

Path to the Youth Order of DeMolay

Talk by Bro. Richard Fiechtner of Siminoff Council No. 485 March 13th 2016

The background history of Jacques DeMolay goes to the time of the many crusades to protect pilgrims and defend the Holy Land from the Infidels. First, we should understand that with the life and death of Christ there came a change in the general area of the Middle East. Christianity spread from Israel to Egypt around the Mediterranean and into Europe.

Mohammed, born A.D. 570 in Mecca, was an epileptic youth of a sensitive nature, who had dreams and visions that caused him to believe he was chosen to be the prophet of God. At first he had very few believers but in time many flocked to hear him, thus, the birth of Mohammedanism. On his death he gave the world his Koran, his sacred writings that led to establishing Islam. With the goal of ridding the world of all other religions, the Caliphs that followed Mohammed aggressively set about carrying out this goal. They were very successful in spreading Islam and their empire so that in a little more than 500 years the armies of Islam had conquered all of Asia Minor and spread into India and Europe.

At this time Europe responded to this danger with the Crusades. The purpose of the Crusades was to overpower Mohammedanism (Islam) on its own turf. The early attempts were somewhat useless due to the system of feudalism and the lack of joint efforts in armed encounters against the well-organized Islam warriors.

In about 1023 the Caliph of Egypt gave a merchant from Amalfi permission to form a hospital for the poor and sick Christians. This simple beginning led to the gradual development of a well-organized order of devoted men, sworn to protect and defend all Christian charity, dedicated to St. John the Almoner and later to St. John the Baptist. At the time the Crusades started its Master was Gerard. He obtained from Pope Honorius II a Bull an Order granting ownership of such lands and buildings as the Crusaders had come to possess in Palestine and in Europe, and the immediate protection of the Holy See.

After Gerard's death Ray du Puy became Grand Master. In his 40 years as Grand Master he changed the brotherhood into a military organization and filled its ranks with fighting knights who fought on behalf of the Crusades for more than 200 years.

These Knights Hospitaller, as they came to be called, later became known as the Knights of Malta and as such, though now honorary rather than military survive to the present in Rome.

Later, two young Frenchmen of noble birth, Hugh de Payens and Godfrey of St. Omer, and several other battle hardened Knights formed an organization to guard the road between Jerusalem and Acre the port on the Mediterranean. These Knights called themselves the "Poor Soldiers in Christ," dedicated to Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and His Mother Mary. In the presence of the Patriarch, head of the Christian Church in Palestine, they took the triple vow of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

They were given a suite in Solomon's Temple for their headquarters, which led to them being names as the 'Knights of the Temple' or 'Knights Templar'. The order of the Knights Templar continued to grow in number and in wealth. In about 1244

Jacques DeMolay was born, he became a Knight in 1265 and joined the Knights Templar. He served as the last Grand Master of Knights Templar.

The Knights Templar obtained a lot of land and amassed great treasure by developing and protecting trade routes and churches with a system of banking and donations. The information of their great wealth spread throughout Europe and to King Phillip of France who was in financial need. He plotted with the Pope to get the treasure and with his sanction ordered the arrest of Jacques DeMolay together with sixty of his Knights in Paris on October Friday 13th 1307 that led to their Inquisition in France. Charges were presented to defame the Knights Templar with misconduct and other falsehoods in reference to their vows that led to torture and under extreme duress they made confessions. They were found guilty and on March 18th 1314 condemned to death by being burned at the stake. Before his execution Jacques DeMolay recanted his confession. Despite nearly 7 years of torture none would reveal the location of the Templar treasure and remained true to their vows.

Now! Let us consider the formation of the Youth Order of DeMolay. Frank Sherman "Dad" Land (June 21, 1890 – November 8, 1959) had a rough early life, his father deserted the family when he was in the 8th grade. In order to get more education, he enrolled in a trade school for business and with his mother and grandmother started a restaurant which became very profitable. However, it was not his choice as his life labor. He once again went in search of a new career and found he had a talent in art. One evening in class Nell, the sister of the teacher, noticed that Frank was distracted, so she asked what he was drawing. He said "The Shield of Chivalry". It was like those used by Knights in the fourteenth century, with swords crossed on the back of the shield, to which he had added a helmet on top.

Nell and Frank became friends and later got married on September 15 1913. Frank continued his education and work in the restaurant. One evening when he came home to the restaurant his family gave him a surprise 21st birthday party with a cake and presents. His grandmother handed him an envelope with the instructions to emulate his grandfather and join the Masonic Lodge. On June 12th 1912 he started his life as a Mason in Ivanhoe Lodge No 446 in Kansas City. He increased his understanding of the craft by his membership in York Rite, Scottish Rite and Shrine. In 1914 he sold the restaurant and took a job as administrator in the Scottish Rite with an office in the Scottish Rite Temple.

After the end of the First World War there were many widows with children whose husbands had been killed and had to cope with everyday problems. Frank Land hired a seventeen-year-old boy to help with his work at the Scottish Rite. In his discussion with this boy he found there were other youths that needed adult support and guidance, so he started a Boys' Club. This club started with 9 boys and soon grew to about 20, they met in a church basement until more boys wanted to join. A larger place was needed so they moved to the Scottish Rite Temple, **March 18, 1919 is the date the Boys Club became DeMolay. The ritual was written by Frank Marshall.**

N.B. W. Bro. Virgil Land P.M. a 100+ year 'young' resident in the Masonic Home and 'father' of Siminoff Lodge No 850 F & A. M. is a distant cousin to Bro. Frank Land.

Bro. Richard Fiechtner.