

Star City Treasures AmeriCorps Oral History Project

The following interview was conducted with Munivera Karic, for the Star City Treasures AmeriCorps Oral History Project. It took place on 5-19-06 at Lincoln Action Program (uh) 210 "O" St. The interview is,... the interviewer is Renee Andersen.

RA: Munivera, could you tell me about where you grew up?

MK: Yes, Of Sur...Of course. So, (uh) I grew up in (uh) a small village (uh) it's close to my city (uh) whenever, after I move (uh) to that city it's called (uh) Arogotisa??? So (uh) I use to live there til my (uh) seventh year, so and (uh) I (uh) since I was (uh, uh) seven years old then my family, I mean my parents they move to Sarajevo that's the cap, capitol of (uh) Bosnia and I started with the first grade, there in my city, so, and (uh) I mean (uh)...(sighs)

I'm going to tell you a little about my (uh) child time, like (uh) it's different than here's so (uh) cause I do have a daughter who is 7 years, I mean 10 years old now and who started for the first grade in the United States but I do remember when I used to be seven years old (uh) that was different e-specially the culture habits, I mean (uh) education (uh) everything is different than here so first (uh) the, the (uh) some...kind of difference's like, (uh) when I used to be a child, I mean we were four kids, we were four kids...

RA: (Interrupts) There's four, four kids in your family?

MK: Yes, four kids in my family.

RA: With a mother and a father?

MK: (uh) We were six, with a mother and a father.

RA: Correct.

MK: (uh) I remember, (uh) very well something's there (uh) when I'm some times thinking about it, it's sad for me because the first one, I didn't have enough like toys, like my daughter now she does have, I just do remember I had one (uh, uh) like, Barbie or something. I don't remember exactly what it was, but that was a kind of (uh) that toy so (uh) because my father, he use to work only, he was only one who worked at that time, my mom was wife house she stayed home with us and, I mean, do home things like cleaning, preparing food, washing, everything else she needed to do so and (uh) we were of course four students and they couldn't, I mean, my father he use to work alone and he, he couldn't afford to buy, I mean, for every body couple of toys every body of us, my

brother use to have only one car, maybe for (uh) more than two years he didn't buy anything else for him because he couldn't afford the money to buy toys so and (uh) also the (uh, uh) I mean, clothe was different time we couldn't have only, maybe, one pair of shoes, one pair of tennis shoes or something, you know we couldn't but, you, we couldn't have, I mean, many pair of shoes because we were four kids and he couldn't buy for all of them so (uh) that was a different too, also if I am talking about the food (uh) when we use to go at school we, I mean, that was different, we had the lunch at school but that was expensive, especially was expensive for my family because we were, as I said four kids, and we couldn't (uh) buy food at school, lunch, I mean, at school so my mom always prepare, I mean, sandwiches and juice so and we took those things to school to have a lunch there so (uh, uh)...What's going to be next?(uh)...

RA: What did you father do?

MK: My father...

RA: for a living?

MK: ...use to work in the factory of clothing.

RA: Oh, OK.

MK: Yeah, but he was a security, he was a security, he didn't (uh) do anything in a factory but he use to take care of a factory, I mean, security so (uh)...

RA: And your mother , did she garden at home?

MK: (uh)...

RA: grow vegetables?

MK: Yes, oh, we use to garden for summer time because (uh) when was winter time and, I mean, when was time for school, we needed to be in the city so to go to school, but when we were on the vacation for summer vacation (uh) every year we (uh) went to village and my parents, my father he use to have vacation and we went there to help them to grow up, even though we didn't know much like we kids, we didn't know much about it, we helped them to grow up like (uh) potatoes, tomatoes, (uh) onion (uh) and my father also (uh) used to plant some kind of (uh) fruits like apples and so was fun, (laughter) being there in our village.

RA: And you had a house in...Sarajevo?

MK: Yes, we use, we, I, I used to have (uh), my father used to have a house first, when we moved from our village to Sarajevo, small, old, that was in a part of old, of old part in a Sarajevo but (uh) later while we were growing up, so that was a very small house, he would (uh) plot, I mean, place and put another house that was a little bit bigger so (um)

(uh) and after that when I got married I moved to another part of my city. (um) So, that was a part of my (um), I mean, child time maybe, whi...while I used to be (uh) in (um) elementary school, later I moved to another school, (uh) in (uh) middle school, I mean, also (uh) going to school there is different than here, in the United States, teacher, classes, (uh) students, I mean, (um)... absolutely culture is different, there is some, I can give you some (uh) examples like, if you (uh) come to class and (uh) met your teacher. You could not, you couldn't say (uh) for example: Hi, teachers name. You have to say, Hi, Teacher. You couldn't say teachers name, like, that was a, I mean, that, maybe that's the some kind of respect to teachers.

