

Interview with Amanda Lonsberry
Tuesday, April 5, 2022
The Hill Cumorah Legacy Project

Recorded in person

Interviewee: Amanda Lonsberry

Interviewer: Olivia Bean and Cael Burkhardt

Duration: 30:11

Transcript

[0:00:00]

[Cael Burkhardt] It is April 5th, 2022. Cael Burkhardt and Olivia Bean interviewing Amanda Lonsberry, former public affairs director for the Hill Cumorah Pageant.

[Olivia Bean] Hi, so, I want to start off by saying, with the Pageant, how did you first get into it, and how did you basically find out about it or get brought into it as the public affairs director?

[Amanda Lonsberry] Well, two questions there, one how I ever learned about it, and then the second question is how I got involved with it. I first heard about the Hill Cumorah Pageant, I had some friends in college who gave up their summer break to go be a part of the Hill Cumorah Pageant. I'm from out west, from Nevada. They traveled all the way out east, which seems very, very far; and they came back just, like, aglow with, like, this was the best experience of their lives. So, I had it in my brain that, like, this Hill Cumorah Pageant thing—if you're a member of a faith community, things that encourage or build your faith, whatever that is, are something you kind of seek after [best guess]. So I had it in my brain that the Hill Cumorah Pageant was something that, you know, people left it feeling good, feeling better about their faith and things. And I didn't really know much about it.

[Amanda Lonsberry] I married my husband, who's from New York, and I moved to New York. We'd been married a couple months, and he was like, "We're gonna go to the Hill Cumorah

Pageant,” but his tradition was to get there at, like, 9 o’clock in the morning and sit in the front row, in the heat, in July—it’s in July— in the heat of July and wait all day long. And it was miserable. So my first time viewing the Pageant versus this, like, spiritual experience was “I had to sit in this heat all day long,” and, you know, by the time the Pageant gets it at 9 o’clock at night, I was fried. And it was lovely, but I was tainted by the fact that my husband had made me sit outside in the heat all day in July.

[**Amanda Lonsberry**] I have a background in communications. I was a journalist before I married my husband, and so, in our church, we don’t really have paid staff to do things. It’s not like you’re a pastor and you get paid. You get what’s called a calling or assignment. You can have that calling and assignment for five years, or you can have it for a couple months, and over time, people learned that I had a background in communications, and they said “Hey do you wanna work with the Hill Cumorah Pageant?” At the time, I had very little kids, they were—in fact, I was pregnant with my third child. And I said, “Yeah I mean, I can do some things, but I can’t obviously be out there with my little babies,” because [laughter, possibly from Olivia], you know, I’m traumatized by the heat. That’s when I realized that working for the Pageant was not like other church pageants; it’s more like a job. I mean, like, it’s a lot of work. Because none of the people who work there are paid; they’re doing it because they believe in the value of the production. But—and so, it just, like—even the little bit of work I was doing out on site made me think, like, “This is a ton; this is just so much work.” It’s constant, like, you’re constantly writing, and you’re constantly calling. I eventually said, “I need to step away from it,” just because with my little kids, it was just too much.

[**Amanda Lonsberry**] And so, fast forward several years. Again, when you’re raising children or you belong to a faith structure—whether, I don’t know, whether you [belong to a faith

structure]—you seek out opportunities to build that religious faith. And—we are very much, even though our Church was *born* in this area, it is very much a minority faith. And so, for example, my kids are the only Latter-day Saints kids in their school. And so, I started thinking, “You need to start finding opportunities to build their faith outside of just what we can provide at home or church.”

[**Amanda Lonsberry**] And I had a friend that I really respected, whose children grew up just right where my kids are growing up. And I said, “Well how did you keep your kids engaged in faith, and active and still wanting to be a part of it, like, when they left home?” And she said “We participated in the Hill Cumorah Pageant as often as we could.” She was a nurse, which was a skill that they needed on staff, so she was able to get on staff pretty frequently because they needed her as a nurse, which meant her kids can be in the Pageant. And something I didn’t know: Most of the time, what happens is the Pageant will get thousands of applications for a few hundred positions in their staff, in the cast. And I had had it in my brain as like, “When the kids are older, we’ll go ahead and apply, and hopefully, because we live close, maybe we’ll get an opportunity to participate.” And I didn’t know at that time that, if you were on staff, your kids just automatically got put in. I had no clue that was a thing.

