

LaRee Jones  
Interviewed by Loren Webb  
For the Washington County Historical Society

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Participants: Loren Webb (Washington County Historical Society interviewer)  
LaRee Jones (Former Washington County School District Accelerated Learning Program Coordinator who coordinated National History Day, Geography Bee, National Storytelling, and Science Fair competitions in the school district)

Webb: Hi, good afternoon, my name is Loren Webb. I'm with the Washington County Historical Society, and this is the fifteenth in a series of oral history interviews that we are conducting here on the campus of Utah State, excuse me, Utah Tech University, and this is the Community Education Channel Studios. I have here with me, LaRee Jones, and tell us a little bit about, first of all, LaRee, just tell us your full name.

Jones: Okay. My full name is Mary LaRee McAllister Jones.

Webb: Okay. And how did you become interested in history?

Jones: Well, first of all, I loved reading, and so, you know, you read a lot about history when you're reading, and then I married a history teacher. And so that was the icing on the cake, because we traveled to many historical places because he knew all about them. He'd be talking to us, the family, all about this and that and what happened. And he just made that area come to life.

Webb: I bet.

Jones: And so it was just a wonderful experience.

Webb: So what led you to become a public school teacher?

Jones: Well, back in the '50s, when I was in school, basically, if you were a professional, there weren't too many areas that you could—women, I should say—that women could find employment in. And teaching was one of those, nursing was one of those, and business was one of those. And I gravitated toward teaching. I just thought it was fun to teach and taught my little sisters a lot, and that's how I became interested. I thought teaching was for me.

Webb: Okay, so if you were employed outside of the Washington County School District, what district did you teach in, and what subject did you teach, and what years did you teach there?

Jones: Well, basically I wasn't employed outside of the Washington [County] School District—

Webb: Your very first?

Jones: On that basis.

Webb: Your very first employment was with the School District then?

Jones: Basically, uh-huh. But I was an adjunct professor.

Webb: Oh, okay.

Jones: I was an adjunct professor for SUU [Southern Utah University] and for Utah State.

Webb: Oh, okay.

Jones: And so I worked with them all the years that I was coordinator for Washington [County] School District in accelerated learning, extended learning, and gifted and talented.

Webb: Okay.

Jones: And so that was from 1991 until 2007.

Webb: Okay, so did you start with the School District in 1991 or?

Jones: No, I started before then.

Webb: Okay. So when did you go to work for the Washington County School District, and which elementary school did you teach at, and what grade did you teach?

Jones: Okay, this is an interesting story.

Webb: Okay.

Jones: Because growing up during World War II, I didn't want to leave my children because my parents had worked and I was put in nursery school, and I didn't like it. So I wasn't going to do that to my children. So basically, I was called on about 1975 or '77, right in there, to do some classes in the various schools. And these classes were funded by federal money that was coming into the school districts via accelerated learning. So these were for students that needed a little more challenge in the classroom. And so I started then. And I basically did classes at East Elementary School and at West Elementary School. And then I

did classes for elementary students home-based at Dixie High School. So their parents would bring them in to Dixie High School.

Webb: And the approximate address of East Elementary was, at the time, 600 East and about, let's see, 400 South.

Jones: Uh-huh.

Webb: Between 400 and 500 South, right?

Jones: Yes, between 400 and 500 South on 600 East.

Webb: And what is it now?

Jones: It's the Atwood.

Webb: It's the Atwood Innovation Plaza.

Jones: Innovation Plaza.

Webb: Owned by Utah Tech University today, right?

Webb: Yes.

Webb: Okay. So what subjects did you teach?

Jones: Well, for extended or when I hit the classroom?

Webb: When you first were in the classroom. You taught everything, right?

Jones: Yes. Well, yes, I did.

Webb: What did you teach?

Jones: I taught core curriculum. My first year of teaching, which garnered me the Sallie Mae First Year Teacher Award, that year was a split fourth and fifth. So I had split kids that were accelerated kids, and I had to do the core curriculum for fifth grade and for fourth grade, plus challenge them beyond that, because they were really sharp kids. And what they didn't need was more time to do times tables or more time to learn the verbs and things like that. What they needed was a challenge beyond that, so it was a delightful time. I loved it.

Webb: Oh, my gosh. Yeah.

Jones: But at the end of that year I had to choose between fourth grade and fifth grade.

Webb: Okay.

Jones: Now federal money came into the School District for accelerated students beginning in fourth grade.

Webb: And that's when you decided you wanted to be the accelerated learning coordinator for, in the District? Is that right?

