

**Interview with Ed Nabrotzky**  
**Friday, April 1, 2022**  
**The Hill Cumorah Legacy Project**

Interviewers: Noah Fox, Cam Garvey

Interviewee: Ed Nabrotzky

Duration: 35:03

Topic: Mr. Nabrotzky's Involvement in the Hill Cumorah Pageant

Interview Date: Friday, April 1, 2022

**Transcript**

**[0:00]**

**Noah Fox:** Are we all set?

**Ed Nabrotzky:** I'm ready when you are.

**Noah Fox:** Alright. Thank you so much for taking the time to meet with us. Yeah, we're really excited about this. I guess the first question is just how did you get involved in the Church to begin with?

**Ed Nabrotzky:** The Church in the beginning? My whole story?

**Noah Fox:** Yeah.

**Ed Nabrotzky:** [laughing] Well, my parents were both immigrants from Eastern Europe. My father moved here to Kitchener, Waterloo, in Canada, and my mother near Kitchener, Waterloo, back after the war, early '50s. They met and married, and they eventually found the Church and became members of the Church. So, I was a young baby at that time, and so I grew up within the Church. So, I didn't have any amazing finding story. [one of the interviewers laughs] I grew up that way. So, I lived in the Church all those years growing up, I served a mission to Scotland for two years, after my high school days, and I have been in various leadership positions all throughout my time doing different things in the Church.

In terms of this particular one, I moved to Rochester about 11 years ago to manage a portfolio of companies for an investment group that I was working with. As part of that I am, I served in different positions here, as well, in the Church, as a volunteer, of course. And I was asked about six years ago now, I guess, to join a Presidency to manage the Hill Cumorah Pageant, which I did. So, myself and two other men were responsible for the operations of that event annually.

**Noah Fox:** So, how did you first—

[Ed starts to speak indistinctly]

**Noah Fox:** Sorry, you can go.

**Ed Nabrotzky:** I don't know how much you know about how that whole Pageant thing works? Am I your first person to interview to understand it, or do you have some background already?

**Noah Fox:** We have background, yeah, we talked about it a lot in class. But you're our first person that we're interviewing about it.

**Ed Nabrotzky:** Oh, okay.

**Noah Fox:** But you can feel free to tell us anything, anything you want. There's never going to be too much information.

**Ed Nabrotzky:** Okay, good, because I'm trying to understand the full scope of what you're doing. But one way to do it will be to understand the background of how this works. So, the Hill Cumorah Pageant, of course, is a historical Pageant put on by the Church for many, many years. Many decades. And throughout that time, it's had different forms. There's times where it was done just kind of ad hoc with volunteers. There were times it was underneath the direction of the Missionary Department, so they would use missionaries to do it completely, missionaries being, you know, these 19- to 26-year-olds that we send out all over the world to work with local

congregations and assist them with proselyting [sic], teaching, humanitarian work, and things like that. So, these missionaries used to come together and put on the Pageant at one phase of the Pageant. Then there was a time we get it out of the Church education system. The Church has a number of universities like Brigham Young University, BYU, that's more famous. And we would bring in students for a summer trip and put it on that way. But the more recent iteration of this has been more of a family-based Pageant, where we accept families to come in from all over the country—really, all over the world—and to make it a family experience with their children being part of the Pageant, to represent the families that might have been in the scenes that we're depicting, and to make it kind of an experience with a family. That's kind of the final iteration we had which we were presiding over, as we were making that go.

So, the purpose of that, of putting on the Pageant is, of course, primarily to tell the story of the Book of Mormon, which is a famous book of scripture that we kind of get our nickname from, the *Mormon* Church. The Book of Mormon is a record of ancient peoples here in the Americas, and so we depict it on that hill. That hill is important to us because it is the site from which these metal plates were taken to translate the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon was written down by ancient prophets, and it was inscribed on metal plates. And these plates were buried in the earth until they were shown to someone here to be able to take them and translate them, Joseph Smith being that person who lived here in Palmyra, New York. So, that's why it's important we put it on right at the site where the Book of Mormon kind of came out of the earth in that way, and that we tell the stories—or some of the stories—of that book, to help people understand what those people went through and how they believed in God, believed in Christ, that testified of Him, and ultimately were visited by Him after His crucifixion and resurrection in Jerusalem.

