

called the Strait of Magellan—he asked the Lord to guide his way. And when his fleet reached Guam it was with Magellan's blessing that Holy Crosses were raised on deck and prayers intoned. In part, it was Magellan's religious enthusiasm that led to his death in the Philippines less than two months after he left Guam. When those Filipinos on Mactan refused to accept Christianity, he personally—and stupidly—led an attack to subdue them which proved to be his demise. Magellan, some historians contend, “suffered from religious hysteria.”

Magellan's will offers a final insight into his veiled character. Among other things, it stated that on the day of his burial “three poor men” should be clothed and fed. We do not know, but assume this wish was honored after the remaining men returned finally to Spain.

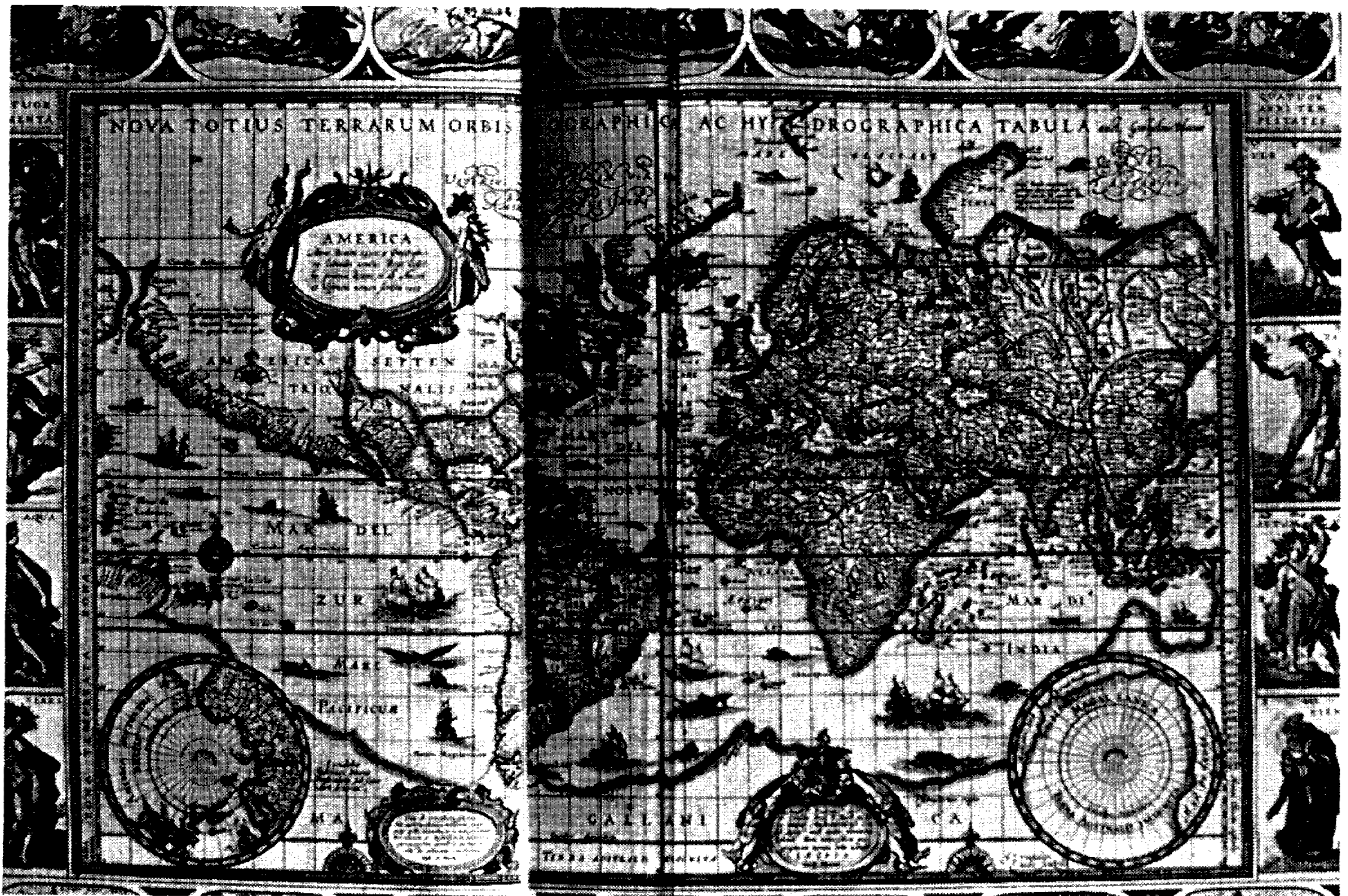
Among Magellan's contemporaries only ardent admirer Antonio Pigafetta has left a memorable epitaph: “So noble a captain; he was more constant than anyone else in adversity. He endured