Jones: Yes. Well, beyond that.

Webb: Okay.

Jones: But before, well, in the school was fine. But then they picked me up from the school and asked me to come and do the District. But I wanted to challenge those accelerated kids. They're so fun. I mean, they're so curious, number one. And number two, they just love challenges.

Webb: Wow.

Jones: And so it was just fun to teach them.

Webb: So did you stay with fourth or fifth grade?

Jones: I stayed with fourth grade.

Webb: Okay.

Jones: Because that was where the beginning was.

Webb: Okay.

Jones: And then as the students came in, I could actually see which ones were accelerated and which ones weren't. And which ones would love the challenges and which ones really weren't interested.

Webb: So what did you feel like were your accomplishments with the accelerated learning, learning coordinator position?

Jones: For my district and for my school, opportunity.

Webb: Wow.

Jones: It was all centered on opportunity because the students don't have opportunities. They aren't challenged.

Webb: Right.

Jones: And so for my school district, well, basically, when I became the school district GT Coordinator, which was in 1991, right after I got my master's degree in that field, we had just one challenged program, and that was Spelling Bee.

Webb: Oh, wow.

Jones: That was, that was all.

Webb: That was it, huh?

Webb: That was it.

Jones: That was it, other than sports, you know. And so basically, from there, it was fun to build this program in all sorts of areas for accelerated students. History Fair, or National History Day, was one of the first ones we did. Then there was a group in our District that really wanted to do an elementary Science Fair. And we became the first school district west of the Mississippi that had an elementary Science Fair. Now, high school had it, and my children had been involved in the high school Science Fair, and probably you were, too, Loren. But anyway, the District said, "You know a little bit about this because you're a parent. Can we bring this in and do it?" And I said, "Absolutely we can, and we will." And so we did, and then on top of that, there was Science Olympiad, which is a jump up from Science Fair. All of these things that we brought into the District to begin with had to have the criteria of State competition and National competition.

Webb: And that's all come about because of Accelerated Learning Program?

Jones: Absolutely.

Webb: That's amazing.

Jones: Yeah.

Webb: Wow.

Jones: And so with Geography Bee, we had a student back in the 1990s. I can't remember his first name, his last name was Lingwall, Neil Lingwall's son, won third place in the nation in Geography Bee. He got his whole college degree earned paid for by the Geography Bee.

Webb: Okay.

Jones: Isn't that neat?

Webb: Yeah.

Jones: And so they're out there, debate is out there, and debate is great. National Storytelling, National Storytelling Festival, we had all of these programs that we introduced and brought to students.

Webb: That's just incredible.

Jones: We did it on a school level. And then if they accelerated on the school level, we brought them into the District, and from there to Region, and then to State, and then to National.

Webb: Did you go to Nationals?

Jones: All the time.

Webb: And where was Nationals?

Jones: Well—

Webb: Depended on the program?

Jones: It depended on the program.

Webb: Okay.

Jones: Storytelling is in Jonesboro, Tennessee, okay. I did not go to National Science Olympiad, but that's back east, I think it's Minnesota. I did go to Science Fairs, although our elementary kids couldn't do that, but our high school kids did, and I went to Fort Worth, Texas, and San Juan, Puerto Rico, to those Fairs. And National History Day is at the University of Maryland in College Park, Maryland.

Webb: Right.

Jones: And I went back there and judged, I went back 12 years, and I think I judged 9 of those 12 years.

Webb: Oh my gosh.

Jones: National.

Webb: So what led you to incorporate the National History Day program into the Washington County School District curriculum?

Jones: Okay, we started that first. I was teaching, and my goodness, fourth grade is Utah history, fifth grade is U.S., and sixth grade is world, and then it goes on from there, you know, intermediate school and middle school. Well, there was such a short amount of time in the curriculum to do Utah history. Stop and think, our students live in Utah.

Webb: Right.

Jones: Ninety percent of them will live their entire life in Utah. And we had this small amount of time to spend on Utah. And so I had read about this history fair, and I thought it's going to be sponsored one last year at SUU. And I thought okay, I'm going to get my students ready, and we'll go to SUU and see what this is all about. And that's what I did, and we had a wonderful time. We had a great trip. [My entire class went. All participated.]

Webb: That's great. I want to just go back and clarify when you talked about a short amount of time to teach Utah history, is it a trimester, nine-week trimester?

Jones: It is.

Webb: Or is it a full year?

Jones: No. It's just nine weeks.

