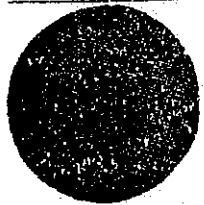


18 Stowaways: Worms and a Dog

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Columbus used this almanac's prediction of an eclipse of the moon to fool Indians into helping him.

the Indians did that, but then they said something like "Get your own food." The explorers didn't know how, and they began to starve. Then the Indians threatened to attack.

The situation was serious when Columbus got out his scientific papers and read something that gave him an idea.

Columbus had Abraham Zacuto's charts of the stars—astronomical charts. Zacuto was a leading scientist and a Portuguese royal mathematician. His charts helped sailors figure out latitude. They also told about eclipses of the moon and sun. Columbus read in Zacuto's charts that there would be an eclipse of the moon on the last day of February in 1504.

On Columbus's fourth voyage he was attacked. Who was the enemy?

Worms. Yes, you read that right, the enemy was worms—worms that ate holes in the ships' bottoms. Worms did so much damage that the ships were ruined and couldn't sail anymore. Columbus and his crew were marooned—stuck—on the island of Jamaica.

Now if you're going to get marooned, Jamaica is a pretty nice place to be. It's a beautiful island where foods grow easily. However, the Spanish explorers (and later the English explorers) weren't interested in growing their own food. Columbus and his men sat around waiting for the Indians to feed them. At first

"They all made fun of my plan then; now even tailors wish to discover," wrote Columbus about the way people changed their ideas after he returned from his first voyage.

A Name To Know

Afonso d' Albuquerque (al buh KER kee) conquered Hormuz, a hilly Moslem island that was a trading center at the entrance to the Persian Gulf. He actually captured Hormuz twice, in 1507 and in 1514. Then the Portuguese built a fort there. That seemed even more important to Europeans than what was happening in the newly discovered Americas. Albuquerque became a big national hero, Portuguese Viceroy in India, and the virtual founder of the Portugal's empire in the East. To find the Persian Gulf, look on a map for Saudia Arabia and Iran. Hormuz is mostly deserted today, a bit of the fort remains.



Balboa made it across the jungles and mountains of Panama without losing any men. His stowaway dog Leoncico made it, too; that's him frisking at the edge as his master strides into the Pacific Ocean.

Balboa and other Spanish explorers were **conquistadors** (kon-KEES-tah-dors). It is a Spanish word that means "conqueror."

be done, others followed. Among them was Giovanni Caboto (jo-VAH-nee kah-BOE-tow), an Italian who went to England, where he was called John Cabot and given a small ship. Cabot sailed across the Atlantic in 1497 with only 18 sailors. He had to be very brave to do that. He landed in Newfoundland, where the Vikings had first landed 500 years earlier. Later the English claimed all of North America because of Cabot's voyage.

If you think exploring is just a matter of luck, consider the story of Vasco Núñez de Balboa (VASS-ko NOON-yez day bahl-BOE-uh), one of the greatest of the Spanish explorers. He was a stowaway, which means he hid on a ship. The ship was heading for Darien (now called Panama) to search for gold.

Balboa hid in a flour barrel with his dog, Leoncico (lay-on-SEE-ko). He waited until the ship was far out at sea before popping out of the barrel. Why was he hiding? Balboa owed money to some people on the island of Hispaniola, and he couldn't pay his debts.

So if you'd asked his creditors (the people he owed money to), they would have told you that Balboa wasn't a very nice person. But if you'd asked others who knew him, they would have said something else. Balboa was a born leader. By the time the ship landed in Darien,

So on that day Columbus called the Indian chiefs together and told them he had power over the moon. He said if they didn't give his men food, he would blot out the moon. It happened just as Columbus said it would, and the Indians cried and begged Columbus to bring back the moon. He agreed, the eclipse ended on schedule, and his men never went hungry again. (You can see Zacuto's tables, with Columbus's notes, if you go to Seville, Spain.)

Finally, after more than a year, Spanish ships rescued Columbus and his men. Columbus went home to Spain, but now no one paid any attention to him. Isabella was dead and Ferdinand wouldn't even see him. Most people thought the islands he had discovered were worthless. It was only after Columbus died that people began to realize the value of his discoveries.

The most important thing he did was to sail into the unknown. That took great courage and skill. Once he showed it could

in 1513, he was in command. He sent the incompetent leader, Enciso (en-SEE-zo), home in chains. (That was a mistake—you'll see why.)

Then Balboa established the first permanent European settlement in the Americas. That would have been enough to get him into the history books, but it wasn't enough for Balboa. He wanted to find gold. It wasn't gold that made him famous, though. Balboa was the first European to see the Pacific Ocean from the American continent. He "discovered" the Pacific for the peoples of Europe. An Indian chief, Comaco, told Balboa about that ocean: "When you cross over these mountains you shall see another sea, where they sail with ships as big as yours, using both sails and oars as you do, even though the men are like us." (Before Balboa's discovery, Europeans thought there was only one ocean. They called it the Ocean Sea.)

Balboa married Comaco's daughter, so the Indian chief helped the white men even though he was disgusted by their constant fights over gold. Here are more of Comaco's words, written down by Peter Martyr, who lived in those times: "What is the matter, you Christian men, that you so greatly value so little gold more than your own peace of mind?" (What did he mean by that? Do you think peace of mind was more important to the Indians than gold? Were they wise or foolish?)

"I will show you a region flowing with gold, where you may satisfy your appetites," said Comaco. Of course Balboa was anxious to go for the gold, but he also wanted to know about the sea that Comaco described. He had an explorer's curiosity.

Balboa decided to march across Panama. Let's go with him. Getting to the Pacific will not be an easy jaunt. Imagine smothering heat, pounding rainstorms, and jungles so thick you can hardly hack your way through them. Add killer bugs, snakes, and germs—and you'll begin to get the picture. Balboa and his men are wearing padded leather jackets and, on top of that, metal armor. Can you see them in the jungle in those hot, heavy garments? They make it to the Pacific Ocean and back—and not a man dies. It is quite an accomplishment.

If you are an explorer, discovering is not enough. You also have to tell people what you find. Balboa did that, too. He sent news of the Pacific Ocean to the people in Spain. Then he started organizing his next exploration. He was planning to go south, to the region flowing with gold. It was called Peru.

But in the meantime, back in Spain, Enciso was thirsting for revenge. He accused Balboa—falsely—of treason. People in Spain believed Enciso. A new governor was sent to Darien with orders to get rid of Balboa. He did. Balboa was beheaded; his head was stuck on a pike for all to see. The officer who arrested Balboa was named Francisco Pizarro (pih-SAR-oh)—remember that name.

When Columbus arrived in San Salvador in 1492, he set off a cultural tornado. He, and those that followed, brought ideas, technology, and germs that overwhelmed the lands they invaded. In that way, they did make a New World.



Balboa was brave and adventurous, but of course he wasn't the first European to see the Pacific—he was just the first European to see the Pacific's American coast.