

INTERVIEW WITH LJUBICA BERIŠIĆ

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Duration: 58 minutes

Present:

1. Ljubica Berišić (Speaker)
2. Erëmirë Krasniqi (Interviewer)
3. Anita Susuri (Interviewer)
4. Besarta Breznica (Camera)

Symbols in transcription, nonverbal communication:

() - emotional communication

{ } - the interlocutor explains some gestures.

Other rules of transcription:

[] - addition to the text to help understand

Footnotes are add-ons that provide information about places, names or expressions.

Part One

Anita Susuri: Can you introduce yourself to us and tell us a little bit about your family, your ancestors and about the earliest memory you have?

Ljubica Berišić: Yes, I am Ljubica Berišić from Janjevo, Croatian.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Talk to us, to turn to the camera because there's no need for it.

Ljubica Berišić: All right.

Anita Susuri: It will be easier to introduce yourself like that. Say it to me if you can.

Ljubica Berišić: Did she turn it on? Okay, good. So I should talk about my mother and all that?

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Yes, when you were kids and such. Those little details that we don't know. Just don't look there (laughs).

Ljubica Berišić: Okay. I'm Ljubica Berišić, born in Janjevo, Croatian woman. I was born in 1947 from my father Nikola and mother Katarina. I don't know...

Anita Susuri: Could you talk more about family life? How many kids were there?

Ljubica Berišić: Yes, there are nine of us, seven of us still living. And we went to school here in Janjevo, we lived and farmed, Dad did it while he was alone. Then later when electricity came to Janjevo, since the '60s and so, then people lived doing craftsmanship too. So then Janjevo became a little bit more developed. We were from a poor family, let's say, and in school there were 1,200 students, so we had a lot of friends, a lot of good memories. You couldn't really do anything with school, life was like that for everyone and for us. Our father was an honest man and a good father who directed us to good things and who worked as much as he could. After that, he went to Macedonia to do these typical Janjevo jobs and then things became a bit better in the house. What I remember the most is, when I started

first grade, I went to Prizren with my mom to see my aunt, she took us there. We got to know the city, Janjevo was still like that, but we lived and we were happy.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: You were born after World War II?

Ljubica Berišić: I was.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What was life like after the war? Did people talk about it? How was it?

Ljubica Berišić: Yes. People talked, my dad told me all about what happened and what went on during the war. He went to a place close to Pristina, Matičani. He spent nine months doing military training, Mom was alone, how many kids did she have back then, in '45, we had one sister. She was born then, Mom managed the best she could. Life back then was very hard, I told you, but then what happened is we got electricity and such, it got a bit better.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: And what did your father do when he was in Matičane?

Ljubica Berišić: Training, as a soldier, yes, yes. Nine months.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Did he ever talk about that later?

Ljubica Berišić: Yes, yes he did. Well, he told us about...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What did he say?

Ljubica Berišić: How they waited there, God forbid, how they trained and such...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Was he in the war?

Ljubica Berišić: No, no, he was in Albania. Yes, they were in Albania back then, he told us about it and they had a friar, one of our own, a priest. And so, they were supposed to be there even longer, he says to them, "When the census of the army happens, you tell them you're Albanian." And they did come, our uncle too and some Janjevo people. And he said, he made them a list and we were released immediately, and the Serbs, well, they stayed there for a bit longer, they walked on foot, with no food back then...

Anita Susuri: Was that *Fra* [Friar] Serafin? Which one?

Ljubica Berišić: No, it was *Fra* Pal Doda. Palj Doda, that's what they called him in Albania, Pavle, Palj.

Anita Susuri: And you're the second child or what?

Ljubica Berišić: No, no, my brother in Zagreb was born in '34, then my sister in '37, yes. I'm the second to last. That's that.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Could you talk more about that first day of school? Where was the school?

Ljubica Berişić: The school is right there, it was the first one. My mom took me there, I wasn't really fond of it, but as soon as I started there, I couldn't miss a single day, like I'm losing something. I loved it, I studied, I was an excellent student all eight years. But I'm telling you, the school didn't have enough funds for everyone, to take us on school trips, we didn't have those. But as I told you, we were very happy, and after that I loved the school very much. Loved to learn and such...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Were there any other girls when you went to school? This was in the '50s.

Ljubica Berişić: Yes, there were both boys and girls. In our class, there were 30 of us. So then later, we had two classes in the first grade, there were four. When the school had 1,200 students, and it's a small school, poorly equipped, so maybe you saw the school. It's a very beautiful school.

Anita Susuri: Did you go to the old school, the one by the church? Was it that one or?

