

Centennial Celebration Moments #52 (June 28, 2019)

The Best Lesson of All- part 2

Last week we learned a little more about Louis Lower and an incident in 1936 that threatened to permanently ruin his relationship with “Dad” Land.

Dad Land replied just a few days later:

"My dear Louis... I don't know why Buck talked as he did with you while in St. Louis recently. It is only natural when one leaves a group with which he has been closely associated for many years, that gossip will make the rounds. Frankly, I have heard a great many rumors as to why you left, but they have never been given a second thought by me. I do not want you to feel that there is any difference in our relationship. You should know me well enough after all these years to know that I would be loyal to your cause and the things you are trying to do. So, dismiss from your mind any such thought."



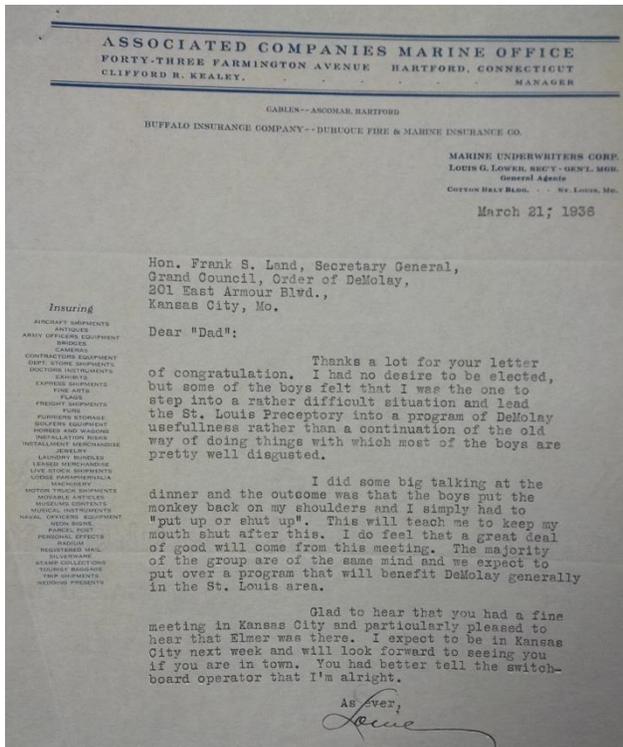
You can almost hear the legendary calming voice of Dad Land come off the page as he tries to assure Louis that nothing has, and nothing will, tear them apart. Land knew how to read people. He knew that a handwritten letter, instead of a typed note, meant that this was really weighing on Louis' mind. He assured Louie in the strongest manner of his personal loyalty. We know that personal devotion was Frank Land's most coveted virtue. Later, when he presented his Founder's Cross, it was a personal award, not a Grand Council award, and it was for loyalty to him, personally. And to drive the message home, the bar across the top of the ribbon read, LOYALTY.

Then Land gives us a clue about why Louis left Kansas City:

"Quite naturally I felt very much grieved at the situation which surrounded you while here and, as I expressed to you months ago, I felt that the only way out was for you to leave Kansas City and try to forget the whole sorry mess. Evidently you have followed my advice and it seems to me that things will work out to a most

successful conclusion. One thing is certain, I have never discussed your situation with anyone else, and if I were so inclined, it would be with you, personally. You have a great opportunity to make good in your new place, and I want you to fulfill every chance afforded you."

We don't know exactly what kind of trouble Louis had in Kansas City that made him leave and move to St. Louis. He was well-known in Kansas City, and it must have been something substantial for Dad Land to have wanted him to leave town.



Luckily for Louis, in 1935, he had been able to partner with his friend and peer, Walter C. Ploeser, in Marine Underwriters Corporation, an insurance business in St. Louis where Ploeser was the Chairman of the Board and President. Louis Lower became the Secretary and General Manager, working with several other agents as brokers for multiple insurance companies.

(Ploeser, by the way, was the first Senior DeMolay to serve as Grand Master of the Order in 1952-1953, and who later served as US Ambassador to Paraguay and Costa Rica.)

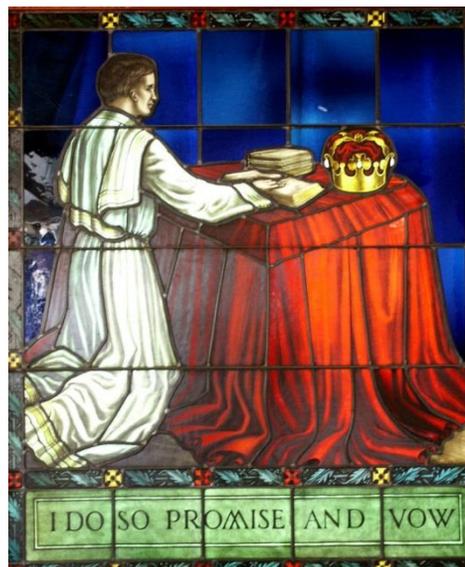
A few weeks later, all seems to be back to normal, as Louis sent a short typed note to Dad Land about his leadership experience in St. Louis (put up or shut up!) and closed with a joke that Dad needed to *“tell the switchboard operator that Louis is OK”* because, of course, ‘out of sight, means out of mind’ and she might not know who he is! Of course, he was making a joke. Can you imagine anyone working at the Grand Council office NOT knowing who Louis Lower was?

We do know that Louis permanently returned to Kansas City within a few years and became the Director of the Municipal Auditorium, which was likely a political appointment. We know that he had actively battled against the Pendergast political machine, and so it is possible the “problem” was with the corrupt local officials. Or it could have been a family problem. We will probably never know.

But, whatever the “*whole sorry mess*” was that Dad Land refers to must have cleared up within a year or two, to allow Louis to return to his home town.

The worst part of this whole episode is that “Buck” (and we don’t know who that was) **heard a rumor, and spread that rumor**, and Louis and Dad’s relationship MAY have been strained because of it. We can all empathize with this. We have all felt betrayed by a friend, or been accused of betraying a friend, or perhaps, the worst, merely IMAGINED it, planting seeds of doubt about an otherwise solid relationship. Gossip and rumors are a part of the human condition, unfortunately. Being crushed by gossip is one of the worst feelings, and even harder within a fraternity that professes fidelity, comradeship and loyalty to fellow members.

And so we close our Centennial Celebration with this example as the model for ALL relationships that need to be maintained, and occasionally mended and repaired. It sets up a perfect example of how honest, heartfelt conversation can solve almost any problem we have with one another. It begins by admitting, as Louis did, that WE may be at fault, that WE are not perfect, that WE are willing to SEEK forgiveness, and to BE forgiving. While we are certain this was never a story that “Dad” Land or Bro. Louie wanted to share with the whole DeMolay world, it may be the greatest gift they have left behind.



May God bless the memories of these two incredible friends and leaders, and may we ALL learn from, and emulate, their devotion to each other, and to the world-wide Order they created.