RA: So, you wouldn't call her, lets say for example: Good morning Mrs. Smith.

MK: No, never, that was very, I mean, strange for me when I came to the United States and I took first class of ESL I went to class and I and the teacher asked us to introduce ourselves and some of the students tell, told her, like her name so I was looking , what's going on? I cannot say her name, that's, that was, I mean, bad feeling for me, I couldn't say her name, later when (uh) time was going I started to, I mean...

RA: Get comfortable?

MK: Yes, yes, get comfortable to that, to tell them names.

RA: So, in, in Bosnia, you would address the teacher as, The Teacher?

MK: Yes, yes and the, we used to dress (uh) everybody of us, we couldn't dress like here, what ever we want to dress and go to school we had (uh) separate, I mean, we can wear li-like this things pants and skirts for example, but we used to have (uh) like cots, something like cots and (uh) those were only blue, either black, either light or (uh) dark, but we couldn't go without those to school, if we went to school without them, then we (uh) wouldn't be returned to home, that was different and we couldn't, we couldn't also go out from the class, when we were in the class we couldn't go out, without asking teacher, I mean, to promise us to go out.

RA: Did you go to High School?

MK: Yes, yes.

RA: In Bosnia?

MK: Sure. Yes. I finished (uh)grammar school that's, gymnasia, kind of, gymnasia. Do you say gymnasia here? Grammar school?

RA: Grammar school. Elementary School.

MK: Yeah, Grammar School, Elementary, that, that's, (uh) I mean, that's not Elementary that's High School but I call, I, I, I think in English, Grammar School? Isn't in English,

Grammar School?

RA: Most people call it, Elementary.

MK: Elementary. Yeah. OK.

RA: Then Middle School.

MK: Yeah. Maybe. Yeah. So...

RA: And then High School. So you did finish High School?

MK: Yes, I did.

RA: Twelfth Grade?

MK: Yes. Yes. So, (um) that's the kind (uh) my occupation is called, kind of technology for a plastic, but I never, I finished High School in Bosnia even though I, after, I finished High School in Bosnia I didn't have chance to work, I worked something else because, because of, at that time was very hard to find a job especially (uh) was (uh, uh) that time was very close (uh)...to war, you know, that was just couple of years and war started, going there. So, (uh) I worked in (uh) factory when my father, father used to work, because my father helped me to find a job, otherwise I couldn't find another job because some people at the time even though they didn't finish some kind of school, they worked on that position, they took for example position I needed to work on that position and so but they didn't have any school for that, that was very hard, I mean, the situation and laws and rules are very strange there and sometimes (uh) I don't like to talk about it because I, really I couldn't understand, those rules and I mean, there was rules there and laws but they didn't help people, they didn't help people at all, so that was very hard.

RA: So, after High School, you worked at a factory where your father worked?

MK: Yes, yes.

RA: As...Were you a seamstress or...?

MK: I used to work in a kitchen, I helped the serving food and things, I mean, different things whatever they needed to do, I did. So...

RA: Did you go to college?

MK: No, I didn't. No, I didn't. Because my sister she finished first she finished school, she's (uh) older, two years, than I am so, (um) and my father couldn't afford money to buy books and pay for (uh) classes there, I mean, the classes were not paid at all but some part, you know, you had to pay for and books, books were very expensive and then I was second child, he didn't educated her more than High School and how could he educated

me, he didn't give more than High School education for either of us any, of us. So,...

RA: Are your parents still alive?

MK: Yes. Yes

RA: Are they living in Bosnia?

MK: They're living, they're living in (uh) same house they bought before. Yeah, in Bosnia, Sarajevo.

RA: In the house you grew up in?

MK: Yes, yes.

RA: What...what are their names?

MK: My fa...My parents?

RA: Yes.

MK: My (uh) fathers name is Ramous??? and my mother name is Bisarah???...So...

RA: OK...after you graduated High School and worked in the factory, what did you do after that?

MK: I got married, I got, I got married and (uh, uh) I used to work (uh)...I think (uh) after I married I used to work one more year there and I got pregnant and (uh) got my son there so and (uh) my son was I think (uh) one year and a half, yes, when war started there and we moved to Germany as Refugees.

RA: Your husband, and you, and the baby...

MK: Right. We moved to Germany.

RA: ...moved to Germany, as Refugees.

MK: Yeah, yeah. Yes...(long pause)

RA: What was that like?

