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Interview with Muhamed Hasanovic (FA 1137)

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Project name: Bosnia Project
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Transcribing Conventions:

Use of square brackets [] indicates a note from the transcriber.
Use of parentheses () indicates a conversational aside.
Use of dash - indicates an interruption of thought or conversation.
Use of ellipses ... indicates a discontinued thought.
Use of quotations “ “ indicates reported speech.
Use of *italics* indicates emphasis.
Use of underline indicates movie, magazine, newspaper, or book titles.
Names of interviewee and interviewer are abbreviated by first and last initial letters.
Time is recorded in time elapsed by the convention [hours:minutes:seconds].

[00:00:00]

BB: Uh wait a minute, I should probably turn it on first. Today is uh February 24th, two thousand-

MH: January.

BB: January, two thousand uh-

MH: Sixteen.

BB: -sixteen. And we're working on our Bosnian Oral History Project, um I am here with Muhamed-

MH: Hasanovic.

BB: -Muhamed Hasanovic, and um we're gonna talk a little bit about uh, you know, his life coming here, his life uh in Bosnia, up until um I think you said seventeen years old. And many we could start off by, by just talking about that, you know? You're a little- you're-like we talked about in our pre-interview, it's a little different because, you know, you do have that history, um deep history, being born there, living that life through, through your formative years and then coming here and continuing to be formed. Um, so maybe just start talking about that and we'll just kind of flow that way. Like where were you born? Or what, what region did you come from?

MH: Well I was born on uh August 2nd, 1984, in uh east uh Sre- uh Bosnia, which I was born actually in Srebrenica in a hospital, but I grew up uh a couple hours away from, from there, on a, on a mountain, or not really a mountain but a hill. And uh, I don't remember much stuff before pre-war, I have very few memories, but most of my childhood and, and my life started, you know, when I was six years old when uh war began and, the memories I have and the life that I lived, and what shaped me was that uh air from six years old, six and a half to, you know, eleven years old, uh till after the war. Um, it's- I grew up with no electricity, uh most of the times no food, um, uh-

BB: Was it in a village or was it in a-

MH: It, it, it was in a village. It was a village uh with probably about fifty, sixty houses and the school. And uh my dad was a teacher so we lived in the school, in a flat, apartment the school uh had, and he was a teacher there for about ten years maybe, ten, fifteen years, before war and during the war. And uh I remember he was my teacher as well, uh after the war started no power, and it wasn't safe to stay in the school to have classrooms, at the beginning, so we had classes out, in, in, on the field, somewhere, you know, where it was safe. And uh, I seen a lot of stuff that I, I and I forgot too because I'm trying to leave that behind me, you know? And just move, move on, but I seen people injured, I haven't seen them get injured in front of me, but after that, and I don't know, it, it's just I, I never really thought about- talked about this, you know, before, so like the flow is not gonna go, I'm, I'm gonna go back and forth but-

BB: Sure.

MH: You know it's, it's difficult, uh my childhood was in, like I said, in a war zone, so we had to keep close to the house, let parents know where you're at, but there was also times where I would stay out all day. Um, I was a shepherd through whole time I was there in a village, because everybody had to contribute uh to some part of that, you know, to get the family going, to survive, to have food, and I had uh a heard of, you know, six up all up to eleven, twelve sheeps that uh my job was to take, pick out at the beginning of the day, take them out to the woods, feed them and make sure they get home safe, so my family can have meat and, and you know, milk. But uh most of the things I learned in childhood I learned from my grandma, because I was fortunate enough to have my grandma there, because at the beginning of the war her village, the place of where she was from and my grandpa, um they got kicked out, so they have to flee and they settled down at my house, with my family.

BB: They lived with you?

MH: Yes. So everything I learned about my religion and, and, and some customs now and, and, and the way I am as, as a, uh as a person, I learned from my grandma. At that time I didn't realize that was the, you know, the case, but now when I'm, you know, older and I think about stuff, I remember what she said to me as a child and uh now it makes sense to me. It's like, "okay, I, I get it. I get it why," and I'm realizing now that Bosnian women, especially grandmas, have a huge responsibility in, in, in the community where I grew up, you know? It's, it's- they're the ones that shape you. [00:05:03] They really do, they teach them a lot of stuff, while the parents are out, back then in the field or whatever, in the woods working, and even now, here, I have relatives that, my aunt actually, she's a, you know, a grandma of five, six, eight kids, and she'd take care of three of them, you know? Stays at, stays at home while parents are working. It, it's still similar but a little bit different, you know, the way it's done and...um-

BB: Is there anything in particular, and I may be calling you like, "Oh I can't think of anything specific," is there something like eating food, or manners, or about how to go to, how to worship, or uh-

MH: How, how, how to worship, it's, it's the one that, that comes to me, and, and how to prepare for it and, you know, uh [slight laugh] it's funny because um as a kid, you know, I didn't realize the days of whole, you know, preparation for the prayer, you know? I mean I knew there, there was a custom, what, what do to, but I didn't realize why it was done, and my grandma was the one teaching me that. Like for example, she was always telling me to uh, it's kind of funny maybe, uh but change my underwear after using the bathroom even though after I wash up, because she stressed that, that how much um unsanitary is the, the stuff that we get out of our body. And she always made sure, like "hey, even

though you clean up really good, change your underwear before you step in the prayer because you never know, you know, what drip or whatever could, you know, ruin your prayers. So that, that's one of the things I remember really well, and she taught me a lot of, you know, um how to recite the, the Arabic, well she didn't know the recite, you know, to read Arabic, but, you know, she um, she learned it from, you know, other people and she knew how to pray, and she taught me some of that too, and then later on where I learned to read Arabic and write Arabic. And um, it's- I don't remember her specifically teaching me like, "okay this is, you know, what you do to, you know, when guests come over," it's just something that, you know, you learned by watching through others, you know? It's like guests come in the house, kids are gonna go in a different room or they're gonna sit in the corner and be respectful and listen, that's how it was uh, because it was entertaining for us, and especially during the war because there's no TV, we, we couldn't be glued to the TV. There was no technology so it's like, you know, somebody come over it's usually from, you know, if not neighbors, from across the village or somewhere outside, and they always had some news and interesting stories to share. And of course, me growing up in the surrounding where, where, you know, where I was, I was interested in listening about, you know, heroes...

BB: So um, you were talking about when people came over, I mean that was, that was the entertainment, that was the news of the day, that's how you learned um, what other kind of things did they- was it, was it, was it like food and having a little drink? So was there like, did people play music or sing songs? Or, and I'm sure it depended on who was there but-

MH: Yeah, it, it all depend who was there. We had like local gatherings as well, where, you know, people would play music, and it, it wasn't, you know, electronic instruments, it was more like tanpura, you know? It's, it's similar to acoustic guitar, but and, and, and, you know it's- works on that principle but it's, it's a folk thing from are- area where I am from. It's just a string and, you know, uh woods, and that's how people played music. And mostly it was uh music played was about the, the heroes. Not he heroes but the, the, the guys who, you know, did some good to defend us, or, you know, and, and stuff like that, you know? You always have those individuals in a war that go beyond-

BB: Yeah.

MH: -their duty, you know? To do, do- to protect their homeland or family, and that's, that's, that was on my amazement always when I got to listen to those guys. It was always, you know, it's like, "oh that guy was awesome, you know?"

BB: Right.

