

## **DREAMHOUSE IN GREECE 9 - 2016**

### **January 2016**

Aegean Airlines informs us that our planned Wednesday late afternoon flight to Samos has been cancelled. After some telephone calls and e-mails we have arranged that we fly to Samos two days earlier, on Monday. That weekday it still is possible to complete the stretch Amsterdam - Athens - Samos in one day.

During the always cosy Mid Winter Samos reunion, in Beringen this year, R. and D. return us the keys of our car and house

On the 11th of January we fly to Samos with 2 suitcases filled to the brim with necessities for the next summer season. While we were away, Aris has picked the olives; I am anxious to taste the olive oil. When we still were at Samos, he had had a look at the olives and had remarked that many of them were of the "wild" type, not giving much oil. Of the "good" type there were not many. I had the impression that he did not feel like picking our olives. So one of the last days of October, just before we were to leave, I had pruned the olive trees rather thoroughly, including ripe olives. But I had guessed wrong, obviously. Though he'd said he did have nets. And also I had not bothered to try to explain that we'd rather have cold pressed oil. Well, we'll see then.

Also I am curious how the orchids have developed. It hasn't been really cold yet, but it has rained very little too. I fear for my new seedlings and potted plants. The (broken) wild cam I left on, it still takes pictures during daylight.

F. & B., who just have become grandparents for the second time, drive us to the railway station. We arrive at Schiphol Airport without any fuss. And after a short night and quick flights we land right on time on Samos. 18°C with some clouds. We shop at the Lidl's and drive home, where we first greet G. & D.'s neighbours Giorgos and Katrina. We see no lights at neighbours D. & L. so we assume that they did not come due to the impending arrival of their first grandchild. With the last of our energy we unpack. Bedtime is at 10 pm.

We wake up late and have a slow breakfast. After that we drive to Karlovassi. On "our" road all of the potholes have been repaired, except for the one at the side of the road next to our gate. At the house of G. & D. we greet Giannis who is busy painting it. In Karlovassi we first have a haircut at Maria's. Then we have a look at the office of our lawyer Giorgos Papakonstantinou. He is not in, but the keys are on the door and that means that he is not far off. So we run some errands, wish happy new year to Tia from Balos, Vaso the pedicure and Maria the notary. After a cappuccino at the old tavern we run into Papakonstantinou so we can pay him back for the road tax. Also we ask him (again) to send Thanassis the summons for the IKA which he still hasn't done (I got suspicious when Th. greeted us very friendly this morning).

After some more errands we return home via Koumeika (no mail in de postbox, no Aris in sight, tavernas closed). We also check the houses of our neighbours which seem to be in good order; Thanassis still hasn't finished the works he promised ... Giorgos and Katrina's cats (Giorgos' Gang) follow us with the idea of food which leads F. to walk home. The cats frolic along and eat their bellies round at our place. The weather in the meanwhile has turned very sunny so I grab my camera looking for

orchids. I do not find them but a lot of orchid rosettes. When I pass the house Giorgos' Gang is enjoying the sunshine on our terrace. I take them along in the direction of their home. Nearly there I walk into the little gorge but the cats think it's too muddy and wet and stay behind miaowing at me. I walk all the way to the end and admire the naturally formed little basins where the water cascades into and over down to the bed of the brook. Must be a nice view. But since this only happens in the wet and cold season it is not very appealing to wade to the ice cold water then to have a look .... When I return the cats have disappeared. Home, I assume. Good, that saves me the long and steep climb up to their house.

I return home where I have a look at the Elzenpad (Els' Path or Alder Path) before the sun sets behind Fourni and see that so far not very much weed has overgrown it. Also the cuts from last autumn have done relatively well. An oleander cut has grown roots so to see. Only the conifer cut from the NL has not survived the draught. I call English Sally and Neil to arrange for a meeting later that week. And at the end of the day the water returns after having been absent for the major part of the day.

Wednesday starts with a shower after which the sun reappears quickly. I work outside most of the day. Planting new cuts, removing dandelions and thistles, freeing orchid rosettes from weed. I also prune the lemon and orange tree. Of the four oranges 3 have fallen on to the ground and started to rot, F. eats the remaining one. I make jam out of 2/3 of the 19 lemons we have. When it gets dark we see lights at our neighbour's D. & L. So they have arrived after all.

Thursday it is sunny again and thus more outside work. I clean the area around the swimming pool and count a few dozen new orchid rosettes. Neighbours D. & L. drop by for some coffee and we chat for a while. Tomorrow they go home already. Friday starts sunny again so the vegetable garden gets a clean-up. We drive to Ormos for some shopping. In the afternoon it gets cloudy and windy and in the evening it starts to rain again.

Saturday is still cloudy but the wind has turned and it is not cold anymore. So some more outside work. Thanassis passes by and surprisingly honks his horn, as does Giorgos from Katrina. As the wind gets stronger and the sky darker, I go inside to warm on a cup of coffee. After lunch we mount the new solar garden lamp on the wall near the door. I discover that we do not have voicemail on our Greek prepaid telephone numbers so I send text messages that those numbers will be out of use in the future. Kostas the mayor drops by to wish Happy New Year (Καλή Χρωνιά), his taverna is open for souvlakis tonight. But first we go to Maria's taverna in Koumeika where we use the internet and meet with Aris. After a beer we drive to Skouraiika where we have souvlakis and treat all the locals present on a drink for the new year. We talk to some of them. I muse that I am glad I do not have to spend the entire winter in such a small village; all there is to do is having a souvlaki and a drink on Saturday evening in the only taverna. Desolate and dreary..... Back home we try the bottle of red wine given to us by the man who repaired the doors last summer. It really tastes awful so instead we have an ouzo and then go to bed.

During the night the wind turns into a real storm and howls around our house. Accompanied by some heavy showers and some thunder. Sunday morning we spend reading. But inside the house it stays dry. Long live Giannis!

Around lunch time the rain gets a bit less and we drive to Koumeika where Aris awaits us with a jerrycan filled with 10 L of our own olive oil. Around torn off branches and through deep puddles we drive in the direction of Votsalakia. The two gas stations are closed as is restaurant Chrysopetros. In Votsalakia the main road is under construction again so on narrow back laid "roads" with potholes and water streams we arrive at the ATM. We return to Ormos where we have a nice lunch in the restaurant at the corner of the plateia and the harbor. The rain has been coming down heavily again in the meanwhile, and when we drive home we see that water from the brook flows over the road again (only for a day, so it isn't as bad as last year). At home we pour the olive oil into bottles and taste it. Not extra vierge but quit good.

Mondays we start with a visit to our garage in Kampos Vourliotes where we agree that in April we will finally have the rubber around the front window renewed. We drive on to Pythagorio where we have coffee and hot chocolate with Sally and Neil. We chat for a while and have lunch together. Around 4 o'clock we drive back via Spatharei. The sun shines but there is an icy wind from the north. Halfway between Spatharei and Pyrgos we help out a chilled-to-the-bone man whose car has gone empty on the battery. Back home we see that the outside temperature is 4.5°C. Inside it is nice and warm.

