



HLY0802: March 29-May 6, 2008

Chief Scientist's Log

Chief Scientist's Log | April 9

Mesmerized by Ice

I've just come down from the bridge where I was watching ice. We are transiting to our line of stations near St. Lawrence Island. We have just left the most remote location on our planned cruise track, truly out in the middle of the Bering Sea. It was sobering to realize how truly far we were from land.

Watching the ice is mesmerizing. We are crossing through fields of snow covered ice with leads between. Some of the leads are covered with newly formed ice and frost "flowers." As we cross a lead, the newly formed ice splits in sheets, sliding over the neighboring piece. The ice is translucent and the overlapping sheets form an incredible abstract array of shapes and shades of dark blue from the water below.

The bridge is quite crowded this evening. Because we are transiting, most of the scientists have the chance to take a break, catch their breath, and come up to enjoy the beauty of the ice landscape. The ship is being driven from the Aloft Con, a control station located at the top of the ship's mast. The view from up there is breathtaking. And it is easier to see the best path through which to steer the ship. We need to follow the leads (open water) or areas of new ice that are thinner when we can rather than trying to break through the thick, snow covered pans of ice in between. So *Healy* doesn't follow a straight path as we move north, but rather twists and turns as we seek out the easiest path. Despite the beauty of the sun-bathed scene, the air temperature is only 10F.

I am glad for the break too. We have worked hard across our first two transects. It is a relief to know that I can sleep through the night without awakening to conduct a Video Plankton Recorder cast in the wee hours of the morning. The night is strangely peaceful too, with only the bumping and thumping of the ship breaking through the ice, but none of the changes in sound associated with conducting the work at a station. Once we get north, we'll be back at work again. Now, I have to go plan the activities at the next few stations ...