[**Olivia Bean**] Mhmm.

[**Amanda Lonsberry**] So, it was in 2016. I get a call from—he was a very good friend of mine; you may have interviewed Bentley Hutchings, and I knew if he was calling [00:05:00] me that he was just going to give me a Church calling. And I was like, “I don’t wanna talk to him, because that just is more work for me.” And I answered—and then I remembered that he had been called—again, we work out of this concept of callings where you just have an assignment. He’s a financial planner, right? So, he works as a financial planner, and then he had this other

responsibility. And I realized, “He’s working with the Hill Cumorah Pageant. I do not have time for that. I’ve got little kids; this is not the right time.”

[**Amanda Lonsberry**] And I called, and I answered the phone, and I said, “Bentley, I can’t,” because I knew exactly that he was gonna be calling me to work for the Hill Cumorah Pageant. He says, “You’re gonna be great, it’s gonna be awesome,” and I said, “I don’t have time. What am I supposed to do with the kids!?” Because to do the assignment correctly, you really needed to be at the Hill. You needed to be there; you needed to be with the people; you needed to be able to take media people on tours. And I said, “There’s just no way!” He said, “Well, just put them in the show!” I said, “What do you mean, you can put them in the show?” And he said, “Well, if you’re on staff, your kids are just in the show!” And I realized, oh wait, they can be in the production if—and I just have to go work for you,s and the kids can be in the production.

[**Amanda Lonsberry**] And so I accepted the assignment so that my kids could be a part of the production, and it ended up being one of the greatest experience[s] of my family’s life. My kids walked into it with a lot of trepidation, like, “We’re gonna give up two and a half weeks of our summer so we can go live out at the hill.” Like, we’d taken them to the Pageant their whole lives. I never let my husband again do the, like, 9 AM [interviewers laugh] to 10 o’clock at night thing. I was like, “No, we are not. We’ll get there at 5:30 or 6 like normal people, get a good seat, and eat some sub sandwiches and go.” You know? So, the kids were of course familiar with it, but being involved with it was a completely, completely different experience. And so that’s—that’s how, from learning about it from my friends, to my husband dragging me there, to dipping in, that’s how we ended up involved in it.

[**Cael Burkhardt**] So, you mentioned that you did media tours. What kind of media groups had interests in touring the Pageant and its production, I guess?

[**Amanda Lonsberry**] Tons. In fact, I mean, even before I was officially on staff, when I was still just kind of helping, the *New York Times* would come. I mean, we're talking, you know, again, you know, the *Book of Mormon* musical came out, and Mitt Romney was running for president, and the *New York Times* was like, "Well, let's go check out—"—like, because it was this thing, they were like, "Well, let's go check out this—let's understand this faith, this thing that's very unique to this faith. A big pageant is from a different era. Let's go check that out." So, we're talking people like the *New York Times*. Local media, of course, would come, you know. We had a lot of people who wanted to do—we had a guy who one year wanted to film a documentary, and I couldn't believe they approved him. He was a ton of fun. We had people working on longform magazine articles. We did media days—so, a lot of local media, because it's a local thing. We did—one year, the years I was there, we did morning shows. It was actually a ton of fun, and it was horrible. We had to get up at, like, 4 AM, and we had to have some of the cast get up at 4 in the morning, and we'd do scenes; but everyone had a ton of fun with it, and it was great because the morning show people, we would put them in costume and give them swords, and light things on fire, and... So yeah, it really just depended on—you know, again, like, when we're talking, if you flash back to, like, 2012, 2013, it was Mitt Romney, *Book of Mormon* the musical was fueling interest, so we had a lot of national media. And then keep going. And then... Some years, people weren't—'cause it's—again, with media in the area, it's just always been there. Right? So, eighty-some-odd years, it's just something that happens every summer, so it's on their local calendar: "Well, we gotta go cover Pageant." And so, the challenge is more like, "What can we give them to do that's different?"

