

# Oral History Methodology and Interview Guidelines



MEMORIAL  
CENTER  
**SREBRENICA**



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# **Oral History Methodology and Interview Guidelines**

Srebrenica, 2025.

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# INTRODUCTION / A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

When genocide occurred against the Bosnian Muslims (known as Bosniaks) in Srebrenica in July 1995, it was a horrendous individual and collective trauma for all involved. People were in shock, in crisis, and initially unable to understand or articulate what had happened. Most all aspects of the community impacted by the genocide were destroyed. For years individuals and families were trying to navigate the chaos that followed the war and the genocide.

It was difficult for survivors to rebuild their lives while focusing on the missing, identifications of their loved ones, and burials. Fighting for justice with the international community and establishing the Memorial were both made more difficult by the fact that community leaders and organizers had also survived the war, the genocide, and were among those trying to adjust to life afterwards amongst the chaos and the trauma. Because of the initiative of the Mothers of Srebrenica, the international community established the Srebrenica Memorial Center whose initial focus was on burials of victims and commemorating the genocide.

As time passed, some 25 years later, it was time for the Memorial to grow into a major center for exhibitions related to the genocide, other educational presentations, and as a place for local and international research and academic conferences. Recently, it has become a site for visitors from around the world to come to learn about the Srebrenica genocide and to pay their respects.

My vision for the Memorial included a focus on survivor voices in the form of narratives told by those who lived through the war and genocide, and who could speak for their loved ones who had not survived. The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) focused on the facts and the perpetrators of war crimes and genocide. The Memorial needed a formal Oral History project where the focus would be on the voices and narratives of the survivors to preserve their stories and to fight against denial and historical revisionism. The Oral History project needed to have a rigorous design including a professional process of consent, be research-based, technologically sound, culturally-sensitive to the Bosniak population, and be developed with a trauma-informed approach.

This protocol that you are reading has all of these necessary aspects, was designed with international cooperation, and is the first of its kind in the former Yugoslavia. It was reviewed by academics from within Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as the international community.

The audio and video personal narratives that are preserved through this Oral History Project will be made available through a formal process for teaching purposes, to academics and researchers, and to others who wish to learn more about their own family history. This Oral History project serves many purposes, including honoring the voices and experiences of those who survived and those who did not.

## **HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE SREBRENICA GENOCIDE**

In 1987, Slobodan Milošević came to power in Serbia, the largest of six republics which comprised the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The other republics were Croatia, Bosnia & Herzegovina (BiH), Slovenia, Macedonia, and Montenegro. Two autonomous provinces in the Federation, Vojvodina and Kosovo, belonged to Serbia. Milošević immediately embarked on a campaign to consolidate power resulting in the republics of Yugoslavia starting to declare independence from 1991 - 1992. Serbia also began encouraging and supporting the rebellion of Serb populations in Croatia and BiH.

In early January 1992, toward the goal of establishing a Greater Serbia, the SDS political party supported by the Milošević regime in BiH, established a Serb parastate called the Serbian Republic of Bosnia & Herzegovina, later known as the Republika Srpska or the RS. In spite of this action, on February 29th and March 1st, 1992, the Socialist Republic of BiH held a referendum on independence from Milošević's Yugoslavia. The referendum for independence passed by a vast majority.

On March 1st, 1992, the SDS ordered barricades to be erected around the city of Sarajevo, marking the beginning of what would be a four-year siege of the BiH capital. Violence erupted across the country, quickly spreading to Eastern Bosnia.

The Srednje Podrinje region, comprised of Srebrenica, Zvornik, Vlasenica, Bratunac, and several other municipalities, was occupied by the Serb forces as it was especially vulnerable due to its close proximity to Serbia on the other side of the Drina River. When Srebrenica was occupied, no more than 300-400 residents remained in the town. The roughly twenty-day period that Srebrenica was under Serb control was characterized by looting, lawlessness, and various crimes. At the end of April 1992, members of the BiH Territorial Defence launched a resistance and drove the Serb forces from the town. Henceforth, Srebrenica became an enclave for tens of thousands of Bosniak refugees from across eastern Bosnia, however the enclave remained surrounded by Serb forces and nearby Serbia.



While the BiH Territorial Defence continued to resist the Serb forces attacks, life in the enclave was characterized by enormous hardship, horrid humanitarian conditions, and unremitting death. By the summer of 1992, hunger had become a defining feature of life in the Srebrenica enclave. When the pre-war food reserves were depleted, Bosniaks in the enclave began to eat whatever they could find. Many died of starvation and malnutrition-related illnesses. In summer and autumn, hundreds of civilians from Srebrenica desperately crossed deep into enemy territory to search for any remaining food in the ruins of decimated Bosniak villages. Many did not survive these trips for food as they had to contend with darkness, enormous physical strain, and ambushes. Only a handful of doctors and medical personnel remained in the Srebrenica enclave and the hospital reopened in July 1992. Short-staffed and lacking medications and basic medical supplies, doctors were forced to treat patients under extremely primitive conditions.

As the siege continued with a growing humanitarian crisis, the population was subjected to daily artillery and aviation attacks by the Serb forces from Bosnia and Serbia. By the winter of 1993, the situation in and around Srebrenica had worsened dramatically as a result of the relentless onslaughts of Serb forces from Bosnia and Serbia with the aim of destroying the Srebrenica enclave. As the territory of the enclave shrank, the number of refugees in the town grew, resulting in an increasingly desperate humanitarian situation. Srebrenica was overcrowded and in the grips of a severe famine, and people were dying in large numbers.

In the spring of 1993, the head of the UN Security Council's diplomatic mission, Venezuelan Ambassador Diego Arria, came to Srebrenica. Witnessing the suffering of Srebrenica's inhabitants, he described the enclave as an "open-air prison" where the Bosnian Serb army was carrying out a "slow-motion genocide." The UN Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, UNPROFOR, tried for months to intervene in the situation around Srebrenica, which by March 1993, had reached cataclysmic proportions. French General Philippe Morillon, the UNPROFOR Commander, came to the enclave on March 10th and observed for himself the horrors of life in Srebrenica. When he later attempted to leave, he addressed the panicked crowd from the Post Office, promising them UN protection, saying "I've decided to stay here. You are now under the protection of the United Nations. I will never let you down".

Following Morillon's visit, humanitarian aid began to be delivered; thousands of refugees, including the sick and wounded, were evacuated from the enclave to Tuzla and a ceasefire was negotiated. Despite the presence of the UN, the Bosnian Serb army continued to carry out brutal attacks on the enclave, deliberately targeting civilians. On April 12th, 1993, the Bosnian Serb Army (BSA) fired shells at a busy school playground in Srebrenica. In the attack, 70 people lost their lives and 100 were injured, with the majority being young individuals.

On April 16th, 1993, the UN Security Council responded to the “rapid deterioration of the situation in Srebrenica and its surroundings,” by adopting Resolution 819 which declared Srebrenica a UN “Safe Area.” A UN peacekeeping force, UNPROFOR, was deployed to Srebrenica. They helped to mediate a cease-fire agreement which included a demilitarization mandate for Srebrenica.

The first UNPROFOR Peacekeeping unit in Srebrenica was a Canadian battalion, followed in February of 1994 by the first contingent of Dutch soldiers, Dutchbat I. The main Dutchbat UN base was located in the facility of the pre-war battery factory in Potočari.

The declaration of Srebrenica as a UN “Safe Area” did not put an end to the suffering in the enclave. Sporadic shelling and sniping of civilians continued despite the UN presence, and Srebrenica residents were confined to an area of roughly 145 square kilometers. All shops remained closed, and the delivery of food and other necessities was still strictly controlled by the Bosnian Serbian authorities. Under these conditions, improvisation came to define nearly every aspect of life in the enclave. Nevertheless, after a few months of the “Safe Area” declaration, life in Srebrenica gradually started getting back to a semblance of normal. Unfortunately, however, in the spring of 1995, the schools were once again shuttered. Srebrenica came under renewed attack, and life slowly began to return to how it had been before the arrival of the UN.

Things changed dramatically on July 6 when the Bosnian Serb Army started their final assault on the enclave, which included all of the Dutch battalion’s observation posts. The Serb forces met no resistance from the UN Dutch battalion, only from a handful of Srebrenica defenders. At a late-night meeting on July 10th, Dutchbat Commander Thom Karremans promised that airstrikes would be launched the next morning and requested that the enclave’s defenders withdraw from the southern part of the conflict line. However, there were no airstrikes on the morning of July 11th and Bosnian Serb forces entered the town without any resistance.

Standing in the center of the town, the BSA Commander Ratko Mladić triumphantly announced that the time had finally come to take revenge on the “Turks”, disparagingly referring to the long-ago Ottoman Empire. That same day, those fleeing the enclave split into two groups, resulting in family members saying their goodbyes at the edge of town. Many never saw their loved ones again. Most of the men went west on foot through the woods on a journey known as the Death March, with the hope of reaching the free territory of Tuzla. The women, children, and elderly went north towards neighboring Potočari hoping that the Dutch UN forces stationed there would protect them. By the end of the day around 30,000 people had poured into Potočari. Five to six thousand were allowed to enter the UN base, while the rest settled outside of the base under the open sky or in the ruins of surrounding buildings. Refugees who fled from Srebrenica stayed in Potočari from the 11th to 13th of July 1995. Both days and nights were horrific.

