It seems to me that he was the classic soldier. He was a survivor. Every mention of him in history, and there are only a few, every one of them is a good solid, positive statement about his manly qualities and his loyalty and integrity.

Peter Hamlin (PH): Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo was the first European to set foot on the shores on what is now San Diego. He was a 16th-century explorer sailing for the Spanish crown. His life is the subject of the first program in the series "Twelve Who Shaped San Diego." I'm Peter Hamlin. Joining me is San Diego historian and chief historical consultant for these programs, Dr. Clare Crane. Clare, I'd like to begin by asking you about Cabrillo himself. It seems that historians really don't know that much about him, and I wonder if that's peculiar to Cabrillo himself or if that's something that we should just expect with someone who lived more than 400 years ago.

Clare Crane (CC): Well, I think it's certainly what one would expect in trying to reconstruct the life of someone who lived as long ago as that. There simply were not the kind of detailed records that are available now. What there was in many instances has been lost for one reason or another through deterioration or fire, flood, what have you.

PH: The interest in Spain toward the explorers back in those days was captured in a book by the Spanish author Montalvo called the Exploits of Esplandian, and from this book we find the first written reference to the name of California. Dr. John R. Adams, Emeritus Professor at San Diego State University and the man who's done a lifetime of research on literature that relates to San Diego says that it was an imaginary island in Montalvo's book.
that gave California its name.

John R. Adams (JRA): His book was published in 1510, which was before the Europeans had gotten to California. Well, in this book by Montalvo, California, a name that he made up, was applied to an island, a large island ruled over by warrior women. Purely fantasy of course, and nothing realistic whatsoever. The Spaniards discovered, or first came to California, which was Lower California, of course, sometime in the first half of the sixteenth century. Cortez and others coming to Baja California took it to be an island and since it was west of the West Indies, quite a ways west, they said, well this is California. They'd read this book which was kind of a contemporary best seller and so the name California was informally attributed to California. It stuck and by the middle of the sixteenth century, as you probably know, it was definitely the name of this part of the world.

PH: Dr. Adams mentions that the American author, Edward Everett Hale, read the Exploits of Esplandian, concluded that it contained the first written reference to the name of California, and published excerpts from the book in the Atlantic Monthly, in the year 1864. We can assume that Montalvo invented the name and although there are other explanations for California's origin, Hall's explanation still does stand up. Clare, before we actually discuss Cabrillo himself, we should really note that what is now San Diego was not really discovered by Cabrillo. It was already inhabited by cultures going back thousands of years. There is a particularly interesting archaeological site being studied in Mission Valley here in San Diego under the direction of Dr. James Moriarty, historian, anthropologist and professor at the University of San Diego.

James Moriarty (JM): The site that you are referring to in Mission Valley
is called the Charles H. Brown Sr. archaeological site. It is on the property which belongs to the Atlas Hotel Corporation, who were kind enough to give us a grant to carry out an extensive program of excavation, recovery and preparation. The site is one of the few stratified sites in San Diego County that I've had an opportunity to work. The age of the site, its greatest date is far beyond what any of us, many years ago, dreamed that we would have for an occupation in San Diego County. My highly conservative estimates are no greater than 20 to 25,000 years. However, I am very likely to be wrong about this and my colleagues feel that 75,000 to even 100,000 might not be too early, or might be a more adequate date. I'm not yet convinced, and that just doesn't mean anything, other than that I'm very conservative and I admit this freely and if my colleagues are right, it will probably be the oldest, well-defined site if it turns out that they're right, and I'm not at all sure that it won't. I really hope it will as a matter of fact. We'll have one of the earliest well-defined sites in North America. There's just no question about it, there were men here very early. The site contains four culture sequences; the historic Indian, at the top and, of course, history itself. Indeed, one of the most significant things about this site is that Dr. Paul Ezell, who is an Emeritus Professor of Anthropology at San Diego State University, and a professor of mine .... during the course of my excavations he and his wife, through examining some artifacts made the discovery that the site was originally the one Father Serra talked about, or "Kosoy" which makes it probably the most historic site in San Diego County because it is in part of our literature.

PH: The site, as Dr. Moriarty explaind, contains the stratified remains of four previous San Diego cultures, and we next turn to the question of which
of these people would have been here during the time of Cabrillo's voyage. 