[**Amanda Lonsberry**] And then one of the things we actually the last couple of years wasn't necessarily media tours, but we invited people—to invite multi-faith people. So, we had a big

thing where we would do a dinner for our Jewish and Muslim, and just other faith-leader friends. And I learned a lot about making sure we had halal food versus kosher food, you know. In fact, I would cater from somebody who could do both kosher and halal so that everybody—we could make sure that everybody was covered. And then we would invite them to our opening night, and talk about—it was just a faith-sharing event. It wasn't—we weren't trying to convert anybody. It was just, come meet us, come talk about us, and it was wonderful to talk with people afterwards. Because it was such a good event with a fun spirit, and it was just fun to get to know your neighbors a little, or your faith neighbors from the region a little bit better. So, that wasn't necessarily media, but that was something we worked really hard on, was using it as a bridge-building tool to build community relationships.

[**Cael Burkhardt**] That's really cool.

[**Olivia Bean**] That is really cool. With the community, even though it's a local—well, not local—the Pageant is big in the faith and everything—for the local community in Palmyra, where the Pageant's held, was it hard bringing in more people as [10:00] the Pageant kind of went into 2019, as it stopped then? Or was it hard to, I don't know, draw people in as the Pageant went on over the years? Or—

[**Amanda Lonsberry**] Do you—do you mean, are you asking about attendance to the Pageant over the years, or local perception of it?

[**Olivia Bean**] More so attendance. 'Cause I feel like—

[**Amanda Lonsberry**] Well, yeah, I mean, it was interesting. Over—I only can account for the attendance for the years I was there—

[**Olivia Bean**] Mhmm.

[**Amanda Lonsberry**] But absolutely. You know, as times changed and people had more

entertainment options, you'd go from having crowds of, like, 10,000 a night to 5- or 6,000 a night. So, when I got on, I think we were probably having between 6- and 4,000 people a night, and my job, of course, was to get people here. So, how do you do that? Part of that was—you know, you try to be innovative. You think, "Well, what can we do to get people to come see it?" I was standing there one opening night, and it was kind of a nightmare unfolded [sic] in front of me. It was raining, and it's kind of a bowl, the grass—

[**Olivia Bean**] Mhmm.

[**Amanda Lonsberry**] And it was muddy; and people kept coming, and coming. I was like, "Why are all these people coming tonight?" Because, the thing was, it was like the grass was getting torn up, and people were walking through the mud, and they just kept coming. And the production goes on unless there's lightning. It doesn't matter if it's raining; we just make everybody get wet and go, you know?

[**Olivia Bean**] Mhmm.

[**Amanda Lonsberry**] So people come prepared with umbrellas. Unless there's lightning, we're—it's been canceled, like, seven times for lightning. Otherwise, it can be a torrential downpour. And I was standing there with an umbrella, watching people just pour in, and I was like, "Why are they—?" And he [Bentley?] leans in and goes, "Well, you must have done a good job advertising it," and I thought, "I guess that's what I tried to do." But that night, we had, like, 8,000 people. [laughter] And I was like—I mean, it was a *mudpit*. In fact, the next day, we had to rearrange seats, to rope off some areas that had just been shredded from the foot traffic.

[**Amanda Lonsberry**] So yeah, over time, of course, technology changes, right?

[**Olivia Bean**] Yeah.

[**Amanda Lonsberry**] It's harder to entertain people with even a cool production; I don't know

if you ever saw a copy of it. But even a production that featured, you know, fire and light, the stuff that the Pageant had, it's certainly harder. But when the announcement was made [that the Pageant was ending], our attendance in 2019 was huge, and we were really bracing that 2020 was gonna be even bigger. Do you know what I mean? Like, because it was ending, people who had said, "I'm gonna go to that"—suddenly, the dependability of it always being there—we had a lot of repeat—because, my job, I would go into the crowd and talk to people all the time, like, "What brought you out tonight?" And there were people who hadn't been in years, because it was always here, do you know what I mean? The option was always available. Every year, you knew it was gonna happen. But when it ceased to be able, it's like, "Oh, I've gotta come see this one more time." People really came out. So it's like—people kind of thought it was always gonna be there, and then when it wasn't, 2019, our numbers were not quite double, but huge.

[**Olivia Bean**] Mhmm.

[**Amanda Lonsberry**] And I imagine our 2020 or 2021 numbers would've been—not pandemic [laughter], not pandemic kosher, basically.

