

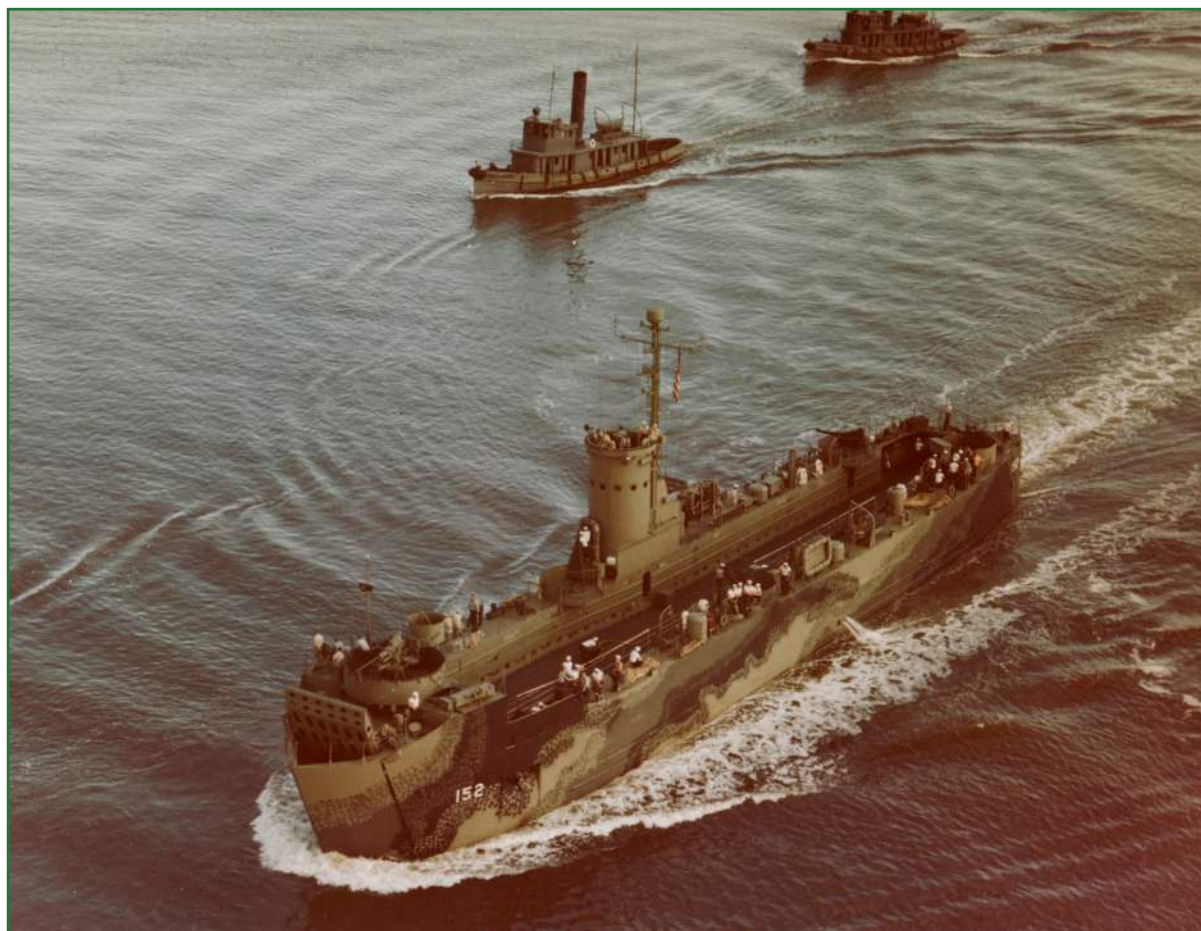
# IRA RAY YOST

SEAMAN FIRST CLASS  
U.S. NAVY

WORLD WAR II  
1910 - 1959

WRITTEN BY BRENNAN COX  
UNIVERSITY HIGH SCHOOL  
INSTRUCTED BY MEGHAN DUNN

**DRAFT** THIS IS A WORK-IN-PROGRESS  
FOR TEMPORARY DISPLAY ONLY



Landing Ship Medium (LSM) on the move. NARA

## Ira Ray Yost was born in Glover Gap, Marion County, West

Virginia, on February 21, 1910, to Henry “Lee” Yost and Mary Jane (Garner) Yost. He grew up on the family farm on Harker Run, a small stream that fed into Long Drain near the Wetzel County town of Earnshaw. The farm, which Lee Yost owned outright, may have been part of a family legacy—many more Yosts lived nearby in Wetzel, Marion, and Monongalia counties (As with Ira’s family, census enumerators often misspelled the name as “Youst.”)

