**Takis, 69, Barber, Vrysoulles**

**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 69 years old and I was born in Acheritou but I live in Vrysoulles. I didn’t go to school. When I was young I would help my father as a shepherd. I wanted to go to school but my father wouldn’t let me because he needed my help. I’ve got four children and four grandchildren. Three of my children are married and the youngest one is studying overseas.*

**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 worked with my father as a shepherd until I was 17. Then I went to the village barber, Mr Costas, and he taught me the barbering trade. I’ve never owned another business in the past. It’s the only business I’ve owned and I’ve been running it since I was 20, from 1969.*

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

*When I left the farm where I worked with my father, I was 17, and I went to Mr Costas to become a barber. He was the only barber in the village and so he always had a lot of work. He showed me how to work with scissors and his customers were happy with me [he shows a photograph on the wall of himself with Mr Costas when he was an apprentice]. Three years later, I decided to open my own barber shop because Mr Costas was getting old and he wanted to retire. I had saved all the money I had earned at Mr Costas’ and I used it to open my own barber shop. I opened a shop in the village centre because I thought it would be better; that’s how I opened my own shop and I think it was the best decision. This shop has been mine since I was 20 years old. I really like my job because you’re not just giving your customers a haircut, but you chat with them and listen to their news. None of my children followed my profession. Two of my sons are policemen, my daughter works for the Social Insurance Service and my youngest son is studying abroad to become a civil engineer.*

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

*I had no one to help me apart from Mr Costas, who taught me the trade. Thankfully, I was able to open the shop and it’s been a part of my life for decades now. I do get a pension but the income I get from here helps quite a bit. I make about €800 extra a month and I work eight hours a day apart from Thursdays and Sundays. It makes a big difference because there are a lot of expenses when you have a son studying overseas.*

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

*No, the business is settled nicely. The whole village comes here to get a shave and a haircut, and they even come from the nearby villages just like you and your father do. I do have some health problems, actually with my heart, but I’m still alive thank God. But the business is fine. I don’t have any expenses, because I own the shop.*

**6. So you’ve never thought about retiring and not working?**

*No, never. Why should I do that? And what would I do if I stopped working? I come here, I see people, friends, chat with the customers at the coffee shop across the street and with the butcher on the corner; and many of my friends gather here outside in the mornings when I don’t have customers [there were already about six men sitting in front of the barber shop playing backgammon]. What about my son’s studies? Who’s going to pay for that? My wife’s and my pension? As long as I’m strong enough, there’s no way I’ll ever stop working.*

**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?**

*Thankfully there are no problems. It’s a way of supplementing my income with the low pension that I get, but it’s also so that I have something to do. And even if I closed the shop what would I do? Maybe when my son finishes his studies I might lessen my hours at the shop and do some fishing, but I’ll never stop working; only if my hands give up on me. And another thing; if I stop working, it means that the shop would go to ruin. Who will take over since my children aren’t interested? I can’t imagine closing up and then, when I’d pass by, I’d see a closed and dusty shop. I think I’d die before my time [he laughs nervously at the thought].*