



Officer places miniature Christmas tree in passageway.



CHRIS

The Coast Guard icebreaker Eastwind was ghostly quiet as her 220 officers and men observed Christmas in the white and barren stretches of Antarctica.

There was no scream of the engines revving up to give the ship enough speed to take another run at the bluish-hard ice. There was no jolt of the icebreaker smashing into the pack to gain another few valuable yards.

There was no rocking from side to side as thousands of gallons of water were rapidly pumped from port to starboard heeling tanks and back again to break the friction holding the ship fast to the ice. There was no roar of the ice grinding its way down the side of the ship and getting spit out of the screws.

It was truly a silent night and a holy one.

With all engines shut down, the 269-foot white cutter was wedged firmly in the thick pack ice of Mc Mundo Sound, her mast and yardarm forming a giant cross silhouetted by the midnight light of the low South Polar sun.