

ORAL HISTORY INDEX AND SUMMARY

Interview with: Qendrim Mustafa

Location: Manchester

Total duration: 36.36 mins

Interview by Naomi Hamill and summary by Kelly Bücher:

The interview plays as one long recording.

1.	Start time	Finish time	Approximate duration	Brief description
	00.00	36.36	36.36	Qendrim shares his childhood memories of Kosovo and talks about his evacuation to the UK as a result of war in Kosovo, when he was seven years old, and then growing up in Manchester.
Pen sketch	<p><i>Qendrim is 23 years old and he was born in a village in Kosovo called Lupjan. He was seven years old when he came to Manchester. He describes long and hot summers in Kosovo as a child and remembers being an adventurous and mischievous on the farms in his village. The conflict in Kosovo meant that Qendrim and his family had to leave their home as they feared that Serbian paramilitaries would kill them. They moved to an uncle's house, then to other houses in Kosovo and then to the refugee camps in Macedonia. The family were evacuated to Manchester where they were housed in a block of flats. The children started at a local school and Qendrim remembers that he struggled with this transition. Qendrim gained a first in Business Management at Manchester Metropolitan University. He now works as an underwriter for an insurance company. He loves Manchester and wants to settle here for the rest of his life, although he says that part of his heart belongs in Kosovo.</i></p> <p>(00.00)</p>			
Summary of interview content	<p>Qendrim talks about being born in Kosovo and living in a little village called Lipjan until he was seven years old.</p> <p>He recalls a rural childhood living in a really small house made of mud. He remembers sunny days playing in the small garden and out in the fields. He says that they had a few cows and a barn. Qendrim remembers watching his dad get all the potatoes and the peppers from the farms.</p> <p>Qendrim talks about being an adventurous child and always getting in trouble for being naughty. He recalls an incident where he was playing hide and seek and his parents thought he may have fallen down the well so went to look for him down there and he was too scared to come out of hiding so he waited half an hour before he came out by which time he was in a lot of trouble!</p> <p>He talks about spending all day outdoors, chasing cows and sitting in the shade of trees, playing.</p> <p>(03:53) He says that he was too young to really remember the occupation in Kosovo by the Serb forces as he was sheltered by his parents from it. He says that they lived in the south so occupation was occurring further north at first. When the tanks first came to his village, his dad got all the immediate family and fled to a cousin's house only three hundred yards away to hide inside, on the floor. He says that it was scary and his brother was crying but his mother had to</p>			

cover his mouth and keep them from looking out of the window in case they got shot.

He says then they went to stay with another relative, an auntie, for three months. They slept full clothed with their shoes on in case they needed to leave quickly in the middle of the night.

Qendrim says at some point they got to the Macedonian border where they boarded a train.

(06:55) He goes back in time to describe someone just running into the village where he lived to warn that the Serbs were coming and that they should leave for safety. He says that not everyone left but his family did, about 20 of them, some in the car and some later. He says that his father stayed to free the cows so that they were free to roam and not tied up as he had heard stories of cows being burnt alive.

He talks about the three months living with his auntie and how he used to be naughty and pick fights with his cousins. He says he was bored there because he couldn't go out like before and the mood had changed and his father was serious.

(09:30) He talks about the Eastern European tradition of big sit down dinners and how his auntie would still try and do this. At night she would light gas lamps and he remembers these meals fondly, with a nice atmosphere. He does have some good memories of being there.

Qendrim says that they stayed elsewhere after his auntie's house before they went to the Macedonian border but he doesn't remember the details of that time.

People were waiting to board a train to Skopje where they would be flown to various countries.

He talks about families with babies being given priority to board the train and when they reached the front of the queue the baby with them had finally gone quiet so they pinched him to make him cry so that they would get attention and maybe be given priority because the child was in distress.

Eventually, his family sneaked through a check point and ran towards a train. An armed guard pointed a gun at them as they ran screaming towards the train but they carried on and got on it anyway. There were many other families doing the same thing. He describes the train as being cram packed and very hot, as it was summer, and it being hard to breath.

He describes the camp as only having three toilets for their section and the queue being an hour long, and then them not being very pleasant. He describes it as being a mess with litter everywhere. Qendrim describes the tents as being provided by an aid organisation and in one long row.

(16:40) He recalls being given a toy, a massive truck which was hollow with small cars inside, which he treasured for years, whilst waiting for a flight to the UK. He says this was important as people were being nice to him so he finally felt safe.

(17:54) But he also talks about hearing the continued bombing campaign and how this distressed the children in particular.

He describes the allocation process at the airport as somewhere you queued up, then were given a choice of countries you and your family could go to and once

you had chosen, you waited in a designated area for your turn in the queue for a flight to that country.

(18:30) He recalls never having been on a plane before that or on a double decker bus, like the one they got on in Manchester to go to the flat, so it was all new to him. He remembers being surprised by all the lights on in the buildings and the streetlights at night being a shock.

(20:48) Qendrim describes living on the first floor of an eleven-story high-rise council flat for a year in Blakeley.

He says that his younger brother would not leave this flat the entire time that they lived there because he was scared to leave. He says that the entire block was families from Kosovo. After, a year they moved to somewhere nearer the city centre to live next door to his uncle.

(21:23) Qendrim considers himself and his family lucky as nobody in their family died and they did not lose anybody, unlike some families he knows.

He says that the flats have been demolished now. They seemed like a haven to his family when they first arrived, safe and nicer than their own home in Kosovo, more space. It was furnished and had heating and it was nice.

(24:04) Qendrim says that it was a month before he went to Crumpsall Lane Primary School. He was given a uniform, books and a school bag but he kept running home at first as he was scared he wouldn't be able to learn, as he could not understand the teachers.

He says that there were a couple of bullies and he was scared to run into them on his own so he eventually started to stay in school. That was he was always with his father or older Kosovar children so the bullies would leave him alone then. He recalls making some friends, too.

(30:43) Years later at he went to college with one of the pupils from his primary school.

Qendrim says that he put on a little bit of weight when he came to Manchester as he was not running around in fields all the time like before.

He talks about his education in England. After primary school he went to high school and gained his G.C.S.E.s, got a place in college and did his A levels. He gained a place at the University, Manchester Metropolitan University where he studied a degree in Business Management. He hopes to become a lecturer or do a PhD.

He currently works as an underwriter for a commercial insurance company and has been there for two years. Qendrim says that people are surprised when they find he is from Kosovo and often it is only because of his name that they realise he is must not be English and they are curious about his story.

(32:42) He talks about loving Manchester because it is small enough to get around but has everything he wants. Great restaurants and food, including Balkan food. He likes that it is not too busy, like London. He says that there are good opportunities to develop a good career here and he would like to settle down here.

(34:04) He talks about his feelings about Kosovo. He describes it as being more developed now, which he sees as a good thing, but also sad as he remembers a simple, happy childhood there. He says that when he goes back, everyone is

working and busy during the days and he only sees his family in the evenings.

He says that in his heart Kosovo but he was only there for seven years and has made a life for sixteen years in Manchester so that is his home. He likes to go on holiday to Kosovo but his home is in England.