



Playstation Nation
by Olivia and Kurt Bruner
Reviewed by MAJ Vance McGee

Olivia and Kurt Bruner's *Playstation Nation* should not be read only by the parents of teens. In fact, even if you are not a parent at all, you'll find that this book will help you to understand why modern American youth "are the way they are."

Have you ever had the experience of trying to talk to a nephew or family friend, say a boy between ten and fifteen years old, and discovering that the lad had literally *nothing of interest to say*? He doesn't play sports, he doesn't read books, he couldn't find Canada on a map if his life depended on it, and he has no opinions on any subject? As a teacher of junior high and high school boys, I see this type of child regularly. *Playstation Nation* demonstrates that modern day video games are *the prime* cause of this vacuity and lack of vitality.

The Bruners begin by telling their own story of how video games were a detriment to their family. Their son Kyle got involved with the simple Nintendo games such as *Mario Brothers* and *Donkey Kong* back in 1996 (which in terms of gaming technology is about three generations ago!). Kyle liked the games very much, but his parents were aware that other activities were more important. They limited Kyle's time playing the games. In fact, they didn't even own a game system at first, but occasionally rented one as a treat for their son. Eventually they were given a Super Nintendo unit, and Kyle's love of the games took on a life of its own. Here is a sample conversation between "Mom" (Olivia Bruner) and her son. "Kyle, are you still playing Nintendo?" "Yes, Mom." "It has been an hour. I told you to set the timer for thirty minutes!" "I did." "Then why are you still playing?" "I just wanted to finish this level real quickly." "Shut it off right now and get up to the bath!" "I can't shut it off!" "What do you mean you can't shut it off?" "Because I have to save my game." "Then save it!" "I can't." "Why can't you?" "Because I have to finish this level before it will let me save." This back-and-forth continues for several exasperating minutes. And as Mom gets more and more angry, she discovers that the level of energy she is expending is way too high. She wonders, Why is my son behaving like a compulsive gambler, who in essence needs one more "poker hand" to win? As she puts it, "I considered [video game fanaticism] a phase, something I hoped he would outgrow by the time he turned fourteen... Instead, I sensed a growing compulsion, with games dominating his thoughts and passions" (pg. 13).

At this point, *Playstation Nation* comes in to its strength. The Bruners shift away from *anecdotal* evidence for the problems brought on by video games, and they cite solid *medical and psychological* research that video games are, to some degree, addictive.

Only half jokingly, the Bruners began calling the game system in their home "my precious" to describe the effects Nintendo seemed to have on [their] boys' ongoing attitudes and behavior" (readers or viewers of the *Lord of the Rings* will know what "my precious" refers to). Here is one example of how "precious" the games can be. Some "hospital staff [have seen] dramatic differences between playing video games and simply viewing television. Seriously ill children in a hospital who played Nintendo required half the pain medication as those who didn't. Television, in contrast, had no effect on the amount of medication required" (pg. 27). In fact, research shows "children who play video games submit their developing brains to a pleasurable chemical reaction similar to an amphetamine drug injection!" (pg. 30)

These facts are disturbing. And chapter 4 (entitled "Made for Addiction") shows that the video game industry exploits these truths for profit! When these medical factors are coupled with psychological factors of human development, it becomes very difficult for children to resist the

product. In the end, the Bruners found that their children could not and *should not* be expected to resist the allure of video games. They as parents had to make the decisions for their children. Their solution was to take their family's *Game Cube* console and all of the games (worth several hundred dollars) and simply throw them in the trash! They did explain themselves to their boys, and they literally "had to help their boys re-shape their free time" and how they organized their day! The authors don't *prescribe* a no video games solution for all parents. In fact, they do concede that some children seem to be "able to handle video games as a small part of an otherwise balanced life" (pg. 129). But they know that in general, boys in particular often struggle with video game *compulsion* and in some cases *addiction*. They include an appendix called "An Open Letter to Those Who Love Video Games." It is meant to be a self-evaluation tool for young people, but it will also be useful for parents who are trying to "figure out" their own children. This reviewer (Vance McGee) has come to the conclusion that there will be no video game console in his home. *Playstation Nation* is a very effective book in that it led me to this conclusion not by preaching at me, but by using relevant anecdotes, medical research and psychological evidence. I believe that all schoolteachers and/or parents ought to read *Playstation Nation* carefully. What you will learn will shock you, but will also at least partially explain why American kids, "are the way they are."

