



## VIKING VOYAGE 1000: A CONVERSATION WITH W. HODDING CARTER AND TERRY MOORE

*W. Hodding Carter, Viking Voyage 1000 Expedition Leader, and Captain Terry Moore discuss last year's attempt to re-create Leif Eriksson's voyage and their plans to try again during the summer of 1998.*

**Q:** *Why did you want to undertake this re-creation in the first place?*

**H:** I don't have one simple answer to this question. This is what I love to do: research a historical moment, retrace it and then write about my experiences. The experience has to challenge me mentally and physically, and this project surpassed that requirement from the very first week. I've had to catch up on the Vikings. Raise money for the project. Have an extinct boat built. And then learn to live and work on board that boat in fairly difficult conditions. I think of myself as Everyman trying to do things that our history books say were only accomplished by heroes and saints. When I fail, I can write about my shortcomings and honestly compare myself (and us) to our heroic predecessors. When I succeed, I kiss the earth.

**Q:** *What was the most difficult aspect of last year's expedition?*

**H:** Most of us trick ourselves into believing we control time. We hurry along. Do things when we want to. Decide when something needs to be done and then do it by the appointed time. Patience is not a virtue that we have to rely on, at least not to the same degree as the Vikings did. Last summer, our patience was tried and oftentimes found wanting. Despite all our talk beforehand, we continually tried to stick to schedules and accomplish things when *we* wanted to, not when nature was necessarily allowing us to. I believe we learned patience by the end, but I imagine we will have to learn it all over again this summer.

**T:** The most difficult part of the expedition was being towed back to Greenland by the Canadian icebreaker, *Pierre Radisson*. It has nothing to do with their willingness to help us; to a person they were as kind, courteous, humorous, and professional as they could be. It has to do with our self-reliance and self-sufficiency. It bothers me that we had not considered the possibility that we might need a rescue in the middle of the Davis Strait. I was confident enough in our rudder system as it evolved over the course of the summer to feel good about making the crossing. Seems that confidence was misplaced. It was also hard to finish on that note, crew members drifting away in ones and twos, not really knowing what was to become of the expedition, whether we would have the chance to try again. We were all pretty disappointed.

**Q: *Did you feel you were prepared to meet all the challenges you faced?***

H: Yes. We were a physically fit group and we knew how to sail our boat. But, more importantly, we were mentally flexible. When things were bad, we found a way to cope and either conquer or adjust to the situation. Of course, we had our rudder difficulties and if we had had more time to find a solution during sea trials, I imagine we would have overcome that, as well.

T: Given the outcome of last summer's expedition, feeling prepared and being prepared for every eventuality are evidently two different things. We were prepared enough to deal with everything we faced save a rudder that made a break for it, and even then I feel that we would have been able to deal with that satisfactorily too, had help from the *Pierre Radisson* not been available. We would have dealt with it because we had to, we had the materials, tools and skills (in the form of Rob Stevens and John Gardner) to make repairs. I just wasn't willing to take the chance that those repairs might not hold up before the weather deteriorated.

**Q: *Were there any aspects of the expedition that proved easier than you had anticipated? What will you do differently this year?***

H: There were a lot of things that were easy – but only relatively. For instance, everyone said we would not be able to row our boat but we did, for miles and miles, although it was at a snail's pace. I think nearly everything about this expedition is difficult but that is to be expected. The main thing we have done differently this year is find a viable rudder system. And, we are giving ourselves more time to finish the voyage.

T: I don't think I anticipated that any of it was going to be easy. We were able to move the boat under oars well enough, which was a pleasant surprise, although easy isn't the word I would choose to describe it. We are going with fewer people this year. We came up with 12 crew originally so that we would have two rowing teams, six oars in the water at a time. As it turns out, most of the rowing that mattered was in relatively short sprints in and out of anchorages, and fewer of us can just suck it up and do it. On those occasions when we rowed all day, for the distance we had to show for it after all was said and done, we may as well have stayed put and waited for the wind. We will also have a different rudder and rudder attachment system to play with.

**Q: *Did last year's events change your expectations of and/or goals for the expedition? How did they shape your perception of the Vikings as sailors?***

H: Our goal has always been to learn and follow in Leif Eriksson's wake. We will continue to do both. We showed some unfounded hubris, thinking we could sail like the Vikings with only a few months experience. I am now humbled. In the Vikings' day, sailing a knarr or a long ship was like flying the space shuttle today. It took patience and hard-earned skill.

