

Interview with Jennie Hedworth, Part One
Tuesday, March 22, 2022
The Hill Cumorah Legacy Project

Recorded over Zoom

Interviewee: Jennie Hedworth

Interviewer: Sabrina Torbit

Questions developed by Sabrina Torbit and Madison Vanderpool

Duration: 13:59

Transcript

Note: Madison Vanderpool planned to jointly conduct this interview with Sabrina Torbit, but Madison was unable to log into the Zoom meeting because of technical issues.

[0:00]

Sabrina Torbit: So, I am interviewing you for our digital history class. We were told that you were the cast busing coordinator for the Hill Cumorah Pageant. So, our first question is, how did you get involved with the Mormon Church?

Jennie Hedworth: Well, my mother joined the Church in 1970, and then I pretty much just grew up in the Church, and—yeah, we—that’s it. I grew up in the Church and, you know, learned for myself whether I wanted to stick with it or not.

Sabrina Torbit: Mhmm. So, I’m—were you born into it, then, or did your mom start practicing when—while you were—?

Jennie Hedworth: Yeah, I was born into it. Oh, yeah.

Sabrina Torbit: Okay. And then—so, yeah, we were told that your role was the cast busing coordinator. So, what exactly did that entail?

Jennie Hedworth: Yep.

Sabrina Torbit: What was your day-to-day like?

Jennie Hedworth: So, before it even started, there's a lot of preparation because we have about 400 people that come in on planes, and so we have to run back and forth. We had—I drive a school bus also, so I think that was one of the reasons also—

Sabrina Torbit: Mhmm.

Jennie Hedworth: Why I was asked to do it, because I understand the busing and how to coordinate all that stuff, and so I had to—we had what was called a flight dump, where everybody would put in their information for their flights. And then my son Hayden would help me organize all of that information, and then we would have a huge plan on whether we would take a bus, or—we had 12 passenger vans, so we would just drive those back and forth, and just keep picking people up and bringing them out to either the dorms, where most people were staying, or over to the Hill. And then, we also—I coordinated all the fun activities that they were doing, the service activities, and then there was [sic] Church history tours that people took, so there was about usually six or 700 people that we would have to get back and forth between—so it was a lot of coordinating—

Sabrina Torbit: Mhmm.

Jennie Hedworth: To take to all their activities, and from the airport to the dorms to—wherever they needed to go, I had all that.

[Sabrina laughs]

Jennie Hedworth: That was my job to coordinate everything.

Sabrina Torbit: That seems like a lot. A lot of strategy and that, yeah.

Jennie Hedworth: It was a lot. A lot of paperwork.

Sabrina Torbit: Yeah!

Jennie Hedworth: Yeah.

Sabrina Torbit: So, did you only work with the Pageant, or did you also work in the City of Palmyra during that time with the busing?

Jennie Hedworth: Well, I didn't work with—besides coordinating, you know, where—how—getting the people to where they were going to go, we had to coordinate to make sure that they could accommodate all of those people. So, trying to split up all those people between the activities they were going to do in the Church history tours, bowling, so the different venues and stuff, that was the only time I really had to talk to people—

[Sabrina says something indistinctly]

Jennie Hedworth: Outside of the Church. Most of it was just coordinating everything, so yeah, not—I didn't really talk to too many people.

Sabrina Torbit: And when did you first get involved with the Pageant, and, like, what made you want to get involved with it?

Jennie Hedworth: Well, I grew up watching it from the time, I mean, as early as I can remember, and then I have three sons, and we started in 2008—we decided to just try it for one year. And it was pretty awesome. My kids loved it. We have what's called cast teams, and every cast team has an age group, so we have all the tents. I don't know if you've ever been there, but there's tents set up out in the lawn—

Sabrina Torbit: Mmm.

Jennie Hedworth: And each tent is a cast team with a specific age group, and so they get to spend those weeks with all kids their age, so they loved it. And ever since then, they had just begged me to do it. So, then, we did it the first couple years and took a break and then in 2011, we've just been doing it since, and especially since I was asked to be the transportation

coordinator. You know, that basically kept us in it for the rest of the year, so it was a good experience.