Ljubica Berişić: I went here because there was no space, then after the fourth grade, I went there.

Anita Susuri: Where?

Ljubica Berişić: There, it was that one...

Anita Susuri: Vladimir Nazor?

Ljubica Berişić: Yes, yes, the school, the church. There I went from the fourth grade because it was like that.

Anita Susuri: Can you describe the school more, what did it look like?

Ljubica Berişić: We...

Anita Susuri: For example, how was it for you in the school?

Ljubica Berişić: We had teachers here, unlike the other villages. Very nice teachers from Serbia, from Vojvodina. My teacher was from Sombor, so they lived here, the teachers, they didn't have to travel back and forth and come back. The teachers lived here and they were very understanding and they never made any problems. Unlike one teacher (laughs) who started talking about religion, and the other colleagues say, "Make fun of anything, but don't talk about religion." Because we were devoted to the church, since we were little our mom took to church, that stays within your soul. And so we...

Anita Susuri: What were the traditions like, Sunday services? What was it like?

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Was that another chance for everyone to get together?

Ljubica Beriŝić: Yes, yes, we had three services. We had the service for youngsters at nine o'clock, then at eleven and then in the evening. We always had two priests, but now there's only Don Mato. We also had nuns who were there for the services to help. Now all that is lost.

Anita Susuri: Did people dress up for the services, you and your family?

Ljubica Beriŝić: On Sunday, yes. You'd get ready, go to church, also for the holidays like Christmas and Easter. Janjevo, after that, when the youngsters and grown-ups left to work in Croatia, Bosnia, Serbia and Macedonia, but for those holidays, they always came home. We had a lot of coffee shops and there would be music, everybody was together, joy. There was a lot of us back then, and now as you can see, there's nobody to come to the house. The times have changed, our people moved during the '90s, in '92 and again in '95 and so...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What else can you say about that life, the church? Did you go, were you a member of the choir?

Ljubica Beriŝić: I was.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Can you talk more about that?

Ljubica Beriŝić: I was, starting with my dad, he was in the choir and he was, then there were some events, something was being prepared, he was involved in it, in acting. Mom also sang in the choir, we were all singers. I went many times with the singers to Dubrovnik. We went there, then we went to Zagreb to a competition *Dani Nina*,¹ I went with the church often. Like this I probably would not have gone anywhere, and we stopped by to Rijeka, Zadar, Split, everything.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: You competed against other church choirs?

Ljubica Beriŝić: Yes, yes, church. In Zagreb, yes.

Anita Susuri: Did you ever win first place or?

Ljubica Beriŝić: We did, in Zagreb, yes.

Anita Susuri: When was that? What year?

Ljubica Beriŝić: '90.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: And when was your first time leaving Janjevo?

Anita Susuri: When you traveled somewhere.

¹ Music festival in Croatia.

Ljubica Beriŝić: First time was in Prizren, I was six, then we went to Bosnia, I had an aunt there, I also went there as a kid with my mom.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Who did you have in Prizren?

Ljubica Beriŝić: In Prizren also an aunt. Mom had five sisters.

Anita Susuri: How did you get there? What means of transportation did you have?

Ljubica Beriŝić: Back then, there was a train. After that, our aunt moved to Osijek. We also went to Osijek.

Anita Susuri: Was the train interesting the first time you saw it?

Ljubica Beriŝić: Well, of course, it was. We also had family in Ferizaj, so we went there from Lipjan, Dad had a sister, she got married there. And so we took the train to go there.

Anita Susuri: Here in Janjevo, the families are mostly big.

Ljubica Beriŝić: Yes, they are.

Anita Susuri: Could you tell us more about your family, your house, how do you remember it all?

Ljubica Beriŝić: Yes, my grandpa was in America then, he was in Bulgaria for work. But unfortunately he died when he was 45 years old, when some Serbians came to our vineyard and killed my grandpa for no reason. My dad was wounded when he was 17, back then there were no doctors, no transfusion or anything... He was, my grandpa was wounded and by the time they brought him home, he had passed away. Then we had some relatives here, they put him there. Dad didn't even know he died, when we have a funeral here, you go to the cemetery, you sing. But they stopped so he wouldn't hear it, because it was so hard for him, they'd always check on him... But still, apart from that, we never hated those people, they're not all the same, not everyone would come for no reason to the vineyard and shoot so easily.

Anita Susuri: What year was this?

Ljubica Beriŝić: Well...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Were you born?

Anita Susuri: No, the father was 17.

Ljubica Beriŝić: No, I wasn't, Dad wasn't even married, he was 17.

Anita Susuri: This was maybe in the '30s?