MH: "He did this." And, and it ranged from, you know, being kids from fifteen, sixteen that, that fought the war, even though they didn't have to but they wanted to, to uh my grandpa was, you know, at the time, he's now seventy-seven, but twenty years ago he was fifty-seven. He was one that, you know, with no military training or nothing he, he's the one that had to step up and did his part too, as well as my dad did. [00:09:59] You know, being a teacher as well, and then go- and it's more, not more like, you know, going to war, because just to keep uh, keep watch, because my village was eight hundred and thirteen meters above the sea level, and it was a specific location uh too where we could defend ourselves. It was on front lines and uh we'd just got attacked by Serbian uh people, uh soldiers or whatever, two times during the, the era. And both two times we, we uh pushed them away, we, we defended ourselves, and then they never did anything like that anymore, but they did, you know, bombard us with like uh tanks and stuff like that, because they couldn't get at, at us otherwise. But um-

BB: So you had an upward strategic position?

MH: Yes, yes, yes, and nothing happened until like '95, when, you know, when big ethnic cleansing, when genocide happened. But I've seen a lot of people during the, the area in my village in Slatina, you know, come and go, uh refugees, even though we didn't have resources for them to, you know, house them, all of them, or feed them, because we didn't have food and stuff like that, but we helped as much as we could. Because there was a lot of them, a lot of them from surrounding cities and, and villages, that flood to the, you know, supposed to be a UN protected zone but it was all but that.

BB: Mhmm. Was your dad, as a teacher and then as he contributed to the war effort, was he the, did he try to be norm- normalcy and try to have- be teaching everyday? And then-

MH: Yeah, yes. Um, he was uh in the day uh worked, and he did that before even war, it was a village and then you had the surrounding village kids coming too, so he would teach kids in two shifts. First shift in the morning would be, for example, first and third class. First and third, and then afternoon, second and four. And there was the one classroom, so kids from first grade would sit on one side and kids from uh third, or whatever, they'd sit on other side. So he would go back and forth, he would teach two grades at the same time, and he did that for years. Generations, generations, and that's how I um got, you know, a school education through the fourth grade, from forth- first to fourth grade.

BB: Mhmm.

MH: And he didn't treat me any different than other, you know, his kids. It was, back then, you, you know, you know, it, it was, for him it was uh permissible to punish kids, you know? To get your hands out and get whipped if you, you know, misbehaving or, you know, for whatever reason, you know, that's I can- it can lead to that, you know? And I, I, I, I was the one that, that received, you know, plenty of get my hands out and get a switch and, you know, I did that. And that's how he grew up, as well, because he got his education in a rural area too and his teacher did that to him, and, you know? And, and later on he became a friend to that teacher, all the to the end of their life of that teacher, and it was always interesting to me the, the connection that my uh dad had with the whole village. Uh, they always kind of, because he was from that village, grew up and raised, his family is there too, and then most of the kids of the generations he raised up teaching, and then some of them, most of them actually came up to him, you know? "What, what the teachers says. What, what's he, what's he think about this? What's he think about that?" But uh-

BB: So there was a reverence for him? He was very-

MH: Eh, yeah, to some point.

BB: To some point.

MH: To some point, to some extent. And uh also um, um, I could have noticed that, I know I, I, I was born into communism but, you know, I was a kid, I didn't know what it is, but now I understand what communism was, you know? And what it did, I, I can tell now, you know, that the communism era left a lot of impact on, on my country, not just my, you know, my family, and, and people I knew, it's, it spread it all over the, you know. And I'm not gonna talk about, is it bad or, or, or good, but definitely Bosnian community, not, not just Bosnian community, but the Bosniaks specifically, you know? [unclear] uh individuals and, and, and community definitely lost a big part of their identity during the communism. And I, when I say lost it's um, they accepted some of the costumes and, and, and the traditions from communism as their own, as part of their religion or identity, which it's not, and now, you know, it's those people, raised generations after that and that left impact to them, as well. [00:15:10] And we have a lot of, I mean in my opinion, I think, you know, a lot of those people misrepresent themselves as who they are because they accept- we accepted, or we was given some customs from communism as our own but they are not really.

BB: Mhmm.

MH: But, you know, that's just the case because our, our country has seen uh many, you know, different oppressors, that come through and we always survived, but, you know, if you have twenty or f- you know, I'm exaggerating right now, not twenty but it was a lot of, you know more than ten oppressors probably through the whole history of Bosnia, that came through. And everybody left, not, not just for the infrastructure, a little bit piece of, you know, their own, and then they left, you know, customs too that eventually, you know, got accepted in some states, some didn't. And that's-

BB: How do you think today the customs are? I guess that's- traditions do change and you have these oppressors that come in and do this and-

MH: Well, yeah, it's just like any colonial uh, uh country, you know? Colon- colo- you know, somebody comes to your home and takes over, using your resources and, you know, they might take away some stuff from you, "hey, you can't do that, you can't do that," or "hey, can do this, you can do this." It's like, "hey, I'm not forcing you do to this, but you know, you, you got, you could do this."

BB: Mhmm. What uh, so childhood was until about seventeen, um how did it, how did it comes to pass that, and I don't who you fled wit, was it your parents and your grand- I mean were all, were all, were you able to leave all at the same time, can you tell me? And how, how that all took place?

MH: Well uh, in '95, like July ninth or tenth, I'm not really sure but one of those two days, you know? And even before that, you know, we fled to the woods uh a few times from our village, just, you know, to be on the safe side, but I remember a particular day and my parents were out, uh you know, doing some work to the land, I don't know what, what, what it was, I can't remember right now. And I remember them coming home and uh, uh they said, "okay, we got to pack what we can and we got to flee. Women and children, and, you know, elderly are gonna go to the uh Potočari, which where there was a camp of UN uh, Holland unit of uh UN, and the, the adults, you know, my dad, my grandma, were meeting with other people, uh men especially, to try to go through woods. Not five day away, through do, do- you know, just try to I guess sneak through to go through a free territory. And we gathered some stuff around, you know? Mostly like some paper work, pictures, and um, and that wasn't our first preference as much as was, you know, gather some food and just get alive to the safe territory. So I remember uh we- I actually was there, uh it was on my way to Potočari, where Bosnian men are, men from soldiers and, not soldiers, and where, where they were meeting up and there was thousands and thousands of them there. And I remember saying "bye" to my dad, not knowing that I, I might not see him again, you know? I still wasn't realizing what's gonna happened, you know? Because I was still a kid, uh I was, almost eleven years old, you know? A month