During the day, refugees endured hellacious heat without access to drinking water, medical care, or means of sanitation and hygiene. Men as well as women were taken away by BSA soldiers, some of whom were never seen again. At night, there were sounds of screams, cries, and gunshots. During their time in Potočari, the refugees lived in constant fear. On the afternoon of July 12th, in Potočari, the Bosnian Serb army began separating the men and teenage boys from the women and children. They latter were loaded onto trucks and buses and forcibly relocated to the town of Kladanj.

By the evening of July 13th, the relocation of the civilians from Potočari was completed, with witnesses recounting harassment, instances of rape, and murder. While this was happening, men and boys on the Death March were continuing to make their way through the woods. An ambush occurred which split the Death March into two groups. Those at the front of the Death March escaped the ambush and continued the trek toward Tuzla. Of those in the back, approximately 1000 people were killed, hundreds were injured, and thousands surrendered while others fled into the woods. From July 13th - July 16, approximately 7,000 prisoners were taken to six primary execution sites and summarily slaughtered. These sites included an agricultural warehouse in Kravica, Orahovac field, Petkovci dam, Kozluk by the river Drina, Branjevo farm, and Pilica Cultural Center. Victims were buried in primary mass graves and later relocated to secondary and tertiary mass graves in a systematic effort to conceal the genocide.

The remains of thousands of Srebrenica genocide victims have been uncovered during the exhumations of the mass graves carried out by the ICTY and missing persons commission in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The identification of these remains involves specific scientific methodology including DNA analysis and other protocols which involve surviving family members. In an organized effort of advocacy, associations of mothers were formed and these organizations, alongside male survivors, worked with the international community to establish a cemetery and genocide memorial in Potočari in October, 2000. Additionally, survivors and relatives of victims have been crucial in ensuring that those responsible for the genocide are held accountable by testifying in the courtrooms of the ICTY in the Hague. After years of trials, the international ICTY and the ICJ courts, along with the Bosnian State Court, judicially determined that what happened in Srebrenica in July 1995 was genocide.

Almost 30 years later, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted a resolution, designating 11 July as the "International Day of Reflection and Commemoration of the 1995 Genocide in Srebrenica". Today, associations of mothers, other survivors, and victims' families continue to play a vital role in combatting genocide denial, advocating for the truth, and overcoming other challenges in the aftermath of genocide. The support of associations and relatives of victims remains integral to the work of the Memorial Center.

# **DEVELOPMENT OF THE SREBRENICA MEMORIAL CENTER ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

After 1995, efforts began focusing on searching for victims, the identification process, and establishing the Srebrenica Memorial Center (SMC) as an official burial place and education center. Eventually enough time had passed that SMC began to preserve the unique stories of survivors in the form of an Oral History Project, joining the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) and the USC Shoah Foundation, among others, who had been preserving oral histories for quite some time.

Oral History is a powerful and essential tool for preserving and documenting events and experiences of survivors and needs to be done once enough time has passed following a genocide.

These current guidelines for the SMC Oral History Project have evolved through our experiences of interviewing survivors of the Srebrenica genocide, are developed through a trauma-informed approach, and are applicable to the unique culture of the Northeast Bosnia region.

# GUIDELINES

## Pre-Interview guidelines

### Purpose:

The first step in an oral history interview is a pre-interview where basic demographic and life experience information is gathered. This information helps determine who will ultimately participate in the oral history interview. Participants are referred to as **narrators** and are identified from a variety of sources. Information gathered in the pre-interview informs the interviewer about the necessary structure of the subsequent oral history interview. It also educates the narrator about the entire process, including informed consent.

### Method:

This pre-interview process is guided by a semi-structured questionnaire which includes specific questions about the narrator's experiences, observations about their communication style, and whether they are fit to participate in the Oral History Project. Basic information that is gathered includes demographics, a short family history, and life experiences before, during, and after the war.

The brief pre-interview is separate from the longer oral history interview. In order to avoid confusion and to allow for information to be clarified, pre-interviews should be conducted at least seven days prior to the oral history interview. Interviewers from the SMC who are trained in this methodology conduct pre-interviews by phone. If a potential participant, referred to as the narrator, does not have a phone, the interviewer visits the narrator's residential address.

Pre-interviews are recorded and later transcribed which then serves as a guide for the longer oral history interview. During the pre-interview, narrators may indicate specific subjects that they do not wish to be asked about in the subsequent oral history interview. This information is noted in the transcription and subsequently included on the individual consent form.

In addition to obtaining information from the narrator, the pre-interview also serves the purpose of informing the narrators about the oral history interview protocol. This includes an overview of the project, the structure of the interview, logistics, the scheduling process, the use and archiving of interview recordings, and the process of consent.

In situations where detailed material about the narrator is publicly available such as written memoirs, videos, or published articles, a different process is followed initially.

The interviewer does not collect basic information from a pre-interview but rather uses these public sources to complete the basic information needed for the oral history interview, after which all steps prior to the oral history interview are followed.

Once the pre-interview is completed, the interviewer transcribes the information within 48 hours including their signature. The interviewer emails the Head of Oral History Department (HOHD) indicating that the transcription is completed and signed. The HOHD then accesses the transcript and evaluates the goodness of fit for the potential narrator to move forward to the Oral History interview.

The HOHD indicates and justifies their decision officially as part of the record including their signature. If it is determined that the narrator moves forward to the Oral History interview, a case number is assigned and entered on the Oral History Data Log (OHDL). An electronic and paper case file are then created beginning with the pre-interview transcript. If it is determined that an oral history interview will not occur, a separate process is followed, including assignment of a case number and an archived system specifically developed for those potential narrators who were not interviewed.

The assigned interviewer then contacts the narrator to set up the oral history interview including the logistics of transportation and any accessibility needs. Other information provided includes the anticipated length of the interview and a review of the oral history interview protocol. This includes an overview of the project, the structure of the interview, logistics, the use and archiving of interview recordings, and the process of consent.

## Pre-Interview Questionnaire

Introduce yourself \_\_\_\_\_

We are filming survivor stories to make sure that individual stories are not forgotten. We have filmed hundreds so far; I understand that you are a survivor. Are you interested in sharing your experience as part of the Oral History Project?

There are a few things that I need to tell you. In this Oral History Project, we talk about your childhood, your family, if you were married, if you had children, your family life before the war, the start of the war, how that impacted you and your family, what happened to you during the war, and what happened to you after the war until now. We are interested in preserving your story if you would like to participate.

If you do participate, the Memorial will arrange a date for your interview and transportation if necessary. The minimum duration of the interview is 1 hour, and the maximum is 5 hours. You would be interviewed by a trained staff member of the Memorial and the interview will be filmed. The interview will become the property of the Memorial and will be archived for use for educational and research purposes. Your interview will be archived but you can opt out of it being used for educational and/or research purposes. If you proceed with the Oral History interview all of this will be further explained in a written consent form.

Do you have any questions so far?

If you are interested in participating in this project, there is a short list of questions I'd like to ask you now so that we can be best prepared for your interview. Is that okay with you? If yes, continue with the pre-interview questionnaire.



## PRE-INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

This Oral History Pre-Interview is done prior to an Oral History interview if it is decided to be done. Basic demographic and life experience information is gathered. Information gathered in the pre-interview informs the interviewer about the necessary structure of the subsequent Oral History interview and educates the narrator about the entire process.

1. Name of Interviewer \_\_\_\_\_
2. Name of person being interviewed \_\_\_\_\_
3. Date of birth \_\_\_\_\_
4. Place of birth \_\_\_\_\_
5. Did you go to school?  
 Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes:

Education	Grades
Primary school	
Secondary school	
University	

6. Marital Status (check all that apply):

- Never married ☐  
 Currently Married ☐  
 Widowed ☐  
 Divorced ☐  
 Remarried ☐

Name of spouse(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date of marriage(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date widowed \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date divorced \_\_\_\_\_

Notes:

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7. If you ever had children can you tell me their names and when they were born?

No children ☐ Yes ☐

If yes:

Name	Family Name	Date of birth

8. War experience:

Srednje Podrinje 1992: ☐

Kamenica 1992-1993: ☐

Cerska 1992-1993: ☐

Konjević Polje 1992-1993: ☐

Srebrenica until March/April 1993: ☐

Srebrenica until 1995 (left before the fall): ☐

Srebrenica until July 1995:

a) Potočari ☐ b) Death March ☐

1. First group

2. Other groups

9. Were you able to stay in your home when the war started?

Yes ☐ No ☐

## 10. **Loses**

Were any of your family members killed during the war?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes:

Who? Where? How? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

11. If any of your family members were killed, were their remains found?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes:

Where and when were they found? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

12. Did you bury your loved ones?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes:

When? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

13. Is there anything that you would NOT want to be asked about in your Oral History interview?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes:

Details: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

14. Impression of the interviewee's cognitive abilities:

Does memory seem clear?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Can chronology be understood?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Interviewer signature

The decision of the OH director moving forward to Oral History interview:

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Head of Oral History signature

## Preparing for an Oral History Interview

The HOHD makes interviewer assignments based on a number of factors including gender, age of narrator, complexity of war experiences, and narrator's current geographic location. Once an interviewer is assigned, they begin their preparation for the interview including background research.