Webb: That's it.

Jones: That's it.

Webb: Nine weeks.

Jones: Of the entire school, fourth grade school curriculum.

Webb: Do you think that that's sufficient today to teach Utah history?

Jones: No, no. It's really not.

Webb: Wow.

Jones: But I understand the crunch. We know what we're in, and we know what we have to do. And so, you know, we just accommodate.

Webb: Okay.

Jones: But it was fun to be able to get the kids into the History Fair.

Webb: So who else was involved with the National History Day program? And if so, who were they, and what contributions did they make—

Jones: Well—

Webb: To localizing the program as well, in addition to yourself?

Jones: It kind of evolved. When I took my students, and this was in about 1990, '91, to SUU, I met the State Director, who at that time was Mike Johnson, and I visited with him a little bit, and he was talking about a class that I could actually—my students didn't do well in the competition, and so I thought, well, this is my fault. I'm just not prepared. So I was talking to him, and he said, "Well, we have this class." And he said, "It's a wonderful opportunity because it's graduate credit. It's beyond bachelors. It's three semester credits, okay, \$45." And I fainted because what a price!

Webb: Oh, yeah.

Jones: I mean, of course, that was back in the '90s. I understand. But anyway, he said, "Basically, I come and I teach three hours of this class and give you all the information. And then you go from there, and you take students through the class and have them compete on a school and a district level." [Write a report and mail it in.]

Webb: Right.

Jones: And for elementary, they cannot go to State. But in intermediate and middle and high school, they can. And so I said, "Oh, I need to take this class. When are you giving it?" And he said, "Well, when would you like to sponsor it in Washington [County] School District? And I'll come down and we'll do it." And so I said, "Well, you name a time when you can come down." And so he did. And so I brought teachers in, mainly because they needed credit.

Jones: M-hm. You have to be fair and honest. They were more interested in credit than they were in the history fair, but they got hooked because it was so good. And so we brought that into the School District early, and that was right after the Spelling Bee, one of the biggest things we did.

Webb: Okay. So who else was involved, like Katherine Leany?

Jones: Well, Katherine.

Webb: Did she come later, or, because she—

Jones: She came a little bit later, yes.



Webb: Okay.

Jones: We offered this class every year, year after year. and I don't think Katherine was even teaching back in 1991. But anyway, she came, and she was absolutely [awesome.] She loved history anyway, and she was absolutely wonderful, and we teamed through the District event. We ran the Southwest Region History Fair for about 32 years.

Webb: It's just incredible. And tell us a little bit about your judges. I mean, where did you draw your judges from?

Jones: My husband, the good history teacher. And he knew all of the history teachers on the District level. And so he was just great to get them to come. And I think we got you to come—

Webb: You did.

Jones: Because you were teaching history. And you know the whole story that way. And we always had the State Director there and once in a while the National Director, and so it was really fun. Well, I better clarify that—the National Director came to Utah, not to St. George. But anyway, it was really fun because we had all of these qualified history teachers that knew everything about history, and then all they had to do was slot judging into either the elementary, the intermediate, the middle school, or the high school.

Webb: Okay.

Jones: And it worked out well. And every one of the students was judged at least three times. And that was the criteria. If you were going to do a Regional or a District event, you had to have judges enough that the students could be judged by three different judges.

Webb: Three different judges.

Jones: M-hm.

Webb: Okay, so what are the five categories that students can choose to present their work for a National History Day project, and then describe the two age divisions that students can compete in.

Jones: Well, this is basically, I brought the judging sheets. I still have them, but the judging sheets are basically this. [Shows sheets.]

Webb: And we'd like to have the cameras, if you can, put it up there where the camera can see that, see the categories.

Jones: Okay, . . . [this is a website judging sheet]. This is the latest one that came on. But it's been on about 20 years after we got the computers, and then process paper, exhibits. These are your exhibit boards—wonderful, wonderful things, and then performance and then Documentaries. Now—

Webb: And those are the judging forms?

Jones: These are the judging forms. Yeah. So every, everyone that competes should have the judging forms so they know what they're going to be judged on, and they usually do. Historical papers and performances were the absolute least entered of the categories, so they were always the best ones to win in, right? And so we really concentrated on historical papers and performances. But we had huge, wonderful exhibit boards, great, great documentaries and web pages. They were super good. So there are categories. There's an individual or there's a group—the group not to exceed five. And then, like I said—

Webb: And an age group, too.