[**Cael Burkhardt**] Interesting. So, I know you talked about the sort of interfaith meeting and that. Was that your favorite part of the overall experience, or was there was something else that just, kind of, really clicked with you?

[**Amanda Lonsberry**] The—it's interesting. When you're around people who believe the same way as you do—so, there's an interesting thing that happened at the Hill Cumorah Pageant. So, there were 900 about, maybe a little more, people on staff and in the cast. And for that two-week period, nobody was focused on anything except getting this production done. And we were all hot, and tired, wet (because it was raining), exhausted. Yet, it's interesting; when you really can put aside your differences, like, "You come from different spaces or different backgrounds," or,

“You’re rich and I’m poor,” when you really put all that aside, and you really just focus on a common cause, and particularly a common cause that makes you feel uplifted, the general feeling of being there was something that’s almost indescribable. And it’s something that you almost, like, hunger after and miss. Because for those two and a half weeks, there was no contention. Does that make sense?

[**Amanda Lonsberry**] Like, you were living in a space, and I would hope this experience for everybody, to have some time where you live in a space for a couple weeks that genuinely does not feature contention. Where you can have completely different opinions about the universe; you can be a liberal or a conservative, but in that or [15:00] whatever it is that divides people, for those moments, everybody put them on a shelf, and we were united in the common cause of faith. And I tell you what, the thing is, is that my family just ate that up. ’Cause you would go every year. And they made—the real, the real biggest blessing of it was these friendships. My kids made friends that will be friends for their whole life, based—bonded in this thing. I made these friends that I could not have even seen coming. Just wonderful, I would say, like best friend status, over the, you know, putting aside differences and come to work to put this production on. Because of course we believed in the message, but it was also just spiritually uplifting. It made you, for those two weeks, it was like the rest of the world and the problems and everything just didn’t matter any more. Does that make sense?

[**Amanda Lonsberry**] So, when you say what was my favorite experience, did I love the interfaith dinners? So much. They were, I mean they were a stress to put together and make sure I had the right food for everyone, because I didn’t want to offend anyone, or—you know. I had a long talk with a guy at the Islamic Center one day to make sure I had the right food, and you know, everybody was wonderful. But for us, the best part of it was those friendships and those

feelings, and there'd be almost a period where you were done, there was a period of this letdown when it's almost like, when you had to walk back in the world, and realize that the rest of the world was still there. It was almost like coming through a door and being like, "Oh." It's like walking from Sunday, when you have a nice day off, back into Monday and you're like, "Oh, the stress is still waiting." But it was lovely to know that that can exist, that you can have like, the power of working in a common cause. Does that make sense?

[**Cael Burkhardt**] Absolutely.

[**Amanda Lonsberry**] It was really, really wonderful. I hope you guys find it at some point in your life. It's great.

[**Olivia Bean**] And you mentioned that your kids were in the show.

[**Amanda Lonsberry**] Mhmm.

[**Olivia Bean**] And I understand that you did—I'm assuming—more background staff, trying to draw people in.

[**Amanda Lonsberry**] Oh, yeah.

[**Olivia Bean**] Were you ever in the Pageant yourself?

[**Amanda Lonsberry**] Nope, I never had time. I literally was from sometimes 4 o'clock in the morning till midnight running. A lot of times in the evening, I would have reporters and stuff that I was—you know, I would take them backstage, so they could see what the backstage looked like at night. Or I would be wrapping up, like, when the show got on, and I knew that my kids were corraled with their cast team leaders—because they were like orphans. It was literally like, "Here you go." In fact, they called themselves staff orphans. I'd be like, "Somebody go find Sam," my little one, 'cause he was three when we started, you know. I'd be, like, "He's with somebody," you know? And it was really like people would just help once they realize you were—'cause my

husband, he had to work, so he couldn't come. He would come and pick up laundry for me, or wash clothes.

[All laugh]

[**Amanda Lonsberry**] I would wrap up press releases for the next day or social media posts. Do you know what I mean? So, I would spend the time of the production not having to stress about my kids, but I was either backstage with a reporter or wrapping up plotting out the next day's social media with pictures and things like that. So, I never—I had planned on in the last year—there's a scene at the end, we call it the Christ in the Americas scene, and anybody—you can throw anybody in that scene. They don't have it—where you can just walk in from the edges and stand there in costume, and I had planned on getting assigned a costume so I could do it at least once.