MK: Before we moved to Germany my husband went to, I mean, war already didn't start real just you know, in a couple areas and he went to (uh), before when we moved to Germany, he went to our village, to (uh) to take some things from the village, village to our city because at, at that time was not safe in our village you know everywhere war was started there so and he was a couple of days in a different city because while he went

there to take the things (uh) the, I mean, other side of soldiers they took all men and keep them in (uh, uh) in the city, maybe twenty miles of our village for a couple of days, so and (uh) we waited he didn't come back so and I called (uh) it wasn't (uh) war in our city yet but and then but in everywhere in the village in the lands I mean, soldiers were hiding there and (uh) I called some of my friends (uh) who was (uh) on another other side so (uh) Serbian, with the Serbian people and they communicated with the, I mean, soldiers and commoners there and they let him go out. So and he came to our city after two days we went to Germany and we spent whole, almost whole time, war time in Germany.

RA: How did you get to Germany?

MK: (uh) First was very tou... very hard to get passport...because (uh) we, I mean, I used to have passport but my husband didn't and my son, I had to sign my son and put his picture in my passport and that was very hard because (uh) many people many thousands and thousands people were looking for a passport to go out, they, they couldn't like(uh) we went to, I mean, police office at that time, to get passport and waited almost whole day to get passport so because we were not alone who was waiting for a passport there so and we went with the train to another city and from another city (uh) that was Zanitza???, called Zanitza??? that city we (uh) took the bus to Germany to Shnootka??? that name of city Schnootka??? and we went to a house of my uncle because they, they had been living there for more than thirty years in Germany, my uncle and his wife we went there and there three people in his (uh) household (uh) they do have a son and we couldn't stay with that family because I mean, I, I didn't feel comfortable even though he was my uncle we wanted to get to go out and, and we did that we went to Refugee Camp in (uh) Costrol??? in (uh) Germany that's Vortombictumburg??? of Germany So and we used to spend in (uh) seven days that was terrible in that camp really you cannot believe it wasn't any door on the restroom,...everything was very dirty and broke because people from everywhere use to live that, that was the first I mean, place when you (uh) come as refugee to do to Germany so they put you in that camp and stay the, there for a couple of days and after seven day they move they, they transferred us to another city and (uh) we spent 1 month in another city and transferred us to I mean (uh) us to Germany...West, I mean, East Germany (laughter) sorry I mean, now I mix Germany and English (laughter), so (uh) and we live there for 2 years, it was very hard to move from oh, oh I mean, East to West... from West to East sorry (laughter) so and (um) because we couldn't work in (uh, uh) in that place for 2 years we didn't have authorization to work there so...

RA: To work in...?

MK: To work in (uh)...

RA: West Germany.

MK: Right. Right. So..

RA: So you moved to East Germany?

MK: Yes, because everyday was very important to us to work...for a war time and, I mean, for us to live in Germany because we had to send the money and (uh) food for our family there...because was, was, was war there so they didn't have even money to buy food and didn't have food to buy so...

RA: The money you made...

MK: Yes.

RA: and your husband made...

MK: Yes.

RA: in Germany...

MK: Yes.

RA: you'd send some back.

MK: We some, we sent some part to our family.

RA: To family back home?

MK: I mean, we, we, we, sent a lot of money for them so, just for them to survive.

RA: But you had enough for yourself and your son?

MK: Yes. Yes. Yes.

RA: So, did you and your husband both work?

MK: Yes. Yes.

RA: And who watched the baby?

MK: (uh) That was (uh, uh, (uh) after we, when we started to work, as I said, we didn't work in (uh, uh, uh) West Germany after we move to a city, Mannhym???, (uh)

RA: In East Germany?

MK: Yes, in East Germany (uh) my husbands uncle ... has been living there also for 30 years and his wife, I mean, take, took care of my son so...

RA: So, you had a relative?

MK: Yes, so, just couple of months we put him in (uh) Kindergarten while he was 2, I

mean, almost 3 years we put in, in Kindergarten.

RA: What's your sons name?

MK: Adeel???

RA: Adeel???

MK: Uh huh?

RA: Karic.

MK: Karic. Yes. So and we didn't have any problem (uh)...

RA: He was born in (uh)?

MK: any more. He was born in Bosnia.

RA: Bosnia. S...(uh) what was the name?

MK: Sarajevo.

RA: Sarajevo.

MK: Yes. Yes.

RA: Bosnia.

MK: Bosnia, Sarajevo. So, and (uh)...

RA: In what year did you move to East Germany?

MK: (uh) I think 199..., (uh) 4.

RA: 1994?

MK: or 1993. I don't remember exactly (laughter).

RA: 1993, something like that?

MK: Yeah, Yeah, maybe. So, and (uh, uh) 1996 I got my daughter there in Germany.

