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SPELEOLIFEROUS LAVA FLOWS ASSOCIATED WITH THE BROTHERS AND SUBSIDIARY FAULT ZONES OF CENTRAL AND SOUTHEASTERN OREGON

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ABSTRACT

The Pacific Northwest at the western edge of the North American Plate is impacted by the interactions of three types of plate boundaries. As the Pacific Plate slips northward toward subduction in the Gulf of Alaska, it is dragging western Oregon northward. During the last 10 to 12 million years, the terrain south of the Brothers Fault Zone has been extended an estimated 50 miles over a distance of 200 miles. The Brothers Fault Zone, along which magma has upwelled repeatedly, is the "pivot" between the older highly folded rocks of the Blue Mountain Province and the younger highly faulted rocks of the Basin and Ranger Province. The basaltic lava fields along the Brothers and subsidiary parallel fault zones include: the Horse, Arnold, Potholes, Matz, Lava Pass, Devils Garden, Squaw Ridge, Green Mountain, Four Craters, Diamond Craters, Voltage, Saddle Butte, Jordan Craters and Cow Lakes. Caves have been discovered in most of these lava fields; their basalts vary in age. A second group of cave flows are associated with the stratovolcanoes which result from magma produced by the subduction of the Juan de Fuca Plate. The highly plastic, small and thin, warm and youthful Juan de Fuca Plate, originating from a spreading center located about 270 miles offshore from the Oregon-Washington line, is subducting at an oblique angle under the more buoyant North American Plate. Examples of the stratovolcanoes with speleoliferous basaltic flows are Mt. St. Helens and Mt. Adams in southern Washington, Newberry Volcano in central Oregon, and Medicine Lake Volcano in northern California.

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