

## The Amelia Riis case: Disagreement about research boat

Crime: Amelia Riis (78) feels that her deceased husband was swindled into investing millions of NOK into this research boat.

by KJETIL SAETER

The research boat “Ty” has become a hot issue in the bitter conflict between Amelia Riis and the lawyer Herman Berge (44). In 2004 and 2005 Einar Riis invested 2.75 million NOK in the company AS Tyvik, which owns the research boat. The money came from the record settlement of 55 million NOK Amelia reached with the State in 2003. On Wednesday 12/31/08 Finansavisen told the story of lawyer Herman Berge, who wants the lion’s share of these 55 million NOK. Berge, who claims he is the executor of Einar Riis’s estate, has also sued Nicolas Sarkozy and Prince Albert II of Monaco for 1,8 billion NOK on behalf of the estate.

### **Berge has control**

According to their statements, AS Tyvik develops a new technology to reduce energy consumption in ships. So far the results have been meager. The 2.75 million NOK from Einar Riis were transferred to AS Tyvik through two companies: EU Invest SA, registered in Luxembourg, and First Branch Invest AB, registered in Sweden. Neither Einar nor Amelia Riis are registered as having any role in these companies. But Herman Berge and his live-in companion Katalin Baranyi are. Berge is also registered as member of the board in AS Tyvik, a company that is run by an acquaintance of Berge, Arne Wik Kristiansen.

### **Claim for repayment**

Amelia Riis’s opinion is that Herman Berge swindled her husband into making these investments. Now she wants that money back. In a recent judgment the Asker and Baerum court declared that Herman Berge owes her approximately 2,4 million NOK relating to the AS Tyvik investment. Berge, who announced change of residence to Luxembourg a few weeks after Amelia Riis denounced him, has not appealed the judgment.

AS Tyvik has not earned much money in the past 7 years. The expenses on the other hand, have been quite steep. According to the books for 2007, the money from Einar Riis has disappeared a long time ago. The company also received 179.000 NOK from the Norwegian Council for Research, and a promise of 100,000 NOK more.

### **Berge the middleman**

The president of the administration council of AS Tyvik, Arne Wik Kristiansen, says that the money from Einar Riis was used to build the boat ”Ty”.

- How did you come in contact with the Riis family?

“Herman Berge put me in contact with Einar Riis” says Wik Kristiansen.

- How long have you known Herman Berge?

“I have known him since 2002 or 2003.

### **Money spent on the boat**

How Herman Berge and Arne Wik Kristiansen presented the investment to Einar Riis is something only they know. In a letter Einar Riis wrote in November 2004 he writes that the new technology is being studied also in relation to use in airplanes, submarines, ferries and “everything else imaginable”. In the letter he ties this information to Herman Berge. Arne Wik Kristiansen says he informed Einar Riis in a meeting that there had been talk of an investment in a research project. “Einar Riis was informed directly by me” says Wik Kristiansen.

According to Amelia Riis her husband’s health had considerably weakened in the last years of his life.

- How did you perceive Mr. Riis’ health when you met him?

“He was in full control of his abilities when he invested in AS Tyvik” says Wik Kristiansen.

- What was the money used for?

“It was entered into the accounts. It was spent on the boat. In addition, students at the High School in Vestfold did unpaid research work in relation to the project. None of the members of the board has taken any salary in these years” says Wik Kristiansen.

- Was Riis led to believe that this investment was a way to make a profit?

“No. This is a development of new technology. I cannot claim that anybody could make any money from it”.

#### Page 8 Photo Captions

[1] Gone berserk with estate. Finansavisen wrote on Wednesday 12/31/08 about Herman Berge’s attempts to get his hands on the lion’s share of Amelia Riis’ record settlement with the State.

[2] Met Riis: Einar Riis was informed directly by me, says Chief of the board of AS Tyvik, Arne Wik Kristiansen

[3] Control: Herman Berge controls the companies that supposedly invested 2.75 million NOK in AS Tyvik.

#### Page 9 Photo Captions

[1] Contested investment: The research boat “Ty” has become an issue in the bitter conflict between Amelia Riis and lawyer Herman Berge.

[2] Claims repayment of millions of NOK invested: In a recent judgment in absence, the Asker and Baerum court declared that Amelia Riis has a claim of 2.4 million NOK against Herman Berge related to AS Tyvik.

#### Background

- Amelia Riis’s husband Einar Riis died on May 30, 2006. The majority of the assets from the 55 million NOK settlement with the State were at that time in Monaco, where Einar Riis was resident.
- That same fall lawyer Herman Berge (44) advances a claim of 27.9 million NOK against the estate. Berge had already received more than 10 million NOK from Amelia and Einar Riis.
- Berge also claims that he is the executor of the estate. The 44 year old has thus blocked the assets in Monaco.
- Berge claims he was the architect behind the settlement of 55 million NOK with the State. Earlier Chief of the Justice Department Odd Einar Doerum, who made the decision to settle the case on behalf of the State, denies this statement.
- Amelia Riis now has two valid judgments from Norway where the so-called wills and agreements that Berge bases his claims on are declared illegitimate.
- Berge does not give up or admit his obligations. Last fall he sued amongst others Nicolas Sarkozy and Prince Albert II of Monaco for 1,8 billion NOK on behalf of the estate.

#### The Amelia Riis case

- Amelia Riis’ brother, Kristoffer Olsen jr., became director and new partner of the shipping company Olsen & Ugelstad after the death of their father in 1948. The disagreements between brother and sister became apparent since 1950.
- After the father’s death, the mother remained in charge of the unpartitioned inheritance, while Kristoffer Olsen jr. ran the companies. After the mother’s death in 1970, the mother’s estate remained undistributed.
- Amelia Riis has always thought that the court unfairly permitted Kristoffer Olsen jr. to handle the distribution of the property, and that this decision was not in the better interest of the heirs. Large values were lost.
- In 1978 Amelia Riis and her husband Einar Riis sued the State. In February 2001 – 23 years later – the court in Oslo rendered the judgment that gave her partial victory and obligated the State to pay her an indemnity of 43 million NOK. The State appealed the judgment, but later accepted the settlement.

- Amelia Riis has also started other lawsuits, amongst them one against the bankruptcy court for Hilmar Reksten.

### **Will not withdraw his claim**

Finansavisen has tried to reach Herman Berge in Luxembourg through email, fax and telephone calls, but has not succeeded. The 44 year old has nevertheless confirmed that he has no intention of withdrawing his claim to 27.9 million NOK from the estate of Einar Riis. Berge says in a letter dated December 21, 2006 that the agreements that were dismissed from the Norwegian courts are still valid.

“To maintain that these agreements are worthless is the same as saying that for 9 years I was led astray and betrayed by the family, particularly by Amelia Riis” he says. Berge also says that he is in possession of hours of taped conversations with the Riis family. These taped conversations supposedly prove all his efforts for the family. Berge still maintains in several papers that he was the architect behind the settlement with the State, even though there are plenty of documents that prove the opposite.

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