

ORAL HISTORY INDEX AND SUMMARY

Interview with: Besim Kadriu

Date: 2/12/15

Location: Manchester

Total duration: 16.27 mins

Interview by Pam Dawes and Salatin Bogujevci and summary by Kelly Bücher:

The interview plays as one long recording.

1.	Start time	Finish time	Approximate duration	Brief description
	00.00	16.27	16.27	Besim talks about being medically evacuated to Manchester from Kosovo in 1999 after being shot in the face, his family and his recovery in Manchester.
Pen sketch	<p><i>Besim Kadriu grew up near Mitrovica in northern Kosovo, close to the Serb border. He was an engineering student. He married shortly before conflict escalated in 1998. His sixteen year old wife, Valbona, was pregnant with their first child when Besim was shot by the Serb military, whilst close to his village. Half Besim's face was blown off. He fled to the hills and survived for months with minimal help and no medication. After the Liberation, Besim was examined by British and American medics who vowed to do everything they could to help him. He and Valbona were medically evacuated by the British Army. Besim's face has gradually been reconstructed in Manchester, where Besim and Valbona now live with their four young daughters. They return to visit Mitrovica and miss Kosovo. Their eldest child, Alberina, plans to join the British Army as an engineer.</i></p>			
Summary of Interview content	<p>(00:00) Besim Kadriu talks about having a very good life before the war in Kosovo. He went to school, then to university. It was in his first year at university that the trouble began. He describes meeting his wife and getting married a few months late in 1999. They had only been married for three months when the war began.</p> <p>Besim describes having to go to the mountains with Valbona's family to seek safety, where they stayed for several months, going up and down the mountains. He says that the police and military came to his village where he used to stay, Zhazha, so they had to go to the mountain again.</p> <p>He says that it was the next day, when the Serbs went to his village, that he was shot. It was 24 hours before he found anyone else. They gave him help and took him to a house that had not been burnt down. Besim says that he was very weak, having lost a lot of blood, and people were very shocked by the appearance of his face as he was unrecognisable. He was unable to receive medical attention – none was available.</p> <p>(2:45) Minutes after meeting up with some of his family the police and military came again. He fled to the mountains.</p> <p>Besim describes having to go back up to the mountain for days, even though he was injured, and it was 5 days before he had any kind of first aid. He survived in</p>			

the hills with virtually no medical care until the Liberation.

He talks about going to the city after the war and finding everything destroyed. He lost many of his and his wife's family. Besim says that he went to his cousin in a village called Kçia. He recalls that after a few days, he met two of his family, his mum and his wife, and went to Kçia.

(08:00) Then after 2 days U.S. Medical came to the school in Kçia and there he met Danny Clay, a doctor from the U.S.A. He describes Danny Clay being shocked by his face as well, due to the severity of the injury, and how he promised there and then to try and help Besim.

He says how Danny Clay met a few of his friends and colleagues and he told Besim how he had met someone from the British Army to whom he had explained the situation. Besim was told that the British Army doctor would see him, surgeon David Vassallo, and he was told he could be medically evacuated.

Besim says that it was on 10th September 1999 that he flew to Manchester with his wife and a few other people from the Bogujevci family.

Besim describes how he coped in the mountains without medical care. He says that he had his wife and a one point a man, who had some medical training, who used to help him clean his wounds with water, which came from absolutely anywhere they could get it, including mountain streams.

Besim says that it is a miracle that he is alive as he was badly hurt and didn't eat for weeks.

He describes how, at that point, every single day the Serbian forces came to the village or came around or snipers tried to shoot people. Constantly on the move, they went up and down in the mountain. They didn't stop one day or one night.

Besim describes having some vision from his left eye at that point, although it was weak.

(9:59) He says that when he arrived in Manchester, he was taken directly to a hospital, North Manchester General Hospital.

Besim says that at the time he arrived in the UK his wife was 6 months pregnant.

He describes his medical treatment. He initially had a 15 hour operation and has subsequently had 15 more operations in Manchester.

Besim considers his surgery to be successful yet on-going. He mentions having just had further reconstructive surgery on his face.

He describes living in Manchester with his wife, who he considers to have been immensely supportive and to have never let him down, no matter where they were, and also his four children. He believes his children to be Mancunian as they were born here but also that they are Kosovar children who live in the U.K. He says that they speak English at school and Albanian at home which pleases him.

Besim describes his first reactions when he got off the plane in Manchester. He says that it was a miracle and he found it hard to believe. He mentions that at first he and his wife, Valbona, did not realise that she would be welcome to go with him to U.K. Initially both thought she would have to stay behind and that they would be separated.

He says that he is happy that they got to stay together and enjoy life.

(13.04) Besim talks about going back to Kosovo for the first time, after the war, in 2001. He says that it was different to the destroyed Kosovo he left and that each year it is different: better. He says that he was living north of the river in Mitrovica, near the Serbian border, and that it is still dangerous to go back. He went back once but does not go back any more. He comments on how much he misses it and he thinks back to his childhood there. He goes back to Kosovo every year for three or four weeks and he likes to return.

Besim gives thanks to all the people who helped him and his family in the U.K. including doctors and the government.