

In the wake of Odysseus

A voyage in an open 4.45 Simoun Regatta sailingboat

By Gijs van Kemenade

July/August 1988

SATURDAY 9 JULY 1988

We are in a very little village, Boukári on the island of Corfu. What happened before we arrived? I started in the second half of January, a letter to and from Eric in Haarlem, letters to and from France, two visits to Haarlem, once to Eindhoven, once to Veghel, months of preparing the boat, 14 people asked for advice or help, read two books (Duxbury's Lugworm), visited all kinds of enterprises to collect

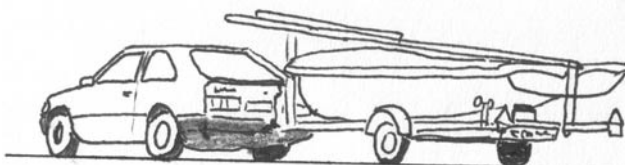


the stuff, drove 2800 kilometres with the boat on the trailer, two prosecutions, this because of the boat on the 18% slope of the Wurzenpaß in Austria and the other because I ignored an overtaking sign. The policeman could hardly explain our mistake. We had to pay \$ 0,75.

Meanwhile, the owner of the restaurant beats on a table. I didn't know what was going on. Henriëtte understands it immediately: the crickets should be quiet.

We didn't reach Igoumenitsa for a few days. The last 88 kilometres driving was too much. We went to a terrace to have a drink. Nice sign-language with the owner, named Zisiz. Very nice chap. Woman and children made it complete. Neighbour Joannis, who spoke German, knew Breda (the city where we used to live): two months in jail. He said that he was innocent. We slept on the roof of the restaurant. In the morning a nice breakfast and we made an appointment to visit Eleousia again on the return journey.

We arrived in a very hot Igoumenitsa. 47 degrees in the shade! Almost impossible to cross the street. We had to arrange a parkingplace for the car. A



hotelowner invited us to park the car under a tree. I asked him for permission to park the car for a month; his face changed completely. To a campsite. For \$ 58.50 it was possible to park the car for one month. On the beach we start to prepare the boat for the voyage. In the neighbourhood was a very large house with a huge garden. I went to the owner to ask for a parkingplace. It was oké. So easy, I didn't expect. Everything was arranged even an unpaid parkingplace under a tree beside a clever-looking



donkey. I drove the boat complete with mast to the sea. Like a bolt from the blue fate became a reality. I drove against an electric cable! With a lot of noise the mast fell down. I couldn't believe what had happened at that moment. I left my car and saw the mast on starboard. The tarpaulin was destroyed. Had the last months of working been for nothing?

The damage was small. Miraculously the electric cable was not broken. The compass shoulder didn't bring happiness. It broke six times during the preparations. What was broken before the voyage started? Exact. I was able to repair the forestag. The last night before the seavoyage we didn't sleep very well because of the mosquitoes. The last job was the tent. I had to fix a lot of "spoons". They are the connection between the tent and the boat. Unfortunately we missed ten "spoons". We went to a shop. No spoons. We got a Greek boy who guided us to another shop. An old man showed his collection. We chose a small type. He wouldn't have packed it very carefully if he had known that I should destroy the spoons after opening the package. I only needed the handle of the spoon.

We took the car to the Greek family, had a nice talk and an original Greek coffee. The coast-hopping could start now! We launched the boat and left Igoumenitsa with a little NNW-breeze. We left the bay to cross the Corfu Channel. From the mainland to the Isle of Corfu. We wore wetsuits to protect us against the sun. Crossing the Channel in a constant course of 27 degrees. It was sailing for hours. Alas, I didn't look at my watch. Without problems we landed

at Ak Voukári. Boat on the coast and we fixed the boomtent. A walk to a restaurant.

SUNDAY 10 JULY

A bad night. At half past six it was too hot to stay inside the tent. It is windy, I guessed Beaufort 4 when I looked at the white tops of the waves. We sailed. It was rough through the waves. We anchored near Mesongi.

The temptation of a 'goriatiki' was too strong. The wind was increasing, I guessed Beaufort.

From my table I looked at the boat. I admired "Bruce". The anchor broke.