Preparation includes the following steps:

- Review the pre-interview transcript;
- Read materials related to narrator's experience including books, articles, reports, maps;
- Watch related videos.

Once this background research is completed, the interviewer chooses the appropriate oral history questionnaire template based on the specific narrator's experiences and modifies as needed. In this process, some questions may be omitted, and others may be added. All questionnaires were developed using historically proven facts. Additionally, questions were developed using a trauma-informed lens to be responsive to cultural norms.

Specific questionnaires include the narrator's war experience in the following categories:

- Srednje Podrinje 1992; Zvornička Kamenica, Cerska and Konjević Polje enclaves 1992-1993;
- Srebrenica until March-April 1993;
- Srebrenica until 1995 (left before the fall);
- Srebrenica until 1995 (Potočari);
- Srebrenica until 1995 (Death March);
- People born 1982-1987 (they were children during the war)

Included in this manual is the master questionnaire from which others are customized. References to the differences between questionnaires are indicated in footnotes.

## Oral History Interview guidelines

### DAY OF INTERVIEW

#### **Purpose:**

In order to document and preserve the unique experiences of survivors, referred to as narrators in this project, the oral history interview is conducted. In addition to their historical relevance, the completed interviews are archived and made available for authorized use by educators and researchers.

## **Method:**

### **Prior to the Beginning of the Interview**

Upon arrival, the narrator is greeted by the interviewer. The interviewer inquires about the narrator's welfare and offers refreshments. Once the narrator is settled, the interviewer explains the entire interview process including the use of the questionnaire. If anyone has accompanied the narrator to the interview, it is explained that, with the narrator's consent, the accompanying person can watch the interview on a live broadcast TV in an adjoining room where the sound technician is located. It is also possible to wait elsewhere during the interview. The interviewer goes over the consent form verbally and encourages the narrator to ask any questions that they may have. The consent form is then signed by the narrator. As part of the consent form the narrator is reminded that their participation is voluntary and that they can pause or stop the interview at any time. The videographer is then invited into the room and introduced to the narrator. The videographer checks the equipment and explains the technical details to the narrator. The interviewer checks with the narrator, videographer, and sound technician to ensure their readiness to begin the interview. Once everyone indicates that they are ready, the interview begins.

## **The Interview**

### **Method:**

Having prepared the appropriate questionnaire based on information obtained in the pre-interview, the interview begins. In this semi-structured process, the interviewer follows a designated set of questions organized in a linear fashion beginning with the narrator's childhood and ending with current times. Some questions are omitted based on pre-interview information provided by the narrator. Each questionnaire is designed with open ended questions which allow narrators to freely tell their story. If needed, a series of prompts are available after each open ended question to allow for further elaboration as well as clarification.

Additionally, when needed, specific questions are added based on unique circumstances shared by the narrator. Using a trauma-informed approach, the interview is an interactive process between interviewer and narrator with the interviewer actively reflecting and acknowledging the narrator's story, demonstrating an understanding of the events and the pain involved in the narrator having experienced them and in the retelling. Interruptions are kept to a minimum and prompts are used intentionally for clarification and enrichment of the story. Pauses may happen for several reasons, including technical difficulties, narrator emotion or physical discomfort, and external noise disturbance. Additionally, the narrator may want to show the interviewer family photos or personal artifacts.

The interviewer may intentionally pause in order to review notes to determine if topics might need to be revisited. Each questionnaire is designed to include language which alerts the narrator from the beginning and throughout the interview that such pauses might need to occur.

The in-depth training that the interviewers receive on this method is contained in the Oral History Interview Training Manual.

## INFORMED WRITTEN CONSENT

In this Oral History interview, we will talk about your childhood, your family, if you were married, if you had children, your family life before the war, the start of the war, how that impacted you and your family, what happened to you during the war, and what happened to you after the war until now. We understand that you will be sharing memories that may be difficult and painful. We are interested in preserving your story if you would like to participate.

I agree to this interview:

Yes ☐ No ☐

The interview that you are about to participate in will last as long as you would like it to. As we discussed in the pre-interview, most interviews last about 2 hours. You will be interviewed by a trained staff member of the Memorial and the interview will be filmed. Do you understand?

Yes ☐ No ☐

I understand that I can stop the interview at any point:

Yes ☐ No ☐

I agree to be photographed during my interview:

Yes ☐ No ☐

The interview will become the property of the Memorial and will be securely and safely archived for use in education and research. Your interview will be archived but you can opt out of it being used for education and/or research.

I agree to my interview becoming the property of the Memorial:

Yes ☐ No ☐

I agree to my interview being archived by the Memorial:

Yes ☐ No ☐

I agree that my interview may be used for educational purposes:

Yes ☐ No ☐

I agree that my interview may be used on social media:

Yes ☐ No ☐

I agree that my interview may be used for research purposes:

Yes ☐ No ☐

I understand that nobody can access my interview without specific prior approval and permission from the Memorial:

Yes ☐ No ☐

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What questions do you have? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

By signing this written consent, I confirm that I am informed about this Oral History Project and agree to participate.

Signature of narrator: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Place of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Today's date: \_\_\_\_\_

Place of interview \_\_\_\_\_



# ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

## (Master Questionnaire)

Interview of Oral History<sup>1</sup>

Production:

Interview Number:

Narrator:

Date of Birth:

Birthplace:

Interviewer:

Interview Date:

Interview Location:

Good afternoon, \_\_\_\_\_, welcome to the oral history interview that will be archived in Srebrenica Memorial Center.

**1.** What we're going to do today is ask you questions about your life experience so that you can tell your story. I know that this might be difficult at times and I'm grateful for anything you'd like to share. You don't need to talk about anything that is too uncomfortable for you and please feel free to add anything that we might not ask about. While you're telling your story there will be times that I'm going to ask you to pause because I want to make sure that I'm understanding everything that you're saying. I will be listening carefully but might pause to clarify. Is that okay? Let's get started.

**2.** Could you briefly introduce yourself?

PROMPTS

**2a.** Where were you born and when?

**2b.** Could you describe the place where you were born?

**3.** Now I'd like to ask you some questions about your family when you were growing up. What was your life like as a family?

PROMPTS

**3a.** Who was in your family?

**3b.** Can you tell me their names?

**3c.** What did your family do for a living?

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<sup>1</sup>This is the master questionnaire which references customized questionnaires. This master questionnaire is followed by the Children's' Questionnaire for those born 1982-1987. The other customized questionnaires are available by contacting the Srebrenica Oral History Department at [info@srebrenicamemorial.org](mailto:info@srebrenicamemorial.org)

**4.** Now I'd like to ask you a few specific questions about your upbringing in your family if you agree. Can you tell me what it meant in your family to be a good person?

PROMPTS

How were you taught to treat:

- 4a.** Your neighbors?
- 4b.** Older people?
- 4c.** People of different ethnicities?
- 4d.** People of different religions?
- 4e.** People with disabilities?
- 4f.** People who had less than you?
- 4g.** People who were bullied?
- 4h.** Animals?

[If narrator did not go to school, go to #10]

[If narrator did go to school, continue with #5]

**5.** We've talked some about your family and now I'd like to hear about your experiences in primary school if you agree. If you went to school, can you talk about what the experience was like for you?

PROMPTS

- 5a.** How many grades did you attend?
- 5b.** What happened that you didn't finish primary school?
- 5c.** What was it like for you to leave school?
- 5d.** Would you say that you liked school more than you disliked it or the opposite?
- 5e.** What were some of your favourite school subjects?
- 5f.** Were there school events that you participated in?
- 5g.** (If yes) what was it like for you participating in those events?
- 5h.** How did you get to and from school?
- 5i.** On school days, what did you eat?
- 5j.** Did you have schoolmates of different ethnicities and/or religions?

**6.** I appreciate you talking about your school experiences. I have a couple of very specific questions I'd like to ask you. In your subject at school, do you remember learning anything about WWII?

**7.** In addition to what you learned at school, can you remember any stories that your family told you about WWII?

**8.** Is there anything else about school that you'd like to share?

**9.** Now that I have an understanding of what school was like for you I'd like to talk about what it was like when you got home from school if that's okay. When the school day ended, many people had chores and homework. Can you tell me what this looked like in your home?

PROMPTS

- 9a.** What was it like when you returned home from school?
- 9b.** Please describe what it was like doing your homework and if anyone helped you.
- 9c.** In addition to your school obligations, what other chores did you have?
- 9d.** How old were you when those chores started?
- 9e.** If you remember, can you describe which chores were hard and which were easy?
- 9f.** Did you help your family's financial situation by collecting and selling things like mushrooms, herbs, berries ?
- 9g.** If so, what did you do?

[If a narrator did not go to school, continue with #10]

**10.** We've talked some about your family and now I'd like to hear about your education if you agree. Did you go to school?

