

Interview with Chris & Heidi Bjorling
Friday, March 18, 2022
The Hill Cumorah Legacy Project

Recorded over Zoom
Interviewees: Chris & Heidi Bjorling
Interviewers: William (Seth) Arnold, Brody Allen
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Transcription App: Panopto

Transcript

Note: Seth Arnold and Chris Bjorling had strict cut off times due to classes and meetings, so unfortunately Seth had to cut off the Bjorlings at one point so that they could finish on time.

[00:00:00]

Seth Arnold: Okay, then. So, I guess we should get started now. And—I guess we should just get started.

Chris Bjorling: Cool.

Seth Arnold: Okay, so: Hello, everybody.

[Chris says something indistinctly]

Seth Arnold: My name is Seth Arnold, along with my partner Brody Allen. Today's date is March 18th, 2022, and I'm here with two guests today. May you introduce yourselves?

Chris Bjorling: Yes, Chris Bjorling.

Heidi Bjorling: I'm Heidi Bjorling.

Seth Arnold: Hey, Chris and Heidi. What were your positions in the Pageant?

Chris Bjorling: I was a counselor in the Hill Cumorah Pageant Presidency for 9+ years.

Heidi Bjorling: And I was the... There's a whole program that goes on *behind* the scenes as the group meets and prepares for Pageant, to learn and perform Pageant. And so, I was over all the

musical—the music in all our group meetings and musical numbers. And then, the last year that Pageant was performed, in '19 [2019], I was serving in the wigs and beards shop, so they apply—we put wigs and beards on principal characters, and I did that with three other ladies in that little shop.

Chris Bjorling: So, let me highlight something, too—for you, too, before you go, Seth. When Heidi said she was in charge of music, we had 47 devotionals and meetings that required music during that 17-day period. So, she was giving us soloists as well as congregational numbers for that purpose, for those time periods.

Heidi Bjorling: Mhmm [best guess].

Chris Bjorling: And then, as she referenced—

Heidi Bjorling: And different choirs and... Yeah.

Chris Bjorling: And different choirs and stuff. She referenced the last time. *We were* brought back into Pageant, and I was brought back in as the head of security for the end of the Pageant period, so we really had different roles over the 10, 11 years we were there. So...

Seth Arnold: Cool. How did you two originally get involved in the Pageant?

Chris Bjorling: That's a great question. We actually have a lot of kids. So, we have 7 children, and we live just down the road from the Hill Cumorah; we're about 10 minutes away. And it's always been a great experience for those members of our Church, from our local group—our local chapel and in the area—that have enjoyed the Pageant over the years. And so, we figured with our first three being boys, we probably should get engaged and do it.

I—as a young boy growing up in Newark, New York, I had the opportunity to work at the Hill Cumorah and the sites through some of my college years, so for a good period of time I was associated with Pageant while working there. [coughs] So, I saw it was a really good

environment, really good opportunity.

So then, when our children got older, we were thinking about applying, and then I got a phone call—and I think you’re probably going to interview him, too—from Neil Pitts, who at the time, Neal Pitts was—from the Church position / standpoint—was over our geographical area, the larger geographical area, and he asked us to participate in the Presidency for me, and then that we would find some position for Heidi to go. So, while we were thinking of applying, we actually ended up being, as we call, “*called to serve*” in the positions. As a counselor in the Presidency, we’re kind of like producers of the Pageant, so we’re—we do all the scenes and making sure everything happens and behind everywhere, and, you know, the funding is there, and it’s done the right way, and stuff like that. So...

Heidi Bjorling: I—on my side of it, the way I would tell the story is I grew up in California. I met my husband in college. We moved back here when we were 10 months married, and that was in 1990 that we moved here—so, you know, living 10 minutes from the Hill Cumorah, where the Pageant was always presented. We’ve been involved with it through the years, whether we were officially involved as cast members or staff members. We were involved certainly in attending it, receiving and [00:05:00] hosting family and friends from across the nation who would come to *see* it, and then serving in—rendering service as a support to help it happen, in terms of whether it’s helping people in the parking, you know, or *whatever*. There’s lots of—there were a lot of roles to be played for—in—you know, in it coming about and producing it. And so, we have always had the experience of being involved, just even as audience members, and serving through years while our kids were young.

So, the first year we became *officially* a part of it, as—in terms of my husband receiving the call and then us for, you know, joining as cast members, was when our oldest was—maybe

when he was 14? Hmm, yes, when he was 14. Our youngest was just four months old. [laughs]
 But I have read that Pageant, the first year it's recorded that it happened, was in 19—[pauses]
 '37, and my grandma and her brother and his wife in 1939 were here, and I have pictures of them
 from that time period, in costumes, were [sic] they came back and were in Pageant back *then*, in
 1939, when it was a very *new* production and ... tradition.

Chris Bjorling: It was actually performed at the—in—at something called the Sacred Grove at
 the time. It had not been at the Hill Cumorah back [yet?] at that point. So...

Heidi Bjorling: Yeah, so, anyway... [laughs]

Seth Arnold: Awesome. For my next question: What did your responsibilities look like during
 your time with the Pageant? Did they vary year by year, or were you gradually assuming more
 and more responsibility as time went on?

Chris Bjorling: I'll let you answer first, honey, and then I'll do mine.

Heidi Bjorling: I—[pauses] I would say in just... Hmm. *No*, I don't think my responsibilities
 changed. As my *family* grew, my experience with it personally—
 [faint noise from Chris]

Heidi Bjorling: You know, changed because the first year that—so, my husband received the
 calling in July the—and it was announced that he would be part of the new Presidency in July of
 2006, and then they worked all year, met with all the staff and people that they would meet with
 to produce it. And so, then, the next year, my kids—our seven kids and myself—were *in* it as
 cast members. And I did—I performed my *calling*—I—my duties—all alongside it, and that
 continued the whole time we were involved in Pageants. So, if it changed, it was just you tweak
 it with changes.

So—I was going to say the first year, I had two children that I carried around, one on

each hip, and then I had the little 4-year-old, the oldest of the three young ones, who... So, our kids have someplace to go *during* it that's called Primary, the 4- to 9-year-olds. So, my first year, I had two pre-Primary age kids and then a 4-year-old. And then, as we grew, and as they grew, then they became involved in their own cast teams. So, the things that changed were just as my kids grew, and then the music, just as the schedule might be—the behind-the-scenes schedule might be modified, then, “Okay, we have another choir here,” or this or that, but otherwise, my duties and roles *didn't* change.

Chris Bjorling: So, for me—and I'm going to focus on the Presidency role right now—when we were called to the Presidency, we quickly divided the tasks ahead of us, [00:10:00] because we weren't the first Dread Pirate Roberts, if you know that reference to [*The Princess Bride*]. But we're picking up where other people had been, and so there—a lot of work have been done ahead of that. So, we divided up the responsibility matrix, and I ended up with pretty much everybody—doing everything that related to people. So, the devotionals that Heidi referenced, where she was getting the music for, I would get the speakers for those. I would focus on the aspects of the entertainment—call it the entertainment—for the cast when they weren't practicing or on stage.