Mary Jane stayed at home to raise five children: Charles, Matilda, Ira, Frank, and Earle. No doubt, her role as a homemaker also involved plenty of physical labor alongside her husband. Though the Yost farm was deep in the hills of eastern Wetzel County, Ira and his siblings did not need to travel far to get to school. It was a short walk down Harker Run to the strip of buildings, known as Earnshaw, where a two-room schoolhouse awaited them. A boardwalk ran through town along a dirt road to make life easier on muddy days. Mail could be picked up from the post office in Hughes General Store.

By 1920, Ira’s older brother Charles was already working in the coal industry at just 16 years of age. It is difficult to ascertain when Ira himself took employment as a coal miner, since he disappears from city directories, census records, and other paper trails between 1920 and 1937. When he reappears, it is as the newly married husband of widow Laura Gladys (Curry) Dodrill. She had lost her husband, a World War I veteran ten years her senior, the year before. Ira became a father to two stepsons and supported the family as a coal miner. It is possible that Laura and Ira originally met through his work. Laura’s deceased husband, Grover Cleveland Dodrill, had worked as a clerk at Industrial Collieries in Barrackville where Ira was a miner.

From the late 1930s to the early 1940s, the newly blended Yost-Dodrill family probably lived at least part of the time on a farm Ira owned in Grant Town, north of Fairmont. Multiple city directories also list them at an address on Brick Hill Road in the small community of Millersville, located on the east side of Fairmont at the confluence of the Tygart and Monongahela rivers. It is possible that the Millersville home was inherited by Laura after her first husband’s death, and that the Yosts rented it out for additional income. It may also have been used as a base by Ira’s eldest stepson, James Robert Dodrill, to attend East Fairmont High School in the early 1940s since it was

much closer to school than the Grant Town farm.

Marion County steadily grew for most of the early 20th century. Its population doubled between 1900 and 1930, due largely to the coal industry. However, that growth was accompanied by tragedy. In 1907, the Monongah Mine Disaster, considered the worst mine disaster in U.S. history, killed at least 361 men. A 1925 explosion in Barrackville killed 33 miners. Ira worked in these very mines until he was drafted into the Navy during World War II.

In 1940, as European powers battered each other and war loomed ever closer to the United States, mandatory Selective Service registration was implemented by the federal government. Ira submitted his draft card in October 1940, but was not called up. For over three years his life as a farmer and coal miner probably proceeded as it had before, except for wartime material shortages and rationing of food, gasoline, and other goods. On March 10, 1944, however, his civilian routine ended. His number had been called.

Ira’s six weeks of initiation took place at the Naval Training Center (NTC), Great Lakes, Illinois. Approximately one million American sailors trained at the expansive Chicago facility during World War II. The newly minted sailor would return home briefly on his way to Florida. He prepared his last will and testament on April 24.

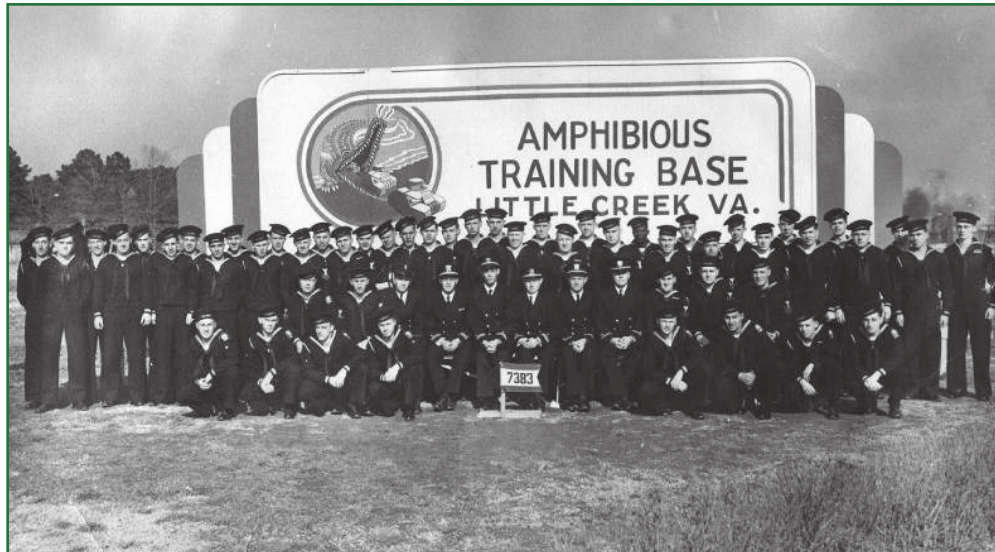
Seaman 2nd Class Yost, who had probably never seen an ocean before, reported to Amphibious Training Base (ATB), Fort Pierce, Florida, for his first true taste of the job that awaited him in the Pacific Ocean. ATB Fort Pierce is usually celebrated as the “birthplace” of the Navy SEALs in the form of World War II’s Underwater Demolition Teams (UDTs, often called “frogmen”). For Ira Yost it was his first time operating on landing ships. The ATB stretched for 25 miles along Florida’s Atlantic coast near Vero Beach, and its 19,000-acre site included over 450 buildings. Fort Pierce wasn’t the typical training ground for “sandscrapers,” or “amphibs,” as the landing ships and craft were often called, so perhaps additional manpower had been needed for a special exercise. Ira’s time in Florida lasted only about six weeks, just like NTC Great Lakes, but he increased in rating to Seaman 1st Class, reflecting a higher degree of expertise and a bump in pay.

