



Wednesday. He built the ship himself and is sailing it around the world.

Yes, but would real vikings listen to Pink Floyd tapes?

By JIM KENYON
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TAMPA -- For most of two days the question was the same for people along Bayshore Boulevard: Are my eyes deceiving me or is that a viking ship anchored out there in the middle of Hillsborough Bay?

Cancel the vision checkup. The vikings have landed.

Denmark's Boris Valentin is taking a 52-foot steel-and fiberglass replica of a viking ship around the world. He anchored in Tampa Monday, unannounced en route to New Orleans, so one of his two crew members could visit relatives.

Wednesday, after the sailors had moved from the bay to the Davis Islands Seaplane Basin, came the identity of the mystery ship.

U.S. Coast Guard, Florida

area law enforcement and the city's two yacht clubs had been in the dark when it arrived. So was Ye Mystic Krewe of Gas-

parilla, the elite social group that should know all about invading the bay at this time of year with a strange vessel from the past.

Then again, when Valentin was besieged by curious visitors after docking late Tuesday — "in one hour we had 15 people and three cases of beer on deck" --- he was just as clueless about Gasparilla.

"Interesting," he said upon hearing that hundreds of thousands of people watch some 754 prominent businessmen invade the city in a mock pirate ship each February. "It sounds like they need a viking."

Maybe an intended stay of a few days will last until this year's pirate parade Feb. 6, he concluded.

Valentin is 31, with an interest in vikings he credits to his *father*, a dentist who became an expert in their seafaring history. After the older man died,

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Viking ship replica has logged 11,000 miles

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tance to build the ship.

It's equipped with a small kitchen and bathtub, and he installed a workbench below deck to pursue his interests in sculpting and jewelry making. A bookshelf includes the works of Alfred Hitchcock and a history of the Grateful Dead. A large music collection in cassettes is heavy on Pink Floyd.

The 30-ton vessel was seaworthy one year and \$240,000 after he started, he said, and in the three years since leaving Denmark he has

logged 11,000 miles crossing the Atlantic Ocean and island hopping in the Caribbean.

"As a kid I dreamed of building a ship and sailing around the world," he said.

As he sat on deck Wednesday in leather pants and a sheepskin vest, he entertained visitors with tales of the sea and the Scandinavian voyagers who roamed the coasts 1,000 years ago.

"Vikings have always been misunderstood," he said. "They were explorers and travelers more than they were warriors."

Like his ship, Valentin's lifestyle

resembles that of his viking heroes.

"The sea is one of the few places in the world where there's true freedom," he said. "My home is always with me. Once I'm 50 miles out at sea there are only a few rules to live by. I can walk naked on deck if I want to. I decide when I wake up in the morning and what I'm going to do that day."

Indeed, provided he can find a place to anchor through Gasparilla Day, Valentin said he just might forget about New Orleans and head later to Mexico or Panama.

"The less plans," he said, "the more freedom."