"Bruce" disappointed me. Where should we stay this night? The sea was rough, the beach was too small to spend-the night

MONDAY 11 JULY

It was yesterday an adventure with just decisions. We sailed reefed back to the harbour of Boukári. Because of the reef we had less speed. In the enormous waves you had to go faster. The distance was small, the waves were huge.

Some fisherman helped us to get a safe place. The dark fisherman:"Where do you sleep this night?" I showed him the boat and said: "Here!" He looked unbelievably. What was he thinking at that moment?

Another fisherman was angry about nothing. Was 'Bruce' too micro? The situation of our 4.45 Simoun? We don't know. Later in the evening he came to ask if everything was oké. The wind whistles across and under the tables. A fisherman told us that it was Beaufort 7. We eat a delicious 'souvlaki.'

After dinner a dark, ominous night. We walked to the storm to spend the night on the water. We had a safe feeling behind the dam.

Unfortunate, I fell between the boat and the quay. In spite of the bad weather we slept very well. In the morning I looked at the same sea: the calm after the storm.

The next place was Ak Kondrakia. A week before a terrible fire destroyed the tourist-season. We ate a pizza between the destroyed houses, trees,etc.

TUESDAY 12 JULY

A wonderful night. At a meter from the water you don't hear the sea! It is like paradise! I tried to receive the English/Greek weatherforecast. I didn't recognize any word about the weather. Henriëtte discovered a little leak in our foodcompartment. A little water inside. No problem because everything was waterproof. The other compartments are 100% waterproof.

We left the beach when the first tourists arrived. We sailed with a NNW-breeze to Corfu-town. We saw thousands of hotelrooms.



We arrived in the marina of Corfu. I asked permission to stay a few days. No problem, no costs because we are too small! We stayed between enormous yachts. Near to us was the 'Zolana'. A big twomast from the Niarchos-family. Micheal Hiss, a member of the



crew, invited us to visit the ship. Very nice to see this ship. Michael: 'No sailing, constant full speed with the two engines'.

WEDNESDAY 13 JULY

I repaired the forestag at the sailingclub of Corfu. They made a new 3 mm stag for me. The female members had a lot of interest. They sail in their '420' sailingboats only a few miles out the coast.

FRIDAY 15 JULY

The sun was burning again. Helios was working very hard on our heads. I will mention the equipment today.

Hatch foredeck: sleeping bags, airmattresses, reserve paddle, dishes, pans, some games, batteries, radio, seamaps and logbook,
 Sack steeringboard: long john, rainclothing, trapezethrousters, surfboots, life-jacket, container with cameras, fins,
 Sack portside: wet suits, rain clothing, surf boots, life-jacket, spinacker,



Hatch steeringboard: clothing
 Hatch portside front: food, container with films, reserve equipment, gas
 Hatch steeringboard transom: towels, shoes, knife, waterproof light, toiletarticles
 Hatch portside transom: safety rockets, tent, tools, divingmask, snorkel, reserve anchor, books, gasburner
 Near transom: bucket with Bruce anchor, 30 meter line, 10 litres water

We sailed from Benitsa to Ak Levkumni. A lot of wind. Levkumni is a very simple port with white houses, a white quay and white ships. A splendid view; some women are selecting beans. Another was threshing straw and reeds. Not touristic at all. What a difference with Corfu-town. Nice that most tourists



stay together near the airport.

What a freedom at this moment. We "coast-hopped" as we wanted. The wind will bring us somewhere. It doesn't matter where.

The landscape here is again totally different. A lot of muds.

SATURDAY 16 JULY

Time seems to have stopped here. I can imagine that a-donkey is an important possession. Mostly women work with donkeys. Most men are in the pub. I planned a crossingcourse to the Isle of Paxi. When the weather was good, we crossed. We visited the village the last time. We saw a funeral. The realtives went to the cemetery and the clerics visited the terrace. Between the water and the bottles of beer 1 looked at the black bonnets. "Papas" they are called. It seems to be a public confession. All kinds of people came for a little talk. They don't have waterworks in this place. For hours and hours women carried water



to their houses. Suddenly one of them took the hand of Henriëtte. She smiled in a friendly way.