JM: The three cultures that are best known in this area, the San Dieguito, the La Jolla Complex, and then the historic Indian who has historically been called the Digueño, named after our bay and mission of course, who recently, because of the Native American preference, prefers to be called the Kumeyaay as I understand it. Now, these are the people that Cabrillo met. They are probably not very closely related to the first two cultures that I mentioned, as we are pretty sure from the evidence that they arrived on the scene here about 1,000 B.C. or 2,000 years ago at least. The cultural attainments of these people have their origin and base in the Colorado River area and they are Yuman speaking peoples which shows their relationship. They spread out from the Colorado River approximately 3,000 years ago, eventually ending up on the shore here where undoubtedly they found the last elements of the La Jolla Complex. I'm not sure whether the La Jolla Complex was still a large population or not at the time. There's no evidence of warfare or anything like that. I've always assumed that there must have been a reasonably peaceful amalgamation of the two peoples. Then you get a dramatic appearance in your archaeological middens where pottery is introduced and sophisticated funerary practices such as cremation begins to take place.

CC: You mentioned that there was probably a peaceful amalgamation of these people. The Indians that Cabrillo and the other early explorers met in this area, were they generally speaking, a non-warlike people and what kind of reception did they give to Cabrillo?

JM: Well, their first response was the response that any people have to strangers. They were frightened and dismayed and fearful of the strangers, especially as now they were viewing technological modifications they never
even dreamed of. They were dealing with Europeans of the Late Renaissance. The subject of whether or not the San Diego Indians were warlike or not is difficult to handle because they had, by the time of Cabrillo's arrival, developed a number of institutions to solve problems of conflict, so that they could, by utilizing ritual, institutional rituals, avoid having to go to war. Now, there's no question that they were as human as you and I and that they did perhaps fight over ladies occasionally, and certainly there's evidence and even a memory of some minimal violence over the use of Gallery Forest Oaks where they would go from time to time to harvest on a seasonal basis, and no doubt, there were such conflicts. The Indians remembered these conflicts. But in general, they did not end up with any great bloody conflict.

CG: When Cabrillo first came, were the Indians, in addition to their being fearful of course, were they curious and were they on the whole friendly or did they attack or run away from those initial contacts? JM: If you read Cabrillo's log, it becomes, I think, obvious from the log that the people were quite fearful and did not approach them too closely. They managed to take some Indians prisoner and attempted to interrogate them, Lord knows how they figured to do that. On the whole, I'd say that they remained fearful of the Spanish and remained away from them, so that during Cabrillo's expedition, as well as that of Vizcaíno, we don't get very much of a description of the Indians... mainly because they remained at a distance and somewhat out of contact. I should add that they even had previous knowledge of the Spaniards because during both Vizcaíno's as well as Cabrillo's expedition, there was mention in various places that they knew of a people far to the east. And in the logs they say that the Indians galloped around as if they were riding horses and as if they had lances. They knew perfectly
well what the horses and lances were doing, and this was at a very early period. I mean, we're talking about around 1,540 so that gives you a good idea of the kind of contact these people really had - a whole grapevine system which apparently was transmitted trans-culturally too.

PH: Dr. James Moriarty of the University of San Diego. A bit later on in our program we will hear an excerpt from Cabrillo's log which describes encounters with the Indians and the landing at San Diego. How do we learn about history? How do you and I know what we do about Cabrillo? Well, we take classes and we read books and magazines, perhaps we learn something from movies. And here in San Diego, we learn about Cabrillo through a reenactment of his landing here, part of the annual Cabrillo Festival. A long-time participant in the Festival is Anthony Codina, who had for ten years played the part of Cabrillo in that reenactment.

Anthony Codina (AC): When I tried to portray this man, I tried to figure out what he was like. If he was Portuguese, and I consider myself an average Portuguese character from Orlengels, he would have the same traits that I have, and this is the basis on which I portray the character. I spoke Portuguese only during the time that I was dressed as Cabrillo.

PH: Anthony Codina's dramatic coach was his own Portuguese heritage and to feel the part he spoke only Portuguese. Perhaps not exactly the Portuguese of Cabrillo's time or his exact words, but things he may have said during the landing, describing the beautiful harbor, deciding to find shelter there for a few days, then continuing on his way.

AC: His name pronounced in Portuguese is Juan Rodrigues Cabrillo. That's a sound similar to the sound in million.

PH: Anthony Codina, as a long-time participant in the Cabrillo Festival,
says that it's an important event for the Portuguese and for all San Diegans.

