Magellan Essay, Research Paper

In 1517 Ferdinand Magellan proposed to King Charles I of Spain for a fully funded expedition to find a western sea route to the Moluccas Islands. If Magellan could find an easy way through or around South America it would enable the Spanish to set up a profitable trade route with the Molaccas, known for its abundance of spices. On May 22,1518 King Charles I granted Magellan enough money to buy five ships.

Over 250 men were divided up amongst the Trinidad, the San Antonio, the Concepcion, the Victoria, and the Santiago. The ships set sail on their journey on September 20, 1519 from a port in Sanlucar de Barrameda, Spain. The ships sailed south along the coast of Africa until they reached the equator. They then turned to head across the Atlantic Ocean toward northern Brazil.

They reached South America at a city in Brazil called Recife. The fleet continued down the coast in search of a passageway through South America. Trades were made in Rio de Janeiro with native Americans in December. Port San Julian in Argentina gave the crew winter shelter for five months. Shortly after resuming voyage, one of the ships was driven to shore and lost exploring an inlet.

Just south of the 50th parallel, near Rio Santa Cruz, Magellan sent two of his four remaining ships to explore a large inlet. The ships returned two days later responding that they had been to three bays through narrow passages. Against advice, Magellan set out to sail through the strait. One of the ships gave up and set out to return to Spain.

On November 28, 1520 Magellan s fleet of the three remaining ships exited the strait into another ocean. The strait Magellan and his crew used is now called The Strait of Magellan.

The new ocean was named the Pacific Ocean because it was very calm. This ocean had much more favorable weather than the last but was much larger than expected. The crew ran out of food shortly. Soon they ate the leather rope guards. Desperate to survive, the sailors ate sawdust and rats for 98 days. Many died of scurvy and malnutrition.

Finally a small island in the west pacific was sighted. The ships stopped for food and to regain health. Magellan then sailed to Mindanao in the Philippines and on to Cebu Island. He converted Huambon, ruler of Cebu, to Christianity. The crews then backed Huambon in a battle with Lapu-Lapu. On April 27, 1521 Magellan was killed in battle. In attempts to return to Spain, one ship was abandon and Portuguese captured one other.

On September 6, 1522 the final ship, the Victoria, with only 18 men returned to Spain with cloves it had picked up in Moluccas. The cloves were worth so much that Spain was repaid for the four lost ships and was able to profit. When Magellan died, by traveling west he had made it past his earlier eastward voyage. Magellan is known as the first man to travel around the world, proving it to be round.

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