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The Voyage of Magellan IV

Lead: Seeking a passage through the American land mass as a short cut to the rich spice islands of East Asia, Ferdinand Magellan and a crew sailed south along the coast of South America in the early months of 1520, looking for strait to take them through.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: While wintering in San Julian, a harbor in present day southern Argentina, three of his captains led a mutiny that threatened the expedition, but Magellan ruthlessly

suppressed it, killing one leader, beheading another and leaving the third stranded on the beach. The rest of the mutineers Magellan wisely pardoned.

After a winter of shooting game and salting it down for the voyage, making sealskin clothing and exploring the interior, the ships headed south, first to Santa Cruz and then on October 21, 1520 sailed past the flat sandy point at Cape Virgenes into the strait that in the future would bear his name. Magellan had found the passage to the western ocean.

He sent one of his ships to the southeast to explore a possible alternate route, but the crew

overwhelmed the captain and sailed it back to Spain. Reduced to three ships, Magellan began his methodical exploration of the strait. On November 28th he sailed past the last cape and out into the darkly rolling Pacific.

For three months, the trio of small ships rode the tradewinds west, with sailors eating biscuits swarming with worms, laced with the urine of rats, and fighting off scurvy, the disease that attacks the gums and causes them to swell painfully.

Finally, they arrived in the Philippines. Magellan had achieved his goal. However, on April 27, 1521 the explorer was killed, the victim of a native attack. One ship was scrapped,

the other two loaded down with spices, and sailed in opposite directions for home, the Victoria by the Cape of Good Hope, the Trinidad, Magellan's flagship, toward Panama. Only four of the Trinidad's crew made it back to Spain, but the Victoria, under Captain Juan Sebastian Elcano limped into the harbor at Seville just over three years after Magellan set sail on his journey. Men had taken the earth's measure for the first time, and, in the centuries since this epic voyage, because of technology and human ingenuity the world has progressively grown smaller.

At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.

Resources

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