

MODELS OF ACHIEVEMENT

EP3 SEG 1 TANJA

ANNETTE SHUN WAH: Hi, I'm Annette Shun Wah, welcome to Models of Achievement. In this series we explore the successes and aspirations of extraordinary Australians who have discovered their own inspirational paths through university study. These are personal stories from people of very diverse backgrounds, current students and recent graduates revealing how education has transformed their lives. For many people around the world war means an uncertain future. From war-torn Bosnia, Tanja and her family fled to Australia to escape the bloodshed in their homeland for a life in suburban Sydney.

TANJA: My name is Tanja and this is my story. I grew in Bosnia and Herzegovina in Visoko, it's near Sarajevo which is the capital of Bosnia. We grew up there until 1992.

When the war came in Bosnia obviously it was really sudden, we didn't know what was happening so my dad actually had to leave straight away and fight. So it was just me and my two sisters and my mum as well.

So straight away went back to my grandparents to actually hide. There were soldiers coming. We went to this cellar and we just had to hide there so hoping they will pass the house, they won't see us. They actually found us which was really sad. So we actually had to get out of the cellar. My mum was devastated because what's going to happen to us?

They beat up my grandfather so my mum decided we really have to leave now because otherwise who knows what's going to happen to us, you just don't know. Luckily the neighbours, even though they were Bosnian Muslim, they actually helped us go through the border.

But the thing is we actually had to walk through this really tall grass. When we're in the grass there were soldiers coming and we actually saw them and my mum is like okay, you have to go down and we just have to be really quiet and they passed us. It

was just the most scariest experience.

And then went to the neighbour and he helped us come and go through the border and get to a safer place and that's where we came to the village and we had to be allowed pretty much our own life where we actually had to have cows with us to get us milk, to get us food, everything from scratch, you had no money, you had no clothes, nothing because you just had to run, there was no time to pack things and get - we don't even have photos.

The life wasn't the best because we didn't have as much resources, as much schools and my parents just thought this is not the life for my daughters and they just want to make it a bit better. They - my dad decided to go to Australia just because that's his dream, so it's like you know what, I'm going to choose, I'm going to America, I'm going to go to Australia. My mum used to call embassy every single Wednesday and ask what's happening with our application and we failed three times. It wasn't kind of smooth ride where you put in application and they say "Yeah, not a problem." It's a lot of hard work and dedication from the families. When, you know, where you have to travel to Belgrade and go to the embassy and talk to them and do this conversation, do the health assessments and all those things. So it wasn't a smooth ride really.

So we came in 2001. We chose Liverpool because we had a friend, we stayed with him for like nine days just to settle down, see where we go and luckily there was a Serbian community already. So my parents felt at ease just that you're not as lost because it's a new language, new country.

I went to just like it's Millers, it's called Miller High School and it was just for learning English for a year so I had to go there and because I hadn't - I didn't know any English, I couldn't speak or anything like that. So I had to kind of - and luckily in that school there was a lot of Serbian girls and boys and it made you a lot more at ease and kind of I think I belong here. After I went from Millers, my parents decided to go to Liverpool Girls High School because we lived in Liverpool. It was very hard, a beginning because Year 9 you just kind of - it's just spoken English. You kind of get lost and then you don't know how to speak it, you've never learnt it. You just learned

it a year ago. After Year 9 I just - I still didn't know what I actually wanted to do. It was very hard. In Year 10 do this test and in Year 11 and 12 I actually chose all really art subjects so I did dance, I did arts, I did Spanish, you know, like maths and English so nothing really particular and I loved those subjects and it was great but then when I finished high school I just had no idea, it was kind of you get lost because you don't know which path you want to take.

I was so lost I just decided to go to TAFE and do preparation for tertiary education. So that year helped so much and taught you a lot and if people don't know what they want and if they get scared of universities, which it is a scary place because it's such an independent place, it's good to kind of have that, a year off but also learn something on the way.

Yes, so I just kind of decided I was like oh, I like kind of science, out of nowhere I thought I'm going to do environmental science. I kind of wanted to discover what it is and after a semester I just didn't feel it. I just didn't feel comfortable. I just didn't think that that's what I wanted to do. So one subject I did it was human biology and that I was so amazed and after a semester I just transferred to medical science and that's where I am.

Well, the first part of it, the first year you just kind of do general subjects which is chemistry, biology, mathematics, physics, so it's just the really general science just to get you introduced and then there's second semester you decide which strand you want to get into which is chemistry, biology or psychology. I really always liked biology so I'd like to go into more human based I went to biology strand and I just did there physiology and it's all just human body really.

I just did an internship in Westmead Hospital for six months just to see where that will take me. You learn in medical science, you learn about human body and how human body works. Within that you learn microbiology and parasites and immunology, so how actually the body works defending itself and within those pathways you can - within medical science you can do a lot more things so you can get into pharmacology, making medicine. You could get into research, help people find cure for cancer which would be pretty amazing.

It always amazes me how our body works and how it's defending itself. It is really, really amazing how, you know, little parasites it can beat it and how it's functioning and how, you know, whatever you eat, how it affects it, just - and how it recovers really quickly. You know, people don't understand how it works amazingly. Just right here right now how the blood is pumping and how much the heart is actually working. It's just really, really amazing. It's just like a machine.

If I went back to Year 9, let's say, or even Year 10. If I found something really interesting I think volunteer work would be amazing thing to do. Whatever that might interest you, doesn't matter, music, whatever you like, just do some volunteering, even for people, for example, they like to do medical science, go to Westmead Hospital, go to, you know, hospitals, ask is there any opportunity for me to do little things. I think that is the best advice to just do something about it.

Well I was very fortunate to actually work at university. I started - I did every little pieces of work that I could and now I'm doing high degree research where I'm just an admin officer. I'm really not still 100% sure what I actually wanted to do so I think for me the main thing is to just start working and find what's my interest and just go way through it and find something and I think I will.

My name is Tanja and this is my story. I was born in Bosnia and Herzegovina and experienced war in 1992. I came to Australia in 2001. From high school I went to TAFE. I studied in environmental science and then I transferred to medical science. University experience has been very fulfilling.

ANNETTE SHUN WAH: After transferring from an environmental and life sciences degree, the medical world is now calling Tanja as she is continuing her studies with a bachelor of medical science.

END OF TRANSCRIPT