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INTRODUCTION

A stowaway's trip is very dangerous. He or she might stow away on an airplane, boat, or truck. But the stowaway does not pay for a ticket. Often, he or she cannot afford the fare. If the stowaway is discovered, the police often send him or her to jail.

People have been stowing away for centuries. Balboa is best known for discovering the Pacific Ocean in 1513. But Balboa might never have made his famous find if he had not stowed away on a ship three years earlier.

During the Civil War era, Harriet Tubman drove carts full of stowaway slaves. She took them to the northern states where they would be free.

Edson Rojas was a stowaway in the back of a tractor-trailer from Mexico to the United States in 1992. It was a very dangerous trip. Edson almost died.

In 2003, Charles McKinley could not afford an airplane ticket home to Texas. So he packed himself in a box. He arrived safely at his parent's doorstep!

Even though the trips were dangerous, these brave people felt they had no choice. They had a chance at a better life by stowing away!

People are not the only ones who stow away. Sometimes animals get aboard ships or planes without anyone knowing. This was the case in Guam during the mid 1940s. A few brown tree snakes stowed away on US military ships headed for Guam. Today, the snakes are a huge problem on the tiny island.

CHAPTER 1

Balboa Stows Away in a Barrel

DATAFILE

Timeline

September 1510

Balboa stows away in a barrel.

September 1513

Balboa is the first European to see the Pacific Ocean.

Where is Hispaniola (Haiti)?



Key Terms

colony—a region ruled by another country

expedition—a group of people working together to make a discovery



Did You Know?

Balboa's dog, Leoncico, was huge. It was a cross between a greyhound and a mastiff. Leoncico's nickname was "little lion." It is unclear how Balboa managed to sneak such a large dog aboard Enciso's ship.

CHAPTER 1

Balboa Stows Away in a Barrel

Vasco Núñez de Balboa is one of the world's greatest explorers. However, Balboa was once a stowaway!

Balboa was born in Spain around 1475. He trained to be a soldier from a young age. Growing up, Balboa heard stories of treasure and gold in the new Spanish colonies. In 1501, Balboa joined Don Rodrigo de Bastidas's crew and their two ships. He sailed to the New World with hopes of becoming rich and famous.

Success and Failure

Balboa's first voyage was very successful. He traded goods for pearls and gold. But soon after,

Balboa's ship sank off the coast of Hispaniola. Luckily, most of the gold and pearls were saved. However, Balboa's luck did not last long. The governor of Hispaniola believed Balboa traded illegally with the Indians. As punishment, he took away one third of Balboa's riches. Balboa also spent one month in jail for his crime.

A Farming Life

Balboa did not return to Spain with Bastidas. He settled in Santo Domingo, Hispaniola. Today, we know Hispaniola as Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

For the next seven years, Balboa farmed the land. But he was a bad farmer. Soon, he owed many people large sums of money. With no way to pay his debts, Balboa was desperate to escape Hispaniola.

So, at the age of 35, Balboa and his friend, Bartolomé Hurtado, made a plan. Balboa would become a stowaway!

Escape!

In early September 1510, after much discussion and thought, Balboa and Hurtado decided Balboa would be loaded onto a departing ship in a large barrel. Though it is not certain how he did it, Balboa also took his faithful dog, Leoncico, aboard with him.

It was dark and uncomfortable in the barrel. Once the ship set sail, Balboa crawled out of the barrel. He hid for some time in a spare sail below deck.

Not far off the coast of Hispaniola, Spanish officials looking for stowaways boarded the ship. Balboa could not risk being found. The law prevented

people from leaving Santo Domingo without paying off their debts. If Balboa were caught, he might be killed. Luckily, the authorities did not find him.

Caught

Once out to sea, Balboa revealed himself to the crew. The crew quickly told Captain Martín Fernández de Enciso about Balboa. Captain Enciso was furious and wanted to leave Balboa on the next deserted island. However, Balboa's friends among the crew convinced the captain to keep Balboa aboard as a crewman.

With the wind in his hair and his dog, Leoncico, beside him, Balboa was a free man! He sailed on with Captain Enciso's crew until Balboa eventually became a ship captain himself. It was not long after that Balboa led the expedition that eventually discovered the Pacific Ocean!

Balboa Discovers the Pacific Ocean

Indians who lived on present-day Haiti told the Spanish explorers about a southern sea and a land rich in gold. They also told the Spaniards it would take 1,000 men to claim that land for Spain.

On September 1, 1513, Balboa sailed to present-day Panama. With him, Balboa had more than 190 Spanish soldiers and hundreds of Indians.

Some of Balboa's men stayed onshore. The smaller group marched south across Panama, through dense jungles, rivers, and swamps. It was some of the densest rainforest in the world. Throughout the journey, Balboa and his men battled many native tribes.

In 1513, at the end of September, from the top of a mountain range, Balboa saw the Pacific Ocean. He became the first European to look out