

John Blossman: A Life Well-Lived

“John Blossman, 65, of Ocean Springs died March 30, 2009...” so began the *Sun Herald’s* notice of the French Camp/Chamberlain-Hunt board chairman’s death. A member of the Episcopal church in Ocean Springs, Mr. Blossman’s funeral was held at the larger Presbyterian church, which was filled to capacity—a testimony to the life of a well-loved man who loved life. Mr. Blossman’s leadership on the board facilitated Chamberlain-Hunt’s rebirth, and he will be sorely missed. The following article about Mr. Blossman was first published in 2004, not long after he was diagnosed with cancer:

Since its beginning in 1951, Blossman Gas pursued one goal: to provide superior service to its customers. Following that business philosophy enabled it to grow from one truck and one office in Ocean Springs, Mississippi to over 70 retail stores across the Southeast today. With locations in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia, Blossman Gas ranks the 11th largest propane dealer in the US.

Its chairman and CEO is John Blossman—a second generation member of one of the South’s pioneering propane families—who has been active in the company’s management since 1969. In recent years, Blossman served as chairman of numerous National Propane Gas Association committees and task forces and as president of the NPGA in 1994-95. As Blossman puts it, “I started at the top.” At age 26 and fresh out of Vanderbilt University’s School of Law, he became president of Blossman Gas. His father, “Woody” Blossman, said simply, “Here’s my office; there’s the desk—they’re yours.” Blossman recalls, “One of the greatest gifts my father gave me when he made me president was to back away from the company.” His father never criticized, second-guessed or played “Monday morning quarterback.”

Given the growing success of Blossman Gas, his father obviously made a wise decision. Blossman is quick to defer credit, however. When he became president, Blossman built a team with two or three key men who worked under his father. They provided experience and advice—and did not see him as a threat.

And that says a lot about John Blossman. A graduate of Yale University and Vanderbilt University’s School of Law, Blossman is very sharp. One need talk with him but a few minutes to recognize him as a man of genius, passion and depth, and equally great humility.

John Blossman learned a lot from his father, lessons that helped him grow the business to its current size: from about 25 stores when he became president to the current 70 stores, from the Gulf Coast into the Carolinas, Tennessee and Virginia. One of those fundamental lessons, deeply rooted in Blossman and evident throughout his life, is that *there’s no standing still*: one either grows or declines. Change, not stasis, is the nature of reality. Blossman chooses growth and knows that growth in business is tied to *service*. In fact, Blossman Gas’s mission statement proclaims Blossman’s philosophy:

By providing superior service to our customers, Blossman can grow and prosper to benefit our people, the people we serve, and our community.

Blossman’s father, a real entrepreneur, created a business where, as Blossman puts it, “people come first.” A widely accepted business principle today, the idea of service to *employees* was somewhat novel in the 1950’s and the elder Blossman served not only his customers but also his employees. Of his father he recalls with admiration, “He never took advantage of people.” He shares his father’s care for others.

Shortly after he became president, Blossman was drafted into the Army. At 26, he was the oldest draftee in his company to go through Basic Training at Fort Polk, Louisiana. Blossman describes his captain: “He was also 26—decent and dedicated, high caliber. He told me, ‘I’ll try to keep the other guys (all 18 or 19 year olds) from killing you.’” Stationed at Ft. Rucker, Alabama, Blossman served as a legal clerk, developing a deep

In Memorium:

Dr. David Gruchy, president of Chamberlain-Hunt from 1955-1965, died on 25 February 2009, at age 93.

appreciation for the men who served in Vietnam in the face of an extremely tough war and little support at home. Two years later and twenty pounds lighter, Blossman returned to the helm of Blossman Gas having seen men give their lives to serve others.

Not only did Blossman follow his father in service to his employees and customers, he also followed him in service to the community. Blossman Gas continues the elder Blossman’s commitments to the YMCA, and Blossman indulges his desire to serve as chairman of the board of French Camp Ministries, on which board his father previously served.

French Camp Ministries operates two Christian boarding schools both located on the scenic Natchez Trace Parkway in Mississippi. French Camp Academy, founded in 1885, serves boys and girls, grades K-12. The other school, Chamberlain-Hunt Academy, is a member of the BIC Alliance family. Its history exemplifies that fundamental lesson Blossman learned from his father: there’s no standing still; one either grows or declines.