short or so. And I remember going down to Potočari and then there was even more people there, women, children, and all kinds of noises, and you can, you can, you could smell fear in the, in the air, you know? And uh I remember on July tenth I, I guess, it was- I was in Potočari, I remember when um Serbian soldiers, the special unit, came out from the side, from the hills, down where we were at, and that, that sound, that, you know, forty, fifty thousand people, women and child make, you know? It, it's, I don't know how to describe it, it's just, you know, like scary, full of fear, and then anger all well, because, you know, you hate that, you hate that guy, you know, coming down, because you know what he's gonna do to do and then you are helpless. [00:20:01] And, and, uh, we stayed there and they came and said, you know, they're gonna provide buses for us to go through, to take us to the free territory, which eventually they did, but what they did, and although it's, you know, because you couldn't get everybody at the same time, you had to go, you know, little, little by little, and depends how many buses and, and trucks they had, to pile them people on. But during that time there uh they raped, killed, and, and slaughtered a lot of people in night time. And you could hear noises, you know, women getting raped, um and, and slaughtered, like I, I, like I said, I was eleven years old and forgot most of those stuff, but I lived through my grandma and, and, and my uh parents. And uh, and I, I could, you know, noticed around me what's going on, and then when, when it finally got to the moment like where my family, which is my grandma, me, my mother, and my little brother, and of course other immediate family, was supposed to go, you know, head out to the buses, and before we did we already heard that, you know, they are separating uh children and men from their family like, you know? And I was eleven years old. So we was heading out to the buses and there was two soldiers on each entrance, you know, to the bus, and then um one of them grabbed me and he said, "okay, you're not going to go with your family, there's a separate bus for you." Which my parents knew, my mom and my grandma, my mom was stunned, she didn't know what to do, um and they knew what's, what's gonna happen to me but, and for some reason, you know, I think it's, it's God's work, uh this grandma uh, grand- old, older guy, you know? Senior, he was, you know, probably fifty, sixty, sixty years old. I, I don't, I don't remember seeing his face but I remember what he was wearing. He was, he had a like kind of uh black pants, black, black, black suit, and he has this handmade uh backpack, you know, that he had, you know, a few things in it probably, I don't know what it was, and he had a hat, like French, French hat that got adopted into Bosnian culture as, as our own. And I remember, and he had the cane too as well, and I remember, I remember him from the back and I'll never forget that scene. He just showed up out of nowhere in between the buses and the trucks, and that guy, the soldier that was, that grabbed me for a shoulder, he was gonna take me away, he saw him so he went to tell him, "hey, grandpa," you know? Something like thing, "old man, you're not gonna go there, you come over here." So he just left me there, so my grandma pushed me in uh, in the bus, all the way to the back in the bus. And there was curtains on the windows, she

closed curtains, I went under the seat, and then she put all kinds of stuff on me, and that's how I survived that part. And then it was a long journey to free territory where, where they was taking us. I remember uh, going through towns where Serbian kids and, and, and women and children were throwing rocks, hollering all kinds of uh names at us, and then I remember uh seeing a, of course I was peeking through as much as I could, I remember that uh seeing on the one, uh Cravitz this place called, I seen like a hundreds of, of the countrymen, you know, Bosnian men that were captured in the field and they had tanks around, not many of them, but they had tanks pointed at, at them, soldiers watching them and those, those people never survived. Uh, they, they got killed, uh whichever way they could I guess. So we got to destination where buses couldn't go any more and we got out the buses, and there was of course Serbian soldier there too and they did sort and, some, some sort there too, they said- our bus driver was a Serbian so before we head out he said, "y'all be careful, you're not that far to walk away, but watch out, don't go anywhere off the road because there's soldier there that rape and kill too," and I remember that. You know how- whichever how many miles it was I can't remember but it lasted forever because when I stepped out I seen soldiers around. But I remember uh particularly every one of them that I saw along the road, uh I looked up and, and, and, and, and made eye contact with one of them. [00:24:57] For whatever reason, I don't know why, but I remember doing that, looking at every one of them, made eye contact whichever, whichever one of them was looking at me. Because, I don't know, I, I can't, I couldn't, you know, I can't come up with a solution why I did that, you know? But I seen a lot of people, you know, it's panic, you know? It's fear. Walk down with their head down, you're trying to survive, but I remember looking up to every one of them, and that's just something that stuck with me. I remember their eyes, you know? The, the, the looks they gave me. And uh finally, you know, we came out to the- where we was greeted by our, our country men, you know? The free territory in [uncertain of city name], so we got taken away to the camp, in Dubrove and it was like huge camp that they set up for tents, for the women and children because, you know, how m- how many of us, they didn't know what to do with us but place us in temporary housing before they found something else for us. And um, a few days passed, you know, and some people went to the woods, soldiers, or men, and women too as well, that didn't want to go to where I'm go- went to. They went through woods and remember, people started coming, you know? And it was about one-third of the people probably that didn't survive that, and my parent- my dad was one of them, my grandma was one of them, but I lost a lot of relatives like uncles and their children. And I remember the main uh sentiments as you see somebody walk through the gate to the camp where I was at, and you see somebody that you, you can physically tell that they went through woods, and one of the main things that everybody asked, no matter who it is, "where are you from?" And then they asked about their relatives, "do you know this guy?" And the, the specific phrase that they used is [in Bosnian], which translated in English you can't really, you know, I can't really translate

it, but it's similar to be- is, is "did they survive?" Because you'd want to know about everybody, hope learn to know about relatives. And then you had a bunch of people that, you know, said, "okay, I know that guy. Yeah he, I saw him survive," and then, you know, there was a bunch of them that said, you know, "Yeah i know that guy, he didn't survive. I seen him getting killed," and then in a day or two it's even different emotions, you know? What I survived at the beginning of that trip, where people finally realized, you know, "hey, I have kids, husbands, sons,I know I'll never see again."

BB: Hmm.

MH: And that was emotional as well, too.

BB: Mhmm.

MH: Uh, my grandma uh, my, my grandpa, he uh, he was one of the, you know, first that came through and, and he- we, we saw right, you know, in the, in the next few days after he uh came through but I haven't seen my dad six months after that, because uh at the beginning of fighting through the woods, uh they used all kinds of chemicals to throw between people, to deceive people, uh and, uh one of the uh, he's our countryman, uh, started hallucinating, and it's, it's just one example. He started hollering there's, you know, Chetniks, Serbians, "Chetniks are here," so he had a hand grenade, pulled it out, throw it under himself, killed a few people around him, himself, and then injured uh my dad, and a few other people. And my dad still has a piece of those uh metals from the grenade. two inches uh from his heart. They're not moving, luckily, but uh, uh of course when that happened he got unconscious, you know? And people who saw him thought he was dead, left him there, but fortunately, you know, there was people some, still, you know, because the, uh, it was a huge line, you know, of people. They didn't just go all, all together, because, you know, it's- that stayed back and they was checking, you know, wounded people and they came through and saw my dad, you know? He was, he woke up, so they picked him up and they carry him for a little bit but after he gained his strength then he uh, he was able to walk on his own, uh through woods and, and witnessing all kinds of stuff. And my grandma, uh grandpa, and when he came to the free territory they put him somewhere in the, in the hospital and but my mom and I, we haven't, even though my uh grand- grandfather saw him come through and he was telling us he's alive, but it was still my mom didn't believe him because we couldn't find him where he is for like six months. [00:30:05] And uh after that, you know, we- he came out of a hospital, uh, to the camp where we were at and he was a teacher, of course, so he started looking for a job to see if he can do some kind of work. So he was able to find a, a teacher, teaching job again and we moved to that place, and um, we stayed there from, you know, '96 to 2002, and that's where I first time, you know, started discovering what's it like to live in a, in a world

where there's power, you know? Where there's running water or, or there's cars going, and buses, you know? And I started school and finished there, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth grade, and started going to high school, which I had to commute for about twenty-seven miles, each way with the bus, which is normal for back home. And uh I went to the college prep high school, you know? It's a little bit different schooling back home because high school is, there's a three years high school, there's a four years, and you, pretty much if you know what you're gonna do, let's say if you want to be like a, you know, in the hospitality business, you ain't got to go to college you just go to hospitality [coughs] in the high school where they had a bunch of different like vocational schools here. They had a bunch of different orientations you could choose, like a mechanic or whatever, you don't have- you don't want to go to college, and there's a college prep. [Unclear] that's the one I went, and there's where I started, you know, learning English, German, you know, Latin, I, I started discovering subjects that I'd never really had the experience, never had really the opportunity to learn about, you know? Philosophy, or logic, or, you know, stuff like that, or computer, and-

BB: So during this time you were all able to live together still?

