

Captain Bret and the Growth of the Homeschool Film Industry

By Amelia Harper

Captain Bret Smith has had a vision for homeschooling for many years, but now he has a new vision as well: promoting Christian films to encourage Christian families in the pursuit of “noble values.” For him, the two concepts go hand in hand and more. And more homeschool families are also making the connection.

Smith, an air traffic controller and a certified commercial sea captain, began his own homeschool journey about 20 years ago as the first of his children neared the age for school. At the time, he had never heard the term “homeschooling.” He just knew that he wanted to protect his family from the influences of the world, even if that meant hiding them from the school authorities and risking jail time. He began to research Georgia’s educational laws at the library on his own, fearful of even revealing his quest to the research librarian. However, when he found the laws, he discovered the term “homeschooling” in the midst of the legal jargon. He asked his pastor about it and found out not only that homeschooling was legal but that there was a homeschool support group in his area!

Times have changed since then. Smith and his wife now have six children, including two adopted sons, and they are currently trying to adopt a set of five siblings from Latvia. Their oldest child is now



Bret and Jacqueline Smith with son Alan and his wife, Katie; and children Kressant, Rachel, Bethany, Arman, and Yerick.

24. He and his siblings have been home educated their whole lives and are now old enough to be a valuable asset to the family business and ministries, for these are growing as well. Smith and his family devote a great deal of their own time and effort to providing innovative media resources to the Christian and homeschool communities.

The Smiths began with an information website called Home-school Advantage, which has a small collection of articles and resources for those in-

terested in learning more about home education. This led to a regular local radio spot in which Smith briefly discussed aspects of homeschooling. Now the ministry has led to a new nationwide cable access show called *Captain Bret's Christian Movie Show*, which can be seen on Wednesday nights at 9 PM EST on the Faith TV Network (Sky Angel Channel 9708).

This program showcases the emerging works of Christian filmmakers, many of them produced by homeschool families just like Smith's own. The idea came about as a result of Smith's attending the first San Antonio Christian Film Festival hosted by Vision Forum in 2004. “I saw some great Christian films there,” Smith said. “But it was obvious that there was

a major problem with ways to distribute the films and make them available to the public.”

Smith was inspired to start his own regional Christian Film Festival in the Atlanta area. The second Georgia Christian Film Festival was held in July 2006. More than 100 films were entered into the competition, with more than 90% coming from families in the homeschool community. This year's winners, Jamey and Candle Sampley, took home \$500 for their film *Hero Dad*. Andrew and Amy Smith won \$300 for *A Parable*, and Mike Vanderwyst and Jeff Frye received \$200 for *3:16*. However, the rewards for these filmmakers are more than financial. Their films will appear on *Captain Bret's Christian*

Movie Show and will go on to the San Antonio Christian Film Festival.

Smith hopes that the movie



Production of Captain Bret's Christian Movie Show



Film producer Manny Edwards gives a workshop on making an excellent quality Christian movie on a tight budget.



a great family project. With a few thousand dollars and a lot of creativity and hard work, a homeschool family can put together a respectable short film that they can enter into these competitions. Some families devote a school year to working on such a project as an enrichment activity, learning about the process of filmmaking from the inside out. Festivals such as the ones in Georgia and San Antonio provide workshops and information for those interested in learning more.

“As we build our families, our power to affect the culture and to elect godly officials grows, too.”


show will bring exposure to more Christian filmmakers, most of whom operate on shoestring budgets. Chosen films are put on DVDs, which are sold through Captain Smith’s Movie Club. Members pay a \$21 fee to receive a new collection of short Christian films that are hard or impossible to find otherwise, and filmmakers receive a small royalty from each DVD that is sold. Smith hopes that this will encourage the making of more quality Christian films as the methods of distribution improve.

“Many families budget \$50 or more a month for entertainment for cable, DVDs, or movies,” Smith said. “If some of those funds could be used for edifying Christian films, it would benefit families and encourage Christian filmmaking.”

Christian filmmaking is becoming more and more popular among homeschool families, Smith says, and can be

While Smith has his own television show, he believes in protecting children from exposure to worldly elements as much as possible. His family does not even have a television set, just a monitor to display DVDs. However, he does view movies with his family, even secular films, as a way to provoke discussion about things that are right and wrong and the need to make good choices.

His family also practices courting and betrothal, and Smith takes an active role in finding mates for his children, one of whom was betrothed and wed last summer and another of whom was recently betrothed. In fact, he has just produced a film on the subject “The Ten Steps of Scriptural Betrothal and Marriage,” which was shown at the Georgia Christian Film Festival.

In his opinion, the growth of homeschooling will eventually affect the culture of the world, not only through the media issues, but also through family issues and power of sheer numbers. “More and more homeschooling families are embracing God’s blessing of children,” he said. “As we build our families, our power to affect the culture and to elect godly officials grows, too. I think we will start to see more homeschooling families in political positions where they can effect change.” 

Amelia Harper



Important Links

Homeschool Advantage
www.homeschooladvantage.us/

The Georgia Christian Film Festival
www.georgiachristianfilms.com



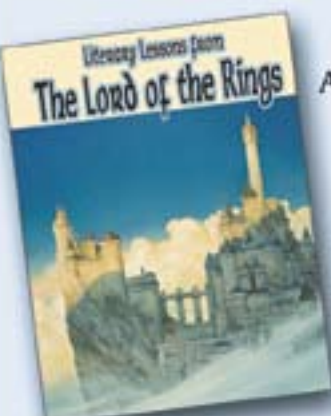
Captain Bret’s Movie Club
www.homeschooladvantage.us/gcf/MovieShow/Shop.cfm

The San Antonio Christian Film Festival
www.independentchristianfilms.com

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