Jones: We had the elementary. So that was fourth through fifth grade; and then intermediate, sixth through seventh, could go to State; middle, eighth through ninth; and then tenth through twelfth, for high school.

Webb: So there were actually four different groups.

Jones: There were.

Webb: Okay.

Jones: But the intermediate groups and the middle school were kind of mashed together.

Webb: Okay. Do any of those student papers or performances or exhibits, does, what stands out? Do you remember any that, the student papers, student projects, any of those that stood out?

Jones: Well, they were all wonderful to judge, and they were all wonderful to read, and they were all wonderful to see. What stands out in my mind are those that won at State and those that went to National and won at National.

Webb: Okay.

Jones: Now, back in the 1990s, we had a wonderful performance group from Dixie Middle School. They performed the Navajo Code Talkers, and they won National. And then just last year, we had a group from Dixie High School, who went back to National, and won with the Lewis Braille performance.

Webb: Wow.

Jones: So this is just great. And I think ones that impressed me were the ones that the students really learned a lot about—probably the Donner Party and how they were flim-flammed.

Webb: Oh, yeah, the Hastings Cut –Off

Jones: Uh-huh. But—

Webb: And tragedy up on, in Donner Lake.

Jones: Yep. And by Lansford Hastings in his book.

Webb: Yes.

Jones: Which he promised he'd come and take them through. And, of course, the book was false, and things like that.

Webb: It killed people.

Jones: It did.

Webb: A guide book that killed, actually resulted in the deaths of a number of people. Yeah, just incredible.

Jones: And that was interesting.

Webb: Yeah.

Jones: Yeah.

Webb: So describe how the National History Day competition is set up in Washington County. Maybe just, what does it, when you go over to a school, and how is it set up, physically?

Jones: Basically, every year we did an orientation in the schools. And then from there, it depended a lot on the history teacher and what they could do. Katherine Leany was wonderful, both at Hurricane Middle and then when she came over to Lava Ridge where she still is, and she required it of all of her students. This is really good because when you get into this program you have to learn to do process papers, you have to learn to do bibliographies and annotated bibliographies which you usually don't learn until your first year of college, and then you learn the research process and actually determining from that research part process what's important and what isn't because there's a time limit on the performances and on documentaries, and so you had to stay within a time limit

as well. So you actually had to slice through all of that information and decide what is the most important.

Webb: How were the judges selected to judge the entries?

Jones: Basically we always had history teachers.

Webb: Okay.

Jones: And we always had the State Rep and the Regional and District Coordinators.

Webb: And there's usually, as I recall, there was like three judges, like in, that judged together or two judges, and then one of them submits the totals—

Jones: Yes.

Webb: To a reporting, a reporting agency or group.

Jones: Uh-huh, to our group on the district level.

Webb: Okay.

Jones: And then we send out another set of judges after we reviewed those judging sheets. And they had to judge the project board on its own. They had listened to the student, and then another judge went out and judged just the board itself.

Webb: Okay.

Jones: So it's really detailed and took a lot of time, but it was good.

Webb: Yeah. How long were you involved with the National History Day program in Washington County? You said 32 years?

Jones: Thirty-two years.

Webb: And what stands out about the caliber of the students who competed in that program?

Jones: They were just amazing. I just thought, you are so good, and you don't really realize at this point how much you've learned or how that's going to help you throughout your life. But I was always impressed with the students that took the challenge and did the work.

Webb: Right. Okay.

Jones: And we tried to reward them with ribbons and with medals and with things like that.

Webb: So what winners from the Washington County National History Day program were eligible to compete at the state level?

Jones: The first and second place winners—

Webb: Okay.

Jones: Winners in each of these categories, individual and in the group, and in each of those five categories.

Webb: And then at the National level, it became the first and second, right?

Jones: From, from—

Webb: From the State?

Jones: From the State—

Webb: Okay.

Jones: That would go back to National.

Webb: And you took students back there from, out of 9, out of 12, did you say 12 years?

Jones: I judged 9 out of 12 years.

Webb: You judged 9 out of 12.

Jones Uh-huh.

Webb: Okay.

Jones: And we took students back 12 years.

Webb: And what was that experience like?

Jones: It was a lot of work. It was always a lot of work, but we encouraged the parents to go.

Webb: Yeah.

Jones; Because in connection with the History Fair, which is, or the National History Day, it's called now, they were able to travel, Washington, D.C. We always set it up so that they could travel and go to Congress and see both the House and

the Senate. And we also had, at times before the big problems, they were able to go to the White House and tour that. They were able to tour the monuments. They were able to tour all around Washington, DC.