AC: Since Cabrillo discovered the western part of the U.S., it isn't just for one special group, it's for all of us. So we're all participants, we all share it.

PH: The Cabrillo Festival centers around the reenactment of his arrival in San Diego Bay. Mary Gilletto, President of the Festival, likes to think of it as an annual rediscovery of San Diego, enabling observers to feel they're actually there for the historic event.

Mary Gilletto (MG): It really is like turning back the pages in history because what we've tried to do is to keep the Cabrillo story or the reenactment of Cabrillo's landing as authentic as possible. And a lot of study has gone into the costume or the uniform that Cabrillo, a sixteenth-century explorer would have worn, and we have duplicated that. Cabrillo, of course, was a Portuguese sailing for the flag of Spain and his soldiers' uniforms are very authentic. We've even duplicated the flags of that era and we have the priest that sailed with them. In fact, every year we've been very fortunate in that St. Agnes Church here does allow one of their priests to join us so that there is a real blessing given when Cabrillo lands. Now the ship is another matter. As you know, there are no sixteenth-century caravelles around. In fact, it's quite difficult to duplicate or to even find plans for a caravelle, but we've been very fortunate in the San Diego area. We've been able to find ships that are not, of course, authentic, but we have the "Rendez-vous" and we have the "California" which are about the closest we can get. This year, we'll be using the "Rendez-vous" and we'll charter it to bring Cabrillo in on that particular day. The ship that we charter, of course, sets up a square rig sail. They have the flags that we've duplicated, that are authentic to that era. It's really a sight to see, very moving.
PH: Mary Gilletto also pointed out that there is much more to the Cabrillo Festival than the landing. For the first time this year, there will be a regatta in San Diego Bay and Cabrillo will march into a San Diego City Council meeting to reclaim the lands. You'll see Portuguese dancing to the sounds of folkloric music, and there will be a historic seminar with the participation of many scholars including special guests from Portugal and Mexico. If you'd like more information on the Festival, by the way, you can call the Cabrillo National Monument at 293-5450. It all happens this year beginning September 22.

The Cabrillo Monument is another contemporary landmark dedicated to the first European to see these shores. It is located on the tip of Point Loma and boasts of a breathtaking view of the harbor, City of San Diego and Pacific Ocean. Testimony to its natural beauty and its historic importance is the fact that it is the most visited national monument in the U.S.; even more people annually than the Statue of Liberty according to the park superintendent.

People come to the Monument for a variety of reasons, probably primarily to enjoy the natural setting but also they can learn about Cabrillo through a number of exhibits and programs. Tom Tucker is the superintendent of the Monument and he never tires of strolling the grounds and telling visitors about the site.

Tom Tucker (TT): The Point Loma Peninsula is an interesting concept so far as a place for a park. I was talking to you earlier, Peter, about the size of Cabrillo as it is now, 144 acres, and mentioning to you that Cabrillo, the monument itself, comprises the whole 144 acres starting from the high water mark on the bay side up over the top of the peninsula over to the ocean and out into the ocean for 300 yards below low, low tide. As we stand up on top, we're so very much aware of 20th-century man while looking out towards
the city; the steel, concrete, glass structures, of the aircraft and the surface craft that we see going in and out on a consistent basis. But, you know, you get over on the ocean side where the peninsula acts like a big land curtain and you know, out of sight, out of mind is really true. You get down there and you look out to the vast expanse of the Pacific Ocean and you have a sense of really being in the wild open spaces. The few craft that you see out there, whether they're naval crafts or kelp cutters, simply give measurement to the tremendous expanse that you're looking at. People over on the ocean side sitting at one of our vista views just watching the crash of the waves come in and looking at that expanse of water out there; I know they feel that they're away from it all, they're only 20 minutes away from downtown San Diego where the hustle and bustle is really taking place. 

PH: Now, as we stand here we have a very broad view of the Pacific Ocean. Can you say with any degree of accuracy where Cabrillo might have sailed? If we had been standing right where we are standing now, would we have seen his ships coming in?

TT: All right now Peter, as we look directly south we look at the Coronado Islands. Those islands are in Mexico. Cabrillo mentions those islands in his log. Our historians inform us, the lay people, that Cabrillo arrived in San Diego running ahead of a storm. As we walk across over here, we can see where he came in on the east side of this tremendous edifice stretching for five miles into the ocean, and began to experience almost immediate relief from the buffeting of the wind when he got into the east side of the peninsula. Historians believe that Cabrillo went as far inland as Ballast Point where we have the Ballast Point Lighthouse, presently close to the submarine center there. That's where historians say Cabrillo anchored. He anchored there and
the next morning came ashore and that was his particular contact with the
land when he came into San Diego on September 28, 1542.

