

ACR 150

Prof. Barnes

Student name

Date

Oral History Project

For my oral project I will be interviewing my Dad and Mom about their experiences in elementary school back in the 1970's in Albania under the communism regime and their literacy life.

Q: What the first and most important book were you assigned to read in elementary school? The first and most important book back in the mid - late 1970's in Albania was called "Abetare". In English it is called the ACB-BOOK. This book would contain all the alphabetic letters in the first page where there would be a figure for each letter and under each figure it would have the upper and lower case letters. There would be a figure of an "Apple" for example and under it there would be the upper and lower case of the first letter the name of the figure started with which is A and a etc. This would be a learning by vision technique. The Albanian alphabet is an alphabet of 36 letters. You would ask why 36 and what are those special letters. Those special letters would be (ç), (dh), (ë), (gj), (ll), (nj),(rr), (sh), (th), (xh) and (zh). Those combinations of letters are considered as one single letter in the Albanian alphabet. The Albanian alphabet does not include the letter "W".

Q: How did you learn how to read? One way of learning how to read was by learning the letters of the alphabet one by one on a daily basis. Since we had special letters in the alphabet we would have to learn the sound of them first by reading it after the teacher. In a day there would be one letter to learn like for example one of the letters would be the letter "ç". Using the Abetare, there would be figures with objects whose name would start with that letter. The teacher would write the letter on the blackboard with chalk. The teacher would have a pointer on his hand while all the students would be paying attention while it is being said loudly. The teacher would read the letter out loud in front of the class while the students all together would repeat it after him. The teacher would go to each and every student and make them say it so the teacher would know that they learned it and after that the students would have to get up in front of the class and say it out loud while everyone repeated after. As everyone I believe when little, we say things not knowing how to write them, the students would be able to learn daily the letters and the sound of them and by that they would put letters together and from that come the words. This process and procedure of learning from the professor and making the students repeat or stand in front of class to say things was not just for letters but later on for words too

and if you did not learn them there would be disciplinary actions taken by the professor towards the students which we'll be talking about later on. In Albania back then the teaching system was very but very strong, the teachers would have to put an outstanding effort and attention on each and every student.

Q: How did you learn how to write? The teaching system was very strict in Albania. The type of writing back then that was strictly and only used was modern cursive handwriting. The way or one of the ways that was used back to to teach the students how to read was that there would be special notebooks. Those special notebooks would have 144 pages. A letter to learn how to write would take 4 pages to learn. On top left corner in the first line there would be the example of the letter "A" upper case, this letter was an example as a starter on how the letter looks and how it should be written and the first 4-5 lines would be the same letter but in a broken line so the students would have to follow with a pen (not pencil) the broken lines in case to learn how to write it. Not pencil because when the next day the students would bring the notebook to the class the teacher would be able to see the mistakes because if it was a pencil they would be able to correct it while using an eraser. This way the teacher would see if the student is actually learning or/if the student needs more attention. The professor would grab the students hands and show them how to hold the pen the right way. Right after while the student was holding the pen the teacher would grab their hand and drag it through the lines or on a blank page to teach the student how to write. This wasn't just at school, this was at home too where the parents would do the same thing as the professor. After the homework was submitted the teacher would always bring each and every one of the students in front of the class in front of the blackboard and would provide them with chalk and a pointer. The students would have to write the letter on the blackboard with the chalk and then use the pointer to show the class the upper and lower case of the letter while reading it out loud.

Q: How was it going to school back then? Here I will be going into details where the discipline was a huge deal. I believe this is, if not the strongest, one of the strongest discipline actions that were ever taken on students so they could be well disciplined and be as respectful as possible. The teachers considered as an actual "second parent" to the students under the rule of communism. It did not matter even if their kid was in the same classroom, they would be treated the same as everyone. Going to school back then was very different but very different as Albania was under the control of communism regime. Students wouldn't dare to be late for class. They would always have to be on point. No excuses when it came to daily homeworks and exercises provided by the teacher. There are two facts that drove me crazy when my parents told me. Back then you would have to go in front of the teacher everyday or

every other day or the teacher would come up to your table to check if your nails were cut or not and if they weren't they would use a ruler and physically hit either the palm or the back of your hand with it as a punishment. Another one is that the teacher would come up to your desk and check your hair with a comb or with their finger to see if you were carrying "Lice" on your hair (search the word up if you'd like to know more). Being clean by cutting your nails and not having lice on your hair and also not obeying were two of the top disciplinary actions taken. As I said before teachers were considered as actual second parents to the students where they had the chance to take physical actions towards the kids like for example pull their ear, pull the hair right around the ear, slap them and hit them with rulers on the back and palm of their hands to a "limit" of course as of they were out of their parents sight if they did not obey the rules or in case they were disrespectful. Another thing was that everytime the teacher/principal would enter the room in sign of respect everyone would have to stand up until the teacher/principal says to sit down. (some of the disciplinary actions and respect signs towards the teachers and the principal in Albania also worked for me too, it was about 15-16 years ago which I believe still continues)

Q: How was your overall experience with the teachers and the school? The overall experience with the teachers and the school was good. There were ups and downs of course since back then people were really poor. Both of my parents back then gladly were able to finish highschool which back then in Albania was a big deal. Since most of the people were poor with big families meaning a lot of kids they had to provide food and clothes for everyone who was not able to send their kids to college. College was a really big step back in the 1970's in Albania where right after high school the communist party would find a job for everyone. Thankfully my parents never had any out of ordinary disciplinary actions taken towards them since they were always well disciplined other than for example if they've done something wrong on the homework or have been late to class.

The reflection transcript.

It's amazing to know and learn how the schooling system was running in Albania under the communism regime in the 1970's. The schooling system was very strict when it came to the kids learning how to read and write their motherland language. The techniques of learning were way different from now on reading and writing. I believe that discipline for the kids was one of the biggest priorities which they put a big importance on when it came to it and that was why it was taken very seriously. I believe the attention the teachers were putting on the kids when it came to learning was insane, which I find very positive. I believe that is the best way a student would learn what they had to learn. As I mentioned before teachers were the second parents to the kids as of when they were out of their parents sight

which I also find positive. There's one thing I might feel some type of way about is when the teachers were punishing the kids just so they could get disciplined and when I compare all of this to myself right now totally different and of course it makes sense because it is about over 40 years ago and the country under the communism regime and that's how things would work. Teachers are not encouraging at all now compared to back then. Also another thing I sadly find very different when it comes to comparing now and back then is that I believe most or some of the kids nowadays get almost no discipline at all. Overall it was great learning new stuff, this project had me learning new things which I actually did not know and also got me surprised.