MH: [coughs] Yeah.

BB: And then your father came and you were reunited and-

MH: Yeah, yeah.

BB: -and try to have some semblance of normalcy, try to make it as-

MH: Yes, my dad was working for, like, like we, we was awarded the housing that they'd made especially for uh, uh refugees, uh which was like four houses, wooden cabins, similar to this, and it was like, it was one next to the school where my dad got a job, so we stayed all the way to 2002 when we moved here. But that childhood was, you know, like the stuff that I needed to explore and live as a child before my sixth, or before my eleventh year of my life, I started exploring, you know? Uh, which is, at one point I matured, way matured for my eleven years old, but then there's that side that, you know, I didn't get to live, you know, what five, and six, and seven, eight year olds did, you know? So I kind of like jumped that phase and jumped into, you know, being an adult, a twelve year old kid. And then later on, as it progressed, like it, it, it was a struggle, my dad worked for, you know, for three hundred uh marks, which is, you know, like two hundred dollars a month, so it was just enough to have food, but we was lucky, you know, he has this, he has a brother in Germany that moved there like way before the war and he was able to help a little bit, to send some money, and buy, buy him a car. I had an uncle that lived in San

Francisco and he helped a little bit too, but mostly it's still, you know, we did what we did to survive during the war and before the war, which was, you know, work on the land, have a garden, you know, have livestock. Um, my grandma and grandpa, they lived with me during the war but after the war they didn't, they got awarded the house somewhere out on, on, on, on the countryside too, so. And that's my grand- my grandpa did most of his life is farming and, and taking care of that, so he wanted to continue that, and I, I, I believe that was uh the therapy for him as well, because he was born in 1938, so a little a kid he grew up in, and he survived the World War II, which we have something in common because as a kid I survived a war too, it's just on opposite sides of a century.

BB: Hmm.

MH: You know, and, and I went to high school back home and, and that was quite an experience as well because, you know, I started thinking about, you know what every high school kid start thinks about, kind of normalize, you know? Have some fun, go party I guess, you know? [00:34:59] Um, started looking at girls and, you know, dating and stuff like that, normalizing a little bit, and finally, you know, started kind of getting acquainted to all that normal, normal life, and my dad, you know my parents decided, you know, "hey maybe it's time to move," uh make another step and you know, see if we can move to the United States, because there was already a lot of Bosnians moving. Because he, he uh- we had an opportunity right after the war to move, uh because my uncle who lives in San Francisco, he sent like a paper, like for us and a lot of, a lot of people to come to the United States, but my dad is, you know, a, a huge patriot and a survivor of genocide, you know? He wanted to stay and help as much as he can to the country in whichever way he could. And he was hoping that things gonna get better, you know? Economy is gonna start to, you know, re-boost and, but, you know, 2002, that's seven years after the war, it didn't. And uh, he wanted to move over here mostly because of me and my brother, you know, to have college education, which we were gonna have back home but it wasn't worth that much because you couldn't find jobs. So 2002, February, we were in, February thirteen we were in Bowling Green, you know? I was-

BB: Why Bowling Green?

MH: Because we already had some family here that moved uh from Bosnian here too, resettled, and we had some that was in Germany and they had to be either uh, they had to either go back home to Bosnia or move away to other Western countries, so they came to the United States. So my parents, my dad chose Bowling Green because we are- there was already Bosnian community here, family, so we moved here. And um, I was third year of high school, so, the-

BB: So what was that trip like? Did you move- what was the, the sequence of events you- [MH coughs] Did you fly to Chicago? Or fly, did you to-

MH: First we had to go like to Croatia, to Zagreb, uh and we had to have like a sequences of interviews with the military, U.S. military personnel, you know? To see, no, I guess background checks and all that stuff, and went through a physical, got all kinds of, you know, uh like TBC shots and stuff like that, you know? Because we were refugees after the war they had to take precautions, you know, to, to save- prevent diseases, you know if somebody has disease to come here, which it makes sense. So it was a sequence, you know? And, and a period, I don't know lo- how long it lasted before February, like a year? And we got approved for a refugee visa, and we flew from Zagreb to, we had stop in Europe somewhere, I don't know where, and then to New York, which was a main entry, entry point. And um-

BB: And who went? Who was- who were the- what, what family group went to the-

MH: My dad, my mother, and my brother, myself, yeah. My grandparents stayed there. And uh, we came to New York and I knew a little bit of English already, a lot, a lot back then, uh b- and I was able, you know, to translate a little bit and-

BB: It was probably pretty- even though New York must've been, even just at the airport.

MH: Yeah, it was JFK, yeah it was, you know. It's like, "whoa," you know? "I've never seen nothing like this before." We stayed there a night in a motel, waiting for a flight to Bowling Green, and we came, some family met us in Bowling Green, brought us here, and found an apartment. But the ticket, uh the airplane tickets, you know? U- U- U.S. government paid for that for us, but then it, it was something that we had to repay back. The, the moment, you know, we come over here, start finding jobs, and we had to pay them back, which a lot of people think here, you know, that, you know, we got everything for free and stuff like that, no, it's still- even though I was a refugee, I still had to pay that back. And of course, you know, Bowling Green community helped us a lot here, you know with dif- different stuff. But uh, I mentioned, you know when I went to- came to New York I knew English, I, I learned English way back, you know? [00:39:53] And I, and uh, after the war, doesn't matter where in the world there's always non-governmental organizations and people from outside that want to come and kind of, you know, help people transit- make that transition from, you know, uh being in the war to have a normal life, and there was a bunch of non-government organizations and English speak- spoken per- personnel, you know people, regular college kids. You know, doctors came to, you know, they usually came every summer, played with the kids and stuff like

that, and that's how I, I, I, I picked up a lot of English through going with them and translating for them and stuff like that.

BB: Was it Americans? Or Brits? Or what-

MH: French, Brits, you know, that's most of them I had encounter with, but there were some people from, you know, Germany, and all over, all over Europe. And then there was, you know, uh U.S. soldier that came through too, like under the NATO, with NATO or whatever after the war. So I got to encounter with them too, and Humvee jeeps, you know? And hang out, you know, talk to them and stuff like that.

BB: Practicing.

MH: Yeah, practicing, yeah that helped a lot. And um we moved to Bowling Green, I went one year in high school at Greenwood.

BB: Yeah how did that go? Because you were well on your way, you know you were about seventeen.

MH: Yeah.

BB: So when somebody comes with that knowledge, you know, you weren't just a little kid, and, you know, you'd go through our sys- our system, how did you do the like the testing? And like "how, how far, how far progressed is this kid?" And, you know, and did they- was it equivalent? Like you, you're- "okay, he's, he is really right with everybody his age, and he only needs to do another year." Or how did they, how did they determine that?