And so—Heidi referenced a term called “cast teams,” and what we would do is we would break the cast down to age-banded individuals, and so, specifically for the youth—so, if you had a youth who is aged 10, they would be in a 10-year-old cast team. There would probably be 30 to 40 of them at the most that were there—actually, probably a little less. And then, so we would divide them up into these cast teams. So, I had a director of the cast teams that worked *for* me under there, but then we would call or ask to help support probably 200 people through the year to do all this work with these different groups, as the Pageant went on. So, everything related to

there—everything related to when we would bring our cast out into the audience to talk to the crowds before and after the performance—that was all related to me, and so a lot of that stuff was just the same thing I did year after year.

I will say that we were asked at different times, you know, not from a professional standpoint, but from just a different standpoint, to change the way we did some things, and so that usually [relied?]*—*rested on my shoulders as to organizational design and refocusing the work that we were doing, and going forward from a scheduling standpoint, or from just of people and the movement of the people standpoint that was there. But that was pretty much, you know, just *going* and *changing* with the times. It's kind of funny; I talked to you briefly the other day, and you said you're a programmer and you're working on that stuff. When we started Pageants back in 2006, we told people, "Don't bring your cell phones; don't bring your iPads"*—*well, I don't even know if iPads were then*—*

Heidi Bjorling: [laughing] Yeah.

Chris Bjorling: "Don't bring your Walkmans," and, you know—you can look these up on the History Channel*—*

Heidi Bjorling: And plus it would crash the systems, huh? And*—*

Chris Bjorling: All these things, and then*—*

Heidi Bjorling: Distract them*—*

Chris Bjorling: And then, the network would be slow. But, by the time we were done, it's like, "OK, pull up this website. Go here. It's the Hill Cumorah today. It's [unclear] today. Get your stuff there." I mean, we used to print out*—*

Heidi Bjorling: Here's where you find your schedule*—*

Chris Bjorling: We used to print out the schedules, and you'd have to deal with that, and people

would be up to 3 in the morning because the rehearsal schedules would change, and things like that. So, it was—you know, we just advanced with technology and the opportunities as well, too. But for the most part, my role was pretty much the same throughout the whole time period. So...

Seth Arnold: All right. So, Brody, did you want to ask a question?

Chris Bjorling: Brody, you're on mute, if you're trying to.

Heidi Bjorling: While he is getting off mute, I have a question. I'm just curious. You're collecting this, you're interviewing right now, for what purpose or with what focus?

Seth Arnold: I would say that we are interviewing so that we can archive your experiences in as pristine a quality as we can, because—let's face it—not all of us are going to be around to tell these stories. And so, we want to find a way to collect all these experiences from folks who had a direct impact in [best guess] the Pageant and archive them for future generations.

Chris Bjorling: So, let me—while you say that, and I'm going to readmit Brody back in—one of the things, because it was kind of uniquely different having served my last set of time as [indistinct]...

Brody Allen: Can you hear me now?

Heidi Bjorling: Ah, yes!

Chris Bjorling: Yeah, Brody, we're gonna let you do a question.

[Brody starts to speak]

Chris Bjorling: Let me finish this *one* thought first. Serving as the security director at the very end, I was actually one of the main people who got the chance to get rid of everything that the Hill Cumorah Pageant owned. So, we had 11 buildings, and so we would—we went on this great giving spree to nonprofit organizations, to [00:15:00] different groups here in the communities far and wide, to our other internal Church groups, of just distributing the few thousand costumes

we had, props we had that were of relevance, different things. Last year, when we were doing this, the price of wood was astronomical, so we had a lot of wood taken to a camp that we owned down on Seneca Lake. So, they came, and they felt they yielded about \$10– to \$12,000 dollars’ worth of lumber from just one of our buildings that they could take away. [coughs] So, it was a big—a very unique experience, as you’re looking to archive this. We couldn’t give things away to members; we couldn’t allow souvenirs to be existing. But it’s kind of fun. I was at a musical just the other day, watching the fog machine go, and knowing that that’s the fog machine from the Hill Cumorah Pageant, it’s like, “OK, *parts* of Pageant still live on.” So, it was kind of cool that way.

Anyway, Brody, I cut you off. Welcome back.

[...]

Chris Bjorling: You’re muted.

Brody Allen: Yep, nope, that’s my bad. Okay, so—again, sorry for the tech issues. My router decided that today of all days would be the day it would just keel over and die.

Chris Bjorling: Been there, done that. Yup.

Brody Allen: Yup. Just one of those days. Anyway: What were some of your issues with producing the Pageant? Was there anything that came up consistently? It was like, what is the biggest challenges in... Because this is a big undertaking of the Pageant, at Hill Cumorah. So, what are the challenges and difficulties, and, you know—?

Chris Bjorling: Yeah, so great question, so let me address that from a few different angles. First of all, each year, we would invite roughly 9—by the end of our term, we’d invite roughly 900 people to be cast members, with the goal of narrowing that down to about 725 to 750, of which—those 900 people—probably 50 to 55 percent were people who had been in Pageant

before, and the other remainder were just names on a list. So, each year that we were in Pageant, we'd—we had from—[it'd] be anywhere between 2- to 4,000 names that we would consider, that submitted applications that were approved by their local congregational leader to participate in Pageant, so we would—we would do—we would sit, and we'd look for things. And, you know, as strange as it is, the Pageant never changed its script in the last 27 years, and so, we knew kind of the body types we wanted. So, we wanted so many 17-year-old males, so many 17-year-old females, so many... And so, we always would start casting by families who had great numbers that would help us fill out our youth categories. And then, from that, we would build up, so that variability that we would have from year to year was usually around who was able to come and actually fill our demographic need as we went through from the casting standpoint. So, each year, by having a different cast, we had some people who knew what they were doing and [some]—and a lot of people who didn't. And so, we relied upon the new people to watch the old people, the older, experienced people, to kind of get more of a flow into the process.

In this activity, as we progressed, we cast probably—I think it was 1,200 roles in a three-hour period on the first night that we pulled this group together. So, you think about the logistics of it; we're doing a lot in a short period of time. Ask any—you know, if you go to any theatrical company and say, "Hey, we cast 1,200 roles in three hours," they'd look at you like you're strange. Like, that never happened. But it was fun to bring some of them from the community in to watch.

Heidi Bjorling: And in fact, how many—you have one main artistic director, and he had a team of, maybe, about ten directors?

Chris Bjorling: Ten to twelve sub-directors, yeah.

