Giorgos, 78, 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’m 78 years old and I live in Nicosia, I’ve got two children and four grandchildren. I’m married and I’ve been doing this job from a very young age.*

**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 in my father’s barber shop for quite a few years which was in another part of Nicosia before I opened this shop here. But this is the only business I’ve ever owned. I’ve been working as a barber for 65 years, ever since I was 13. I didn’t go to school at all because my dad needed quite a lot of help and so I stayed in this profession.*

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

*I started worked at my father’s barber shop when I was 13 [he shows an old photo on the wall of his father and himself as a young boy in the old barbers]. I learnt to cut hair and shave quite well and then I decided to open my own barber shop. My father died young and I didn’t want to continue working at the same shop because the area wasn’t so good. So I found this place here, with a low rent of €200 per month and opened up here. I work here every day apart from Thursdays, but I do come in for a couple of hours on Sundays; on other days I work nine to ten hours, with a two hour siesta at lunch time.*

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

*The good thing about this job is that you get to talk to a lot of customers and develop relationships. For example, I have customers who are tourists that come here to see Ledra Street, but most of them are Cypriots and I have quite a few soldiers from the Greek Army Forces in Cyprus who come in regularly. Whenever they’re on leave for a few hours they come here to get a haircut. Apart from that, quite a few of the shop owners are friends of mine since I’ve been here for so many years, so my barber shop is like a home to them.*

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

*Business isn’t what it used to be; there are younger barbers now and hairstylists who follow trends and the preferences of the younger generation. My customers are older and their hairstyles more simple. But quite a few of them have passed away and I don’t have as many customers. For example, the hairstyles that the youngsters have today are styles which my customers wanted 30-40 years ago. So the older fashions are coming back, it’s just that the youngsters want to go to younger barbers. My older customers are dying and they’re not being replaced by younger ones because the younger ones go to young barbers, and as time goes on I think the situation will get worse.*

**6. So since things are not going so well, why don’t you retire and stop working?**

*Why should I stop working? My pension is very low, €400 a month and the income I get from here is about €600-700 a month. So you can see that the extra income is helping me out financially so I can buy things for my grandchildren.*

*[At this point, his wife calls to tell him that his children and grandchildren will be coming for dinner this coming Sunday. He was obviously pleased with the call he had from his wife.]*

*See? The call was from my wife and she told me that my grandchildren will be coming on Sunday. So I need to buy fresh fish and presents. I used to go fishing in the past, I liked going to the unoccupied areas of Ammochostos [he takes out an album from a drawer with old photos of him fishing]. Now I’ve stopped going because it’s not permitted anymore, otherwise I would still go. So I only have the barber shop here to help pass my time every day.*

**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 certainly do this job because I love it. Time goes by pleasantly, doing something that I love. I do it to keep myself occupied and also for financial reasons. But the main reason for working still, is because I like it and I am passionate about my work. I’ll continue to do this job for as long as I can. So you understand what I mean, I come to work on a small motorcycle, but even if I become 85 and I can’t ride it anymore, I’ll take the bus every morning to come here. There’s no way I’ll stop working.*