Ljubica Beriŝić: Yes, yes, we have a memorial. Somehow it all...

Anita Susuri: Okay, if you don't remember, we can...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Could you tell us more about this tradition of singing when going to the cemetery?

Ljubica Beriŝić: Yes, yes, on the way there, our priest Don Mato, he sang. Then the people would too until the cemetery, and you'd pray up there, and then...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What was that like, were they sacral songs?

Ljubica Beriŝić: Yes, yes, church songs.

Anita Susuri: Could you talk in more detail about your family, for example, when you were little, what did your mother do?

Ljubica Beriŝić: Our mom at that time used to knit. In that way, she could contribute, and it wasn't like today, no machines, you'd wash everything by hand, and there's a lot of kids, you couldn't do much. She did that and she could even sell something back then.

Anita Susuri: What did she make mostly?

Ljubica Beriŝić: She made these aprons, mostly *boŝće*² that they wore, we also still have a pillow today that she made, we keep it in the room upstairs. Maybe you'd like to take a picture of it, I'll show you. She made that and so on.

Anita Susuri: You are talking about knitting?

Ljubica Beriŝić: Yes, that's what Mom used to do, and you had nothing else really.

Anita Susuri: So she also made traditional clothes or?

Ljubica Beriŝić: And sold.

Anita Susuri: And sold it.

Ljubica Beriŝić: But only when she was engaged, that's when she prepared everything. It wasn't like today, when you can simply buy everything. Back then, they prepared all of it. She was engaged for a long time, three years. And then she was ready, she did come from a slightly richer family, but nevertheless, she got married here and life was a little bit harder here. So...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: She was also from Janjevo, your mom?

² Embroidered apron.

Ljubica Beriŝić: Yes, yes.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What was her family like?

Anita Susuri: Last name?

Ljubica Beriŝić: Palić.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Oh, she was a Palić?

Ljubica Beriŝić: Yes.

Anita Susuri: Did any specific women knit, or did everybody do it a little bit?

Ljubica Beriŝić: Oh, everybody knew, that's how they would get ready to be married, there was nothing else to buy. Now unlike then...

Anita Susuri: Did your mother wear traditional clothes?

Ljubica Beriŝić: She did, yes.

Anita Susuri: Could you describe it?

Ljubica Beriŝić: Yes, she wore *dimia*,³ apron, *boŝće*, I don't know what, back then we called it, I don't know now, *mintan*⁴ and then a shirt underneath. When she got older, then they used to wear from that material, *xhamadan*⁵ that's what we called it. And she wore that, our daughter-in-law also wore it when she got married to our brother, after that, she went to visit in Osijek and Bosnia and then she wore dresses and she's not here anymore. My sister also when she got married here in Janjevo, and they demanded that she wear the traditional clothes, she wore it for a while and so. Women used to wear it, but now unfortunately, nobody does anymore.

Anita Susuri: Until when did they used to wear it?

Ljubica Beriŝić: Well maybe ten years or so have passed since anybody wore them, because unfortunately women left, some died and now the younger generation doesn't do it.

Anita Susuri: Did you used to have it?

Ljubica Beriŝić: I used to dress for the wedding. It was really beautiful and that formal wear and when you come to church for Christmas, and the people from above, from the tall house and watched the

³ Billowing white satin pantaloons that narrow at the ankles, Turkish style. They are made with about twelve meters of fabric.

⁴ Coat with long, narrow sleeves, type of clothes for men or women with long sleeves.

⁵ Traditional garment, usually sleeveless.

choir below. They'd say, "Oh, how beautiful it is, all the women have dressed up." It was all the same for weddings, those garments, the clothes were very rich, nice to look at. Our things were very beautiful.

Anita Susuri: You mentioned weddings and how women wore those special garments. Could you tell us more about weddings? What kind of traditions did you have?

Ljubica Beriŝić: Yes. The weddings... We had traditions, first, you'd go to church, they [the couple] would go to the town hall and then to the church to get married. And from the church, the bride goes to her house and the groom goes back to his. After lunch, around three o'clock, they came for the bride. Every Sunday, this used to happen, we'd go and watch the wedding. They danced in the yard and Janjevo was so big that even four weddings used to take place on a Sunday. But now, unfortunately, I can't even remember the last time there was a wedding in Janjevo. And that was that, family, friends, music played all down the street. Janjevo is a tight place, you could hear everything, the singing and everything, it was so beautiful. Just what was mentioned, the rest I don't know about.

Anita Susuri: What was the music like, did people sing? Was there a band that played?

