

From his workplace the Seilmagasinet

(Norway's version of Yachting World)

It is with great sadness that we announce that our dear colleague Mikkel Thommessen is no longer with us. He lived and breathed sailing right until the end, and passed away on the morning of Tuesday, April 22nd, while handing over sailing literature to the Royal Norwegian Sailing Association (KNS) library collection. That same morning, he had already managed to publish a news article about Norwegian regatta results in Hyeres.

Mikkel Thommessen turned 80 years old on March 21st of this year. He was full of ideas and plans when the editorial staff celebrated his birthday at a sunny outdoor venue in early April. Little did we know that his life would be over within the month.

Mikkel Thommessen lived to a ripe old age, but he never grew old. A few years ago, he started a podcast here at SEILmagasinet, which became increasingly popular. In February, he invited Olympic sailing winners from the 1960s to the present day to talk about their achievements at the Oslofjord Museum in Vollen. And earlier this month, he invited well-known top sailors to a dragon boat race in Son, and wrote an article about it under the title "The Nursing Home on an Outing."

We take comfort in the fact that Mikkel was in full vigor until the very end, and there is something symbolic about his life's journey concluding as he handed over his precious sailing literature to the members of KNS. He was a walking encyclopedia of sailing history himself, and had a large network in the sailing world both here at home and out in the wider world.

He was a Shipbroker

When Mikkel became a full-time sailing journalist in the 1990s, he had a background as a shipbroker. After completing his Examen Artium in 1965, he started working for the shipping brokerage firm R.S. Platou. He later worked as a shipbroker in Montreal, New York, and Tokyo before returning to Oslo in 1973. Until 1986, he worked as a broker, the last few years at Fearnley Finans. He was a board member and later vice-chairman of the Royal Norwegian Sailing Association from 1980 to 1990 and has been the chairman of the organizing committee for several international regattas and championships. As a competitor, he has two silver and one bronze medal from the Norwegian Championships, and two 6th places in the World Championships for 5.5 meters in 1990 and 93, in addition to a silver medal in the Japanese Soling Championship in 1972. He has participated in the Atlantic Rally for Cruisers (ARC) and has cruised to the UK, Svalbard, Iceland, the Shetland Islands, the Faroe Islands, and the Mediterranean.

We don't know if Mikkel was born into journalism, but his mother was the composer and folk singer Caroline Marie ("Mimi") Thommessen. His father, Olaf Dobloug Thommessen, was the editor of Tidens Tegn, and later a bookseller.

He was out on the Regatta course

SEILmagasinet's sailing editor was hired by NRK on several occasions as an expert commentator for all Olympic Games from 1996 to 2008. Many people probably also remember that he, along with Jon Herwig Karlsen, was the announcer at Aker Brygge during the start of the Færder Race for many years. Mikkel Thommessen also wrote several books about sailing and sailors, most recently about the 8-meter yacht "Sira," which both King Olav and King Harald have sailed.

"I haven't been to the regatta course as much as I would have liked this year, but I hope to come back strong when I turn 80," he said when the book about "Sira" was released.

This is how we colleagues at SEILmagasinet remember Mikkel, smiling and optimistic and full of ideas right until the end.

Many of us have enjoyed Mikkel Thommessen's numerous stories and reports from the world of sailing. Now he has put an end to it for good and is deeply missed.

From KNS the Royal Norwegian Sailing Association

(Norway's RYA)

The well-known and beloved sailing journalist Mikkel Thommessen (80) passed away suddenly and unexpectedly on Tuesday, April 22nd. Mikkel was a highly respected sailing expert with extensive knowledge and a vast network within the sailing community, built up over a long life in the sport.

When I started at KNS in 2019, Mikkel was quick to reach out to me. The experienced sailing journalist from Seilmagasinet wanted to know more about the new addition to KNS's communications team and about potential collaborative projects. As a complete newcomer to the sailing world, I quickly perceived Mikkel as very knowledgeable and a man with great respect among sailors and generally within the sailing community.

We immediately hit it off, and that was the start of a friendship and professional collaboration that lasted until yesterday, when Mikkel collapsed and died while delivering his large collection of books about the America's Cup to us at KNS. He wanted to donate his beloved collection so that it would be preserved for the future and made available to all KNS members.

Over the past six years, we at KNS have used Mikkel in major regattas as part of a collaborative communication team between KNS and Seilmagasinet. Most recently, during the Dutch Sailing Race last year, where Mikkel did some of what he enjoyed most – walking around and interviewing sailors on the dock. Always well-prepared, always with relevant and good questions, and with a natural and nice flow to the interview. He was an eloquent and excellent communicator, whether speaking on TV, in his podcast, or as a writer. It's not without reason that he was an expert commentator for NRK during several Olympic Games.

Mikkel could describe events and episodes on a regatta course in a way that everyone understood, even those who weren't completely familiar with sailing. Of course, he was hired as the live speaker by the organizer during the start of the Hollænderseilasen, in addition to the media work he did for KNS and Seilmagasinet.

Earlier this summer in 2024, Mikkel was a central figure during the Soling World Championship in Hankø, where he contributed his comprehensive daily press releases, reports, and interviews.

When the Færder Race celebrated its 75th anniversary, we hired Mikkel to help us create a digital anniversary book – the website www.færderhistorien.no. Mikkel's work in this comprehensive summary of the history of the Færder Race was absolutely essential for the website to achieve such high quality. His archives of images and articles, and his knowledge, laid the foundation for us to create a documentation for posterity that we can be very proud of.

We naturally used Mikkel for TV interviews with key figures within the Færder Race, including His Majesty King Harald.

Mikkel just turned 80 years old. He was one of the most vital and youthful people I knew. He wasn't idle; he completed several major book projects in parallel with all his media work. He was happy and looked positively toward the future, and had many plans and projects ahead of him.

I will miss Mikkel, who always greeted me with a big, warm smile, a handshake, and the words "How are you doing?"

It's sad that we at KNS can no longer benefit from Mikkel Thommesen's knowledge and expertise. At the same time, we are grateful for everything he contributed, and that most of it is documentation for all time to come. In that way, Mikkel's spirit lives on.

Thanks for everything, Mikkel.

Christian Ruscetta
Editor at Seilas

We could not have said it better, with any deeper feeling of loss.

