

Oral History Kosovo

INTERVIEW EXTRACT

[The in-depth oral history interview with the narrator was conducted on May 3, 2021 in Pristina. Due to the narrator's request for anonymity, we have concealed the identity.]

Narrator: Before getting pregnant, I babysitted a child. And it was the child of, the daughter of a friend, she was six months old. And when she turned six months old she called me on the phone and said, “I have to go back to work, can you babysit for me?” I said, “I’m not used to [taking care of] children this young,” I said, “I’m scared.” I was scared. “No, I can’t trust anyone with my child but you.” “Okay,” I said, “I will come, just keep in mind that in case I am not able to, don’t get too comfortable that you found someone,” I said, “because I might not be able to, I might be scared or something,” I said, “And I might have to leave.”

Interviewer: What scared you?

Narrator: She was little, I was scared I might hurt her or that I won’t know how to feed her, that I might choke her. I was scared, this is what I was scared of. But somehow I got used to it immediately. She seemed like a chubby baby to me, chubby and small. Even though I only went there to babysit her, by nature, I can’t stay in one place. The moment she slept, I would go about and clean, I would do something, even though I wasn’t obligated to, but I was used to cleaning and not seeing any mess and so I would get up. Then I also started doing housework.

Interviewer: How many hours would you be there?

Narrator: From 8:00 in the morning to 16:00.

Interviewer: How much did you get paid for this shift?

Narrator: 200 euros.

Interviewer: For a month?

Narrator: Yes.

Interviewer: Five days a week.

Narrator: Six, Saturdays also. There were cases when I didn't go on Saturdays. Sometimes she took her to her parents, but mostly yes, Saturdays too. The bright side was that I got used to [taking care of] children. I realized that working with children isn't hard, but it's delicate.

Interviewer: What would you and the child do, I mean when she didn't sleep, what would you do in that free time?

Narrator: She was little, six months old, I would try to sing some songs that we knew from when we were little to put her to sleep. I would feed her, she had her own fixed schedule, for the food too...

Interviewer: Did you create the schedule or did her mother do it?

Narrator: Her mother. I just stuck by those rules. I would prepare the food in the blender, feed her. She was a very good child, she slept when she was supposed to, she had everything scheduled. As if she were programmed, wake up, wake up, sleep, sleep. I don't know, it wasn't hard for me to deal with her. Except if she was sick, she happened to be sick twice, which is normal. When children are sick, they're a bit more... Even when we adults are sick we become hard to please, let alone children.

When she was sick, I was calling her mother all the time, "What do I give her now, what do I do?" Because I was scared to make any decisions for someone else's child. Maybe I annoyed her calling, but there was nothing else I could do because I didn't dare [take decisions]. And how can you know, the child can be allergic to something or the body might not respond well to something. But in general, she was a good child. I worked a lot with her, I loved her a lot. I started getting very attached to her, and she started getting attached to me, sometimes when her mother came back from work, she would spend more time with me, she wouldn't go to her mother, she had gotten attached to me.

Until she turned nine months old, when she turned nine months old, I started painting with her. She would grab these and draw some lines, stuff like that. Just so we would do some activities, I would let her watch television for half an hour, that's what her mother told me, for half an hour she'd watch television, but she never watched it for half an hour, she would immediately fall asleep watching. Maybe because she wasn't used to watching television, the moment she would start watching it, she would fall asleep. So, I found the method to take her to sleep, *tak* {onomatopoeic} in front of the

television (laughs) and she would fall asleep. And good, a good job, I learned a lot about how to raise a child, I learned a lot.

Interviewer: How long did you babysit her?

Narrator: Until she turned one, six months.

Interviewer: What was that period when you had to leave the little girl you were babysitting and go on with your life like?

Narrator: Actually I quit, as they didn't want to let me go, they didn't want to take her to kindergarten, they wanted me to look after her. Because I started doing activities with her, I wanted to teach her a little. I started to teach her how to walk and so on. Actually I spent all of my time with her and... But then I got pregnant and I had a complicated pregnancy and I couldn't continue working. The doctor forbade it for me, he actually told me, "You have to stay home." And this was the reason why I stopped, because I wouldn't have stopped, at least not for as long as I would have been able to [work]. It was hard for both sides, for all three sides, for me and also for the parents, as well as for the child.

But I tried to keep in touch with her, I see her sometimes even now, she's grown up now. But somehow now she doesn't know me like back then, it's different now. When I talk to her sometimes, she steps back, she gets scared, you know, some kind of... But it was very hard and I missed her a lot in the beginning, *auf* {onomatopoeic}. There were a few times I even cried, when I recalled how she wakes up in the morning, what she does, how she looks for you immediately. But when she turned one, they took her to kindergarten, I stopped, I didn't keep going. It really was hard, luckily I wasn't separated from my son, but back then I didn't have my own child, it felt like being separated from my own child, I was used to [being around] her, I was attached to her.