MH: Well I was already like a third grade of, of high school, like a Junior, and then I moved here, of course I had to translate my stuff, you know, like uh, like grades and stuff like that. And, you know, I, I wasn't the best of the students because, you know, but I was decent, you know? But I, you know, and at, at the Junior year of high school, you know, I was more interested in, especially when I moved here, meeting up girls and stuff like that, you know? I, I wasn't- but they, they put me with normal, you know, what am I- what grade am I supposed to be, they put me like in regular. Uh it was kind of still difficult, even though I knew English, but I wasn't familiar in um, I had more experience with British English, rather than, you know, American English, and i didn't really, you know, know much about school terms and stuff like that. So that was, you know, a period of where I had to learn a lot like, you know a lot of kids that moved here they was put in into English as Second Language from the get-go, when I moved here they realized I knew some English so they put me in the regular English classes, where I had to, you, you

know, read Shakespeare in English or, you know, stuff like that, American literature, which was hard to understand. And because I didn't read that much books anyway because as a kid I didn't have, in the war and after that, didn't have interest I guess that much, because that, reading was the last thing on my mind, you know? So that was a, a huge transition as well. And then I played soccer and got involved into sports, some other teams, um, uh after the high school, well and during the high school I got a job, you know? McDonald's was my first job, you know I was able to save up some money and help my parents, I got the car, which was a huge deal, you know, where I, where I grew up and what I came from. So that kind of, uh, took me away from more relevant stuff, what I needed to do. It's like getting prepared for college and stuff like that, it's "hey," you know, I lived through seventeen years of my life with not having enough to now, you know, I'm making my own money, you know even, you know, I have a car, you know I can, I'm free, you know? And it was, it was a huge, huge deal, but I didn't- the- like I, like I said, as well took me away from what should've been my preference, you know, number one, to run, run around and explore the country here, and...

BB: Who were your friend- I mean were you friends with the American kids or? I'm thinking about soccer and starting to play, and I know that it's, it's a, you know?

MH: Yeah.

BB: Foot- that kind of football is the, is the sport where you, where you're from, so did- was there a lot- did you get to know more Bosnians that way or did you mix it-

MH: I got, I got to know a, a, a lot more Bosnians that way, and I got, I got to learn a lot of uh people from- Americans as well, but uh, it was, I was still hanging out with Bosnians mostly because, I guess because of the, you know, they're my countrymen, you know, they're the same like me. [00:45:15] Uh, and not that I was, you know, racist, but I was- there, but there was a lot of people that, you know, had the racial remarks, but why I hung out with the Bosnian kids mostly because we had same, similar interests, similar language, and, and I, and I didn't quite understand quite yet, you know, what American seventeen year old kid is into, you know? And what they were into that I was able to um see, didn't interest me, so that why, you know, we- you stay with your own flock till you, you know, I spend three of four years here and then I started uh having more American friends, you know, stuff like that, but. You know, I, I dated, I dated uh mostly American girls when I was seventeen, eighteen, nineteen years old, because it, it was, I guess it's that uh, that all men have, you know? It's something different, you know? I want to try it. And I dated, yeah, with, with- outside of my race. Not my race, my nationality. And then I, of course, 2003 right after high school, I started college and uh finished all my gen ed classes and-

BB: At Western?

MH: At Western, yes. And I, I, I was, you know, still a little confused of what I want to do with my life because, you know, I didn't really thought about that before in my life, what I want to become. So I explored different majors, you know, History, English, stuff like that, and it's a whole different ballgame in college, you know? Now you meet people all over the world and, you know, socialize, [unclear] I guess. And girls, of course, and then, you know, job, you know, and, and me being confused what I want to do with my life didn't quite work, work, work well. So I decided, you know, to quit that, get a, get a job and just continue with that, making money and try to help my parents, stuff like that. And not till, you know, uh I held different kind of jobs, from, like I've said, fast food service to customer service at hotels, you know, to the-

BB: So you were in hospitality?

MH: -manufacturing. Yeah, for a little bit, yeah. And uh it's not till 2011, midway, where I started, you know, "hey, I need to go finish out the college," and I, I got working full-time and I started taking some classes here, you know, full-time, some part-time, and I just graduated in May.

BB: Oh cool.

MH: Yeah, business school, Business Administration. And right now I'm, I'm working for Kroger and playing that corporate game I guess, trying to climb the ladder. You know, it's-

BB: And you're here in Bowling Green?

MH: Yeah, here in Bowling Green, yes.

BB: Huh. That's cool. Yeah so your, your parents are still-

MH: Yeah, they're, they're here, they're still alive and uh working in uh manufacturing, of course, you know, because they don't speak English that well, so it's- there's limitless possibilities for them, so they've got to work where they can.

BB: Hmm. And you're still pretty clo- I mean, did you live with them during the period of time when you had left college and were you living at their-

MH: Yeah, I was living with them through whole, the whole time, and I, I, I still does, I still do actually, uh because I couldn't, you know, see myself leaving them to live by myself, not knowing English, not knowing, you know, whatever, because, you know, even if I would move away from them i would still have to be a lot in the house helping them translate, taking them to doctor's appointment. And eventually, even when I get married, you know, they're gonna be with me because, um, it's, it's in our culture, uh, you know, the eldest person or whoever, one of the sons, to take care of the parents. And you just- putting them in a home, you know, it's not a, not an option, you know? And, but that's just something I, I plan to do the rest of my life too, and just something my wife will have to, you know, deal with, eventually.

BB: Um, so your grand- you know you mentioned your grandmother from our, beginning of our- I didn't ask, so it was your grandmother and grandfather, your father's parents?

[00:50:02]

MH: My mom's parents.

BB: Your mom's parents.

MH: Yeah. Uh I don't remember my uh dad's parents, uh because they died long before I was, I was, you know, two, a couple years old when they died so I don't remember them. But yeah they're my mom's side, parents.

BB: That's a cultural thing and something that's with you now.

MH: Yeah.

BB: Yeah, I think that's a good thing, it's great.

MH: Well um, one of the difficult transitions that I, of course it's, it's, it's, it's a cultural shock when you move to a new country, but one of the, the difficulties I had with growing up uh back home it's you know everybody in your neighborhood, you know? Ten houses down, you know who lives in that house and you, you know, you say "hi" to him, and you go knock on the door and you don't, you know, you go to the coffee, to eat, whatever, and then we moved here and then, you know, it's more of the, and everybody's busy, yeah I understand, and then like but you don't know who lives ten houses ten anymore, you know? It's, you know, you don't know who's three houses down. You see them, but, you know, it's not really like uh in the custom to go here, or I haven't it experienced it, to go,

"hey," to meet them, to tell them "hey," you come over, you know, like it just doesn't, it's different than what I, what I grew up with.

BB: Hmm.

MH: But uh of course as year progressed it's kind of, I became that person as well now too, you know? Because that's how it is here, and you just say, "hi," you know, be nice and, but you don't try to have that um relationship with everybody around you in your neighborhood.

BB: Right. I think I was talking to some of, some of the friends like Denis and talking about how, or I think it was maybe like Senida or something, so maybe there was a saying but I don't know what it was, and it was something about sometimes your neighbors are more important than family.

MH: They are.