hunger better than all the others, and better than any man in the world did he understand sea charts and navigation. The best proof of his genius is that he circumnavigated the world, none having preceded him.”

## REFERENCES

The following materials were used for the preparation and are recommended for further reading:

1. Daniel Gordon Payne, *Magellan and the First Circumnavigation of the World*, New York: Saturday Review Press, 1973.
2. Antonio Pigafetta, *The First Voyage Round the World*, London, 1812.
3. Walter Brownlee, *The First Ships Around the World*, Minneapolis: The Lerner Publications Company, 1977.
4. Selected materials from the Vertical Files contained in the *Pacific Collections* at the Micronesian Area Research Center at the University of Guam.



Map — World on Mercator Projection — W. M. Blaeu, 1641, from John Hale, "Age of Exploration."

and there were also three islanders who survived with them. Later at Seville, Del Cano led the group to the Shrine of Santa Maria de la Antigua for prayers. They were described as a ghastly lot, unrecognizable from those who had left three years before. Although none had yet reached the age of forty, they all appeared like old men after their experience.

What kind of a man was Ferdinand Magellan? From the day of his birth in 1480 he appears to have been a "half-veiled figure, indistinct, unclear, and whatever his surroundings, no more than practically defined." This description was written by his biographer, Daniel Hawthorne, and explains the difficulty of any historical quest to discover the human side of the man who came to Guam some 468 years ago with his trio of weather-beaten and slovenly-crewed ships. He was about 41 years old when he got to Guam, and other than the fact that he wore a beard, and was "short of stature", we don't know very much about his physical appearance. He walked with a limp as he moved about the deck of his flagship, since years earlier while fighting for Portugal in the Far East a lance had severed a tendon behind his left knee, laming him for life. Magellan's enemies called him "old clubfoot." He was married at the time he arrived at Guam to a woman named Beatrice. It was an arranged marriage, and she was a wealthy heiress from one of the rich Spanish families who supported his expedition. Beatrice seems to be the only female that history records as sharing his bed which makes one wonder if Magellan married for love or money.

