

Capt. Floyd M. Soule, USCGR (Ret.)

(1901-1968)



Capt. Floyd M. Soule, USCGR (Ret.), the Oceanographer and Chief Scientist for the International Ice Patrol from 1933 through 1963, died at Woods Hole, Mass., on February 15, 1968. He was born July 19, 1901, in Ripon, Wis. and received a B.S. in electrical engineering from George Washington University in 1927. He then entered Government service as a junior physicist with the National Bureau of Standards. In 1918 he became an observer for the Department of Terrestrial Magnetism of the Carnegie Institution of Washington. He joined Carnegie's oceanographic expedition in 1928 and made many of the early observations of the upwelling along the edge of the North Equatorial Current in the Pacific. In 1931 he joined an expedition of the submarine NAUTILUS exploring the waters beneath the Arctic icepack.

In 1933 Floyd Soule was named Senior Physical Oceanographer of the U.S. Coast Guard and as such assumed direct responsibility of all oceanography in support of the International Ice Patrol. During the next eight years he participated in a number of expeditions to Davis Strait and the Labrador Sea on board the cutters MARION and GENERAL GREENE, and the area east of the Grand Banks was surveyed on an operational basis that yielded dynamic topographic charts within hours of the final observation. He assisted in the development of the shipboard salinity bridge, the beginning of modern oceanographic technology. With the advent of World War II, Floyd Soule accepted a commission as a Lieutenant Commander in the U.S. Coast Guard

Reserve and served as Operations Officer under Admiral Edward H. Smith on the Greenland Patrol. His knowledge of Arctic and subarctic conditions and his "rare ability to translate academic knowledge into action" earned for Commander Soule the Bronze Star from the U.S. Navy.

After the war, he resumed his position as Senior Civilian Physical Oceanographer of the Coast Guard, but remained in the U.S. Coast Guard Reserve and was promoted to Captain in 1956. The post-war years saw Captain Soule participating in Ice Patrol cruises on board the Coast Guard Cutter EVERGREEN and as a research associate of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution.

He retired in 1963 after completing a series of comprehensive ocean current charts of the iceberg areas of the North Atlantic Ocean on which iceberg drift predictions and warnings to shipping are based. He also saw the expansion of the U.S. Coast Guard into other areas of oceanography. On his retirement the U.S. Treasury Department presented him its highest honor, the Albert Gallatin Award.

Captain Soule was a pioneer in the field of oceanography. He was an astute and meticulous scientist. His life work was given to the International Ice Patrol. He made significant scientific achievements but had the even greater satisfaction of seeing his work used for the benefit of man.