

Interview with William (Bill) Jones
Sunday, March 27, 2022
The Hill Cumorah Legacy Project

Recorded over Zoom

Interviewee: William (Bill) Jones

Interviewer: Daniel Gorman Jr.

Duration: 36:15

Transcription App: Panopto

As of spring 2022, Bill Jones is a middle school teacher in Utah.

Transcript

[00:00]

Dan Gorman: You should see a record button on your screen.

Bill Jones: Got it.

Dan Gorman: All right, we're rolling. Today is Sunday, March 27th, 2022. It's about 6:10 PM Eastern Time, or 4:10 PM—Mountain Time?

Bill Jones: Mhmm.

Dan Gorman: Mountain Time, okay. And my name is Dan Gorman. I am the lead researcher for the Hill Cumorah Legacy Project, and today I'm speaking with William Jones, who is a member of the Seneca Tribe and a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Bill, as we get started, is there anything you'd like our future listeners to know about you?

Bill Jones: Well, I guess I could introduce myself. Is that where we want to go with—?

Dan Gorman: Sure.

Bill Jones: I'm currently living in the state of Utah. And like you said, I am a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and I was born and raised closer to where you're at, in Rochester, New York, in a small town called Irving, New York. And there is a Native American territory called the Cattaraugus Indian Territory, and I'm of the Seneca tribe, and [I]

was born and raised there for several years. I graduated from Silver Creek High School, or Silver Creek Central School, they call it. And I was an athlete, played football, coached football for several years. My family moved to Utah, married, have four kids and a lovely wife who puts up with everything that I dish out. So, we've had the opportunity to have our fair share of trials as well as, you know, happy times. So, I'm probably just like any other normal American family out there. So.... But that's my quick story of who I am.

Dan Gorman: Bill, how did you become involved in the Church? Were you raised in it? Did you convert, in your youth or later in life?

Bill Jones: I was [raised in it]—my parents were raised in the Church. It was my grandmother on my dad's side who joined the Church, and [I] have always remembered going to church as a youngster. I mean, there's obviously challenging times throughout even those days. I mean, it's not the perfect world for anybody, no matter what religion you probably are a part of. And—but I am a member of the Church, and—I mean, there's a term that we use, and somebody kind of takes what we call, you know, “going active,” and I had a little stint there for about five years when I was a teenager, when my parents divorced and I moved to Utah with my father—we—that's when I [fell]—you know, I fell at—what we call “fall away” or became inactive or just no longer practiced. And, you know, it took about five years. I always felt like I believed in God or believed in a Savior or a Christ, and I still do. And my parents had taught me when I was very, very young that that was the case. And it took me, you know—it actually took me becoming *inactive* to *realize* those things for myself. Several people within the Church, sometimes, you know, what they call live off the curtail [sic; coattail] of their own parents, and I guess I did that for quite—you know, my teenage years. And, you know, I thought I was going to be OK with absolutely not having religion in my life and not being a part of the Church and basically just

kind of, like, at one point I was even angry at God, you know, it—for my parents divorcing and having that whole experience, and so... But in time, I, you know, I realized, you know, there's... There's a bigger picture to why we're here and this is why I'm a strong—what *I* consider a strong member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at this point.

Dan Gorman: Bill, as you grew up as a member of the Church, being a Native American—how did that affect, or did it even affect at all, your participation in the Church? Were there other Native American members where you grew up?

Bill Jones: Well, there's—as much as I know. It's pretty *rare* that there's a chapel on any Native territory, [5:00] and we're one of the, I think, very few, if maybe the only one, at least at one point, where there is an actual chapel with, you know, several Native American members who were, you know, participating in that religion. So, I—even when I go back home to visit my family, that's where I go to church, and it's right on the territory, and [I] see several family members, friends, who are of the Native, you know, culture. But yeah, I mean, there are some challenges that go along with that, for sure.

