

## **Kelly Bücher interview with Pam Dawes (27:28)**

(00:00) PD: This is Pam Dawes recording Kelly Bücher on the 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2016.

So Kelly you've been a key member of the Oral Histories team and you've done all the transcription. Could you talk a little bit about how you've got involved and how you've found doing that piece of work?

KB: Well I met Pam and Naomi one day. We were just meeting up and they were telling me about the project and I hadn't actually known all that much about it beforehand. I know that Pam and Manchester Aid to Kosovo had applied for some funding for some, you know, rather big project but I didn't really know much about it. And they were telling that they were typing up all the audio files and asked me if I wanted to help out; so I did, and didn't realise how much work there was actually going to be. I thought there was just going to be a small amount and actually it's been going on for almost a year now.

Actually, my background as an audio typist is something they didn't actually realise that I had. So straight away I was able to identify ways to speed the process up and to help get the transcripts and summaries typed a lot quicker and more efficiently.

So, at first, the way I was being shown to do it was just to use the mouse on my laptop to stop and start the audio file - which obviously is really time consuming because you have to listen to everything several times and when you stop it you need to rewind it a little bit so you don't miss anything. So, straight way, I said that we need to get an audio pedal and start using headphones and then use your feet to control, you know, the audio file so that we could - because it takes about four times as long as the audio file to type it up as a transcript anyway, and that's with being able to use your feet to stop and start the audio. So I don't even know... I can't even imagine how long it would have taken if we hadn't done that.

It's been really enjoyable. I'm really pleased to be part of something I think's really important. I think it's really important that this is being recorded and because I go over to Kosovo myself, so I've got an interest in the region and I know some of the people, actually, that have been interviewed, it's something I'm quite... it's quite close to my heart. So I have really enjoyed it because - like I say - I think it's important. But, at the same time, it's been quite emotionally draining, some days, because it's just heart breaking hearing what people went through.

PD: And do you feel people have shared for this project that perhaps they wouldn't normally talk about?

KB: I think that's a yes because quite often I hear people saying, "Well, I don't really remember much about that," and then they just start talking for ten minutes on the topic. And then they say something and that leads to another memory. And it's obviously something they don't think about every day, or try not to, you know. If you've been through a traumatic experience, it's not, I guess, at some point - sixteen years later - you know, you'd hope not for it to be on your mind all the time.

So I think some people - I think some of the things that they've mentioned - I think maybe they've never thought about, and I think maybe, sometimes, they just haven't thought about it for a while.

PD: Do you think it's important to have the record and have this in Manchester available online so that people can access it?

(04:00)KB: I think so because it's part of Manchester's history. Obviously, the city has changed and grown over the years for whatever reason, whether it's the industrial revolution or, you know, refugees coming and what have you. So I think everything that changes a city or occurs in a city should be recorded. But also these particular stories, they're relevant because refugees are still leaving, you know. They're still going to other countries including ours. It's not something that's not happening today. So...

I thought it was quite interesting when there were several people from the same family. So they were talking about the same instances but they had completely different viewpoints on what... on how things occurred, or how dangerous the situations were. I think some people didn't, if they... generally the younger they are the less they realised how...

PD: Was that the Bujupis?

(05:00) KB: Yes, that's what I was thinking. So I think, yes. I think sometimes children were sheltered from the true extent of the danger. And so they had different concepts of what they were experiencing. So yes, I would say that. And also actually, I think just hearing how it's affected everyone who was involved that weren't Kosovar, you know. Like the people who were part - like the doctors and the surgeons and people over here. It's just quite interesting hearing how it's changed them. I think everyone feels quite grateful and moved to be able to help the refugees. I think they often feel that they've been helped as well.

I think it's not just... everyone seems to think that they've been helped. Not, you know... so it's not just the refugees.

And, I feel the same, actually.

PD: So do you feel it's changed you in some way?

(06:05) KB: Sorry, I'm getting quite emotional now.

PD: Are you ok?

KB: It's just upsetting.

PD: Yeah. Do you want to stop for a minute?

KB: It's ok. I think it gives you perspective. And when you hear all these people - all the refugees - I don't think there's one of them that haven't said that they're really lucky.

I've been typing them today. Sorry.

PD: Fresh in your mind.

(06:35) KB: Yeah, it's just shocking especially because it's happening with Syria and stuff at the minute. You just read stuff in the papers and you see stuff on the TV and you just think: *How has anyone got a negative attitude to receiving the refugees - including our*

government? When you look at Germany who have taken a million which clearly they can't continue at that rate and we're saying that we don't even want to take orphaned children. It's just...