Established by the Presbytery of Mississippi in 1879, Chamberlain-Hunt Academy celebrates its *quasiquicentennial* this year. Six years ago, however, it was bankrupt and on the verge of closing. That’s when French Camp Ministries, under Blossman’s leadership, came to the rescue. The historic military academy began its decline about the same time Blossman returned to Mississippi from Ft. Rucker. Around 1970, the old Southern Presbyterian Church (PCUS) split and its ability to support Chamberlain-Hunt ceased. The Academy eventually became independent and took in a large number of day students from the newly integrated state schools. With the change of governance and the shift of focus from its military boarding program to a predominately day program, Chamberlain-Hunt’s boarding population declined. By 1998, the day Cadet population declined as the result of declining local population and only 22 Cadets boarded.

The then board of Chamberlain-Hunt approached the board of French Camp Ministries with an offer it could not refuse: The bank will forgive our debt if you take the Academy and run it. Within five years, the boarding population grew to 140, filling three dorms and requiring the renovation of Guthrie Hall, the boarded up original campus dormitory—the first net increase in dorm space the Academy has seen since Gage Hall opened in 1949.

Blossman is excited about the growth at Chamberlain-Hunt because he knows it is serving a need. He recognizes the need to shape a generation of young men who know that true faith generates passion for living. His studies of Kierkegaard at Yale and continued studies of faith and culture shaped his understanding of faith, not as some mathematical formula, but as the answer to what it means to be a human person—the answer to the age-old question, “Why am I here?” In the South, where being a “Christian” is almost automatic—in a very mechanical, external manner—Blossman lives a faith the burns deep from within. He likes that the Cadets at Chamberlain-Hunt are challenged daily with the implications of the Christian faith; he likes when people are made to *think*.

His deep, experiential faith and the lessons of growth and service he learned from his father drive Blossman. Do not think, however, that his life has been all “positive.” Recently, Blossman was diagnosed with cancer. The dreaded diagnosis, which is often met with “how can a loving God let this happen?”, Blossman met with faith: “He is God and we’re human. Cancer and its treatment are tough, but I believe God is loving and this will be good for me.” Resting in God’s loving-kindness, Blossman is not giving up. He has gone through treatments, including several operations, and he is on the mend. He maintains his work at Blossman Gas, the YMCA and French Camp Ministries, and still manages time to read and sail. He loves living on the water: sailing, boating, swimming, even fishing.

There’s no doubting it: John Blossman loves life. He knows standing still is not a choice: one either declines or grows, and Blossman still chooses to grow.

CHAMBERLAIN - HUNT



CHRISTIAN MILITARY BOARDING
124 MCCOMB AVENUE PORT GIBSON MS 39150

From the president’s desk . . .



“Behold, I go forward, but he is not there, and backward, but I do not perceive him; on the left hand when he is working, I do not behold him; he turns to the right hand, but I do not see him. But he knows the way that I take; when he has tried me, I shall come out as gold,” lamented Job (*Job 23:8-10 ESV*)—and yet Job’s lament was not without hope. Notice the progression of thought from “God is not there” to “I do not see him”—from God doesn’t exist, to he is here but I don’t sense his presence, to I sense he is at work but I can’t really hold on to him, to I know he’s right there even though I don’t see him.

Moreover, Job speaks with confidence that God knows him and the path he takes; he speaks with confidence that God is at work in him, doing something amazing, turning him into “pure gold.”

The Refiner’s fire is an uncomfortable place to be. This concept came alive to me last year while working with some Cadets on casting the bronze head of Samuel Mason. We put scraps of bronze—dirty, jagged, brown scraps of bronze—into the crucible, put the crucible into the furnace and turned on the heat. At about 1200 degrees Fahrenheit, the scraps melted into a shimmering, translucent liquid. The dross floated to the top and we skimmed it off before pouring the molten bronze into the mould. Even in fireproof suits and head guards, we could not get too close to the bronze as it melted—just quick peaks here and there. Gold melts at just over 1900 degrees Fahrenheit.

Job’s hopeful lament sheds some light on Chamberlain-Hunt’s theme verse, “In all thy ways acknowledge him and he shall direct thy paths” (*Proverbs 3:6 KJV*). Cadets (and adults) sometime struggle in their relationship with God because they think that their trust and his direction should be simple and pain-free. Job teaches us that our trust and God’s direction are sometimes quite painful—like a furnace turned up over 1900 degrees!