There's—how do I—how do I best describe this, but... You know, I come to church in *Utah*, and I'm a *minority*, right? And—at least in terms of my skin color and my culture. But what throws everybody off is my last name is *Jones*. And so, that's as un-Native as it probably comes. And so, maybe I fool a lot of people. In fact, I've even had young men tell me, “*I didn't know you were a Native American. I thought you were just a tanned white guy.*” So, I mean, that's quoting some of my kids. So—and so—you know, I can't say that I've had any real *contention* with the color of my skin at all, throughout my years of being a member of the Church as well as, you know, just even in my—just *working*, just being a member of the society, you know, being a schoolteacher and things like that, and even going to school when I was

young, I didn't... I mean, I had people ask me, "Did they treat you differently?" And the answer to that really is *no*. I mean, I felt like I was treated just as kindly as anybody else, you know?

And so, I know some people *have* been... and my mom probably has a lot of stories because they [best guess] used to go to the—I can't remember the name of the school.... It's not Carlyle.... I'll think of it. But it was right on the territory, where—the Thomas Indian School was the name of it. And, you know, they were, you know, quite *cruel* and—quite honestly. And my mom has a lot of stories, and she's, you know, without putting words in *her* mouth, she's been pretty *sour* about it, about some of the ways she's been treated and how the other Natives have been treated and things like that, and so... But I can't say that I've had any of that, that mistreatment, to be honest with you, so I've been pretty happy in that sense and—you know—those—I guess, in that way.

Dan Gorman: A related question that comes to mind is the fact that most of the Book of Mormon is set in ancient America. So, on the one hand, as a member of the Church, you have this this religious—I don't want to use the word mythology, but you have this *lore* set in ancient America. Meanwhile, you yourself are Native American and you grew up, as you said, in Seneca culture with the stories and traditions of your tribe. As a Native American person, how do you read the Book of Mormon? What do you find interesting about it?

Bill Jones: Ironically, there's a story right in the Book of Mormon that talks about how the Lamanites were battling each other and then—versus the Nephites and the Lamanites, and they would battle each other, even. And then, there was a moment in there, in one of the stories, where they basically bury their weapons of war, and they pledge that they will never raise a weapon towards another, at least that generation. Ironically, that same, similar story is in our own [Seneca] verbal culture. And, if you think about where *you're* located [in Rochester] and

where the Hill Cumorah *is* located and where my tribe is—and I'm not going to say that we're the only Native Americans within the Book of Mormon; you know, I think we're one of many—but I honestly, you know, have to think—I mean, I'm just putting two and two together when you talk about location and proximity—you have to wonder if, you know, some of those stories that are right in the Book of Mormon are talking about some of those areas that we're talking about—at least, you know, nearby in the United States, right? 'Cause it is—it's written, I mean—and, you know, I honestly believe it's not pinpointed to this—that very—that book [is] not written just for that little area. I mean, I think it's North America, probably even partion [sic]—portions of South America. But, you know, there's certainly some truth to that. But I don't read the Book [10:00] of Mormon with the sense of, you know, well, that's—it's—how do I want to say this? I don't read the Book of Mormon in a different way because I'm Native American. I read the Book of Mormon in the way that I'm a child of God, if that makes sense. And, you know, there's certainly stories in there that are written for the Lamanites. It even mentions that, right? Where, you know, the Lord kind of knew there was another people, you know, when he was doing, you know, when he was on the other side with the Bible stories, right? After he [Jesus] gets crucified and *rises*, he comes to America. That's what we're... That's the part of the Book of Mormon that you'll hear stories about, where he *comes* after he was crucified, and he visits the Americas. Because he's even told them on the other side that—the people that have not accepted him—he said, “Other people I have that are not of this area here.” So, he *visits*; he visits us. I mean, there's no question that we were here, and the Book of Mormon kind of talks about, you know, some of those *signs* and *stories*, and we've had things prophesied. And you know, that's—I read the Book of Mormon in a, you know, in a way that,

you know, really just confirms, you know, some of the history that even *I've* experienced and lived as a Native American. So, I guess that would be *one* different way I read it.

