



HLY0802: March 29-May 6, 2008

Chief Scientist's Log

April 21: Pancakes and Jim Swift Rolls

Post by Carin Ashjian

After we encountered the rough weather, we headed to a location where we had done a process station (experiments!) when we were in this area at the beginning of the cruise. Then we went inshore 40-50 miles to look for a suitable location for an ice station. What a change in the ice in the last few weeks! Instead of large floes of ice, we saw many small pancakes with the snow on top melting. Spring has come to the Bering Sea!

On Saturday night, the science party cooked dinner on board. We had a wonderful meal including seagull enchiladas (chicken), krill legs (king crab), arctic cod tacos (fish tacos), seaweed salad (Ev's Bean Salad), flan, ice cream, and the infamous Jim Swift Rolls. It was quite a lot of fun to do the cooking, especially in a galley where everything is supersized! It was nip and tuck to get the rolls finished in time.

Sunday night was science crew changeover day. We went to St. Paul, a very small island in the Bering Sea, where 12 of us got off and 9 new people joined our team. It was sad to say goodbye to our friends and it is fun to say hello to our new teammates. After the personnel exchange, we headed NW to a spot where we had seen an elevation of phytoplankton in a satellite image from April 16. Until now, the phytoplankton has been very sparse in the water column. We traversed through the night, watching the underway fluorescence as we went. At 2 a.m. we stopped to do a process station at a location with the highest water column phytoplankton concentration that we have seen to date!

There are several types of water column diatoms present. There was so much phytoplankton that our nets were clogging. Our samples looked a bit like homebrew beer when it first is mixed and starts to foam. We had to subsample just to get a sample into the jar! We are all very excited, since this is the first sign of "spring" that we have seen in our water column. Now we are heading to do two very deep stations (>3000 m). We will spend the next two days here, as it takes a long time to send our instruments and equipment (corers) to the bottom to sample the water and the seafloor. We are in open water with no ice in sight. The ship is pitching gently as we traverse and I have to brace myself in the leg hole of my desk to keep my wild chair from sending me on a joy ride through the room.

Because of the depth of the station, I have no activities to wake me during the night and am looking forward to a peaceful sleep as the ship rocks. There is nothing quite like the rocking of the ocean to promote sleep, as long as the motion is not too violent!

It is hard to believe the cruise is more than half over. Time passes so slowly here, a week goes by and it seems like an eternity. We are so busy that the events of the outside world by and large do not intrude. Our lives are attuned to the hours of meals (very important), the timing of our stations and sampling, and the events of the ship. The weather is decidedly different, being in the 30s most of the time now. A far cry from the near 0 temperatures of a few weeks ago.