

Logbook 14 (04/12/29)

On the 23rd people on board had doubts whether the bright sunlight might support any Christmas feelings. The following Christmas party in the „Blue Saloon“, however, showed the contrary. The ship's noble room became an international ballroom, after the chief scientist, *Michael Spindler*, as Santa Claus had distributed little gifts. What a fortunate coincidence that AWI's polar suit comes in the color of Christmas carmine.

I won't forget till the end of my life the 2004-*Polarstern* interpretation of „Silent Night, Holy Night“ presented in seven languages, e.g., by the only Greek on board, *Stathy*, with his courageously counter tenor, by the three Fins with their nordic roar or the Australian solo – o miraculum miraculorum! - in Latin. Christmas tree balls with the portraits of all participants, slightly modified on the computer, caused instantaneous comments like „finally a psycho-picture of me“ or „this is better than the picture in my passport“. Faxes arrived from all over the world where *Polarstern* is well-known, including one from the German Secretary of Education and Research, *Edelgard Bulmahn*, and the mayor of Bremen, *Henning Scherf*. Unbelievable also the Christmas dinner on the 25th in the cleared helicopter hangar which has the size of a small village hall. It was absolutely silent when everybody enjoyed the meal served by the Polar-STERN-kitchen.

But the most impressive „gift“ we received from mother nature. During the Holy Night our floe got a serious hit. The Fins sensed it just in time and retrieved the data logger from the ice still after the celebration in the Blue Saloon at 3 am. On the 25th their meteorology mast bends over the new gigantic crack separating the original floe and one of their instruments to measure wind velocity floats on the slush left from the destruction. Former little cracks now have the width of huge rivers causing dark blue waters on port side where I did cross-country skiing the day before. A new ridge higher than any I have seen before formed and destroyed Hauke's valuable under-ice net including the steel frame on the ice, and one of Gerhard Dieckmann's sediment traps is missing.

The old, well-known floe completely disappeared. On the bridge experts and laymen puzzle about the pieces which formed the picture familiar to all from pre-Christmas times. What caused the destruction – the tides, the wind or the Weddell gyre? Days before, *Christian Haas* one of the sea-ice experts on board already made a weird observation: one part of the floe formerly suppressed and therefore topped with a greenish/brownish slush was lifted appearing with a dry, white top. This indicates the release of an enormous internal pressure. The drift track of our floe (see map on the ISPOL page) also shows funny circles - sometimes forced northward by the Weddell gyre, then southward by a strong

northern wind with tidal excursions superimposed. This is not quite the drift straight to the north the experts expected. However, in this rather unknown part of the world one has to face expectations to be transient.

The event during the Holy Night did not come as a surprise, but very vigorously. Already days before zodiacs were used as shuttles to different floes to continue at „old“ sites the drilling and/or measuring of sea ice and snow thicknesses. However, suddenly it becomes obvious that our time at and on the floe vanishes. To ease operations on the ice until our departure in 1.5 weeks, *Polarstern* moved to the central crack right in the middle of the original floe from where all sites can be reached with roughly the same effort.

From *Polarstern*, the scientists and crew members wish you a happy and enjoyable 2005!