

In Memoriam

H.A.G. “Bunny” Lewis, 1908-2002

With the passing of Bunny Lewis in England on January 27, 2002, it is appropriate to note the significant role he played for many years in formulating and implementing national and international goals of the United States, England, and many other countries in respect to geographic names. Because he was not involved with academic aspects of names, his accomplishments may not have been noticed by many members of the American Name Society or similar organizations. Nevertheless, his accomplishments on the practical side of toponymy are substantial.

He was born in Devonport, England in 1912; his father was a civil servant. His full name was Herbert Alfred Gardner Lewis, but the nickname “Bunny” was applied at an early age and remained with him for his entire life. He earned a degree in mathematics from the Admiralty Engineering College in Plymouth in 1941. During World War II, he held several positions with military organizations where he accumulated a formidable knowledge of geodesy, photogrammetry, and cartography and worked to design maps and charts covering terrain, urban areas, ports, and harbors. He applied his skills to plans leading to D-Day landings in France as well as to handbooks concerning naval intelligence. After the war, he became an advisor to UN and NATO programs and worked with Saudi Arabia on cartographic projects. By this time he also had acquired a command of several languages, including Arabic, Greek, French, and Russian.

These skills and experiences gave him a comprehension and understanding of the role played by geographic names in civil and military operations. In 1950 Bunny became a member of the Permanent Committee on Geographical Names for British Official Use (PCGN) and served as its chair from 1981 to 1997. This involvement with the PCGN led to a long period of collaboration with his counterparts on the U.S. Board on Geographic Names and he was instrumental in establishing biennial meetings of the two bodies to discuss common interests and common problems. He also brought about collaboration with colleagues in the UK, the U.S., Mexico, and Canada to develop United Nations programs to standardize names; he served as president of the second UN Conference on Geographical Names in London in 1972. During this time he also promoted programs leading to the adoption of NATO standards

for romanizing Cyrillic and Greek alphabets to ensure that uniform and comprehensible place names appeared on NATO maps and charts. (The same standards actually had been developed earlier by the PCGN and the U.S. Board on Geographic Names for joint use by U.S. and U.K. cartographers.) During the Cold War, Bunny's insights into complicated names issues brought up at UN conferences and technical sessions and his managerial skills earned him the respect and admiration of those he worked with, including representatives from the USSR and its allies, whose views often were influenced by political considerations regarding the standardization of names. This respect was shown quite clearly after the collapse of the Soviet Union when he conferred with representatives of its former member countries who could more openly collaborate on national and international programs.

On the civil side of his career, Bunny provided a number of useful services to private organizations, including acting as consultant to Times Books in its development and publication of *The Times Concise Atlas of the World* and *The Times Atlas of the Moon*. He also was a consultant to Reader's Digest in the preparation of its *Great World Atlas*.

While Bunny's talents and skills were not limited to geographic names, without question he was a major influence on national and international names programs and I am certain that colleagues active in those areas would certainly agree. I worked with Bunny on many occasions on UN and joint U.S./U.K. programs, from 1973 to 1993 when I served as Executive Secretary of the U.S. Board on Geographic Names. During this time there was a broad range of efforts to develop acceptable procedures for treating geographical names in an environment complicated by political issues. It is also fair to note that much of his work depended on the professional talents and support of the staffs not only of the PCGN but also of the U.S. Board on Geographic Names.

Bunny's accomplishments were widely recognized and brought him many honors. He was a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society, and was elected to an Honorary Fellowship of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society. The British Cartographic Society granted him its highest award, the Silver Medal. In 1970 he was awarded the Order of the British Empire—OBE. Bunny Lewis was truly a toponymist extraordinaire.

Richard R. Randall
Washington, D.C.
r3randall@starpower.net