RA: So your daughter, and what is her name?

MK: She was born in Germany. Medina.

RA: Medina? And she, she was born in East Germany

MK: Yes, Yes. (uh) So, and we (uh) we left Germany I think 1997, yes, we went back to Bosnia again because we didn't have (uh) like a real Visa to stay anymore. We used to stay as a Refugees there after war was done we had to move to Bosnia again.

RA: You had to go back to Bosnia in 1997.

MK: So, yes. Correct. So, and...

RA: Did you stay with your family or did you have your own home?

MK: (uh) We, I mean, my husbands, my husband used to live with three brothers, not in the same apartment no, that was, that's one house, but everybody has (uh) one floor like we used to live on first floor his brother second floor and third brother third floor. So everybody was living separate so, and we went back to I mean our part of the house so and (uh) as (uh) always when war done is everywhere it's hard to find a job it was more harder than before war so because everything was destroyed and you know burned and it was very hard to find a job. We just try after we went to Bosnia we tried to open (uh) small store to, I mean, to make our own business but as we needed to pay a lot of tax and on everything there and that was (uh) I mean, they, they used to (uh) create different rule for (uh) paying electric and gas (uh) I mean, was different between a paying gas in (uh) some business than paying a gas in a house or apartment it was, I mean, very expensive, we couldn't, we try, I mean, I think one year and half and we couldn't, we couldn't just, if we didn't try, than we thought, oh, we could do it, but we try, we couldn't, so, and (uh) after that we...

RA: Closed your store.

MK: We didn't close, we, we couldn't close right away because we didn't know exactly are we are going to come to the United States or not, so, (uh)...

RA: When did you decide...

MK: See, we, we...

RA:...to come to the United States?

MK: ...some of our friends went to America, they came to the United States one year before we came to the United States so, and we just, we were in (uh) I mean, in (uh) communication of them, so we called each other and (uh) I mean, they, when we, we were approved to come to the United States (uh) we couldn't decide because I do have sister-in-law she lives in (uh) Chicago for six years, so and we couldn't decide (uh) between Chicago and Nebraska, Lincoln Nebraska, so we talked to her first and then talked to our friends and decided, of course, to come to Lincoln because I went to Chicago once its big and nice city, I mean, buildings and things, I mean, importance

maybe buildings are nice but I think Lincoln is better for us, it's better for my family because of many, I mean, different things, first like education, I think everybody, I mean, like me, I'm a mother of my kids, so they do have, I mean, a huge opportunity to go to school and big chance to finish their schools because I do have a chance to finish, I mean, to continue to go to school and you know, but (uh)...

RA: What year did you come to America? And did you come straight to Lincoln?

MK: Yes, straight to Lincoln, just we stopped by, in Chicago but just in area of airport we didn't go, we couldn't go out, of the airport when we came from Bosnia, they just wait a couple hours and we were transferred to Lincoln. So...

RA: What year was that?

MK: (uh) That was (uh) four, June, two thousand two.

RA: June fourth of two thousand two.

MK: Yes.

RA: you, your husband...

MK: And two kids.

RA: ...and two children.

MK: Yeah.

RA: And how old were they, at that time?

MK: (uh) My daughter was six years old and my son, I think, twelve. Yes.

RA: Twelve...

MK: Yes.

RA: ...and six.

MK: Yes. Twelve and six.

RA: Then came straight to Lincoln?

MK: Yes.

RA: And what was that like?

MK: (uh)...

RA: Did you have a home to go to right away?

MK: No. We came to (uh), to apartment of our friends and stayed for seven days and after that the, (uh) I mean, the agency they help us, that was a church, we, we came through the church, I think, I don't remember exactly what the name of the church but that was (uh) some agency, I mean, community. So, they help us (uh) to pay (uh) rent for three months and I think for gas, electric and (uh) what else? They gave us food stamps too. So, that was (uh) kind of (uh) public assistance. So and (uh) after a couple weeks we got Social Security numbers we, because we couldn't work without (uh) Social Security numbers so and (uh)...

RA: So, an agency here in, in Lincoln...

MK:...in Lincoln.

RA:... helped with getting you ID, identification.

MK: Correct. Correct.

RA: (uh)...like drivers license?

MK: Oh! After three days we came to the United States we got drivers license I have, I mean, because we used to have International Drivers licenses I got first drivers license in Bosnia and went to Germany and got their drivers license Germany drivers licenses is International, wherever you go you can use it but I, we (uh, uh) you know what, when we came here I went to the, (uh) to the building of, I mean, how do you call that building of, if you need to do drivers licenses?

RA: Department of Motor Vehicles.