Webb: Wow.

Jones: And get a feel of what it was like. And then we had our state legislators come and talk to them so they could get their picture taken. I've got pictures, I should have brought them, but they could have their pictures taken with their state legislators [Jake Garn, Orrin Hatch, Scott Matheson, etc.].

Webb: Okay. So how are you able to arrange all of the East Elementary photos on the Washington County Historical Society website?

Jones: Okay, I'll, are we through with, with—

Webb: Is there anything else that you wanted to talk about the National History Day program that I didn't ask?

Jones: No, that's fine.

Webb: Okay, okay.

Jones: National History Day is fine. Basically what I did—

Webb: Or the accelerated learning program.

Jones: I started, at East Elementary, we started the accelerated learning program in 1988. And this is a sample of how we set up for the school year. So we had a calendar that had every single event. You'll find geography on here, you'll find storytelling on here, you'll find debate on here, you'll find all of these events. And holiday of harmony, all that we did on the district level, but they were all scheduled here because we had to have a school competition or a school event first, and then we went from there to district and on [shared calendar].

Webb: So that included National History Day, the Science Fair, the Spelling Bee, and—

Jones: Geography.

Webb: And the Geography.

Jones: M-hm, Geography Bee.

Webb: Geography Bee.

Jones: But for elementary school, because [the State Bee] started in middle school, we did geography challenge [for elementary students].

Webb: Okay.

Jones: And so fourth grade, they were challenged in Utah history, fifth grade in U. S. history, and a sixth grade world history. And then we ran a big regional fair. Michael Stevenson over at Pine View Middle School always hosted and did a wonderful job.

Webb: Okay.

Jones: So we had great judges.

Webb: Okay, anything else on accelerated learning before we talk about the photos?

Jones: There's a ton, but I can't think of anything more to share.

Webb: Okay. So how were you able to arrange all of these East Elementary photos on the Washington County Historical Society website?

Jones: Well, by that time I was retired.

Webb: Okay.

Jones: Because I retired in 2007. And my husband was working with the Director of the Washington County Historical Society and the webmaster, okay. And so [Heber] spent a lot of time with George Cannon. And when he found out that I was a retired teacher from East Elementary, he said, "Well, they had a coordinator at West Elementary who had put a lot of the history of West Elementary on the website.

Webb: On the website.

Jones: And would East be willing to do that. And by that time we had an [East Elementary School] retired teachers' luncheon, so we met once a month and had lunch, and so we talked about that at our luncheon, and we had teachers like Elaine Allred and Lola Perkins, all those girls that wanted to do it [the website for East Elementary]. And so we went to [Principal] Dar Smith, who was still living then. He was thrilled. He thought that [the school photos] should be preserved for posterity, and all of this information and these photos of students should be where they could get at them handily. And so he thought that was great. So we went in, and East Elementary had kept a scrapbook every year. So we got those scrapbooks and opened them up, and I took them to George. And together we digitized all of them.

Webb: Wow.

Jones: And they're now on the website.

Webb: Which is an amazing contribution, I think, you know, to the history of all the, you know, all of the elementary, like I say, East Elementary, and I hope that they do that with—

Jones: The others. All of the other elementaries in the school [District]. So West Elementary's on there, East Elementary's on there, and I had understood that Sunset Elementary was working on that at this time. I'm not certain, but that's what I had understood.

Webb: Right. Okay.

Jones: So that'll be fun for kids to look up and see what they looked like—

Webb: Yeah.

Jones: When they were young.

Webb: So what other educational programs above and beyond the regular classroom instruction have you been involved with at the elementary level? Anything else that you haven't, we haven't talked about?

Jones: I can't think of anything right off hand. Storytelling was always delightful. We always had those little kids that read a book and wanted to share it, you know, and so this was really a fun opportunity. And we partnered with the City of St. George. And the Mayor of St. George, bless his heart, signed every certificate, a certificate for every participant.

Webb: Isn't that awesome. I love that he would do that.

Jones: Isn't that amazing that he [Mayor Dan McArthur] would do that?

Webb: Yeah.

Jones: And we gave medals to all of the participants, and we had four genres. We had humorous.

Webb: M-hm.

Jones: They usually appeared over in the opera house because that was the largest category. Now these were all school winners through Washington [County] School District and they had come to the district to [perform]. And then we had fantasy, and then we had mystery and adventure, and then we had what? Can't remember.



