

JOE

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THUMBTRACKS OF HISTORY.MAGELLAN.

WE got off the truck together at Cafe Normandie. I hadn't noticed him get on at Noumea; there were so many of us packed together that we just hung on and hoped we'd get a ride all the way. And I don't think I would have noticed him on the road had we not been standing together thumbing for a lift to Dumbea. "New Zealander, eh?" he asked, as he casually looked me over. I nodded and thumbed. He spat on the dusty road. "Been up the Canal?" he asked. I shook my head. "Been up there myself - just got back a week ago," he continued between thumbs. "Up in hospital now!" He spat again. "What the hell's the use of this," he grumbled as heavily laden trucks rumbled past the groups of soldiers all thumbing and shouting for a lift. :::: HE felt for the packet of Luckies. All the while in a fidget very close to an air of abandon. Perhaps his tall, loosely built figure and his voice with the suspicion of a whine accentuated the impression. He watch the trucks race by. "I drove them sonsa - bitches for eight years in the States and didn't have an accident," he said as though recalling a forgotten pride. "And I'll do it again," he concluded as though suddenly remembering "the States" :::: "GET the fever?", I asked by way of drawing him out. "No," he replied. "Two bits of lead in my lung - going back to the States soon. Know what an "Iron Lung" is?" he asked casually. I shook my head. "Wall, it's like this" and he proceeded to make an imaginary diagram with his hands, indicating something between an ice box and a bed. "Guess I'll have to spend the rest of my life in one - only my head out. I oughta live for another fifty years, maybe a bit more. Knew a guy once who was in one for five years. Say, let's walk down the road. A truck wont stop to pick us up here with all these suckers hangin' round :::: HE thumbed and belted mosquitoes as he walked. It was then I noticed the slinky rolling walk; whatever army training he had had left no lasting impression. "Haven't touched a woman for two years," he volunteered, and paused for a reply. That was when my wife was alive." (Cont page 6)

"ON 25 September 1513 Vasco Nunez de Balboa first of European men sighted the Pacific. With a chosen band of men he toiled and fought his way across the Isthmus of Panama; and on that day from the summit of the Sierras he saw the ocean." The story of how he waded into the water and claimed it and all the continents and islands it washed for his master the King Of Spain is an old story and one history has made familiar to us. But not so familiar is the life of Magellan the first great explorer of the Pacific and a man who only in the last few years has merited the recognition he so richly deserved. :::: BORN in 1480 of a noble Portuguese family, his youth was spent at the court of King Manoel where he saw sea captains bring home their harvest of gold, spices, strange men as slaves, and stranger stories of fabulous wealth in foreign seas. The ambitious, but mean King of Portugal, determined to reap a further harvest and to that end equipped the greatest armada ever to leave Portugal (1504). It is estimated that the death rate on voyages at that time was six out of every seven men. But death seldom deters when enormous wealth, religious reward and high adventure go hand in hand. The wealth had been sighted, the adventure was in fighting the Moors, the religious promptings supplied by the Pope in 1493 when he had divided the world into two - the West for Spain and the East for Portugal. Were there not heathens to convert - and was the task not specifically given by the Pope. That motive comes to the fore again and again in the great Pacific discoveries. :::: IN 1505 Magellan enlisted under Almeida, one Portugal's greatest leaders and it was seven years before Magellan returned - and he came fired with a belief of a western passage to the East. He was "always busy with pilots, charts and questions of longitude, and acquiring all the geographical knowledge of his time, perfecting himself in the theories of navigation". He met one Ruy Faleiro "an astrologer of dark looks and uncertain temper, suspected of being in league with the devil." Magellan incurred the displeasure of the King, the unshot of which was to make him adopt Spanish nationality in 1517. (Cont. 6)