



The Phyllis Schlafly Report



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It's Better To Light One Candle

Marion, Alabama is a historic town of the Deep South, with more than a dozen showplace homes dating from the 1830s and many historic churches and public buildings from the same period. Its site was chosen in 1822 as the county seat of Perry County and named in honor of the Revolutionary War hero called the SwampFox, Francis Marion. Prior to the Civil War, it was among the most prosperous cotton-producing counties of the state.

Such a town could be expected to have a rich educational heritage, and it does, beginning with the first school established in a log cabin in 1824. The Marion Female Seminary was founded in 1836 and functioned until 1915; since then, the building has been used by the public school system. Marion Military Institute, well-known as a military prep school, has been in operation since before the Civil War.

Marion today is a college town. Judson College, the only woman's college in Alabama, has been on its present site there since 1840. The University of Alabama offers Graduate Extension studies on the Judson campus. Marion is within commuting distance of Montevallo University and the University of Alabama.

Facing A Modern Frontier

In 1965, Perry Christian School in Marion opened its doors with 32 students in six grades. This was the humble beginning of a dream of a wonderful couple named John and Bobbie Ames. This little school, born of faith and glued together for seven years with dedication and determination, has now taken its place as one of the best schools in the South -- not because of any impressive buildings, but because of the quality of education it gives.

Parents from coast to coast are lamenting what their children are learning -- or not learning -- in schools and colleges. Our children seem to learn the arguments for atheism, but have no knowledge of God. They are often indoctrinated in the fallacies of Socialism and Communism, but they usually are woefully ignorant of what makes America great. Drugs, VD, riots, disruption of classes, and even arson are part of campus life today. Some concerned parents take their children out of one school, only to find the situation is just as bad in another.

Instead of groaning about the decline of values and disrespect for truth in most schools, John and Bobbie Ames decided that it's better to light one candle than to curse the darkness. After seven years, the candle is burning brightly and lighting the lives of some 330 students in 12 grades -- giving them not only a sound education, but a host of fringe benefits: Christian values, a love of America, self-discipline, and an appreciation of the eternal verities which will carry them through life.

John and Bobbie Ames moved to Marion from another part of the state in 1964. Selecting a wooded, uncleared track of land which looked very much like the same land looked when the first elementary school was opened in Marion 141 years earlier, they tackled their modern frontier with enthusiasm. First, John built the Ames Bag and Packaging Company, a fine business which flourishes under his managerial talents giving employment to about 350 people.

Next, they built their home, a modern brick house with Southern-style charm and ample space for their five children. John was architect and builder. Bobbie's good taste and many antiques make it a home of distinction and beauty.

Then came Perry Christian School, into which John and Bobbie Ames have poured their time, hard work, enthusiasm, money, and their unique talent of leadership which could make any project succeed on any frontier. They founded the School for the purpose of securing for parents an opportunity to educate their children with high academic standards in our Christian and American heritage. It is an independent, non-profit, interdenominational Christian school. After seven years, their dream is a reality, a success, and an inspiration to the rest of the country.

An Academic Success

Perry Christian School is fully accredited by the Alabama Private School Association and is a member of the National Association of Christian Schools. It offers a college preparatory curriculum and has graduates in the state's leading colleges and universities. One of this year's seniors is the youngest girl in Alabama to be named a National Merit Scholarship finalist. All the subjects given in any good

high school are available at Perry Christian. There is also a general education program offered for students not planning to enter college.

Knowing the kind of people John and Bobbie Ames are, it would be expected that they would attract a faculty of similar integrity, Christian purpose, intellectual standards, and ability to communicate with young people. They have. The faculty is thoroughly qualified and competent in the academic areas, and each one has a genuine love and concern for the students. More than half the teachers have Master's Degrees. The headmaster, William LaCour, left a high position in private industry to come to Perry Christian School because he believes in this type of education.

The size of all classes is held small enough to encourage independent work and allow for individual instruction. The ratio of faculty to students is approximately one to 14. Report cards are issued every six weeks, using the numerical grading system. The "nobody fails" philosophy of many public schools is conspicuously absent; social promotion is not practiced.

The elementary school is dedicated to giving the child a firm foundation in reading, writing, arithmetic, music, and Christian principles. The reading program is based on phonics from the kindergarten level, on the premise that phonics is the only way to achieve independence in reading.

The School attempts to individualize the high school program wherever possible because learning is personal and the student's motivation influences attainment. The School is constantly developing innovative methods and techniques to prepare students for higher education.

Although most of the students at Perry Christian are day students, junior and senior high school boarders have been accepted almost from the beginning. "The Girls' Chalet," where the boarders live on the School grounds, accommodates 32 high school girls. It is operated under the daily supervision of Bobbie Ames and the girls' housemother.