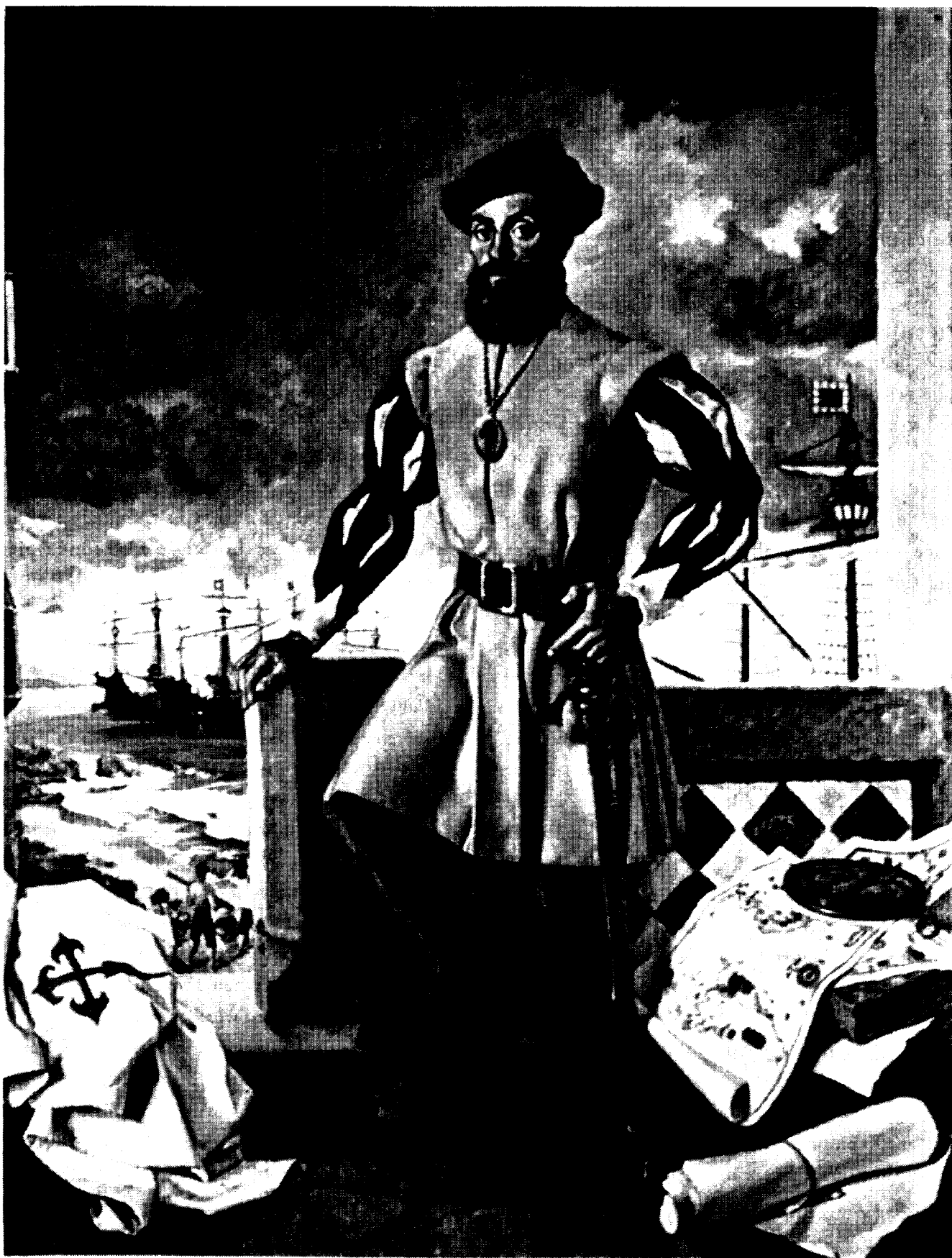
Magellan reportedly loved to talk about navigation and exploration with the leading astronomers, sailors, and mapmakers of his day, but otherwise he was a man of very few words. When he did speak he was blunt and to the point. His sense of humor was crude. Once, when attacked from behind by a would-be assassin, the alert Magellan spun around, drew his sword, and swiftly inflicted several head wounds on the surprised man. He then stopped his defense abruptly, pointed to his own crippled leg, and repeated for the mangled

assailant an old European proverb: "Lame lambs never sleep for fear of wolves."

"Man of action" is undoubtedly the best phrase for describing Magellan. He never hesitated to make a bold move. Witness his behavior when mutiny threatened him on the voyage and he smashed it, ordering death for several of the instigators. Juan de Cartagena who conspired against him was a high-ranking Spanish nobleman, and he left him marooned on the tip of South America. Yet, at the same time Magellan was compassionate. Pigafetta recounts that when his crewmen suffered during their hundred and ten day transpacific voyage, he took pity upon them and daily tended the sick. He collected the personal effects of the dead to return to Spain. He fed those who were too weak to sit up and eat, even though the food was rotten—old bisquits stained yellow with rat urine, pounded maggots and hot water.

The compassion that Magellan showered upon his crew however, did not extend to the Chamorros he met at Guam. Canoe loads of the islanders swept over the *Victoria* and, finding the crew so weak from starvation that they could not protest much, they took many items from aboard the vessels, including the small skiff which was trailing behind the *Trinidad*. Magellan ordered the stronger crewmen to open fire with their cross-bows, and several islanders were killed as the group fled from the ships. On the following day more were killed ashore when the skiff was recovered and fresh provisions were procured. During the three days that the Spanish were here on Guam we do not know exactly what happened or how many people were killed because Pigafetta did not precisely record it, and Magellan's personal papers were lost during the remainder of the voyage, but certainly Magellan, who is honored as Guam's discoverer, is also the first European to order the killing of Chamorros.