PROMPTS

- 10a.** What happened that you did not go to school?
- 10b.** Did anybody tell you that you could not go to school?
- 10c.** How did you feel when that happened?

**11.** As you told me earlier you did not go to school, I'd like to talk about what you did instead. What did you do at home when you did not go to school?

PROMPTS

- 11a.** What responsibilities did you have?
- 11b.** How old were you when you started doing chores?
- 11c.** If you remember, can you describe which chores were hard and which were easy?
- 11d.** Did you help your family's financial situation by collecting and selling things like mushrooms, herbs, and berries?
- 11e.** If so, what did you do?

**12.** Can you describe how your responsibilities and chores changed as you got older?

[Question #13 is for those who went to school beyond 8th grade]

**13.** Earlier you told me that you finished primary school. I'd be interested in knowing details about your further education if you are comfortable talking about that?

**14.** You've talked about your family, school, and chores, but what we haven't yet talked about is the role of religion and ethnicity. I'd like to ask you some questions about that if you agree. Can you describe if and how religion played a role in your family?

PROMPTS

**14a.** Was your family religious?

**14b.** Did you attend religious lectures as a child?

**15.** When you were growing up, what were relationships like between ethnicities?

PROMPTS

**15a.** If people of other ethnicities live nearby, which ethnicities were they?

**15b.** Were any of your friends or classmates a different ethnicity than you? (If yes) what ethnicities were they?

**15c.** (If yes) can you describe your relationships with these friends and classmates?

**16.** When you think about all that you have told me about your childhood are there any particularly happy memories that stand out?

**17.** Are you comfortable talking about any sad memories that you might have?

[Asking questions #18-22 depends on pre-interview information]

**18.** In learning more about your life, I'd be interested in hearing about whether or not you got married.

PROMPTS

**18a.** How did you meet your spouse?

**18b.** What was your wedding like?

**19.** What did your husband/wife do for a living?

**20.** (If male), did you spend time in the army?

PROMPT

**20a.** If yes, can you describe your experience?

**21.** Did you have children?

PROMPT

**21a.** If yes, can you tell me their names and when they were born?

**22.** What was your life like as a family?

[#23 is asked of those born 1975 or earlier]

**23.** Now I'd like to move to a specific point in time when a significant event happened. Josip Broz Tito died. If you remember Tito's death, can you describe what it was like for you and your family?

PROMPTS

**23a.** How did you find out?

**23b.** What was your reaction to his death?

**23c.** How did your family and neighbours react to his death?

**24.** Ten years after Tito died, in 1990 elections were held in the former Yugoslavia. If you remember these elections in BiH, can you describe what the political atmosphere was like before and after the elections?

PROMPTS

**24a.** Do you remember the first democratic elections in 1990 in Yugoslavia?

**24b.** If yes, what was the political atmosphere like right before the elections were held?

**24c.** If yes, what was the political atmosphere like after the elections were held?

**25.** At this point in time it was clear that Yugoslavia was breaking apart. If you are comfortable discussing it, can you describe what you remember about the Republic of BiH independence referendum in spring 1992?

**26.** Do you remember what your hopes and expectations were at that time for the future of the country?

**27.** If you noticed any changes after the referendum passed, can you describe them?

PROMPT

**27a.** How did you feel about these changes?

**28.** What did you hear on the radio and TV or read in the newspaper during that time?

**29.** Can you tell me about the response of your neighbors during that time?

**30.** In many places, conflicts started between people in communities. Can you remember any specific incidents that happened where you lived?

PROMPT

**30a.** If yes, can you describe how you felt when these incidents were happening?

**31.** All of these difficult incidents took place and I'm wondering if you remember what happened that made you and your family realize that a war would break out?

**32.** It may be hard to talk about the war starting but if you agree, I'd like to ask you about that. What happened to you and your family when the war started?  
PROMPTS

**32a.** When the war started did you and your family have a sufficient amount of food?

**32b.** How about clothing and shoes?

**32c.** How about other life necessities?

**32d.** What were some of the ways were you exposed to danger once the war started?

**33.** Do you remember what it was like for you during this time?

**34.** This next part is very hard to talk about. As the war went on, people began to die. Are you comfortable with me asking you some questions about that? (If yes) If you did know anyone who died during 1992 or 93, could you tell me who they were and what happened?

PROMPT

**34a.** Where were you when they died?

**35.** Can you describe what that was like for you?

**36.** During this difficult time when people were starting to die, you were also experiencing other serious difficulties, such as shortages of things that were vital. Again, this might be hard to talk about but if you're comfortable doing so could you tell me what the situation was like for you and your family with food and other necessities?

PROMPT

**36a.** What were the ways that you acquired food and other necessities during this time?

**37.** Can you remember what this time was like for you and your family?

**38.** At the same time, many people faced the difficult experience of being expelled from their homes and became refugees. If that happened to you, would you be willing to talk about the circumstances?

[If no, skip to #46]

PROMPTS

**38a.** Can you describe what happened and where you went?

**38b.** If you're comfortable doing so can you talk about what that felt like?

**38c.** If you remember the hardest part of leaving home, what was it?

**38d.** Can you describe how you got settled?

**38e.** Did anyone help you? If so, what did they do?

**38f.** If someone helped (or not), how did you feel about that?

**39.** Did you keep livestock or other animals?

**40.** (If yes) what happened to them when you had to leave?<sup>2</sup>

**41.** How did you feel about that?

**42.** Were you able to bring things with you from home?

**43.** If yes, what?

**44.** What weren't you able to bring?

**45.** What was it like not having those things?

**46.** Can you describe how you were able to stay in your home? (Those narrators who were not expelled from their homes at that moment)

**47.** Eventually, everyone was in the enclave and these were very difficult times. I'm grateful for everything that you've shared so far and there are other situations that I'm going to be asking you about. While you're telling your story there may be times that I'm going to ask you to pause because I want to make sure that I'm understanding everything that you're saying. I will be listening carefully but might need to pause to clarify. Is that okay?

**48.** My next question is about your family's situation with food in the enclave. Can you tell me about that?

PROMPTS

**48a.** Were you missing any basic food groups?

**48b.** If not enough food, how did you manage?

**48c.** Did you or a family member have to search for food elsewhere?

**48d.** If yes, can you describe the situation?

**48e.** What was it like for you having to search for food?

**48f.** Can you describe any dangers that you encountered?

**48g.** Did you or your family members participate in getting food from airdrops?

**48h.** If yes, can you describe those experiences?

**48i.** Did you have some favorite foods in those MRE packets?

**48j.** How was food prepared?

**48k.** Can you describe any kitchen facilities that you had?

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<sup>2</sup>Srednje Podrinje, Kamenica, Cerska & Konjević Polje survivors questionnaire continues from question #134

**49.** During these difficult times for people in the enclave when food was such an issue, some people have described a sense of solidarity. Was that your experience or not?

**50.** We've talked about food, so now let's move to the situation with water. Access to drinking water and all other ways that water was needed was a challenge. Can you discuss how you and your family met these challenges with access to water for drinking, cooking, sanitation and hygiene?

PROMPTS

**50a.** What access did you have to water?

**50b.** Can you describe how you got water to drink?

**50c.** If you had to go to the water well, what was that experience like?

**50d.** What did you have to do to get water for cooking, washing clothes, and personal hygiene?

**51.** In addition to water there were other things that people needed. I'd like to ask you about some of those things. Can you describe what you had or didn't have for personal hygiene (for example, toothpaste, soap, toilet paper, feminine hygiene products)?

**52.** What was the situation like with clothing and shoes for you and your family?

**53.** In addition to the challenges we've already discussed, there were also so many people needing living space. Can you describe the conditions where you and your family lived during this time?

PROMPTS

**53a.** Where did you and your family live?

**53b.** How many people shared that space?

**53c.** Can you describe where everyone slept?

**53d.** Can you discuss if you had enough mattresses, blankets, and pillows?

**53e.** Were you able to keep warm?

**53f.** Were there adequate bathrooms for the number of people living together?

**53g.** Did you have access to electricity?

**53h.** Were you able to get light in your living space?

**54.** With little to no access to electricity and being primarily cut off from the outside world, were you able to get outside news and if so, how?

**55.** You were living in these difficult conditions under the siege. I'm wondering if you're comfortable answering some specific questions about how it all felt. In this time period, what were some of the most difficult things for you to deal with?

**56.** In this time period, were there any moments that made you think more positively?

**57.** If yes, can you describe what that was?



**58.** During this time, what did you miss most of all?

**59.** One of the difficult conditions under the siege was dealing with the shelling. It was hard for everybody. If you're comfortable doing so, can you describe the impact of the shelling on you and your family?

PROMPTS

**59a.** Where did you hide?

**59b.** Were you or any family members wounded?

**59c.** If yes, can you describe what happened?

**59d.** If yes, what was that like for you?

**59e.** Have you witnessed crimes such as arson and destruction of cultural heritage, etc.?

**59f.** During this period, was anyone that you knew killed?

**59g.** If yes, who was it and what were the circumstances?

**60.** Can you describe what all that was like for you?

**61.** Things were so hard and then in March of 1993 the UN Commander for Bosnia, Philippe Morillon, arrived in Srebrenica and promised that you would be protected by the UN. What do you remember about that?