MK: Correct. Correct. We went there third day and we just did test we didn't drive, we didn't drive, just did test and we were done, for five minutes, both of us got drivers license, we didn't have any problems with drivers license but, we had a problem with (uh, uh) vehicles so, when we, as everybody of refugee came to the United States, we don't have money, how can you buy a car, you can't buy a car, so I didn't, I couldn't drive bicycle either, because I didn't have a bicycle as a child and (laugh) I didn't learned at all how to drive bicycle, I didn't have a problem with drivers license but I had a problem, how to drive bicycle, my husband he does, my son, my daughter, but I didn't really didn't drive a bicycle, that's, I, I, would like to be honest...

RA: Yeah.

MK:...maybe that's funny but (laughter) ...

RA: My mother doesn't know how...

MK: Sometimes, sometimes it's sad, it is sad, I cannot explain (uh) to my daughter now, I don't understand how to drive bicycle, when I tell her, she is laughing. Why mom? When I tell her, when I told her, I didn't have a bicycle when I used to be a child like you, and she just feel, because I saw her eyes, you know, she feels like she wanted to cry, because she was sorry for me, I didn't have a bicycle. Yeah. Sometimes I tell her, Medina, see how many toys you do have, see how many toys you do have, I didn't have a lot, while I was a child so, and I missed one thing I think, while I used to be in Bosnia that was 1991, one year before I came to the United States, I, I got a sick. I got a sick. I, (uh) I had a cancer breast. First time.

RA: Breast Cancer.

MK: Yeah. And I went (uh), I went under surgery. I don't know did I say that correct?

RA: Yes.

MK: So, (uh) were just removed a couple of (uh) lumps there and I used to have (uh) six chemotherapy and thirty radiations. So,...

RA: So, you had six chemotherapy treatments?

MK: Yes. Yeah, and thirty radiations.

RA: Thirty radiations.

MK: Correct. So, I was very sick, at that time.

RA: And how old were you, at that time.

MK: (uh) Thirty...(uh) let me count , I think thirty-six.

RA: Thirty-six years old...

MK: Yes.

RA:...with Breast Cancer...

MK: Yes.

RA:...living in Bosnia.

MK: Yes so and when we, after that, when we move to the United States two years ago I got again here and at that time was removed whole part of my breast because doctor said (uh) he could, can't be, I mean, sure if he just take some lumps again so he said, I mean, I

asked him I mean for advice, he said, if you would be my wife, I would remove whole part, so and I said Ok well do whatever you think. So, and...

RA: So that was 2 years after you came to America...

MK: 2 years, yeah.

RA: you got, you got Breast Cancer again...

MK: Again, so...

RA: and had your breast removed.

MK: But I was so glad I didn't have any chemotherapy treatments and radiations anymore so because I was really scared of that.

RA: Did you receive good treatment here?

MK: Yes.

RA:...good doctors?

MK: Yes, very good and they gave me good medicines and I, I hope I don't have any problem now but last year I used to have another surgery, my uterus and ovary were removed, too.

RA: Was that due to cancer?

MK: (uh) He didn't say its cancer but he said if they didn't do a surgery that it is possibility to get cancer so and I said Ok I can be without those things (laughter) lets do it.

RA: And you received good treatment?

MK: Yes.

RA: Same doctor?

MK: No, (uh) that was (uh) different doctor but (uh) the same doctor gave me prescriptions so, medicines, after that, because they, they needed to communicate each other, since I have a cancer breasts because that was a different thing, so (uh) Dr. Petersen is my radiology doctor, he's taking care of my medicines and he gave me (uh) good medicines and I hope I'm Ok now, (laughter) even though we don't know never what can happen for us.

RA: Exactly.

MK: Yeah, cause (uh) you know, I just (uh) I, I cannot forget (uh) one thing never in my life while I used to (uh) get (uh) was maybe 4th or 5th chemotherapy treatments and I, (uh) I was in (uh) in my room each time I got chemotherapy, I was very sick. I couldn't wake up for (uh) maybe, more than 5 days. Couldn't eat, couldn't drink, couldn't speak anything. I even didn't know what to do with my body. Couldn't be in my bed something like, that's, I mean, that's very strange situation and once my son...my daughter, she (uh) she couldn't never see my head because I was without hair, I lost my hair because of chemotherapy so, once she (uh) my husband (uh) took her to (uh) house of my parents but my son he was (uh) I think (uh) 11 years old. One. Once he came to my room, I was alone in my room, so, I mean, every, everyday were my family there so and my husband was, I mean, but I just wanted to be alone. I couldn't hear anybody to, to ask me anything because I thought if, at that time when somebody (uh) get chemotherapy is going to die very soon. So and (uh) my son came to my room and ask, and he said, "Mom, can you just talk to me for 5 second?" I just, I didn't say anything, I just was pointing like...and he asked me, "Mom, are you going to die, or are you going to be Ok?" I couldn't answer...that's hard, that's really hard to even answer, he went to his father and asked my husband, "Is mom going to die?" and my husband told him, "No, she will be Ok and I'm Ok now. (laughter) Yeah. That's..."