As you visit it, you are quickly aware that it is very homelike, with nothing of the institutional atmosphere found on many campuses. Up to the present time, Perry Christian has accepted only boarders who could go home on weekends, since the Girls' Chalet was open only five days a week.

Beginning in September 1972, the Girls' Chalet will be open on a full seven-day-a-week basis, and Perry Christian School is eager to admit girls from other states. Any girl who would like to enroll should contact the School as soon as possible. A limited number of boys can also be accepted -- with housing, of course, in another building. There are no coed dorms at Perry Christian!

The cost of tuition, room and board for the nine months is about \$1,300, which is well under other boarding schools.

A School With Character

One of the things that makes Perry Christian School

unique is that it is a parentally controlled school. It is operated and governed by a Board of Directors elected by the parents of the current students. Such an attitude is most unusual -- and refreshing. Many other schools treat parents as though their sole function were to pay the bills and provide a cheering section for athletic contests.

One of the major benefits of being a Perry Christian School student is the training in character and self-discipline, the most honorable discipline in the world. The Honor System is introduced in the primary grades and extends throughout the school. Students whose lives reflect self-discipline, whose conduct is above reproach, and whose academic habits deserve merit, are awarded "Responsible Student Status." This conveys certain privileges and is a coveted honor.

Perry Christian has an active Student Council to develop leadership ability and to maintain an open line of communication in both directions. The School is dedicated to the principle of building leaders for tomorrow to serve God and country.

The School strives for character development and self-government of each student rather than an enforcement of some super-imposed discipline. The School does not have a multitude of rules, but it does enforce the ones it has. For example, courtesy to elders requires the use of "sir" and "ma'am".

Perry Christian School believes that good grooming is part of education and helps in making good students. Students are expected to conform to the School's dress code. Boys wear red blazers, navy blue trousers, white shirts, and blue ties. They must have their hair neatly trimmed, combed, and off the ears, off their collars and out of their eyes; no beards or mustaches are allowed. Girls wear red blazers, navy blue skirts and white blouses. All shirttails must be tucked in, and dark shoes and socks worn at all times.

Perry Christian is not a School for everyone. It is a School for those who believe in Christ and who believe in America. It is a School for guys and girls who can accept the moral self-discipline to function in an honor system. It is a School for those who can accept the intellectual self-discipline to accept much of the responsibility for their own learning. An important part of the learning process is to afford the student opportunities to gain emotional independence, to grow in social relationships, and to exercise moral and ethical judgment in personal decisions.

At Perry Christian, there is a proper emphasis on the great American traditions. The documents of American history are taught and revered, and "Old Glory" is proudly displayed in every classroom. American history and American government are taught with an appreciation of the principles and institutions that gave us our great inheritance of freedom.

Perry Christian School and other groups have asked the patriotic women's organization called Pro America to write an Americanism program for each of the twelve grades, so that the teaching of Americanism can be integrated into the course of study throughout the elementary and secondary levels. The Alabama Chapter

of Pro America has accepted this responsibility, which is expected to take about a year.

The School encourages all such student activities, academic and social, which contribute to the development of maturing boys and girls. It has a splendid Girls' Concert Choir under the direction of Mr. John von Spreckelsen, which has traveled all over Alabama for performances. The quality of the music is very good -- and the attractiveness of the girls is outstanding.

Perry Christian School has its full share of sports enthusiasts. Competitive athletics such as football, basketball and track are encouraged. A new athletic field and gymnasium have recently been completed. Students must be passing in all subjects to play in inter-school competition.

What a Christian Education Means

Bobbie Ames has a wonderful way of communicating with young people. Here are some excerpts from a letter she writes to new students.

"Dear Teenager: Did you know that when God created 'you' he planned a unique personality and a unique life different from every other one of his creations? He endowed 'you' with special talents and abilities and potentials that you could never have dreamed of. He has an exciting plan for your life different from his plan for every other fellow and girl you know. As you discover this plan and pursue it, you may find yourself becoming a leader and decisionmaker in tomorrow's world. To find God's plan for your life, you will surely find yourself becoming more creative, more concerned for others, and more courageous as you live this Christian life."

Bobbie's own beautiful character could not help but have a lasting beneficial influence on every student who attends Perry Christian. She believes that, like adults, young people make thousands of decisions every day. By teaching them five days a week, week in and week out, that decision-making must always relate to God's standard, we are laying a solid foundation for morally mature citizens who will be qualified to deal with the vital issues of their time. When moral crises arise in their lives, they won't cop out or press the panic button.

Perry Christian School provides a balanced education in five ways: (1) spiritually, by learning to live in harmony with God's laws; (2) morally, by developing a code of behavior which knows right from wrong; (3) intellectually, by exploring the vast world of knowledge and using the tools of learning; (4) socially, by getting along with others, always with a respect for their rights and property; (5) physically, by developing a healthy body through exercise and competitive athletics.