The background [5:00] way this works is that we—I was in charge of the IT, which was a major piece of the Pageant. We use a lot of great tools now that we didn't have when we first started doing the Pageant 100 years, or eighty years, ago that allow us to administrate the Pageant. So, usually at the end of every summer, we will open up a registration site where people can apply to be part of the Pageant. It's a web form where they'll fill in a bunch of details about themselves, upload pictures of their family, backgrounds of things that they do. And we would typically get, you know, four to six thousand applications in that period, usually from September through October. We'd leave it open for about two months, and people would apply to be part of the Pageant. Those applications all come into our central database we would run. We sort them, and we have some filter algorithms implemented so we can kind of get them into buckets. And then we review them as a Presidency, myself and my two colleagues that are in charge of running the Pageant, along with the artistic director who's running the show. The four of us would meet usually on a Saturday, early in December, and we would go through those applications.

The goal would be to try and select about 750 cast members from the four to six thousand applications. And we would read through those applications and try to understand which ones were the ones we should be accepting, and which families needed that experience, and which would add to the experience of the overall cast. And then in December, just before Christmas, we would send out those acceptance letters to those that were selected—and, of course, also a communication of those that we were not selecting. But those people are all coming as volunteers. They pay their own way to get to the Pageant. They pay their expenses while they're here in terms of any lodging or food or things like that to be a part of the Pageant, but we just administer that, as a personnel side.

In addition, we manage a team of volunteers, which we call staff; they're the staff that actually run the Pageant. They serve from three to five years in length in their positions, doing things like costume, security, parking, IT, where they donate their time during the year to help the operations of the Pageant. We had about 200 staff that would run that, and our role as a Presidency would be to work with those staff members, and we organized them into departments or functional groups, and we each led some of those functional groups so that we could drive those actions forward. And those staff would support that operation of the Pageant; they would also pay their own way to come here in many cases, paying many of their own expenses. We sometimes had common food at different work actions and things like that, but largely this whole thing would be volunteer-driven and a lot of donated hours. A lot of donated hours. [laughs] Every year, we would do a report in Salt Lake to talk about the volunteer hours expended on the Pageant, and it was a few hundred thousand hours every year that were expended in putting on the Pageant.

There is also a work crew that we would select. The work crew was a special group of 24—well, actually, 28, counting the leaders—28 18-year-olds, basically, 17- to 18-year-old young men. We selected them very specifically because they would have the most grueling task, up very early every day working very hard. They put up all the sets, all the light towers, all the special effects, and operated them during the performance. They served as the ground crew, the lighting crew, the people managing the stage throughout the performances. They were really awesome young men, and we had a full program with them. They lived together, right on site, in a dorm that we'd set up behind the hill. And we had a work crew direction team that would lead those young men and train them in their duties and work them through. And that was kind of a

highlight for them before they head off to their next adventure, whether it's going on a mission for the Church or going to postsecondary education.

We have an artistic crew. So, the director, the artistic director has several directors working for her, in this case. The last director we had was a she, and Shawnda [Moss] would have a team of probably a dozen directors that would manage different scenes and different elements of the production, as well as four stage workers and the prop master and costume people and makeup people—so, a fairly extensive artistic crew. That was also augmented with some resources from the Church in Salt Lake, where we would have audio visual experts, lighting crew experts, really a production team that would come out every year and bring a set of equipment for us that we would run the Pageant with. That was our producer and his sub-producers, and that's where we also have all the licensed people, folks that were professionals in, you know—professional electricians, professional theater and lighting people, special effects people that would manage all these volunteers to make sure that it was done according to code and standards, and that [10:00] everything would be safe and done correctly.

So, that's the general setup of the overall thing. It would start—so, once we did all those acceptance letters in December, we'd work through a bunch of payments and logistics. We had a whole team that would order, you know, T-shirts for everybody, different merchandising and clothing options that would come during the Pageant. We'd be creating all the badges, security procedures. We work with the local FBI detachment and the Sheriff of the county that we operate in to make sure that our security is integrated and make plans for that. You know, every year, we would have to—we'd hire the sheriff's to come and work at our event, to provide that security and also all the parking and logistics that have to happen to make that go, augmented by all of our volunteers.

We would do preparations for all the physical materials. You know, we would always have new costumes, new consumables to be in there, all the meal plans, because we catered this event all through that time. We worked with local charities in Palmyra that would put on all the concessions and food. They would take all that—they didn't pay anything to the Church to do that. They were here as our guests to kind of raise money for their good causes that they work on during the year. So, the Rotary and the Lions Clubs and folks made a good amount by selling different food items to the people coming here, you know, popcorn, salt potatoes, you know, different dinners, roast chicken dinners, and things like that.

