

ACUF-A Memoir
Harley D. Nygren, RADM, NOAA(Retired)

ACUF originated at a time when the Federal Government was stirring itself once again to pay more attention to the the Oceans. Federal funding of various bureaus and laboratories was producing an increasing number of surveys of one kind or another, and the naming situation had the potential of becoming chaotic. Forward thinking bureau chiefs had informally created the Inter Agency Committee on Oceanography, and the way was paved for the eventual creation of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Dr. Harris B. Stewart and I had become the oceanic ball carriers for the U.S. Coast & Geodetic Survey This bureau was eventually absorbed by the Environmental Science Services Administration, which became part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. As such we had to represent our agency in numerous interagency committees, panels, task forces and groups. The Board on Geographic Names was also involved in organizational changes of one kind or another. Usually Harris was the designated rep, with me as a backup, however in some areas I was the lone sailor holding out against the entrenched interests. Both of us were designated as ACUF members, and it was a genuine pleasure to work on problems where objectivity and reason governed, for the most part.

The original members had trouble finding sufficient time to do the sometimes tedious work of refining definitions and judging suggested names. Roger Revelle, Harry Ladd, Stew and I met with Dr. Meredith Burrill in a run down row house, which was the interim location of ACUF. Charts and maps were rolled up in a bathtub. We labored in a very small room with shabby furniture in this greatly neglected building. I particularly enjoyed watching these distinguished scientists at work. As I had just come off of a year of deep ocean surveys where it was not unusual to discover at least one seamount every month I had a certain real world credibility. I was entrigued by Dr. Ladd talking about his earlier work and the notables that he served with. Dr. Revelle was in a career change at the time, and had many projects on the fire. Dr. Lyman joined us somewhat later, and as the Science Advisor to the Secretary of the Interior he shared many of our representational duties.

While the workings of the committee were handled smoothly not everyone appreciated what we were doing. One oceanographer called us "a self appointed group of so-called experts", and threatened to ignore us altogether. I served ACUF until pulled out for other duties and sea service. It was a fine opportunity to meet and work with a good group of real people who laid the foundations for ACUF as it exists today.