PD: It's very powerful because this isn't a piece of work that's related to the past only, it's brought totally into our lives because every day we're seeing on the news and in the papers that it's a contemporary issue, isn't it, an issue about people in crisis and where they can go?

KB: I think that's why I'm finding it quite hard, as well. I mean, I'm quite emotional, anyway, but yeah, it's just reading, you know, sorry... listening to people's stories and understanding how horrific it is, especially when, quite often, you hear the same thing again and again. So you know that it's true because everyone's got the same story, kind of at some point; when they talk about the trains and the planes, like, it's camps. It's all the same.

PD: Lots of links back, sadly, to the holocaust. Images of the trains and the experiences of the trains and that all comes to mind as well, doesn't it?

(08:15) KB: Well this is it. I think that's, I mean, this should be recorded. But then at the same time, it shouldn't be needed to be recorded

because we should have learnt, you know, when everyone read Anne Frank's diary<sup>1</sup>. That should have been enough. Again, I don't... I can't comprehend how, you know, other children are having to educate people, again, you know.

PD: So you are talking about some of our recordings? People are talking about their experiences of children in the way that Anne Frank recorded hers in her diary?

KB: Yeah, and you just think, you know... because it's easy to compare it to the holocaust. Because, you know, it's again a mass group of people and in Europe. And you just think that we should have learnt lessons and it's just difficult to understand how it's occurring again, you know, why it has occurred again.

PD: Kelly, are there any points that you'd like to make about how your work could have been made easier by, say, the recorders who were giving you the material?

(09:20) KB: Yes, definitely, actually, because...

PD: Do you want to list those? It could be maybe helpful.

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<sup>1</sup> The Diary of a Young Girl is a book of the writings from the Dutch language diary kept by Anne Frank while she was in hiding for two years with her family during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands. Originally published June 25, 1947

KB: Yes, well, obviously when I started doing it I didn't realise there were going to be as many audio files. So I didn't realise that I should maybe have been making notes then and making requests. And also I didn't realise they were going to get as long as they did because some of them got quite lengthy. And even though I've been to the region quite a lot, things like place names and people's names - things like that - that I think certain people take for granted. Especially the people doing the interviews as well, like Pam and Naomi, have been out to Kosovo so much that I think again - because they recognise names - that it's easy to forget that not everyone is familiar with that.

So I think a list of spellings of crucial things, like medical terms. You can Google, like with David Vassallo, Colonel David Vassallo. I could work most of it out by googling things. And again, things to do with Natasha Kandiç, the Serbian Humanitarian lawyer, I could google that kind of thing. But, yes, just names, places; not having TVs on in the background; people sometimes talking over each other - which you can't help in a conversation but when you're trying to do a transcript, it's hard to stop and start that. But I think maybe... I think we've done a good job actually, to say we've not done it before.

(11:06) PD: So as clean a recording as possible and also the recorder to make a list of all the place names and unusual names that come up

because that would be quite easy for a recorder to do, and give that to the transcriber?

KB: Yeah, I think instead of - you don't want to interrupt someone's flow of conversation because, obviously, it's upsetting and people are recounting horrific stories and it's quite traumatic, I'm sure, for some people - so you don't want to be interrupting them and saying, you know. But I think, yeah, if you could just make a note to query and get the correct spellings that would definitely help.

PD: That's a good point.

Did you find grammar and punctuation were quite difficult because, I know you're a great reader, and you're used to reading whole grammatical sentences, but some of the speech wasn't grammatical? And also it was being said by people who for English was a second language and so there were sometimes issues about vocabulary. How did you find that?

(12:23) KB: I think when we began - because another thing we had to do was figure out whether to do straight up transcripts or summarise it and in the end we decided to do both. So the summaries I could be a bit more free and easy with. I would say suchabody was describing suchathing. So I could use, hopefully, correct grammar and summarise

it in my own words. So I could form proper sentences. But with a transcript, yeah, if people aren't using - which I might not be now, I'm sure I'm doing it as well - using, you know, proper sentences, or sometimes the incorrect grammar, I try to keep as neat and accurate - make it as accurate as possible - but we took out the 'ers' and the 'um' in the end and then also sometimes people use the word 'like' which is essentially an 'um'. So I would keep a couple of those in so that you could feel the flow of the person's vocabulary and conversation but kind of removed a majority of them because they were essentially just 'um'.

PD: When you... when you saw the text displayed, the text that you'd transcribed...

KB: At the exhibition?

PD: At the exhibition - we've done two exhibitions and they have displayed very small edits, sometimes two sentences, or three, but printed up very large next to the portrait of the speaker - how did you feel?

(13:55) KB: I thought it was very powerful. As you walked in the room you could see the majority of the faces, and they were huge as well. And then, even though I was really familiar with the words. The fact...

and I also helped select some of the phrases or I had a say in what we thought was most powerful. So I was really familiar with them. Just seeing it up there, it was very powerful and stirred emotions.