**Unidentified student interviewer:** Hmm.

**Ed Nabrotzky:** And it was a great thing for the community to make money on that, from all the participants that we would get.

You know, depending on what the year was like and what the weather was like, we would average between, you know, 30- and 45,000 people visiting this event each year. We set up about 8,000 chairs in the bowl, and a lot of people—because we made it like an amphitheater, people would sit on blankets. Families would just sit up together on blankets and watch it as well. So, when we did the counts, you know, we would count everybody in the seats, but we would also count the folks in the blankets, of course.

We never did broadcast it live. That was something that we were interested in. We did a couple of years experiment with streaming the opening processions, or some of the opening scenes, just as an experiment to show Salt Lake what we could get. But we never did in total, broadcast the entire session. It was always a live event only. We did make a final recording of it before the Pageant closed down, and so that, of course, is now available, and you can see the recording with the Pageant was. I'm not sure if you guys have looked at that, or have

downloaded that from the Church site, but that's available, to see the whole presentation as it was. I think that's the 2019 presentation that we recorded and put up on the site.

**Cam Garvey:** I believe we did watch that. We watched some of it in class, and then some of it as an assignment, because we had—we were reading all about the Hill Cumorah Pageant and the Book of Mormon and everything. And so, just as a way to get us ready for interviews and stuff, we had watched some of that.

**Ed Nabrotzky:** Awesome.

**Cam Garvey:** I'm pretty certain.

**Ed Nabrotzky:** So, you got some background on the Book of Mormon, which is excellent, too.

**Cam Garvey:** Yeah. So, you went into it a little bit, but I was just wondering, because you had mentioned that you work with some IT stuff, so, what were, like, your expectations for your role in the Pageant? And I know, my professor also mentioned that you were a cast member at some point, so I was curious about, like, what roles you filled in that?

**Ed Nabrotzky:** Oh, yeah, sure. I should probably say that, too. So, before I was called to be in the Presidency to run the Pageant, as a family, my family and I went and were cast members, one year. So, that was not knowing I'd ever be put into leadership of it, but it gave us that passion experience. That experience was fantastic. We enjoyed being there as a family. I work a number of businesses, and so I'm usually not with the family as much as I'd like to be, and to take, you know, three weeks off and be there full time with my family at the hill, and to be engaged in this, you know, the rehearsals, the presentations, the Scripture, study, the [conversations]—great conversations, organizing some of the, you know, campfires and the dances. It was a really wonderful experience for our family. We had teenagers then, and they made great friendships that have lasted forever since, and it was just an excellent, excellent experience.



One of things you do as a cast members [sic] is you circulate through the crowd, and you meet some of the guests that have come. We find out what what's going on in their lives; you help them find their seats and get them comfortable. You talk to them about what's about to be presented and the Book of Mormon. And I met some amazing people there, too, just getting out and mixing with the crowd from all over the world, you know—people from Africa, from Europe, from Asia, all over the United States, of course, from South America, Central America. So, I really enjoyed that as an experience for me personally. For my kids, I think it was more of the friends they made. There again, you make friends from all over the country that have come together to be in the cast, and they made some lasting friendships from folks in Mexico and out West in California and Colorado that they still are friends with today. So, a [15:00] really good experience for all of us.

**Noah Fox:** So, you talk about the sense of community and community-building and friendships. How important, really, was the Pageant to facilitating those relationships? And how important was it just to people in the region, as well as the Church members? Obviously, there was a lot of tourism. You said 30- to 45,000 people—

**Ed Nabrotzky:** Yeah.

**Noah Fox:** Came every year, so how important was that to tourism? And what is that going to look like, now that the Pageant is no longer running?

**Ed Nabrotzky:** Yeah, those are really good implications for you to talk about, for sure. So, it really, let's put in a few buckets. The first bucket is the sense of community for the Church members that came from all over the world to be cast members. You know, for a few weeks, you bonded together with people of similar feelings and similar beliefs. You shared meals together. You had your kids play together, dance together. It was a—it's a unique experience. As a father,

to have a place where I can bring my family and have that wonderful, wholesome, fully all-engaged experience, and I think that sense of community was really important for those members of the Church that came together to talk about that. And it is a sacred site for us, a place where the Church was formed, and where revelation was given from heaven. So, it's a wonderful, uplifting experience in that way, and that sense of community.

