



Dad Land Talk

In DeMolay history, November the 8th marks the anniversary of the Death of the founder of our order: Frank S. Land. DeMolay began with nine boys and a man; tonight I would like to look back on that beginning, our beginning.

Frank Land was a mason who was asked by a fellow member to find a job for young Louis Lower, whose father had died the year before. Although Louie's mother had taken a job, the family was still having a tough time of it, so Louie had decided to do his part in helping his family get by. Frank said he would be glad to help and hired Louie to work with him. Frank wasn't just an employer to Louie though he became a friend and a confidante, he took time to listen to Louie, to learn about his hopes and problems to find out his dreams and help him to achieve them. It was clear to Land that Louie needed more than just a job, and Louie with many other young men might need the same things.

It was February of 1919, and Louie Lower arranged for himself and eight of his friends to meet with Frank Land to discuss the formation of a club. The boys were all eager to do so but first they wanted a name. Frank Land told them of the heroic figures from the past and the one that stuck in their minds was Jacques DeMolay who had given up his life in the spirit of Comradeship. Less than a month later the Order of DeMolay held its first meeting. It wasn't long after that, that perhaps the biggest milestone in DeMolay was passed, the membership of DeMolay had grown from its initial nine members to over sixty. And one of the young members put forward a motion to limit the club to seventy-five members, there was only a short discussion and the motion was passed unanimously.

Frank Land, or Dad, as he had simply come to be known as by the boys, stepped forward to speak. The members where silent, for Frank had always told them that it was their organisation and he had not spoken except at the end of meetings since he first met. But "Dad" did indeed have something to say that night. He told the boys that they were making a mistake that they where being selfish. He pointed out that all their members were from a single school in Kansas City had gained from there membership, and that there was no reason that other boys from other schools should not be allowed to gain from and contribute to DeMolay. He reminded them that "To become big, we must be big." The motion to limit membership was reconsidered and defeated.

Dad Land was right when he said that many boys could gain from and contribute to DeMolay, but he probably had no idea just how many boys. By January of 1921, DeMolay had grown to 52 Chapters across the United States with membership over 2200 members. A year later there was over 165 Chapters with membership in excess of 28000, by 1924 the membership had surged to well over 100,000 young men and Frank Land was known as "Dad" to all of them.

Since that time DeMolay has prospered and fallen, and prospered again. All of our Advisors are known as Dad's just as Frank Land was and all of them try to live up to his commitment to our Order. Dad Land spent his entire life in service to DeMolay; he gave tirelessly of his time and energy because he believed in the order that he insisted was not created by him, but by nine young men.

One story about Frank Land that sticks in my mind, is how when the members of the mother Chapter travelled to New York City to institute a new Chapter. Frank Land gave them the run of the town telling them that they must be back in their hotel by 11:00pm. When they weren't back by midnight, he gathered up the other advisors to go look for them. Frank Land claimed that it was perhaps the saddest moment of his life when he saw a "Black Maria," a paddy wagon of the New York police go by on the road filled with each and every one of his DeMolay. His heart sank to think that these boys who he had spent so much time with, whom he had taken so much pride in could be in such trouble with the law that they had to be taken to jail in a Paddy Wagon. Then the Black Maria came around the corner and pulled up beside the startled advisors, 22 sets of arms stuck out of the bars to wave as 22 voices cried out "Hi Dad." The police then offered to give Dad Land and the other advisors the same tour of the City as they had offered the DeMolays.

When he passed away on Nov. 8th 1959, his final words were "It is the beginning". Dad Land was a deeply spiritual man and his final words expressed his hope of the hereafter, however I would like to think that he was also thinking of DeMolay when he uttered them. It is up to each of us, to carry on him to strive to make DeMolay a better organisation, to help it grow to make it something that we and Dad Land could take pride in. Because Brethren, "it is the beginning."