Our last whole day on Samos starts with an outside temperature of 0.7°C. The peak of Mount Kerkis is covered in snow. There is no wind so in the sunshine it feels not too bad. We take a few pictures of the nice view of the mountain. We spend the day reading and at the end of the afternoon I pack the suitcases, including 2 bottles of olive oil and some lemons. The snow on the mountain then has thawed away.

Next day we say a very early goodbye to our dear house and return to the NL.

## **April 2016**

We leave the Netherlands behind us after a period of visiting good friends and nice exhibitions and, unfortunately, more turmoil than we'd asked for. The trip to Samos is without any trouble and early in the evening we open our house. We unpack some things but after a night of sitting up at Schiphol Airport we go to sleep early.

The next day, Sunday, I check the orchid-meadows around our house. De upper one, behind C. & R.'s house, has been cleared and the bush burned down. Gone are the many bright blue speculums, I find 3 at the edge which escaped the clearing and are finished flowering. A bit closer to C. & R.'s I find a dried out regis-fernandi. I conclude that the plants are flowering two weeks earlier than last year. Must be due to the warm month of February. The samiotissa on the road under C. & R.'s are flowering, and I find some flowering pelinaea, the late variety. To my joy I find a rainbow-orchid in our yard, although already finished flowering, finally another species! On D. & L.'s plot of land behind our yard, I find three more, and a flowering Serapias. Then, alas, due to a rib-injury and a heavy cold, I run out of energy and spend the rest of the afternoon sitting in the sun. Which makes the temperature rise to 22°C in the shadow.

Monday we drive to Vathi, where we visit the Forthnet-store, by recommendation of British Sally and Neil. There we take a subscription to internet by satellite, cheaper and with more GB than our previous one at Vodafone's. The staff has to look up

where the heck Skouraiika is situated, but then assure us that within 2 weeks it will be installed at our house. So we do a quick internet-check on a terrace with a cup of cappuccino.

The next day we do some odd jobs around the house. I have to slow down my speed of doing things considerably due to my not-so-good health, but resting in the sun hardly is a punishment. Kostas the mayor, Albanian Aris and retired Manolis all stop to say hello. We check the houses of the para and I hand a note to Katrina & Giorgos when they will arrive, for cleaning their houses. Thursday we drive to Limnionas to score some orchids over there, but most of them have finished flowering. Only a bunch of horseshoe orchids silently shows its beauty. In Ormos we have a drink and check our mail etc. We also drop by retired Manolis for a chat.

Friday starts with wind, but the temperature still is ok. I continue with the odd jobs, taking a pain killer every now and then. Saturday night we have souvlakis at Kostas the mayor. Apart from the arrival of his mother, three men watching UK football on the tv and Jacobo's sister with her baby, really nothing happens. Kostas has a new electricity bill for us, not yet the water bill. There seems to be some trouble with the computer handling it. Sunday we have lunch at Chrispetro's, together with retired Manolis. We are welcomed warm heartedly, the food is delicious. I am very unlucky as I strain my ankle. I now have three injuries.

The night from Sunday to Monday it starts to rain and thunder a little bit. Mondays the rain continues. We drive to Pythagorion where we buy a walnut tree at the garden centre. They have run out of almond trees. Then we go and deliver a book on Samos stamps at Stamatis from restaurant Esperides. He tells us a.o. that the nautical museum in Ireon will be opened this year and that the Epaulinus-tunnel/aqueduct, from Polycrates' time (500 B.C.) is restored all the way to the other end of the mountain, open for public. We have coffee at Manolis and Effi and a pita with gyros for lunch at Robinson's. Finally we drop by at R.'s in Koumaradei to chat up.

Tuesday it is sunny again, with some clouds, and the living gets its spring cleaning. Giorgos from Katrina drop by. Katrina is cleaning the houses of G. & D.'s and H. & J.'s. At G. & D.'s the electricity plugs switch off every time so he proposes to let the electrician from Koumeika to have a look at it. At H. & J.'s there seems to be a problem of a missing window but it turns out that it is a sliding window which can be put back again.

Wednesday we do some more work outside, since the weather is lovely. Thursday starts with the arrival of Psylotakis (Tall Takis as opposed to Short Takis) who promises us to install new lamps for the swimming pool next week. After that I want to clean out the wooden cabin, but that doesn't work out. First Giannis from Amanda arrives. He is going to asphalt the entrance road to R. & D.'s. We talk through the work scheme and payments. Then he asks for R.'s AFM-number (Greek tax number), which he needs. R. does not answer his phone, probably in the middle of a training session and D. cannot find it in the papers. So I send a text message to R. and then he calls back and gives me the number. But by then Giannis is already gone. He also notified us that Aris is at R. & D.'s at the moment, cutting the grass. I try to call him but he probably does not hear his phone. So I decide to drive over. Just then my phone rings and the people from Forthnet tell me that they will be in Skouraiika in an

hour to install the internet-equipment. We arrange to meet at the parking area over there. I drive to Aris and he promises me that he'll come and cut our grass the same afternoon. After a cup of coffee I drive to Skouraiika where I meet the men of Forthnet and we drive back to our house, where they start to work. In the meanwhile we look at the towing away of the broken down van on Dimitri's aloe vera-plantation, under the three houses. I also call our car dealer (again) to arrange about the replacement of the dried-out rubber around the front window of the car. And German Joachim to help us find the HD-TV channels on the new satellite and Maria the hairdresser for an appointment next week.

After about two hours the Forthnet men are ready and we are back on line again. Aris arrives and starts cutting the grass and weeds on our premises. I had already marked the orchids with circles of little stones and cut away some of the grass around them. I also tell him that Albanian Victor (which he does not like) had cut off all the orchids when he did the job. Anyway, Aris neatly trims around the orchids. But it is a lot of work so he comes back the next day to finish it. He tells us that his wife now works for an old granny to help her with everything. I start to rake the hay over the edges of the terraces to get some air and light for future orchids.

When Joachim arrives we start on the tv. After many attempts we are able to turn the satellite dish in the exact right position so that it picks up the signal from Astra 3, right "next to" the much stronger Astra 1. Because the Dutch satellite cable company has decided in its ultimate wisdom that as from May 1st it will only send HD-signals of Dutch and Belgian channels via Astra 3, and stops with the "normal" SD-signals from Astra 1. For the 21st century I think the system of turning the dish for some millimeters to find the satellite is rather user-unfriendly. Yes, there are systems which are totally computer-driven, but they cost a lot of money! We now miss some free German channels, which I don't care about, and Eurosport, but to F.'s great joy we get L1 Limburg TV in return. And Amsterdam AT5. But not TV West or any other regional channel ..... Joachim by the way mentions that the ferry connection Karlovassi - Lesbos - Smyrna/Izmir will indeed get started this summer ....

We haven't seen much of cats apart from shabby Micky with his empty eye socket. But then we are presented very much pregnant Kitty, grey/cypric coloured. She devours bowls of cat food, for she has to feed the little ones too. After a while we don't see her for some days, so we assume the kittens are born.