Sabrina Torbit: So, did you first go to the Pageant just to be involved in it? What was your first role, kind of, in the Pageant?

Jennie Hedworth: I was a dancer.

Sabrina Torbit: Oh, okay!

Jennie Hedworth: A harvest dancer is what they call it. [laughter] Yeah.

Sabrina Torbit: Are there any ideals that the Church has that you feel strongly about?

Jennie Hedworth: [5:00] Um, well, I think one of the biggest things is just to remember, you know, that we're all children of God and to treat each other as you would want to be treated. And I think that that makes the biggest difference in life and will make the difference in how people react to you, and it changes everything—

Sabrina Torbit: Mhmm.

Jennie Hedworth: When you just love one another.

Sabrina Torbit: Um, Maddie's not here, so I'm just gonna go ahead and ask her questions if you're okay with that.

Jennie Hedworth: Okay, sure.

Sabrina Torbit: Yeah.

Jennie Hedworth: Yeah, that's fine.

Sabrina Torbit: Okay. So, what was a regular day for you like during the Pageant?

Jennie Hedworth: Um, it was pretty hectic because I would get calls *nonstop* on my phone, you know, people getting left behind, or... There were so many people to coordinate, there was always something happening. So, it seemed like we were either going to pick people up or—you

know, just making sure that all the bus drivers were there and ready to go, [that] they knew what they were doing. So besides getting all the people coordinated, I had to coordinate all the drivers to where they needed to go with the directions. And just planning things out also with—there were cast team leaders that were also over those groups, so I had to coordinate with them what they were planning, and then we put that all together to make that bus schedule work. So, it just was a lot of coordinating and planning really, more paperwork than anything.

Sabrina Torbit: How many buses were there? How many drivers were there for the whole event?

Jennie Hedworth: So, we usually used three to go back and forth for the dorms each day—three to four, depending on that year, how many people there were—and then we usually would use one or two to go back and forth to the airport. And then, on the days where the groups will be going out to do service in the community or having their fun days, we usually would have about thirteen to fourteen buses to shuttle *everyone*, yeah. And *those* buses were being utilized twice sometimes, so they would take a group, come back, and pick up another group, so... We could have probably used more, but a lot of times, we just—we weren't able to get that many drivers, so...

Sabrina Torbit: Mhmm. Very, very hectic from what it seems.

Jennie Hedworth: It was hectic. [laughter]

Sabrina Torbit: How did you feel about the Pageant ending?

Jennie Hedworth: Um, you know, it was bittersweet. I was pretty exhausted. I know a lot of people that were putting in their time and effort to work at the Pageant. It's a lot of work. I miss—I just missed the whole ... gathering, I guess—

Sabrina Torbit: Mhmm.

Jennie Hedworth: Of it, just what it's all about, and being with, you know, other people from the Church, from different countries and different states, and just for that one cause. It was pretty great. It was a really amazing experience. Not a lot of people can say they were [in] a cast of, you know, 800 people acting on a stage, so it was pretty neat.

[Jennie says something indistinctly]

Sabrina Torbit: And you said that your sons went with you, so how did that affect them, for the Pageant ending?

Jennie Hedworth: Yeah, well, my sons—yeah, they were pretty sad about it. They were looking forward to doing it. My one son just got married, and they were looking forward to you know, eventually doing that with their wives and kids down the road, and they also were a part of what was called the crew that worked on the—to put up the stage, and those guys became very close. They work together for—they were there actually a couple of weeks before Pageant even started, putting everything together—

Sabrina Torbit: Mhmm.

Jennie Hedworth: So they were pretty sad about it. It definitely has brought some really great memories for us, and it will be missed. Yeah, I understand why they did it, and I think it was time.

Sabrina Torbit: Mhmm. So, have you been back up to Palmyra since the Pageant has ended, or—?

Jennie Hedworth: I've been by there, but I haven't actually walked the grounds, and I would like to go do that. I've seen pictures online people have posted of all the changes, so it's going to be—it's kind of heartbreaking to know they were tearing down all the buildings and all the memories there, so I think it'll be... Once I go there, I think it's really gonna hit me more.