Ph: The log of Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo is lost but a summary does exist,
written by perhaps a friend, perhaps a sixteenth-century historian by the name
of Juan Piaz. And there we read a description of that first sighting of the
Coronado Islands called by Cabrillo "Islas de Santos," and the entrance to
San Diego Bay then called San Miguel:

On Thursday, they went about six leagues north/northwest along the
coast and found a very good and close port to which they gave the name
of San Miguel. And after anchoring they went ashore where there were
people. Of these, three waited and all of the others ran away. To
these three Indians they gave some gifts and the Indians told them
by signs that people like the Spaniards had passed through before.
They showed with much fear. At night the Spaniards left their ships
in a small boat to land and to fish. There happened to be Indians
there and they began to shoot with their arrows and they wounded
three men. The next day in the morning they sailed further into the
port which was large, and they took two boys who understood nothing,
not even signs, and they gave them shirts and sent them away. The
day after that in the morning, three large Indians came to the ships
and by signs told the others that there were men that walked like the
Spaniards, bearded, armed and dressed like the men on the ships. And
they showed that they had balistas, crossbows, and made gestures with
their right arms as if they were spearing. They were running as if
on a horse, and showed that they killed many of the Indian natives.
And for that reason, they were afraid. These people were very well
proportioned and large. They went around covered with the furs of
animals. While in port a very large storm passed but because the port
was so good they felt nothing. The weather came from the west/southwest
and it was rainy. It was the first real storm that they had undergone
and they stayed in the port until the following Tuesday. Here the
natives called the Christians "Juacamal." On Tuesday, the third of
October, they left the port of San Diego and during Wednesday, Thursday and Friday they sailed on.

PH: Much of Cabrillo remains unknown today, and that mystery feeds a tremendous curiosity on the part of students of Cabrillo. Terry de Mattio, Chief of Interpretation at the Cabrillo Monument, is responsible for telling visitors about the port and about Cabrillo.

Terry de Mattio (TdM): More than what we found that was interesting about Cabrillo is much that is mysterious about Cabrillo. We don't know exactly where he was born nor when, whether he was a member of the aristocracy or whether he was a common man, or if he had a chance for much of a formal education. In fact, we don't even know what the man looked like so these are some things that sort of stir the interest a little bit and catch the imagination, and we're able to speculate about this man, this mysterious man, Cabrillo. But we've been able to piece together enough, I think, to give us a good outline: that he first came to the New World and fought with Cortez and later on the campaigns through Central America and into Guatemala, was awarded for his services with encomiendas and therefore able to tax the Indians that worked the land. And from there, still caught up in this spirit of adventure perhaps, or an opportunity to discover new lands, or maybe even an opportunity to get rich, he went off on his expedition. Why exactly we don't know, so we can only sort of scratch our heads and ponder a little bit, but that seems to add to the enjoyment of the Cabrillo story.

PH: There's much more to the Cabrillo Monument than history. Terry de Mattio also tells visitors about the natural setting of the park; it's tidepools and
vegetation, a bayside trail, the old lighthouse and the migration of the Grey Whales which are clearly visible at certain times of the year from the Monument. The Monument's history is interesting in itself, by the way, and one of the fascinating anecdotes relating to San Diego history involves how the Cabrillo statue got to its location on Point Loma. But you'll have to wait for a future program in this series to hear about that. One additional aspect about learning about Cabrillo at the monument has to do with the sense of touch. Replicas of Cabrillo's weapons and armour can be handled and weighed by visitors to gain a more realistic idea about the lives of the explorers.

TdM: We have replicas of the helmet and breastplate, crossbow, that Cabrillo or soldiers of his time would have used, and when we start putting these on the kids, you can see their knees buckle and their eyes get bigger and the exclamations come out about just how heavy it is and how they wouldn't have wanted to wear this trying to cross the desert or even on board ship. This, I think, is one of the most interesting things; grown-ups think so too. We pass the helmet around a lot, and even though it doesn't weigh much, we'll get estimates of fifteen to twenty to thirty pounds, when in fact the helmet only weighs eight. It's surprising. It's primarily due to the fact that they didn't realize some of the hardships the men had to endure on these explorations.