SUNDAY 17 JULY

Paxi was the destination. We arrived at Cape Kavos. It was very rough. Sailing a cape sometimes gives problems, but this time we didn't succeed. It was too late to sail to Paxi. Two different currents and a lot of

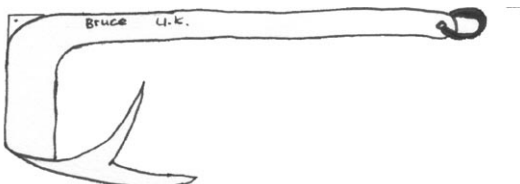


wind. The wind turns in all directions. We decided to go back to the mainland. Nisoi Sivota was the new destination. We sailed quickly with wind abeam. We couldn't find the harbour in the neighbourhood of the rocks. It is difficult to recognize land in front of a lot of Islands Suddenly we discovered a fishingboat. A returning fisherman always goes to a port.

MONDAY 18 JULY

A new destination we don't call anymore. We sailed in the direction of Parga. At first there was little wind. The huge waves brought us to Parga. I took photos between walls of water. Dolldrums: huge waves and little wind.

Suddenly we saw some yachts disappearing between



the rocks. A harbour! We arrived at the bay of Parga. Luffing in plané through the harbour. It wasn't show. The strong wind caused a spectacular arrival.

TUESDAY 19 JULY

Parga is a town built against the rocks. Beautiful to see. A lot of people think the same about it: very touristic. Sailing with free wind we went towards Preveza. We sailed for hours with the spinacker. Very comfortable! Near Kanali we saw a nice beach. It was late so we wanted to spend the night there.

Just before landing, we saw an enormous problem. Concrete!! Concrete just below sealevel! We couldnot return to the sea. I jumped into the water without surfingshoes. I tried to rescue the boat. Suddenly the boat came on my body and I was very afraid that I would break my legs because my feet stayed in the concrete. In the meanwhile Henriëtte was looking for a way to land. The concrete wasn't on the map. Later we heard in the village that the concrete was built by the Germans in the Second World War. They protected the coast against landing navyships. A big mistake on the Admiralty map!

WEDNESDAY 20 JULY

From the tent we looked at the concrete in the sea. How to reach the sea again? When I looked at the soles of my feet I counted on my left foot six cuts and seven cuts on the right. Some were reather deep. Henriëtte had bruises on her knee. What are we going



to do? Perhaps it is better to stay in an apartment in Spain for a few weeks. Oh now! This we don't like! I inspected the concrete under level. I was searching for a way to get out. Some Greek people helped us. It was an adventure, but Poseidon was helping us. Lugging to Preveza. We decided to land at the first place we should see. Mytika was the village where our wounds should heal. On the beach we discovered four cracks in the boat. They were about ten centimetres.

THURSDAY 21 JULY

The village was very small. Only a baker and a butcher. Preveza was seven kilometres to the south. I would hitchhike to organize the repairwork. First we had a cup of coffee together. After some minutes we were invited to sit at the table with some Greek men. Talked about the problems. George Kakiusis offered to bring us to Preveza. When they saw the small boat on the beach, they were very astonished 4.45 metres and then sailing on the sea? In Preveza we spoke to someone of a shiprepaircompany, named Tefas. He would repair it for \$350,-. Timoleon Papas told me in Italian that it was too much. He repaired the boat for \$ 35,-. He was a 63 years old weaver. He had worked for about 20 years with polyester. The Greek interest was enormous. Henriëtte counted 11 persons around the dinghy. The people in the village were talking about the trip and the price of Tefas. In the evening I seem to be Odysseus, talking about his voyage. Only Penelope was on board. Timoleon invited us later to get a cup of coffee. At such a moment you had to speak the Greek language.

FRIDAY 22 JULY

Mytika is small and the social control is big. It is strange that a lot of people know us. We have just arrived and they recognize, greet and invite us. This morning I was looking at a sailing fisherman. He was the only one on this area who sailed his fishingboat. He was an 81 years old retired seaman. He talked



about Rotterdam 1936. Very nice man. The only one who trusted our Simoun sailingboat.

It is a very,very small village; streetnames are not necessary with 700 inhabitants. In the evening we liked to walk together. 'This street?' 'No, we know someone and we prefer to walk. 'This street?' No, we also know someone! 'This street?' 'Oké, we know nobody!' This third street we took. The walking was very short because we met the Mpeintair-family. It was a very nice invitation. We got kilos of tomatoes.



