



The Master's Academy

*celebrates founding
steering committee member*

Jim Cashion



An exploratory meeting in the spring of 1986 was held in a building on Kirkman Road in west Orlando for those parents who might be interested in a non-denominational, community Christian school somewhere in Central Florida, with no details except that the Lord was preparing the way! Some would call that “the impossible dream.” I was privileged to be a part of the original steering committee. Pat Mennenga would be the headmaster, and my wife, Shirley Cashion, the elementary principal for this great endeavor. God, through that meeting, provided the encouragement to go forward even though none of us on the steering committee had ever been involved in creating any kind of school. A step of faith, NO; this was a giant leap! We began having meetings in the real estate office of Paul West on North Pine Hills Road. We remember fondly the low wattage bulb in the center of the room where we prayed and planned.

I had met Pat Mennenga about eleven years earlier when he came to be interviewed before a deacon committee as a candidate for headmaster of Pine Hills Christian Academy. The church’s educational pastor brought Pat to meet the deacons. I was chairman, and my first thought was that Pat was as young looking as a high school student. Over the next ten years at PHCA, Pat proved to be an able and effective headmaster who had a vision of a non-denominational school.

We, the steering committee, caught his vision. In the short span of about four months, a dream became reality. Locations were selected, faculty and staff hired, and over 200 students registered for K4 through 12th grade. Please understand it wasn’t quite as easy as this sounds. The parents showed great faith in trusting a school of this magnitude, that would be utilizing rented facilities, and lots of hand-me-downs. The goodness of God was evident again and again - in purchasing desks from the Orange County schools for \$1 each, donations of office equipment, free paper goods from Martin Marietta’s outdated stock, the volunteer hours of parents and staff in many facets, it was a real team effort. Prayer paved the way for The Master’s Academy to open its doors for school in August 1986 – a mere four months from the exploratory meeting! The steering committee’s work was finished.

Over the past 24 years, I have watched in amazement as the Lord has continued to provide protection and direction to TMA. It is important to remember that those who are directly connected to TMA stand on the shoulders of those who preceded them. Shirley and I have been blessed by God’s handiwork at TMA, and continue to be blessed even though she has retired, through our children’s and grandchildren’s involvement in the Academy. As the song says “May all who come behind us find us faithful.” Our prayer is that TMA always remain focused on its stated mission of spiritual and academic excellence.