Magellan, while both lethal and compassionate, was also a religious man. While in Spain preparing for his voyage, he regularly attended Mass on at a nearby cathedral. While searching for the waterway between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans—now



Ferdinand Magellan, a modern portrait by António Menendez.  
Museu de Marinha, Lisbon.

[Reprint from Samuel E. Morison, "European Discovery."]

Tuamotu group, in the present-day Cook Islands. Magellan was unable to land, but the crew did catch some fish. He must have passed subsequently within a hundred miles of the Marshalls, although he never spotted any other land. Again, the most poignant description of the difficulties and suffering comes from the pen of Pigafetta:

"We entered the Pacific Sea where we remained three months and twenty days . . . we ate only old biscuit turned to powder all full of worms and stinking . . . and we drank water impure and yellow. We ate also ox hides from the ship's rigging, which were very hard because of the sun, rain and wind. We left them for days in the sea, then laid them for a short time on embers and so we ate them. And of the rats which were sold for half a crown each, some of us could not get enough. Scurvy caused the gums of most of our men to swell above and below so that they could not eat. And in this way 29 of them died. . . . Besides those who died, 25 or 30 fell sick to various diseases whether of the arms or the legs, or of other parts of the body, so that there remained very few healthy men."

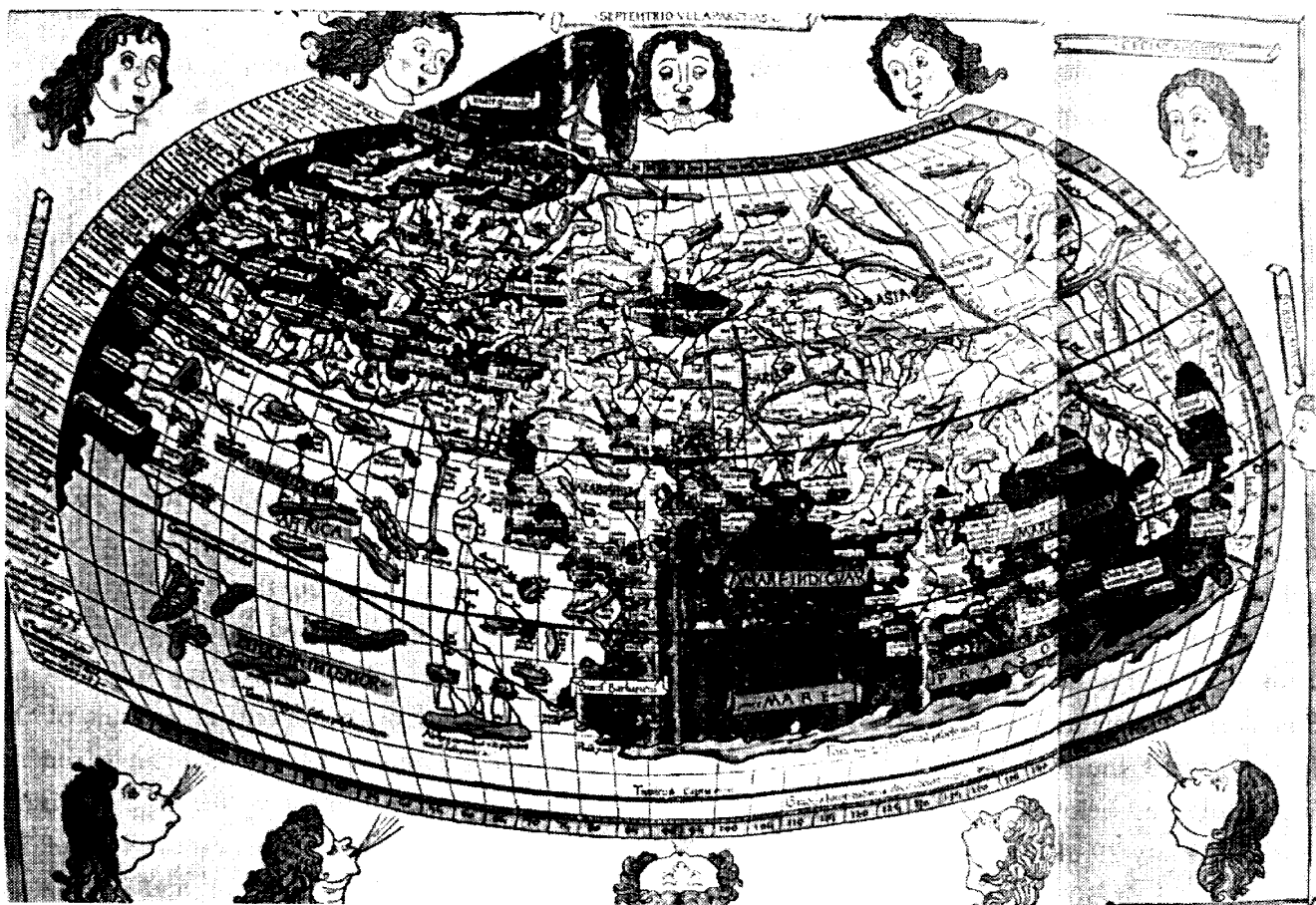
To this day it seems incredible that the group could have come all the way across to Guam without sighting any land other than the two small islands already mentioned—and which Magellan's men named "the Islands of Misfortune" since they were unable to land. In retrospect, however, it might have been fortunate that they did not sight some of the coral atolls of the Marshalls especially because in their weakened state the crew might not have been able to handle the bulky *Victoria* adroitly enough to avoid being wrecked on the treacherous reefs.