When I run an errand, I run into Themo, with a red sun-burnt head. He is working at the restaurant at rebuilding the terrace. They open the 3rd of May. That now is the holiday, Labour Day and Demeter's Day, since the 1st of May is Easter Sunday.

During the week the weather has turned back to very sunny again, up to 26°C in the shade. In the night the fireflies twinkle their lights enthusiastically.

After 2 weeks it is high time to visit the Lidl's again. Easter treats are abundant. In Pythagorion we see that the ferry booking office still is closed. We have coffee and then lunch at Ambrosia's. A very nice Cordon Bleu for me and a Kokkinisto (beef cooked in red sauce) for F. We drive home via Spatharei. At home we unpack, and the biweekly circle is closed.

Sunday I finish raking the hay. A lot of work! The weather is lovely, the sea looks like a mirror. We observe some dolphins catching fishes, accompanied by some seagulls.

Too bad they don't jump out of the water completely. Kitty reappears, a lot slimmer than before. Again she devours a bowl of catfood. She looks good so we assume the delivery went well. When will we see the kittens?

That Monday it is clean out time for the wooden cabin. A gecko who has found shelter inside gets pretty nervous with all the disturbance. We have a critical look at all the stuff which is stored inside and decide to discard broken and/or unused items. Giannis drops by to collect the money for the cementing of R. & D.'s entrance road.

Tuesday we take a tour around the island. The special offer for summer pyjama pants at the Lild's is practically sold out. At the garage mechanic Tony succeeds in replacing the dried out rubber under the front window with the material delivered by Athens. We also have new rubber, again, for the back window swiper. At Karlovassi we buy tickets for the ferry to Tilos, 10 - 12 May. The lady at the desk also informs us that indeed this summer there will be a ferry connection to Smyrna/Izmir. After that Maria cuts our hair. Wednesday Psylotakis arrives to replace the pool lights. The bedroom gets a big clean out. The weather remains sunny and warm, with only a little bit of wind and a single small cloud.

Thursdays there is a strong wind, however. We drive to the top of the Karvounis, it is icy cold up there. At the north side there are flowering orchids, on the south side we hardly see any. We drive home via Karlovassi, where we pay Psylotakis for the lamps and his work. We also fill up the car with gasoline. Fridays the wind has gone. I start weeding the vegetable garden. Saturday there are some clouds but it's not cold. In the evening we drive to Skouraiika, together with retired Manolis, to the other taverna, run by Safira and her son Nikos. Nikos is the only one present, he starts preparing us food. In due time some 3 men arrive, and Nikos' grandma Stamatina. She is 90 years old, and calls retired Manolis, aged 75, "Manolaki" meaning: "little Manolis". We are back home at a quarter past 10.

Sunday I finish the weeding of the vegetable garden. After I removed the stones that have come down during winter, it really starts to look like a vegetable garden again. F. and I spread out the fresh soil we bought on the spots where I want to sow greens and herbs. Grey clouds threaten with rain, but it stays dry. I am relieved, that after 3 weeks of a severe cold, injuries and unpleasant side effects of pain killers, I am able to work a whole day in my "normal" pace again, without major complaints. And to my joy I find another "new" orchid flowering under an olive tree near the house, a pyramidalis.

Monday it is time again for the biweekly round of "removing dandelions and thistles". I also sow the greens and herbs in the vegetable garden, and book a hotel for our stay on Tilos. Giorgos drops by with the electrician from Koumeika to collect his fee. They have an "ouzaki" (meaning "small ouzo" but which is in no way meant to be small!) and we chat for a while. Tuesday there is a strong wind so time for indoor jobs. At the end of the afternoon Giannis drops by, to see what needs to be done at the pool. Wednesday and Thursday the wind gets lesser and lesser, so it is lovely weather again. These days are spent on a big clean out of the terrace, the blinds and the windows, so everything looks spic & span again.

Fridays I drive to the airport to pick up neighbours R. & D. I leave early so I first can go shopping at the Lidl's. But on the occasion of Megali Paraskevi (Good Friday) it

will only open at 13.00h today. So I drive to the Cash & Carry's a bit back on the road and buy as much as I can find. The baker's at Pyrgos does not have whole meal bread on this holiday, only white bread. So at home we bake a "brown" bread ourselves. The sky is a bit overcast, but there is no wind and the temperature really is nice. In the evening there are a few drops of rain when the four of us drive to Votsalakia for dinner. Chrisopetro is closed due to Good Friday, so we drive on to Chester's where I have a nice steak. When we are back home there is an unforeseen small shower of rain.

Saturdays the sky clears in the course of the morning, it is hot in the sun. Giannis arrives with his nephew to work on the swimming pool. They remove some parts of the bottom, where in has come loose from the concrete underneath it. Also, the loose paint is removed by a high pressure water beam. Giannis also tells us that for €250 euro he can enlarge the terrace at the back of the house to twice its size. So we can sit under the olive tree at the bedroom side, in the shadow. He'll have time to do it in a week or so.

In the evening we attend the Easter Night Mass with R. & D. Grandma Stamatiina and the wife of the old pope wave us (the ladies) to sit next to them. The men sit next to Thassos. Rodopi's Giannis and Kostas the mayor (beard shaven off) have put on their best suit. We have bought a little lantern with a paraffine candle stick inside, so we light it with the candle which we lighted from the light that had arrived from Constantinople. So that it will not be extinguished by the wind. Then, as goes the tradition, we all go outside where the resurrection of Christ is celebrated with many loud bangs from firework (and a shotgun, F. notices). This year it is very much and very loud, so the new young popes stops the chanting and orders the youngsters, eyebrows raised, that it is enough for now. The old pope hides a smile in his beard, amused by the situation. After three knocks on the church door and three announcements the young pope is allowed to enter the church again and so are we. But most people go home after congratulating each other with the resurrection by saying "Christos Anesti!" (Christ has resurrected), answered by "Alythos Anesti!" (He really has resurrected) or just by plain "Chronia polla!" (Many years, useful at any congratulation). And so, blessed and all, we return home.

## **May 2016**

The 1st of May, Easter Sunday, is a lovely sunny day. I prepare the Easter lunch for R. & D and F. & me: leg of lamb from the oven with potato gratin, cauliflower and salad, accompanied by a nice bottle of wine. R. has prepared the entrée. We take our time and around half past 5 we drive to Diamantis, Amanda's and Giannis' son, where we are invited by Giannis to come and have a drink. But there, nobody is to be seen. Only after a while a sleepy Diamantis turns up, together with his wife Maria and their toddler Nefeli. Amanda is at work and Giannis is probably at home digesting the lunch. So we turn around and drive to the village square, where we see that only old Maraki's is open. There we have an ouzo and then drive home.