Chamberlain-Hunt interrupts the lives of boys and confronts them in the areas of their lives that need refining. This is our mission. We trust that God uses us to make something beautiful!

Cadet LIFE

A SUMMER WELL SPENT

by MAJ Chris Blackwell



As much as boys look forward to summer and wait with great expectancy for those days of freedom and bliss, it is not too long into the summer before parents begin to hear those familiar phrases, “I’m bored” and “There’s *nothing* to do!” Despite encouragement to the contrary, summer days are too often wasted sitting on the couch playing video games and texting friends. A good summer, however, is one where memories are made through putting the time and effort into doing something of value.

Chamberlain-Hunt Academy offers the opportunity for a summer well spent. The main purpose of *Adventure Summer School* is to provide Cadets with the opportunity to further their education. For some it is a chance to get special attention in a subject in which they have struggled. For others it is an opportunity to get ahead. Rising seventh and eighth graders take an enrichment course and high school Cadets earn a full credit, choosing from one of the following courses: Algebra I and II, English I and II, and US History.

One of the unique qualities of Chamberlain-Hunt Academy is its military program. The basic manners, customs and traditions that are part of life during the regular school year are reinforced during the summer. Returning Cadets are given the opportunity to move into positions of leadership as they model for the new Cadets the importance of referring to those in authority over them as Ma’am and Sir, treating others with respect and courtesy and keeping their room and personal appearance in order.

Though the primary focus of *Adventure Summer School* is on academics and military training, it is still *summer*, and thus there is ample time for outdoor activities and weekend trips. The Cadets spend their afternoons swimming in the pool and playing intramural sports. They spend weekends playing paintball, qualifying on the rifle range, camping, canoeing, and attending two Mississippi Braves baseball games. These opportunities combined with the challenge of the military lifestyle and the amount of time spent together as squads compels the Cadets to see past cultural differences and join together to form strong and lasting friendships with boys from across the country. Though a large portion of the boys come from Mississippi and Louisiana, there are representatives from as far off as Long Beach, California and Brooklyn, New York.

As important as the academics, military training and activities of summer school are, a summer of activity could still be a wasted summer if there is no ultimate purpose behind all the activity. The single thread that runs through everything that is done at Chamberlain-Hunt Academy is that we exist to bring glory to God. Therefore, we know that our summer is not wasted when we do everything we do—from preparing for dorm inspections to taking final exams—to the best of our ability and to the glory of God. “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (Rom. 10:31).



February/March 2009

Third Quarter Stats

President’s List (4.0 GPA):

D. Bogenreif (CA)
Christopher Cruz ()
C. Grafton (MS)
J. Hanks (MS)
N. Looney ()
W. Schaffner ()

Principal’s List (3.6-3.9):

C. Bishop ()
M. Chavoustie (CO)
M. Collins (MS)
T. Giordano ()
S. Guthrie (MS)
A. McCraine (MS)
N. Smith ()
B. Streit ()
A. Thomas (CA)
D. Young (LA)

Momentum Award (1.0 or greater gain):

C. Sinclair ()

Privilege List (3.0 or greater):

42 Cadets are on the Privilege List for the Third Quarter

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

Spring / Summer 2009

Apr 3–Apr 13	Spring Break
Apr 18	Alumni Day
May 17	Phone Calls
May 18–20	Final Exams
May 21	Baccalaureate/Senior Speeches
May 22	Final Pass in Review
June 1-27	Adventure Summer School

Hear, Obey, and Teach— Deuteronomy 6:1-9

A Chapel Message by CHP Michael Herrin

This is the great statement of faith of the people of God, ever since the time of Moses. “Hear, Israel, Yahweh is our God, Yahweh alone!” This is the foundation of the Christian life. In order for God to be truly our God, he must reign over all aspects of our lives. He must be of first importance to us. Without God as our God, nothing else in the Bible makes sense, and we remain lost, adrift in a sea of self-worship and self-importance.

But once we have bowed the knee to God by placing our trust in Christ, once God is our God, everything that follows becomes crystal clear. If he is our God, we will naturally fear him, for we have acknowledged his power and might. And if God alone is our God, we will long to obey him, following all his statutes and commandments.

