

Steve Knutson (1941-2024)

Compiled by Members of Persona Non Grotto

- NSS 5433
- Charter member:
 - Oregon Grotto (1964)
 - Willamette Valley Grotto (1974)
 - Shasta Area Grotto (1982)
 - Persona Non Grotto (2019)
- Editor, American Caving Accidents (1976-1993)
- NSS Fellow (1977)
- Lew Bicking Award (1989)



Climbing History

- Started rock climbing and mountaineering with the Reed College Outing Club while a college student (early 60s) in Portland.
- He joined the Mazamas (a climbing club in the Pacific Northwest) and their rescue group after they rescued him after his 1000' fall on Mt Hood in 1963.
- Summitted many peaks in the Pacific Northwest.
- Also known for first ascents in the Santiam area of the Oregon Cascades in the 60s and 70s.
- An early climber at Wolf Rocks, Smith Rock, and Beacon Rock in the Columbia Gorge.



Photo source: Mike Sims

Caving History

- Started caving in Oregon Caves in 1961
- Wrote about lava tube caves in late-60s and early-70s.
- Member of the 1974 Castleguard Cave expedition in the Canadian Rockies led by Derek Ford
- Participated in hydrologic studies of the Mammoth Cave karst led by NPS hydrologist Jim Quinlan, 1976 to 1978
- Started the Klamath Mountain Conservation Task Force in 1973, with the goal of protecting and preserving cave resources in the region.
- Explored Northern California caves starting in 1973
- Started caving in the Marble Mountains in 1974.
 - Bigfoot Cave - set the US deepest cave record in 1977
 - Hosted annual Speleocamps.



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Oregon Caves

The Pioneer Exploration
and the New Discoveries



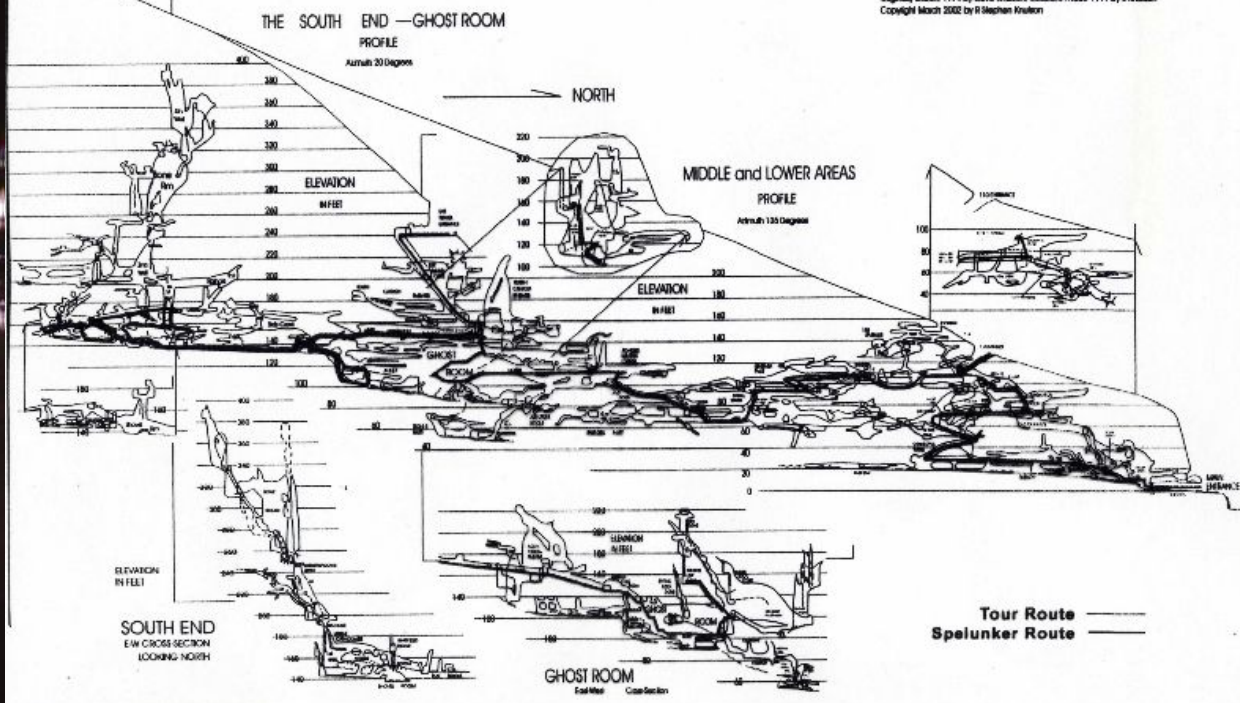
Steve Knutson



OREGON CAVES

Oregon Caves National Monument
Profile and Selected Cross-Sections

Tapo and Compass surveys, 1970-1999
Originally Drawn, 1974 by Steve Knutson; additions made 1997 by S. Knutson
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Lost World Expeditions (annual, starting in 1979)

- **Mexico** (Cuetzalan, Tecolo, Chichicasspan, San Bernardo, Santa Elena)
- **Guatemala** (Tz'ul Mas Nim, Yalijux, Cuilco Plateau, Cuchumatanes)
- **Honduras** (Rio Atima, Montaña Santa Barbara)
- **Peru** (Bolivar, Leimebamba)
 - Featured as an episode on the History Channel entitled “Mummies of the Clouds”
 - Discovery of indigenous burials of the Chachapoya culture in the Cloud Forests of Peru.















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Steve played guitar, mandolin, fiddle, banjo, and autoharp and was in at least five bluegrass/old-time string bands beginning at Reed College in 1962.

Summary: Steve Knutson

- **Expedition leader** for many pioneer caving trips
- **Safety first**, he was strongly committed to avoiding situations that resulted in accidents due to physical, mental, or personality causes
- **Exceptional stamina** in alpine environments (cold, low oxygen, demanding conditions)
- **Attentive to equipment problems** (carbide lamps, early ascenders & descenders, wet suits, ropes, footwear)
- **Astute mapper and passage finder** - kept assiduous notes plus had a phenomenal memory
- **Wonderful storyteller**, writing many adventure articles that summarized trips
- **Mentor** to novice cavers, patient, intelligent, witty