RA: Your husband must have been a very strong man, and he helped with the children?

MK: Of course. A lot, and my mother-in-law she used to live with me, I mean, for a couple of years, she helped me a lot, my sister, older sister, she came everyday to our house because mother-in-law she was (uh) old, she's now (uh) 84 years old, she couldn't clean, she couldn't cook, she couldn't do anything, just helps, I mean, easy and small things, because I was...

RA: But she tried. She tried...

MK: Yeah, she tried, she tried because while I used to be, used to be (uh), I mean, still healthy, I did all of those things, I didn't ask her, I mean, never to help me something because she was much older than I was, so, was very hard. (sighs)

RA: How long were you sick, and this was in Bosnia?

MK: Yeah, that was in Bosnia first time.

RA: Bosnia. First time.

MK: But here was much easier because (uh) I didn't, I, I was so glad (laughter)

RA: No chemotherapy.

MK: ...and happier. No chemotherapy, no anything (laughter)

RA: That makes you very weak, its very tough on your body.

MK: Oh gosh. Even though my, some members of my family who still live in (uh) Austria they send, I think, (uh) couple of medicines, I needed to use them during chemotherapy, you know, to make myself (uh) being better and feel better so, that didn't help me, even though they pay they, they spend a lot of money for just couple of medicines. I think that's, those called (uh) Zofron???. I saw them when I came to here to Dr. Petersen office and that was just some (uh) paper on (uh) wall and I read Zofron??? Oh my gosh.

RA: You noticed the same medicines

MK: I wanted, I, Yeah, same medicines, I wanted to leave his office right away, after I saw that sign, Zofron??? Just I wanted to leave, just, I just feel like I feel the smell of those medicines. I didn't, I didn't smell them but just in my head something, oh, Zofron??? my gosh,. I wanted to leave right away.

RA: Definitely not a good feeling.

MK: Not a good feeling so... Yeah.

RA: So the, so how long were you sick with the chem...um...er...in, in Bosnia, you...

MK: almost til I...

RA: ... how long were you sick.

MK: ... wanted to go to America maybe 10, (uh) 10 months because I couldn't get chemotherapy (uh) right away after each other. When I got one, then I needed to, I had to wait for 21 days, to do, I mean, to make my blood better because each time I got chemotherapy, my blood got down. So...

RA: So, about 10 months...

MK: Yeah.

RA: ...you were sick, being treated.

MK: Yeah. It took time to, Yeah. Right. Each time...

RA: And in this...and in this time you were applying for citizenship or Visa to come to America?

MK: (sighs) Before we... Before I got sick, sick we applied, we didn't know I would be sick or not, just happen, yeah, because when I, first time when I went to doctor and doctor did some exam, he said, "Oh, that's nothing" because just was one part of my

breast red so, and he thought, that doctor thought that is the problem (uh) of skin and I went to doctor of skin, I don't know how do you call the doctor, like...

RA: Dermatologist.

MK: Dermatologist, so, and he gave me almost all kind of lotions and cream, which didn't help me at all...and I went to another city to check and another doctor, I mean, did exam he said, "You have to go to hospital right away, you have to go to hospital, so...(sighs)

RA: So, you came to America and...?

MK: Yes and we came to America

RA: ...after you got better?

MK: ...after I got better so and...

RA: Did you come on a Visa or a...?

MK: We came as Refugee.

RA: As Refugee.

MK: Correct.

RA: ...and you came to Lincoln?

MK: Yes, yes we came to Lincoln.

RA: ...with your children?

MK: Yes.

RA: And they were, 6 and 12?

MK: 6 and 12, yes, years old, so we spend the...

RA: Were you still weak from the chemo, chemotherapy?

MK: Oh...

RA: Pretty healthy at that point?

MK: You think now?

RA: (uh) During that time, the, the trip?

MK: No. I was already gone. I was out of all of those things.(laughter)

RA: You were Ok?

MK: Yeah. Ok.

RA: So you came...did you come on plane. In an airplane?

MK: Yes. Yes.

RA: Came in an airplane to Lincoln.

MK: ...to Lincoln.

RA: Stayed with...?

MK: Stayed seven days with our friends and after that we moved to another building next to building of our friends so, because they helped us to find apartment.

