Andreas, 73, Barber, Nicosia

**1. Can you tell me a few things about yourself? For example, when and where you were born? Did you study for anything? Have you travelled or lived overseas?**

*I was born in 1945...you can calculate how old I am [he smiles]. I am from Diorios village from the occupied area of Cyprus and I came to Nicosia when I was 17 years old to find work. I didn’t complete my army service because I was excused since my father had passed away and I had younger sisters to look after. I came to Nicosia to find work, which I did at Figaro hair salon. It was a well known salon in its day; it’s on Rigenis Street if you know where that is. Later on I opened my own barber shop, but not here. I came here to this shop in 1980.*

**2. Have you ever owned another business in the past? How long have you been an owner of a business? How many businesses have you owned in the past?**

*I opened my own barber shop in 1971 and later moved here where I am today. My son has a unisex hair salon in Dasoupoli and I stayed here with the few customers I have left. I was teasing him the other day and asked him to give me a chair in his salon so I can go in three times a week and cut my customers’ hair and then go home [he says laughingly].*

**3. Can you tell me about the history behind your business?**

*I’ve been here in this place since November 1980. I put a lot effort into making it an attractive shop and I had a lot of work. Just think I even had three assistants. Now I don’t have any assistants; a day may go by without anyone coming in.*

*[At that moment, an elderly customer of Andreas comes in, holding his catheter in a plastic bag; Andreas greets him warmly and asks him to sit and wait.]*

*As I was saying, I had a lot of work but the problem is, is that when I was 30, my customers were around the age of 40-45. Most of them have passed away now, and those who are still alive are elderly and confined to their homes with health problems and have no interest in getting their hair cut; or they come and get their head shaved every six months because it’s more convenient for them.*

**4. What advantages did you see in opening your business?**

*I learnt this trade and opened my own barber shop to make a life for myself. I’m well known in the area. Everyone knew Andreas the Barber; that’s what I was known as, no one used my surname. Later on, when there was less work, I thought about closing the shop but the pension that I get is too low. It’s not as if I make a lot, but what I do make is extra money for me. Is it possible to live off €500 a month?*

**5. Are you facing any obstacles or problems in keeping your business going?**

*The main problem is, is that I have fewer customers as time goes on. Because I offer a service, people need to know who you are to come to you. My customers have either passed away or they are very elderly. So I stay here for the few regulars I have left until they die as well and I close up shop [he smiles]. If my shop was more central, for example in Onasagorou or Ledras maybe I would have younger customers who hang around those areas or soldiers from ELDYK (the Greek Army in Cyprus). But here, this neighbourhood has filled with foreigners; Pakistanis, Indians...whatever you can imagine. That lot don’t come to us and even keep the locals away because they’re scared of coming to the area.*

**6. Considering the experience that you have built up over the years but also the experience that you are going through now, would you say that you are still able to maintain the business and deal with the problems that affect it?**

*I really like my job; I like the contact I have with people. The people around me give me energy; I can’t sit at home like an old man and wait for the time when I will finally close my eyes. That’s why I don’t look my age, at least that’s what they tell me, that I look younger than I actually am. Like I said before, it’s not enough you liking the job or being good at it; it’s your customers and the competition. Many other barber shops have opened here over the years, the clientele that each one has had is decreasing because that’s how it is when you offer a service. But I said that I’ll carry on for as long as I can, or until it’s no longer viable because I pay for parking here every day and for electricity and water.*