The second part you mentioned is that we do a lot of work with the political leaders in the region, you know, the mayors, the county executives, the sheriffs, and we work together with them to put this Pageant on. They're not used to having us work with them in other areas. You know, normally we're kind of on our own, doing our own things in the Church, and nobody really knows you're there. So, that integration with the community and getting a sense of working together with them, and having them see a little bit of how we operate and what we do, and us, you know, understanding their constraints and concerns, I think really helped build some bridges for me personally, as well, but also for the Church to have relationships with political leaders and operational folks inside the communities. The amount of time we spent with the Sheriff's Department. You know, we brought security experts from Salt Lake who are, you know, ex-Secret Service, CIA people. And working with the local sheriffs, I like to think we added something to their understanding and did some trainings with them, and they certainly added to us on how to do things. And I think that rippled through all of the different operational and political leaders that we formed bridges with.

But probably one of the most important community aspects was the work we did with the charities and the local businesses. You know, we directly contributed to a number of different causes, and thousands of dollars we paid, you know, as a thank-you for the cooperation they did with us. We received often—well, every year—we received—motions were made in the county

meetings to thank the Church for their contributions, both financial and physical while we were there. And more than that, behind the scenes, all the thanks we got for the direct engagement, you know, it was really wonderful to build those bridges. It wasn't just money and bringing money by bringing tourists in. We would always do service projects with the cast members. It was a key part of Pageant that we would have regular excursions to go out and do service projects, you know, cleaning up the local town campground, doing stuff at a charity, assembling kits, you know, for refugees, working at some of the food cupboards and pantries. We forged relationships by having our members go and cheerfully work with all these different charities and add some resources. I mentioned the Lions Clubs and the Rotary folks. We would speak at their events during the year, but my understanding was that I think 85 to 90 percent of their fundraising they did for the year came from Pageant. They made more money in those three weeks, you know, then most of they made the rest of the year. So, it was a major impact on helping them fund their organization. Yeah, I think that was very much appreciated. And certainly, they expressed that to me many times, as I would meet with them and speak with them about that as well.

**Noah Fox:** When you say—

[indistinct]

**Ed Nabrotzky:** Yeah, no, go ahead.

**Noah Fox:** When you say the majority of their funding came from Pageants, do you mean specifically the Hill Cumorah Pageant or other pageants in the region?

**Ed Nabrotzky:** Oh, I mean, the Hill Cumorah Pageant.

**Noah Fox:** Okay.

**Ed Nabrotzky:** Yep. Yeah, they would staff up all their volunteers to just do the chicken roasts or the popcorn stands, and with the traffic that we brought through and the money that they got on the concessions, you know, they were able to—that was the majority of their fundraising budget.

**Noah Fox:** Interesting. So—

**Ed Nabrotzky:** [Unclear], so I wouldn't quote the 85 to 90 percent number [Noah laughs], but certainly, I know in at least one case it was in the high 80 percentages that they were—their funding came from that event. Again, not directly from us; it's the money they would raise from selling their things that concessions.

**Noah Fox:** Interesting. So—

**Ed Nabrotzky:** The question is what happens after that, and that was a big concern. When we announced the closure the Pageant, as a Presidency we met with all the political leaders, all the charities [20:00] to explain it. They all wanted to know why and what would happen next. We tried to brainstorm with them on how they would still be able to make some of that money with the traffic, because the working hypothesis was that, although they wouldn't all come during the same two weeks in July, the same number of Church tourists would come because these are still sacred sites. You know, these are still places people come from around the world to visit and to think about what happened there. And when they do, they have to stop in and eat; they have to have hotel lodging. And, you know, everyone thought, well, maybe it would be a good thing. It'll just stretch that out instead of being such a huge push. You know, everything was always overbooked, and it was always crowded during those two weeks. Now, it would be maybe stretched out through the entire summer. COVID, of course, has made it difficult to gauge whether that's going to be real or not. I think this will be our first summer where we can really

see what the numbers look like, but I think the current working hypothesis, at least amongst the merchants on Main Street, Palmyra, is that they'll still see about that number of LDS or Church visitors, but stretched out through the entire vacation period. We'll see if that that works.