Assorted Children: I thought the helmet was pretty heavy if you had to walk a long way instead of on horse because if you walk with this suit on you'd get pretty tired.

Well, that crossbow was super heavy on my shoulder. I guess cause I was holding one end and then I wasn't holding the back, 'cause, but it was really heavy on my shoulder and I don't know how they could shoot that thing. It would be way too heavy for me to shoot. I would like to have been with Cabrillo
but I wouldn't like to be a bowman. I'd want to be something else.

PH: Like what?

Child: A leader or something like that, but not carry that. Too much equipment.

And then when I put that on...it hurts your shoulders, sort of bends them down. I'd never want to go with them.

PH: Do you know more about Cabrillo? Do you like picking up the stuff?

Child: Yeah...yeah. Because we studied California history.

PH: What do you think Cabrillo was like? Anybody have any ideas on that?

Child: I think he was really strong and big. I would just love to go with him. That would be really fun.

PH: How about you?

Child: Well, I wouldn't like to go with him because you might get hurt the same way he did.

PH: Some young visitors to the Cabrillo National Monument wearing helmets and carrying armour like that Cabrillo would have carried. What was Cabrillo like? That's a question we put to Dr. Moriarty at the University of San Diego.

JM: Well one, I'm not sure all my colleagues in history would agree with this, but it seems to me that he was the classic soldier, he was a survivor. He began by developing a fleet for Cortez. He later came into association, after Cortez left for the New World, with the great Pedro de Alvarado, the great soldier as you know, who was killed in the Mixton Wars, at just about the same time the expeditions on the northwest coast were really taking shape, in the 1530's and late 1530's. Alvarado, just before his death, made certain agreements with Mendoza, who was the governor, which, I think, was an unnecessary prologue to getting the proper permissions to continue expeditions.
Cabrillo sat in a secondary position but was respected and knowledgeable, and considered well by all of his contemporaries. In his great work, Castillo signified that he was a man of integrity and much liked, an honorable man. This is quite a thing because of the jealousies, the arguments over land and property and what have you. Practically no one says anything bad. As a matter of fact, I can't think of anyone who said anything bad about Cabrillo. Every mention of him in history, and there are only a few, but, every one of them is a good solid positive statement about his manly qualities, loyalty and integrity.

PH: What might have life aboard those ships have been like? What, for example, did the men think of Cabrillo, what was their daily life aboard like, what kinds of hardships did they have to live through?

JM: The hardships on the expedition were as great as they usually were on any expedition of this type. Food had the tendency to go bad in the holds which were damp and wet. The ships weren't anywhere near the quality they were to later be. The commanders on most of these vessels sooner or later had a problem of mutiny or almost mutiny because living conditions and the general dehabilitation of the crew got to the point generally where the crew didn't want to continue any longer. Francisco Ulloa, who was a friend of Cortez and one of his captains, along with Cabrillo; both seemed to have been men who would push their crews to the limit but seemed to know when that limit was arrived at. It's hard to describe a Renaissance soldier as a humane man but their leadership was of such quality that they knew how far they could push their men. All through the summary logs of the early voyages, we get the impression of concern for his men and yet a real motivation towards discovery and the advancement of the cause of those who sent him out. There's no question that he was a patriot in the best possible sense.
PH: What class of men would have been on the crew of, let's say, Cabrillo's expedition?

JM: Well, it's certainly popular with some historians to describe them mostly as the scum of the jails of Seville and that most of the conquistadores were not from the best elements of society. I have a tendency to feel this is more a reflection of our social views of our time rather than reality. Certainly, many of them were poor, certainly many of them were entrepreneurs, certainly many of them were out for the main chance. I don't find too much adavariance from what we have today in the academic world. They were not those who would hold, or stay behind. As Richard the Lion Hearted said "thank God we were not born clerks," and I suspect that that was a fairly reasonable statement. Some were outstanding, there isn't any question about that. Courageous, intelligent -- certainly this would describe Cabrillo. And I suppose they had their share of those who when pressed wouldn't come up to scratch, but on the whole, you wouldn't have wanted to go to sea with men you couldn't trust in an emergency. I rather suspect that men like Cabrillo would have chose from whatever grouping he had, the best he could get. He knew who had been tested and those he could trust.

PH: Dr. James Moriarty. Claire, what was it that Cabrillo and his men were searching for? Why did they come here? I suppose not to find San Diego Harbor.