Heidi Bjorling: And we had seven stages. And then—I mean, there is somebody whose role was

to spray paint cyber-stages into the bowl, or the “house” [unclear]—

Chris Bjorling: They would—

Heidi Bjorling: So they could carry on rehearsals for all those different stages throughout a day—

Chris Bjorling: In a one-dimension—

Heidi Bjorling: Yeah, and—

Chris Bjorling: On the grass. So, they would paint basically the stage layout on the grass. So, we would have the real stage, which was, as Heidi said, multi-dimensional, so it’s multi-levels, like, up to so-many stories high. And then, we would have this all in a flat surface on the grass, and they would act it out there too, so...

Heidi Bjorling: And so, my point about it, in mentioning, is just that it’s—you have a team of directors that, in their professional careers, are [00:20:00] directors elsewhere during the year. And they would come, and they would all tell you [laughs], in no other place in their careers do they do that, cast 8—how many roles? 12-? I mean—

Chris Bjorling: Well, up to 1,200, but—

Heidi Bjorling: It’s usually like 800 people, but, like, 1,200 roles in a three-hour period.

Chris Bjorling: Yeah.

Heidi Bjorling: So, that was a real tall task.

Chris Bjorling: So, in—so, that was item one. Item two, then, is, because we have half of these people new, we don’t know their personalities; we don’t know a lot of that stuff. So, you were always dealing with *uniquenesses* of people, and it was fun, you know, for the most part. But there were some challenges when you go through that period. For instance, one year, we had some missionaries want to get us to accept a person that we were told was Jewish, and he was

from Israel. But we can't proselyte [sic]; our Church can't proselyte [sic] in Israel, so he couldn't become a member, and he couldn't become a member because of his quote-unquote "wife." And so, we brought him in to cast, and then we found out within a day that he was actually an undercover writer that was trying to infiltrate the Hill Cumorah Pageant cast and write a story on us.

Well, we found it out. It was kind of funny 'cause he'd—as we looked and we researched, and we found more things—he had done this at a prison and some other places, and stuff like that—but here, a bunch of, you know, *old guys* busted him in this process of doing this stuff, and we're kicking him out. The fun part was, we had the—our—where he was living, was overwatched by the former head of the FBI in Southeast Asia, so that was kind of cool. So, we had this FBI agent kind of take him away, in a *nice* way, ok? It was a very nice way, but it was—

Brody Allen: I feel like you could have just—

Chris Bjorling: Pardon?

Brody Allen: Sorry, again. I feel like—it seems like a lot of effort to go through when you could just ask. I mean, you seem perfectly amenable to interviews. It's not like it's—it's not like the whole thing is a secret.

Heidi Bjorling: Right!

Chris Bjorling: Well, that's exactly what we told him! When we're like, we're like, "Ari, all you had to do is [sic] just asked." We would—because I was in the room when he was confronted, and I'm like—we're like, "All you have to do is just ask; we would have just had you here the whole time." We didn't care. And, you know, so, we kicked him out of Pageant, but we brought him back, and he ended up writing—

Heidi Bjorling: As a reporter, as a—

Chris Bjorling: Well, as a guest.

Heidi Bjorling: Research.

Chris Bjorling: He felt really embarrassed. He goes, “If this had happened in my church, I would have been—you know, I’d be in hand[cuffs]—in shackles right now, and the lawyers would be talking to me.” And I’m like—and we’re like, “Yeah, we just kind of find it funny, you know?” And somebody wanted to bust into the Pageant. So, anyway, so he ended up writing a book. Last time I knew, it was still available on Amazon. But there is a book out there from that. So, we had that.

We also had—each year, we would find the challenge of dealing with protesters. So, pre-season, we would meet with the sheriff’s department, who provided security for us during this time period, and they would talk about—and the district attorney—and they would talk about what was there and such. So, one of my first few years, I actually had the opportunity to—they *did* arrest a gentleman who was disturbing some of our meetings, and—because it’s not lawful to interrupt a church service—so, one of those meetings that we referenced (Heidi before), he was—his megaphone was carrying forward from the road into our building, which we called the study shelter, which is open-air–covered—well, it was covered, but it was open-air on the sides—facility that the 900 people would sit in.

So, anyway—so, yeah, so, I got to go to court for that. That was a very interesting thing, along those lines. And then, you’d have to deal with issues with security every year, just somebody stealing something or somebody breaking in, and so, those were some things that you didn’t like to deal with, but you know, what was really fun—

Heidi Bjorling: Or people trying to come in, in costumes.

Chris Bjorling: Yeah. So, before we took over, our cast would go out in suits and ties, or shirts

and ties, white shirts and ties. But then, we found members of other denominations who didn't really like us, coming in and preaching to people. And so, we switched up—that was one of the things I think we did year 2 or 3—we switched up and had our cast only greeting in their costumes, so somebody couldn't look like us and give the wrong story.

So, it was always just a fun challenge, and—you know, give 'em credit, lots of some of 'em were really mean, but some of 'em were really just nice people that had different views than we did, and you got to like those people, and things like that. And so, they'd come back year after year, so you knew a lot of them, and you'd say hi, and... You know, [00:25:00] it's kind of like one of those Foghorn Leghorn cartoons of—I don't know if you ever saw it, but it was like the fox and the—er, the wolf and the sheep dog. Every morning, they punch in the time clock, and they say, “Hey, how are you doing today?” “I'm doing fine.” And then, they'd go fight each other all day long, and then they'd turn around and go back out, and punch back out, and [say,] “Woop [best guess], see you tomorrow! See you tomorrow!” And—so, it was kind of that way.

So, big question, Brody, yeah. So, when you're there, you just have to deal with it. And—one of the two things that were models of mine was, first of all, we're really *camping*. So, we had people coming in from our artistic departments out in Salt Lake, and they're like, “Oh, you can't do this!” and “You know, we never allow this to happen in our conference center,” which is a 22,000-person-seat arena where the Tabernacle [Choir] plays and the leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints present, and stuff like that. But I would tell him, I'm like, “No guys, we're camping. It's okay. We can do it this way. We're camping.” So, that was always one of the other thing[s], the—one of the models. Then the other one was, okay, just expect change. Just expect disruption. And as long as you took those attitudes each day, the—you were ready to handle it, because we didn't know if a building was gonna get flooded out, or

if something would break, or something along those lines, because I referenced our cast size of roughly 725 to 750. On a production night, we added about another 150 people in there. And on a regular—even for our staff nights, we had the 750 cast, but we'd have about 100 staff members. So, you're really pushing a thousand people that you're trying to maintain and move around and keep organized and keep safety there. We had usually, on par, 10 doctors on staff that were—well, they were cast members and on staff each year, so we would get them in so we could run a full medical facility if we needed to. Because you've got these people out in the heat; they're doing things; you have dehydration; you get injuries, falling off [sets], breaking arms, breaking legs. Yeah, just some dumb stuff, too. [indistinct]

Heidi Bjorling: Yes, there's the—

Brody Allen: We actually, uh—

Heidi Bjorling: The *performance* aspect of it, you're taking nonprofessionals, non—inexperienced, even handicapped individuals, and learning a show and preparing a presentation. But then you're dealing with the logistics of that, too. Like he says, you know: You've got the bathrooms, and you've got the medical, and you've got just the logistical parameters of leading a group that size through—spending—

Chris Bjorling: Feeding 'em.

