

DeMolay Pilgrimages to France

The first pilgrimage of DeMolay to France sailed from New York City on June 25, 1937, its destination the birth place of Jacques DeMolay in France near the Swiss border. There were 36 in this party, the maximum planned for this pilgrimage, reservations being refused after this number was reached. The reception of the group was indeed impressive. First, they were tendered a banquet in Paris by the French Government. Then the party was received officially in various cities in which they stopped, and lastly they experienced a special ceremony in the village of Molay.

In 1969, to celebrate the 50th Anniversary, another, larger, pilgrimage was held. Immediately following the International Conference in Kansas City, three charter planes carrying 490



people left from Kansas City, Chicago and Boston, for Europe. This two-week DeMolay Pilgrimage took the group to 8 countries, beginning in London and ending in Rome, and featuring the dedication of a Memorial Plaque on a footer of the Pont Neuf Bridge in Paris on Isle de la Cite, the traditional site of the burning of Jacques DeMolay. All transportation, lodging and meals cost less than \$625 per person. Dad Tom Moberly, member of the DeMolay Hall of Fame, was a member of the Headquarters Staff was the General Chairman of the Pilgrimage. He relates that each plane brought enough participants for 4 busses.

After two days touring London, the group flew in several chartered planes to Paris where they participated in the unveiling of a plaque near the Cathedral of Notre Dame, where Jacques DeMolay was executed.



M. ÉTIENNE DE VÉRICOURT, PRÉSIDENT
ET LES MEMBRES DU BUREAU
DU CONSEIL DE PARIS

vous prie de bien vouloir leur faire l'honneur d'assister
le Mercredi 9 Juillet 1969, à 15 h 30, au Pont-Neuf, à
l'inauguration d'une plaque, offerte par l'Ordre de
Molay, et rappelant la mémoire du dernier Grand Maître
de l'Ordre du Temple.

Une réception sera ensuite donnée, à 17 heures,
dans les salons de l'Hôtel de Ville.

ENTRÉE : place de l'Hôtel-de-Ville
- Porche Sud (Côté Seine) -

He recalls that one highlight of the trip occurred *“after the dedication of the plaque at Pont Neuf (translated as Bridge Nine) when the entire group was invited to City Hall, where the Mayor of Paris accepted the plaque on behalf of the city, and then hosted a reception with an abundance of French pastries, fancy hors d’oeuvres and champagne for everyone...even the youth!”*

The groups traveled around Europe in three contingents, and only came together for a few events. Dad Moberly remembers that they had a medical doctor on each plane and traveling with each group. They also had bus captains who were charged with taking care of details.

The trip also took them to Luxembourg, Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Italy.

Another highlight of the trip for many was an audience with Cardinal Willebrands of the Vatican, who made very positive statements about the work of the Order of DeMolay, expressing his “joy that the membership of the Order includes Catholics, Protestants and Jews in a great cooperation for the benefit of humanity.” He then gave everyone present a commemorative medallion of Pope Paul.

Another large Pilgrimage was successful in 1979 for the 60th Anniversary, and a smaller group traveled to France this year in March to be at the sight of DeMolay’s burning on the March 18th anniversary.

1. What is the point of a “pilgrimage?” Can you think of any historic or famous pilgrimages?
2. What cost only \$625 per person in 1969 now costs in excess of \$5000 for air travel, hotels, meals and touring costs. If you had a year or two advanced notice, would you be able to raise the money to attend another Pilgrimage?
3. Why was the statement made by Cardinal Willebrands of such significance to the entire Order in 1969?