But, um, honestly? I read it because I'm a child of God. It has really not much more to do about, you know, being a Native American for that matter. I mean, don't get me wrong; I love *my culture*; I love what that's *about*. And—but I think there's a bigger picture than even that. And you think about how we love to do our missionary work, and, you know, everybody's important in this church—every culture, every, you know, every different ethnicity—everybody's a child of God. And that's what—that's why I read it the way I just told you, is that I'm a child of God! That's just how it goes.

Dan Gorman: You mention missionary work, and that might actually make a good segue into talking about the Hill Cumorah Pageant specifically. As somebody who had—grew up in New York, did you ever attend the Hill Cumorah Pageants as a young person?

Bill Jones: Yeah, I was [sic]. It was a family tradition. I mean, we were only a[n] hour and a half drive away from where we lived, and every year I went *to* it. Never *participated* in it, except for that last year; it was like I mentioned before we started this recording, but... I—we looked forward to it every year. And we would go; my dad would take us. It was—you know, we would do some *camping*. And, you know, it was—*obviously*, you know, I guess as a *child*, I liked it because it was kind of like watching the movie version, right, of the book.

Dan Gorman: Mhmm.

Bill Jones: And in a lot of respects, I understand—I *understood* the Book of Mormon as a child just a little bit better *because* of going to the Hill Cumorah Pageant. I always was told stories, *verbal* stories, but it came to life on the Hill, and that's what I loved about *that*. Some people—and when I first started—you know, when we went in 2019 to participate in the Hill Cumorah

Pageant, that was one of our—I guess *testimonies* is what we call it; we bore testimony that what we are about to *perform* for the people that would arrive and watch, actually happened. It's not just this fairy tale that some people think, "Oh, it's just a cute little story. I mean, look at that nice, beautiful lights and pictures and costumes and things." But—I—whenever I got to chat with some people who were not of our faith, I was able to say, "This is a *book* where—there's history here, and it actually took place—

Dan Gorman: Mmm.

Bill Jones: ... "here in the Americas. And that's what we're witnessing. It's another testament of Jesus Christ."

Dan Gorman: So, in 19—I believe it was 1988—the Pageant was revamped and gained a new script. Did you get to see that version before you performed in? And I'm curious how you reacted to changes in the Pageant, the style of it, over the years.

Bill Jones: I think that the changes were mostly—I mean, there weren't doctrinal changes. I—the way I thought of it, there were just different parts of the Pageant that were either included or eliminated just because that you couldn't perform everything *in* the book. It's kind of like any other movie that's made. And so, there might have been some changes in *that* way where you, you know, you add a story or you eliminate a story, and you just—you know, the directors just go, "What's most important?" And, of course, they—you know, the [15:00] Church Presidency is probably very involved in that, in what should be included in the Pageant portion of what is performed. And so, you know, maybe it's by era, right? And—we believe in prophecy, and we believe in things like, you know, where you can be directed by the spirit on, you know, what is needed *today*, right? And so, in twenty years from now, things might be a little bit different. And

so, you know, so therefore we *change*, we—*adapt*, I guess, is a better word—kind of how things are delivered.

And I've always—I've never—I've actually kind of *appreciated* the changes, to be honest with you, because it's a different version of the Book of Mormon that we get to see or listen to. And so, I've never been opposed or have seen anything that was—you know, that I never enjoyed—I mean, that—I *always enjoyed* it. I guess there is one particular—and I'm trying to remember, in 1988, when—what was the stories that were involved in the Pageant those years, but there was one time that I remember going as a kid where they actually had *horses*! And King Moroni would drive—you know, ride up on the hill with a horse, and I thought that was the coolest thing. They used to do the sword fights with actual metal swords until missionaries would get injured, and then [chuckling]—so they'd have to alter it and kind of, you know, do some things that way. I remember when just missionaries *were* the cast members, and it wasn't families, and some—later on, in the Pageant, they allowed families to be a part of it. So, I mean, there's been some certain evolution, for sure, in terms of, like, how they conducted the Pageant, but I have always felt the spirit every time we would go and the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon, for sure.