Implications for Chamberlain-Hunt

As the authors explain, the world of video games (especially the fantasy role playing games such as *World of Warcraft* and *EverQuest*) is an artificial world parallel to our own. In the ersatz world created by these games, undistinguished young men can be heroes. Because this is so, boys come gradually to prefer video world to the real world. I personally have met many of these young men, and they are mostly empty. It is almost eerie to converse with a thirteen year old who has *essentially no personality!* So what can Chamberlain-Hunt Academy do to help?

To begin with, the fact that we separate boys from their games is the best thing we can do! As the Bruners demonstrate, when an "addicted" young games lover is cut off from his "precious," he will go through a sort of withdrawal period. However, the fact that Chamberlain-Hunt absolutely fills the Cadet's days with schoolwork and physical activity does much to ease the pain. Once the Cadet decides, "Oh well, I can't play with my Xbox anymore; I guess I'll have to think about something else," he becomes a different child.

A second way that Chamberlain-Hunt can help these "video drones" is to replace their visual entertainment focus with a focus on the printed word. Entertaining but substantial books do exist, and for all reading levels. These books, as well as *time to read them*, ought to be made easily available to the Cadets.

And finally, the cultivation of hobbies ought to be reasonably encouraged here at Chamberlain-Hunt. This is the most difficult idea to implement within our school's framework. If a boy loves motocross or fly-fishing, life in a military academy will make his hobby almost impossible to follow *right now*. But as we encourage our Cadets to be physically active, we teach them to long for *activity* rather than passive (dare we say *useless*) pleasures such as video games. In the end, I am convinced that *Playstation Nation* would be a helpful text for all Chamberlain-Hunt staff. It is not only useful, but also enjoyable to read.

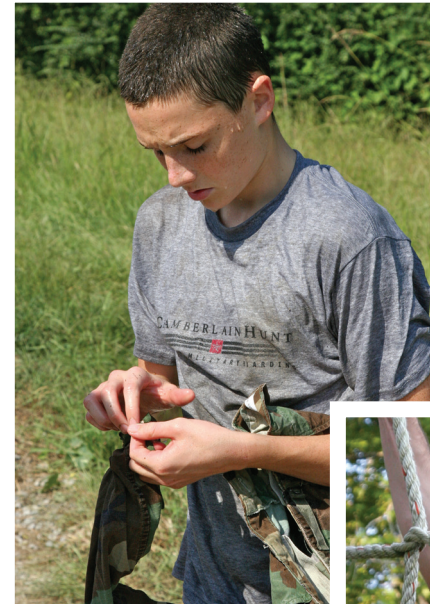
A California native, Vance McGee was ordained as a minister in the Reformed Episcopal Church after earning an MDiv at Cranmer House Theological Seminary. MAJ McGee joined the Bible department at Chamberlain-Hunt in 2005. He earned a BA and an MA in Political Science from California State/Fullerton, and an MA in Systematic Theology from Talbot School of Theology.



Crusader Challenge 2007



"Pain is Temporary, Pride is Forever!" - CSM Tierney



"The best of the best"—this is the meaning of becoming a Crusader. Along with being set apart as someone with great strength, a Crusader is respected by his peers, has proven to others his full potential, and has proven to himself that he can push himself [body, mind and spirit] to the limit.

Crusader training employs military strategies in phases. First, the PAP (Physical Assessment Phase) is administered. This phase challenges Cadets to push their bodies to the limits in the areas of strength, agility and endurance. Cadets must do 52 push-ups in two minutes, 58 sit-ups in two minutes and run 2 miles in 14 minutes. Cadets who pass the physical test are then led to their station in the Wilderness for a 2 day tour. During this time, Cadets will dig foxholes, move sandbags and prepare for the final challenge, the tactical mission. The Cadets get little sleep and a limited amount of rations during this 2 day period.

The TAP (Tactical Assessment Phase) covers many areas of training including: map reading, hand-to-hand combat, operations orders, link up, movements, M-16 and pistol training, ambush, indirect fire, water survival and first aid. This final phase prepares them for the 13-mile road march during which the Cadets work together to defend their territory and make wise choices on the battlefield.

Chamberlain-Hunt began the Crusader Challenge 6 years ago, and offers a Challenge in both the fall and spring semesters. Hundreds of Cadets have begun the Challenge over the years, but only 45 have completed it. This year, 36 Cadets began on Day One and in the end, only two made it to the final mission. The challenges that most Cadets find to be the most difficult are the limited sleep and food, the physical exertion and the emotional strain. Currently there are 6 Crusaders at Chamberlain-Hunt including COL Blanton, LTC Granville, MAJ Blackwell, CSM Tierney, Crusader Whittemore (FL) and Crusader Callahan (AR). Two more will join these six at the initiation ceremony, and they include Cadet Barber (MS) and Cadet Simpson (AZ).

