Angelos, 76, Tailor, Limassol

**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?**

*My name is Angelos and I’m 76 years old. I’ve got three children and five grandchildren. I’ve worked here since 1975, and this shop was my father’s. I work about nine hours a day but I also work up to lunch time on Saturdays.*

**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’ve been working in this job since 1975, when my father started the business. We came here as refugees from Kyrenia in 1974 and we had nothing before this. So when we came here we started this business to make a living for ourselves.*

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

*I was born in Kyrenia in 1942. I lived there with my two brothers; one of them died during the war of 1974 and the other lives here in Limassol with his family. Our father was a tailor before the war. He made tailored suits for men. Before the war, there were many tourists who would come to him to have suits tailor-made for their weddings because many people had their weddings in Kyrenia (an occupied town north of the island) and also in Varosi (an occupied town east of the island, in the district of Ammochostos). During the invasion, we all came here to Limassol to be safe from the atrocities of the war. Kyrenia was the first town to be invaded by the Turkish, so we were the first refugees of the war. Then my father wanted to carry on with what he knew best how to do, and to make a living for his family. He found this place here and the rent was low because he was a refugee. I started to work here with him because I didn’t have another job [he shows a photograph of himself with his father taken at the time of when they first opened the shop.] So, I also learnt the trade and kept the business going even after my father passed away. Our relatives from my mother’s side, who lived in Limassol, also helped us quite a lot and we managed to make a life for ourselves.*

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

*Well, since the rent is low, even after so many years, I can still make a living. Anyway, my wife passed away and I don’t have many expenses. So whatever I make is mine. I don’t have that much work these past few years, but what can I do? I think that all the businessmen in the area are facing the same problems. But I’ve been here so many years and regardless of whether I have work or not, I come here every day because I like it.*

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

*People’s circumstances have changed from what they were before and surely some things are simpler now. If you had a wedding, wouldn’t you go and buy yourself a ready-made suit, rather than come here for me to take your measurements and make you one? It’s to be expected. But these are the problems which come about because people don’t understand, for example, that if there is a problem with the suit they could come back and I would alter it free of charge. Go buy a suit from a shop and let’s see if they can or even want to alter it for you. I only do alterations here mostly now. Gone are the days when we made suits [obviously upset and annoyed]. So, we have been overtaken by a love of foreign things in this country. There will certainly come a time when there will be no proper tailors in Cyprus. Can you see any young men interested in tailoring? Only those who design clothes for the runway and you can’t call them tailors.*

**6. So since things are not going so well, why don’t you just live off your pension and stop working?**

*Believe me, I’ve tried. I closed the business for two months in 2014 but I was still paying rent out of my own pocket. You have no idea how bored I got. At least I can come here and pass my time. The coffee shop is next door; every day I chat with their regulars who I know, and the day slowly passes by, rather than me being at home by myself. You know, at some point, you get depressed when you’re by yourself all the time and you don’t have anyone to talk to. I make enough for the monthly rent and if there is any money left, I save it.*

**- So the main reason why you’re still working is not for the money but mainly so that you have something to occupy yourself with?**

*Definitely. The money? That’s nothing. I’m just passing my time here so I don’t get bored and depressed at home.*

**7. 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 pass my time here are at the shop and at least the friends that I have made here over the years still keep me company. [Several of the other shopkeepers in the area stopped by to say good morning. Also the owner of the coffee shop next door came in with coffee and they joked.] I work five days and half-day on Saturday. And on Sundays my children and grandchildren come to my house with food so we can all eat together. Unfortunately, I can’t afford to feed eight people every Sunday on the pension that I get, but thankfully they understand. I wish them all well. And that’s how I fill my days.*