Ira then shipped up the coast to ATB Bradford outside Norfolk, Virginia, arriving at the end of June 1944. The base was the true heartland of the amphibians, where nearly every landing ship sailor learned his craft. A smaller camp, Little Creek, adjoined ATB Bradford. Little Creek had briefly been a Seabees base before being turned over to the training of men for the Landing Ship Tank (LST). LSTs had become the amphibious workhorses of the war, capable of traveling (slowly) across oceans directly to enemy shores where its bow doors and ramp could disgorge hundreds of men and dozens of tanks or vehicles directly onto the beach. Over 1,000 LSTs were produced for the war, with very few being sunk despite being nicknamed “Large Slow Targets” by their crews.

After just over a month of training at Bradford and Little Creek, Yost reported aboard *LST-1032* on August 1, 1944, upon its commissioning. In September, the ship and its 126-man crew sailed for the Panama Canal and the Pacific. Something happened to Ira Yost along the way, however—probably illness—and he had to be transferred to the San Diego Naval Hospital on October 5. The war could not wait for Ira to recover, and neither could *LST-1032*, so his shipmates sailed on without him. Within a few weeks, Ira boarded another vessel and made his way out to the Admiralty Islands where he joined his new ship, the *LSM-28*.

The LSM, or Landing Ship Medium, was the LST’s little brother. LSMs had

# IRA RAY YOST



The crew of another LSM at Little Creek, Virginia. NHHC

been designed later in the war as the Navy gained more experience in the Pacific and realized a crucial gap existed between small landing craft (such as a Landing Craft Tank or LCT) and the much larger LST. Indeed, a 1945 Navy recognition journal explicitly states that the LSM “combines the best features of each” of those two craft: “She is an ocean-going vessel with a long range and adequate carrying capacity but has greater speed than the lumbering older LST.” On *LSM-28*, Yost was joining a crew half the size of his old one, only about 60 men in all.

*LSM-28* was assigned to LSM Flotilla 3 (FLOT 3), comprised of about 15 LSMs. These temporary flotillas were very fluid formations, working together, constantly exchanging ships, and growing and shrinking as operational needs required. The operational needs this time would be immense and exacting: nothing less than the landing of some 200,000 men and their equipment on the shores of Lingayen Gulf in the face of Japanese resistance. Operation Musketeer Mike I was the name for this primary landing which, it was hoped, would kickstart the final recapture of Luzon and liberate the Filipino capital of Manila.

As Navy ships and planes bombarded the shoreline of Luzon on January 6, 1945, FLOT 3 was on its way with Army troops aboard. Like her sisters, *LSM-28* could carry five or six vehicles (or three medium tanks) and about 50 combat troops. Alternatively, they could move about 150 tons of supplies. Transport ships made tempting targets, however, and the Japanese were well aware an invasion was on the way. Enemy planes attacked FLOT 3’s convoy on January 8. No American ships were damaged, but it would not be the last Ira Yost would see of Japanese aircraft.

Musketeer Mike I’s landings—dubbed “S-day”—began on January 9. FLOT 3’s LSMs made a combat landing with their first load of troops, vehicles,



Landing craft head for the Lingayen Gulf beaches. NARA

and gear. When resistance proved light, more LSMs joined FLOT 3 to move troops ashore more quickly. It was an enormous amount of work transferring men and materials from ship to ship at sea, especially with the ever-present threat that enemy aircraft might attack at any time.

After small harassing attacks by exactly such aircraft on S-day, late that afternoon another enemy fighter appeared and flew toward *LSM-28*. The ship and its sisters opened up with 40mm and 20mm anti-aircraft guns. The enemy “Zeke” fighter did not actually attack and flew off shortly, but *LSM-28* took hits anyway in the form of 20mm shells from nearby LSMs. Three army personnel on deck, probably preparing their equipment for landing, were hit. So was one of *LSM-28*’s ensigns—and so was Ira Yost.