Ljubica Beriŝić: There was, there was a band. They had from Pristina, a Roma man used to come with a clarinet and here they had guitars and such, an accordion too. They came and they played.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Those Janjevo songs, your songs?

Ljubica Beriŝić: Before they used to... Yes, there are some Janjevo songs, but mainly Macedonian ones were sung. They are good for dancing (laughs) and so. And when our dad was here, there was no transportation, he told us. So when a wedding was planned, at night the musicians from Pristina came on foot, there was no transportation. And he said that they had to come on Saturday because they needed to rest and sleep so they could be there in the morning. He said, "We can hear the music." And they went straight to the hill, to Glama, they played and he said, "It's known, the musicians are here," and so.

Anita Susuri: You mentioned Glama, there used to be some celebrations held there. What was that like?

Ljubica Beriŝić: Ah, St. George's Day. It was very beautiful, it was on April 23rd. We had that day, we called it *rifana*.⁶ On the night of the holiday St. George's Day, friends would gather in houses but mainly they went to Glama. They'd set up a tent and cook there, make a fire, cook a lamb, a goat, who had what, drinks, singing and you could also go and steal something (laughs). But I think it didn't become a habit, but you could take some food that was cooked, if you can steal it, you can eat it and that was that. And that used to be a tradition for us, it was like a joke to mention something, but that was that, all night long.

⁶ Another name for St. Georges, also implying the parties and gatherings taking place on that day.

Anita Susuri: This happens every year?

Ljubica Beriŝić: Every year. All night there would be singing until the morning, and somebody celebrated at home. Then they would put up those swings, on the roof, now I have the gutter, so I can't put it like that {points to outside} on that beam, and they'd put a rope and tie it, put a pillow and swing all night. So, the village had its own traditions and...

Anita Susuri: Did younger people do them more or were there others?

Ljubica Beriŝić: There were others, but mostly young people. Others didn't go up to Glama but in their homes.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: You said that you loved going to school. When the time came to go to high school, where did you go? What was that like, how was that transition for you?

Ljubica Beriŝić: I started, I started going to school in Ferizaj, I got a scholarship there and just went to school there, from Lipjan.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What year was this? Why there?

Ljubica Beriŝić: In '60, '62, there was a school there.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: In Serbian language? It was the economics school, right?

Ljubica Beriŝić: *Mhm.*

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What was Ferizaj like for you? Did you live only in Janjevo?

Ljubica Beriŝić: I had an apartment, I waited for my brother one year so I could go with him and we got a private apartment. My cousin was there, we were protected and so, we often went to lunch at their place, mostly on Sundays. And we had a really nice time.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What was Ferizaj like at the time? Was there anything being built, what kind of town was it?

Ljubica Beriŝić: Well, it was a nice town, for that time, I just think that Pristina was always more developed but yes, you could live nicely, you had everything available to buy and so on. It was good.

Anita Susuri: Did any of your friends keep going to school, or was it just you?

Ljubica Beriŝić: The men did, but not the women.

Anita Susuri: Was it strange that you went to school, back in those days?

Ljubica Beriŝić: It wasn't, my sister went even before me, she went somewhere close to Belgrade, to Pančevo to school. She went to Bosnia with our uncle there and Dad took her there so she could go to Bosnia, but since she didn't have the means for it, then she got a scholarship from Pristina and she ended up there. And it was only girls there, 30 in the school, one teacher said that we had this and that, educators and directors, everyone was a woman. And so she finished it there, and even before me, there were some girls that finished school.

Anita Susuri: Was there any prejudice against women, girls who kept going further with their education?

Ljubica Beriŝić: Well, it was a little bit unusual to the world but...

Anita Susuri: For example, what was being done?

Ljubica Beriŝić: Oh, what will a woman do, she will get married (laughs) and so on.

Anita Susuri: So you spent how many years in Ferizaj?

Ljubica Beriŝić: Four.

Anita Susuri: Did you come home for the weekends?

Ljubica Beriŝić: Yes, yes, there was a bus later, I came home on a bus. There was one in the morning from Janjevo and in the afternoon from Ferizaj to Janjevo so I was able to come. And back then Saturdays were also school days.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: And when did you start working in the family workshop?

Ljubica Beriŝić: In the family workshop, since I was little, yes.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: How old were you?

Ljubica Beriŝić: I worked when I finished the eighth grade, I started working but then I went to school. My family also worked at home, Mom went to her sister in Osijek, so she used to bring us some, we made dolls from sponges, we made those nets that we used to weave, not plastic is banned but we can't remember how it used to be, how we made it. We bought at Jugoplastika in Pristina the materials, we made nets, and I also said plastics from other people what they made. Then we started our own products and did that, it was good.