CC: The motivations for exploring New Spain, in general, were three things: glory, God and gold. Glory for themselves, certainly they hoped to find that. God - they hoped to bring their version of Christianity to the pagans, bring this to the savages. And gold of course. Specifically, what Cabrillo and his men were instructed to search for was the Strait of Anian, what the English
called the Northwest Passage. This great mythical river which, of course, nobody ever did find, was supposed to flow between the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans and would make it much easier to get through this empty continent of North America.

PH: As far as looking for gold and great cities is concerned, Dr. Moriarty points out that there was really no reason not to expect another highly advanced and rich Indian civilization on the expeditions to the North.

JM: All the great discoveries in Mexico City had been made. Marvelous places had been found in Maya land, the Yucatan Penninsula representing the Maya culture, and then suddenly, after some expeditions to the South, you have the discovery of the Inca peoples. There wasn't any doubt in anyone's mind, nor would it have been logical to assume that these were the only great civilizations producing the kind of treasure and rare metals and precious gems, etc. It was logical to assume that all of that distance that they knew existed must lie to the North and Northwest along this coast. Surely, there had to be other cities and, of course, they had their legends of the Seven Cities of Cibola. They had some of the fibs that were told by Cabeza de Vaca which added to it even if he was a liar and everyone knew it. He might have been a liar who passed through El Dorado, who knows. The dream of great riches and wealth and new discovery, and that's, of course, something that .... I love Samuel Edwards Morrison because somewhere he said, "Why do we always deny them the nobility that," referring to the great explorers, "that we would almost automatically give anyone else."

That is that they were not just after wealth and riches, which were the obvious and up-front things, but that they were men looking for what was on the other side of the hill, and who wanted to experience the new and the bizarre and who were willing to risk a good deal for that pleasure alone. Thank God we still
have people like that and we know they exist.

PH: Dr. James Moriarty, University of San Diego. Claire, at the beginning of the program we talked about the lack of information available on Cabrillo, and it seems that a very basic fact indeed is still missing from the picture. Now, most people assume that Cabrillo was Portuguese, and I'd like to ask you if most historians are quite sure about that; the fact that Cabrillo was indeed Portuguese.

CC: Well, up until certainly very recently, and in many of the books that are still being reprinted, the story of the discovery of California is briefly told and in almost all of the histories that I am familiar with, it is simply said that Cabrillo was a Portuguese navigator, and until the article published by Dr. Michael Matthis in The Journal of San Diego History, I think that this was simply unquestioningly assumed. It wasn't anything about which people thought there was really any controversy.

PH: Dr. Michael Matthis is a professor of history currently at the University of San Francisco, and when he recently visited San Diego he explained his argument that Cabrillo was not Portuguese.

Michael Matthis (MM): Well, first I'll refer to him as Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo because, since I do believe that he is Spanish, Rodriguez would be his proper last name, his family name, rather than Cabrillo although he is popularly called Cabrillo. My basic argument is 1) there is no definite proof of him having been Portuguese. That is, there are no baptismal certificates, birth records or anything of this sort which indicate that he was Portuguese, and 2) he reached a level in the Spanish bureaucracy and hierarchy in the New World of such a nature that it would be highly indicative of the fact and he was not a foreigner but was rather a castillion in fact, not even just a Spaniard but rather a castillion.
The contemporary documentation at the time tended to always refer to a person who was a non-castillion by their particular nationality and regionality and in the case of Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo there is no such mention.

PH: At this point, I guess we had better discuss why, then, it is almost universally thought that Cabrillo or Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo was Portuguese.

MM: The basic argument is simply based upon a statement by Antonio de Herrera in his work published in 1615 on a general history of the Spanish expansion in the New World in which he casually and passively refers to Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo as being Portuguese. Just simply the statement, the "Portuguese Navigator," and the entire argument for nationality has been based on that statement.

PH: Would it not have been true that Herrera had available to him any of the documents that we may not have now? For example, he may have had a birth certificate or some other document that does not exist anymore. Why would we suppose that he's not correct on that point?