Evidently, Ira was grazed in the leg by an exploding 20mm shell. The wound was not serious. He stayed on the ship for the next several weeks of nonstop work supporting the Lingayen Gulf landings. At times, Yost and his ship made roundtrips of several hundred miles between Lingayen Gulf and Leyte Gulf, moving more men and supplies. By late March, however, a new objective was in the crosshairs of the island-hopping Pacific Fleet: Okinawa.

Ira Yost’s involvement in the massive Okinawa invasion, codenamed Operation Iceberg, was bizarrely brief. Troops were landed in massive waves by *LSM-28* and other landing craft beginning on April 1, 1945. The following day, Seaman 1st Class Ira Yost was to be found aboard the attack transport *USS La Porte* (APA-151), out of action and en route to a hospital on Guam.

No description of Yost’s condition or what occurred to hospitalize him have surfaced, but it was serious enough that the doctors and nurses in Guam could

not resolve the injury or illness. On May 30, 1945, two months after he was transferred from *LSM-28*, he was loaded aboard the *USS Bolivar* (APA-34) with 450 sick and wounded soldiers. His destination was the naval hospital in Seattle. He was finally discharged from the Navy on Christmas Eve 1945.

Ira Ray Yost returned to Laura Gladys and life as a farmer, and the couple moved to Reno, Preston County. It was on their farm in June 1959 that Ira suffered a horrific tractor accident which crushed his left leg. He was moved to the Cleveland Clinic, where the leg had to be amputated. After battling an infection for the next five weeks, Ira Ray Yost died on July 16, 1959. He was buried in Grafton National Cemetery four days later.

Yost’s stepson James Robert Dodrill attempted to register for the draft while still underage. Note the corrected birthday in the center of the form. The large note in the center says “Not within required age rejected.” NARA

Cancelled 5/7/45

FORM APPROVED  
Budget Bureau No. 33-R012-42

REGISTRATION CARD (Men born on or after July 1, 1924, and on or before December 31, 1924)  
(Also for the registration of men as they reach the 18th anniversary of the date of their birth on or after January 1, 1943.)

SERIAL NUMBER W 566	1. NAME (Print) JAMES ROBERT DODRILL	ORDER NUMBER 12704
2. PLACE OF RESIDENCE (Print) Route #4, Fairmont (Millersville) Marion W. Va.		
3. MAILING ADDRESS Rt. #4, Box 81, Fairmont, W. Va.		
4. TELEPHONE 1764-M	5. AGE IN YEARS 18 March 15, or 1927	6. PLACE OF BIRTH Barrackville West Virginia
7. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS Mrs. Lora Gladys Yost, Rt. #4, Box 81, Fairmont, W. Va. (mother)		
8. EMPLOYER'S NAME AND ADDRESS East Fairmont High School, Fairmont, W. Va.		
9. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS		

I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.

DSS Form 1 (Rev. 11-16-42) c16-21630-4 (OVER) James Robert Dodrill (Registrant's signature)



**SOURCES** FULL BIBLIOGRAPHY TO BE INCLUDED IN FINAL VERSION

# SOURCES

## ABOUT THE PROJECT

Full bibliographies will be included in the final draft of each biography, available later in the summer of 2024.

**The West Virginia National Cemeteries Project** is a program of the West Virginia Humanities Council, funded in part by the Veterans Legacy Grant Program of the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs and initiated in 2021. All biographies produced as part of this program are composed by West Virginia high school students, who conduct original research on veterans interred at the Grafton National Cemetery or the West Virginia National Cemetery, both of which are located in Grafton, Taylor County, West Virginia.

As home to one of the nation's first National Cemeteries—founded shortly after the Civil War—the community of Grafton has longstanding traditions of honoring America's veterans, including the longest continuously celebrated Memorial Day parade in the United States. The Grafton National Cemetery, located in the heart of the city and founded in 1867, is typically the endpoint of each year's parade. Since the Grafton National Cemetery began to run short of space during the 1960s, the West Virginia National Cemetery was dedicated in 1987, just a few miles outside of Grafton.

The West Virginia Humanities Council is proud to thank the following organizations for their participation in the West Virginia National Cemeteries Project: West Virginia Archives and History, the West Virginia University history department, Taylor County Historical and Genealogical Society, Taylor County Public Library, Grafton High School, and University High School.

Please refer comments or questions to the West Virginia Humanities Council  
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Veterans Legacy Grant Program  
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