T: Our expectations are a little more realistic now with a Greenland season under our belts. We have a better idea of how long it takes to get from A to B in that climate with those weather patterns. Remember, no one has done this in a thousand years, so we're doing a little reinventing of the wheel here. The goal,

however, is still the same: sail the route that Leif Eriksson sailed when he founded the colony in Vinland, and through that journey experience what the Vikings must have experienced because we are choosing to do it riding on the tool that shaped their world. The Vikings were tough, incredibly skilled, fitseamen. But that is no surprise to anyone who has studied them even a little bit.

**Q: *What about your expectations of one another? How well did the crew work together?***

H: Nearly every crew member has commented to me that they were surprised at how few squabbles we had, and there was never any serious altercation, besides the dreaded Hot Chocolate Near Mutiny. (More can be learned about it on our web site.)

T: We worked together very well. We had the occasional disagreement and misunderstanding, but nothing that you wouldn't expect of twelve guys living day in and day out on a small boat. It would have been more cause for alarm had we not had to deal with stuff like that. It was a very intense living situation, and we dealt with each other very openly. I think that this coming summer will only be better, now that we all know what to expect of life afloat.

**Q: *How did the public respond to the abrupt end of your journey? Did you feel as though you had a lot of public support throughout the expedition, or were you simply under pressure to perform?***

H: Judging by the letters (snail and e-mail), everyone seemed to agree with the decisions we made when our rudder system failed. It was heartening to know that the people who had been following our voyage understood and agreed with our final decisions. It was obvious from the questions we received by satellite that a lot of people had been attracted to our project and were looking forward to seeing this voyage through our eyes. At times, when things were not going well, this attention was daunting, but I think that is part of the charm of this project – showing people just what it took (and now takes) to sail a Viking ship from sub-Arctic Greenland to Newfoundland.

T: There is certainly pressure to perform, but it comes from the world around the boat. Making landfall in the fog, navigating on a poorly charted coastline, needing to row a 25-ton boat all day. That's pressure to perform, determining whether or not I will see tomorrow. I think we gave any naysayers out there enough ammo to allow them to grumble for the rest of their lives, and we gave all those well-wishers, staunch supporters, and vicarious Vikings plenty to cheer about, all in one summer's journey.

**Q: *What do you think is the most important thing for the public to understand about Viking Voyage 1000?***

H: I do not believe there is one single important thing about this voyage. Everyone involved in this project, as well as those following it from their homes, has different reasons for caring about the voyage. I do, however, want people to know that I feel it is the attempt, and not the final outcome, that matters most.

T: That we are not attempting to prove anything. The goal is the journey. Experience and then share what it may have been like for the Vikings, by using the same technology that they did to explore their world. We

are certainly learning a lot about the Vikings, and perhaps we have a unique perspective on what their lives at sea were like, but we aren't claiming that because we did it, that anyone else necessarily did it that way. It is an experientialist's way of trying to look through the eyes of a Viking sailor, just as a scholar might do the same thing through the study of ancient manuscripts.

**Q: *How did your family feel about you being on this voyage?***

H: My wife worries about my safety and absence but also feels pangs of jealousy. She loves the outdoors, and I think she wishes she could come along. My kids are too young to know what I am doing and the rest of my family thinks I am crazy.

T: My Mom is very supportive but worried, my Dad is envious, my brother and sister think I'm nuts, but would probably go in a heartbeat if I could sneak them into my duffel.

**Q: *How did you establish the sponsorship with Lands' End? How has their sponsorship benefited Viking Voyage 1000?***

H: I was looking for companies that had either interests in sailing or the outdoors. Lands' End began as a sailing merchandise provider and I thought I might have a good chance with them. I simply could not have found a more easy-going sponsor, providing as much support, as Lands' End. Although our voyage was cut short last summer and we did not complete our mission, Lands' End stuck with my project, seeming more like a good friend than an emotionless company.

###

**For more information contact:**

Gary Collins  
Fleishman-Hillard, Inc.  
212-453-2127  
Email [collinsg@fleishman.com](mailto:collinsg@fleishman.com)

Lisa Mullen  
Lands' End, Inc.  
608-935-4274  
[llmulle@landsend.com](mailto:llmulle@landsend.com)

[www.beyond.landsend.com](http://www.beyond.landsend.com)