

Yost, Frank Herman (1894–1958)

SABRINA RILEY

Sabrina Riley was born in Auburn, New York and raised in Dowagiac, Michigan. She received a B.A. in history from Andrews University and an M.A. in information and libraries studies from the University of Michigan. Riley was a member of Andrews University's library staff from 1998 to 2003, library director and college archivist at Union College from 2003 to 2016, and is presently a freelance researcher, author, and information professional.

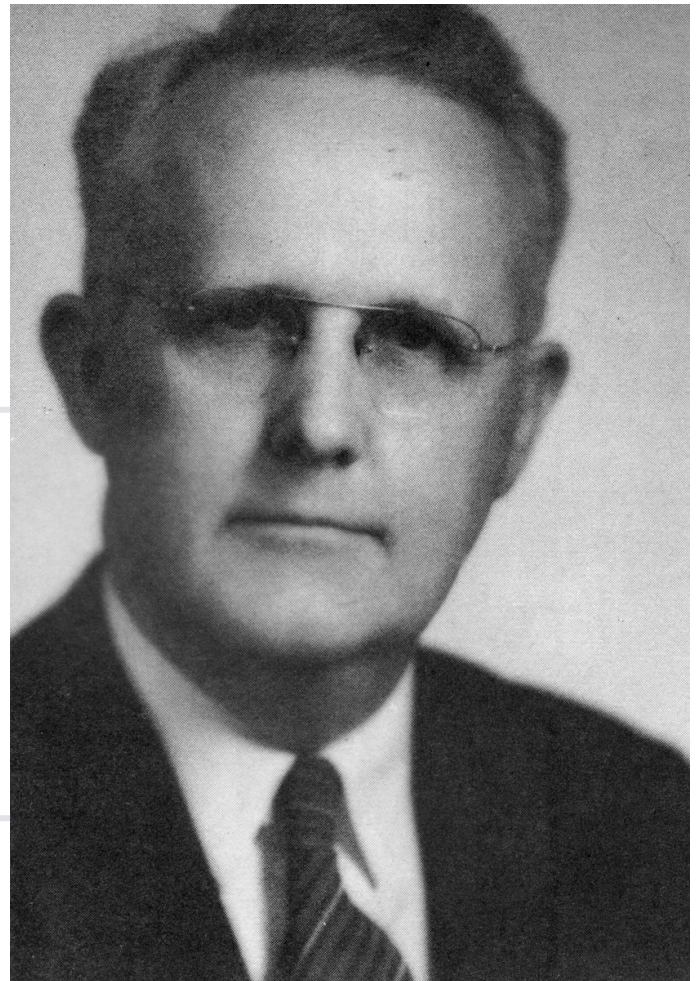
Frank Herman Yost was an Adventist minister, historian, seminary professor and *Liberty* magazine editor.

Family

Frank was born on July 20, 1894, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, United States of America (U.S.A.), the youngest of Frank Herman Sr. (1852–1935) and Elizabeth (Simpson; 1851–1940) Yost's six children. The senior Yost was a machinist with humble origins in rural Pennsylvania. He joined the Adventist denomination about 1914, was the elder of the North Philadelphia Seventh-day Adventist Church for 11 years, and for a short time, worked as a colporteur for the East Pennsylvania Conference. Elizabeth was the daughter of Scottish and Irish immigrants.

Military Service

When the United States entered World War I in 1917, Yost was working as a draftsman for Jacob Myers & Sons, a major construction company in Philadelphia. He volunteered with the Pennsylvania National Guard, enlisting on May 23, 1917, in the 1st Pennsylvania Engineers, then a part of the 7th Division. In July of 1917, the 7th Division



Frank H. Yost.