[Amanda Lonsberry hits the tabletop.]

[**Amanda Lonsberry**] Darn pandemic.

[Amanda Lonsberry snaps.]

[**Amanda Lonsberry**] That had been my last year plan. I was gonna make some time to go do it once, but, up to that point, I just never had time. But my kids were in it and loved it.

[**Olivia Bean**] That seems like an amazing experience, especially for kids to be part of a giant group that they had, like, a common—

[**Cael Burkhardt**] Yeah.

[**Amanda Lonsberry**] Yeah, it was huge. In fact, when the pandemic hit, my son Jack, who is a teenager, he is the one who—he's a very social kid, and he's the one who most really found a group of friends that he really connected with. Here, the beginning of the 2020 pandemic, we're stuck at home. I've got this very social kid who's suddenly cut off, and it was really the thing

that kept him [from] going insane. His friends from Pageant were all in the same boat. One of his good friends was in New York City, stuck in her apartment. You know, he's stuck at home in New York. They're all over the country. They would spend *hours* with each other on Facetime. So it was interesting; it was that group of kids. They got each other through about the first six months of the pandemic just on Facetime. And it wasn't like he didn't have friends closer, but it was just something about that group of friends, they're, like, very, very close. We met up with a bunch of them this summer, and he's 16 at the time—he's just turned 17—but we never saw him. We were out in Utah; we never saw him. It's interesting because they're from all over the country; they all—we all happened to be there the same week. And we never saw him.

[Amanda Lonsberry slaps the tabletop again.]

[**Amanda Lonsberry**] He was gone; he was with his friends. I was just, like, “Well, I'm assuming you're gonna be safe. We'll see you when we see you.” It was like—

[**Olivia Bean**] Mhmm.

[**Amanda Lonsberry**] He just soaked up that energy from that group of kids so much. He did break his shoulder, or his collarbone, but he did not die.

[All laugh]

[**Amanda Lonsberry**] It's all good.

[**Cael Burkhardt**] That's definitely good. So, [20:00] have you received any sort of calling since the end of the Pageant, and if you have, what does that look like?

[**Amanda Lonsberry**] Yeah, and we always—in our faith, you get called to all sorts of different things. Pageant was different because it was a regional assignment. Even when I was called to Pageant, I was still teaching Primary, which is little kids at Church. And I've been teaching Relief Society; that's like a women's class that we have every other week, which is not hard. But

I also got called, because, again, once they find out you have a skill, I now work with regional public affairs, so kind of doing what I did for Pageant, but I do it pretty much for all of New York's stakes outside of New York City. So, I help those stakes think about how to plan events with other groups, like other faith groups, and other [cultures]—like, how can you—basically, can we get you out into the community? How can you deal with media? Because a lot of times, people—they get nervous dealing with media, like, “Oh they’re gonna talk bad about us.” You’ve gotta actually have a good relationship [with media]. So, one of my things now is to help different stakes—which is similar to a Catholic diocese—just figure out how to deal better with media and how to work with other groups. So—and I do that now on a regional level. I’m a volunteer.

[Olivia Bean] That does seem amazing, though, trying and reaching out with the whole—

[Amanda Lonsberry] Yeah, I mean you’re stronger together, right?

[Olivia Bean] Mhmm.

[Cael Burkhardt] Yeah.

[Amanda Lonsberry] So, when you work together, you get a lot more accomplished than when you try to do it by yourself. I mean, I learned that lesson in the first grade, but... [laughter] So, it’s still good to do, to think about how to support each other as different faith groups. But that’s what I do right now. I teach Relief Society every couple Sundays, and I help people deal with media stuff.

[Cael Burkhardt] Seems pretty fulfilling, to be involved in so much.

