

Antarctic trip diary, Part 7

1/4/07 afternoon

This afternoon we cruised into the Weddell Sea under a blue sky with nice puffy clouds. This is a very different but equally beautiful part of Antarctica than the western coast of the peninsula where we had been and where most of the expedition ships sail. The rocky cliffs here are sedimentary (layered) instead of igneous (oozed out of a volcano). Icebergs are tabular, huge chunks of the ice shelf which have broken off; on the other side they are irregular, having calved from a glacier. We passed one tabular iceberg which was $1 \frac{1}{4}$ miles long! Since Rhode Island is often used as a comparative unit of measure for icebergs, this one was approximately 25 mille-Rhode Islands long. We had an sheet ice partially blocking our way so the Captain, being a bit of a hot-dogger at heart, tried to push through it. We got about half a ship length into it when we had to back out and go around. I guess the Captain did not want to repeat Shackleton's experience with the Endurance. Further down the passage, we passed a high (200 ft.) cliff with waterfalls from the melting ice on top cascading over the edge.



As we worked our way back north, we again passed through a large field of tabular icebergs. By now, the sun is low in the sky bathing the iceberg sides and the clouds in a warm rosy glow. It was quite a contrast from the cool ice-blue colors earlier in the day. All the photographers, myself included, scurried back on deck to get pictures of this surreal scene. No matter which way you aimed, into the sun to capture the sun backlighting the clouds, or away from the sun to catch the rosy glow reflected off the ice and clouds, it was awesome. One frustrated photographer exclaimed "No photograph could possibly do justice to this scene." All I can say is "Amen, brother!" Antarctica continues to excite the soul of the artist that lurks deep within us all.

Tomorrow we visit the Polish station in the morning and then head back across the Drake Passage leaving this enchanted place behind (he typed sadly).