MM: There's perfectly good reason to believe that Herrera could have had material available to him which no longer exists or is no longer accessible. However, two points: one, that additional documentation, which is still available, relative to Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo, makes no mention of him having been Portuguese at all and that this is rather extensive documentation: letters from the Viceroy Antonio de Mendoza discussing his voyage to California, various claims by his grandchildren relative to his properties in Guatemala, and other documentation in which there is no mention at all of his having been Portuguese. Further, Herrera was a man who sat down to write general history in its largest edition which was published by the Spanish Royal Academy of History. This was a seventeen-volume work, an encyclopedic study of Spanish overseas expansion. Similarly, to this case, there are various errors in Herrera's work. Anybody that sits
down to write an encyclopedic history is invariably going to make a mistake or two somewhere along the line, and it's just as possible that he could have made a mistake in this case.

PH: Dr. Moriarty, on the other hand, is of the opinion that Cabrillo is Portuguese. He sees no particular reason not to believe the word of Herrera.

JM: The question is yet unsolved. Let me go on record as saying that no mention of Cabrillo's nationality is made excepting in the document that Michael Matthis mentioned which was written about 100 years after his death. But that is a statement that says he was Portuguese. The man using those documents had the availability of every document relating to this period in the Royal Archives. He was not a man easily fooled. He was an excellent scholar and Michael mentions the same thing in his paper. Now, there is no answer to Michael's final contention that there is no historic documentation in a contemporary sense relating to the nationality of Cabrillo, but there is a growing, and has been growing for a long time, weight of evidence to indicate that the statement that he was Portuguese was true. First of all, it is well known and accepted by all historians that I know, that there was a law that no one, outside of a person who was of Spanish birth, could even enter the New World let alone be on any expeditions of discovery. And this expedition of discovery is the principal thing. They were not allowed on the expeditions of discovery. Certainly a number of people got into the New World alright, and were ignored for whatever reasons. But on the expeditions themselves, the law was very clear. Expeditions of discovery were secret and naturally the Royal Spanish government didn't want this new knowledge to leak out for a long time. They kept as much information, maps and what have you, as secret as possible. Well anyway, there isn't any question that with men of quality, with talents that were needed, these ideas are going to be overcome.
And Cabrillo was unique. He goes back to the Conquest itself. He is the man who helped develop and build the boats for Cortez, which were on the lake, partially and largely responsible for the conquest of Mexico City. He served very well in Honduras and other places, so he demonstrated not only soldierly but nautical qualities. He obviously could navigate and do a variety of very specialized things which very few of the early conquistadors could do. Those people with specific talents in any trial situation will generally be brought to the fore regardless, it seems to me, certainly by pragmatic people like Cortez, and later on Alvarado and Mendoza too. In addition, the cultural variation, and all the Portuguese will be angry with me for this I suppose, but the cultural variation is relatively minor between the Spanish and the Portuguese and certainly, at that period they weren't all that different. So, one could adjust one culture or another without the cross-cultural problems that others would have. So here you have a man who meets all the requirements and is specifically trained in certain tasks. Naturally, they'd use him. It seems logical.

**PH:** But Dr. Matthis finds the Spanish law regarding non-Spanish participants in the expeditions lends evidence to his side of the argument: Cabrillo may have been Spanish:

**HM:** It was legal to work for the Spanish crown if you declared your nationality and swore allegiance to the Spanish monarchy. But we have cases such as Columbus and Magellan who are very evident cases of great explorers, who, although of non-Castillian birth, nonetheless worked for the Spanish monarchy in a very technical capacity. So it was not illegal for him to work for the Spanish crown; it would have been terribly illegal if he'd been caught hiding this out. But, I find it very difficult to believe that a man could achieve this level of importance. He was a confidante of the Viceroy, a confidante of the conqueror
Guatemala, Pedro de Alvarado. He circulated among conquistadors. I find it very difficult to believe that he could have achieved that rank and successfully hide his nationality that long, virtually his entire life. I haven't gone through all of the national census roles, but I've gone through all the telephone directories of Portugal and all of those of Spain, and there are no Cabrillos or any last names even similar to Cabrillo which could be considered to be an adaptation of the name of those who own a telephone in Portugal, whereas there are seven families of this name in the telephone directory in Madrid alone. This seems to be indicative of something here.

PH: Dr. Moriarty has a different interpretation of the name Cabrillo.

JM: I am of the opinion that it is a nickname, that it's a soldierly nickname, too, and maybe a little silly, but it refers to a small goat. Soldiers have a tendency to give those kinds of names to officers they like. They're very seldom given to officers they don't like. His men probably called him "the Little Goat." That's an indication too. The name is therefore Spanish, not Portuguese, as the soldiers he was dealing with were all Spanish or at least most of them were.