[Amanda Lonsberry] I think it’s one of the things I like about my Church, my faith, is that you don’t—really, unless you get—again, everybody is called; there’s no paid positions, like, unless you finally get called to, “We’re gonna pull you out of your career into full-time Church

service”—they do offer you some sort of salary. I think the thing that makes it work is just, at some point, everybody has to serve somewhere. You use all of your time, talents, and abilities to, you know, build up yourself in your faith, and you do feel like you’re doing a service to other people. And I promise you that you do feel better about the universe when you’re serving. So, when you find opportunities to serve other people, it really will make you feel better. It’s a great antidote for feeling sorry for yourself or feeling selfish; it’s like, go find somebody to do something for. And I think that was interesting about working for Pageant, like, it was so much work. There were times when I would be, like, “This is like a part time job,” and there were times it felt like a full time job. And I was not getting paid for it. Money. Right? I wasn’t getting any compensation, but was I compensated? More than I could have ever been paid. The compensation—what it did for myself, my family, and my kids—was huge. My calling now, it’s good. I get to pick what I teach for Relief Society, so you know—again, you know I’m from a faith background, so you kind of prayerfully think about, “Well, what do I wanna teach?” So, do I get something out of that? Yeah! You know? And right now, with the media calling, it’s more like, “How can I serve you? How can I help you people? What do you have questions…” You know? We’re prepping right now for a big Zoom call on dealing with media, because they have some questions about—you know, we’ve got some new people. So—do you know—it’s more—yeah. Would I say it’s fulfilling? I enjoy being able to help, and I think that the quickest way to not feel selfish, or self-centered, or sorry for yourself, which we all do sometimes, is to go find someone to help. My Church just gives me a way to do it by saying, “Congratulations, you’re doing this.”

[All laugh]

[**Amanda Lonsberry**] I don’t have to go look for it; they just hand it to you.

[**Olivia Bean**] Mhmm.

[**Cael Burkhardt**] You said that the Pageant at times could feel like a full- or part-time job. Do you find yourself now doing anything else in that span of two and a half weeks that you would have spent on the Pageant otherwise?

[**Amanda Lonsberry**] Well, we miss it after doing—my family did it full-time for four years. And I tell you, the first year [25:00] that it didn't happen, the kids were almost adrift, like, "Wait, it's July and we're not at the Hill." I mean, it does certainly open up opportunities. For example, last year, my nephew was getting married, and it was right in that span where—oh, if it had been Pageant time, we would've had a tough... My kids would've hands down been like, "Love ya' cousin, but we're going to the Hill." They would've chosen that over anything. I would've had to fly to my nephew's wedding, but—do you know what I mean? I was able to drive out to Nevada and be at my nephew's wedding, but of course it opens up two weeks in the summer that you wouldn't have had otherwise. But my kids would have rather done that than anything else, so, trade-off. There's nothing they would've rather done. I could've dangled Disneyland in front of them, and they still would've thought the Pageant was a better place. [laughter] Like, that's—I can't really say anything more about how much it meant to them, or how much fun they had there. And it's weird that you would say it was a good time because it was hot, and humid, and you'd get rained on, and it was really *hot*.

[All laugh again]

[**Amanda Lonsberry**] And you were outside all day long, and you were not getting enough sleep, and yet the happiest they've ever been in their lives was when I'd come and I'd see them, they'd been rolling in the dirt all day long. And I'd be, like, "Okay, well, everyone else is filthy too, [Olivia laughs] so we're just gonna go with it."

[**Cael Burkhardt**] I understand that pretty well as a former track athlete.

[**Amanda Lonsberry**] You like to be out in the—?

[**Cael Burkhardt**] I—yeah.

[**Amanda Lonsberry**] Distance runner?

[**Cael Burkhardt**] I did jumps.

[**Amanda Lonsberry**] Oh, cool!

[**Cael Burkhardt**] But—

[**Amanda Lonsberry**] My son's learning to high jump right now, in middle school track.

[**Cael Burkhardt**] Fun. Very fun.

[**Olivia Bean**] No, I never did track, but I probably could relate to your kids and how they felt, like, there was this sense of, “Oh, there's no Pageant.” Like, there's nothing there, or there's something missing. I can definitely relate to that.

[**Amanda Lonsberry**] It really, like, there's still—with 2020, you understood, because there was a pandemic—

[**Olivia Bean**] Mhmm.

[**Amanda Lonsberry**] And you didn't know. And we end up—we have a pond, a campout in Allegheny County, and because, you know—Covid was still, like, we didn't know, but people were more comfortable being outside, we ended up spending the entire summer with friends at our pond, which ended up being fabulous.