RA: What did you think of America?

MK: (Pause) You know, first time when we, when we came to the United States, as everybody of Refugees so, we, because before we came to the United States, maybe as everybody else, you do sometimes have some picture of some place even though its, its not, its not same so, when we came, I, just thought America looks like Germany, I mean, or close to Germany but each country is different so, when we came was very hard because we didn't speak any English. Absolutely, my son maybe little bit because he was (uh) he finished fifth grade in Bosnia and he started to learn English in a fifth grade so, he could speak just little but we didn't. So, and (uh) after seven days, after we moved to our apartment, we started with the, taking the classes through the Refugee Program. So, (uh) and one of the biggest of my problems was transportation, even though I had drivers license, I didn't have a car (laughter).

RA: No car...

MK: Yeah.

RA: ...and no bicycle.

MK: No bicycle, yes. (uh) Friend of our, who came to the United States came, its now, I mean, twelve, I think, years old, he gave, he, he gave us as a present one (uh) I mean, was old car but was very good for us.

RA: Perfect.

MK: Yeah. His, his name is Amsid Delmich, he has his own business now, here in Lincoln so, and my husband took that car to work, after he got social security number he found, he applied in (uh) Farmland in Crete and he got a job there because one of us had to work, we couldn't stay, you know, without money because we had to pay all rent, expenses, all of those things and also support our kids, support our kids. So, and we decided for him to work because of my health. So, and I stayed taking English classes. First, I, (uh) I mean, I worked I used to work for months and months because I didn't have car. I remember first of the, of my place, taking the classes was on 33rd St. and 'Q' St., that was some church, I don't remember now, the place. I think couple of months I walk there, that was the first level, then after that I move to Asian Center and finished their (uh) second and third level and then moved to Energy Square, (uh) did the fourth level. Each time I moved...

RA: ...of English. Right. Ok.

MK: Yes. Each time I move, I walked all of these blocks and miles.(laughter)

RA: How about your husband, was he learning English too, at the same time.

MK: He just started, he just started couple of weeks and as soon as he started to work, he was quit, because working on a Farmland is very hard.

RA: Very hard.

MK: After he comes from work, he's tired, he cannot read, he cannot, you know, he just need to be rest, rested to be able to work, I mean, tomorrow. So, and (uh) when I, I think when I finished, I was done with the fourth level, I went to Southeast Community College to do (uh) test, to see (uh) where is my, I mean, on which level is my knowledge of English so that was just through Refugee and Lincoln Literacy Council. I also went, wherever I knew is place to learn English, I went there, and I think helps me, even though I don't speak English very well, but help me a lot. So, and I went to, to do that test and they, they put me in (uh) level three, through the South Community College and I finish seven levels through the South Community College, I think, two years or last year, no, one year and a half, sometime. So,...

RA: You, you've, Ok you had finished eleven or no seven...

MK: Seven, seven. Uh-huh.

RA: ...seven levels in a year and a half...

MK: Yes. Yes.

RA: ... at Southeast.

MK: Yes, yes, so, and (uh) also I used to be taking those classes, I started to work in a Park Middle School, part time, I found a part time job working in a kitchen so, and I walked everyday seventeen blocks (laughter). From my apartment to Park Middle School.

RA: Oh, you would walk, while your children were in school?

MK: Yes. My son (uh) started in (uh) that same school, I work there, Park Middle School with sixth grade. So, and (uh) one of the teachers (uh) helped him first year with the transportation. Every morning she came to pick him up and brought him home.

RA: What was her name, do you remember?

MK: Her name is (uh) Paula Deharsh, she was also (uh), I mean, she was our, she wasn't our sponsor really, but when we came to Lincoln, she came to our apartment, friend of mine brought her to our apartment, to ask for (uh) do we need some furniture, of course, we didn't have anything, I, I missed that part. I mean, two days later she brought almost everything even dryer and washer, in our apartment.

RA: Washer and dryer.

MK: Yeah. she brought everything for us.

RA: Her name is...?

MK: Paula Deharsh, she works at the, in the Park Middle School as a teacher for (uh) I think some special kids.

RA: Ok.

MK: Yeah.

RA: They seem very nice.

MK: And her husband also, Mark, he helped us a lot, I mean, that, I cannot forget them never. Never.

RA: Very nice.

MK: We still do have those things, they brought for us because were not still to buy I mean, expensive things and some kind of furniture.

RA: And they didn't go through an agency or anything to help you?

MK: No.

RA: They just did this out of the kindness of their heart.

MK: No. They just, they just, they just did that by themselves, they maybe went to their friends and, I mean, collected all of these things and brought for us. So...

