

upfront

We didn't consider this possibility. Next time, we will.

Last week, we were relaxing on Hydra, the Greek (Saronic) motor-vehicle-free island about an hour and a half from Athens by sea. Waking late, lingering over coffee. Hiking for hours. Eating grilled just-caught fish.

The small port filled each morning with day trippers. It emptied again as the sun faded and evening reset the collective calm. The dark night skies were quiet until midweek, the only interrupting sounds – an occasional footfall on a stone alleyway or the plaintive mew of a lonely cat.

By Wednesday, the persistent whistle of a strengthening breeze served as a lullaby, deepening our sleep. Thursday was uncharacteristically windy; angry water escaped the reliable boundaries of the harbor to the delight of local boys who frolicked in the novel spray. Friday, on top of a remote mountain ridge, our hats blew off our heads. Ferry service throughout the Greek Isles was suspended indefinitely; our only route home was suddenly closed.

I summoned all my travel tricks. Flights rebooked. Hotel cancelled; alternative accommodations secured, just in case we found a miracle conveyance across the bay. We went to bed Friday night with unpacked bags, as the gusts had intensified to those of a tropical storm. Somehow, I woke at 8:10 without the help of an alarm, to see the floating dots of a WhatsApp message being actively typed by Maria, our innkeeper-friend. "A boat is going at 9. Do you want to try it?" Sure.

No time to shower, just stuff everything in our cases, hug Lola and Maria, and race for the boarding ramp. We arrived and waited for an uncertain hour while a crowd began to cluster and build. The "boat," not yet cleared for departure, would be a 40-seater, not the usual high-speed, high-capacity, state-of-the-art craft. More like a tired fisherman's retirement plan. The calculus baffled me: 200 people, 50 tickets, a humanity blob rather than an orderly queue, and one chance at escape. Having accurately anticipated the future line-head, we made it on board and took seats along the starboard wall around midship. The waves were big and irregular, refusing a predictable frequency. Maybe it was an illusion of perspective, but with every broadside pitch and roll, our fellow travelers along the opposite windows seemed to dip down to the deep trough's waterline. We were conspicuously listing to port.

No safety briefing. No chatter. One timid question: "How long?" "Twenty-five minutes," the ununiformed crewman replied, which felt like an interminable prospective span. Eventually, the wave heights began to mercifully shorten, and we pulled up to a utilitarian dock.

We loaded into a van with a gregarious German couple and a young

Norwegian family of five. A happy, round driver who blared "Sweet Caroline" and "I Will Survive" and tutored us in the battles of the ancient Peloponnese took us halfway, where we changed vans and drivers and rode in relative quiet for the remainder of the trip. Thirty minutes by water and five hours by land, as opposed to the typical one-hour-15 on a boat and a short taxi ride, when the ferries run. But the airport hotel was surprisingly lovely; its restaurant and gym both first-rate; and we arrived in Savannah four days earlier than our original itinerary would have delivered us.

There's no place like home.

Until this morning, when a 5:30 a.m. text from our coffee shop (Cutters Point) announced: "There's an inch of water on the floor. The freezer broke." Our usual repair service is "unavailable" for nine days. The first part of the morning has been dedicated to determining if anyone around here does emergency commercial refrigeration work. (Evidently, Edge does, and they have arrived at the shop).

Amid these fits of chaos, there's tranquility that experience provides. Time has taught me there's always an imminent solution, life will continue to advance with relative disinterest in my personal predicaments, and it's great to have a reliable colleague on our team.

That's Philip. Schweier. Creative director of this magazine. Philip is unflappable. He's been with us for well over a decade. He and I are about the same age, yet he's willing to learn and try new things. Others have come and gone, but Philip has remained steadfast, trustworthy, capable, and deserving of praise, despite his reticence to seek it for himself.

A little about Philip...he's been doing graphic design for over 30 years, a graduate of SCAD. He loves cats – all animals, really – though he takes special daily care of a group of felines whose lives would be lacking without his attention. Philip's married to Heidi. He's a fan of Superman, super-heroes, and other stuff like that, and Philip and Heidi are no strangers to the circuit of 'cons' (conventions focused on pop culture media and grown-up games). Originally from Indiana, and Midwestern humility and kindness come authentically to him. I think he enjoys the relative quiet and solitude of the magazine office, from which he emerges when he and Heidi indulge in an adventurous trip or two each year.

Philip does a bit of everything for us. He determines what goes into each issue. He plans our production schedule. He interfaces with our advertising clients, content contributors, vendors, and you. He writes features under his own byline, and occasionally an unattributed piece or two. Philip is clever, understatedly funny, and relatively ego-less. One thing Philip almost never does: Say "no" to something I/we ask him to do.

So, we can go to Greece and tend to a broken freezer and write this essay minutes before its absolutely-final-deadline. Because we can count on Philip to handle much of the rest of what needs to get done, and to do it well. Thank you, Philip (and Happy Birthday, this week)...now

Scott A. Lawrence

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