

Take "Dad's" Advice: Change the Vision, not the Values

In 1942, with America embroiled in World War II, DeMolay faced the possibility of losing as many as 4 out of 5 of its active members to the draft. In this crisis, "Dad" Land saw an opportunity. He sent a letter to local Advisors, outlining his vision for what was to come. In his own words, here is that vision:



FRANK S. LAND
FOUNDER AND
SECRETARY GENERAL

THE GRAND COUNCIL OF THE ORDER OF DEMOLAY

ARMOUR AND WARWICK BOULEVARDS

KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

September 28, 1942

My dear Brother:

Our country is at war. The whole world is in chaos. Every bit of earth is a battle front. Men are fighting and dying. **DeMolay is experiencing its first war.**



During such an hour I wish that I might, through some magical formula, knock at your door, sit down and visit with you awhile---but this is impossible. I must depend upon these written words, inadequate as they are, to ask you to **join with me in advancing DeMolay frontiers.** It will mean doing the greatest "bit" of boy work we

have attempted ... Perhaps new and better ideas will come to you than here expressed but the important point is that **DeMolay has heard a "call"** and we who hold its destiny in our hands must plan, work and then labor as never before if we truly love youth. Any sacrifices that we make will be very small indeed beside those of our boys at the front.

For twenty-three years DeMolay, quietly but militantly, has been preparing boys for the test they now face ... Our program has been one of developing character with special emphasis on love of God, love of Home and love of Country. By precept and example, we have been hammering constantly into the hearts and minds of our boys the eternal virtues taught every child at its mother's knee.



During the present conflict **we must not deviate the slightest from this simple program of character development. This is our work and must be our destiny.**

We have taken pride during peaceful pursuits, in the worthwhile evidences of DeMolay teachings. **Now we meet the supreme tests** of seeing how well our teachings stand the onslaught of treacherous warfare influences ...Hundreds of active DeMolays have enlisted in



the armed forces of the nation and thousands upon thousands of majority DeMolays are now serving in the army or navy. It now appears certain that within the next sixty or ninety days, those of our membership in the eighteen and nineteen year old groups will be drafted.

When this happens – and it is going to happen – **DeMolay must devote itself exclusively to the fifteen, sixteen and seventeen year old boys ...**

At first thought we might be inclined to think that we will not be able to carry on under such conditions but I want you to stop and think for a moment because this condition that has come upon us can prove to be **a blessing and opportunity for greater service.**



DeMolay started in your town and my town with fifteen, sixteen and seventeen year old boys ... **Our greatest memberships were in the first couple of years of our chapters existence ... Today, the largest chapters of the Movement are composed almost exclusively of high school boys.** They maintain large memberships because each DeMolay in high school meets scores of boys daily, eligible for DeMolay, while the employed boy is confined to a small circle immediately surrounding him. You and I know this is a true statement of facts.

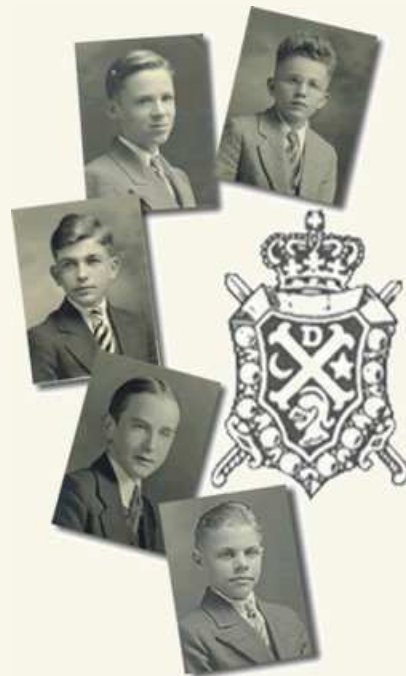
This letter is meant to stimulate and afford a change of base in DeMolay thinking ... Right now you are probably electing and appointing your officers for the Fall and Winter terms. With the certainty that the eighteen and nineteen year old boys will be drafted within the next few months, isn't it sensible to clean house, do away with progressive advancement of officers for the "duration" and appeal directly to the high school age bracket for members and officers? ...

In other words, **start this Fall with a new vision.** Start the Fall activities as though you were just instituting your chapter.

All of this might seem rather disconcerting for the moment in view of the fact that your present chapter set-up may be ever so successful with older boys but **we must face the future courageously and with open minds** if we are going to bridge the present emergency and **keep DeMolay alive in your community.** I would not have you, for one moment, feel that I am underestimating the great value of the older youth, nor do I mean ...that the eighteen,

nineteen and twenty year old boys should be ignored and forgotten – that would be nonsensical – but you know, as I do, that during these times, he will not be available for DeMolay activity much longer.

Three weeks ago, I called a meeting of the [Mother]chapter and explained the situation. Only one boy on the line was a high school student. They arose nobly to the emergency and promptly set to work to bring into the chapterboys of high school age ... young men were invited to a chapter dinner ... and they were invited to join DeMolay with a very definite understanding **they would be called upon almost immediately** to select the chapter's

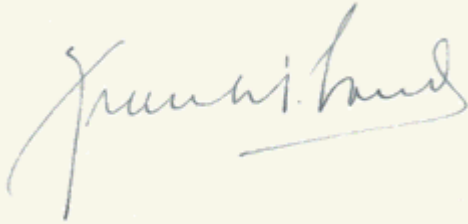


officers from those joining the chapter ... **DeMolay in this community is back to its natural field of endeavor.** These high school boys are creating more DeMolay activity than has been prevalent in the past fifteen years. **A lasting reservoir for future members is being tapped.**

I hope you will enthusiastically consider this suggestion and profit by our experience here ... **It is our duty to make available to every youth the teachings and ideals of DeMolay** ... I trust that with the help of God you will join with me in this effort.

With word of deep personal regard and best wishes, I am

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Frank S. Land". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored background. The first name "Frank" is written in a large, flowing cursive, and "S. Land" is written in a smaller, more compact cursive. A horizontal line is drawn under the signature.

The above is excerpted from a letter from Frank S. Land to DeMolay Advisors in 1942. The letter was sent to PA DeMolay by "Dad" Al Spina of Friendship-Bray Chapter after he found it in their historical files.