Heidi Bjorling: *Hours*

Chris Bjorling: Yeah.

Heidi Bjorling: A day. They even rehearse up until after midnight the first couple days, you know, so you are running. The *entire* group meets by 8—8:30 AM—

Chris Bjorling: Yeah.

Heidi Bjorling: Every day while they're in preparation. And then, you have even people

rehearsing the schedules; [it would] take 'em up till midnight, even—

Chris Bjorling: Yeah.

Heidi Bjorling: You know, as you're running all of that, so, logistically, communicating...

Chris Bjorling: So—Brody, you were going to say something—

Heidi Bjorling: Yeah.

Chris Bjorling: So we cut you off, sorry.

Heidi Bjorling: Sorry!

[silence]

Chris Bjorling: Brody died again.

Heidi Bjorling: Oh, no! [gasps]

Brody Allen: Am I still here?

Chris Bjorling, Heidi Bjorling [simultaneously]: There you are!

Chris Bjorling: Go ahead, Brody; we cut you off.

Brody Allen: All right. I was going to say—I had a couple of little, minor questions relating to this, and again, you got some great insight so far, but my first thought was, what are people *protesting*? I can see somebody showing up just to be, like, hecklers, because you get those at everything, but... Like, *organized protests*?

Chris Bjorling: Yeah. So, when you say organized, it's great. So, the current district attorney in Ontario County is a friend of mine. He's—he and I coach baseball together; we've got kids the same age. [coughs] We've had a great time, and we actually hung out for a lot of football stuff, too. And he was the assistant district attorney over these things, and one year, he calls and says, "Hey, they're not finding protesters." So, you had some born-again Christian magazine that showed that they were hiring protesters for the Hill Cumorah Pageant. They didn't have enough,

and they put out a thing; they were going to pay people to come up and protest. So, yeah, it is organized, and it is there. And some of these organizers, they travel around and follow different Church groups, like—for instance, I referenced before, we arrested one—or, well, *we* didn't arrest; the police arrested one—very nice guy, I think, very simple-minded, but very outspoken about... [00:30:00] *things*, okay, and stuff. And you're like, "OK, is he only protesting us?" Well, a couple of years ago, we had season tickets to Syracuse Orange basketball, and we would park at this one structure. And he was outside preaching *there*, too, and it was—so he was like a street preacher, preaching repentance and everything like that. So, most of the time, the people that protested against us were people who didn't like our Church and our beliefs. And they said we were bad ... people, because of our beliefs. And it's kind of weird when you think about it. It's like, "Okay, this is kind of strange."

But yeah, it was there, and on the conflict—on the contrary, we had—while I was there, we had... oh, not *60 Minutes*; we had *ABC Nightly News*? No, ABC's... There was an evening show, an hourlong evening show, and Mitt Romney was running the first time. They came out and stayed with us, and things like that. So it's just kind of interesting, the way it all goes.

Heidi Bjorling: There are some, yeah—

Chris Bjorling: *Nightline! Nightline.*

Heidi Bjorling: Or—there are some organizations that, like you said, that—where people do travel around. They run a circuit. And they would like to actually instigate or get people engaged physically and different things because they can make *money* off of the lawsuits. So there is—there are organizations like that—

Chris Bjorling: Yeah, there are ones that do that, too—

Heidi Bjorling: In place, and then there are just opposing religions, too. So, you know we are

aware. We have many different congregations alive and well in our community, right here in Canandaigua, and—you know, we're aware of different congregations that take their turns *studying us*, you know [laughs], and getting steeped in ideas against us. And so, then there's—I've known different groups who are busy during Pageant time putting fliers, *anti*-[LDS] fliers, on people's doorsteps, you know, canvassing the neighborhoods, and to deter them from coming and stuff. So, there's people that just have different religious beliefs and—you know, all the way to people who—it's their way to try and make money.

Chris Bjorling: So, one funny story was, the Department of Transportation had us put up these electronic billboards. You've seen them; they have the lights on, and they give a message like, "Pageant traffic ahead," I think is what ours was just supposed to say. It's supposed to give a warning to the drivers when they come down through. Well, apparently one of them was unlocked one night, and we didn't know about it, and they put in their own message. They knew what they were doing, so they typed in their own message that said, "Joseph lied." So, that's a reference to Joseph Smith. So, it was just kind of—you know, most everybody would be upset, and we just kind of thought it was the funniest thing. We're like, "This is hilarious they would go to the trouble of just reprogramming a safety sign—"

[Heidi laughs]

Chris Bjorling: "To put in some message." We just—we kind of laughed about it, and then we got it fixed, and you kind of have to let it roll off your back. So...

Brody Allen: All right. Will [Seth], do you want to ask the next one?

Seth Arnold: Sure. So, what were some of your favorite moments from the Pageant that just made you feel interested or engaged or proud of the work you'd done?

Chris Bjorling: Mom, you want to say anything about that?

Heidi Bjorling: Oh, hmm. [laughs]

Chris Bjorling: All right, let her think about it for a second. So—you want to? Because I've got stuff.

Heidi Bjorling: Mmm. Yeah, I mean, there's a lot of little, individual, personal experiences. I feel like we were really involved in it all hours of the day and throughout the year, and... It just—it really has been, and really was, a very unique experience in—unique in the Church as well, because it's not like pageants, producing pageants are our Church's ultimate business. I mean, that's not what they're doing, you know? [laughs] By and large, overall, throughout the world. But it seemed like the Church, that I am aware of, has had, like, eight or nine Pageants that you can—

Chris Bjorling: They've had more than that.

Heidi Bjorling: Find throughout the world, at a given time, that might be happening for a stint of years, and [00:35:00] I can name some that I know of, but it's still not Church-wide that we're really doing this all the time, [this] kind of thing.

But what I have felt was *pretty* special about our Pageant—a lot of things, but one—is it has been one of the larger cast-type pageants. It is—it's been remarkable to *me*, when I experience it, when I'm *on* the Hill, when I'm *in* rehearsals, when you're sacrificing and experiencing the elements, you know, whether it's just torrential downpour or it's the heat of the day, on a stage that is made of fiberglass, and it's like you're standing on a frying pan, you know? And—*but* to be a part of something where everyone is united with this purpose and coming together, and sacrificing to come together. And then, when you're—many people who are a part, [who] have been a part of the cast will say one of their favorite moments is when we are all on the stage together in what happens to be a scene where Christ is coming to visit people.

