Andreas, 73, Coffee Shop, Galata

**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’m 73 years old. I was born in Galata village. I’ve got three children; two sons, one daughter and four grandchildren. I’ve been an owner of a coffee shop in Galata for more than 18 years now and I’ve lived in Galata all my life. I used to own a taverna in Kakopetria but I left there and opened up the coffee shop 18 years ago.*

**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 owned a traditional taverna in Kakopetria, together with a friend of mine, for about 20 years. Basically, when I left from there, I opened up the coffee shop here. Many tourists visit Kakopetria to see the mountain areas and to eat meze. But because I had to work very long hours, I became very tired and I told myself that enough was enough [expressing his exhaustion]. I stayed at home for about a year, and then I opened the coffee shop here which is much easier for me. I only serve Cypriot coffee, coffee with milk and hot chocolate. I don’t offer any types of cappuccino or other coffees. I have regulars who come here every day.*

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

*I had a traditional taverna in Kakopetria for 20 years. But we worked long hours and to be honest, serving food is a difficult business. Basically, it’s more difficult to satisfy someone with food rather than with coffee. So I left because I couldn’t take it anymore. I came back to Galata and then decided that I wanted to do something so that I could have an income. So, I opened this coffee shop 18 years ago. In the past, this place here was a cava selling wine. The owner of the shop was also from here and now he is one of my regular customers. When I left the taverna in Kakopetria, I opened up the coffee shop with the help of my children and have been here ever since. I work here with just my wife, no one else, and we’re just fine.*

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

*When I had the taverna in Kakopetria my aim was to always have satisfied customers because I knew that they would come back. I knew that the Cypriots who would come to Kakopetria for the weekend would come back. But the business of preparing and serving food is very difficult and the years went by like this. I put my heart into that business and all my energy, and even then, I would sometimes get negative comments. So I said enough was enough and decided that I didn’t want to do this job for the rest of life. I did what I wanted and this is the reason why I opened the coffee shop. Especially because I had started to get older and I didn’t need any anxiety and stress in my life. Work here at the coffee shop is so completely different from the tavern. There’s no stress here and the only thing I do is serve coffees. At the end of the day, I might not be making a lot of money to buy cars and other things, but I live a decent enough life because I get my pension as well.*

**5. Why are you still working and not living off your pension?**

*For two main reasons. First, because I don’t get a large enough pension. The contributions that I had been making to the social insurance weren’t enough for me to get a good pension now. How can you live off €360 [a month] pension? So I earn an extra income from here and we are able to get by in our old age. How can I stop working? But the other thing is, is what do you do if you stop working? I have a few olive trees which I tend to and occupy myself with, but to stay at home and get bored?*

*You should know, that people who stay at home once they retire and don’t occupy themselves with something, age more easily. I see quite a few customers of the coffee shop who are at home and some of the older ones have problems walking.*

**6. Are you facing any problems with keeping your business going?**

*No, there aren’t any problems. When I first opened the coffee shop there were some difficulties, but not now. Though, what I mean by difficulties, was for example, paying the rent, or sorting out my suppliers and getting the coffee shop to look like it does now.*

*The coffee shop’s position in the village square is really good. The rent that I pay is again very reasonable because the building belongs to someone who lives and works in Nicosia, and he doesn’t bother about the shop too much. He offered me a low rent on a 15 year lease and we renewed it a few years ago with no problem.*

**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’ve had this coffee shop for about 18 years now and I believe that I’ve attracted enough regulars here even from other nearby villages. This shows that I am doing a good job and that we have satisfied customers. It’s not just about making coffee and serving it, but it’s also about chatting with your customers, friendly teasing and asking them how their day is going. I’ve managed to maintain a steady monthly income which is decent enough and it helps us improve our lifestyle.*