Eleni, 83, Production of Traditional Cypriot Sweets, Kakopetria

**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 Eleni, I’m 83 years old and I live in Kakopetria. I was born here in this village and I’ve lived here most of my life. I’ve got five children who live abroad – in France, England and America – and I’ve got seven grandchildren and two great-grandchildren as well. I lost my husband eight years ago in a car accident; his car was loaded with sacks of cement, and he lost control of the car and went over the mountainside. He was a wonderful man, but unfortunately I’ve been by myself since then [she shows his photo obviously upset]. I travel quite a bit since my children live overseas; every couple of months I go to either France, or London or New York to visit my family.*

**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?**

*This here is what I’ve been doing all my life. I always had a passion for making sweets from fresh fruit and love to give them to my friends and family. My mother taught me how to make them when I was little and since then I’ve been making sweets; I make them so that I can have extra money for travelling to visit my children three or four times a year. I never had a normal business as I never had enough money to invest in one. So I sit here outside my front door; when the tourists come in the summer it’s really good because I make more money. In the winter I don’t make so much because most of the visitors are Cypriot, they already know me and don’t always buy sweets whenever they come. So I prefer to visit my children in the winter and I’m here all summer.*

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

*I started selling sweets a long time ago, when I married my husband in 1955. Things were different back then. We had no benefits from the government and we needed money to live. Back then we were under British rule so you can understand. My husband worked, but the money was never enough, and since I enjoyed making sweets I started to make a living out of it. I decided to sit outside my front door from the morning ‘til the afternoon and sell sweets to the people who were passing by, mostly tourists. Kakopetria wasn’t like this before; there weren’t many tourists and it wasn’t so built up. My husband would work, and I would be at home making sweets with my mother to sell to other housewives in the village and the surrounding villages, to help out with the finances at home. After 1960 when the disturbances began with the Turkish-Cypriots [inter-community disturbances] people became afraid and stopped spending. They were saving just in case war broke out. A few years after the war, things improved because Cyprus was becoming a tourist destination. That was when I was able to make more money from the tourists.*

**4. What advantages did you see in continuing your business? Why don’t you just retire?**

*First of all it’s something I like doing and that’s why I have been doing it for so many years. I enjoy chatting with passersby every day and I meet people from all over the world. Thankfully I know how to speak English and I can communicate well enough. I do it mainly for the money; I’m able to save money to go and visit my children. My pension covers my living expenses but the money I make from selling sweets is for my travels.*

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

*There aren’t any problems with this work because it’s so simple. I put a table outside my house; I sit on a chair and wait for the people to come by so I can chat with them. Producing the sweets is very easy. I have plenty of time to prepare them, and to be honest it’s not that difficult. As I said before, I’ve been doing it for years and making the sweets has turned into a simple routine with no expenses.*

**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?**

*It’s not a job that brings in a large income so I wouldn’t say that it can be considered a normal business. My target is to make about €300 extra a month during the summer so that I can visit my children; nothing more. I’m doing something that I enjoy and I’ve been doing it for a long time, that’s why so many people who pass by know me. I’m able to make about €300 a month during the summer because the tourists who come here don’t just buy for themselves; they’ll buy one for their parents and one for their friends as well. So you can see that I’m able to make that money each month, but my children always help out with my expenses when I go to see them.*