And—but you're all assembled and on the stage, and it's *definitely* an experience that is much larger than just your little self. And then, you are—you're just—you're coming together, and the whole time behind the scenes, coming together. You are sacrificing [laughs] a *lot* to get there. And we can name people that have been *robbed* on the way [laughs] and literally shown up from across the country with *nothing*, literally, because they were robbed on the way. So, you know, there are sacrifices people have made to get there, to put—to reserve that time, to just spend the couple weeks that is required, the two [to] three weeks to be able to participate in the experience.

But—sorry, I'm *long-winded* in getting to this—but that anyone can do it, essentially—not anyone, because the numbers can't allow everyone that applies, *but*—that anyone with handicaps or not, with talent or not, can be in it, and so experiencing, watching very *skilled* people—as in, skilled with—as a director or a lighting designer or sound, or you have the soundtrack of the Tabernacle Choir and Children's Choir, and you have music people, and—so, the person doing—building—in charge of the costumes—all of these different skill sets that come together and get to be a *part* of it. You know, I had kids be teenagers in it, and certainly young men in it. And so, there's a *battle master* director, and he is conducting rehearsals with hundreds of young men on the stage—

Chris Bjorling: With weapons. [laughs]

Heidi Bjorling: And they're wielding heavy swords, and they have to be real wood [laughs] to use. And so, when you're watching that, and watching and hearing the music and—of everything, of these *professional* contributions pulled together, and seeing somebody—like, I keep saying handicapped, but truly; we have a director's daughter that was very hunched over by her physical impediments, and somebody would always help her to safely navigate just getting on the stage. Or you'd watch an older person and make sure they're safely on the stage *and*

exiting the stage, and you're carrying, like I did, babies, and trying to remain safe with all of that. And you've got the tech people that are [00:40:00] supporting that, building the stage and put[ting] the lights up and the spotlights, all of that—all of that pulled together, that you're this little piece that gets to be a part of that, and not because of any specific, special skill that you have, but you're united with everybody and experiencing the benefit of participating in that. And I don't know, I—there—when I worked in wigs and beards the last year, some people—things have changed in terms of being able to get our hands on quality of beards and wigs, but there are people that would work the whole year, making *one beard* out of human hair. And so [laughs], they've contributed that time. And then, you have the people—I got trained in how to *apply* the beards, but then we took care of those each night, and—so, we—anyway, so there—with that function, I was offstage. I never even *witnessed* the Pageant, and we would have first-timers that would come across the country with their families for the first and only time and never actually see the Pageant themselves, either. But that last year, being *on* the Hill, *in* the—behind-the-scenes, not even *witnessing* it, but hearing the soundtrack, feeling it, and interacting with the people as they came and went from on and off to stage, and helped 'em, I remember *feeling*—it's just a feeling that was tangible, but that I experienced, you know, kind of thirdhand or vicariously, being a part of it, but still feeling how grand the experience was, to be a part of it and to feel united and gathered with such a crowd. That's—I don't know—that—

Chris Bjorling: That's you? Okay, so, thank you! For me, some things that stick out. First of all, nobody died, okay?

[Heidi and Chris laugh]

Chris Bjorling: So, when you're in one of these positions of leadership, and you're thinking, "Okay, nobody die, please; nobody die." We didn't have anybody die, so, you know, it was a

low bar, but it was a *good* bar. The—

Heidi Bjorling: But are you referencing the *challenges*? [laughs]

Chris Bjorling: Well—but—yeah, when you think about it, you're really looking for the safety of everybody. But—

Heidi Bjorling: Saving the stage from somebody rushing, you know?

Chris Bjorling: So, the things that really stick out the most is, we were able to put off—put together great Pageants each year we were there. Everything came together; nobody died, like I joked about. But more importantly, in Heidi's reference to it, you know, this is a spiritual show. It's a religious thing. And it was interesting that, as you would watch the casting at the beginning of the night, that some of the principal characters are on the stage, one of them being the individual that they would have, as Heidi referenced, as the descending Christ. So, the person who portrayed Christ in their acting role, you could actually just feel it as they're going through, and you're looking at them call down the men for the role. You would feel like, "This year, it's going to be this person." And it was *kind* of overwhelming to *feel* that, and to know when they pulled them and selected them that—you kind of are in tune with everything, too, and it was just a spiritual moment that was there. And one of the major things that *we* had was—

Heidi Bjorling: And I'll have to add to that when you're done [laughs]—

Chris Bjorling: One—

Heidi Bjorling: But we had an experienced person, you and I, with that when I was cast as Sariah.

Chris Bjorling: Right, so one of the big things that was originally done, that the Pageant's for, is— [to Seth] Oh, you got a hand up. Do we have a hand raised?

Seth Arnold: Yeah, that's me. Sorry, I don't want to be **that** guy, but we still have six

questions to go through, and we've used up 2/3 of our time limit.

Heidi Bjorling: Okay, okay.

Seth Arnold: So, I would like to get through all the questions first before we dive into it. Sorry about that.

Chris Bjorling: No, it's okay. All right. So we'll leave it at that for the moment. So... But go ahead. Do your next question.

Seth Arnold: So, this next one is for Chris specifically. What sort of duties do [sic] you have for the Pageant over years besides being head of security and counselor? It sounds like you had quite a busy time there.

Chris Bjorling: Yeah, so the counselor was—just so you understand, we were the top of the food chain, so we were in charge of everything. So, we [00:45:00] worked year-round on doing a Pageant. Even though it only happened during the summer, we worked year-round on the process. So, other than that, I really—you know, Heidi referenced that, before we would join the Pageant itself, we would come in and work security and those types of things. But that role was just all-encompassing. And then, the security aspect played out annually, too, as a full year 'cause you're planning, and you're meeting the sheriff's departments ,and doing all those kind of fun things, so yeah.

Seth Arnold: Okay, and I've also been wondering myself—what does actually being a counselor entail, too? Is it like a religious counselor, a psychological counselor?

Chris Bjorling: So... It's a great question, because we kind of did all that stuff, but what a counselor is, is that it's really—we're members of a Presidency. So, we have a President, who has the ultimate responsibility for everything, and then two people who support that person in doing that. And so—

Heidi Bjorling: So, counselors to the president.

Chris Bjorling: And we're counselors to the president. So, we're there that. Now, when you ask those questions, because we have so many people there and very hot, humid days and doing things, we counsel a lot of ways. We counsel spiritually because it was a spiritual activity, so we're viewed as the top three in—for those purposes. And then, we counsel emotionally for those that may have been having a hard time or feeling off, or anything along those lines. So, we provided a little bit of everything along that there, but the primary responsibility of a counselor is really just [that] you're part of that producing team, one of those top three that is putting the whole thing together and putting it on. Hopefully, that answers the question.