I didn't actually listen to the audios. I know that you could go and sit down but I think they were all quite busy and I turned up quite late after the Run<sup>2</sup>. And, obviously, like, I've heard all that. So I would be interested to know which snippets form the audio files<sup>3</sup>. But with regards to just the printed words, I feel like the words that were chosen were chosen well but there's loads of different quotes you could have chosen that were equally powerful. But I think the mix was really strong.

PD: I think people will have access to the audio and the transcript, which is great, and the summaries. So many different needs could be met. Someone could listen from the community who is just interested; someone researching the history or someone who perhaps is writing a script could use the material. It can be a fantastic resource and that's very much down to you. You've been so diligent. Did you enjoy getting into the natural speech because it reminds me most of a very good script and if one doesn't normally read, say, a play or a film script? Did you start to enjoy that side of it, the fact that you were writing speech?

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<sup>2</sup> Great Manchester Run, May 2015. Part 1 of 'Voices of Kosovo in Manchester' was exhibited for 12 weeks at the People's History Museum in Manchester in 2015.

<sup>3</sup> There are some edits to the main audio files + a group edit of everybody's story

(15:50) KB: Well, I think in my... the way I actually typed it up improved as I went along. But yes, I think with each person it's different because you'd start typing it and then you'd just realise that you'd just basically written a paragraph as one sentence. So I'd have to go back and revisit it and kind of work out where I think they paused when they were speaking, as opposed to where you would naturally punctuate it. And a lot of sentences began with 'and' and 'but' because basically someone's thought process is maybe a sentence and maybe an 'and' and then another sentence and then 'and'. So yeah, I think I tried to show when people were laughing, as well. And show when they were pausing because they were maybe upset or just remembering or...

PD: And you would sometimes put a comment in like '(laughs)' to show how the person was behaving.

KB: Yes and I'm not sure if they'll all stay in but I definitely put them in because I know it was being proof read after me. So I just kind of put those in hoping that they would stay...

PD: They will stay.

KB: But I think it's important because especially when sometimes people are saying something that's quite harrowing and they're laughing at that: maybe at how ridiculous it is.

PD: If you just read the text you wouldn't get that they're feeling like that?

KB: Or the fact that, maybe, they'd just been saying something that is quite important and now they're saying something that's a bit sillier. I think it is important to kind of, yeah... because you can't necessarily read that. It's like a text, you know. People mis-communicate constantly through texts because you can't tell if someone is being sarcastic or funny or serious. So yeah, I try to convey that. So yeah, I did enjoy that.

(17:45) PD: And after your stage there was more proofing?

KB: Hopefully.

PD: Because the accuracy is very important. So for example, recently we were checking a reference to a Home Secretary in Canada and we found out that actually the minister involved was Minister for Justice. So we're correcting with square brackets. So there's been lots of references to factual material to try and help the viewer where perhaps the speaker wasn't absolutely correct. There may not be a better parallel to Home Secretary in Canada so perhaps that's why the word was used but we've been doing that process. And I think tonight

we've got a contact who is really great in terms of punctuation and she is involved in writing and publishing. She is going to be talking to you a bit about punctuation of speech. It will be interesting to see what guidance she gives.

(18:50) KB: Yeah, I think, if we're going to talk about improvements it would have been - I know we had one meeting at Central Library with, was it, Jackie? And that wasn't even the first meeting, but, obviously, I didn't come in at the beginning. So yeah, that was more about whether we should do transcripts or summaries, or both, and what have you.

PD: I don't think anyone's actually helped you with how to transcribe speech? You've been left on your own?

KB: Yeah, I mean, we've had a few conversations about it. But, yeah, I'm not sure if it's right or uniform.

PD: It'll be interesting to see. I don't think there are all that many rules to be honest. But let's find out tonight because we're going to have some training.

(19:35) KB: It's a bit like when you're buying a house, suddenly you spot every house for sale. And I've been reading things and if I see speech

within speech or something or things that I think are interesting or relevant to what I'm doing, then suddenly I'm, like, picking up on how other people - in published work - have done what I'm trying to do.

PD: And, sometimes, we're different to the Americans.

KB: Yeah, which doesn't help. And yes, different publications: like academic writing is probably different to a media, newspaper or magazine.

PD: How do you feel about moving on from here, Kelly because I think you've done work which we've all felt was of an incredible standard. It's really been a key part of the project. Are you going to stop at the end of the project or have you got any other plans?

(20:25) KB: I think it's funny that you say that, actually, because as I used to work as an audio typist, handing this standard - like, the standard of work I'm handing over - that, I feel, isn't good enough because it needs proof reading and correcting afterwards for names and places and stuff like that...