PROMPTS

**61a.** Were you at the post office to hear him say this?

**61b.** (If no) How did you hear about it?

**61c.** (If yes) Can you describe what happened?

**61d.** What was your reaction to this event?

**62.** As a result of Morillon's promise, food convoys started arriving in Srebrenica. Can you describe what this situation was like for you and your family?

PROMPTS

**62a.** Did you receive any of that food?

**62b.** If yes, can you describe what you received?

**62c.** Can you describe the amount that you received?

**62d.** Can you discuss whether or not you received all food necessities?

**63.** As the convoys began to bring food, the process of deporting some civilians to Tuzla began. If this impacted you and your family can you describe what happened?<sup>3</sup>

PROMPTS

**63a.** If nobody evacuated, how was that decision made?

**63b.** Were any of your family members evacuated?

**63c.** If yes, who?

**63d.** What was that like for you having them leave?

**63e.** What was it like living in the enclave without them?

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<sup>3</sup>The questionnaire for the category of survivors who left Srebrenica in March/April in 1993 continues from question #134

**64.** Another event happened later in April that everyone who was living in the enclave remembers. I'm talking about the massacre at the playground. This is another difficult situation to discuss but if you're willing to do so could you describe your experience connected to this event?

PROMPTS

**64a.** Where were you when this happened?

**64b.** Can you describe your experience?

**64c.** Were any of your friends or family wounded or killed at the playground?

**64d.** If yes, can you describe what that was like for you?

**65.** Four days after the playground massacre the UN Security Council passed a Resolution formally designating Srebrenica as a "Safe Area". Can you discuss what this was like when you heard about it?

**66.** Two days later, the Canadian UNPROFOR battalion arrived in Srebrenica. Can you discuss any changes that you noticed after Srebrenica became a "Safe Area"?

PROMPTS

**66a.** What was your reaction to their arrival?

**66b.** Did you have any interaction with the Canadian UN in Srebrenica?

**66c.** If yes, what did that look like for you?

**67.** In 1994, schools reopened. How did that impact you?

PROMPTS

**67a.** Did you return to school?

**67b.** If no, why not?

**67c.** What was that like for you to stay out of school?

**67d.** If yes, what was that like for you?

**67e.** What was the situation with school supplies?

**67f.** What did you do for clothing and shoes?

**68.** Is there anything else that you'd like to share about this school experience?

[If the narrator had school-age children ask the following question]

**69.** When schools reopened, what happened with your children going back to school?

PROMPTS

**69a.** If they didn't go back, why not?

**69b.** What was that like for you when they stayed out of school?

**69c.** If they did go back, what was that like for you?

**69d.** Were you able to provide them with school supplies?

**69e.** Were you able to provide them with clothing and shoes?

**70.** While in Srebrenica, many people tried to be in touch with those on the outside. What was your experience with that?

PROMPTS

**70a.** Were you in touch with people who lived outside of Srebrenica?

**70b.** If no, what was that like for you?

**70c.** If yes, who?

**70d.** What was that like for you?

**71.** Is there any other specific situation that you'd like to share?

**72.** Many people have shared that they got sick or didn't have the medications that they needed. What was this experience like for you and your family members?

PROMPTS

**72a.** Did you and your family have the medications that you needed during the war?

**72b.** If no, what did you do?

**72c.** Did you and your family ever get sick during the war?

**72d.** If yes, did you get medical care?

**72e.** Did you ever go to the Srebrenica war hospital?

**72f.** What was it like for you at the hospital?

**72g.** Were you or your family members wounded?

**72h.** If yes, did you get medical care for your wound(s)?

**72i.** What was it like for you?

**73.** As you know, in February 1994 the Dutch replaced the Canadian UN battalion. Can you describe any interaction that you or your family members had with the Dutch UN in Srebrenica?

**74.** Did you notice any differences between the Canadian and the Dutch battalions?

**75.** If yes, what did you notice?

**76.** During the time that the UN was in Srebrenica, it became possible to think about socializing. I'd like to ask you about that if you agree. Can you describe how you spent your free time during this period?

**77.** During this time, though still difficult, were there any situations where you could be happy for a moment, or not?

**78.** If yes, could you share one of those situations?

- 79.** Was there anything that you can remember that helped you cope with everyday life?
- 80.** If yes, can you explain what that was?
- 81.** Is there anything you can remember that you hoped for during this time, or not?
- 82.** Is there anything that we haven't talked about that happened before the fall of Srebrenica that you would like to share?
- 83.** In the spring of 1995 things started to deteriorate in Srebrenica. What was happening to you and your family during that time?
- PROMPTS
- 83a.** Did you notice any changes happening during that time?
- 83b.** If yes, what did you notice?
- 83c.** Where were you when the first attacks on Srebrenica occurred?
- 84.** Can you describe how you were feeling?
- 85.** What were the reactions of people around you?<sup>4</sup>
- 86.** Before the fall of Srebrenica people started fleeing. I'd like to ask you some questions about that if you are comfortable. As hard as it might be to talk about, can you describe what happened to you and your family?
- PROMPTS
- 86a.** Can you describe what was happening starting on July 10th?
- 86b.** Can you describe your personal experiences and those of your family on July 11?
- 86c.** Did you have to part from family members or friends?
- 86d.** (If yes) What happened?
- 86e.** (If yes) What was that experience like for you?
- 87.** When you fled Srebrenica, who was with you?
- 88.** Where did you go?<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>The questionnaire for the category of survivors who left Srebrenica before July 1995 continues from question #134.

<sup>5</sup>The questionnaire for the category of Death March continues from question #109

**89.** You were in an unthinkable situation and decided that your best decision was to go to Potočari even though you didn't know for sure what that would be like. As hard as it might be to talk about, if you're comfortable can you describe your journey from Srebrenica to Potočari?

PROMPTS

**89a.** Who were you with?

**89b.** What did you bring with you?

**89c.** Were you able to bring photographs and other important things?

**89d.** Were there things that you wish you could have brought with you?

**89e.** (If yes) What were those?

**89f.** On the journey to Potočari were there things that were dangerous?

**89g.** (If yes) Can you describe them?

**90.** Would you like to talk about anything else that happened on this journey that I didn't ask you about or you didn't get to tell me?

**91.** Can you describe what happened to you and your family when you got to Potočari?

PROMPTS

**91a.** Where did you stay while in Potočari?

**91b.** Did you have enough food and water for yourself and your family members?

**91c.** How did you get food and water?

**92.** Many people have shared that the first night was very difficult for them. What was the first night like for you and your family?

PROMPTS

**92a.** Were you able to sleep?

**92b.** Were you cold?

**93.** Do you remember anything else specifically that happened on that night that you'd like to share?

**94.** What was it like when the next day came?

PROMPTS

**94a.** Do you remember seeing Serb soldiers arriving in Potočari?

**94b.** (If yes) What was that like for you?

**94c.** If you recognized any of them, who did you recognize?

**94d.** Did you have any interactions with the Serb soldiers?

**94e.** (If yes) Can you describe what happened?

**95.** While you were in Potočari, did you interact with the Dutch soldiers?

**96.** (If yes) What was that like?

**97.** Can you describe what happened during the rest of your stay in Potočari?

PROMPTS

- 97a.** How long did you and your family stay in Potočari?
- 97b.** What were the circumstances?
- 97c.** Was anyone from your family separated?
- 97d.** (If yes) Who and can you describe what happened?
- 97e.** Can you remember how you were feeling when this was happening?
- 97f.** Did you see any friends or neighbors being separated?
- 97g.** (If yes), who and can you describe what happened?
- 97h.** Can you remember how you were feeling when you saw separations happening?

**98.** If you're comfortable talking about it, can you describe your journey from Potočari to the free territory?

PROMPTS

- 98a.** Did any soldiers or police get on your bus or truck?
- 98b.** (If yes) What happened?
- 98c.** Did they ask for money or gold?
- 98d.** Did you see any prisoners along the way (for example at Sandići, Kravica, Nova Kasaba)?
- 98e.** (If yes) Did you recognize anybody?
- 98f.** (If yes) Who?
- 98g.** (If yes) What was that like for you?

**99.** Would you like to talk about anything else that happened on your journey to the free territory that I didn't ask you about or you didn't get to tell me?

**100.** At some point you made it to Tišča and your vehicle stopped. If you're comfortable talking about that I'd like to ask you some questions. Can you describe what happened when you arrived?

PROMPTS

- 100a.** What's the first thing that you remember happening when you got out of the vehicle?
- 100b.** Was anyone from your family separated?
- 100c.** (If yes) Who and can you describe what happened?
- 100d.** Can you remember how you were feeling when this was happening?
- 100e.** Did you see any friends or neighbors being separated?
- 100f.** (If yes) Who and can you describe what happened?
- 100g.** Can you remember how you were feeling when you saw that happening?

**101.** Would you like to talk about anything else that happened that I didn't ask you about or you didn't get to tell me?