For the charities who ran the concessions, they don't have that same opportunity. And the merchants will probably still have that, but it's difficult with the charity to do fundraising in the same concentrated way that they did at the Hill. To be honest, there's a double-edged sword here. As one of the folks expressed to me, it was getting very difficult for them to even staff those events. They were hard, grueling, you know, 12-hour days on your feet. And many of the people who support these charitable organizations are elderly. They haven't been able to recruit a lot of young people to work with them, so the one lady said to me, "Boy, this is almost a relief. It was killing us to get that." It was a lot of money they were raising, but it was really, really hard work, and they were having a hard time getting enough volunteers to actually staff, you know, those intense events. So, from their side, they were looking for alternatives on ways they could do less intense events over a longer period and raise the same kind of money, but I'm not sure we found a good solution there for them.

**Cam Garvey:** Yeah, so, you've mentioned it a little bit. But, um, I was just kind of curious, because we had Jerry Argetsinger come into—

**Ed Nabrotzky:** Yes.

**Cam Garvey:** Class a few times. And he mentioned—he was talking about the ending of the Pageant, and how there were discussions about, like, the decrease in attendance. So I'm just wondering, like, how you felt about how it ended? Because it was kind of abrupt and also, like—it—were you like in discussions about how the attendance was decreasing over time, in, like, the more recent years?

**Ed Nabrotzky:** Yeah, I think—and Jerry has opinions on stuff like that, but he wasn't involved in the actual discussion, so, you know, it's an outsider's view—I can tell you that, for the last three years of the Pageant's run, we had many meetings with authorities in Salt Lake. They had a consulting firm that they sent out to interview people, including Jerry and some others, but also lots of the attendees, different Church leaders around the region. Several alternative plans were designed for how the Pageant continue in a different form. Those were formalized into documents that we submitted, along with recommendations we submitted. So, there was a lot of discussion. I think nine members of the Quorum of the Twelve [Apostles], and two members of the First Presidency—these are the very senior Church leaders—came out at different times to stand on the Hill and think about what the new direction should be. So, it was not a discussion taken lightly, and it was not one single thing that would cause, you know, the Pageant to close. We don't operate on commission, and so a declining physical attendance was not really the concern and was not even one of the main drivers, you know, for the decision, I can tell you from being involved in those close conversations. You know, one of the alternatives we talked about was doing more online, streaming the performance to reach more people, because there is a reality there that people nowadays don't want to come out to a physical event [laughs] like that, sit out on a chair, have mosquitoes buzzing around. They prefer to sit in their home and watch it online, and, you know, that might have been one of the forums that Pageant could have continued in. So, attendance was not the issue. But certainly, attendance did decline in the most recent years, and there was a number of reasons for that. But that wasn't the reason it was canceled.

**Cam Garvey:** Yeah. And then, we talked with a few other people who were in the Church, and they had mentioned that they didn't think that Pageant would come back because the Church had shifted their priorities a little bit.

**Ed Nabrotzky:** Yes.

**Cam Garvey:** Do you think there'd be any other events that the Church would organize overtime later that could be comparable? Or is [sic] this kind of just been altogether abandoned, I guess?

**Ed Nabrotzky:** I think you're getting closer to the truth there when you say shifting the priorities. You know, the Church has become a very big worldwide church, and a lot of areas emerging, you know, in Africa, in Eastern Europe, in the Philippines, with many, many members who will never ever come to Palmyra. And so, I think, no matter what site you pick [25:00], when you invest this time in putting on such an event that only a few people can come to, I don't think that's the direction that the Church would like to go. I think we'd like to make it more open to all, which, obviously, through online means we can do now, which we didn't do before. So, I think that that's probably one of the major issues.

**Unidentified student interviewer [Cam Garvey?]:** Mmm.

**Ed Nabrotzky:** I don't think putting on another local event in any form would be in the cards at all. I think that the Church has moved more towards participation from all countries and being more open with online means to do that. But again, I'm not—I can't speak for the senior leaders of the Church. I'm certainly not that, but—

**Cam Garvey:** Yeah.

**Ed Nabrotzky:** But that would be my impression, having been part of this process.

**Cam Garvey:** Mhmm.

**Ed Nabrotzky:** Because, when they closed down the Pageant, the other good data point is that they closed other such events as well, you know, that it was not just Palmyra, of course. Other things that are local celebrations like this were also changed and taken out, and, I think, for that kind of a reason. The Church uses a term, “family-centered, Church-supported,” you know, that really is a philosophy that we want families to have the time and the space to do what they need to do to strengthen their children and their relationships. And putting on these mega-events kind of takes away from that. You know, you have your whole summer vacation tied up with that one thing, which may be a very good thing, but it is still just one thing. And so, I think that’s part of what the Church wanted to get away from, for sure.