Dan Gorman: So, let's come to the year of 2019. Now, I believe it was in fall 2018, the Church had announced that they were going to wind down the Pageant, with the last year going to be 2020. Did knowing that the Pageant was going to come to an end influence your decision to apply as a cast member?

Bill Jones: You know, I'm trying to remember. I *want* to say that we were already accepted, and I'm trying to remember exactly. Do you have that information on when they announced—

Dan Gorman: Just a moment. I will...

Bill Jones: When the Pageant was no longer—? 'Cause I think it was after we even applied and got accepted, and it was shortly afterwards, I think we found out—do you got [sic] the date for that? Because I can pretty much...

Dan Gorman: Yes, so, the Rochester *Democrat and Chronicle* says in October of 2018 that the Pageant would end in 2020.

Bill Jones: Okay. Okay. So, to answer your question, regardless of whether the Pageant was being limited or not, we were going to participate. And I think we got the news—our family had made the decision that we *wanted* to participate. When I say our family, I'm going to be honest with you—and maybe this is a similar story for most families, but—because of my history in New York, and an opportunity to go visit family and to participate in a Hill Cumorah Pageant, we kind of surprised our kids with the fact that, “Hey, we want to apply. What do you guys think?” They weren't *pumped* like, you know, as if we were going to Disneyland or anything like that.

[Dan laughs]

Bill Jones: I'll be honest with you, they were like, “No, Dad, please, no, no, I don't want to.” You know, “Why are you making us do this?” And I said, “Well, we're not ma[king you]—it's kind of a vacation, to some extent.” But we were—we had neighbors when we lived in Provo, Utah, who were in it for several years, and they were telling us right away, once we told them we were applying, that this is not a vacation. This is a lot of work. And you guys will realize that once you get there, and they even told us, you probably ought to work out, you probably ought to get yourself conditioned, making sure you're—you know, getting yourself prepared physically, right? And they would send us these things. But I guess the shorter answer is, we were going to apply; we were looking forward to it to some extent; and I guess I'll finish the story about my

kids, but after we were done with the experience, they wanted to do it again, because they enjoyed themselves so much. And I have to say that it was—like I told you, it was a lot of work. How many teenagers do *you* know that are excited about work? And how it's kind of like, my goodness, my kids are *seeing* the bigger picture, right? And that's, you know, as a mom, as a dad—and I'm—you know—my wife's—you know, the mom and dad want their kids to learn service. They want them to learn to *think of other people* than themselves. And that's really what the Pageant really kind of allowed us to do while we were having that experience.

Dan Gorman: As a high school teacher and as someone who's been a sports coach, who's worked in youth development, did you draw on any of that training, that professional [20:00] experience in your work at the Pageant?

Bill Jones: Absolutely. They divide up the ages when you are there and you're casted [sic]. And before we even arrived, they gave us a list of— I think we were in charge of the 17-year-olds, me and my wife. And *my* kids were assigned to other people. And so, we never really saw our kids much, our own *personal* kids. We were with the 17-year-olds, and we got to do *activities*, “get to know you,” and, you know, bear testimony, talk about Book of Mormon stories, and just kind of have a really good time in getting to know each other really closely.

And then, obviously, you know, we get casted [sic] within—I don't know if you have heard the story about—and this is what amazed me. Excuse me. The first day, you show *up*, they want—they need to *cast* over 700 people, I think was the number. It's quite amazing how they do it. And me as a film production teacher, you know, out here in high school, I'm like, “There's no way they're *assigning* this many people in that short of [an] amount of time.” And, as I watched the process, there was just, like—I was in *awe*. And, um—and so—but I got to use my, you know, my coaching skills and to be able to just even, you know, socialize with those young

men and women that were in our group, and I had about—I want to say we had about *fifteen*. And so, we were just responsible for them. We would—you know, they had some time where we had to, you know, talk with them, chat with them, and we would just—sometimes, just, that’s all we would do sometimes, is just chat. Where are you guys from, right? And we’re all from different areas of the country, it seemed like. And by the time—jeez, by the time we left, we were in tears and, you know, just didn’t—we just didn’t want to leave. I mean, it was—there was just a special feeling about that, for sure.