**102.** You eventually reached the free territory in Kladanj. Can you describe how you got there?

PROMPT

**102a.** How did you finally reach the free territory in Kladanj?

**103.** Do you remember how you felt once you reached Kladanj?

**104.** Where did you go after Kladanj and how did you get there?

**105.** Can you describe what happened once you got there?

PROMPTS

**105a.** Can you describe how you were feeling?

**105b.** What were the overall conditions where you were?

**105c.** Where did you sleep?

**105d.** How was food provided?

**105e.** If you needed to cook, what was that like?

**105f.** Where did you shower?

**105g.** Can you describe sanitation facilities?

**105h.** What were all of these conditions like for you and your family?

**106.** How were you feeling about the situation for you and your family?

**107.** At this point in time, you were waiting for news about other family members. Who were you waiting to hear about?

PROMPTS

**107a.** Can you describe how you tried to get information?

**107b.** Did other family members arrive while you were waiting?

**107c.** (If yes) Who was it?

**107d.** What were the circumstances?

**108.** What was this waiting like for you?<sup>6</sup>

[Questions continue for Death March survivors]

**109.** Would you be comfortable describing in more detail your journey from Srebrenica to the free territory? I'm grateful for anything you'd like to share. While you're telling your story there will be times that I'm going to ask you to pause because I want to make sure that I'm understanding everything that you're saying. I will be listening carefully but might to pause to clarify. Is that okay?

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<sup>6</sup>The questionnaire for the category of survivors who left Srebrenica for Potočari in July 1995 continues from question #134 #140



**110.** If you're comfortable let's start with the story of leaving Srebrenica and heading into the woods. Can you describe that experience leaving Srebrenica up to Kamenice Hill?

PROMPTS

**110a.** Can you remember why you made that choice to go through the woods?

**110b.** What did you bring with you?

**110c.** Were you able to bring photographs and other important things?

**110d.** Were there things that you wish you could have brought with you?

**110e.** (If yes) What were those?

**110f.** How long did you have to walk before you got to Jagličići/Šušnjari?

**110g.** What happened when you got there?

**110h.** How long did you stay there before you set off?

**110i.** Were you aware of the obstacles ahead of you?

**110j.** Along the way, were you separated from those you started out with?

**110k.** (If yes) What were the circumstances?

**110l.** (If yes) What was that like for you?

**110m.** Can you describe any attacks against the column?

**110n.** (If yes) Are you comfortable talking about how you felt?

**110o.** Did you see any wounded or dead people up to this point?

**110p.** (If yes) Are you comfortable talking about it?

**110q.** (If yes) What was that like for you?

**110r.** How did you feel then?

**111.** Would you like to talk about anything else that happened on this part of the journey that I didn't ask you about or you didn't get to tell me?

**112.** If you are willing, can you continue your story explaining what happened to you at Kamenica Hill?

PROMPTS

**112a.** What was it like being there?

**112b.** I know how difficult it is to talk about people being killed. Are you okay with me asking you about people who were killed in this ambush?

**112c.** (If yes) Was anyone you know killed there?

**112d.** (If yes) Who was that?

**112e.** (If yes) What was that like for you?

**113.** This was an unthinkable situation that you were in. Do you remember how you made sense of it?

**114.** Did you wonder if you would survive?

**115.** I know that many people surrendered along the way. Did you see anyone surrendering?



**116.** (If yes) Who was that?

**117.** What was that experience like for you?

**118.** Did you consider surrendering at any point?

**119.** (If no) Can you say why not?

**120.** (If yes) What was happening that made you consider it?

**121.** Would you like to talk about anything else that happened on this part of the journey that I didn't ask you about or you didn't get to tell me?

**122.** I'm assuming you were exhausted at that point. Can you talk about that?

**123.** Along with this level of exhaustion I assume you were also hungry, thirsty, and afraid. If you're comfortable discussing, what was happening for you psychologically?

PROMPTS

**123a.** What was happening psychologically with those around you?

**123b.** In spite of all that was happening, you kept walking. By the 3rd or 4th day, had you walked more during the day or night?

**123c.** If you had to walk during the night how did you see?

**124.** Would you like to talk about anything else that happened on this part of the journey that I didn't ask you about or you didn't get to tell me?

**125.** After the ambush where did you go and who was with you?

**126.** Would you be comfortable talking about your experiences from after the Kamenica Hill ambush until you reached the free territory?

PROMPTS

**126a.** How long did it take you to get to the free territory?

**126b.** What was it like for you?

**127.** Would you like to talk about anything else that happened on this journey that I didn't ask you about or you didn't get to tell me?

I'm grateful for everything that you have shared, and I want to make sure that I understood everything that you've said. Before you continue your story, I'd like to ask you a few more questions so that I understand all of the important details of your experience.



**128. FOOD**

- 128a.** Did you have enough food for such a long journey?
- 128b.** If you had some food, how often and what did you eat?
- 128c.** If you had some food, did you share it with others?
- 128d.** If you did not have any food, what did you do?
- 128e.** How did your situation with food make you feel?

**129. WATER**

- 129a.** Did you drink enough water?
- 129b.** (If yes) Describe how much you had and how did you get it?
- 129c.** (If not) Describe the situation?
- 129d.** (If not) What was that like for you?

**130. CLOTHING/FOOTWEAR**

- 130a.** Did you have adequate clothing and footwear?
- 130b.** (If not) Can you explain what the situation was like?

**131. SLEEPING**

- 131a.** If you did not get enough sleep, how did you handle it?

**132. CONCERNS ABOUT FAMILY**

- 132a.** Can you remember specific times along the way that you were wondering about your family?

**133. FEAR**

- 133a.** You've described a very traumatic journey which must have been scary. Are you comfortable talking about how fearful you were?

**PLACE TO STAY AND FAMILY REUNION**

**134.** You survived your unimaginable journey and made it to the free territory. I'm so grateful for your determination in sticking with telling your difficult story. Are you comfortable with me asking you some questions about what came next?

**135.** (If yes) How long did you stay where you initially arrived?

**136.** Can you describe what happened once you left there?

PROMPT

- 136a.** Where did you move?
- 136b.** Did you move just once or several times?
- 136c.** What were your living conditions like in these places?

**137.** What was it like for you having to move?

**138.** What steps did you take to rebuild your life at that time?

**139.** You were among those fortunate to make it to the free territory but you didn't yet know who else in your family might have survived. If you're willing, can you talk about what the search for your family members looked like?

PROMPT

**139a.** If you reunited with your family, who was there and who wasn't there?

**139b.** How did the reunion happen?

**139c.** What was this like for you and your family members?

**140.** Would you like to talk about anything else regarding this part of your life that I didn't ask you about or you didn't get to tell me?

**141.** During this time, the Dayton Agreement was signed which officially ended the war. Do you remember how you heard about this and what your reaction was to this news?

**142.** As hard as this is to discuss, several years after Dayton, in 1998 the first mass graves were discovered and many more were found later. Thousands of human remains were found. I'm wondering if I can ask you some questions about your experiences with this.

**143.** We learned earlier from the pre-interview that you lost [names and relationship known from pre-interview]. Is that correct? Is there anybody else?

[Questions #144-149 should be asked of those who lost family members]

[Skip to question #157 for those who did NOT lose family members]

**144.** After all you survived you still had another painful process in front of you when DNA identification began. Did you or your family members give blood samples for the official DNA identification?

**145.** (If not) Can you remember why not?

**146.** (If yes) What was that process like for you?

**147.** While waiting to see if your loved ones would be identified, it was a time of uncertainty, anticipation, dread, and it wasn't easy to wait while wondering how long it would take. If you're willing, I'd like to ask you some more questions about your situation, starting with have your loved ones been identified?

**148.** (If not) What is that like for you to still be waiting?

**149.** (If yes) Can you describe the process of how you found out?

PROMPTS

**149a.** How did you find out that they had died?

**149b.** Did you go through the official identification process in Tuzla?

**149c.** Do you know the circumstances of their death?

**149d.** (If yes) How did you find out?

**149e.** Who supported you during this time?

[Question for those whose family members were identified]

**150.** Can you remember how you felt when you learned of their fate?

[Continue to ask 151-156 for those who lost family members]

**151.** You've talked about the very difficult details of your loved ones who are no longer here. And we know that they are so much more than their names and the stories of their death. So if you're comfortable talking more about them, I'd like to ask you some questions to be sure to honor their memory. Can you describe what he/ she/they looked like?

**152.** What was his/her/their personality like?

**153.** What did you like the most about him/her/them?

**154.** What are your favourite memories of him/her/them?

**155.** What do you miss the most about him/her/them?

**156.** How do you most want him/her/them to be remembered?

[Ask the remaining questions to everyone]

**157.** You survived the unthinkable, yet you had the difficult task of starting your life over and putting the pieces back together. Would you be comfortable describing what your life has been like since the end of the war?

PROMPTS

**157a.** How did you secure money for you and your family's needs?

**157b.** Did you return to where you lived before the war?

**157c.** (If not) Is there a reason you didn't go back?

**157d.** What was it like to not return home?

**157e.** (If yes) Can you describe the process of returning?

**157f.** Can you describe what it's like for you to be back?

**157g.** (If age-appropriate) Did you continue your education?

**158.** You've talked a lot about your life and events that were traumatic, and you've described what those events were like for you. I'm wondering if you would feel comfortable talking about any psychological difficulties that you might still feel now?