When Crusader candidates were asked what they would take away from attempting the Challenge, they commonly replied that they benefited from the opportunity to encourage others to not give up and push themselves to be the very best in everything they do. There is no doubt that these young men will be mentors to each and every Cadet who needs encouragement.

The 2007 Crusaders are Cadet Leland Barber of Madison, MS and Cadet Christian Simpson of Phoenix, AZ.

Honoring Loved Ones—Helping Cadets

Memorial Gifts for August and September

Mr. Jacob Reed Barker
Mr. and Mrs. Jerry Benham
Ms. Joyce Ann Buscaglia
Mr. Charles H. Ripoll

Mr. Marion Buchanan
Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Bowen, Jr.

Mr. Robert Cannada
Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Bowen, Jr.
Mrs. Wiley P. Lowry

Mr. Bob Ehrhardt
Mr. and Mrs. John L. Hyland III

Mrs. Karen Emerson
Mr. and Mrs. William B. Abraham

Mrs. Annie Ganann
Mr. and Mrs. George L. Hand

Mr. Blaine Greer and Mr. Brian Greer
Mr. and Mrs. C. Wayne Mastin

Mr. Warren Earl Husband
Mr. and Mrs. Wiley P. Lowry, Jr.

Mr. Marvin Hynum
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Mr. Otho Johnson
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Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Bowen, Jr.
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Mr. R. Henry Jones
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Mr. Allison Killingsworth
Mr. and Mrs. Robert Greenlee

Mr. Robert Lee
Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Bowen, Jr.

Mr. Grady W. Leese
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Mr. Bobby Joe Mitchell
Mr. Matthew Mercer

Mr. Dan McCullen
Mr. and Mrs. George E. Bishop
Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Bowen, Jr.
Mr. and Mrs. Steve Edwards
Mr. and Mrs. Wiley P. Lowry, Jr.

Mrs. Richard McRae
Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Bowen, Jr.
Mrs. Wiley P. Lowry

Mrs. Sally Porter
Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Bowen, Jr.

Dr. Michael Vise
Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Bowen, Jr.
Dr. and Mrs. Will Thompson

Mr. Bobby Wade
Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Bowen, Jr.
Mrs. Jane Mashburn DeWitt

Mr. Edmond Ward
Dr. and Mrs. Dennis E. Ward

Mr. Ray Zagorski
Mr. and Mrs. William B. Abraham
Mr. and Mrs. William L. Williamson III

Honor Gifts for August and September

Mr. Thomas Bowen, Jr.
Dr. Thomas C. Turner

Mrs. Katherine C. Bryson
Mrs. Lydia Rives

Mr. and Mrs. Sam Elliott
Mr. & Mrs. John Tipton

Mr. John Hyland
Mrs. Martha Ann May Klaus

Mr. and Mrs. Danny Irvin
Mr. and Mrs. George L. Hand

Mr. and Mrs. Don Kimmel
Mr. and Mrs. Christopher Helman

Mr. Niven Walker
Mr. Dan Walker

In The News

Rachel Howell recently accepted an appointment to the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, MD. After a series of interviews, Rachel was nominated for an appointment by U.S. Senator Lamar Alexander and U.S. Congressman Zach Wamp.



Rachel attended Chamberlain-Hunt Academy in grades seventh through ninth and graduated from Oak Ridge High School in May of this year. Rachel scored a 32 on her ACT.

Retired Air National Guard Major General **Martha Trim Rainville** (Chamberlain-Hunt class of 1975) was recently appointed counselor to the Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

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Cadet LIFE



August/September 2007

A Landmark Year for Chamberlain-Hunt Cadet Enrollment

In 1970, the Chamberlain-Hunt Cadet Corps consisted of one hundred sixty-eight boarding Cadets and twenty-four day Cadets. In 1971, as a result of the integration of the state schools, the day Cadet population rose to one hundred seventy, while the boarding Cadet population dropped to one hundred fifty-eight. Since that historically significant year, boarding Cadet enrollment at Chamberlain-Hunt declined steadily while the day Cadet population waxed and waned. In the year 1998, as a result of much prayer and due to the need for a Christian military boarding school for boys, the administration at Chamberlain-Hunt focused its efforts on the all male boarding program. Over the past 10 years God has greatly blessed Chamberlain-Hunt and confirmed that there is a real need for a school with our unique mission. The boarding Cadet enrollment has steadily grown to the largest that it has been since 1977. This year we began with one hundred twenty-two Cadets—sixty-six new boarding Cadets, fifty-two returning boarding Cadets and four day Cadets.