**Noah Fox:** The—so, the Pageant, as we’ve already talked about this a little bit, the Pageant shifted over the years. You talked about how it kind of started as a way to bring converts, but then it transitioned into more of a celebratory event. And then you’re saying how the Church—the LDS’s [sic] Church[’s] priorities have shifted, and they’re not trying to do local events anymore. They want to be more global and accept everyone—

**Ed Nabrotzky:** Yes.

**Noah Fox:** And be more inclusive. But do you think that there is some importance in those community events? And do you think that there’s going to be a void that’s going to be left, now that there’s no longer the Hill Cumorah Pageant in Palmyra?

**Ed Nabrotzky:** Absolutely. I think community events are very important. As we talked about, the sense of community that was built with this event was really important, both within the Church community and in the broader community, both interfaith and in others. But I think what they’re asking us to do, and my new role here now as what’s called a stake president, is that it’s now my obligation to continue those relationships and to create local events that are within my



local region, with my congregations. And that, I think, has a more lasting impact. Rather than having the Church bring all these resources in and swoop in and do this massive mega-project, the way to build community is to have an ongoing dialogue and working relationship with the community leaders, and to serve in service projects, to get involved in good causes. Yeah, to put on a play, or a road show, or what we call road shows, you know, little events, locally, but not these massive mega-events that take hundreds of thousands of volunteer hours. I think that's the real shift here. And whether that can be effective or not, I guess time will tell, but I think there's a good chance for that to be the substitute.

**Cam Garvey:** Now, just looking back at your experiences in the Pageant, was there, like, a memory that you really hold on to, like, your favorite experience from the Pageant, or something that really has, like, really brought you closer to the Pageant?

**Ed Nabrotzky:** Oh, my goodness, there's a few of them. From the Pageant performance itself, you know, I've always been very much drawn to John the Baptist, and I've enjoyed, you know, studying him and reading about him. And, other than the scene where Christ descends amongst the children, which is always emotional for me, that—the scene that gets me the most is that scene where John baptizes the Christ. And, as Christ comes up out of the water and then walks away with his disciples, John has kind of left on the on the side stage, and the light comes off of him, and then he kind of walks off stage and walks up around [coughs] behind the woods. To me, that tangibly was my favorite Pageant scene and memory because it so symbolized John's ministry—that, you know, he served for a time, and then he handed it off to the Savior, and [went]—and finished off in ignominy [sic] and ending up being beheaded. But that part was kind of my favorite side part other than, of course, the Christ scene. That was always so powerful with all the children, and my family was there [best guess], that we did it as well.

But in terms of other service, you know, to me, it was all the behind the scenes work that no one ever saw. You know, the lovely Greek lady that came and did the meals for our work crew boys, and the great, you know, times we had [30:00] doing that behind the Hill, visiting with those boys and doing things with them. There was [sic] some precious moments there that were wonderful. Some of the counseling that I did for kids, you know... When we're all on site with 1,000 people, different things happen, you know, people have disagreements. People get into some trouble. Sometimes, people do things. And part of our roles as the Presidency was to look after all of that and make sure we corrected behaviors and things, and... especially with our youth who are—you know, it's hot, and it's tough work. We had many times where we engage with them and help them along the way. And there was some of those—I really treasure some of those memories.

I used to run a tour up to Mendon [New York], to some other sites that are people are less familiar with, and I would take hundreds of people to explain the origins of Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball and some of the early pioneers that were also from this area. You know, the, the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith are famous, but there's some other stories that are not as often told. So, I've got some precious memories of the Mendon Saints, and talking and teaching about them, that I really enjoyed doing. So those would be, I guess, a sampling of the few [laughs] that I remember.

**Cam Garvey:** Yeah. And just, kind of, I guess, to close it out here, we talked a lot in class about how the Hill Cumorah Pageant went through several different iterations?

**Ed Nabrotzky:** Yes.

**Cam Garvey:** And how there were different scenes included. So I guess, I was just wondering if there were any scenes that you thought *could* have been included that weren't included, or you

felt particularly close to that weren't included? Because we were just talking to different people about scenes that weren't included that they wished they saw included.