The next day, Easter Monday, Giannis stands on our doorstep at half past 8 to continue the work at the swimming pool. It is cloudy but not cold. For tomorrow, rain is predicted. But at 10 o'clock already a few drops of rain fall out of the sky. Giannis

hurries to cover the cemented spots in the pool with sheets of plastic. We clear away the remainders of yesterday's lunch and keep quiet for the rest of the day. I take some errands to G. & D.'s who will be picked up from the airport by R. early tonight. The six of us have an elaborate dinner at Kyriakos, the next day I am not hungry at all. As that is a holiday too (1st of May-day has been set on this day), we have our traditional 1st of May dinner at Themos, lamb chops for me of course. We sit inside because the weather still is unstable, bits of rain and wind from time to time.

Wednesday Giannis arrives at a quarter to 8 already, to start painting the swimming pool. He finishes it around noon. It needs to dry for a week, this time, before we can fill it with water. In the afternoon it rains a little bit, again. Vasso, the pedicure, arrives, to do a nice turn on our feet. Thursdays we are ready to leave for some errands in Karlovassi, when Giannis and Aris drive up to our house to start working on the terrace. When we return, supplied with a.o. a new peach tree and fresh fish from the fishermen at the harbour in Karlovassi, we see that the work is almost done. Apart from filling out the joints. Which they come and do the next day. Both Thursday and Friday it is a bit overcast and windy, which makes it a bit chilly. We stay inside and read a lot. Saturdays the wind has gone, it is sunny and lovely again. We drive to Kokkari to meet with British Sally and Neil. We drive up the hills south of Kokkari where we spend some time admiring the "wood"-orchids. We drive all the way to Mytilini, where we have a lunch in the sunshine, at the old town square. In the evening we have souvlaki's at mayor Kostas taverna in Skouraiika, with the "hard core" of our παρέα. Since neighbours H. & J. have also arrived, a day later than planned due to delayed airplanes and missed connections.

Tuesday we leave home early for our short trip to Tilos. Along youngsters with backpacks, waiting for the bus, we arrive in Pythagorio in due time. The catamaran ferry of Dodekanesos is already waiting. Effie from the Summertime Bar tells us that this firm has not participated in the strike which was over this morning at 06.00h. This time we do not sail via Fourni (and along our house) but via the dry small island of Agathonissi. When we leave there we have some big waves, so the kind steward walks with me back to our chairs, holding the mugs of coffee, while I try to stay on my feet.

Via Patmos, Lipsi and Leros we arrive at barren and windy Kalymnos where we have to change ships. Since we have two hours before we leave again, we walk out of the port into the little town of Rodia. On the quay there are (now empty) tents for refugees from the UNHCR. We have some lunch. Rodia is not particularly pretty, flat houses in faded colours, one or two nice churches. It seems Kalymnos is a good spot for mountain climbing and diving. Although the famous sponges of Kalymnos almost went extinct due to over-harvesting a few decennia ago.

Via Kos (also no more tents for refugees on the quays) and Nysiros (a island mainly consisting of a caldera) we arrive at Tilos, in the harbour of Livadia. About half an hour late, due to some big waves on the way which made it not possible for the ferry to use the gliders of the catamaran. We are awaited by talkative young Andreas, the manager of the Apollo Studios where we have booked. He drives us in his mini van the 300 m up to the hotel, where we get an elaborate explanation of the facilities of our room. We have a rest and then walk into the village. There we are finished with

our tour within 15 minutes and sit down at a taverna for a drink. Accompanied by a range of differently furred cats. Most of them have a clipped ear, which means they have been neutered. One of them is very much crooked-eyed, not cross-eyed, because both the eyes look to the outer side of its head. The sun sets and I put my sweater on, the wind makes it chilly. I enjoy our trip, on this charming doll-sized island. After a nice dinner of a.o. Seafood Saganaki and lamb chops (for me) we sit on the balcony of our room for a short while and then go to sleep.

Wednesday we sleep long and have breakfast on the plateia (square) in the sunshine. We do have to put on sun cream. We walk to the bus stop, where the bus should leave for Megalo Chorio (where the Elephant Museum is) every half hour, according to Andreas. But after some waiting and asking around we find out that the busses still operate according to the winter time table. So the next one leaves at 11.00h. Time for some coffee then. We drink it and watch teasing little girls and little boys playing football, dreaming to be Ronaldo Christiano (one of them even resembles him for a little bit). Near 11 o'clock a small crowd has gathered for the bus. The bus driver first runs some errands before we can leave. I try to take a strategic position so that we will be the first to enter the little bus. In that I succeed and 15 minutes later we get out at Megalo Chorio. There we find the museum closed due to lack of staff. But after some begging of our side one man offers to open the museum and show us around.

Although it is only one room with displays, the shown fossil remains and pictures are very interesting. A reconstruction with the fossil bones of a baby elephant shows that it had the size of a fox. A grown elephant is the size of a cow. In total, bones of 40 elephants have been found. Science still does not fully understand how it is possible that animals living on a small island gradually evolve into a smaller (under-)species. The man who shows us around, tells us that the common theory now is that there was a big volcano eruption on the nearby Nysiros, which made the elephants to seek shelter in the cave where their fossilized bones (dated 3700 b.C.) eventually were found in the 70's of last century by some islanders looking for their lost goats. (Though English people we meet later on tell us that the cave was probably exposed again because the RAF used that particular hill for target-practice during WW II). Sediments of volcanic eruptions also have been found in the cave (not on the rest of the island, blown away or eroded?), so probably the elephants were not really protected in the cave and maybe died of toxic fumes or ashes. Anyway the cave collapsed and the elephant bones then were fossilized. In times of seismic action volcano eruptions and earthquakes go hand in hand, so it could have happened shortly one after the other. In the cave human tools were also found, but they date from 7000 years earlier. Probably the humans, which at that time still lived as hunters/gatherers, left after a while. In fact, the elephants of Tilos were the last in Europe. During the ice ages, the level of the Mediterranean was at least 100 metres lower (most of the water was held in the giant icecaps). Islands were connected with land bridges or separated by small stretches of sea. Elephants might have wandered of from Asia and/or Europe on to the islands. When during a interglacial period the sea rose again, they got isolated on the islands. The elephants on the other islands however got extinct thousands of years earlier, scientists have discovered by carbon-dating their bones. Since there are no indications that humans inhabited Tilos during

the time of the last elephants (3700 b.C.), that might be they reason they survived so long .... The manager of the museum and the cave has retired, so we cannot visit the cave. The research director has died. And due to the present situation in Greece, this investigation has no priority alas .....

We have a drink in one of the scarce tavernas of this very sleepy village. When we walk back to the bus stop way before it is due to leave, we see that the bus is already there. Hastily we get in and it takes off 15 min. early. We do take another route, to Ag. Antonios and Eristos. It returns to Megalo Chorio, but not to the village centre, only the school outside the village. Then it returns to Livadia. We are glad we took it so early, because we still don't understand Greek logic. In Livadia we have lunch on the plateia were we chat with some English people who come to Tilos every year for the last 30 years. After the siesta in our room we have a drink on the plateia and dinner in the same restaurant as yesterday.