BB: Just that, and it kind of goes back to what you were just talking about, just like, oh that's weird that I don't know everybody in the next of two blocks or something like that. So um it's very-

MH: Well it's, it's a, it's a religious practice, you know, because, you know, it don't matter who your neighbors are, uh but incorporated to, Bo- you know, national practice as well. Yeah, because, you know, you- something happens to you, it's the neighbor that's gonna help you out, and you live with that guy or person, you know? He helps you. For example, when I grew up, you know, in, in, in Slatina in during the war, and even before war, it's- I have a big piece of land that I had to uh grow uh some kind of crop on it or whatever, or cut the hay down, and we didn't have electrical powered equipment, you know, tractors or all that, it was all hand um, you know? And you rely on your neighbor, your neighbors, you know, to help you out, because, you know, everybody comes help you out, tomorrow everybody goes help that guy, everybody goes help that guy, you know, because it, it was just impossible, or it, it, it wouldn't, it would take a long time for you to do all that by yourself. You get sick, you know, neighbors help you out, because relatives live, if they're not close, different village, by the time they get there it'd be too late.

BB: Are there any similarities between that village culture and how people are here? I've been tell- asking people about everything from are there any similarities, is there any food or how people treat you? I mean I don't know if you have experience like visiting the North

and how people are maybe in Chicago as opposed to how welcoming they are around here? Or the food? Or, uh, I don't know, yeah.

MH: I, I visited North, Chicago, but, you know, I did just as a tourist, I, you know, visited California and stuff like that, but mostly, you know, it's here, surrounding counties and coun- the states that I know, but, but I have noticed that uh there's a lot of similarity between rural area and where I grew up here. I mean it's, it's, that's dying off too, maybe like twenty years ago it was more similar, where people here in, in, in rural area and communities are just like we were back home, you know, it's community-oriented. You know, you know who your neighbor is, or whatnot, and they grew up the same way, you know, like we did, except using different tools like on the farms, stuff like that, the kids had to do the, their part too, like I did, which is now, it's, you know, a little bit different.

BB: Mhmm.

[00:55:08]

MH: But the food-wise, uh, it, it's also similar to, you know, rural areas, because, you know, they don't have access to the fast food and restaurants and they cook a lot, and my mom still cooks a lot, daily. You know, it's just something that she can't be without, you know? And it is hard work but she got used to my, my dad eating fresh food, cooked and-

BB: Bosnian food?

MH: Yeah, Bosnian food. So they still cook it everyday. Of course I'm more, you know, ac- accustomed now to eating, you know, like American food, of course.

BB: And now you work for a big food chain.

MH: Yeah, yes.

BB: Where's your uh, where's your office based for work? Or where are you?

MH: Well I work for Country Oven Bakery, I'm part of the pro- uh production-

BB: Okay.

MH: -as in like daily relief, and I do pretty much from being on the assembly line to being a group leader, it all depends, from day-to-day basis.

BB: So it switches up?

MH: Yeah, it switches up, yes. But I'm, I am trying to [unclear] you know they have a like a career training program where you can move somewhere and be, you know, a supervisor or HR, or whatever, but I don't want to move, I'm trying to stay here and build, build on what's here because that's- this is my home.

BB: That's important.

MH: Yeah, it's important to me to be here, because I don't have to- I don't- I can't think about just about my, myself, you know? Our- and then I'm not like blaming nobody, you know? My career could be a lot different now because I know I could've build it and then be somewhere else, but I choose not to because I'll be alone, and having people around me that speak languages like I am, and having my family, my parents around me, it's more, more important to me than having, have career because I had the experience to see people that are from my country that uh orientated more toward career, and now they, you know, they're thirty, thirty-five year olds, single people who are kind of, you know, regretting why did they choose career over family and stuff like that. And of course there's those that, you know, don't regret it, but to me like to start the family, you know, be around family, it's a big, big part of my-

BB: Big priority.

MH: Yeah, big priority-

BB: See I, I think that's great. Yeah.

MH: Um, one, one thing I wanted to mention uh earlier-

BB: [Want to stop for a second while this train goes by?] Okay, I'm sorry, I, I cut you off. It's on now.

MH: Well uh, the, the battle that I had, you know, like in being there in the war, or in post-war back home, it's, you know, it's just like a battle of survival, exploring, it's similar to what I had to go through when I moved here as well, it was still the battle even though, you, you know, a different kind of battle, because you'll- you received a cultural shock, you experienced that, and then you got to choose what's good, what's right, you know, what's ethical here or what's not, you know? Who to trust, what to try, what to not try, you know, and it's- it was still that same kind of battle for my, for me. And I've seen a lot of people, uh, give in to that battle and, you know, go the wrong way, which leads to,

eventually to, you know, being dead or whatever, in prisoned or whatnot, which is similar to back home, being dead or get- being captured or handicapped, or stuff like that.

BB: Hmm.

MH: So it, it was that constant battle, just different kind of war.

BB: Mhmm. You talked about um, being Muslim and, and how- what is that like in, in Bowling Green? Or, you know, certainly that's part of your community, you said you'd probably met, you know, Denis here-

MH: Yeah.

BB: -that way, uh a little bit.

MH: Well it's, it's, it's a place where, you know, it's an institution where you- everybody has a like, you know, and, and jobs, and career, and family, and of course, you know, you, you spend time doing that you don't get to see that much and to meet new people, and, you know, a mosque is a perfect opportunity for to fulfill, you know, your spiritual side, you know, to feed the soul. That's what mosque is for me and my, my religion, you know, it's- I have drinks, food and different stuff to feed my body, but there's that food that I have to feed my soul with. [01:00:22] And then there's opportunity for, for me, young individuals as, you know, Denis from my country, and other, others, you know? And [train noise] meet their kids-

BB: Yeah.

MH: -you know, play with the kids, see my family, and socialize, and of course, be part of some projects, whether it is, you know, to just bring everybody together or to help community by, you know, collecting whatever, charities.

BB: Yeah, yeah. And there's a- is there things for like men and women to do? Do you get to meet other, you know?

MH: Uh, yeah.

BB: Like young people, say both men and women, do they do things together or?

MH: Yeah, yeah, yeah, we do, we do. It's, you know, not as, as it's portrayed like in the media about what Islam is or Muslims are, you know? It's, like I would like to, you know,

anybody who want to in Bowling Green, I w- you know, they are always welcome to come to see what I experience because, you know, it's not any different than when you're stepping in a church, or synagogue, or whatever. It's, it's the same thing, just, you know, different beliefs kind of, but it's still similar beliefs [train noise] but some are different.

BB: [talking about the train noise] So, so one of the things, we're talking about mosques, so one of the things I think Denis and I talked about about early on is, what a project like this, if we share some of the stories on the radio or they're embedded in an exhibit that we're doing or something, one of the things, and we pitch this when we're trying to, you know, get grant money, and everyone's really uh supportive, we've had local grants most recently here, but we're going for a National Endowment of the Arts grant where we can celebrate creativity and music, or craft or some things maybe your mother does or your grandmother does, or something like that. One of the things that Denis, and every- most people agree, and I certainly agree, is how can we help break down barriers about uh Islam and just how can we- misconceptions and, you know, and it's just all fall we've had these meetings, and it was like after Paris, it's just like- and I'm talking to uh my wife, who's actually a part of the professor group here, and I was going, "what kind of bologna do, do they have to, do these Islamic friends of ours have to deal with? and after this. So I don't know, what do you, what would you think about, you know, I don't know if it's trips to the mosque to help familiarize people? Or we- something more ecumenical where we can be-

MH: What I noticed the, the what most people, you know, when they say stuff about Islam, it's they got that, you know, from TV, they got that from interest, or whatever source. What they don't have is somebody who is Islam, Muslim, Muslim religion, so they are, you know, making uh opinions about something they don't have experience, you know, first hand, you know, it's always a second or third source. And what I would like to, you know, to see people a. meet a Bo- you know not Bosnian, there's a Muslim community here all over the world, meet a Muslim fr- you know a person, a friend, and then, you know, you make, may make a, you know, opinion about Islam then, you know see because there's a lot of us here, right in front of everybody, go talk, go visit mosques, you know? And, and go from there, you know? That, that's what I would like to, you know, for people, to get to know e- know each other, familiarize with them. Just like, you know, uh there's a subject that, you know, I'm, I'm stating my opinion about, you know let's say medicine, you know, and I'm biased or I'm not biased but if I, I can be uh, I can know more about a subject than Denis, so you know, but luckily I know him, I can ask him a question about it, and you know and I'll know first hand, you know? I just can't go on WebMD and uh Denis, you know, "that's what Web you know MD says," you know? "Uh even though you studied that subject, I don't know, you know, it's here."