Anita Susuri: Did you have a special room in the house where you made that?

Ljubica Beriŝić: No, we made it here in the room the machine used to be here outside.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: And did anybody from your family go to Croatia to work over the summer?

Ljubica Beriŝić: No, no. Our dad worked in Macedonia, and our brother was in Bosnia for a while since we had an aunt there, and he knew what to do, and how to do it and so on. It wasn't very...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: When did you start working?

Ljubica Beriŝić: Where? At Metalac?

Anita Susuri: Right after...

Ljubica Beriŝić: I waited for a long time, until '84 even.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: How did it come to that you...

Ljubica Beriŝić: Well, they were hiring a worker, I applied for it, my sister worked there, but unlike others she didn't look for a connection or any help or anything, I handled it on my own and she kept quiet. They hired me and so I began working, but I waited for a long time.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What did you do?

Ljubica Beriŝić: I was in commerce, invoice administrator.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: You mentioned that you worked for 15 years. What was it like at Metalac during that time?

Ljubica Beriŝić: Yes. It was very nice at Metalac. We would gather every morning mostly in an office that was very big, there were Albanians, one Serbian woman. We'd go, my sister was in accounting, we even had Roma people there and everything. And so we'd have a coffee, we'd joke around, talk and then everybody would get back to work. Nobody ever really paid attention to anything but later when it all started...

Anita Susuri: And what did they produce?

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Could you tell us more about that?

Anita Susuri: About their work, about the production?

Ljubica Beriŝić: Yes, yes, here, at Metalac, we processed aluminium and iron products. So, meaning those candleholders, mortars, doorknobs and that's about it. Then later when Metalac developed a bit more, we also made those crown plugs, that's what it's called, the bottle caps. It was a very lucrative business and we made a lot of money. Our director was Dedi, he was a very capable man, then later they made another factory in Srbica, plastic, our table was made there. And that factory worked very well, and then we found out that a Serbian man had bought all those machines and products and took them to Serbia. So Srbica doesn't have it anymore. There were 1200 workers there, with Srbica included.

Anita Susuri: What importance did Metalac carry for Janjevo people?

Ljubica Beriŝić: Yes, yes, it did. Our own people had founded Metalac on their own, for example, my dad when Metalac was being opened, they brought their own tools and managed like that, started small. So Metalac came to be...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: And then the state took it or?

Ljubica Beriŝić: No, they sold it to a private company now.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: No, I meant after the '90s.

Ljubica Beriŝić: Ah, yes, yes, yes. Yes, so Metalac was founded in '47.

Part Two

Anita Susuri: Did you ever sell at the market, or did you just give it to the one who bought it in Janjevo?

Ljubica Beriŝić: Yes, we sold the products in Janjevo here, we didn't go anywhere, and Dad used to go to Macedonia, yes. Whatever plastic we had here, and also bijouterie and such.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: You had the market every Friday, right?

Ljubica Beriŝić: Yes, it was very crowded.

Anita Susuri: What was that like? Tell us a bit about it.

Ljubica Beriŝić: The market, I can tell you about who I talk to, we in Janjevo would bring everything that we made and we'd sell it. And now, when we go to Lipjan to the market and everything is from Janjevo, oh, we made so much there. And then these Serbians, they would also bring every morning milk to the market. They would say, "We have this house in Janjevo, it was so nice when we came there." I'd say, "Well, you can come now too." They don't come anymore, only one woman and two men come to the market.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Why is that?

Ljubica Beriŝić: They were scared then of what had happened and...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: But when you were young, the market was full of people from the surrounding places, right?

Ljubica Beriŝić: Yes, yes, they used to come.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: And everybody would have brought their own?

Ljubica Beriŝić: Products, yes.

Anita Susuri: Janjevo did have a lot of production, but everything that was brought was also sold. What did they bring that Janjevo needed?

Ljubica Beriŝić: Janjevo needed milk, fruit, vegetables, they sold that, beans too, anything.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: You didn't have those here?

Ljubica Beriŝić: No, we don't have a garden, almost nothing, no. The land is like that and we also didn't have water very often, so we loved that. Even to this day.

Anita Susuri: I heard that there used to be all kinds of fruit in Janjevo. When was that?

Ljubica Beriŝić: There was fruit until, I mean, while people were in agriculture and we did have a vineyard for a long time. We had all kinds of fruit but people who didn't have vineyards also had them, and then they'd sell to those who came.

Anita Susuri: You never got married?

Ljubica Beriŝić: No, I haven't.

Anita Susuri: Why is that?

Ljubica Beriŝić: Maybe I was a bit picky (laughs).