The good enrollment numbers did not begin in August. *Adventure Summer School 2007* was a big success. With sixty-one Cadets enrolled, this year's summer school was the largest in recent history. The summer school Cadet Corps consisted of seventeen returning Cadets and forty-four new Cadets. Coincidentally, there were as many new Cadets for summer school this year as there were new Cadets at the beginning of the regular school year in August 2006. In addition to the growth in the numbers of Cadets attending, another healthy sign is that six of last year's Cadets became Jr TAC officers, giving up a month of their summer vacation to help during summer school. Jr TAC officers are high ranking Cadets who, upon on their request and the president's approval, are given the opportunity to work as staff during the summer.

As we pray for God's continued blessing and trust that the Cadet Corps will continue to grow, the admissions office is preparing itself for this growth. More Cadets mean more interviews, more applications, more scholarship forms, more phone calls, etc.... The heart of the admission process is in establishing a relationship with the parents and the prospective Cadet. As in all relationships this takes time, thoughtfulness and care. The relationship that is established with families during the admission process does not end at registration. The admissions office continues to build on that relationship with the Cadets through counseling and investing time in them to ensure that they are reaching their goals. With the parents we continually seek to inform them of the events and opportunities at Chamberlain-Hunt and remind them why Chamberlain-Hunt is the best school for their son.

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Contact: cadetlife@chamberlain-hunt.com or 601.437.8855



From the President's Desk...

"A vote is like a rifle: its usefulness depends upon the character of the user," Theodore Roosevelt wrote in his 1913 autobiography. I expect Chamberlain-Hunt Cadets to grow up to be men of character, men who are good citizens. I expect them to change the world by wisely using the appropriate tools at their disposal.

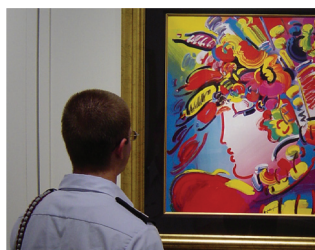
Through day-to-day activities, like formations, classroom learning and afternoon sports, and special activities, like the Crusader Challenge and off-campus events, we aim to train boys to be men of character. As surprising as it may seem given our nation's recent school shooting tragedies, we often use guns to train them. On our rifle range in the Wilderness, the Sergeant Major trains Cadets to handle guns wisely. Often supporters of the Academy graciously provide hunting opportunities for Cadets. I took Crusaders Callahan and Whittemore and Cadet Rickels to the recent Young Business Leaders-sponsored Clay Shoot competition at Kearney Park in Flora, MS. In November, we are offering a special bird hunt opportunity at the Willows, near Tunica, to six Cadets. Parents, be on the lookout for details!

Guns are just tools. They can provide sustenance and security when used rightly; they can cause death and destruction when used wrongly. Likewise, votes can strengthen our Republic or they can destroy it. The difference is made by the aim of the person pulling the trigger—or the lever. Join us in praying that we will teach—and Cadets will learn—wisdom in using all the tools that God gives us in this life for his glory and our good.

Knowledge and wisdom!

A. SHANE BLANTON
COL, CHA
President

The Fine Arts Program at Chamberlain-Hunt



Art

Director: MAJ Jaime Coon

It is important for Cadets to understand the core basics of art before they can fully appreciate pieces of art created by others. Just because something is not necessarily beautiful, does not mean that there is not depth, meaning and talent working together to create the piece. Cadets in the Art program learn the basics such as the elements and principles of design and the different types of media available to them in creating pieces of art, and they develop a sense of pride in craftsmanship and problem solving skills needed to express themselves in their work.

They also study different art styles as an aspect of developing a Christian worldview. We work together to critique their own work and the work of others with an attitude of openness to others' opinions and to constructive criticism.

Music

Director: MAJ Monya Williams

Music is the other fine arts elective we offer this year. In addition to music as an academic class, we offer extra-curricular music instruction. Between voice training and the study of several instruments, the music department at Chamberlain-Hunt is a delight, and on occasion not a delight, to the ear.

Cadets in the choir are preparing for concerts this spring. In addition to the choir practice, MAJ Williams is giving lessons to Cadets on such instruments as bass guitar, acoustic guitar, trumpet, drums and piano. We are planning a recital for each of the Cadets studying these instruments and for the trumpet ensemble recital for later in the school year.