BB: That's a good, actually that's a good analogy. Yeah, people just take the pop culture, uh sometimes vitriolic uh terrorism things and twist it and uh they have no idea.

MH: Yeah, they have no idea-

BB: I mean I think that's what I try to do is just show culture is very diverse and very sacred and beloved, and to how do we, how can we validate culture? And just say, "it's just a different way of operating and they do a lot of great things too, and they're, they're you're neighbors so get to know them." [01:05:12] I mean it's like, I'd like to be able to expand, you know, you know, you know ten ho- I'd like to have you know ten houses down.

MH: Yeah, yeah, absolutely. Um, but we are we very musical as well, you know? We like, Bosnian communities-

BB: I'd like to hear, I'd like to hear about, about that, we haven't talked about too much about that.

MH: It's, it's not similar to anything I know in the world, but, you know, there is, you know, pop culture, rock and roll, but I'm more a, a fan of uh vocal and acoustic stuff like that. I mean even though like the religious call it's fascinating to me, not just because I'm part of it, it's mine, like Adnan it's just, I mean it's, you know you hear and it's, it's, it's like uh it has a melody to it, you know? I mean I, I know what does it mean but it's just amazing to me, and every time when I was back home this past September, it, it's just something I missed about home. And yeah it's just call for prayer, you know, that's it, but it's just like the city and there's every mosque you know in the city, there's, there's that melody coming from speakers, and then all of a sudden at the same time you can hear the church bells ring, and then, you know, synagogue or whatever, and it's just, you just close your eyes and it, it's music of life for me, you know, it's, it's amazing. Uh, actually like in Sarajevo there's a part of Sarajevo, a, a, a block where within a hundred meters I believe, and I don't know is there any may- maybe Jerusalem, and I, I, I'm not familiar with any more other place, there's a church, Orthodox church, there's a Catholic cathedral, there's a synagogue, there's a mosque, all with the radius of, you know, a hundred meters, and it's just something that you don't see that much around the world, it's unique. And that's always- I was amazed and I was always glad to be approached like that, where we had different influences, religions, and, you know, stuff like that, but on the other hand, not everybody were happy I guess because of that, because we always had genocides and conflicts and all that, but mostly because politics, you know, in- enter that, you know, house of prayers. Whether that mosque or cathedral or whatever it is, politics goes in there and-

BB: Mhmm.

MH: -your people choose sides then and stuff happens.

BB: Mhmm, mhmm. How about, so that's, you know, sacred music that, that human voice I think that-

MH: Yeah.

BB: -really drives us is the call, if it's a call to prayer, how about uh secular music? Like are the folk traditions of, of- you men- you mentioned uh, um tamburitza and different, different uh instruments like that, are those, are those played in this community at all? Like maybe even informally?

MH: Tamburitza I have, maybe, you know, private houses and stuff-

BB: Yeah.

MH: -by who knows how to play but like I haven't seen nobody publicly do it here, maybe, but that, that's one of the first instruments I uh, I got to know, and that was the music, you know, I um, I hear, or I heard, it was, you know, Tamburitza and voice, that was it.

BB: Mhmm.

MH: And uh it, it was always dear to me because I guess, you know, it's the first thing that I got to experience, and then Sevdah now, and I'm actually, you know, at the in point my life where somewhat I have a control of my life, you know? Even though there's a lot more to it, but now, you know, as a thirty year old, I know what I want, I know what I enjoy, you know, I'm done explored already, you know, who am I as a person, you know? It took awhile because the circumstances I grew up in and survived through, you know? Like right now Denis is, is as a twenty year old, he knows pretty much what kind of music he likes, listens to and stuff like that, this is just an example, well that was transition period for me where I'd just started exploring really what music, you know? I started learning about classical music when I was eighteen, nineteen year old, I didn't know classical music exists, you know? I didn't know there is uh Vivaldi, I didn't know there is a Mozart, or a Igor Tchaikovsky, you know? [unclear] or all kinds of different music. So I didn't know there is Chinese classical music, I didn't know there is Aborigen traditional, you know, music and stuff like that. And, you know, after exploring that it's still like kind of I went back home and Sevdah is big part of my life, because I'm, you know, engaged in- I love and I'm loved, you know, so that's why I guess, and then plus it's music from my home and it's kind of like go back to the roots and-

BB: Tell me about, tell me your interpretation of Sevdah and is it something that's performed? Or, or how is it shared here? Or is it something we'd listen to or is it something we get together and do? And just maybe first start by like what is, what is Sevdah?

MH: It's uh love songs, that's what it is to me. And uh, you know, you-

BB: Singing for a, for a girl? Or for the love of where I live and the beauty of the surroundings? Or?

MH: Uh, just like anything else, you know, there's different kinds of loves, of course, but this is mostly about love, you know, women love, you know? And there's, you know, songs about country or patriotism love but mostly it's about love, you know, and love songs. And that's, that's one, that's the ones, you know, I enjoy the most.

BB: Are they, are they created uh, is it something you'd- you'll sit and compose or is it something that's extemporaneous, it just comes, it just comes like uh-

MH: Well, it, it-

BB: And maybe there's different ones, so.

MH: Um, right now, twenty-first century, I don't believe that like there's, you know, somebody who composes and writes Sevdah songs anymore. It's more of the, the millennials now uh taking the old stuff and giving it new energy, you know? It's still with that touch of Sevdah but it's just like trying to, get that movement going again, you know?

BB: Do you sing Sevdah yourself?

MH: No, I don't, no I'm, I'm-

BB: But you just en- you enjoy it?

MH: Yeah, I enjoy it, I enjoy it, yeah.

BB: Would we have people around this community as we explore Sevdah and the love Sevdah, do you think there would be something we could have as one of our small community gatherings to share that there could be Sevdah performed? Do you think there's anybody that, you know-

MH: That could perform?

BB: Yeah, just-

MH: Maybe uh, to similar something of what you have here, you know?

BB: Yeah, yeah, intimate, like and small.

MH: Intimate, yes, yes. People, you know, there, there's some per- that I, I could think of that could play Sevdah, you know, and stuff like that.

BB: It sure would be nice to like-

MH: Yeah.

BB: -document it, and, and maybe share with the audience what it is-

MH: Exactly.

BB: -and then here is an example. Maybe have some food, something.

MH: Yeah, that would be a good idea. How about uh the theatre here? Uh-

BB: You mean to have that at this theatre or to?

MH: -shows. Or if they like shows, like, you know, there's theatre here and they produce all kinds of shows.

BB: Yeah, yeah, you mean like at, at uh-

MH: Plays, stuff like that.

BB: -Fine Arts Center, or-

MH: Or-

BB: -or Potter?