Heidi Bjorling: Well, and he referenced earlier being over all the “people” tasks. So, in terms of dividing up, how are you going to lead this production? As an example, the other counselor would have—

Chris Bjorling: Everything, facilities—

Heidi Bjorling: Facilities, duties, you know, so the maintenance and the facilities of the facility—well, anyway...

Chris Bjorling: Everything going on.

Seth Arnold: Okay. Brody, did you have anything to add?

Brody Allen: Okay, I can ask the next one. Chris—actually, no, we asked that one... Heidi, how did you contribute to the Pageant?

Heidi Bjorling: I was a cast member for all those years, and then—so I would play roles on stage just like everybody else that was a cast member—because a staff member, most of those positions didn't actually go on stage as a cast member. Like, my husband never did. And then, I did have a role of, like [I] stated at the beginning—

Chris Bjorling: I think Brody missed all that—

Heidi Bjorling: Producing all the—orchestrating all the music that was needed. So, we had forty-some-plus meetings, devotionals for the entire group, and we would have singing. We would have congregational singing, opening, closing hymns; we would have musical numbers; we would have choirs perform; and so, I orchestrated all of that, and then in the end, [I] was a staff member where I worked in the wigs and beards shop.

Brody Allen: Okay, awesome. One more question for Heidi: What are the experiences of the Pageant from *your* perspective, specifically? Do you just want to talk more about that?

Heidi Bjorling: What are the experiences?

Chris Bjorling: Your experiences.

Brody Allen: Yeah, like...

Heidi Bjorling: I guess, I referenced watching the—my *sons* be in *battles*, and as a mother, it was—they went to Primary from ages 4 to 9, so there was scheduled time where they were mingling with the kids their ages. But then, when they were—9, right? 9 or 10—

Chris Bjorling: 9.

Heidi Bjorling: They went to their *own* cast teams, so we had a lot of families that would come and think, “This is going to be family-together time for the next two weeks.” But actually, they were all in individual cast teams, so the boys [00:50:00] and the girls were in—they were grouped with all the 9-year-old boys, and then, once the kids—once the youth reached age 14, then they were *co-ed*, so boys and girls of the same age would be on—*could be* in the same **cast** teams. There might have to be more than one of an age group, but—so, each individual is having *their own experience* with *their cast team* and with the *roles* they’re playing in the rehearsals that they go to. And—so, it was pretty *amazing* to me, as a mother, to watch my youth, *my children*,

participate with their own autonomy, going to *their* groups, having *their own* experiences that were profound to them.

I also, as a mother, as an individual, was assigned to cast teams. When I had young ones, I was in a cast team that—where parents also had young ones, pre-Primary-age kids. And then, when your children are all on their own, in their own cast teams, you're still in a cast team. But one time, as a cast member—you know, I would be cast in different things. Really fun was the destruction scene, where you had a lot of stinky pond water sprayed all over, and—you know, you went running on, and you had stopwatches and timed the entrance of all the different people onto the stage and off of the stage, and I had a chance to have my daughter—she was in the same scene, and so we got to do it together, and that was fun.

One year, I was completely surprised. I wasn't intending to even go down to casting, you know? I was like, “*Ah*, I'll just—you know—I'll go be in the back and be a crowd [member].” But my husband said—it was—happened to be—my husband said, “You need to go. Go to the casting line-up.” And I just went on—stood in the line and didn't even know what was going on. [I] didn't—wasn't aware of what they were doing. The directors were there, actually, pulling people out and giving them something to do for the casting, kind of as an audition, and I wasn't even aware that that was happening. I got cast as Sariah, which was probably—well, she was—the busiest female role of the Pageant. And they now—the last time they did Pageant—that role was divided up into three different people because of where you needed to—how they would run the scenes, and where you'd have to be to enter and exit the stage, and so on. But at the time, that role was played by two women, and I was her, and had—so I had *long, lots* of rehearsal time.

And—but it was a very different perspective to be on the stage and during the Pageant itself, be on there with the other principal, my “husband” in the show, and to just have the

experience of being—looking out into the audience and seeing... It was very profound and personal to be thinking of—trying to imagine the role that she played in the Scriptures, you know, in the stories about her. And I know that, when I was cast as that, I—they didn't know that my husband [Chris] was as involved as he was, and I had those young children, that I would spend those two weeks trying to take care of. And my husband watched—this is what I was referencing—he happened to just stand behind the directors and watch them casting some of these principal roles. And he witnessed it, and there were others—costume director—there were other people that witnessed it happen as it happened, and I didn't even realize it was happening. But they handed [00:55:00] me my card, which is what they do when they tell you, “This is the role you're going to play.” And I didn't even know what it meant when I got it, mainly! I knew the *name* of the person, but I didn't really know what that would involve, and the people that did commented—and then when they found out who I was, as in the wife of a Counselor in the Presidency with young children—“Oh, can you do this? Can you accept this role? And can you actually, physically do this, go to these rehearsals?” And I [didn't] know if I could, but my husband had witnessed them, the process, elsewhere and said, “I've seen this. I've seen this happen where you *know* this is what's supposed to happen. And so, we'll figure out how to do it.”

And we *did*. We found somebody who could help me with my kids at the time and—so that I could go to these kind of round-the-clock rehearsals. And—so... I don't know. It ended up being a very profound experience *personally* to receive that assignment, and then [to] just watch my children and watch myself when we played these roles on stage, feel after—and feel—get in touch with what we were conveying, and it's kind of like—I don't know; this doesn't seem connected, maybe, but—we all have different ways of learning, and it was profound to see. Some

people need to have large muscles involved, you know [laughs], when you teach children. And so, watching *my* teenage boys do the acting-out of the fight scenes or whatever, I just, like—to experience the scriptures in likening them to ourselves and bringing it into a personal experience, it really did, I feel like. So, that’s what I was wanting to—was thinking of. I don’t know if that helps [laughs], if that makes sense.

Seth Arnold: Every little bit helps. So, this might be a bit of a personal question, but how did the Pageant and producing it affect both of your relationships with your faith?

Chris Bjorling: I—it solidified it, I think. I mean, it did nothing to—but just make it stronger, I think, overall. One of the things that’s important, and I would talk to the cast members about this, too, is that—’cause they would say, “Oh, there’s this Pageant experience, okay, having children go through it, too; there’s this Pageant experience; there’s this Pageant experience”—but really, what it was is that it was the dedication of seventeen days of your life to serving the Lord, and removing yourself from the obstacles of work, school, you know, games that you might have to be thinking about playing in, all those types of things, and just focusing on providing that service to our Heavenly Father, really sharpens you. It really is a cleansing thing, and it makes you stronger in your faith and the like.

