

ORAL HISTORY INDEX AND SUMMARY

Interview with: Naomi Hamill

Date: 1/10/15

Location: Manchester

Total duration: 24.08 mins

Interview by Pam Dawes and summary by Kelly Bücher:

The interview plays as one long recording.

1.	Start time	Finish time	Approximate duration	Brief description
	00.00	24.08	24.08	Naomi manages the MaK oral history programme. She discusses the project in Manchester and then goes on to describe her work developing MaK's educational programme in Kosovo.
<p>Pen sketch</p> <p>Summary of interview content</p>	<p><i>Naomi has worked as an English teacher and is also a special needs and inclusion specialist. She teaches in the North West. Her family comes from the south of England but she has settled in Manchester since moving up to follow an MA in Creative Writing in the city. Naomi is the Chair of Manchester Aid to Kosovo. She headed up's MaK children's programme for eight years, leading the charity's Summer Club in Kosovo from strength to strength, developing many Kosovar leaders for the hundreds of children who take part each year. She loves literature and drama. In 2016 Naomi completed her first novel, 'How to be a Kosovan Wife'.</i></p> <p>(00:00) Naomi talks about running Oral Histories Project in Manchester. She says that she has interviewed a lot of people who settled in Manchester, often in their homes.</p> <p>(2:09) She says that she thinks it has been a positive experience for the interviewees. She talks about it being an important reference for people's children whose parents would perhaps have difficulty telling their stories to them directly.</p> <p>Naomi talks about memories being linked to strong emotions and comments on the fact that this is possibly why people remember certain instances, because it affected them strongly emotionally at the time.</p> <p>She comments on hearing the same stories from different perspectives and how interesting that is.</p> <p>Naomi discusses her background and training with regards to the project. She says that she is currently studying for an MA in Creative Writing at Manchester Metropolitan University and also attended two training sessions specifically about Oral Histories there.</p> <p>(04:00) Naomi also talks about having advice and training from Jackie Ould at the Manchester Central Reference Library, Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Relations Resource Centre, about recording the interview and how to develop the work.</p>			

(04:06) She quotes a writer who has said that all we really have are stories. She talks about how she thinks Oral Histories have huge historical value and are important for education reasons amongst others. Stories change both the speaker and the listener. Many pupils have their own experience of migration. Manchester has changed people's lives and they have changed the city. Naomi comments on the recordings being important for future generations and says she wants the archive to keep growing. They are a useful teaching resource for many subjects including history and the context of the Balkans wars.

(07:06) She talks about how she hopes the project will continue to grow and more inspiring Oral Histories will be recorded. The stories are inspiring expressing great resilience and an absence of bitterness. They express moving forwards to a more positive place.

(09:20) Naomi talks about how inspiring it was to interview Colonel David Vasallo and how she was struck by his gentle demeanour for someone in the army. She comments that his skillset as a surgeon and in developing telemedicine is humanitarian. She was touched by his words about how we all share a common humanity.

(11:06) She talks about interviewing Kosovar women and how their lives are likely to be very different now to how they expected or imagined them to be, This must be difficult for them and a challenge. Naomi does comment that there are some freedoms afforded because of their move but leaving their traditions and country is a real challenge for them. She says that learning a new language must have been hard, especially as some older women may have had no formal education.

Naomi talks about the drive for women to protect their families and how often the recordings reveal they want to help others, as they were helped.

(13:20) Naomi moves on to talk about her experience in Kosovo and of running MaK's Educational programme and Summer Club for many years. She says that her friend Anna started it but then she was invited to join her and eventually ended up running it instead when Anna moved on.

She describes what Kosovo was like in those early years - the hotel they stayed in and how the roads were quite treacherous to walk along because of uncovered man holes everywhere.

Naomi says that the Summer Club was actually started to keep the children busy whilst they Manchester Peace Park was being built. It grew rapidly. Naomi says in the early years UN tanks were still sometimes present and the soldiers would often stop to hand out gifts like pens and pencils to the children.

She talks about the difficulties with language as the children would shout excitedly in Albanian and she and the other British volunteers would be speaking English so they enlisted the help of some local artists to interpret for them at the Summer Club.

She says her friend Anne went to teach in Tanzania after a few years and made her promise to continue the Summer Club as Anne could not bear the thought of the children expecting them and no-one showing up in the summer.

(18:18) Naomi describes the volunteers for the Summer Club as being a mixture of those with teaching experience and those without including local volunteers. She says that many of the young volunteers used to attend the club as children themselves and now wish to lead. She talks about trying to plan different themes

each year.

(20:06) Naomi talks about how some of the costs of the Summer Club are covered by the volunteers including leaders' own flights and accommodation. Often people donate materials. Costs are really kept to a minimum. The team take a lot of materials with them to Kosovo.

She recalls a conversation between Stephen Raw, MaK Chair at the time, and some young U.K. volunteers discussing how often people think they are going to Kosovo to help out but they end up being helped themselves as the time spent there is so rewarding.

(21:30) Naomi talks about being a teacher in England and the differences between British and Kosovar schools.

Naomi talks about Kosovar children being very enthusiastic about anything creative: they don't have the same facilities and materials as children in U.K. She talks about the teachers being very dedicated but lacking the access to materials that she is used to in England. She considers many Kosovar schools are in disrepair and quite different: sometimes you can see such things as wood burning stoves in the classrooms. She compares this to resources in the UK and often having many laptops or ipads at her disposal to teach her students and the ability to download information, in her classroom, for pupils.

She summarises saying the system in Kosovo has incredibly dedicated teachers and enthusiastic, well behaved children but schools have to rely on out of date materials, are not technology rich, and the fabric of the school buildings is not of good quality.