It was probably fantasy, mystery, and adventure. And sorry, maybe tomorrow I'll remember it [fairy tale]. [The four categories were Humorous, Mystery and Adventure, Tall Tales and Folktales, and Fairy Tale and Fantasy.]

Webb: But it sounds, those categories sound just fun, just fun.

Jones: It was , it was just great.

Webb: Yeah.

Jones: Yeah.

Webb: So you taught, how many years, again, in the Washington County School District?

Jones: Thirty-four.

Webb: Thirty-four. And as you look back over your teaching career, what, what things stand out?

Jones: Oh, the relationships.

Webb: Okay.

Jones: And all of the support I had. First of all, on the District level from my, my elementary directors which were Gene Bennett, that asked me to go to District, and then Kent Christensen and Rex Wilkie, couldn't have been better. Right up to Kolene Granger and Max Rose, the superintendents, and Marshall Topham, they were all just marvelous, because getting these students to National was horrendous. Getting them to State was enough, you know. But National was horrendous.

Webb: Yeah.

Jones: And then the different people that I've met, for instance, Debate, was National Energy Foundation. They sponsored that, they did such a great job, and I have great friends up there that I met that way. But it's the people. You know, you meet all of these wonderful people and all of these teachers that are ready to give of their time above and beyond, and it was just, it was just great. And these friendships are still my most cherished friendships.

Webb: I would imagine.

Jones: It started then. Yeah. That's great.

Webb: How did your husband, Heber Jones, assist you with the teaching as he himself was a history teacher on the junior high and middle school level?

Jones: He was wonderful. If I came home discouraged or if I had a problem, I could sit down and talk to him and say, "What do you do in a situation like this," or "what should I do" about that, or "What would you do?" And he could, he read the situation perfectly, and he knew what to do and what to tell me to do, and it always worked out really well.

Webb: Yeah, that's great.

Jones: We just, it was super.

Webb: You two were a great team.

Jones: We loved it.

Webb: Yeah. What other civic or religious organizations do you participate in, if any?

Jones: Well, I, I've participated in a lot. In my church, I was always involved in church things, and I was a Stake Golden Gleaner, Stake Silver Gleaner President, so I decided I wanted to be a Golden Gleaner, which is as far as you could go in the Young Women's program back then, and I got that. And at that time, President Gordon B. Hinckley was not the President. He was one of the Twelve Apostles, but he was down to a stake conference, and he had my husband and I come up in front of the stake and awarded me this Golden Gleaner. And it was really a very nice thing.

Webb: Yeah.

Jones: It was great. And so, in my church, I've been Relief Society President, and I've been Young Women's President twice. Loved, loved those callings. Loved all of the callings. And then in the Primary, I've been a Second Counselor with the Scouting. And since I had a lot of boys, I was really involved in Scouting and enjoyed it. And when Heber was getting his master's degree through an NDEA [National Defense Education Act] scholarship at Utah State, I had little children on campus. And so we went down and learned all about 4-H. And so we started doing 4-H, and that led me into 4-H. And so I received my Silver Beaver in 1986. And four years ago, I received my 50-year pin in 4-H.

Webb: In 4-H.

Jones: In 4-H.

Webb: That's so amazing.

Jones: Isn't that wonderful? [We were honored as the 4-H Family of the Year in 2008.]

Webb: Yes,

Jones: Yeah.

Webb: That's great.

Jones: So it's been just exciting. And the people that I've associated there, also, just, just great friends.

Webb: Okay.

Jones: They are all wonderful.

Webb: Okay. Where were you born? Oh, go ahead.

Jones: And then I spent six years as the Home Arts Director for the Washington County Fair, and I co -chaired Heritage Week for six years as well.

Webb: Okay, and Heritage Week, was that St. George or Washington County Heritage Week?

Jones: That was St. George, and it actually was the time when we celebrated the settling of St. George and when we became a city.

Webb: Yes.

Jones: January 17th.

Webb: What a great program that was.

Jones: We had a wonderful time. And actually, Storytelling evolved from that.

Webb: Okay.

Jones: So it's all good.

Webb: So where were you born?

Jones: Kanab.

Webb: Okay. Kanab, Utah.

Jones: Utah.

Webb: Okay.

Jones: Lived there only two years, but I was born there.

Webb: And who else was in your family?

Jones: I have five sisters—two older and three younger, and I have an older brother.

Webb: Okay. And what did your community look like when you were growing up outside of your family?