Very nice but walking together was impossible. Helene Paptis liked to talk to us in her own language. She tried to teach us some words: trapezi, porteri, boukari, tenda, leludi.

SATURDAY 23 JULY

I promised Andreas a short sailingtrip. He translated a lot for us. At sea he was very quiet. The voyage to Lefkas was dangerous because of the rocks and

stones just above or below sealevel. The map showed it but we didn't trust the map anymore. We sailed straight to Lefkas I made a big navigationmistake.



We tried to reach the Channel of Lefkas but we were miles out! We had to sail further to the South. With the spinacker through the channel! Great! We were glad that we didn't meet another boat because the channel is rather narrow. We arrived at Nydri.

SUNDAY 24 JULY

We left this touristic colony very quickly. They just think of your money! On 'the road' to the somethingth island. Skorpios, the isle of the Onassis family, is a paradise. We had a nice swimming in one of the luxurious ports. We sailed between Meganissi and Lefkas. Poros was the destination. A village

with mainly Italian tourists. An Italian has his own travelhabits. Mostly luxury. 'Dov'e' la valigia nella barca? (Where are the suitcases in the boat?)

MONDAY 25 JULY

After the photosession of the Italian boys, we choose the sea. We like to sail to Fiscardo (Kefalonia) But the wind was just from that sailorsport. It was very windy. In spite of that we had no speed. This was caused by the strong current. We sailed to Arkudi. Just before rounding the cape on the eastside Henriëtte hung in the trapeze. For several hours. We had topspeed! Enormous waves didn't matter anymore. We sailed through and over them. Suddenly I saw an Italian ferryboat. Shall I wait? Not very comfortable in such huge waves. Shall we sail before the boat? We had a lot of speed. We sailed very safely in front of the ferryboat. Henriëtte didn't see the boat at all. She was in a wrong position to see it. When we crossed the ferryboat I told her about it. We heard later that it was Beaufort 6 (22 knots) that afternoon. We arrived in Frikes. We thought that we had finished the crossing. Suddenly very strong winds came from different directions. From a valley and from a slope. Ten feet very strong wind, ten feet no wind and so on. Henriëtte had to go for several seconds in the trapeze. Impossible! We capsized two times in a few minutes. After lowering the sails we kept the boat in a good position. I wanted to peddle to the quay but Fiona





Weeds helped us with her motorboat. She worked for a British Tourist organisation. Everyone in the village knew us in no time. Fiona invited us for a party at midnight in the house with the umbrella. First a very nice shower. Great after two weeks! Great to unsalt your hair after weeks!

In the harbour I met some Americans. "I am Dick Cooper from California I've seen you before!" What appeared? They saw us in full action on sea. Dick, Carl, Tom and Juliana were very enthusiastic.

TUESDAY 26 JULY

Again the terrace. Breakfast with the Americans. They took a lot of photographs. At the table, near the lighthouse, near the boat, etc. They should have boring photoimpressions. Too many photos of the two Dutch! Dick showed me a book about all kinds of Greek harbours. 'No problem, I'll copy it in the States and send it to the Netherlands!' It was getting time to leave Frikes. We were too well known here. Someone came to us. 'I've heard that you are one of the famous sailors.' I asked him: 'Who said that?' He answered: 'Everyone in the village.' Nice dinner at the terrace. Again some problems. Suddenly enormous waves. I didn't close the sacks!. The line was too short and a lot of water came into the boat and the sacks! This is also the life of the 'famous sailors'. It was impossible to sleep in the boat. No room to rent, no hotels. We found a sleepingplace near a little building on the

quay. Two barking dogs kept us awake. So another sleepingplace on a narrow wooden landingstage.

WEDNESDAY 27 JULY

Henriëtte is a real seamstress. For hours in the trapeze, brown, bleached salt hair, sleeping on a hard landingstage. We left Frikes early. Via Marmala Pt and Aphalles Bay to Kefalonia. A good orientation was necessary.