It is a Christian school where the Bible is studied and respected. But who wants Christianity if the Christians are not enjoying their faith? At Perry Christian, faculty and students have fun, and lots of it. They don't walk around with heads bowed and solemn faces, nor are they consumed in rituals. They are a



Bobbie Ames

happy and energetic Christian "family" engaged in seeking quality education for students which will enable them to go to the college of their choice and pursue their chosen professions and occupations. In addition, they are engaged in living research, as they discover themselves intellectually, socially, emotionally and spiritually.

While the School does not discriminate concerning ethnic, social or economic status, it admits students who are receptive to Christianity and its discipline. Students are not accepted at Perry Christian School unless they want to come. The student must agree cheerfully to obey the rules and regulations of the School.

Perry Christian is a School for those who are serious about this business of education and are preparing for their future to fulfill God's plan. It is a School for those who are self-disciplined enough to handle the liberty on the campus.

Can you ask for anything better than a Christian education for your child? Can you be satisfied with anything less? Is there a better way to prepare your child to function as a mature adult? Is there a better way you can make a lasting contribution to your country than an investment in the character and integrity and high quality education of the next generation?

Why Should You Care?

Why should you, who probably live hundreds, or even thousands of miles, from Marion, Alabama, be

interested in this story? I think there are many reasons why anyone who regularly reads this newsletter would be interested.

First, it is an inspiring success story. In these days when we read of so many defeats and discouragements for our cause, when we seem to be losing on so many fronts, it's good to cheer ourselves up with some *good* news of a victory and a solid achievement.

Secondly, Bobbie and John Ames are the kind of people you would like to know -- and would be proud to have as friends. More than anyone I know, they embody the qualities that the American pioneers must have had in order to survive. With their courage and leadership and faith and hard work, they literally carved a whole community out of the wilderness -- a thriving business which gave employment to people who needed it, a beautiful home which is a model of family life, and Perry Christian School, a monument of lasting achievement because it is building the character and the intellects of the next generation.

If you could know Bobbie and John as I do, you would want to give every encouragement to the continued success and expansion of the work they have started.

Thirdly, a good school which produces God-fearing, moral, patriotic, educated leaders is of benefit to all Americans wherever we may live. Certainly the need has never been greater for the work done at Perry Christian School.

So, what can you do to help? There are several ways.

1. Do you know a high school-age child who would like to attend Perry Christian School? Students from all over the country are earnestly sought now, and there is a place for your child if he or she meets the qualifications. The present student body is made up of the finest, most outstanding guys and girls to be found on any campus in any state. They come from Christian homes where the parents care enough about moral values to be willing to make the financial sacrifices necessary to provide the very best in Christian education.

If you come expecting beautiful buildings, a gorgeous campus, and stylish students from wealthy families, you will be disappointed. Perry Christian School is in a semi-rural and economically-poor section of the country. The town of Marion has only 4,300 people and has none of the advantages (or disadvantages) of New York and Chicago. But the School is rich in the things that are lasting -- the moral standards and intellectual opportunities which are the most important part of education.

It's all a matter of your scale of values -- and the scale of values you want for your children. Which values do you think are most important?

2. Perry Christian School needs money. Like other schools, the tuition never is enough to cover the costs. The great need at the present time is for a lunchroom, a chapel, and additional living facilities. I guarantee that your dollar will go farther in supporting real

education at Perry Christian than at any other School in the country. John and Bobbie Ames are used to making every dollar stretch as far as possible. Your donation is fully tax-deductible.

Each fall, Perry Christian School has sponsored a fund-raising barbecue to help meet the operating deficit. Among the speakers who have been glad to help raise funds for the School by giving their time to speak at these barbecues are Walter Brennan, Senator Strom Thurmond, Fred and Phyllis Schlafly.

3. Perry Christian School needs books for its library. Several years ago, readers of this Report were asked to send a Christmas gift to the Perry Christian School consisting of any new or used books in good condition which would be suitable to be read by any elementary or high school students. Anyone who reads this newsletter is perfectly competent to make a judgment of what is or is not suitable. The School desperately needs to build a good library adequate for the needs of college-bound students. The need for reference materials is unending. Don't worry about whether the book you may send is a duplicate or not. School libraries need duplicates, and Perry Christian has not approached the point where it need worry about having too many.

Look around your house and see if there are not some suitable books, perhaps which you or your children used years ago which are now gathering dust, and send them where they will be appreciated and used. Write in the front: "Presented by _____ (your name, city and state)." Wrap the books well, and mail them by inexpensive "book rate" to Perry Christian School, Marion, Alabama 36756. These gifts are also tax-deductible.

Any help you send, whether it is your child, your financial contribution, your books, or your prayers, will be gratefully accepted in the spirit of the Perry Christian School motto: "For God and Country."

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