

Date: Tue, Jan 5, 2010 at 9:16 PM

Subject: Scholes Cabin 5 (P): My cabin

Dear Stirling,

I am writing this from my cabin, where I work when I am not tending instruments in the aft lab, or helping with the CTD in the forward lab. The aft lab is now too cold to sit in for hours unless you are bundled up in polar gear, and the forward lab is too crowded. Now that my cabin mate is somewhere in the interior of Antarctica, this is a nice, quiet warm place to sit.

It is a double room, on the starboard side, immediately above the forward lab. I think it was designed to be a suite, with the front part as a day room, and the second room as the sleeping quarters. But up until now the Agulhas has been so full that every bunk has been occupied, including the fold-down ones that form a couch in the dayroom. It is shared by my oceanography colleague Yuri, from the University of Naples, and Quinton, from the Weather Service. Quinton is supposed to fly out today.

My sleeping cabin, where I also work, is about 3 m x 4 m. It has two narrow beds, one on each side, that are built into sort of boxes (like a shallow cot) so that you don't roll out when the sea is rough. They are a bit short for me, but that has not stopped me from sleeping well! Each has a curtain, for privacy, but which really helps to not to wake my companions when I get up in the night to tend to instruments. The cabin has a porthole, which makes it very bright day and night, remembering that the sun does not set at this latitude and time of the year. There is a blind I can pull over it if I want to pretend it is night-time.

The walls are panelled with a sort of fake wood in light brown, the floor has a blue carpet, and the duvets on the beds are blue. There are four narrow cupboards (two are for Quinton and Yuri). Under each bunk is a large drawer, and I also have two smaller drawers in a chest which also serves as my desk. A mirror and a chair complete the furniture.

The shower and toilet leads off the day room. It is small, but adequate, and the shower water is always hot. The toilets are a bit cranky - they tend to get stuck in the flush position, which could fill the shipboard sewage system to overflowing. So we have to give the mechanism a bang with a boot when it does.

The day room is about the same size, but seems bigger because the bunks are above one another, and there are no cupboards. There is a small round 'coffee table', fixed to the floor, and a proper little desk with a place for your knees, in front of the porthole. I don't work there because the day room is a bit crowded.

We are on 'blue deck', which is a bit fancier than the main passenger deck, and that is a bit fancier than the crew deck below. Above us are two decks of officers' cabins, which are quite spacious, then the bridge and radio room. There is a sort of hierarchy which goes back to the days of social classes and the navy, but it is not very strictly enforced. For instance, blue deck has a pantry with an expresso coffee machine and occasionally cookies - but unless your timing is perfect, they are all gobbled up by the inhabitants of other decks. I don't really feel that I deserve to be treated differently to anyone else - but it is nice to have this cabin, which is one of the best on the ship.

A fine day today, a bit windy but clear both here and at SANAE IV. The first helicopter left at 0730, and a constant stream of people has been ferried off. The 'boys' (and a few girls) who will be part of the overwintering team left today, and will be missed, especially by the girls (and a few boys) of the oceanography team.

Love,

Dad