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Was education maybe a problem?

Ljubica Beriŝić: No, no. No, that wasn't a problem. I was just picky and I didn't realize that my generation has passed, and it is what it is.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: You had some holidays and one of them was a masquerade, costume ball. Could you talk about that?

Ljubica Beriŝić: Yes, every year I used to wear these, it was a garment worn around Prizren somewhere, I love that one the most. Even as a little girl, the boys would come here, young men, let's say, and they'd pick me up and put me in that drinking fountain. We would go through Janjevo and when I was little, I kept on going, and I kept on dressing up. All of Janjevo, there wasn't a house that didn't get ready for that day. It used to be so nice, now there's nobody to...

Anita Susuri: What was it like?

Ljubica Beriŝić: Everybody used to put on masks, women would get dressed as men and men would wear women's clothes. And then makeup and such, if someone came by, you wouldn't be able to recognize them. There was a lot of putting makeup on and getting dressed in all kinds of things...

Anita Susuri: And you only wore those garments, or did you also have a mask or something?

Ljubica Beriŝić: No, a mask, no makeup. And on my head one of their scarves.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Why like that?

Ljubica Beriŝić: I used to love it, I had one of my mom's at home, I could take that and not even ask for it, and I wore hers.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Do you have any photos?

Ljubica Beriŝić: I think I do. Would you like to look at the photos now?

Erëmirë Krasniqi: I will, and Anita will talk while you...

Ljubica Beriŝić: That one next to your finger down there, it's Mom and Dad.

Anita Susuri: When you worked at Metalac, what was it like back then? Meaning did it, what kind of future did Metalac offer people here?

Ljubica Beriŝić: In the beginning, people could build a house with it. Our neighbor here built a small house back then, her husband worked, they could, everything was different then, paychecks were bigger and so on. You could...

Anita Susuri: Did you have in Janjevo, for example, Albanian women or men, Turkish people who you were friends with? What was that like back then?

Ljubica Beriŝić: Well, you know what, my brother a year after me, they had Albanians and Turks with him in his class. And we Roma people were always with us, it's how it is even today but unlike... Somebody who went to school there, only my class didn't have, and after that, my brother for another year {loud noises outside}.

Anita Susuri: Could you repeat that, I didn't hear a thing?

Ljubica Beriŝić: You didn't?

Anita Susuri: Because of the car, I'm sorry.

Ljubica Beriŝić: Yes, so I said that my brother went a year after me, but he had in his class Albanian kids and some Turkish also. And I didn't have that in my class. Later, they joined however they wanted.

We had, it was very nice and the teachers were also Albanians. We went here to the old school, nobody looked after it except for the teacher on duty. If you made a mistake, then you could even (laughs) unlike now. There wasn't anything if an Albanian teacher hit you, or a Serbian one or anything. It wasn't like...

Anita Susuri: During the '90s, the situation here in Janjevo started to change. What were those years like for you? I mean for you especially.

Ljubica Berišić: For us, in '92, it was very hard. We used to go every morning to Metalac, you'd see four moving trucks, getting loaded and people said, "What will happen to us?" And that was that. Families came to say goodbye, friends too. Our brother also left in '92. And so many calls for the army came and the families had a lot of kids, they'd receive the calls when it already started, a call to join the army. And the poor kids, what are they going to do, they went across Macedonia until they got the papers from Croatia, they left. My sister never even came back, 27 years ago and so.

Anita Susuri: We talked about the '90s and the Croats leaving Janjevo.

Ljubica Berišić: Yes.

Anita Susuri: So that was then, how did you experience it?

Ljubica Berišić: Let me tell you, it was hard. We went to work in the morning, you'd see four trucks, five, getting loaded, going to Croatia, we'd think about what would happen to us that stayed there. Friends left, relatives left, only came to say bye. My mom said, "Until when will I see them off?" Our brother left in '92, it was August, then later she died in October. She couldn't handle it anymore. Everybody, we only have one sister, no relatives.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Who do you live with today?

Ljubica Berišić: Here? With my brother.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Just you and your brother decided to stay, why is that?

Ljubica Berišić: Well, back then we couldn't afford to buy a house, just as today. And well, we didn't want sub-tenants. Mom and Dad were still alive back then in '92, and Mom died, Dad died in '94, and that's it.

Anita Susuri: We heard that Šešelj⁷ was here in the '90s.

Ljubica Berišić: He was, he was.

⁷Vojislav Šešelj (1954-) is the founder of the nationalist Serbian Radical Party. In 2003 he surrendered to the International Criminal Court for Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), where was indicted for war crimes and crimes against humanity. In 2016 he was acquitted of the crimes.