Photo courtesy of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Archives.

was mobilized for federal service in the American Expeditionary Forces at Camp Hancock, Georgia. The 7th Division was reorganized into the 28th Division, and the 1st Pennsylvania Engineers were renamed the 103rd Pennsylvania Engineers. While the specific details of Yost's service are unknown, he quickly rose in rank. On March 3, 1918, he was promoted to corporal before his unit departed the United States. Arriving in France in the spring of 1918 during Germany's third offensive, Yost's regiment was first assigned to the Chateau-Thierry Sector, where he was promoted to regimental sergeant major. The 103rd Pennsylvania Engineers participated in the Second Battle of the Marne. They were then moved from the Ourcq and Vesle Rivers to the Meuse-Argonne Sector, and then the Thiaucourt Sector, where they were located when the armistice was signed on November 11, 1918. Yost was discharged on May 16, 1919, at Camp Dix in New Jersey, U.S.A., but remained at the installation as head clerk for some time afterward.

Conversion, Education, and Marriage

On October 11, 1919, Frank Yost married Susan H. Kavash in a Lutheran church in Philadelphia. This marriage was of short duration. Exactly what happened to Kavash is uncertain. No record of her after 1920 has been located, and it is presumed she died prematurely.

In 1921 Yost joined the North Philadelphia Seventh-day Adventist Church through baptism and, with his father, briefly worked as a colporteur in the Philadelphia area serving the East Pennsylvania Conference.

Between 1922 and 1924, Yost attended Washington Missionary College (WMC; now Washington Adventist University in Takoma Park, Maryland), where he studied the junior theology course. While at WMC, he led the Missionary Volunteer Society.

Following his graduation in 1924, he accepted a call to Saint Paul, Minnesota, where he served as Home Missionary Secretary for the Minnesota Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Before he went to Minnesota, Yost married Esther May Zimmer (1902–1968), a fellow Philadelphian and classmate at Washington Missionary College. Esther later served as the office secretary for the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary from 1945 to 1947. In 1948 she became the seminary president's secretary. Esther also helped produce the seminary's newsletter, *Keynote*. After her husband's death, Esther became a receptionist at the General Conference. The Yosts had one son, Frank Donald Yost, born in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on June 23, 1927, who, like his father, became an Adventist minister, educator, and editor. The younger Yost was also the first General Conference archivist.

Career and Further Education

Yost was ordained in 1927 while serving in Minnesota. In 1929 Yost began a teaching career as the Bible instructor at Maplewood Academy in Hutchinson, Minnesota. For part of his time at Maplewood Academy, Yost

also served as acting principal while the principal, A. W. Johnson, pursued graduate study. In 1932 Yost moved to Union College, where he taught Bible and homiletics while simultaneously completing a B.A. in history from the same institution. Following graduation from Union College in 1933, he continued teaching at the college but also immediately began graduate work at the University of Nebraska—Lincoln. Yost completed an M.A. in history from the University of Nebraska at Lincoln in 1935. For his thesis, Yost translated Abbot Norbert's *Vita Bennonis II, episcopi Osnabrugensis*, an essential account of the life of German Bishop Benno II of Osnabrück written in the twelfth century. Completed in 1942, Yost's doctoral work also delved into early western European church history, with a study of the secular activities of church leaders in the seventh century.¹

While at Union College, Yost was also a member of the faculty committee that, in 1934, organized the Union College Medical Corps—a prototype of the Seventh-day Adventist Medical Cadet Corps. Yost was selected for this committee because of his military experience during World War I and his interest in religious freedom. Along with Everett Dick, Yost was one of the first instructors for the Medical Corps. Also while at Union College, Yost served as chair of the Bible Department from 1938 to 1940. During these last years at Union College, Yost spent the summers of 1937 and 1938 teaching at the new Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary in Takoma Park, Maryland, before accepting a permanent position there in 1940.

Upon moving to Takoma Park, Yost became chair of the seminary's Church History Department, a position he held until 1946. From 1950 to 1954, he was chair of the Systematic Theology Department. In addition to administrative and teaching responsibilities in Takoma Park, Yost traveled extensively, teaching at seminary extension schools in South Africa (1952), South America, and India.