MH: Yeah, or yeah.

BB: Yeah.

MH: Because there's a lot of uh, I don't know how, how long is uh preparations for it, and I know it takes a while, there's a lot of uh, not a lot of maybe, but a few actually plays that are transferred in English that were world-

BB: Bosnian plays?

MH: Yeah, worldwide known that actually have that uh Sevdah theme in it, you know? It's-

BB: Huh.

MH: Yeah, stuff like that.

BB: We should think about this, I'd like-

MH: Yeah.

BB: And I'm trying to think about how we could get it out in a nice- I mean yeah, I think we could do this intimate Sevdah thing too, but we could also, you know we were also thinking about maybe we have a small film festival series, because there's certain they have great good Bosnian films.

MH: Yeah.

BB: There's, every time we talk about getting maybe a Bosnian performer there's a couple of big names, like, you know, who's the Bob Dylan of uh Bosnia? Who's the-

MH: Oh Sev- or like-

BB: I, I mean in, in popular, uh in, in music.

MH: I don't know. [someone else says Dino Merlin] Dino Merlin probably, even-

BB: So there's like-

MH: -even, even more similar would be to like Michael Jackson, not Bob Dylan because-

BB: More like, more like-

MH: Yeah.

BB: -poppy, pop figure?

MH: Yeah, yeah.

BB: Pop figure, yeah. So, you know, what does this mean, uh I want to be able to dream but I also want to be realistic, like what can we share? There's an exhibit I'd like to do, there's- and then there's some programming and I'd like to share some food traditions, I'd like to uh, at the Folklife Festival often times we'll have like a food, foodways tent, and, and there would be like a cooking surface and pe- people coming in with chairs and watching, and that sort of thing. Or maybe there's like a small jam session, uh playing music, maybe instead of playing music in your garage, Tamburitz and things like that, maybe you'd come out and share with other people.

MH: Yeah.

BB: So these kinds of things that are expressions. We talked about knitting and crocheting, and everyone said, "oh, my grandmother did that, oh, everyone did that, everyone did that." So maybe we can share, you know, because there's a lot of handicraft in American too and it, it expresses something. It may be that the community uh tradition is kind of waning and going away, but what, what is that, you know? [01:15:05] Um, maybe there's sewing, or there's woodcraft or there's metalsmithing or something like that, I don't know, you know? May- maybe they're, they just haven't come.

MH: That would be hard to find here, you know, Bowling Green area, because I don't know, well I don't know anybody that still do stuff like that, you know? Uh we could get connected with uh museum and, and, and uh institutions back home, which I know some people there that could connect us to, to them, maybe, you know, we use some of their stuff and stuff like that, like original stuff. But I, I don't know how.

BB: Yeah, well that's interesting. But I think like Sevdah is something that's-

MH: Yeah, but-

BB: -I think it's something engaging and people-

MH: Yeah.

BB: -people, they love the human voice too, everyone-

MH: Yeah.

BB: -loves the human, I mean most people do. So I think we'll explore that and-

MH: Yeah. Well I, I know a couple people that actually play Tamburitza and, you know, I think I could have uh talk them into to have, you know, a small jam session. And I don't know long it would be-

BB: Sure.

MH: -probably short, but definitely yeah, they could, I could talk them into coming, coming-

BB: But then it could be in the spring, like a Sunday afternoon or something?

MH: Yeah, yeah.

BB: Like a jam session.

MH: Yeah.

BB: We're thinking of doing a monthly jam session with like old-time musicians, bluegrass people, maybe it would be thematic, just people that play like Celtic music.

MH: Yeah.

BB: Maybe we, it would be so great if we could have a-

MH: Different sounds?

BB: -a Bosnian-

MH: Yeah.

BB: -um group.

MH: Tamburitza, yeah.

BB: So we could, we could think about that. I'm sorry, I'm- now I'm starting to talk.

MH: It's all right.

BB: Uh, is there anything else you wanted to get across for our, I mean you've told me great stuff so I mean it's, it's, it's great to hear your-

MH: Um, nothing really that come to my mind right now, but I'm, I'm sure eventually, you know, I will, maybe there will be stuff that, you know-

BB: Sure.

MH: -I said that I, I couldn't mention this, I forgot about it, so-

BB: Sure.

MH: -you know, and, and, and then in the future maybe, you know, I could probably bring it up again and forward to you guys or.

BB: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I mean that I, I think you know this, I want this to live on past, I think we're doing this exploration for 2017-'18, but I think it would be really great if we could continue just having this on, or, you know, sometimes a, a thing like this makes people, even if they're apprehensive, I'm not trying to just get everyone's worst stories or anything, but they might think, "oh, he had a good experience giving his story. Yeah, you should try it." Or, or it's like, "you know I'm ready now to do that, to, to share."

MH: Yeah.

BB: So, you know, I want it to, to keep going on and being able to have this as a, and maybe not here, but when we find a nice quiet spot sometime and uh-

MH: My uh, my dad has an interesting story but I don't think uh, you know, he would uh, be uh-

BB: He would have a good interesting story, wouldn't he?

MH: -he, he, he wouldn't be uh, I don't know willingly he would, because I try to, you know, get him to, to talk-

BB: Mhmm.

MH: -to me. I mean he does sometimes but like I want to tell him the whole story on the camera so I have it, and it, it, it was, it was a struggle, and he would have interesting story. And, you know, of course any of my relatives would, any, anybody who, you know, who's

older than thirty years old, you know, they would have interesting story from way before war, after the war, but mostly, you know, everybody has war stories, of course. The stuff that, you know, they, they pushed in, in the back of their con- unconscious, and they don't want to bring it up again, and-

BB: Exactly, I can see why.

MH: Um, PTSD, it's, it's, it's a real stuff, but it's- and it's interesting to me that the way how we deal with it it's just something that...I guess, you know, what, what you live through becomes a reality, and then when it's over, it's not anymore, it's pushed back in the back of your mind and you don't think about it. And I, I've noticed a lot of people um, healed themselves, I don't know, I don't know how or why, you know? And I don't see them getting the PTSD treatment for it, it's just...it's that, I don't know, like I couldn't explain it but I was amazed by it. And I think something, you know, that, that could be explored as well.

BB: The human resilience to be able to do, to, to be able to heal or, or just put that scab over-

MH: Yeah.

BB: -and keep that scab on it and just keep it there. It just, it kind of blows me away, because I've never, you know, I've had an easier life compared to my friends that I hear this from. Wow. It is something to explore.

MH: Yeah.

BB: I don't know how, I don't know if I'm, I have that level of expertise to go, to take somebody to that deep place.

MH: Well, one of the reasons could be because, you know, it could be something embedded in their genes as well, because this is not the first time my countrymen, my people go through it. You know, my, my dad did, my grandma did, my grandpa did, their parents, you know, and as it goes on. Bosnia and Herzegovina saw *a lot* of wars. So it's just something like, you know you hear about us as a kid, even in the, you know, peace, it's like, "hey, we did this, we survived this," and it's just something I guess, you know, it helped you prepare for if it happens, you know what I'm saying? We gr- we gr- uh raised our children, well it was the case before, I don't know how now, it's like you, you, you put your kids, you're not overprotective that much to it, it's actually you get to go see the world, you know? Go see what's going on or what happens.

BB: Mhmm. Thank you.

MH: Your'e welcome. I hope-

[01:20:59 End Track]