Anita Susuri: What was that like?

Ljubica Berišić: Only we didn't know that he was coming, people were scared, hiding from each other, when they say, "Šešelj was here." He was, you know who Šešelj is (laughs) and why we should be scared of him.

Anita Susuri: You weren't here when he came?

Ljubica Berišić: We didn't know, we were at home, but we didn't know he was coming. He was there in the center.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Did people panic, or?

Ljubica Berišić: I'm telling you, people were scared so they stayed together, in their houses and I said we didn't know.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What did they talk about?

Anita Susuri: What did they talk about?

Ljubica Berišić: He didn't, he went to the police and walked over there to the cemetery and went by himself.

Anita Susuri: What did people say, for example, if something is going to happen or what were their thoughts about it?

Ljubica Berišić: They were scared, you don't know what he will do, but it's good that he didn't do anything.

Anita Susuri: In the '90s, the Albanians left their jobs at Metalac. What was that like?

Ljubica Berišić: What was it like...

Anita Susuri: How did it come to that and how did you feel?

Ljubica Berišić: They came to make this boss go away, the director, that. And the workers simply followed and that was that. We stayed for a bit and then we also left. It's good that we were so united.

Anita Susuri: Could you tell us more about how business went at Metalac?

Ljubica Berišić: Business, what was happening at Metalac?

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Yes, did the political situation influence the work at Metalac? Because there were wars in Yugoslavia.

Anita Susuri: Did anything change?

Ljubica Berišić: No, nothing happened then. Later they only came to make these directors go away and then the workers followed.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What about the production, did it affect the production also, or?

Anita Susuri: Did production stop?

Ljubica Berišić: After that? Yes, of course.

Anita Susuri: Did the war also have an effect, all the wars in Yugoslavia at that time, did that affect production and what was, so in Yugoslavia, it was...

Ljubica Berišić: Well, it did when Slovenia and Croatia separated. We received acids from Slovenia, the workers in galvanization did it. They say, "Oh, you pour and you pour, and you never get it quite right." Because we got it from Slovenia, later Serbia started producing it, of course. Everything was constricted, even the raw materials.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: And when did Metalac close down?

Ljubica Berišić: When the bombing in '99 began.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Until then? How did that decision come to be? I know about the bombing, how did they communicate?

Anita Susuri: How did they tell you that you weren't going to be working anymore?

Ljubica Berišić: "The bombing started, go home for safety reasons," and it stayed like that.

Anita Susuri: You never came back again?

Ljubica Berišić: I didn't.

Anita Susuri: Was there anything being said about it opening again or back then maybe? What did you think, for example, what was going to happen?

Ljubica Berišić: Well, I'm telling you, I thought that was going to be just for one year, I'll work at the school and I'll come back, but nothing ever happened. Nobody called us, nor did they do anything, it just stayed that way.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: You can tell us more details, if you want. What was life like after the war in 2000? How did you become involved in work at the school, everything you told us in private, if you can repeat it for the camera?

Ljubica Beriŝić: Well then, I was left without a job like all of us from Metalac. The school was closed until 2000, and we started working in the second semester, I asked, the locals asked that only Croatians from Janjevo can be there, and so we started with no experience, we just worked. I taught two generations, from the first until the fourth grade, and later they brought in a Serbian and I lost my job. But I told you, no matter what, I received a paycheck from Lipjan, Municipality of Lipjan.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: What was it like working with kids?

Ljubica Beriŝić: It was interesting, unlike Metalac, it was good, and there was always company, Serbians and Albanians would meet and say, “Nothing will be the same.” I say, “It won’t but then again, it’s good to work with the kids.”

Anita Susuri: Tell us about how Don Mate came to you and asked for something but you didn’t want to.

Ljubica Beriŝić: Well, Don Mato came to bless the house, it was after New Year’s and, well, he said, “Do you want to work at the school?” I say, “How will I work? I never did that, I don’t know how.” “You’ll manage, you are hardworking people and you’ll manage.” So then, even though I was a bit scared, I started working there in 2000 and later I was alone and pleased with my work, the students and parents too, happy that they were with me, happy with my work. Croatians worked with me also, and then later it was the same thing.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: How many kids were there?

Ljubica Beriŝić: I had 23 in the first grade, yes, in 2000 and younger. They accepted our whole year. Of course, a little bit shorter so we had to catch up with lectures and all that, but they accepted it for us and the kids. So...

Anita Susuri: What was the hardest thing for you when you worked as a teacher?