PROMPTS

**158a.** (If yes) Do you have strategies that you use to cope?

**158b.** At any point have you had access to psychological services?

**158c.** (If no) Would you have wanted this access?

**158d.** (If yes) Did you choose to use these services?

**158e.** (If no) Can you discuss why not?

**158f.** (If yes) How helpful was it to you?

**159.** In spite of all difficulties you have encountered and dealt with, you are here today after so many years telling your story about all that you survived, which takes a lot of courage and resilience. In closing, would you be willing to answer just a few more questions?

**160.** When you think about your life today, how would you describe it?

**161.** Is there anything else that you'd like to add that I didn't ask you about or you didn't get to tell me?

**162.** In closing do you want to perhaps share a message with those who will learn from your story?

I want to thank you for taking the time to share your important story today.

# ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

## (Children's Questionnaire)

### DOB 1982-1987

Production:  
Interview Number:  
Narrator / Interviewee:  
Date of birth:  
Birthplace:  
Interviewer:  
Interview Date:  
Interview Location:

Good afternoon, \_\_\_\_\_, welcome to the oral history interview that will be archived in Srebrenica Memorial Center.

**1.** What we're going to do today is ask you questions about your life experience so that you can tell your story. I know that this might be difficult at times and I'm grateful for anything you'd like to share. You don't need to talk about anything that is too uncomfortable for you and please feel free to add anything that we might not ask about. While you're telling your story there will be times that I'm going to ask you to pause because I want to make sure that I'm understanding everything that you're saying. I will be listening carefully but might pause to clarify. Is that okay? Let's get started.

**2.** Could you briefly introduce yourself?

PROMPTS

**2a.** Where were you born and when?

**2b.** Could you describe the place where you were born?

**3.** Now I'd like to ask you some questions about your family when you were growing up. What was your life like as a family?

PROMPTS

**3a.** Who was in your family?

**3b.** Can you tell me their names?

**3c.** What did your family do for a living?

**4.** Now I'd like to ask you a few specific questions about your upbringing in your family if you agree. Can you tell me what it meant in your family to be a good person?

PROMPTS

How were you taught to treat:

- 4a.** Your neighbors?
- 4b.** Older people?
- 4c.** People of different ethnicities?
- 4d.** People of different religions?
- 4e.** People with disabilities?
- 4f.** People who had less than you?
- 4g.** People who were bullied?
- 4h.** Animals?

**5.** We've talked some about your family and now I'd like to hear about your experiences in primary school if you agree. What was school like for you?

PROMPTS

- 5a.** Would you say that you liked school more than you disliked it or the opposite?
- 5b.** What were some of your favourite school subjects?
- 5c.** Were there school events that you participated in?
- 5d.** (If yes) What was it like for you to participate in those events?
- 5e.** How did you get to and from school?
- 5f.** On school days, how did you eat?

**6.** I appreciate you talking about your school experiences. I have a couple of very specific questions I'd like to ask you. In your subjects at school, do you remember learning anything about WWII?

**7.** In addition to what you learned at school, can you remember any stories that your family told you about WWII?

**8.** Is there anything else about the school that you'd like to share?

**9.** Now that I have an understanding of what school was like for you, I'd like to talk about what it was like when you got home from school if that's okay. When the school day ended, many people had chores and homework. Can you tell me what this looked like in your home?

PROMPTS

- 9a.** What was it like when you returned home from school?
- 9b.** Please describe what it was like doing your homework and if anyone helped you.
- 9c.** In addition to your school obligations, what other chores did you have?
- 9d.** How old were you when those chores started?
- 9e.** If you remember, can you describe which chores were hard and which were easy?

**10.** You've talked about your chores and homework. I'm curious about what else you did in your spare time. Can you tell me about that?

PROMPTS

**10a.** Did you have favorite games you played?

**10b.** Who did you play with?

**10c.** Did you have any hobbies?

**11.** When you think about all of this are there any particularly happy memories that stand out?

**12.** Are you comfortable talking about any sad memories that you might have?

**13.** Earlier you told me that you finished primary school. I'd be interested in knowing details about your further education if you are comfortable talking about that?

**14.** You've talked about your family, school, and chores, but what we haven't yet talked about is the role of religion and ethnicity. I'd like to ask you some questions about that if you agree. Can you describe if and how religion played a role in your family?

PROMPTS

**14a.** Was your family religious?

**14b.** Did you attend religious lectures as a child?

**15.** When you were growing up, what were relationships like between ethnicities?

PROMPTS

**15a.** If people of other ethnicities live nearby, which ethnicities were they?

**15b.** Were any of your friends or classmates a different ethnicity than you?  
(If yes) What ethnicities were they?

**15c.** (If yes) Can you describe your relationships with these friends and classmates?

**16.** It may be hard to talk about the war starting but if you agree, I'd like to ask you about that. I know that you were \_\_\_\_\_ years old when the war started. Do you remember what happened to you and your family during that time?

PROMPTS

**16a.** When the war started did you and your family have a sufficient amount of food?

**16b.** How about clothing and shoes?

**16c.** How about other life necessities?

**16d.** What were some of the ways were you exposed to danger once the war started?

**17.** Do you remember what it was like for you during this time?



**18.** This next part is very hard to talk about. As the war went on, people began to die. Are you comfortable with me asking you some questions about that? (If yes) If you did know anyone who died during 1992 or 93, could you tell me who they were and what happened?

PROMPTS

**18a.** Where were you when they died?

**18b.** Can you describe what that was like for you?

**19.** During this difficult time when people were starting to die, you were also experiencing other serious difficulties, such as shortages of things that were vital. Again, this might be hard to talk about but, if you're comfortable doing so, could you tell me what the situation was like for you and your family concerning food and other necessities?

PROMPT

**19a.** What were the ways that you acquired food and other necessities during this time?

**20.** Can you remember what this time was like for you and your family?

**21.** At the same time, many people faced the difficult experience of being expelled from their homes and becoming refugees. If that happened to you, would you be willing to talk about the circumstances? [If no, skip to #29]

PROMPTS

**21a.** Can you describe what happened and where you went?

**21b.** If you're comfortable doing so can you talk about what that felt like?

**21c.** If you remember the hardest part of leaving home, what was it?

**21d.** Can you describe how you got settled?

**21e.** Did anyone help you? If so, what did they do?

**21f.** If someone helped (or not), how did you feel about that?

**22.** Did you keep livestock or other animals?

**23.** (If yes) What happened to them when you had to leave?

**24.** How did you feel about that?

**25.** Were you able to bring things with you from home?

**26.** (If yes) What were they?

**27.** What weren't you able to bring?

**28.** What was it like not having those things?

**29.** Can you describe how you were able to stay in your home?

**30.** Eventually, everyone was in the enclave and these were very difficult times. I'm grateful for everything that you've shared so far and there are other situations that I'm going to be asking you about. While you're telling your story there may be times that I'm going to ask you to pause because I want to make sure that I'm understanding everything that you're saying. I will be listening carefully but might need to pause to clarify. Is that okay?

**31.** My next question is about your family's situation with food in the enclave. Can you tell me about that?

**32.** We've talked about food, so now let's move to the situation with water. Access to drinking water and all other ways that water was needed was a challenge. Can you discuss how you and your family met these challenges with access to water for drinking, cooking, sanitation, and hygiene?

**33.** In addition to water, there were other things that people needed. I'd like to ask you about some of those things. Can you describe what you had or didn't have for personal hygiene (for example, toothpaste, soap, toilet paper, feminine hygiene products)?

**34.** What was the situation like with clothing and shoes for you and your family?

**35.** In addition to the challenges we've already discussed, there were also so many people needing living space. Can you describe the conditions where you and your family lived during this time?

**36.** One of the difficult conditions under the siege was dealing with shelling. It was hard for everybody. If you're comfortable doing so, can you describe the impact of the shelling on you and your family?

**37.** Can you describe what all that was like for you?

**38.** Another event happened later in April that everyone who was living in the enclave remembers. I'm talking about the massacre at the playground. This is another difficult situation to discuss but if you're willing to do so could you describe your experience connected to this event?

PROMPTS

**38a.** Where were you when this happened?

**38b.** Can you describe your experience?

**38c.** Were any of your friends or family wounded or killed at the playground?

**38d.** (If yes) Can you describe what that was like for you?

**39.** Shortly after the playground massacre, Srebrenica was designated a UN “Safe Area” and the UN battalion arrived in Srebrenica. Do you remember that happening? If yes, can you describe what happened?

**40.** At some point after the UN arrived, schools reopened. How did that impact you?

**41.** Was school different before the war compared to during the war?

**42.** Many people have shared that they got sick or didn’t have the medications that they needed. If you remember what this experience was like for you and your family members, can you describe it?

PROMPTS

**42a.** Did you and your family have the medications that you needed during the war?

**42b.** (If no) What did you do?

**42c.** Did you and your family ever get sick during the war?

**42d.** (If yes) Did you get medical care?

**42e.** Did you ever go to the Srebrenica war hospital?

**42f.** What was it like for you at the hospital?

**42g.** Were you or your family members wounded?

**42i.** (If yes) Did you get medical care for your wound(s)?

**42j.** What was it like for you?

**43.** During the time that the UN was in Srebrenica, it became possible to think about playing and socializing. I’d like to ask you about that if you agree. If you remember how you spent your free time during this period can you describe it?