Dan Gorman: What roles did you have in the Pageant? Were you a cast member? [Or] were you purely behind the scenes?

Bill Jones: No, I was a cast member. I was the one in the Samuel the Lamanite story, and they called us the—*rabblers*, I think is what we were called? And I was—Samuel the Lamanite would get up and warn the people and tell them what’s going to happen, and we would be the people down below that would be throwing rocks and spears and things like that, and I got to throw rocks, so I was pretty thrilled about that, but not really. I mean, I was one of the bad guys, I guess, is what I’m saying. [Indistinct.]

Dan Gorman: And what about the rest of your family? What were their roles in the show?

Bill Jones: So, my wife was in the King Noah’s scene. King Noah’s an evil king in the Book of Mormon and—who led the people astray, even, you know, he was a Nephite king. And she was just a part of that, where Abinadi would come and would, you know, came and—I guess the best way to just quickly say it is, [Abinadi] would tell the king, you know, you’re wrong in how your—how you guys are doing things here, as a city, as a people, in terms of, like, keeping the commandments of God, and they *know* better, I mean, because they *had* that history several years ago, right, if you read the book and in sequential order of how it works.

But my kids were in the... My oldest, who was—who's graduated and was a senior that year, was in the Alma the Younger [scene], where he was doing some baptizing and things like that.

Dan Gorman: Mhmm.

Bill Jones: My *youngest* daughter was in that same scene and was a—just a daughter of a family. They were just put[ting] families together, fictional *families* together, in the stories that were being portrayed in the Pageant. My *second*-oldest daughter, Caylee, she's a little bit more tanned like me, and so she was—I don't know if this was the reason why—but she was asked to be a Lamanite dancer, and so she had one of the coolest costumes, I thought. And—so, she got to do those kinds of things. And then Cael, my youngest son, my only son, is—he was in the destruction scene. And so, he got to run out and—and die, I guess, is how that works out.

[Dan and Bill laugh]

Bill Jones: But he was—I mean, we—and then, we all got to participate in the very *beginning*—I can't even remember what that—the procession, I think, is what they call it, and then the—where Christ comes and appears, is where everybody arrives back again. So, that was ultimately my favorite whole entire experience, was being a part of that, for sure.

Dan Gorman: What was it like interacting with the audiences in 2019?

Bill Jones: Are you talking about, you know, the *people* that we would go visit [25:00] at—before the performance? Is that you are [unclear]?

Dan Gorman: Yes, when—before the show started, so this would be around, hmm, 6:30, 7 PM—

Bill Jones: Yep.

Dan Gorman: Before showtime, the cast members and also missionaries who weren't in the show would go out and talk to the visitors.

Bill Jones: You know, the visitors were always very gracious, and they were there because they wanted to be, typically, right? And so, some of them are there and have been there for year after year after year after year. And, honestly, I probably ran into more [Church] members than we did nonmembers. But when we ran into nonmembers, it was always kind of an extra-special time because then they would be inquisitive, like, oh, "What is this story about?" And then [we] would kind of be able to tell them a little bit more about it. But the people were always very nice and very gracious to, you know—and they're kind of *excited*, to be honest with you. I mean, that was—it's the lar[gest]—I think, it still *was* the largest outdoor performing, you know, pageant in the country, if not the world. I'm not sure how that works out. You probably know more about that than I do.

Dan Gorman: Mmm.

Bill Jones: But it was always fun to find somebody who started—just would ask you—they would—you—I guess the best way that conversations got started is, we would be in *costume*, and so they would definitely ask, oh, "So, what part of the Pageant do you play in?" And so, we would tell them the story of what we were a part in, and sometimes we would even be able to ask—*answer* more questions that they have about the Book of Mormon, if they had some. And so—and it obviously [was] a missionary opportunity for them to fill out a referral if they, you know, if they felt anything that they, you know—while they were listening to the performance sometimes, they would get—they would write out a referral that would send missionaries to get—*answer* more questions that they have after the performance.