Finally they raised the Marianas: "We discovered on Wednesday, 6 March, a small island to the northwest and two others toward the southwest, one of which was higher and larger than the other two. . . ." By this time the crewmen were so weak that maneuvering the *Victoria* was difficult. For many days they had been trailing a small skiff behind the *Trinidad* to enable them greater ease at disembarking at any island they would chance to

find in their woeful state. It is not known precisely where he landed, but thought now that it was somewhere along the northwest coast of Guam. The Chamorros swarmed over the three ships and had to be beaten off. They took the skiff. Magellan went ashore with a small party the next day and got it back, and also killed and burned to teach "los ladrones" (the thieves—for whom he named the islands) a lesson.

On 9 March the little fleet departed Guam and sailed westward. Within a week they discovered Samar Island in the Philippines. After saying the first Mass ashore and claiming the place for Spain, Magellan began spreading the Holy Gospel among the Filipinos who seemed willing to embrace it. But then tragedy befell the group which by now had become strongly united as a result of their long and arduous ordeal. At Mactan Island near Cebu, Magellan became involved in local rivalries with his Filipino hosts. Some groups had taken to Christianity and others had not, and Magellan was persuaded to lead a fighting party against a belligerent chief. With 48 men in knee-deep water, beyond the range of his ships' firepower, he faced over a thousand native lancers; a very foolish move. He fell and was killed—along with a number of others—on 27 April 1521, and his body was not recovered. Pigafetta wrote of Magellan's final moments: "All at once . . . they slew our mirror, our light, our comfort and our true guide."

Incredibly, after some reorganization the voyage continued. The *Concepcion* was leaking badly and so had to be scuttled. The *Trinidad* under the command of Jaoa Lopez Carvalho headed back into the Pacific homebound, but was later captured and interned by the Portuguese. But the *Victoria* with the former mutineer Sebastian Del Cano as captain, pressed onward across the Indian Ocean toward the Cape of Good Hope. They encountered storms and fears from the Portuguese during the rest of their nine month, 11,000 mile trip. But they got home to Spain. It was almost three years since the voyage had started when the *Victoria* again pulled into the mouth of the Guadalquivir River at San Lucar de Barrameda. Only 18 of the original crew remained,



Map - Ptolemy II Reprint 1482, from John Hale, "Age of Exploration."

succeeded, on orders, in killing the ring-leader Mendoza. The third conspirator, Quesada of the *Concepcion* was also seized. The remaining two ships, *Trinidad* and *Santiago*, remained loyal. In one afternoon, Magellan had invoked the traditional captain's "right of hope and knife," put down the mutiny, and regained control of all five ships.