Thursday morning we pack our little suitcase and settle the bill with young Andreas. When I tell him I did not finish the bottle of wine from the mini bar (Too much, I say, but in fact it was awful) he presents us with a new bottle as a gift from the house. That bottle we dump in a container at the harbour. After breakfast we say goodbye to Crook Eyes Johnny and wait for our ferry. We sail back on a flat sea and after a nice rucola salad for lunch on Kalymnos and some errands at the Lidl's and Cash & Carry's on Samos we arrive home at half past 7. There we sweep the dirt from the bottom of the swimming pool and start filling it.

Friday we clear up and put the garden chairs outside. We try to contact mayor Kostas because the water flow has stopped. Just a lot of sand. Towards the evening the water comes back again, at first with another load of sand. I get the impression that mayor Kostas has used the filling of our pool to empty the reservoir and give it a good cleaning. As soon as the pool is filled we can bring on the robot to clean out all the sand. The only activity that day comes from ladycat Debby who is in heat and is chased by Nick & Simon (no, not the populair Dutch singers but two one-eyed tomcats). At Dimitri's aloe vera plantation all is quiet. He has probably run ut of money for the next step.

Saturday it is cloudy but warm. High time for my everlasting battle against the dandelions, who used the few drops of rain that have been falling to grow at least half a meter and to form dozens of flowering buds. Only this time they get a dose of herbicide on their heads if I can reach them. At noon it starts to rain but I continue till the upper part of the yard is done; it is not cold. The afternoon the rain keeps falling. In the evening I watch the Eurovision Song Contest for a change. But it's the same old song: the nice ballads (a.o. from the NL, France and Sweden) get some points, but the Eastern European countries still vote for each other so the non-inspiring contribution from Ukraine wins. I have enough of it for the next 5 years. Also because the tv programme ends at 2 o'clock in the night over here.

Sunday it is cloudy but dry and warm so I continue to decapitate dandelions and thistles. The pool gets filled at a steady pace in the meanwhile. I take some large garbage bags to the garbage container at the road and fill them with the stuff that people have thrown down besides the containers (like leftovers from a renovataion). These bags I throw in the containers so at the next round it will be all taken away.

And it will not look like a garbage dump anymore. The litter along the road is minimal this year. I suspect this is due to a subsidized action to prevent it, in which Skouraiika has recently participated. When the pool is almost full, we enter the robot into it to clear away the sand. However, the robot is nearing its end, so I have to correct it with the broom every 5 minutes to prevent it from staying stuck at the pool walls. When it has eventually removed 95% of the sand we remove it again. Then we continue with cleaning and stowing the robot, cleaning the filters, adding chlorine tablets in their holders, and getting the pump into action - its tubes are filled with air and it takes some skills to replace the air with water. The new landing net, that I bought via the internet, is too coarse for the little mosquitoes, so I sow the rest of the old net into it. So 2x a day the insects can be removed from the water surface. Yes, it is hardship maintaining a pool! Evermore since the thermometer shows that the water temperature is 23°C. Brrrrr.... some solar heating to be done at first.

Monday the house gets a big cleaning and we prepare the guestroom for our guests the coming weeks. Tuesday we pick up E., a former colleague, at the airport. After a frappé at the scenic harbour in Pythagorion we drive home via the coastal route and Spatharei. In the evening we have the traditional welcoming dinner at Themo's in Balos. Wednesday we take a trip to Drakei. The weather is very sunny again, back from Monday. Although the wind makes it a bit chilly from time to time. We have lunch at Limnionas on our way back, and E. takes a swim in the brilliant blue sea over there. In the evening we are invited at retired Manolis' and his Swiss lady friend Anne. The conversation is a mixture of English, French and Greek. Thursday we visit Manolates and Vathy; Friday is a lazy day. Saturday it is cloudy with some drops of rain. We drive to Hera's temple in Iraeion and have lunch on a pita with gyros at Robinson's in Pythagorion. In the evening we have souvarkis at Nikos in Skouraiika and a drink at Kostas' the mayor. Saturday night it really rains from time to time and also Sunday brings us some drops of rain with a distant rolling thunder. We fix the water supply in the garden so we don't have to carry around the watering can for the plants anymore.

Monday we drive to Perri and the unpaved road further along the coast. After that we drive up to Spatharei and Pyrgos. There, we have a look. We ask a few old ladies whether they know when the Culinary Festival will be held. Somewhere around Maria Assumption (15th August), is all they know. After a frappé we drive back home. In the evening we have our yearly lobster meal at Themo's after a drink at Tia's hotel in Balos.

Tuesday we take E. back to the airport and pick up our next guest, my old study mate M. Again we start with a coffee at Manolis & Effie's and a visit to the statue of Pythagoras at the harbour. The weather has changed into the well-known Greek type: sunny and not too much wind. Wednesday we make a big tour around the Karvounis. The unpaved roads are in a very bad shape, I contemplate that we last drove them in 2014 and not after the heavy rains of January 2015. The special orchids Sally mentioned to me are done flowering, alas. Next year then! We have an elaborate lunch at Kokkari, with fresh fish and pork tenderloin in green pepper sauce. A few army helicopters fly over, looking for refugees, but none found so to see. Thursday we have some odd jobs in and around the house. As M. is just such an enthusiastic

swimmer as our previous guest, I am persuaded to try the pool. The water is 25°C. To me it is rather cold so I get out after 6 rounds.

Friday we visit the archeological museum in Pythagorion and the surrounding excavations, completed with a lunch at the old plateia in Mytilinii. In the evening M. and I walk back along Memory Lane of our student years and we get the idea to organize a reunion. Saturday we first make a souvenir-buying stop at Votsalakia and then drive to the centuries old plantain in Nikoloudes and the pond in the wood near Tsourlei. We have coffee at Lekka's at the terrace with an overview of the valley towards Karlovassi. Sunday we have a lazy day, as the spring pétanque tournament is cancelled for various reasons. We have a drink at G. & D's, where newly arrived C. & R. join us. After that we have dinner at Mylos Balos with the seven of us. The place is crowded to the brim with known and unknown people. I have a hair rising moment as the sister of last year deceased H. arrives, she looks just like here. Amanda and her family join her, so I am finally able to hand her the DVD of the Memorial we held for H.

Monday we walk along the Potami river as our last outing. In the old chapel we see that pre-Christian Corinthian pillars (with the acanthus leaves chiseled out at the top) are used for its construction. At the end of the path some brave Germans get into the icecold mountain stream to admire the 1.5 m high waterfall a bit further along. We turn around and have a coffee at the Hippy's which indeed still has some elements of the hippy age like Indian prints and decorations. M. paddles around the clear blue sea water.

Tuesday it is time to take M. to the airport again. We combine it with a lunch at Esperides where philanthropist Stamatis runs the place. We have arranged to meet there with F.'s stamp collecting mate A. from North Brabant who is on holiday on Samos. After a long chat we drive home, where in the evening we enjoy the sounds of silence.