PH: Dr. James Moriarty. And before him we heard Dr. Michael Matthias, professor of history at the University of San Francisco. Of course, both men's arguments are much more detailed than the short version we've presented here. We included the argument for a number of reasons. In the course of the presentation of the two sides we learned quite a bit about Cabrillo himself and I think we've seen a very good example of how we can have two very different interpretations of similar material. If Cabrillo could have known of the problems he would cause future scholars, he could have done a thing so simple as writing his name differently.
JM: He signed his name Juan Rod. That leaves you without knowing whether he would have written Rodriguez, the Portuguese way, or Rodríguez, the Spanish way. If we ever find anything with his name written out fully, we'll have one more clue. A number of problems have been solved. We know that he had more than two ships. We know that he had Portuguese on board in positions of authority. We are learning slowly but surely more and more about him and it seems so strange because the search for Cabrillo began back in the 1830's by people like Buckingham Smith and a variety of other scholars who had to do with the first translations of the summary log. A possibility that the log itself will be discovered some day ... can you imagine what a thrill that would be? That will give us information. We will have his own words, for one thing, and not a transliteration of what the log said, not a summary, but his own words. One statement like "the land looks like my home near Lisbon" would be just great. Or the reverse, "near Madrid." One way or another, a statement like that, you see, could solve things. People say things like this when they're keeping logs. You always compare in descriptions, you see. Oh, the finding of that log would be a wonderful thing. And does the log exist? Why, the chances of it existing are very good. No one can say with any truth whatsoever that they have investigated the archives of Spain which are pretty scattered anyway, but still, enormous bundles of documents haven't been opened in 200 to 300 years. What about the document that's misfiled in such a vast collection? Only by the sheerest luck could this needle in the haystack be found. But, it has happened in the past, it'll happen again. I have real hopes that the log does exist.

PH: Dr. James Moriarty of the University of San Diego. I'm curious what the fate of Cabrillo was after he left San Diego Harbour. We took him that far in the reading from the log. He called it San Miguel, and then headed north
to continue his expedition. What then?

CC: The voyage continued on up the coast of California and they stopped at a number of places, for example, in Santa Barbara and on the Channel Islands of which there are several. On one of these islands in November, Cabrillo fell and broke either an arm or a leg. The accounts differ. The voyage continued but evidently there was an infection or something of that nature as a result of this fall, and on January 3, 1543, Cabrillo died and was buried on one of the Channel Islands. He turned over command of the voyage to his pilot Bartolome Ferrer or Ferrello as it's sometimes written, and the ships were ultimately brought back to Mexico, but Cabrillo was buried there on one of these Channel Islands. A few years ago, Dr. Robert Heiser of the University of California, in looking through some stones that had come from the Channel Islands, came across one with markings on it that looked like "J.R." and a little subscript "S." Dr. Heiser has every reason to believe that this may have been a grave marker for Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo, and there is a replica of it at the Cabrillo Monument now, that people can see.

PH: Finally, when Cabrillo died, was he praised as a hero? Was he considered a great man for having discovered these vast new lands that we now call California?

CC: He may have thought of himself as a failure. Certainly, he had been sent to search for the Strait of Anian and to search for these rich cities, gold and silver and so on. He probably considered himself a failure because he had not found these things. Certainly, the government of New Spain did not regard the discoveries of Cabrillo in California as being worthwhile following up. Nothing was done about colonizing that area and following up his claim to the area for a couple hundred years.

PH: And what would you say his importance is to San Diego aside from the obvious
that he was the first European to come here? what else?

CC: It seems to me that Cabrillo's real importance for San Diego lies in the fact that our written history begins with Cabrillo. Certainly he is important also as the discoverer, in the European sense, the first European to discover and to record that he discovered California. He's the first person to have applied the name California to this entire area, or at least if not the first person to have used the name, to have popularized it, to have affixed it firmly to this area, and he's important for these reasons.

PH: Dr. Claire Crane, San Diego historian and chief consultant for this series of programs on San Diego history. It was many years before Spain acted on Cabrillo's claim to the port of San Miguel. In 1602, Vizcaíno made a voyage up the coast and it is from him that we gain the name of San Diego. It was 227 years after Cabrillo's discovery before Spanish colonization began in earnest with the arrival of Father Junípero Serra, a determined Franciscan padre who was instrumental in the success of the San Diego settlement. Father Serra will be the topic of next week's program.