And it was interesting that our kids who went off and served on missions—for instance, my one—our third son, he went off and served a mission, and in his first area, they had been on average doing six lessons a week when he went out. But, because he knew how to interact with people—he knew how to talk to individuals; he knew a lot about the Gospel and felt very secure meeting [a] cast or a crowd of three, four, [or?] five thousand each night—within the first week [of his mission], they were at fifty, then they were up to about sixty on average for the next six months of meetings that they would have. And it was all because of his experience there [at the

Pageant]. So, when I look at it, it just—it positively impacted us, and it positively impacted—and Heidi can speak for herself, but it positively impacted all of our children and friends' children, and you would just watch this, and it was a miracle, so... Heidi?

Heidi Bjorling: May I ask, are you—? I don't know either of you and where you come from in [01:00:00] life, or where you stand. [laughs] Do you know what we're talking about, as members of the Church, when we reference some things? 'Cause I don't want to use *speak*—are you members of our Church?

Seth Arnold: Um...

Brody Allen: Speaking for myself, I am not, but I was raised Catholic.

Heidi Bjorling: Okay.

Chris Bjorling: Great [muffled; best guess].

Brody Allen: And, you know, it's an interesting relationship, but I'm familiar with it. I was, you know, baptized, confirmed, the whole nine yards.

Heidi Bjorling: Yeah, yeah.

Brody Allen: But I'm—I—you know, again, this is—we're doing—'cause a lot of what we're doing is *LDS-related* history—

Chris Bjorling: Right.

Seth Arnold: Yeah.

Brody Allen: For this class, so the both of us are pretty familiar with the Church and its practices.

Heidi Bjorling: Uh-huh.

Seth Arnold: Yeah. To add on to this, we did have to read this book by Matthew Bowman called *The Mormon People*. It's basically just like a historical lens of, you know, what the Church went

through, how it formed, and what it's doing now, all that sort of thing.

Chris Bjorling: Sure. That's great.

Heidi Bjorling: Mhmm.

Seth Arnold: So, we're not members of the Church, but we have a working knowledge of what's going on.

Heidi Bjorling: Yeah, yeah. And it's fine either way. I just—not sure if—how to—what—you know, if what I say—how much you're understanding [laughs] what I'm talking about! In terms of—[to] put it in layman's terms or something, you know? But to solidify my faith, I—as I referenced, my grandma was in Pageant in 1939, so I *do* have a heritage of membership in this Church for—from its beginning days, its founding days. And in terms of—uh, you know, I don't claim to go back to the founding member, Joseph Smith, but I do have a lot of family that did join the Church in the *very* early days, the first year of the Church, and travel across the country and travel across the oceans and go to Utah. So, I do have that background, and I have always cared about my faith and cared about religion and Heavenly Father.

I would have to say the very foundational piece of my *faith* is knowing that God is *real* and feeling that I'm a child of God, so I've grown up feeling very connected to that, to my Heavenly Father and that. One thing I—so, yes, this was great, and I kind of referenced that, when you're going through—to actually go through the motions of the stories from the Book of Mormon, that is—that's really cool! That really does *help* you liken the scriptures to yourself, I would say.

So, two ways that I'm trying to cite that it solidified my faith was just, I think of sacrifice as a very basic element in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as I understand it, and so, in a *lot*—in countless personal experiences and ways, I've often think [sic] the experience of Pageant—as

involved as we have been—it's still like trying to describe or touching different parts of the elephant, right? It's a large beast, and one can describe the tail, and one can describe the ear or the trunk. And so, for me, with this, on all the personal experiences, of personal interactions with all the individuals, I—there is—there are countless stories of watching people sacrifice to come together in this effort, and I just think you experience—you witness [01:05:00] literally miracles. I have seen God's hand in all of this being able to be accomplished and coming about, and that's been very profound. And I feel—my theory is that people have sacrificed a lot by the time they get here, to be involved in this, and so, I feel like we experience blessings of sacrifice, whether it's just a miracle of the heart and of love, you know, that we experience as a takeaway for that sacrifice that we're engaged in. So, we've—experiencing that and seeing it really play out has been amazing, and dozens of witnessing experiences.

But then, also, at one point... My husband did a lot of things in the duration, the time period that he did, in terms of how we manage and the preparation and the planning and the training and everything. And *one* of 'em was, we want you to have this—be personally—how do you get—how do you personally—how do you share this experience with our guests? And they would read right from the Book of Mormon. [laughs] They'd have it. They found ways to be able to carry it into the audience and then deposit it—you know, some logistics—deposit it, so they can go back and be on stage and they're not carrying around a book with them. And so, then, also, just reading from the scripture itself, reading from what we consider to be scripture and revelation, gave place for the spirit, to bear witness of the truthfulness of it. And—so, I witnessed *that*, too. I witnessed dozens of people, like, just read it, just read it, and give place for the spirit to do its job of testifying of the truthfulness of it. So, that was—and then we kind of, essentially, get to do it in 3D, you know? [laughs] In terms of when you're acting it out and going through

the motions. So, I think, in those two major ways, it gave place to strengthen my faith, for sure.

Seth Arnold: Okay. Penultimate question, but probably the most impactful one: What were your reactions when you learned the Pageant was shutting down?

Heidi Bjorling: I would say that my husband, with the Presidency and the main artistic director, that was the team that reviewed all applications for Pageant, and my husband also interacted with lots of different entities of the Church to produce Pageant, in terms of the budgets and the physical facilities department and the Church Historical [sic] Department and the Missionary Department and the finances of all of it. And so, he would watch the process; he was a part of the process of reviewing and selecting the cast and how, now, we have to let others know that they don't get to be a part of it this year, and others that they *do* get to be a part of it. And he would come home, and, you know, we would feel really lucky for being a part of it. So, it always felt like a very *unique* opportunity and experience in the Church at large, you know? 'Cause, like I said, it's not like it's their primary business. And then—and he would also say, when you look at the logistics of all of that, “This could all go away.” [laughs] And so, I think I have always felt that it was a *very* unique experience to be a part of, and so, just, grateful that we had it while we *had* it, and an awareness that [01:10:00] times will come and go and change, and so it might not always exist.

And so—I don't know. I felt like—I wasn't, ultimately, really surprised, and it would feel like a *loss*, for sure, but ultimately [I] had to redirect the emotions. Watching people go through it this last year, when my husband literally was over there physically every day. From the word of “We're not doing Pageant,” he got to deal again with all the physical—the logistics—of getting rid of Pageant—giving it away, shutting it down, clearing the land physically. And so, watching all the cast members and staff members deal with that, because again, with COVID, it

[the Pageant] was put off, then it was put off, and then it was going to happen. And so, the...
 unsurety—I can't think of my right word!—but not knowing, and then, when they finally knew,
 when it was finally announced, I feel like *receiving* comments and questions from the
neighborhood, from our neighbors, *and then* from everybody that was planning to be *in it* and
 scheduled to be in it, it felt like I was watching people, as they tried to process through it, going
 through a mourning and going through different stages of mourning. [laughs] You know? Like,
 “It can't—it really can't be happening that it's not going to happen again,” you know?