Sabrina Torbit: Mhmm. So, what specific differences have you seen in Palmyra, then, since the Pageant stopped?

Jennie Hedworth: It's a lot quieter, for sure. [10:00] I haven't really been over there too much. But, um, yeah, when I'm there, it's just not as busy.

Sabrina Torbit: Mhmm.

Jennie Hedworth: I think we'll still get tourists, but not as much as we were.

Sabrina Torbit: Mhmm. What did the Pageant mean to you either personally or spiritually?

Jennie Hedworth: Well, growing up with it, I think when I was younger, I didn't quite understand what I was watching, but the effects of it were just amazing. But the older I got—and, actually, after being in Pageant—there were some scenes in the Pageant that really affected me, especially when Christ comes to the Americas. And when you're actually sitting on stage, I think a lot of people say they believe in Christ, and you think about, you know, what it might be to meet him. But when you're on stage, and someone's actually up there, acting it out, and you're with all those children surrounding you, it was so surreal, like you're almost sitting there. And it just really strengthens my faith in knowing that Christ is real, and that one day, we will be sitting at his feet, and that, to me, is just an amazing feeling. And also, just to see the trials that those people had gone through, and how it comes full circle and—you know, just to know that we can face certain hard things and be okay.

Sabrina Torbit: And then, what will you miss the most about the Pageant? Like, what's the one most—one biggest thing that you miss the most?

Jennie Hedworth: Hmm. I think being with people of my faith, like in big crowds.

Sabrina Torbit: Mhmm.

Jennie Hedworth: It just was an amazing feeling to not only be with them, but also to share that experience with all the people that came, and to hear their reactions on the way they felt when they watched it and what their thoughts were, and just to get a different viewpoint of people outside the Church. I think the people all coming together was the most amazing thing.

Sabrina Torbit: And then, do you still follow up with those people, I'm assuming, even though you guys don't gather every year for the Pageant?

Jennie Hedworth: I made a lot of friends. Yep. And I still talk to a bunch of them. And the neat thing is just knowing those people that came from different areas, it seems like I have a friend in every state and even in other countries now. [laughs] So, it's pretty nice.

Sabrina Torbit: Where did most people come from, then? Like, were they mostly [from] Utah?

Jennie Hedworth: Mostly Utah.

Sabrina Torbit: Okay.

Jennie Hedworth: Yeah.

Sabrina Torbit: What other countries did people come from?

Jennie Hedworth: We had a lady from Australia. There's some—I remember someone from Africa. We actually had a few people from Africa, New Zealand—I think England? And... Yeah, that's all I can remember right now.

Sabrina Torbit: That's so great, then, just being able to meet all these people from everywhere and bonding through your religion.

Jennie Hedworth: It is.

Sabrina Torbit: That's—

Jennie Hedworth: Yeah.

Sabrina Torbit: That's awesome.

Jennie Hedworth: It was a neat experience.

Sabrina Torbit: Those were all of our questions that we had for you today. Thank you for doing this interview with me.

Jennie Hedworth: Yeah! Sorry she couldn't show up. No, that's okay, though.

Sabrina Torbit: Yes. Have a good rest of the day.

Jennie Hedworth: Thanks for the opportunity.

Sabrina Torbit: Yes. Thank you.

Jennie Hedworth: Okay, you, too. Thanks.

Sabrina Torbit: Bye.

Jennie Hedworth: Bye-bye.

Dublin Core Metadata for the Interview

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Subject: Hill Cumorah Project, Cast Busing Coordinator, Family, Palmyra

Description: I interview Jennie Hedworth, who was the cast busing coordinator for the Hill Cumorah Pageant. We discuss the Pageant mainly, and what it meant to her and how it has impacted her life. She went to the Pageant for years, so she shares her experiences with me as an audience member, cast member, and busing coordinator. We also discuss her family's involvement in the Pageant and what it all meant to them and how she's raised her sons going to the Pageant every year. Along with this, Jennie shares information about how the Pageant affected Palmyra and how the Pageant coming to an end has affected the area and herself. She also discusses her religion and how she grew up.

Creator: Jennie Hedworth and Sabrina Torbit

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