Petros, 71, Handmade Cypriot Style BBQs, Larnaca

**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 Petros, I’m 71 years old and I’ve got three children and two grandchildren. I’m a refugee from Rizokarpasso [an area north-east of the island occupied by Turkey] and I’ve been living in Tsiakkilero since 1974 [an area on the outskirts of Larnaca where housing estates for the refugees were built by the government]. I have this shop here selling traditional Cypriot BBQs, whatever you see here is made in my workshop.*

**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 lived in Rizokarpasso with my wife, and daughter who was born in 1973, just before the war. I was an ironmonger by trade and I made a variety of things. You name it, I made it; anything. I had a very small shop with my father, in the centre of the village.*

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

*When we left Rizokarpasso after the invasion in 1974, we came to Tsiakkilero where everyone had gathered [meaning the refugees]. We came here with nothing. They gave us houses to live in and then the refugee housing estates were built. Two or three years later, when we had managed to get back on our feet, I decided that I needed to go back to the job I’d been doing before the war. So I found this house which was for rent, the owner turned out to be someone my father knew and I rented it. Gradually I bought the machinery I needed and began to make BBQs mostly; I stopped making other things and concentrated on the BBQs because there was more of a demand for them. I remember starting up in March 1978; I’ve been here since then.*

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

*I didn’t have many opportunities when I came here as a refugee. There were others like us too. You can’t imagine what the situation was like in Larnaca and Limassol because of the refugees. But we slowly managed to get back on our feet. The shop here is my life. Just as my father had started his workshop in Rizokarpasso with sacrifices and a lot of effort, I did the same here. You can’t find handmade BBQs anymore. Now people think that if they pay €50 for a BBQ it will last for years. The good thing is though, is that I’ve got my contacts and my loyal customers. I’ve got one customer, who bought a BBQ from me, then he sent all his relatives here to buy one as well; he was that grateful and that impressed with the BBQ he had bought.*

**5. Are you facing any obstacles or problems in keeping your business going? Does the business give you a decent income?**

*My income is good enough for me and my wife. I get a pension of about €380 a month and I make about €350 a month from here which is fine. Things were definitely better before. Everybody came here to buy from us, everything is handmade. In recent years, since the large stores started selling BBQs for €50, sales have dropped. But I’m fine, I can’t complain. We have our friends around us [he points to an elderly gentleman sitting in the opposite street] we chat, and pass our time.*

**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?**

*I’m fine here in my shop. You should see how many problems others have. I get my extra income and I’m able to do something that I’ve done for many years and love doing it. For as long as I’m able, I’ll be here working. Even if I need a walking stick some day, I’ll still come here in the mornings until I die, unless we get our lands back [ meaning the Turkish occupied areas].*