But... And so, a sadness, but then—but watching my husband have to play a leading role
 in that process, you know, we had to just deal with it. We couldn't stop and think about what it
felt like to be dealing with it. So, yes, my husband took me and our youngest daughter, who grew
 up with it, on the grounds when nobody else was there, and we would just sporadically have
 tears come over us. [laughs] Emotions come and feel like we can talk about it. We just needed
 some personal time, [laughs] just to kind of go ahead and cry and mourn and carry on. But,
ultimately, we had to redirect our—the emotions to just doing the job that needed to be done and
 also recognizing that what made this special—like I said, sacrifice, I believe—we continue to
 sacrifice and be engaged in religiously, in serving in countless ways going forward, and [we] can
 still experience the benefits of that, kind of being united in spirit and love with our congregation
 and with people in the world. So...

Chris Bjorling: So, for me, interesting question. I didn't cry, okay?

Heidi Bjorling: Yeah.

Chris Bjorling: Heidi and the kids cried and—some. But I knew that there was a possibility that
 this would happen. But here's the most important thing to think about, and this is what I explain
 to people who are not members of our faith that ask the question that are local. Pageant was

great, okay? It was beautiful. But the Hill Cumorah is a sacred location to us. So, each year, we would put up these thirty-some casting tents that would look like a circus. We have—thousands of people would be on the Hill, traipsing around, and they would be reenacting parts of the Book of Mormon, and that was great. But the reality of it is, it's still a sacred facility for us. It's a sacred site. And so, because of that, when the leadership of the Church asked for us to discontinue and to turn it back more to a natural site, a site that would probably have been similar to when Joseph Smith went there to receive the golden plates from the Angel Moroni (since you read the book), then it's really turning it back to that spiritual side of it completely and saying, "Okay, it's alright; it's okay to do this." So, while there's some personal loss and, like, "Oh, we love this," the reality of it is, this is a sacred, sacred spot, and we need [01:15:00] to keep it that way, and it's great. And so, as we drive by now and see all of our eleven buildings gone and everything out there missing, and... It's just kind of interesting—it's almost empty, but it's not, if that makes sense. So, thanks for asking that question.

Heidi Bjorling: Well, and it was—and some of my tears are out of gratitude too. Just—it was just really, truly a unique thing and experience, and we'll never—we'll always have that. And I'm just really sentimental. [laughs]

Chris Bjorling: Me, too.

Seth Arnold: Yeah, it's something that will always be a part of you, even if it's gone now.

Heidi Bjorling: Yeah.

Seth Arnold: Okay, now we have ... five minutes left. Real quick, what are you two doing now, now that the Pageant no longer exists? Do you still volunteer in other ways with the Church?

Chris Bjorling: Yeah. So, we, always volunteer for the Church, and we're asked to volunteer with the Church. That's usually the way that it works. So, currently, I am serving as another

counselor, but this time in something called the stake Presidency. So, geographically—so, Brody, for your purposes, since you grew up Catholic, so diocese—it's an area leadership team. And so, we're in charge, if you want to call [it] in charge—we're the leaders of the geographic area from the eastern part of Rochester to Lake Ontario to—into Pennsylvania, over to Auburn—close to Auburn—and down. So, we have eleven congregations there that we kind of oversee and work with and have stewardship for. So, that's what I'm doing right now, and because of that role, which usually has me traveling every Sunday to different locations, Heidi has been...

Heidi Bjorling: The last few years and up and—well, last several years—I was serving as—with the youth. So, the last few years, I was serving as a young women's president. That's the young woman's organization in my geographical unit, which is called a ward, my congregation. So, I had, like, forty young women ages 12 to 18, and I was a president with counselors in that. So, I served the youth, and now I was released from that because of the commitments, the demand of it, and I help to plan camp for young women, which happens in the summer. But we work through the year to plan it, and we have twenty-something young women that are ages 16 and 17 that serve as youth camp leaders, and so I work with them in planning camp for each summer.

Chris Bjorling: Mhmm.

Seth Arnold: All right, awesome. That's all we had to ask, and this was Chris and Heidi Bjorling, everyone. Thank you so much for your time.

Heidi Bjorling: Thank you.

Chris Bjorling: Thank you, guys.

Heidi Bjorling: Thanks for listening to us!

Chris Bjorling: Hey, good luck with everything as it comes together. So—

Heidi Bjorling: Yeah!

Chris Bjorling: We appreciate it.

Brody Allen: We're glad you were able to talk to us.

Chris Bjorling: Oh.

Brody Allen: This was very enlightening.

Chris Bjorling: Oh, our pleasure. Thanks. We could go on for a long time [because?], you know...

Heidi Bjorling: Yeah! Clearly, sorry.

Chris Bjorling: Lots of memories, love.

Seth Arnold: I wish we had—but, you know, time constraints and all that.

Chris Bjorling: Yep.

Heidi Bjorling: Pageant's a *big* experience, and so that's a big project you guys have.

Chris Bjorling: Yeah. So... Anyway, we appreciate your time, gentlemen. I will—once this recording processes, I will find a place, probably on one of my Dropbox accounts, [and] put it there so you guys can pull it down, okay?

Seth Arnold: Okay, and quick request: Could you also submit video, too, if possible, because it might help us once we actually have to get around transcribing this?

Chris Bjorling: Oh, it'll send—it'll be the full thing. It's—yeah, so, the recording is the video, and it is—

Seth Arnold: Awesome.

Chris Bjorling: And the audio.

Heidi Bjorling: Let us know if it doesn't work for you.

Seth Arnold: Awesome.

Chris Bjorling: Yes, please.

Seth Arnold: Awesome.

Chris Bjorling: It'll take a moment to generate, and then, I've got a meeting at 2:00, and then—so, somewhere I will get that back to you. So, thank you.

Dublin Core Metadata for the Interview

Title: Interview with Chris & Heidi Bjorling, Friday, March 18, 2022

Subject: Hill Cumorah Pageant, Theater, Children, Logistics, Protests, Journalism, Music, Missionaries

Description: Chris and Heidi Bjorling are former staff members of the Hill Cumorah Pageant, with Chris having experience as head of security and president of the Pageant, and Heidi contributing to the choir and costume design and makeup. In this interview, they discuss how they originally became involved in the Pageant, what some of their roles and responsibilities were, what challenges they faced, any interesting or funny stories they recall of the Pageant, and their reactions to learning about the Pageant being discontinued by the LDS Church. They also discuss how the Pageant influenced their relationships with their family, coworkers, faith, and lives overall.

Creator: Chris Bjorling, Heidi Bjorling, Brody Allen, and William (Seth) Arnold

Source: The Hill Cumorah Legacy Project

Date: Friday, March 18, 2022

Contributor: Seth Arnold and Brody Allen

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