Moses thus goes on to summarize the entire law in this memorable phrase: “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.” It is not enough for us to obey out of fear of punishment. We must love God, and give ourselves fully to him. Just as two people give themselves to each other in marriage, so we must give all that we are and all that we have to God. He deserves nothing less.

But God doesn't make his blessings dependent on our love for him. At the time Moses spoke these words to the people, God had already delivered them from Egypt. God had already made them a great nation. And God was about to give them victory over the inhabitants of the promised land. God had poured out blessings on them, even though they had not deserved them. Thus their receiving the gifts of God was not conditional upon their obedience.

But nevertheless God made it clear that if they did not obey, God would not continue to bless them. Verse 15 makes it clear that they would not live long in the land. In other words, just as James told us two weeks ago, faith in the promises of God is dead without works of obedience which respond to God's amazing grace.

The foundation of their faith is thus no different to that of ours: total devotion to God and obedience to his will. Devotion and obedience are also the foundations of Christian Education. And isn't it interesting that the first words out of God's mouth following the great confession of faith are a command to teach the children? We teach the same way we live, by devotion and obedience.

Yes, telling young people about God is important. That's why the Academy's curriculum contains daily instruction in the Bible. But the Academy also seeks to recognize the central role of faith in all areas of study, just as we seek to be Christians in all areas of our lives. Just as God isn't just God on Sunday, but all week long, just so he isn't just the God of Bible class, but the God of history and science and literature and even of math!

But Christian instruction isn't just for teachers in classrooms. We are all to talk of God's commandments wherever we are: in the dining hall and the dorms, and as we go about our daily business on campus or in the streets. In fact, some of the best teaching opportunities come in the casual moments of life, when conversations aren't scheduled or planned.

And some of the most profound teaching we do is unintentional or even accidental. When a cadet catches you controlling your temper in the face of provocation, you are teaching the reality of the power of the Holy Spirit. When a cadet notices you doing a thorough job even when your boss isn't around, you are teaching integrity.

And just as our teaching is constant, so our devotion must be constant. We must not satisfy ourselves with 10 or 20 minutes of prayer and Bible reading in the morning. Is that all the time you would spend with your spouse? No, we must meditate on God's Word all day and all night – when we lie down and when we rise up.

And how do we live such a comprehensive life of faith? By putting our faith into action. Moses says we are to put the commandments of God on our hand. What better way is there to do this than to act out our faith, showing people that we belong to Christ by our deeds? We can write God's word between our eyes if we are so full of God's love that it overflows, and people can literally see Christ in us. Finally, we can write God's word on our door posts – even our belongings should declare to the world that we belong to Christ.

For that's really the bottom line, isn't it? That's the reason for our teaching and our obedience, and even for our love: all that we are and all that we have belong to God. All that we are and all that we have belong to our redeemer, who has bought us with the price of his blood. All that we are and all that we have are to be devoted to the expansion of his kingdom, and thus to the task of raising up young people in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

May all of us give all that we are and all that we have every day to the God who has given himself for us. May all those around us hear God clearly in our words. May they see him clearly in our actions. And may they follow him as they follow our example of self-sacrificial love.

CADETS PLAY FOR STATE TITLE

by LTC David Granville

Entering the Christmas vacation, the basketball team had a record of 4 wins and 3 losses. Looking at three weeks away from practice while the cadets were at home, Coach Dave Granville met with the team and asked for a full commitment to the team and to each other. He handed them a workout sheet, notes on individual skills to work on, and asked that each one of them return with a passion to get better as individuals and as a team.

Three weeks later, at the first practice, Coach Granville exhorted the team to become better defensive players, better students, and better people. At the conclusion of practice, the players handed in their workout sheets and listened as Coach Granville explained the team's new offensive plays, their new defensive schemes, and the need for developing into a team that has 5 players who can attack the basket and score, rather than a team that walks it up and lobs the ball inside to the center, David Hahn.

The Chamberlain-Hunt Academy boys basketball team placed second in the state AA MPSA., losing to five time state champion Brookhaven 41-30. After placing third in the South State tournament, CHA received a first round bye, defeated Canton Academy, then defeated Bowling Green in double overtime in the semi-finals. Bowling Green had defeated CHA a week earlier in the South State semifinal, forcing CHA to play Brookhaven Academy in the consolation game. CHA defeated Brookhaven 58-47 in that game.