Pigafetta described the fate of the mutineers: "Mendoza was killed by dagger blows, then drawn and quartered. . . . Quesada had his head cut off and then was quartered." The other mutineers, including the sympathizer Sebastian Del Cano, were condemned to death but then commuted to hard labor after swearing renewed allegiance. Captain Cartagena and a rebel priest were marooned as punishment. Magellan had established his authority once and for all, and it was never again questioned throughout the remainder of the voyage. A weaker, more hesitant man would have failed at that point.

During the winter stay at San Julian, Magellan

sent the *Santiago* to search for provisions and to try to locate a passage through to the Pacific. Then, near Rio Santa Cruz, just south of San Julian, on 3 May 1520, the *Santiago* was wrecked in a storm, but the crew made it to shore and most of the provisions were saved. Magellan then resolved to stay the rest of the winter—only about a month—at Rio Santa Cruz.

On 21 October they set out again and Esteban Gomez who was Captain of the *San Antonio*, and who hated Magellan, deserted and returned across the Atlantic to Spain. But Magellan, undaunted, pressed on and passed through the straits which now bear his name with a fleet of three remaining ships—*Trinidad*, *Concepcion*, and *Victoria*—and entered the Pacific on 28 November 1520.

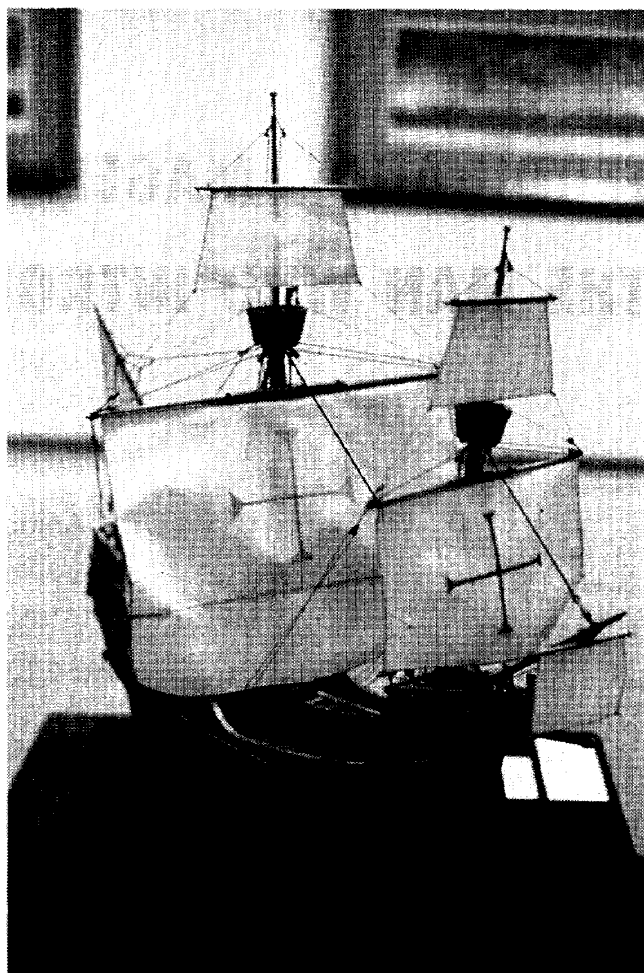
The Pacific was unusually kind to Magellan that fateful year. He had fair winds during the whole crossing. Two and a half months out they sighted two small uninhabited islands which have since been identified as Puka Puka and Caroline of the

Only the hardest of adventurers would think of making such a trip in vessels like these today. The largest one would be about the size of the tugboats which operate today in Apra Harbor. The celebrated Guam ship modeler G. G. Anderson who has constructed the most accurate model of the *Victoria* ever made, and who has studied the voyage for many years, calls the ships "ugly and uncomfortable, and not of a good design for long sea voyages. They were stubby, small, and more suited for cargo than people."