[**Olivia Bean**] Mhmm.

[**Amanda Lonsberry**] We had a great summer because we were home and couldn't go anywhere. We'd always gone to the pond a couple times through the summer, but we were there like three times a week.

[**Olivia Bean**] Mhmm.

[**Amanda Lonsberry**] We didn't have anywhere else to go. That was wonderful, too. You discover different ways to fill your time, but they would pick the Pageant. They still—July hits, and they're still a little mopey about, you know... That's when you end up reaching out to your Pageant friends and reliving your memories, and I don't know that that'll ever go away for them. I don't see them ever—it was a very—it's hard to explain when you talk about it. It was a very powerful experience for them. And I don't see that ever going away, like, that longing. Because it wasn't—you were striving after a feeling that is an idealistic thing, right? Like, it was the concept of world peace on a small scale. It was—like, what people constantly say they're seeking after, but you found it for two weeks. So, once you find that, it's hard to let that go.

[**Olivia Bean**] Mhmm.

[**Amanda Lonsberry**] It was really difficult to let go of it. So it's like—it's a stupid thing, but for those two weeks, it's like you really did find a little piece of world peace and what it could feel like, and it's pretty nice. So...

[**Olivia Bean**] Even being from sort of around the area, I wasn't very much aware of it until we started talking about it in the class, and now that we're really delving into it, I'm thinking, "Oh I wish I would've known about this sooner." I'm like, "Oh, I would've gone." It seemed very interesting, and—

[**Amanda Lonsberry**] Have you guys ever watched a copy of the production?

[**Cael Burkhardt**] Yeah.

[**Olivia Bean**] We watched a little bit in a class.

[**Cael Burkhardt**] I watched the entire thing one night.

[**Amanda Lonsberry**] Okay.

[**Olivia Bean**] Mhmm.

[**Cael Burkhardt**] I'm not sure what year it was from, but I had it on, on one monitor, while I was doing projects on the other.

[**Amanda Lonsberry**] It was probably from 2019, which is the only time we really filmed it with the intent to put it out.

[**Cael Burkhardt**] It was [unintelligible]...

[**Amanda Lonsberry**] And it's difficult—and it's interesting because I'm consciously recognize [sic] that it's from a different era. In fact, I had been really hoping that they would rescript it. I kinda felt like, "This is a dated script," like, we could rescript this. Because there's different stories from scripture that could be told. You know, the script was written by Orson Scott Card, who was super-cool in the '80s, but—

[**Olivia Bean**] Mhmm.

[**Amanda Lonsberry**] Who else could write a new script using the source material? But instead—and I understand the reasons for canceling it; I really do. There's a lot that went into it, and... That didn't make it any less sad. But... It's a completely different experience watching it versus being in it.

[**Cael Burkhardt**] I'm certain.

[**Olivia Bean**] Oh, yeah.

[**Cael Burkhardt**] Thank you for your time. I don't have [30:00] anything else.

[**Olivia Bean**] I don't, either. Thank you.

[**Cael Burkhardt**] I think that covers anything that we could've asked, and more.

[**Olivia Bean**] Yeah.

[**Amanda Lonsberry**] Ok, well, cool. Excellent. That was easy.

Dublin Core Metadata for the Interview

Title: Interview with Amanda Lonsberry, Tuesday, April 5, 2022

Subject: Hill Cumorah Legacy Project, theater, business, public affairs, family, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, press, publicity

Description: During this interview with Amanda Lonsberry, she described her position as the public affairs director for the Hill Cumorah Pageant held at Palmyra, New York. As the public affairs director, she was in charge of advertisement and the overall outside communications with members of the Church and the community. Lonsberry detailed her responsibilities relating to management of the media and press, as well as the weight of these obligations. She also spoke about the LDS concept of “callings.” Lonsberry stated that her time with the Pageant was not only fulfilling for her in her faith, but also for her children. She stated that participating and aiding in the Pageant strengthened their relationship with the Church and created many bonds that she and her children will hold for the rest of their lives.

Creators: Amanda Lonsberry, Olivia Bean, and Cael Burkhardt

Source: Hill Cumorah Legacy Project

Date: Tuesday, April 5, 2022

Contributor: Olivia Bean and Cael Burkhardt

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