

UNION OIL COMPANY OF ARIZONA'S "FORWARD ARIZONA" PROGRAM  
AS BROADCAST FEBRUARY 26, 1930, OVER KTAR, THE ARIZONA  
REPUBLICAN'S ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT COMPANY'S RADIO STATION  
ATOP THE HEARD BUILDING, PHOENIX, ARIZONA. PRESENTED BY

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CORONADO AND THE GOLDEN CITIES OF CIBOLA

Last week I told somewhat of the pioneering in the present land of Arizona of Friar Marcos de Niza. After his discovery of the Seven Cities of Cibola he made haste back to Mexico. At Campostela he met the governor of the Northern Mexican provinces, Don Francisco Vasquez de Coronado. The latter considered de Niza's report of such tremendous significance that, keeping it in greatest secrecy, he set forth at once with the reverend traveler for the City of Mexico, there to confer with his friend the Viceroy, Don Antonio de Mendoza, declaring that at last had been found the Seven Cities, a quest in which Nuno de Guzman had failed. On request of the Viceroy, Friar Marcos at once was made Father Provincial of the Franciscan Order, and from the pulpits was spread the news of a great land to the northward that awaited the coming of the Cross and its supporters.

Coronado was named Captain General of a force that should bring the northern land under Spanish dominion. The expedition was utilized by the Viceroy very acceptably to himself in ridding Mexico of the burden of maintaining several hundred useless young members of the Spanish aristocracy, who, with no ability in the arts of peace, had come to New Spain to seek their fortunes. Mendoza was a diplomat of the first order, granting most graciously the petitions of scores of young wastrels that they be permitted an opportunity in the extension northward of the Faith and of the power of the Crown. He appears to have done Coronado a service also in choosing all sorts of officials for the expedition, officers who has resounding titles, but with little power attached.

The expedition was reviewed by the Viceroy before it started from Campostela. There were about 300 horsemen and a considerable force of footmen, together with possibly a thousand Indian bearers and servants. The review must have been a gorgeous affair, though held in a wild land remote from the refinements of Spain. The horses, of true Barbary stock, generally were from the ranchos of the Viceroy. Many of the riders were in armor, or at least wore coats of mail, while the footmen carried cross bows and arquebuses and some of them were armed with sword and shield. The natives were in full war panoply, generally armed with club or bow. Behind were herds of cattle and bands of sheep to assure food, and there were extra horses and mules loaded with camp supplies, as well as with a number of swivel guns in the way of artillery. Coronado was described as having been a truly gorgeous figure, leading the van in a suit of golden armor.

The start was made February 23, 1540. Culiacan was reached March 28. There was delay of a fortnight, for the expedition already had proven unwieldy and its members needed rest and reequipment. At Chiametla the expedition nearly suffered disaster, due to the arrival of Melchior Diaz and Juan de Saldivar, returning from an expedition northward, directed by the Viceroy to check up the testimony of Friar Marcos. Though Coronado forbade Diaz to make public the result of his investigation, it soon became noised around that he had failed to substantiate the friar's story. De Niza, with the courage of his convictions, had elected to go with the Coronado expedition and pluckily stood his ground against the charges, preaching a <sup>special</sup> sermon in which he seems to have persuaded Coronado and soldiers alike that their quest would not be in vain.

A naval annex under command of Hernando de Alarcon hugged the western shore of Mexico northward, but at no time got into touch with the land forces. Possibly he reached as far as the site of Needles, his boats pulled by Indians up the Colorado, then discovered by him.

Coronado took a force of about 100 picked men, including three friars, and himself went advance. He left Culiacan April 22nd. It would appear that he struck the valley of the Sonora River and followed the stream to its source, thence crossing a broad divide and following down the San Pedro Valley. Then, over another divide, he reached a ruined pueblo, probably on the Gila, near the present Gerontmo, called Chichilticalli, which in Aztec meant "red house".

From Chichilticalli Coronado and his advance party undoubtedly followed the line of a present day road from the Gila River to Fort Apache. This section of the journey is described as having been most trying, with horses and Indian carriers both tiring and dying, with poor provisions and little grass, but probably in the valley of the Little Colorado, "were found fresh grass and many nut and mulberry trees "

Unlike de Niza's journey, the party appears to have found few Indians and to have been met with no great showing of hospitality. Cibola, in western New Mexico of today, was reached July 7, 1540, when Coronado and his advance guard were halted by violent resistance before the first of the "cities", the mud-and-stone-built communal village of Hawikuh, rechristened by the Spaniards after Granada, the beautiful Spanish birthplace of the Viceroy Mendoza.

The Indians, with their sacred meal, drew lines on the ground beyond which they forbade the Spaniards to pass. A shower of arrows was the answer returned summons to surrender. Finally, in spite of the pacific instructions of their leader, the soldiers shouted the sacred war cry of "Santiago" and put the Indians to flight, driving them into the shelter of their own defenses. Coronado marshaled his men again and advanced his forces against the town. It was found that little could be accomplished by the crossbow men or those who handled the arquebuses, but the main position of the defenders was taken by a charge, led by Coronado himself, whose golden armor hardly proved adequate to protect him from rocks thrown by the defenders. Twice he was knocked to the ground, receiving bruises that confined him to the camp for days thereafter. A number of the attacking party were severely wounded by arrows, but none seems to have been killed. The first of the fabled Cities of Cibola at last was in Spanish possession. But of the gold and precious stones, of the doors whose lintels were studded with turquoise, nothing could be found. It was simply a mud-built pueblo village, inhabited by Indians whose needs were few, and rarely satisfied at that, and who would appear to have had nothing to excite the cupidity of any European.