FRIDAY 29 JULY

With fright I looked at the date. Time flies quickly. Before you know you are working again! We sailed downwind from Fiscardo to Sami. On portside Ithaca and on starboard Kefalonia. Very comfortable with



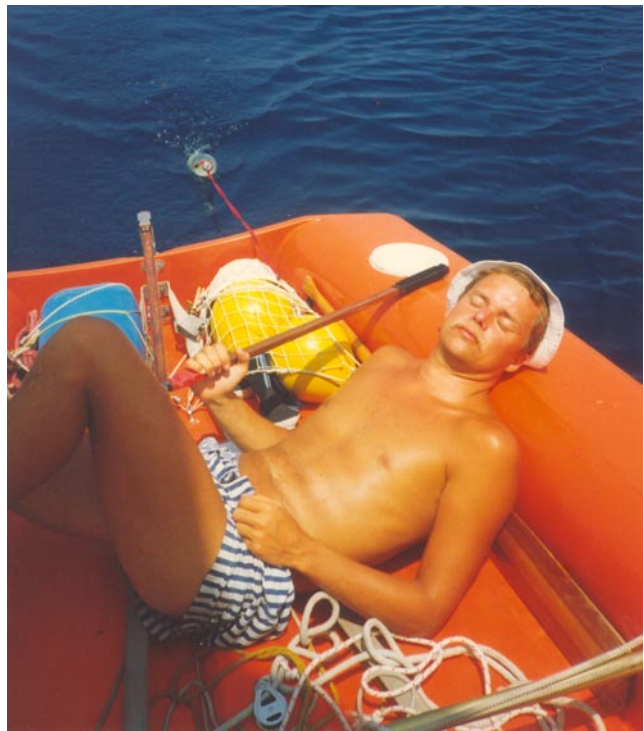
the spinacker. It was very funny when we entered the Bay of Sami. The ferryboat just arrived. With that boat we arrived five years ago with our good old friends Louis and Monique.

SATURDAY 30 JULY

Again Ithaca. This morning we left Sami with a lot of wind. Unfortunately no longer than half an hour. Hours and hours floating on the water. Zefyros didn't think of us. The high mountains are a natural obstacle. At the moment we stay on the inhabited southern part of the Isle of Ithaca. No wind for several days. Only the sun.

MONDAY 1 AUGUST

The night could be better. Suddenly I felt a slithering centipede on my legs. I jumped out of the tent. I took my pocket-torch and searched the whole tent. Sometimes the border between dreams and reality is vague. The animal was in the land of my dreamings. A few moments later, Henriëtte awoke: 'There are rats in the surroundings of the boat!' Again searching with the torch. Not inside but outside the boat. Nothing! Two days of paddling, swimming and sunning. No wind. After these days we arrived at Port Vathy, the capital of Ithaca.



TUESDAY 2 AUGUST

Atoko had been part of the programme for days, but we didn't reach it because of the wind and currents. We left with enough wind the splendid harbour of Vathy. After some hours no wind anymore. We stayed on a nice beach. We left at about five o'clock. Again in the direction of Atoko. It was a strange wind. Very nervous waves. A lot of wind but no speed. After



somemiles we decided to return. It was too late, no speed and the distance to Atoko was about 18 nautical miles. We spend the night on the beach. Made a

camp-fire, cooked in a hole. A beach for ourselves... We planned to sail via Atoko to Kalomo. We changed our plan and returned in Poros on Lefkas. Here we met again some Italians. Antonio and his friend talked about an Italian TV-programme. More words than action.

WEDNESDAY 3 AUGUST

An Italian on the beach: 'It is not a trip, it is an adventure!' We sailed from the southcape of Meganissi via Petellis and Kithro. With a quarering wind via Formicula to Kalomo. We came in a flock of sheep. A total different reception. Kalomo is a very rough island. Only three cars on the whole island. The inhabitants use horses, donkeys and motorbikes.



THURSDAY 4 AUGUST

A short sailing brought us to our destination Mytika (an other Mytika) With pain in our hearts we finished our trip. This because of the time. We had to return to the Netherlands; we had to work again.

EPILOGUE

We had a wonderful sailingmonth together in Greece. With a 4.45 meter boat it is magnificent sailing in the wake of Odysseus. We sailed about 250 nautical miles, perhaps more, we don't know. Next year we are preparing a new trip. Perhaps again Greece!

Gijs van Kemenade