**Ed Nabrotzky:** Absolutely! Oh, there's some—it's hard because you have to leave something out; you can't put everything in; and so I understand that. There was another version of the Pageant in the works. Had Pageant continued, it would have continued on a new script and would have been—some new scenes would have been included, but the decision was made not to proceed with that. You know, that—part of the reason for the declining attendance is we kept the same script for a number of years, and so once people have seen it over and over again, they wouldn't keep coming. But yeah, that's always an interesting one.

I will tell you that one of the things that I wanted to have happened, that we talked about with the artistic crew, but they wouldn't approve it. That last Pageant we put on, there's a scene in there called the destruction scene. I thought it would be great if we actually destroyed everything—like, blew the sets up and had [interviewer laughs] a volcano, you know, cover it all, but that didn't get to happen. I missed the—in one of the iterations of the Pageant, there was a live volcano constructed on the Hill, with the lava coming out and special effects. I always missed that volcano. I would like to see that back in again. In the iteration that I presided over we didn't have the volcano. But, especially during the final one, I would have liked to see a full destruction.

But in terms of the spiritual stories, you know, a story that I always thought would have been powerful would have been the conversion of Alma the Younger. I think that the angel appearing to him and correcting his behavior and having him turn, almost like Paul, you know, in the New Testament, would have been a powerful scene that I would have liked to have seen in

there. But there's several scenes we could have added that would have been great. But that would be my favorite to add.

**Cam Garvey:** Awesome. Uh, Noah, do you have anything else to ask?

**Noah Fox:** I don't, but thank you so much. This was super-informative and really interesting, just to hear about your history through the Church and through the Pageant. It was really interesting. Thank you so much.

**Ed Nabrotzky:** No problem! The thing I would stress is that, you know, this Pageant was a labor of love by thousands and thousands of people. Many people are—they raised their kids doing this every year and were part of it, so... It wasn't ever something that was out there just to go and find converts. That's not really the main purpose of it. But the story of the Book of Mormon is woven into all of our hearts as believers in this message, and we celebrate and love presenting it and talking about the great message from it, so that's really what it was about.

**Cam Garvey:** Mhmm.

**Ed Nabrotzky:** The sense of community, of doing it together, you know, doing hard things together, is always a key part of that journey, so it was very, very fun to do.

**Cam Garvey:** Well, we'll let you know. We have a website for the class that has a bunch of different props and things from the different iterations of the Pageant, and then it'll have interviews with a bunch of different people—

**Ed Nabrotzky:** Oh, cool.

**Cam Garvey:** So we will make sure to send that over to you as well—once it's, like—once everything is up and we're all ready.

**Ed Nabrotzky:** Happy to look at that. That would be great.

**Noah Fox:** And that will, by the way—that will be archived by the Church in Salt Lake, so you will be able to look at that whenever you want—

**Ed Nabrotzky:** Awesome.

**Noah Fox:** Assuming they continue to archive it.

**Ed Nabrotzky:** They have done a lot of good collection. The Church History Department is great at keeping these memories together, and I'm in constant contact with them on different things, so I look forward to seeing you get your contribution in there.

**Cam Garvey:** Thank you.

**Noah Fox:** Thank you so much.

**Ed Nabrotzky:** Okay, thanks, guys. Thanks for working on this. [35:00] Bye.

### **Dublin Core Metadata for the Interview**

**Title:**

Interview with Ed Nabrotzky, Friday, April 1, 2022

**Subject:**

Hill Cumorah Project, Theater, Brigham Young University, Community Building, John the Baptist, Book of Mormon, Tourism, Alma the Younger

**Description:**

Noah Fox and Cam Garvey interview Ed Nabrotzky about his involvement in the Hill Cumorah Pageant, from his role as a cast member to his role in the Pageant Presidency. Ed details a brief history of the Pageant as it relates to the stories in the Book of Mormon and why the Hill in Palmyra is so important. He also speaks about how important a show like this is important to both interfaith activities and to others that were involved. For members of the Church, long-lasting friendships between cast members were made, and tens of thousands of people came every year to view the Pageant. For those that were not members of the Church, the tourism that this event brought was instrumental in their funding, and so seeing it end has made a lasting impact on the region.

**Creator:**

Ed Nabrotzky, Noah Fox, and Cam Garvey

**Source:**

The Hill Cumorah Legacy Project

**Date:**

Friday, April 1, 2022

**Contributors:**

Noah Fox and Cam Garvey

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