Dan Gorman: Was there any discussion of what it was like having a large, primarily non-Native American cast playing roles that were, you know, ancient and [sic] Mesoamericans?

Bill Jones: Um—*no*? I mean—and I don't know if... I'm not going to say that I've been *offended* by that, either. I mean, it's us—

Dan Gorman: Mhmm.

Bill Jones: Telling the story, right? I think there were certainly people—and *I* was given—we were given the opportunity—I mean, they knew we were from *that area* and that I was [a] Native American Sen[eca]—and they gave me the opportunity, given other members of my family, *extended* family, who have also participated in that, and some of them for *years*, and they would go year in and year out. And so—no, I think the Pageant Presidency and the Church, you know, gave equal opportunity for all members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to participate and to be able to just tell the story. And so, you know, obviously—culturally and with skin color and such, maybe that *impacted* how they casted [sic] people, but I don't necessarily think so. I mean, uh, *maybe*. It all—it, you know... I guess it didn't really matter much to me, you know, in term—I just wanted to participate and—

Dan Gorman: Mhmm.

Bill Jones: Be able to be a part of it, and that was just an *outstanding* opportunity for our family.

Dan Gorman: After you performed in the Pageant in 2019, were you interested in applying again for 2020, for the last—what was going to be the last, show?

Bill Jones: We did apply. My kids were begging us to. I mean, honestly, they were like, “Dad, we want to do this again.” And that's when, basically, I believe—well, we got word that we weren't accepted, but that was okay. What—either way, we were going to go, right?

Dan Gorman: Mhmm.

Bill Jones: We were either going to be in it, or we were going to watch it. And I guess that's one unique thing that, in 2019, I never really got to watch the Pageant 'cause we were in it, and you're kind of behind—you know, you're behind-the-scenes, and you don't have an opportunity to sit down and watch it. They don't ask—they don't *allow* us to go into the audience and just sit there and watch it while we're not performing, if that makes sense. And so—but, it was a *sad day* to really get that news. From the time I was a small kid, we went every year, as many years as we could go, and then to hear that it was being discontinued... Um, yeah, there was a piece of my heart that basically kind of, like, feel like—felt like it *died*, but, you know, there's—I mean, I still believe in, you know, that the brethren receive revelation, and so that wasn't something that really... Um, I mean, it hurt for a little while, but I accepted it.

Dan Gorman: And, looking back on the experience now, what do you think is the takeaway for you, [30:00] from having been in the exp[erience]—having been *in* the Pageant, especially right as it ended?

Bill Jones: You know, the takeaway—[laughs] well, I tell you, for me, at least, even being in the Pageant, no matter how many years you've been a member of the Church, it was confirming that the Book of Mormon is true. I mean, it's *true*.

Dan Gorman: Hmm.

Bill Jones: And how do you *not* when you—especially when you're performing it? I mean, it's—[sighs] I tried to stress this with people that we would talk to in the audience—is like, the things that you're about to watch is [sic] just not a show. It's just—it's actually things that actually happened in real life and here in the Americas. And so, whether people believe that or not, I mean, that's obviously their choice. But I honestly—it just confirmed to *me*—that was my takeaway—that this was the *absolute truth* because of how I—not necessarily about what I *read*;

it was how I *felt*. And, you know, it just—[it's] hard to describe in words, honestly. I mean, it's just—and even my kids felt it. And sometimes you have to teach them what they're feeling, but it's like—yeah, that's—you know, to have them say what they said after we were done with that experience, you can—you *know* that they were touched by the things that we were doing there. That really was the bigger picture of *life*, I mean, really, honestly.

Dan Gorman: Before we end this interview, Bill—and you've been very gracious, even as we've gone a bit overtime—is there any last story you'd like to share from your Pageant experience?

