feast at The University Centre in Svalbard Oct. 22.

British judge to oversee polar bear attack probe

A British Supreme Court judge is scheduled to oversee the investigation of an Aug. 5 polar bear attack in Svalbard that killed one U.K. teenager and seriously wounded four other people.

A British Schools Exploring Society (BSES) expedition was attacked about 40 kilometers from Longyearbyen after a tripwire-mounted flare alarm system failed to detonate. The expedition has been heavily criticized as lacking proper training and equipment, which will be the focus of the judge's investigation.

The probe, in addition to one being conducted by the Svalbard governor's office, is expected to begin in October and conclude next year.

Icesheet

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

Heinous crime continues to run rampant in Svalbard, at least in the alternate universe occupied by Monica Kristensen. The author's fourth crime novel set in Svalbard, "The Dead in Barentsburg," is scheduled to debut in January with publishing expanded beyond Scandinavia to Germany and France. Her series starring investigator Knut Fjeld debuted in 2007 to

critical and commercial success, and she said she chose Barentsburg for the latest mystery because it's "one of the most fascinating places I know about: A full Russian city, with its very own dramatic history and identity." We want to revisit the topic in a year and see what sold more – this or the cheesy paperback romance "Whispers of Scandal" released earlier this year (only the latter is available in English).



COURTESY OF ALEX HARTLEY

Alex Hartley stands on a considerably smaller chunk of land than the football-pitch-size mass he is temporarily moving from northern Svalbard to the United Kingdom for the 2012 Olympic Games.

Island voyage off to rough start

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is sailing in northwest Spitsbergen aboard the *Noorderlicht* this week to reach – and transport south– a land mass the size of a football pitch "discovered" by sculptor Alex Hartley during a climate change cruise in 2004.

Hartley, claiming to be the first person to set foot on the land, which was revealed after ice melted from a retreating glacier. He gave it the name Nowhereisland and is returning to claim his turf, so to speak.

It will be towed now to the United Kingdom and then 500 nautical miles along the southwest coastline next year during the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. The land is scheduled to be returned to its original location by the end of 2012.

The project is inviting the public to register as "citizens" of the island, although Hartley is the only one who will be permitted to set foot on it during its tour.

Sixteen scientists, artists, climate change activists and others are aboard the *Noorderlicht* to help move the island and discuss the environmental awareness campaign it will be used for.

"Our Nowhereisland pioneers are quite remarkable," notes the online expedition logbook (<http://nowhereisland.org/#!/logbook>). "There

is (an) amazing group of people on board for this journey, intimidating when they start to introduce themselves and what they do or have done, but then just fine to talk with, laugh with or even better to allow the leveling effect of the minibus taxi's karaoke machine to work its magic as the ultimate icebreaker."

The *Noorderlicht* departed from Longyearbyen on Sunday after the members arrived on a flight troubled by weather. But the 1910 schooner's passage through rough waters has meant the rotten fish they were served as a delicacy at a welcoming banquet isn't the only thing causing queazy stomachs.

"Seventy percent of our crew ... are in their bunks with varying degrees of sea-sickness," the log entry for today notes. "Unfortunately this has meant discussions are off until our sea-legs are better established."

The expedition is also taking precautions against another hazard – polar bear attacks – after another one person was killed and four seriously wounded earlier this summer in what some are calling an ill-prepared U.K. expedition. Nowhereisland members are spending all nights aboard the ship, and the crew and guides have extensive experience as guards.

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

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Oxbow seeks 365M kroner in lawsuit against Store Norske

A trial is scheduled to begin in Oslo today for Oxbow Corp., which is seeking 365 million kroner in damages from Store Norske after the mining company terminated what it called an overpriced contract. Oxbow's contract for selling coal was supposed to last until 2015, an extension of a 10-year deal signed in 2000, but Store Norske terminated it last year and said it was not binding. Oxbow said the contract was proper given the market conditions at the time and efforts to discredit the firm are being made by Store Norske without evidence. The dispute is part of a series of questionable agreements between Store Norske and subcontractors that resulted in criminal charges against former Administrative Director Robert Hermansen, who received compensation and other favorable treatment for other business ventures.

Health ministry says it will OK brewing of beer in Svalbard

Brewing beer in Svalbard will be allowed by Norway's Ministry of Health, following requests by Longyearbyen pilot Robert Johansen and the Barentsburg company Trust Arktikugol for a change in the law. Specifics of the change have not been determined and Johansen said it is unlikely he will be able to start a venture until at least next spring. "This is not a big step, but it is certainly in the right direction," he said. Manufacturing alcoholic beverages has been prohibited since 1928, but the ministry rejected requests for exemptions by the two prospective brewers, stating a permanent change is preferable.

Retired Longyearbyen man wins 1 million kr. Lotto prize

Per Roar Ingebrigtsen of Longyearbyen is one of five Lotto players who won 1 million kroner Saturday, with Svalbardbutikken selling the first ticket to win such a prize in many years, according to a store official. Ingebrigtsen said he saw his name among the winners on Saturday's television broadcast, although it incorrectly listed his residency as Tromsø. The retired maintenance worker said he does not know yet what he will do with the money.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Periods of rain and snow. NE winds to 22 km/h. High 2C (0C wind chill), low -1C (-7C wind chill). Sunrise 5:26a; sunset 8:15p	Rain. SE winds to 11 km/h. High 4C (2C wind chill), low 2C (0C wind chill). Sunrise 5:34a; sunset 8:07p	Rain and snow. S winds to 7 km/h. High 2C (2C wind chill), low 1C (-1C wind chill). Sunrise 5:41a; sunset 7:59p	Partly cloudy. W winds at 7 km/h. High -1C (-3C wind chill), low -2C (-4C wind chill). Sunrise 5:49a; sunset 7:51p
Extended forecast: Sunday, some rain, 1C (-1C), -2C (-4C), light 13:47h; Monday, rain and snow, 2C (-1C), 1C (-2C), light 13:31h; Tuesday, snow ending, 1C (-1C), 0C (-2C), light 13:16h; Wednesday, occasional snow, 1C (-2C), -2C (-4C), light 13:01h.			
Data provided by yr.no			

Viljar Hanssen, 18, center left, attends the Utøya political youth camp with his younger brother, Torje, 14, in the summer of 2010. The younger Hanssen was one of five Longyearbyen youths at the camp during the July 22 shooting this year that killed 69 people, but was not injured.