PD: So you feel a bit frustrated by the fact that it's not finished?

KB: I feel like I would like to hand over something that needs maybe a cursory glance but not, you know, the same amount of proof reading, I feel.

PD: But that's just being part of the team.

KB: No, I know, I know. That's just trying to do everything well.

PD: For example, some of the proofing is being done by Kosovars because loads of us - who are based in the U.K. and are English - we just don't have the knowledge. So it's been nice because we've drawn them in as volunteers into the team to do this sort of job. But I can understand the frustration for you that it doesn't feel finished when you hand it over.

KB: It's just trying to not be a perfectionist because that's not what's important here, it's getting it right. So I appreciate that I'm one of the steps. But it's just a bit weird, like, for me... it's not, like... I'm used to handing over a finished piece.

(21:36) But I would like to continue and do it, if there was a second part - part two. I'd be interested.

I think, as well, because I do work, well volunteer, in Kosovo - and on a lot of projects to do with Kosovo - it's nice to have someone, you know, like, who is part of the team because they are already interested. And, you know, as well...

PD: Already committed.

KB: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, I think it's, yeah, I think it's nice 'cause I want to do a really good job for them, you know. And make sure their histories are recorded accurately.

(22:20) PD: In a way it's a massive responsibility when you put it like that which I think you've really honoured.

KB: Yeah, I think so. It's weird as well because even though it takes, say you've got an hour of audio and it might take four hours to do the transcript and then a couple of hours changing that into a summary and formatting and what have you, you can't just sit there for six hours. It's not like you're typing up, you know, quotes for a carpet, you know! So you can't just sit there for six hours straight and do it either, or even with one coffee break, like. Sometimes you just have to stop.

PD: Take time out?

KB: Yeah, because sometimes I just like, I'm crying, like I'm doing now. Like, I'm really sorry that I'm being emotional. But yeah, it's just heart breaking and then you're just reading one story, hearing one story after another, you know, so...

PD: A lot of suffering?

KB: Yeah, so I spend five days doing it, I might listen to seven stories and it's just all along the same, you know, horrific journey. And it all seems so unnecessary.

PD: Did you feel uplifted at times, though, because of the recovery in Manchester?

(23:43) KB: Yeah, definitely, everybody, I like the fact that everybody loves my city and, like, doesn't want to live anywhere else generally. Most people prefer this city to London which always nice to hear as a northerner! But also, yeah, I think they like going back to Kosovo for summer but most people - and like the Kosovar traditions - but it is uplifting to hear that they've recovered so well, but also have now got opportunities that were maybe not available to them. But perhaps they wouldn't have wanted them, you know. Like, a young boy running around in a field and going to live in a mud hut doesn't necessarily have, you know, ideas and concepts of ambitions they could have

because a simpler life is what he was enjoying, you know, and probably would have continued to had they not come to Manchester... you know... realised.

PD: Different aspirations?

(24:30) KB: Yeah, and it's not necessarily a good or a bad thing. It's just different, you know, I just think people's lives are very different. And although it's a horrible thing that they had to come here, you know, the reasons they came here is terrible, I think, for a lot of people, they, you know, now have opportunities that they didn't necessarily have before.

PD: It was interesting how many people were involved in helping professions. Some are studying biomedicine; someone is an intensive care nurse. There are people who are in nursing as well as people in business and in graphics and media. But it was very interesting, to me, that a lot of people could relate to a situation where someone was suffering medically and they felt the motivation to get involved in caring professions came from that moment and they could almost pinpoint it, like someone is speaking on the train when their mother collapsed.

KB: I was about to say the same thing - definitely.

PD: And she is an Organ Transplant Nurse now I think that person. So there were uplifting elements but it was, I'm sure, very difficult, especially when you're doing audio and you're perhaps listening over the same sections a few times to get it correct, to just keep listening a voice talking about pain and suffering and fear.

(26:25) KB: But I think that's - although it's the small part of the journey because obviously the recovery is the lengthier part - I think initially what people talk... were talking about was, you know, what happened when they left Kosovo. If they went to a camp in Macedonia and you know... so that was quite a lengthy part of the tape - the audio - but actually that's the shortest portion of the story. So at the end, yeah, that's when everyone is saying, "Oh, now I'm happy", "I've got a husband", "I've got four kids" and "I'm studying for a PhD" and it is really uplifting. But yeah, actually, although it's not lost on me, that is the smallest portion of what I'm typing up so although it's nice to end each story like that...

I think, most of them, if not all of them, they've ended really positively, actually.

PD: Thank you very much, Kelly.

KB: Thank you. Sorry for crying.