Jones: Well, this is interesting because basically between the time that I was born, and that I can remember, and the time that I graduated from high school I had three communities. I grew up in Salt Lake City, went to school on the campus of the University of Utah, Stewart School, so we always had student teachers, always had wonderful opportunities, could go to Kingsbury Hall, to all of their dress rehearsal performances for musicals and for dramas and for ballet. So to grow up with that experience was great. And then we went to the science building, got to see the big dinosaurs, got to touch a meteorite, something from a—

Webb: Gosh.

Jones: Little kids, I mean, it was just wonderful.

Webb: Yeah.

Jones: So that was a great experience. And I did a lot of babysitting, and back then I could walk from my home, which was five blocks from the school, across the campus of the University of Utah, to Stadium Village, to babysit. I could do that in the early evening and never be afraid. It's, you couldn't do that now, but I could back then in Salt Lake.

Webb: Okay.

Jones: So that was good. Then when I was 14, we left Salt Lake and we went to Paragonah, Utah.

Webb: Uh-huh.

Jones: Three hundred sixty-eight people, dirt roads, no indoor bathroom, wood and coal stove, rode the school bus to Parowan to ninth grade—total change.

Webb: My gosh.

Jones: We were there about 15 months and then moved to St. George. And that was when St. George had one streetlight.

Webb: M-hm.

Jones: And one high school.

Webb: Yeah.

Jones I went to Woodward [Junior High School] and then [graduated from Dixie High School.]

Webb: Okay.

Jones: Isn't that amazing?

Webb: Yes. And you went through Dixie High School, right?

Jones: M-hm, and Dixie College.

Webb: Okay, and then Dixie College. So, tell me about your college years—anything stand out there?

Jones: We had a wonderful time. Loved my teachers, thought it was a great experience. I was elected Commissioner of Amusements two different years, and so we, we did wonderful assemblies back then. They were major productions. And we had to do D -Day floats and D -Day skits and do all sorts of fun things like that. And then I was president of the FBLA club when I was at Dixie College, Future Business Leaders of America. So we were able to do a lot of things with business. And I was working at the time because I worked from the age of 16 on at McArthur Jewelers. And we were able, through the FBLA club, to get a lot of our club members part-time jobs in the various businesses around town. So they would work two or three hours after school or so. So it was really a great thing.

Webb: Oh, my gosh. Did you have any influential mentors at that time, too?

Jones: Oh, my teachers were all wonderful. I loved every single one of them. Myrtle Henderson, the drama teacher, was good. Mrs. Syphus, Beth Syphus was just great. And they told my mom, "Oh, she has a bit of talent in drama. You better keep her going in drama." And so that was fun.

Webb: I bet.

Jones: Participated in plays and participated giving oral readings, which they don't do much anymore—

Webb: Wow.

Jones: At State and things like that.

Webb: Okay. How did you meet and marry your spouse?

Jones: How much time have you got? This is a crazy story. I was working as a car hop at Church's. And you remember Church's.

Webb: Church's chicken out on, out on the old Highway 91 which is now, I guess they call it Sunset Boulevard.

Jones: They do.

Webb: Oh, my gosh, yes.

Jones: Yes. So it was between Santa Clara and St. George.

Webb: And it was up on a hill, wasn't it?

Jones: M-hm.

Webb: Yes.

Jones: He built up on a hill. I was one of the car hops there.

Webb: Oh, my gosh.

Jones: And one day this guy walks in, knocks on the door [of my home]. And he tells me who he is. He says, "I'm Tom McArthur." He said, "I run a jewelry store uptown." And I knew about McArthur Jewelers. You know, I'd seen it. He said, "Would you like to come and work for me?" And I—

Webb: Just like that?

Jones: Just like that! And I thought, "Wow, if you work in a jewelry store, number one, you get your nights off. Number two, you don't have to work on Sunday." I said, "Sure. I'll be glad to do that." You know. And so he said, "What time could you come today?" And so I said, "Well, today's a good day." I said, "I think I could be there by two o'clock." And he said, "Okay, I'll see you at two." Turned around and left.

Webb: Oh, my gosh.

Jones: So I got up to the jewelry store at two o'clock and he said, "Now look over the merchandise, and you're to help people." And he said, "This is the till. If you make a sale, you write it up on this paper. You put the money in here,"

etc. And so I had a couple of good customers. And so I could sell, he decided. Anyway, we got ready to close up. So he showed me how we take the diamonds out of the showcase window and put them in trays and put them in the safe, in the back, and how we lock the safe and then how we check the two doors, turn out the lights. And he had me lock and unlock the front door two or three times. Okay? And then he said, "I'll take you home." And I said, "Okay." On the way home, he said, "Look, I'm scheduled to go out of town tomorrow. I'm scheduled to take my wife and my parents to Washington State." And he said, "Would you feel comfortable about just staying with the store for about seven work days while I'm gone?"