PRIVATE

Hanssen sets goal for return

RECOVERY, from page 1

said his mother, Christin Kristoffersen, who is the local Labor Party's top candidate. "It will be some time before or after the election."

Meanwhile, Hanssen, who formed the local chapter of the Labor-affiliated AUF youth organization in 2009, keeps up his political activities through friends and in his first interviews since the shooting.

"Although I'm physically here, I am mentally in Longyearbyen in every way," he told *Svalbardposten* last week. "It depends on how much energy I have, but hopefully there will be letters to the editor and postings on social media. I also hope to be planning and strategiz-

ing over the phone as much as I can."

Hanssen was shot five times, but said he remembers everything about the incident.

"Being shot is very strange," he told *Svalbardposten*. "After I was shot I did not think that it would not go well."

He said he tried to focus on positive thoughts such as surviving to ride on his snowmobile, even though three fingers on his left hand were gone, and "I was keen to look after my little brother and the others who were around me, and running away from the sound of bullets."

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

Advance voting begins Monday

MORK, from page 1

The head of Longyearbyen's local council (a.k.a. mayor) is preparing for retirement after more than 30 years as an educator, administrator and politician in the community. He said he will spend some time between now and the Oct. 9-10 municipal election on campaign activities for the Labor Party that has the largest representation on the council, but won't be giving them too much advice.

"I have no wish to have any control of the new candidates," he said in an interview Friday at his office.

Advance voting in the election begins Monday and lasts until Oct. 7. Eligible voters must be registered residents as of Sept. 11.

Mork, 62, will mostly be an observer of an election that in some ways is markedly different – even historic – than the last vote in 2007, even though many issues such as power generation and infrastructure improvements remain the same.

Youths ages 16 and 17 will be allowed to vote for the first time as part of a trial program in 21 municipalities nationwide. Also, the Svalbard Lista Party returns after being absent in the last election and has already shown it can affect the debate by questioning at a recent forum if Longyearbyen should even have a local government.

Mork said Longyearbyen's elections typically are less contentious than those on the mainland because "we don't have the conflicts between the districts." But while many of the expressed goals are the same, Mork's argument for the campaign will be about effectiveness.

"It's much easier for parties belonging to the central party," he said.

Municipal elections on the mainland, which took place Monday and today, resulted in Labor winning 33.2 percent of the vote (3.6 percent lower than the 2009 parliamentary elections), Conservatives 27.7 percent and the Progress Party 11.5 percent (a drop from 17.5 percent apparently due to the longtime membership of Anders Behring Breivik, who confessed to killing 77 people during the July 22 attacks in Oslo and Utøya).

Mork said some notable improvements have been made in ongoing issues during his term as mayor, including an emergency power supply and the completion of Kulturhuset. But many of the many improvements sought – such as improved school and hospital facilities, roads, and a larger primary power supply – are difficult due to limited funds.

"We maybe get just enough money to run the town and take care of the people who live here, but we don't get enough to invest," he said. Rather than trying to pursue one big project "so many things are linked together, so I think you have to minimize them ... after one step you take the next."

Mork said he will spend much of the winter packing belongings accumulated during three decades in town, but will continue living here part-time. He also hopes to continue some community involvement such as serving as a board member at the Svalbard Museum since "maybe I have even more time for them now."

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

What's up

Sept. 14

8 p.m.: Movie: "Oslo, 31," Norwegian drama, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

Sept. 17

Noon-6 p.m.: Kick-off gathering for annual TV auction to raise money for Norwegian People's Aid. Central square.

Sept. 18

11 a.m.: Mass with confirmation and homily by Swedish Bishop Hans Stiglund. Svalbard Church.

6 p.m.: Movie: "The Smurfs" (3D), U.S. animated/family, no age limit determined. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Sønner av Norge," Norwegian drama, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

Sept. 22-24

Beer festival. Radisson SAS Polar Hotel.

Sept. 23

6 p.m.: Movie: "Knerten i Knipe," Norwegian children's, no age limit determined. Kulturhuset. Proceeds to benefit annual TV auction.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Kong Curling," Norwegian comedy, all ages. Kulturhuset.

Sept. 24

Noon-3 p.m.: Open day at Longyearbyen Fire Station.

7 p.m.: Concert to celebrate Longyearbyen Hospital's 20th anniversary. Features guest singer Anne Nymo Trulsen and numerous other artists. Tickets 100 kr. at www.lokalstyre.no or Kulturhuset, venue for the event.

Sept. 25

11 a.m.: Family Mass with performance by Polargospel. Svalbard Church.

8 p.m.: Movie: "The Tree of Life," U.S. drama/fantasy, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

Sept. 27

7 p.m.: Interview with UNIS Director Gunnar Sand. Svalbard Church.

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:

- *Svalbard's fjords tricky for weathermen*
- *Arctic sea ice volume again at record low*
- *Why an ice-free Arctic scare scientists*
- *'Happy Feet' vanishes to unknown fate*