## **June 2016**

In the meantime the temperature has been gradually going up, maximum during the day just above 30°C. Around noon we close the shutters to keep the house cool. The pool water also gets warmer, so I can resume my nice swims at a water temperature of almost 27°C. Wednesday we clear away the gear used for the guests and in the evening we have a farewell dinner for G. & D. The retiring mayor of the nice little town of Capelle a/d IJssel also drops by. Thursday F.'s stamp collecting mate A. visits us; I have prepared bami noodles with chicken for lunch. We eat it in the shade of the pergola at the side of the pool. Later in the afternoon I do not have my usual siesta, but I fight on to get the channels back on tv, for monopolist Dutch satellite tv provider Canal Digital has changed settings for the umpteenth time. After a lot of "errors" I am finally able to download them. Then we only have to wait for CD to reactivate our subscription card ..... Grrrr! To cool down, literally and figuratively, I swim my lapses in the pool. I spent the major part of the next morning on it too, to arrange the channels like they used to be.

Saturday I run another kill-the-dandelions-round. Due to the draught there aren't many left. Saturday evening we traditionally have souvlakis at Kostas' tavern in

Skouraiika. Sunday I start to clear out the Elzenpad, Els' Path and/or Alder Path. Only for an hour, because of the heat. In the evening we watch football, a friendly game between Belgium and Norway. Monday I continue the work at the Elzenpad. We drive to Ormos for some shopping.

Tuesday we have another jeep safari along the Kerkis with our Swiss neighbours C. & R. First we walk with them to the bakery in Koumeika, to see where it is. The baker is a young lady who speaks perfect English. She's got nice croissants so we buy two of them. At Ormos we pick up an elderly lady who wants to go to Marathokampos. We get some figs as a thank-you. Then up the mountain we go. Some parts of the road are bad, but not as bad as around the Karvounis. At a chapel the men have a chat with two young men who are cleaning it. Because tomorrow it is 40 days after Easter and they celebrate that over there. After taking some pictures, a.o. of the giant flowering *Dracunculus*, we arrive at the tavern of the old lady at Kosmadei. She provides us with some nice mezedes along our drinks. As goodbye we get a little bag of cherries. Via Nikouloudes with the old plantain and the pond down in de woods we arrive at Lekka. There we have an omelet for lunch. In the meanwhile. R. tells us that "our" Debby has become the mother of 3 sturdy kittens of now 6 to 7 weeks old. They come and play a lot on C. & R.'s terrace and balcony. Probably their nest is close by. R. shows us some pictures of them.

We drive back home and have a rest. When I come out for a swim I see that it is cloudy with a moderate wind. Not at all nice, so I skip the swimming. In the evening the six of us have dinner at Themo's for H. & J.'s farewell. Mimis, Themo's father, presents us all with a big cucumber each. I pickle them some days later. Wednesday there is a strong wind but it is sunny. In the afternoon the wind gathers strength into a small summer storm. I clear out quite a stretch of the Elzenpad. As a matter of fact, there are not much weeds due to the continuing draught. H. drops by to bring us their food left-overs. He tells us that there are road works going on, at the last unpaved stretch. First the wall of the little stream was fortified with cement, and now we hope that they'll have enough to cover the whole of the unpaved piece with asphalt.

In the afternoon the wind strengthens into a small summer storm, the Meltemi. Late in the afternoon I drive up to Mayor Kostas in Skouraiika with H. to help him out with the application for his won water meter. Some official paper is needed that H. does not have, but Kostas promises to see what he can do. At night it is too chilly to sit outside. The next day there also is a lot of wind, though a bit less. The pool water has cooled down to 24°C. All sorts of plants and twigs have been blown into the pool, so time for a major cleaning. We wave goodbye to H. & J. and after that we go and water the plants at R. & D.'s and G. & D.'s. In the meanwhile we have a good look at the works at the road. We hope that next Friday the whole stretch is covered with asphalt. After that we drive up to C. & R.'s to have a look at the kittens. I continue working at the Elzenpad. At night we stay inside and do some reading, it still is too chilly outside.

Friday the wind is far less but it is clouded. Good weather to work on the Elzenpad and the pool. I finish the Elzenpad and I have enough energy left to make a mokkabavarois of leftovers. We see a truck with cement & pouring equipment drive down. When we go for watering the plants of the neighbours, we see that the side wall of the

stream has been completed and also some 10 metres more of the road is covered with asphalt. Still no completely paved road to our house.

Saturday night we have souvlakis at Safira & Nikos' with C. & R. and later on a drink at mayor Kostas'. We go home early since the EC Football has started. Earlier today C. had watched Albania - Switzerland at our place. It is a nice change since tv has changed into the dull summer programming for over almost a month now.

The weather changes for the better and the pool water warms up 1°C every day. I take off all the covers of the cushions of the garden chairs, wash and iron them and put them back on. Since there are 16 of them it keeps me busy for a while. Monday it is clouded but there is no wind as we have dinner on the hill at C. & R.'s. The little kittens come out and show their newly learned tricks. In the night it starts to rain with a lot of wind. Tuesdays it still is clouded with some wind. We drive to the Lidl's for our biweekly shopping. After that we have lunch at the new restaurant of Dutch Emmy at the back of Ireon. It now has an international kitchen, not the pizza-joint that she ran at the corner in Chora. F. heartily devours a plate of spaghetti carbonara, I enjoy big scampis in a sweet&sour curry sauce.

Wednesday it is warm and sunny again. High time to scrub away the last rain-and-sand spatters of the season (?) on the blinds and windows. Tomorrow the windows will be washed. Aris and C. drop by to put the sign of the Elzenpad back in its place, anchored in a pile of cement (It was blown down last winter). After that Aris repairs a leaking tap and installs the timer for the watering of the garden. In the evening C. watches the second match of Switzerland at our place.

In the second half of June it really gets warm. We switch on the fans and only sleep under a sheet. The water of the pool has a very nice temperature, it is not cold anymore when you dive in. Psylotakis drops by for the keys of R. & D.'s to fix something over there. I show him that the left lamp of the pool has gone broke again. Luckily he mentions the word "guaranty" himself. I also show him the cover of an electricity connection for the pump which has crumbled and broken in the scorching sun. In the evening a few jet-fighters race over our house, very low. Practising, probably .....

Rodopi's Giannis drops by with a dozen eggs. In exchange for an ouzaki. I bake a ginger cake with some of the eggs. Saturday C. & R. pass by to say goodbye, their three week holiday has come to an end. The temperature crosses the 40°C in the shade, but due to the wind it is bearable. The temperature of the pool water stays nice despite the wind. Apart from the necessary household chores we do not do much. Reading, watching football. The swimming is upgraded to two times a day. Mondays neighbours R. & D. arrive by car which is packed to the brim. We celebrate their return with a dinner at Esperos in Balos. Wednesday R. & D. come to our place to watch tv. We see how Belgium qualifies for the eight finals of the EC football, be it with some difficulty.