Bill Jones: Yeah, I guess I want to share my experience when—have you seen it yourself?

Dan Gorman: Yes, I saw it [in] 2017, 2018, *and* 2019.

Bill Jones: It's the scene when Christ appears, and he—I don't know if you got the opportunity to see him come basically out of the sky.

Dan Gorman: Mhmm.

Bill Jones: At least, it looks that way, right? And we got the opportunity... [long pause] We got the opportunity to *watch* that, and I guess I could only imagine what that would have been like, to see that for real. I just remember the first feeling that *I* had, and like I told you, we all have different roles in the Pageant, so you would think we were [sic; would] be sitting together as a family, right?—

Dan Gorman: Mmm.

Bill Jones: For that particular event. But I—my son's across the way; my daughter's, you know... We're basically dotted all throughout the cast there, on the big hill, on this stage. And, um... [long pause] I just remember kind of, like, wanting... [chokes up] Sorry to get emotional here... Um, wanting to get to see my *kids*, my *wife*! I wanted to know where they *were*. I wanted

to s[ee]—I mean... [voice breaks] I just wanted to know if they were feeling the same thing I was. Right? Um... [pause] You know, you read it a hundred times, over and over again, and then, when you perform it, and you're *in it*... Wow. Just—that was a *spectacular* moment/feeling. It just kind of reaffirmed what this life's all about, is that we have a savior. We have a savior who was here, who died for us and *came to visit*, because he cared enough to do that, right? He just came to—he really is someone who knows who we *are*. And—no, just a special feeling, I mean, just one of those things where I wanted my own kids, my wife, I wanted to know what they were feeling at that moment, and, unfortunately [laughs], I couldn't. I had to look across—I mean, it—and we—that scene was as reverent if I've ever seen my kids, if that makes sense to you. I mean, I'm talking about teenagers here, and—you know, where they're just—I mean, they—like, Christ in white is there, ministering to the children, ministering to the people. And he's—I mean, just, can you imagine? I mean, I don't know if you believe in God or Christ, but I mean, I guess I was put[ting]—trying to put myself in the shoes of the people who *actually* saw him, and how would [35:00] that have made me feel. And I guess I felt as much peace as I've ever *felt*, in my entire life, in that particular moment. And so, you know, the Church is true, as far as I'm concerned, and I hope that, you know, whoever hears this, whether it's a family member of mine or someone—some complete stranger, this book, this Book of Mormon that we read and that we believe in, we do more than just believe in it. We try to *live* and *learn from* the lessons that are in that book. And, um, you know, it's—it *is* another testament of Jesus Christ, and that's, you know, what I try to testify of, not only through verbally, but just how I *act* and how I live my life. And so, I've—I certainly appreciated the opportunity to participate in that very *last* Pageant. It's just—it was a special—it was a special moment for me.

Dan Gorman: Well, Bill, thank you so much for sharing your memories and ... certainly for being so *candid* about how you felt during the experience.

Bill Jones: For sure. And I appreciate you doing this history. I think this is a very *good thing* that you're doing. So, thank you so much.

Dublin Core Metadata for the Interview

Title: Interview with William (Bill) Jones, Sunday, March 27, 2022

Subject: Hill Cumorah Project, Seneca, Native American, Theatre, Twentieth Century, Twenty-First Century, Education, Book of Mormon

Description: William (Bill) Jones recounts his upbringing as a Seneca Native American and Latter-day Saint in Western New York. After discussing his views about Native Americans, race, and the Book of Mormon, he tells the story of how he, his wife, and their children acted in the 2019 Hill Cumorah Pageant. Particular emphasis is placed on the show's casting process (including race and colorblind casting), Bill's supervision of teenagers at the Pageant, the acting experience, and Bill's strong emotions during the scene where Jesus visits the Americas.

Creator: William (Bill) Jones and Daniel Gorman Jr.

Source: Hill Cumorah Legacy Project

Date: Sunday, March 27, 2022

Contributor: Daniel Gorman Jr.

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