Castaneda rather severely remarks in his narrative, "When they (Coronado's advance guard) saw the first village, which was Cibola, such were the curses hurled at Friar Marcos that I prayed God may protect him from them. It is a little unattractive village, looking as if it had been crumpled up all together. There are mansions in New Spain which make a better appearance at a distance. It is a village of 200 warriors, with houses small and having only a few rooms and without a court yard. One yard serves for each section."

Possibly broken in spirit, but giving ill health as his reason, Friar Marcos left Zuni about August 3rd on his return to Mexico. He remained in southern Mexico till his death in Jalapa seventeen years later.

A few weeks after the capture of Zuni, a westward expedition was undertaken, Don Pedro de Tovar being sent with about twenty men and Friar Juan de Padilla, to verify the report that, at twenty-five leagues distant, were high villages with warelike people, in the province of Tucano or Tusayan. The Spaniards met with only slight opposition, though, led by the warlike priest, they charged the Indians when the latter hesitated over submission. Little of value was found from these people, the Hopis of today, save information concerning a large river still further to the westward.

The report brought back by de Tovar led to the sending of a second expedition, under Garcia Lopez de Cardenas, with about twelve soldiers. The start was made from Cibola late in August, with instructions to return within eighty days. In Tusayan Cardenas was well received by the Indians, who gave him guides for the journey. His way thence was over one of the most ancient roads of the continent, the great Moqui trail, which still is visible and is used, running straightway to the Grand Canyon of the Colorado River, first touching its rim at a point a few miles west of the present Grand View trail into the Canyon, within about a dozen miles of Bright Angel trail, where has been established a hotel that today bears the name of Tovar.

But Cardenas, who had taken twenty days to reach the Canon, a seemingly unnecessarily long time, was satisfied to return when once he had made an attempt to cross the gorge. His report told that the river seemed to be three or four leagues below them. In reality they were about 5000 feet above the bed of the river and about eight miles from it by the present trails. It was told that the country was elevated and so cold that, save in the warm season, no one could live there. Three days were spent looking for a passage down to the river, "which looked as if the water were six feet across, though the Indians said it was half a league wide." Captain Melgosa and two companions, light and agile men, chose what appeared to be the least difficult place and went down until those who were above them were unable to keep sight of them, but they returned in the afternoon saying that they had gone only a third of the way and that rocks that seemed from the top to be about as tall as a man, in reality were bigger than the great tower of Sevilla.

Cardenas returned with information that the upper reaches of Alarcon's Rio Tison had been encountered and that the Canyon was impassable. Without doubt he was the first European who ever feasted his eye upon the glories of the gorge. I have stood at the point of this first view and have appreciated what must have been his emotion.

Coronado soon led hismen into the Rio Grande Valley, where he explored diligently, ever hoping to find the wealth of the Indies. His principal quest later was the kingdom of Quivira, the journey leading across the buffalo plains till finally Quivira was found, a large settlement of semi-nomadic Indians, reached in August of 1541 by a party of thirty horsemen, led by Coronado. He had sent his main force back to the Rio Grande pueblos. The farthermost point reached probably was in eastern Kansas, beyond the Arkansas River.

Having absolutely failed to develop any riches, the expedition of Coronado, by himself and his followers, was considered a failure, for their explorations, however important to future generations, had brought them nothing but travail. So, early in 1542 the greater part of the army was marshalled and started back to Mexico.

Coronado, though receiving reinforcements and supplies at Chichilticalli, returned to Mexico, early in the winter of 1542, with only a ragged remnant of the magnificent force with which he had set out two years before, his ranks thinning rapidly after the command reached Mexico, as the wearied men dropped out in each suc-

cessive settlement. It was a sad homecoming, for many had been left behind dead, many slaves had been lost and scores of unfortunates had been sacrificed. The situation bore heaviest of all upon the Viceroy himself, for Mendoza not only had risked his personal fortune in outfitting the expedition, but, without authority, he had drawn upon the royal revenues for the unlucky enterprise. Still, it is told, so firmly had he established himself in the government of Mexico by reason of honesty of character and rare ability of administration, that even this failure did not cause the ruin expected to his political standing.

A commentator of the times piously observes: "It was most likewise chastisement of God that riches were not found on this expedition, because, when this ought to have been the secondary object of the expedition and the conversion of all those heathen their first aim, they bartered with fate and struggled for the secondary; and thus the misfortune is not so much that all of those labors were without fruit, but the worst is that such a number of souls have remained in their blindness."

A one hours continuance of the Union Oil Company's "Forward Arizona" program is presented over KTAR every Wednesday evening between eight and nine o'clock.

Yours truly,

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