“It is extremely difficult to beat Brookhaven Academy twice in one week”, said Coach Granville. In addition, Brookhaven hosted the state tournament, increasing the difficulty.

Advancing out of the South States for the first time in 9 years, the Cadets defeated Canton Academy 51-49 in the opening state game. In the semi final game, David Hahn scored 24, Ifeanyi Uzuegbunam 11 and Chase Deculus 9. In the final game Hahn had 13, Keeneil Weaver 6, Deculus 5 and Josh McNair 4.

Hahn, CHA's 7 foot center, made first team All District, was voted the district regular season Most Valuable Player, made the South State All Tournament team and the State All Tournament team. Weaver made first team All District and South State All Tournament team. Deculus made second team All District and State All Tournament team. Uzuegbunam made second team All District and McNair made second team All District.

“This is the first time that all 5 of the starters made the first or second All District team”, said Granville. “I cannot understand how Uzuegbunam did not make the South State All Tournament team. He had 16 points against Bowling Green and put back a missed free throw to send us to the final game. But, it was a great year, and a great reflection of how well every member of the team played hard and stayed together.”

Other team members were Cameron Gary, Jalen Ellington, Neil Jordan, Derrick Daughtry, Josh Goodwin and Dillon Bogenrief. Uzuegbunam, Weaver, Deculus and Ellington will be back next year to form a strong nucleus.

The journey to the finals was filled with success from hard work and team effort. Upon returning from the Christmas break, the Cadets had to play three days later, opening District play against Riverfield. The team struggled from sloppy play and poor conditioning, but won 47-45. Playing three games a week from that point on the team went 14 and 3, defeating Tallulah 74-43, losing to Trinity 77-49 without Hahn and Deculus, defeated ACCS 73-44, and lost to River Oaks 66-57.

With 4 days before the next game, Coach Granville looked at game tape and decided he needed to do something different to not allow his team to accept being mediocre. “I challenged the players to not accept mediocrity, but to desire to be excellent”, said Granville. He scrapped the man to man defense the team was playing 90% of the time and installed an unconventional 3-2 zone. The goal was to not allow the other team's point guard to penetrate and drive to the rim, either scoring or drawing fouls, or, dish off to team mates for wide open shots.

The new defense worked wonders with CHA avenging the loss to River Oaks 5 days earlier, 74-54. Wins against PVA (59-38), WCCA (69-51), Riverfield (55-28), ACCS (68-47) and PVA (55-38) surrounded a loss to Trinity 63-61 in overtime. Trinity was the number 1 ranked team in the state at the time.

Tied for second place in 3-AA District play, CHA had to travel to a neutral site at Riverfield to play River Oaks in an extra game to determine seeding for the South State tournament. ‘It is difficult to play a team 3 times in district play, and this is even more difficult because we had made significant defensive adjustments to beat them after they beat us the first game. CHA prevailed 56-45 to clinch second place, which gave them a first round bye in South State play.

“It was an unbelievable experience to play for a state championship” said Granville. “I hope our returnees will dedicate themselves to getting back there for another chance.”



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It is no secret that many families are struggling financially. Perhaps yours is one of them. Certainly, the families of some of our Cadets are sorting through implications of lower-than-expected income, and even unemployment. Now, we face the implications of parents who cannot afford the tuition payments they agreed in August to pay this year. As you know, we are committed not to turn away any otherwise acceptable applicant simply because his parents or guardians cannot afford the tuition—and we certainly do not want to send a current Cadet home because his parents cannot make their tuition payments. As always, of course, we can fulfill our commitment only when others share our desire to provide boys the biblically-based discipline, both in the classroom and out, that we offer at Chamberlain-Hunt. If you share our desire and have the financial resources to help, please give to our Financial Aid/General Scholarship Fund.

FOR YOUR CONVENIENCE, GIVE ON-LINE AT
WWW.CHAMBERLAIN-HUNT.COM/GIVING.SHTML

FEBRUARY & MARCH ACTIVITIES

Chamberlain-Hunt is accepting applications for Adventure Summer School enrollment. Please contact the admissions office for details: 601.437.8855 or admissions@chamberlain-hunt.com.