Ljubica Beriŝić: The hardest was, when I walked on the first day, I said, “God, will I be able to do this?” I’m looking at the children in front of me. I say it’s a foundation, like when you build a house, but I say I tried a lot and I wanted to work, and I knew this teacher in Niš, she was Croatian, so I learned a lot from her. She told me, “Come here, don’t spend money on your phone, come here.” And so I went, brought my sister and went to Niš. The woman gave me some exercises, showed me, taught me. I attended one of her classes that day and so I could really do this.

Anita Susuri: How long did you work at the school?

Ljubica Beriŝić: Later, I worked four more, so eight. Two generations and then four years with no students, so...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: When did you retire? Six or seven years passed, right? How old are you?

Ljubica Berišić: 72.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: So you've been retired for seven years.

Ljubica Berišić: Seven years.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: And when you held classes.

Anita Susuri: When you held classes.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Did you preserve the Janjevo dialect, or how did you do it?

Ljubica Berišić: Janjevo dialect, I haven't (laughs), I made it a bit more accessible so that the kids could, as it is in the book, so I only did in Serbian. We worked at Metalac, my boss was from Pristina, Gent, and he told me, "I do resent this." I said, "Why?" "Because you don't speak Croatian." I said, "How, boss? Everybody talks like that." Serbian schools and such, now we have Croatian television so you can learn more, but that's that. You don't need to, what can you do when it's like that.

Anita Susuri: You used Serbian books in school?

Ljubica Berišić: Serbian, yes, even today.

Anita Susuri: Why is that?

Ljubica Berišić: Well, I don't know, the Ministry of Kosovo said, "Take Bosnian books." And they were supposed to make an effort, when my brother started, he also worked at the school. When he started, he taught arts and technical education. They were also supposed to introduce Croatian language as a subject I don't know how many years ago, but the people from Serbia didn't want it and they didn't tell anybody that they had a right to two classes per week. And later they started Croatian, they asked my brother to teach it and so he did. Then I tried, they came here for St. Nicholas from Vojvodina and Subotica, I met that man that was the president of the Croats, one of them was from Vojvodina. And they gave us some cards and when my brother started teaching Croatian, it was easy for him. He had a friend, they sent him everything but he only had the program in Croatian. And he only had two classes, I called Subotica, they sent some books to him and a plan and so he managed.

Anita Susuri: You worked at the first school that was there, Vladimir Nator, and then you went over to the other, when was that? After the war?

Ljubica Berišić: Well, we still have Vladimir Nator for Serbs, Serbian program and the school is called Janjevo.

Anita Susuri: It's called Shtjefën Gjeçovi?

Ljubica Berišić: Yes.

Anita Susuri: And you still call the school Vladimir Nazor?

Ljubica Beriŝić: Both (laughs).

Anita Susuri: I didn't know that.

Ljubica Beriŝić: You really didn't know.

Anita Susuri: Do you have anything else to tell us, in case you forgot something? Would you like to tell us more?

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Something important about your history, personal history? Something we wouldn't even know to ask about?

Anita Susuri: For example, we didn't know that (laughs) the school had two names.

Ljubica Beriŝić: Yes, yes. Well, Croatia is still a beautiful country and everything, but we are used to being here and we couldn't leave. Although everyone did, our uncle, and uncle's side, aunt too, aunt's family and everybody is up there, but we stayed committed and in that time I told you, we couldn't buy a house, like now. And we stayed a little...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Could you tell us more about Letnica, about that pilgrimage, what's it called?

Ljubica Beriŝić: Yes, there's a pilgrimage to Letnica on August 15th, the Assumption of Mary, and on September 8th, the Nativity of Mary. So our people went from Janjevo even before the 26th and stayed there, where you saw those photos, they used to stay there. And they stayed in houses, you'd pay for those days and go every night to church, at night they'd gather around the fire and sing. Some days they'd bake potatoes, some days popcorn, some food would be prepared, singing and such. They used to go by carriage, there were no cars. It was a long journey, twelve hours, but now...

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Did you sing in the choir?

Ljubica Beriŝić: I did. Yes, they went to Letnica, they didn't have an actual choir. One year, a priest from Janjevo paid for a room for the singers, and we ate food at the church. So even when we came home, he'd bring us gifts, a lamb, this and that. And they gave us three or four lambs and on that hill we would go there, get a *sáč*⁸ and all that and so we stay and cook and hang out there all day.

Erëmirë Krasniqi: Okay, thank you so much.

Anita Susuri: Thank you!

⁸ A large metal or ceramic lid with which bread or meat is baked. Over the lid, ash and coal is placed, and the lid acquires the necessary temperature and is placed over the food to bake.