RA: And did your daughter, she, did she start kindergarten?

MK: She, no she started with the first grade here in Lincoln. Yeah.

RA: Did she have, no, no kindergarten?

MK: No, she didn't, just she was (uh), she was (uh) in, (uh) ESL classes and she finished with ESL classes last year.

RA: Ok.

MK: Because when you came to the United States, if you don't have any knowledge of English, you have to take (uh) ESL classes.

RA: Ok.

MK: I think it's five levels for children, of English.

RA: So she started first grade at, which school?

MK: (uh) Holmes School.

RA: Holmes?

MK: Yes. Holmes School and she finished there third grade after we moved to another apartment, she's now in (uh) Hill.

RA: She's at Hill, Elementary, Right?

MK: Yes. Elementary School.

RA: What grade is she in now?

MK: Fourth.

RA: Fourth grade. And your son?

MK: He is second of (uh) Southwest.

RA: Second year of Southwest High School so he is, How old is he now?

MK: Tenth grade, he's (uh) sixteen.

RA: He's sixteen in the tenth and your daughter is now...?

MK: Ten, Fourth grade.

RA: Ten years old in the Fourth grade. And do they remember Bosnia?

MK: (uh) My son, yes, both of them, but (uh) I think she, she does remember less than my son so because she left while she was six years old, she remember everybody I mean, of my family, of my I mean, members of my family but she doesn't remember some times the places and you know, because she used to go in kindergarten in Bosnia too, for a year and a half while we used to be there so...

RA: So now you, you work as an AmeriCorps member for...?

MK: Yes. I do work now, actually I started to work last year 2005, (uh) 2004 September, that was September as of everybody of AmeriCorps because new AmeriCorps are starting (uh) every year, September. So, and this is my second term working as an AmeriCorps member here with the Citizenship Program, so...

RA: And your husband what does he do now?

MK: He still in Farmland, this is fourth year.

RA: He's still there.

MK: Yes but he's (uh) planning I mean, he's not going to leave unless he get new job but what is he planning now to do drivers license for a truck driver and move his self because I mean his position is very hard, very hard but he doesn't understand to speak English very well and it is also very hard for him to find another job. So,... Yeah.

RA: How did you become AmeriCorps member? How did you find out about the program?

MK: Oh. (um)there is a friend of mine who works here, her name is Munera...

RA: Ok.

MK: (laughter) I think you remember her, she told me once, because was very hard for me to work in (uh) Park Middle School especially (uh) in kitchen, working in a kitchen is very hard for me, maybe it wasn't be hard if I would be you know, healthy but was very so and he I mean, she told me about this (uh) program and I applied of course they, they made an interview with me so and they hired me and I am so glad I'm here.

RA: In both years, were you Citizenship AmeriCorps?

MK: Yes. Yes, both years. I'll be, I mean, I'll be soon done with my hours because were planning to, I'm going to leave next week to go to Bosnia, to visit my family and we'll stay there for a month, after I come back, I'll be soon done with my hours.

RA: So you are planning to take a trip?

MK: Yes.

RA: May ?

MK: May 28, we'll be leaving and we'll be back 25 of June.

RA: And you are taking your children?

MK: Yes.

RA: And your husband?

MK: Yes. My husband is gonna stay fifteen days because Farmland doesn't let him go more than fifteen days, because he's only three years and a half on Farmland, he cannot be able to stay otherwise if he would like to leave Farmland then he can stay as long as he want but he would like to keep his job til he finds something else, so, my daughter is going to stay whole summer vacation, but my son he will be coming with me because he is a teenager and I would like to take him. I like to take care of him now. So...

RA: And how do they speak, English and Bosnian?

MK: Oh, they, they, they do speak especially perfect, both of them, especially my daughter, yeah. If you listen when she speaks English, you cannot say she is from Bosnia You, you could say she is American.

RA: American.

MK: Yeah, but my son, he just has little bit different accent, but his English is Ok too and Bosnian, but my daughter she, I mean, she, (uh) she cannot sometime speak very well Bosnian because she forgot, I mean, she didn't learn I mean, even Bosnian while she was still in Bosnia because she was six years old she still was a child when we left from Bosnia, so and sometime she mixed English and Bosnia together. (laughter)

RA: So, but she does speak both, they both speak both languages.

MK: Yes. Yes. Yeah, because we decided to take them now (uh) for a vacation to be there a month and leave her there with my parents, I mean, mother of my husband just to practice language, we never know, see, I never thought I would be coming in America that was something for me impossible we didn't plan at all, we didn't plan I never know for my kids where I going to be in their future, here or there, you never know what

happen for us. Only god knows.