George, 81, Shoe Shop, 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’m 81 years old. I’ve got two daughters who both work at our two shops. I work here nine hours a day, six days a week, but not always. As my daughters are both here I go to the coffee shop sometimes for two or three hours. I’ve got five grandchildren and a great-grandchild and I like to spend time with them.*

**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?**

*No I haven’t, but I’ve worked in many other jobs from a young age. My father was from Apostolos Andreas [an area north-east of Cyprus occupied by the Turks] but when he married my mother, they moved to Nicosia because there were better opportunities here and the area they were from was somewhat secluded [he shows me a photo of his parents from when they moved to Nicosia]. It’s not like now where everyone has a car and the highways take you from one end of Cyprus to the other in two hours. This was the first business we opened.*

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

*As I said before, when my parents came to Nicosia they worked in many different jobs to make a living. I was born in 1937, so you can understand that we lived through the EOKA liberation struggle against the British [1955-1959]. Then my father decided after this period that it was best time for us to open a business of our own. So he opened this shoe shop in 1960. I was 23 when we opened the first shop. But my father passed away early, when I was 29, and so I took over the business. Years later, after we had been through the troubles of 1964 [inter-community struggles] and then the Turkish invasion [1974] we gradually managed to open our second shop a little further down.*

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

*My father always had a plan and knew how to put it into action. He did what he wanted and how he wanted it. I would suggest to him that we should put clothes in our shop, and he would always say that shoes and a few bags were enough. So I didn’t change much after he died and I kept only shoes and bags in the shops. I brought in a few ribbons for ladies when we opened the second shop but that’s it.*

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

*There aren’t any problems here. The area is quiet with a few tourists and steady customers [meaning Cypriots]. We do pay rent though, which isn’t low. For this shop here, I pay €200 a month and the other one further down is €300. But we cover our expenses because we have enough customers, especially the tourists who come here to buy sandals. The area has definitely changed from how it was before but we can’t complain.*

*I still work regardless of the fact that I get a pension now, because I have nothing else to do. Summers are better because my grandchildren don’t go to school and I get to spend time with them; with my two daughters at the shops I have things covered. So I spend my time here, even though, I don’t want to be too involved in the finances of the business any more or others things that I don’t understand. My daughters take care of those things now. I still have my income from here, but not too much because I leave that for my daughters to share as they have families; it’s the logical thing to do.*

**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?**

*The business has a lot of potential, and from what I see my daughters are managing well. They both started here young and they know the work. Especially now that the checkpoint has opened and the area attracts more tourists, it’s a good thing. I’ll still stay on for as long as my daughters need me. I hope to have a few years left in me yet, so I can watch and be proud of them a little longer.*