After about 9 days the heat wave diminishes a bit (highest maximum day temperature 41.5°C in the shade). Friday night we want to sit outside but we are chased away by hordes of flying ants. They even come into the house via the roof beams. But luckily it only lasts one evening. Saturday there are some small clouds in the sky during the

day. In the evening it cools down to a very agreeable temperature. At night the temperature drops to 24°C. Sunday morning it even is really overcast at sunrise, but the clouds dissolve after an hour. In the evening it cools down nicely. We eat at Giannis Mylos at Balos and after that watch the match Belgium - Hungary with R. & D. and young S. & P. The Red Devils win the game in a professional way. We almost had to go home to watch, since German Joachim, after watching the previous game (Germany - Slovakia), had turned off the television thereby completely disorganizing the reception of the satellite. Giannis and his ladyfriend, swearing softly under their breath, with the aid of a telephone consultation of their IT-man, are barely able to set up the equipment again, seconds before our match starts.

Mondays, when we drive up to C. & R.'s to feed the cats, we find that neighbour L. has already arrived with a friend. With a cup of coffee we exchange the latest news. In the afternoon I bake two Tartes Tatin with peaches. Tuesday we take the car to the garage for service, and make our biweekly shopping tour at the Lidl's. After that we try the Asiatic restaurant Jasmin Garden in Kokkari for lunch, which proves to be an excellent idea. At the end of the afternoon we drive past R.'s at Koumaradei, His wife E. had had an accident. R. is very sad, even the dog Rex is depressed. We try to cheer them up as much as we can; E. will recover completely but it will take some time; Wednesday, after a pedicure of Vasso, we drive to Pythagorion with R. & D. and retired Manolis to stuff ourselves with the superb sushis of Unan the sushi bar.

Thursday neighbour D. arrives on his quad behind which he has attached a large trailer, filled with bags of chopped up wood for the Elzenpad. I think I will spread it out just before the autumn rains start, otherwise it will blow away.

## **July 2016**

I start the new month with a visit to neighbour D. to have a look at the stinging pain in my hip. It proves to be an inflammation of the bursa up there. He gives me a shot in the hip to cure the inflammation and some pills for the pain. I already feel a lot better. Handy, an MP als neighbour. In the evening we gather with a large group to watch Belgium -Wales at Giannis Mylos in Balos again. To the disappointment of the Belgians and to the joy of the young Welsh ladies at the other table Belgium loses. We now will support Iceland, we decide. The next day, Saturday, the temperature rises again to considerable height. D. & L. and their guest come to help us spread out the chopped up wood along the Elzenpad. When the temperature has dropped again I will spread it out somewhat better with a rake. In the evening we have souvlakis at mayor Kostas' up in Skouraiika together with R. & D. and their guests. Jacobo and his Bulgarian wife Darina show up, as usual. He tells us that the violinist from Armenistis, Ikarai, will perform again at the Culinary Festival in Pyrgos. So we hope we can talk to him to see if he is interested to play at the party of the septagenarians next year. Sunday I visit neighbour D. for another shot in my hip; they will leave for Belgium that evening.

Monday it is F.'s 69th birthday which we celebrate with a dinner for almost the entire παρέα at Themo's in Balos. The grandchildren sit at a separate table, continuously chatting and whatever youngsters do these days. The wind is so strong that the salad is blown from the table. Tuesday morning we drive to Karlovassi, where Maria cuts

our hair, extra short. We pay the fire insurance and on the advice of our lawyer we drop by the accountant in Marathokampos. There his assistant Kristina tells us that property tax is due in September. At the Town Hall we pay the water bill of our neighbours D. & L. Then it is high time for a splash in the pool at home. The wind cools down the water a little bit, but not much (27°C). F. watches the Tour de France, I look at the EC Athletics. R. & D. drop by with their guests next Wednesday to have a look at our house. They tell us that they have picked up a stray dog for the summer. Retired Manolis also drops by. Thursday H. arrives with the grandchildren for a swim. They continue Whatsapping while standing in the pool. The wind, the meltemi, is very strong, the pool water cools down to 26°C. Friday and Saturday we take it easy and lazy around. Saturday night we have dinner at Kyriakos in his Cypriot restaurant in Balos as an early farewell. Sunday we clear away the garden furniture and I take a last swim in the cold water (26°C). We turn in not too late. Monday we rise very early. After a screaming baby, a delayed flight and an extra change of trains we arrive at our house in Maastricht rather tired.

## **August 2016**

For the first time we travel with only two small suitcases. But they still are relatively heavy, so we breathlessly reach the top of the high stairs to the walkway over the railtracks at the backside of the station in Maastricht. Because the elevator doors would not shut and so the elevator would not go up. F. & B. had dropped us there because the front side of the station is undergoing a major make over. Obstacle 2 meets us shortly thereafter: despite our phone call earlier that day F.'s free travel day for August still has not been put in the system, so he has to buy a ticket. We will have to file a complaint to get the money back. Obstacle 3 is a major reconstruction of the railways around Schiphol conveniently planned during the summer holidays, so we have to travel via Amsterdam Central Station. There we encounter several information boards without information, a broken and an absent escalator (obstacle 4). So we arrive at Schiphol Airport with only 15 minutes delay, at half past midnight. After a very long queue at check-in, pouring rain at take-off, noisy children and a silly orthodox Jew (obstacle 5a to 5d) we arrive in Athens bathing in a nice sun. Before our next leg, I observe the fuss going on at the gate next to ours. The man of an orthodox muslim family makes a lot of trouble. I suspect that it is about the fact that the women are completely covered in clothes, including a veil. The Greek ground staff is implacable however: the face must be shown to compare with the passport. Eventually the women lift their veils for about 3 seconds in front of a female staff member in a corner of the gate. We fly to Samos in a relaxed way; among the passengers is a family with twin babies of less than 3 weeks old. We make our shopping round and at home clear away the items for the refrigerator and the freezer. After a short shower we have a lovely dinner at Kyriakos with all sorts of shrimp plates (and a tuna fish steak) while we elaborately chat up with neighbours R. & D. On our way back we clearly spot a jackal who runs over the country road. To welcome us too?

At home we read on Teletext that we have missed out - to our joy - on obstacles 6 and 7 at Schiphol Airport: strike of the ground staff and a big computer failure of the luggage handling. We fall into our beds like dead weights.

The next morning I only wake up near 10 o'clock. We clear away everything, put the garden furniture outside and I do a quick vacuum cleaning to get rid of the sand and the dead flies. Day-max 37°C in the shade. Although there has been a lot of wind, the water in the pool is above 29°C. High time for a swim at the end of the afternoon. For dinner we have sushi from the Lidl's, easy. Cheap compared to those of the sushi bar Unan's at Pythagorion, but of course not so special. Not bad though. The wind is strong but that disappears halfway through the night. As usual.

Thursday we start with a visit to our garage for the annual measurement of the exhaust gases of our car. After that we buy Leffe Blond Belgian beer and Metsovo smoked cheese at the AB's at Karlovassi, and some more groceries. At the butcher we buy the delicious bifteki and liver. We also order a new cleaning robot for the pool; of the old one the driver's program does not work anymore. In the afternoon we deal with some emails and telephone calls. The end of the afternoon gives the usual swimming round. The old robot has meanwhile gotten rid of most of the leaves and sand, be it with some persuasion. The water has cooled down to 28°C due to the strong wind, but it is still very nice.