**44.** Is there anything that we haven’t talked about that happened before the fall of Srebrenica that you would like to share?

**45.** In the spring of 1995, things started to deteriorate in Srebrenica. If you remember what was happening to you and your family during that time can you describe it?

PROMPTS

**45a.** Did you notice any changes happening during that time?

**45b.** If yes, what did you notice?

**45d.** If you remember, where were you when the first attacks on Srebrenica occurred?

**46.** Can you describe how you were feeling?

**47.** What were the reactions of people around you?

**48.** Before the fall of Srebrenica, people started fleeing. I'd like to ask you some questions about that if you are comfortable. As hard as it might be to talk about, can you describe what happened to you and your family if you remember?

PROMPTS

**48a.** Can you describe what was happening starting on July 10th?

**48b.** Can you describe your personal experiences and those of your family on July 11?

**48c.** Did you have to part from family members or friends?

**48d.** (If yes) What happened?

**48e.** (If yes) What was that experience like for you?

**49.** When you fled Srebrenica, who did you go with?

**50.** This was an unthinkable situation and your family decided that your best decision was to go to Potočari, even though you didn't know for sure what that would be like. As hard as it might be to talk about, if you remember and if you're comfortable can you describe your journey from Srebrenica to Potočari?

PROMPTS

**50a.** What did you bring with you?

**50b.** Were you able to bring photographs and other important things?

**50c.** Were there things that you wish you could have brought with you?

**50d.** (If yes) What were those?

**50e.** On the journey to Potočari were there things that were dangerous or scary?

**50f.** (If yes) Can you describe them?

**51.** Would you like to talk about anything else that happened on this journey that I didn't ask you about or that you didn't get to tell me?

**52.** If you remember, can you describe what happened to you and your family when you got to Potočari?

PROMPTS

**52a.** Where did you stay while in Potočari?

**52b.** Did you have enough food and water for yourself and your family members?

**52c.** How did you get food and water?

**53.** Many people have shared that nights were very difficult for them. If you remember, what were the nights like for you and your family?

PROMPTS

**53a.** Were you able to sleep?

**53b.** Were you cold?

**54.** Do you remember anything else specifically that happened during the nights that you'd like to share?

- 55.** What was it like in the mornings?
- 56.** If you remember, can you describe what happened during the rest of your stay in Potočari?
- 57.** There was such chaos in Potočari. If you are comfortable talking about it can you describe how all of this felt for you?
- 58.** If you're comfortable talking about it and if you remember, can you describe your journey from Potočari to the free territory?
- 59.** Would you like to talk about anything else that happened on your journey to the free territory that I didn't ask you about or that you didn't get to tell me?
- 60.** At some point, you made it close to the free territory and your vehicle stopped. If you're comfortable talking about that I'd like to ask you some questions. If you remember, can you describe what happened when you arrived?
- 61.** Would you like to talk about anything else that happened that I didn't ask you about or you didn't get to tell me?
- 62.** You eventually reached the free territory in Kladanj. Do you remember that? If yes, can you describe how you got there?
- 63.** What happened after you left Kladanj? Where did you go?
- 64.** You survived this unimaginable journey and made it to the free territory. I'm so grateful for your determination in sticking with telling your difficult story. Are you comfortable with me asking you some questions about what came next?
- 65.** Where did you and your family live?
- 66.** Who were you living with?
- 67.** If you remember, what was it like adjusting to a new place?
- 68.** Do you remember if you had everything that you needed? If not, what was missing?
- 69.** Do you remember if people from your family were missing? If so, who?
- 70.** (If yes) Do you remember what that was like for you and your family and if so, are you comfortable talking about it?

**71.** Do you remember when the Dayton Peace Agreement was signed which officially ended the war?

**72.** (If yes) Do you remember how you and your family felt?

**73.** We learned earlier from the pre-interview that you lost (names and relationships from pre-interview). Is that correct? Was there anybody else?

(Next questions should be asked of those who lost family members #74 - 76.)  
(If not, go to question 84.)

**74.** Do you remember if your family participated in the DNA identification process? (If so) Can you describe what happened?

**75.** Were any of your missing family members identified? (If so) Who?

**76.** Can you remember how you felt when you learned of their fate?

**77.** You've talked about the very difficult details of your loved ones who are no longer here. And we know that they are so much more than their names and the stories of their death. So if you're comfortable talking more about them, I'd like to ask you some questions to be sure to honor their memory. Can you describe what he/she/they looked like?

**78.** Can you describe what he/she/they looked like?

**79.** What was his/her/their personality like?

**80.** What did you like the most about him/her/them?

**81.** What are your favourite memories of him/her/them?

**82.** What do you miss the most about him/her/them?

**83.** How do you most want him/her/them to be remembered?

**84.** You survived the unthinkable, yet you had the difficult task of starting your life over and putting the pieces back together. Would you be comfortable describing what your life has been like since the end of the war?

**85.** You've talked a lot about your life and events that were traumatic and you've described what those events were like for you. I'm wondering if you would feel comfortable talking about any psychological difficulties that you might still feel now?

PROMPTS

**85a.** (If yes) Do you have strategies that you use to cope?

**85b.** At any point have you had access to psychological services?

**85c.** (If no) Would you have wanted this access?

**85d.** (If yes) Did you choose to use these services?

**85e.** (If no) Can you discuss why not?

**85f.** (If yes) How helpful was it to you?

**86.** In spite of all difficulties you have encountered and dealt with, you are here today after so many years telling your story about all that you survived which takes a lot of courage and resilience. In closing, would you be willing to answer just a few more questions? When you think about your life today, how would you describe it?

**87.** Is there anything else that you'd like to add that I didn't ask you about or that you didn't get to tell me?

**88.** In closing do you want to perhaps share a message with those who will learn from your story?

I want to thank you for taking the time to share your important story today.

## AFTER THE INTERVIEW

Once the interview is finished, the interviewer offers to sit with the narrator to talk and have refreshments. During this time, the interviewer assesses the narrator's well-being and takes the necessary steps to address any issues that are present. The interviewer also makes sure that the logistics are in order for the narrator to return home and walks them to their transportation.

The next day the interviewer calls the narrator to check on their well-being and to answer any questions that they might have.

### Processing the Interview Materials

Prior to processing the interview materials, those involved sign a confidentiality agreement.

## **Confidentiality Agreement Transcribers, Translators, & Editors**

### **STATEMENT ON CONFIDENTIALITY OF INFORMATION**

As a volunteer of the Srebrenica Memorial Center (SMC) I am aware that the information that I am authorized to transcribe/translate/edit, for the purposes of the Oral History Project, is confidential.

I will not reveal the personal information of the narrators that becomes available to me at any time during my work on this project or make it available in any other way to third parties who are not authorized by SMC. I will take all necessary measures to protect the confidentiality of information including storing it securely on the computer.

I agree to follow all SMC protocols and other instructions connected with this project.

I will be held responsible for any ethical or legal breaches due to any negligence on my part and will accept any subsequent consequences.

This Statement is given solely for the purpose of protecting the Srebrenica Memorial Center and the Oral History project narrators from unauthorized use of confidential information.

I have read this Statement in its entirety and agree to abide by these rules of confidentiality.

Signature of volunteer

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Printed name of volunteer

---

Date

---



After the completion of the interview, all files and the quality of video and sound are reviewed by the technology crew. If found to be satisfactory, the interview is labeled, copied, backed up, and stored in accordance with the established protocols.

The interview audio is then transcribed into Bosnian by a member of a qualified team of transcribers. It is then validated by a separate transcriber who checks the transcript against the audio, following the oral history project's rules of transcription.

The initial transcriber writes a one-page summary of the interview referencing the oral history project summary outline.

Once the interview is transcribed, validated and summarized, it is added to the narrator's electronic case file.

The transcript is then translated into English and other languages by a member of a qualified team of translators. The translation is then edited by a native speaker and added to the narrator's electronic case file.

Video files are then prepared for subtitling in English and other languages. A qualified team of subtitlers creates SRT files for each video which is then validated by another team member. The SRT file is then added to the narrator's electronic case file.

The final phase of processing the interview materials is Indexing. This step is necessary for these interviews to be accessible for research purposes based on topics, experiences, locations, individuals, and other themes. Indexing is done by a member of a qualified team of indexers.

Completed files are available to and may be shared by SMC employees for research and educational purposes through an application and approval process.

Detailed information about all of the above processes can be found in the Oral History Project Training Manual.





*"The methodology is carefully designed and faithfully reflects the seriousness and professionalism of the project, as well as the Srebrenica Memorial Center's dedication to expert, scientific, social, and higher goals. It will serve as an indispensable guide for all future participants in similar projects."*

Mirsad Kunić, PhD

*"This protocol you are reading includes all the necessary aspects, was designed through international cooperation, and is the first of its kind in the former Yugoslavia. It was reviewed by academics from within Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as the international community. "*

Emir Suljagić, PhD



MEMORIAL  
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