While at the seminary, Yost also began working with the International Religious Liberty Association. He was associate secretary of the General Conference Religious Liberty department from 1946 to 1950 and again from 1954 to 1958. In 1955, he became editor of *Liberty* magazine, a position he held until 1958.

Yost accepted a call to teach Bible and church history at La Sierra College (now La Sierra University) in 1958. He began teaching at La Sierra in September, but just a few weeks later suffered a stroke caused by a brain hemorrhage. Surgery on October 29 revealed a brain tumor. Yost died on November 15, 1958, at the White Memorial Hospital in Los Angeles, California.

Contributions

Yost's unexpected death was a tragedy for the Seventh-day Adventist community. A beloved teacher and popular speaker, he was a regular presenter at weeks of prayer, camp meetings across North America, and at academy and college commencements.

Yost was also a prolific author, writing countless articles for Adventist periodicals, including the *Review and Herald*, the *Youth's Instructor*, *Ministry*, *Signs of the Times*, *Liberty*, and union conference papers. He also wrote at

least six published books: *The Early Christian Sabbath*, *Let Freedom Ring*, *Sunday Laws: What to Do About Them*, *The Church Religious Liberty Secretary*, *The Doctrine of the Sabbath and the Sunday*, and, with Alvin W. Johnson, he coauthored *Separation of Church and State in the United States*.² The latter book was highly influential in legal circles and was reportedly referenced by U.S. Congressmen.³ Yost was also contributor to the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* volume on Acts.

In his role as associate secretary of the International Religious Liberty Association, Yost's influence also extended beyond his traditional Adventist audience. Some of his articles were published in *Christianity Today*, and his speaking engagements included various religious liberty advocacy gatherings and serving as a panel member for the television program *Religious Town Hall of the Air*. Yost was a member of the first executive committee of Protestants and Other Americans United for the Separation of Church and State (POAU; now Americans United for Separation of Church and State), a nonsectarian organization founded in 1948 to advocate for the separation of church and state. Yost was also the program chair for the first POAU national conference in 1949. In addition, Yost was called upon to speak before the state and federal legislative committees and subcommittees on issues related to religious liberty.

At the time of his death, Yost had already been selected to receive the POAU's Religious Liberty Man of the Year Award for 1958. The award was presented posthumously at the POAU's conference meeting on February 9, 1959, in Saint Louis, Missouri.

SOURCES

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"Dr. Frank Yost Passes." *Pacific Union Recorder*, November 24, 1958.

"In Remembrance: Yost." *ARH*, December 25, 1958.

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———. *Let Freedom Ring: The Story of Religious Liberty and the Menaces It Faces Today*. Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1946.

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NOTES

1. Frank Herman Yost, "A Translation, with Introduction and Notes of Abbot Norbert's *Vita Bennonis II, episcopi Osnabrugensis*" (M.A. thesis, University of Nebraska, 1935); Frank Herman Yost, "The Secular Activities of the Episcopate in Gaul to 639" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Nebraska, 1942).
2. Frank H Yost, *The Early Christian Sabbath* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1947); Frank H Yost, *Let Freedom Ring: The Story of Religious Liberty and the Menaces It Faces Today* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1946); Frank H Yost, *Sunday Laws: What to Do about Them* (Washington, D.C.: Religious Liberty Association, 1955); Frank H Yost, *The Church Religious Liberty Secretary* (Washington, D.C.: International Religious Liberty Association, 1956); Frank Herman Yost, *The Doctrine of the Sabbath and the Sunday* (Washington, D.C.: Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, 1952); Alvin W. Johnson and Frank H. Yost, *Separation of Church and State in the United States* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).
3. "To the Memory of Two Great Leaders in the Cause of Freedom: Dr. Frank Herman Yost," *Liberty*, February 1, 1959, 18.

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