Webb: Oh, my gosh, after one—

Jones: Sixteen years old.

Webb: Sixteen years old and after only one day of training.

Jones: Three hours.

Webb: Three hours of training. Oh my gosh.

Jones: And I looked at him and I thought, and I was about to say, and he said, "I'll give you a number you can call if you have any problems." And I said, "Well, I guess if you feel like I can do it, I can do it." So he put the keys in my hand and drove off and left me [at] home.

Webb: Oh my gosh.

Jones: Well, I had been there about two days, and in walks this guy with his Levi's and his t-shirt, you know, and he walks in and I said, "Oh, can I help you?" And he said, "No." And then he started walking around, you know. Well, he started coming back of the counter. And I said, "Whoa, I'm sorry, but only employees can come back here." And he said, "Oh, it's all right." And I said, "No, it isn't." And he came a little bit further. And I said, "You come one step further, and I'm calling the police." And he started to grin, and he said, "I'm Tom McArthur's cousin, and I'm here for a few days, and he asked me to just come and see how you're doing."

Webb: Did he tell you his name?

Jones: Yes. I said, "What is your name?" and I said, "Who are you staying with?" Well, he was staying at Tom McArthur's parents' home. They weren't there, but he was staying there. So I said, "Okay." So he came in and sat down, and so we developed a friendship then, but he did not date me until three years later.

Webb: This is Heber Jones?

Jones:: This is Heber Jones. And he was at the University of Utah.

Webb: Oh, my gosh.

Jones: But he came down at Christmas time during the Christmas break, and he always helped customers during the Christmas rush. And we always did inventory together because we started that right after Christmas. And so three years later, he had his degree, he was working at Titanium Metals in Henderson, Nevada. And he said, "Would you like to go on a date?" And so we started dating. Years later I said, "You would just take me home from work, but you'd never date me. How come you didn't date me sooner than three years?" And he said, "Why would I date you? All you ever did was giggle, giggle, giggle."

Webb: Oh my gosh.

Jones: Is that not the craziest way to meet?

Webb: Yeah, oh my gosh. Well, and I still got to go back and say, how did Tom McArthur know to go out and find you at Vernon Church chicken? Did he ever tell you that?

Jones: No, I was at home basically. He never did go to Church's. And Mr. Church was really quite angry that I didn't give him notice.

Webb: Notice.

Jones: You know, but it wasn't a problem because he had a waiting list. He had a lot of people that would be car hops. But anyway, what had happened was his person that he was going to leave the jewelry store with up and left. She said, "I can't work any longer. I've got this situation." So he was desperate. He wanted to go, had his kids all, knew where they were going to be, they were all farmed out, everything. So he had some very good friends that were Irma and Leo Syphus.

Webb: Oh, yeah.

Jones: Irma knew me because I had been house cleaning for her mother and for some women around town. I'd go after school and clean their houses, etc. And so she suggested me.

Webb: Okay. And so he just, right out of the blue, he just came down? He said, "Well, what's her address?" Okay.

Jones: So he just came down and asked for me, and that was it.

Webb: Oh, my gosh. When did you get married?



Jones: We got married in 1956.

Webb: In 1956, and tell me about the aspects of raising your children. How many children did you have, and?

Jones: We had six children, all boys.

Webb: All boys.

Jones: And we were blessed enough to raise five of them.

Webb: Okay.

Jones: We lost one that was born premature.

Webb: Okay. As you look back over your life, what would you like to be remembered for?

Jones: Well, being a loving wife and mother would probably be my most important. I think, second, I would just like to be remembered for improving people's lives or doing something that made their lives better and happier and made them better citizens.

Webb: Okay.

Jones: Yeah, I think it's all about that.

Webb: Okay. Is there anything that I haven't asked you that you feel is important for this interview?

Jones: It's been delightful.

Webb: Okay.

Jones: We'll have to do it again.

Webb: Okay. Thank you so much for taking the time to meet with us, meet with me today. LaRee, I just really appreciate your expertise and your friendship over all the years. And anyway, we want to thank you, the audience as well, for being here with us. And again, my name is Loren Webb. This is the Washington County Historical Society Oral History Interview. And again, this is one of a series. And thank you for joining us.