The next day, Friday, the water temperature has risen to 29°C again. Neighbours D. & L. drop by to chat up. They will drive to Pythagorion that evening, to attend "the Battle of Samos". I wonder what they will think of it. We go to the more intimate but far more nice village feast in Koumeika which is always on the same day (August 5th). For the occasion we are invited to Aris' table, together with neighbours R. & D. and Aris' sister, brother-in-law and niece. He also picks up Katrina when she has finished working at Stella the Cypriotic restaurant. She however is so tired that she leaves after a short while, together with the children Remos and Rea. We are home at half past 2, take one glimpse at the opening of the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro and roll into bed.

Saturdays we get up rather late and watch the last part of the replay of the opening of the Olympic Games and the beginning of the competitions. After a refreshing dive into the pool we are picked up by R. & D. to eat souvlakis up in Skouraiika at mayor Kostas'. We are back home not too late. Sunday I eventually find the energy to do some household works. Friends of neighbours C. & R., who stay in their house, come to say hello. It is a young couple with children of 5 and 7 years old. When they have lost their shyness, they cast eager looks at the swimming pool. When I suggest they take a swim they are in the pool in no time, equipped with a floating ring etc. Their parents have trouble getting them out to continue their day. After that we watch some more sports. The maximum temperature in the afternoon still is around 39°C in the shade, with only a little bit of wind.

The second week of August somewhat cooler weather is forecast, but that does not come true. The max of the day are between 37°C and 39°C in the shade, with only a little bit of wind, mostly in the afternoon. We do nothing much but the most urgent household work and watch the Olympic Games. The Dutchies perform not as good as expected but there still are some nice moments. Tuesday we go for cocktails at

Makoula's in Balos, after a dinner at Themo's. The rest of the week we practically do nothing. Friday we drive to Votsalakia to get some money from the ATM, and we have a look at the self-adopted dog at neighbours R. & D.'s. Saturday the wind gets fierce and brings down the temperature a bit. We have souvlakis at Safira and her son Nikos' in Skouraiika. Neighbour N. and one of her daughters R. also join us. Amercian-Greek Cindy from Boston has finally arrived, and with her and grandma Stamatina we agree to come and record the latter's life story one day. In the meantime our water supply has stopped, and when we meet mayor Kostas I learn from his long story that the floater of the reservoir has gone broke. Sunday the water slowly returns but the piping now is filled with sand for a great part. We try to get rid of it by the trick of open-close-open-close the main supply tap, but keep having trouble with the tap in the kitchen and the toilet. We call Dimitris the plumber. He can only come Mondays, so we wait. Pedicure Vasso does arrive that Sunday afternoon, but it will probably be one of the last times. Her daughter has to go to school in Thessaloniki, where her husband works and where they live during the winter.

After the disappointing performance of the Dutch athletes my taste for the Olympic Games has gone, I hardly watch anymore. Monday Dimitris arrives to check upon our failing water system and fortunately he fixes it in a very short time. A combination of chalk and sand caused all the trouble. I ask him to replace the toilet with another one with a higher seating but he advises us to bring that from the Netherlands since that type is almost unknown here.

As the wind still is strong, the pool water has cooled down to 27°C. Refreshing, some people might call it. The air temperature does not exceed 34°C. It is the first time in a long period that after sunset we do not have to get all the windows wide open to bring the inside temperature down. But that only lasts for a short while; the days thereafter the wind gradually gets less strong and the day max. temperature rises to about 38°C in the shade. The advantage is that the temperature of the pool water rises half a degree every day. The nights are a bit cooler though.

Wednesday we already stay on Samos for a little bit more than 2 weeks, so high time for a shopping round to the Lild's. On the way back we traditionally have a drink on the terrace of Manolis and Effi, and a pitta with gyros for lunch at Robinson's. We discovered that neighbour N. and her daughter R. are crazy on sushi, so that is a perfect excuse to visit the Unan sushi bar in Pythagorion again, before they fly back. We indulge in the heavenly food and filled to the brim we have a drink at the harbour before we go home. The terraces are very crowded, for it is also the night of the ancient Hera procession.

Thursday I bake a Dutch apple pie as a dessert after the grilled steaks on Friday at R. & D.'s we are invited to, with Judith and Franz from the Danube Monarchy (officially they live in Switzerland, there used to be an Austrian in their παρέα and Judith has Hungarian roots). To my surprise Judith has the cell phone number of the violinist of Ikaria, and after some efforts I get to talk to him the next Saturday. No he will not perform in Pyrgos that evening and yes he is willing to come and play at a party at our place some day (next year for the septuagenarians). We still drive to the Culinary Festival in Pyrgos that evening, where it is already very crowded. We do not find a table for ourselves, just a few chairs next to the table of Manolis and Anna. We get a

plate of food, but it is quite unhandy to eat it just out of your hand. The band and the dances aren't as good as last year, so we decide to drive to Balos for the annual Onion Festival. Unfortunately they've run out of hand painted mugs this year. We have a drink while watching the dancing and the music and chat with the people into the small hours of the night. Sundays we take a rest from all of this.

Then suddenly things go wrong concerning my health. I am hastily admitted in the small hospital in Vathy, where they take care of the basic problems. After some 4 days I am transferred to a hospital in Athens by a military aircraft, together with F., after a jumpy ride in an old ambulance. The crew of the airplane is very helpful but it is still a very uncomfortable trip, on a wobbly stretcher with heat and noise and diesel fumes. And then another jumpy ride in an old ambulance.

The in-take ward in the hospital is crowded to the brim, so it takes a while before I am through the whole procedure. It is evening when I get to my ward. F. leaves to find a hotel nearby and call the travel insurance company (again). Friday morning I undergo surgery and after that I have to recover. The next days we are able to squeeze some information out of the doctors and nurses. Which is a matter of finding out which person to ask the right questions. It all comes down to me stabilizing. When I call my doctor in the NL, we agree that I ask an English speaking doctor over here to call her to exchange information. That doctor however tells me that he cannot make international calls from the hospital. Upon which I grab my cell phone and call my Dutch doctor again. It takes however some 10 minutes to get connected to her and in the meanwhile the Greek doctor has returned to his office. When I finally get hold of the Dutch doctor, I ask a nurse to get the Greek doctor, but the nurse declares he has disappeared. Fortunately he drops in some 15 seconds later so the two can talk. I get the impression that the conversation is quite useful. F. flies up and down to Samos to collect our things.

What strikes me is that everybody yells at each other: the nurses to each other (and sometimes to a patient), the doctors at each other during discussions about the patients (just beside your bed), and the visitors at each other and at the patients. In between the loud and non stop ringing of cell phones which are answered by yelling into the phone. No offense but it is a lot of noise.

I undergo some more investigations and finally it is announced that I am stable. I am released out of the hospital and spend some days in a hotel room with F. Which is quite an improvement compared to the shabby old hospital. Then it is another struggle to get all the paperwork in order and eventually we fly to the Netherlands for further recuperation.