

A Tribute to Alyson Bailes

Lassi Heininen



Alyson J.K. Bailes – 6 April 1949–29 April 2016

Dear Alyson, I played this song “Hold the Heathen Hammer High” by the band *Tyr* for you, since this is music that you liked and liked to listen. The Faroes heavy metal music is a good example and indicator of how open-minded you were and how broad were your interests, also crossing the borders of your profession and expertise. Being a Finn I don’t want to use superlatives or praise a person’s merits too much – you knew this well after living for a few years in Finland and learning the language – only would like to say that you were a unique person, even ‘extraordinary’ (the word which a few who knew you are using). I was happy to be your friend, that we enjoyed each other’s company and had a fruitful cooperation for years.

I’m honoured to have this tribute to You.

The Faroes heavy metal music is an example to show, even manifest, that Alyson Bailes was a character that you cannot put into a box. She was simply too bright (intelligent) and curious for

Text prepared and read by Lassi Heininen, editor of the Arctic Yearbook, on October 5th, 2016 during the 9th Polar Law Symposium in Akureyri, Iceland. Alyson Bailes was a Member of the Arctic Yearbook’s Editorial Board. We extend our condolences to family and friends of our friend and colleague, Alyson.

that. Alyson Judith Kirtley Bailes was born on the 6th of April 1949 and died at the age of 67 of cancer on the 29th of April 2016. She had a rich life and a long, successful career.

It began in 1969, when Alyson joined the Foreign Office of the UK as a junior diplomat. After serving in several positions there, she later became the British Ambassador to Finland for about 30 years. She was not, however, looking for higher rank in diplomacy for its own sake and was curious and eager to do something else. As a surprise to many of her colleagues she jumped out of diplomatic circles and became the director of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) in 2002. The last 10 years or so she lived in Iceland and was teaching at the University of Iceland, and also a few times here at the University of Akureyri (UNAK). At the same time, she served as member in several boards of many academic institutions across Europe.

We were friends and colleagues.

Strange enough, I only met Alyson after her years of serving in Finland as Ambassador. I met her for the first time in 2007 in Reykjavik, a few months after she had moved to Iceland. Since then we cooperated until her health had already been dramatically weakened. I annually lectured on environmental politics and security in her course “Non-State Actors and Non-Military Security” which had a broad approach. She lectured on security institutions and non-state actors in my module “International Cooperation, Geopolitics, Security” at the Polar Law MA study program at UNAK.

She also invited me to become a speaker or panelist in several conferences, seminars, workshops she organized in Reykjavik. Correspondingly, she attended a few Northern Research Forum (NRF) open assemblies. I also invited her to become a member of the Editorial Board of the Arctic Yearbook, and she had already contributed to the Yearbook before.

I recall the first seminar on business and security in the North she invited me to as a speaker, alongside several senior scholars and former policy-makers. I had introductory remarks on “The Way Ahead: Challenges and Options in the Arctic.” I noticed that a part of the audience was not so happy with my talk because I hadn’t emphasized the role of NATO in the region. Alyson defended me by saying that Lassi meant that in addition to NATO, new non-military problems and challenges in the Arctic (pollution, climate change) are emphasized. Well, I didn’t really mean that; I had only emphasized new challenges. And Alyson guessed that, while acting as a middleman to get the two sides to agree – she had good skills for that.

Our cooperation was cumulative by nature, being much based on the theory of ‘functionalism’ (by David Mitrany) to start slowly aiming to build trust, and with more confidence the further you can go. After one year at UNAK, she asked me if I would consider, as I did, supervising an Icelandic PhD candidate, one of her former MA students. The paradox here is that, although there was no doubt she was highly qualified for being a supervisor, she didn’t have the formal mandate to do so. I later began supervising other PhD candidates that were Alyson’s students, and another, and another – and the first of those will defend her doctoral dissertation in December.

Alyson did this first of all for her students. She really liked her students: they were like her children (she didn’t have her own). I saw this several times, and was always impressed. It was touching to see how much she did for her students.

When it comes to substance areas – I don't talk about theories, she didn't emphasize, maybe not even believed in, any one theory, though diplomacy is all about the unified state system and 'real politik'. She was an expert on security studies, particularly security- and military-policy, and foreign policy. Even more she became one of the best experts on small states and small state policies, because she liked the Nordic countries – she lived in Finland, Sweden and Iceland the last 15 years of her life. As well she much liked Scotland, where she bought her latest flat a few years before she passed away. In the last years, she was much talking about the flat and its renovation, and looking forward to living there.

When we met for the first time she was not really interested in the Arctic and did not do Arctic studies. After a few years, however, Alyson became interested in Arctic geopolitics – I think I might be partly guilty for that! Though she was one of the newcomers on the field, she did it her way, which much shows her high skills and experiences: she didn't copy but applied her expertise on security and small states studies into Arctic security studies and those of Arctic geopolitics. Our joint book *Strategy Papers on the Arctic or High North: A Comparative Study and Analysis* is a nice example of that. Unfortunately, her time ended before we were able to finalize one more joint publication.

Those of you who did not know Alyson personally might think that she was first of all a hard worker. Well, she was a hard worker, but she also knew how to enjoy life and did that with style. Heavy metal music is already mentioned. She also sang in a chorus and studied foreign languages. She much liked travelling, not only for business but also for pleasure. Or, she used to combine the two things, when travelling she used to have a couple of extra days before or after a conference/seminar/workshop and rented a car to explore. For organizers she was a much-liked speaker both giving an excellent presentation and often covering a big part of her travelling costs by herself.

She had her own car in Reykjavik, and often when she picked me up from a hotel she apologized that the car was messy – indeed, it was full of scraps of food due to her latest excursion to some part of Iceland.

Well, she liked good food and wines. Our habit in those years was to have a joint lunch or dinner together, when I visited Reykjavik, with good food and wines, and good conversations. We hardly ate in the same restaurant twice, she wanted to test a new restaurant if only possible (in Reykjavik there were, and are, several new restaurants all the time). I much enjoyed myself having these restaurant tours with Alyson, and now miss these nice moments and her generous mind, her brilliance and good sense of humor.

Dear Alyson, have a peaceful rest!

We, who were lucky enough to know you, miss you. Your death, though we were prepared for that, was a big loss to us and the academic community. As tons of messages by your friends after your death show and manifest, we have nice memories and warm thoughts about you. We also know that you did more than anybody can expect for politics and academia, and to make the world a better place to live.

You are with us in our memories.