The group left Spain on 20 September 1519, and sailed for the Canary Islands in the Atlantic. From the start of the voyage there were difficulties. The ships' crews consisted of Spaniards, Basques, Portuguese, Italians, French, Germans, Flemings, Greeks, and one Englishman. Friction soon developed between Magellan, a Portuguese, and his captains, all Spaniards. Coasting down the east coast of South America, exploring every bay and estuary, the food ran short. Supplies for the voyage were inadequate; swindlers in Spain had short-changed the provisions.

Sailing with the group aboard the *Trinidad*, was the young gentleman-scholar Antonio Pigafetta who had talked his way aboard as chronicler. His motivation was simple: "I determined . . . to experience and to go . . . that it might be told that I made the voyage and saw with my eyes the things. . . . and that I might win a famous name . . . " Pigafetta did gain his fame for all time, although not riches in great store. He survived the voyage and wrote the most informative history of the event. Almost everything we know today about this first circumnavigation comes from his pen. Pigafetta recorded shipboard gossip and conspiracy among the Spanish officers and men. They accused Magellan absurdly of planning to cast away the entire fleet, and of luring on King Carlos for years in vain hopes of reaching the spice islands via the Antarctic.

Magellan reached the Brazilian coast near Purnambuco, and explored the estuary of the Rio de la Plata. His fleet stayed the winter at Port San Julian surviving on limited rations, and at the first



A Model of the *Victoria* by G. G. Anderson.

signs of spring, Captain Luis de Mendoza of the *Victoria* and Captain Juan de Cartagena of the *San Antonio*, urged the reinstitution of full rations and an immediate return to Spain; they were cold, hungry and discouraged, and wanted to go home.

On Palm Sunday 1520 Magellan tested the loyalty of his group by summoning all captains and officers to attend Mass ashore, and then to dine with him afterwards in his command cabin. But nobody—save his kinsman Mazquita—accepted. He could see clearly the gravity of the situation and directly devised plans to deal with it. Then, on 2 April the mutinying officers, including Lieutenant Sebastian Del Cano, took possession of three ships and sent Magellan a message that they no longer would recognize him as Captain-General. By sheer audacity, wit, and the ability to seize opportunities, Magellan led a boarding party to the *San Antonio*, took the ship, and put her Captain, Juan de Cartagena, in shackles. At the same time he sent a special messenger to the *Victoria* who

# FERDINAND MAGELLAN: THE MARINER AND THE MAN WHO INTRODUCED GUAM TO EUROPE

by

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Ferdinand Magellan, the Portuguese mariner in command of the first expedition to circumnavigate the globe and to discover Guam in the process, is one of the most-remembered mariners of all time. But while he is well-remembered, he is not well-known; that is, his "human side" is not well-known. Perhaps in this year—the 468 anniversary of his circumnavigation—we can take another look at Magellan and consider particularly his human side. What was he like as a man? Was he religious? Compassionate? For the answers to these and attending questions, we must look at his famous voyage, and also what we know about his everyday life.

Magellan lived during the Renaissance—a wonderful period to have experienced—and he embarked upon a bold and courageous voyage during which he made the supreme sacrifice. His was a golden age for mariners and navigators. Prince Henry of Portugal led the world in the contemporary ocean-going technology, and schoolboys of the time aspired to be explorers who would sail the great seas and discover new lands. Magellan himself went to the East Indies several times by both the land routes across the muslim Middle East and by the water route around

the south African Cape of Good Hope, and hence formulated proposals for a voyage to find yet another alternate route to the East Indies, one which would be swifter and smoother, and which would go in the opposite direction. (It is worth noting here that no intelligent person of that day believed the world to be flat.) But Portugal's King Emmanuel would not support Magellan's plans for the voyage and so he turned to rival Spain and its young King Carlos I. He met with keen interest. His belief that a new route could be found was strong and so he switched nations and became a Spanish citizen, and on 22 March 1518 King Carlos issued Magellan a exploration contract. Five ships and crews were organized and promised a twentieth share of the profits from the voyage. They anchored at the mouth of the Guadalquivir river at San Lucar de Barrameda, near Seville, Spain:

SHIP	CAPTAIN	TONS	CREW SIZE
Trinidad (flag)	Magellan	100	61
San Antonio	Cartagena	120	57
Concepcion	Quesadas	90	47
Victoria	Mendoza	85	45
Santiago	Serrano	75	31