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Gene Savoy & His Search for the Secrets of Vanished Civilizations

An Interview with Sean Savoy

(a two page excerpt from the eight page interview)

Douglas Eugene “Gene” Savoy (1927-2007) was an American explorer, author, religious leader, and theologian. He undertook a series of daring expeditions to the Andes and the Amazon jungle in search of the ancient mysteries of the Incas, Aztecs and Mayans. He is perhaps best known for bringing to light a number of Peru’s most important archaeological sites, including Vilcabamba, the last refuge of the Incas during the Spanish Conquest.

Today Gene Savoy’s work is continued by the religious community and the educational institution he founded. *New Dawn* recently spoke to Gene Savoy’s son Sean about his father’s remarkable discoveries and insights based on the lore of lost civilizations.

NEW DAWN (ND): Your late father Gene Savoy has been called the original ‘Indiana Jones’. His South American expeditions, exploring and documenting various pre-Columbian archaeological sites, challenged the ‘conventional wisdom’ of the time. Can you tell us about your father’s journeys undertaken in the 60s and 70s?

SEAN SAVOY (SS): Well, that is a long story. It would take a book to tell the full account. In fact, my father did write several books on his adventures of that time, but I believe a new book is due to continue the story where he left off. It is my aim to write such a book.

To be brief, my father began exploring in Peru in 1957 at the age of 30, first along the desert coast researching pre-Inca and Inca settlements by foot and by air. Eventually, he undertook a major expedition in 1964 whose purpose was to locate the legendary last capital city of the Inca Empire, Vilcabamba. It was Vilcabamba that 50 years earlier the American explorer Hiram Bingham had set out in search of but instead located the mountain citadel now known as Machu Picchu. Bingham never did successfully locate Vilcabamba, which was recorded by the Chroniclers to have been located deep in the jungles of southern Peru. Following Bingham’s original route, my father arrived at the Plain of Ghosts and after a long, treacherous and arduous journey of some weeks, came upon

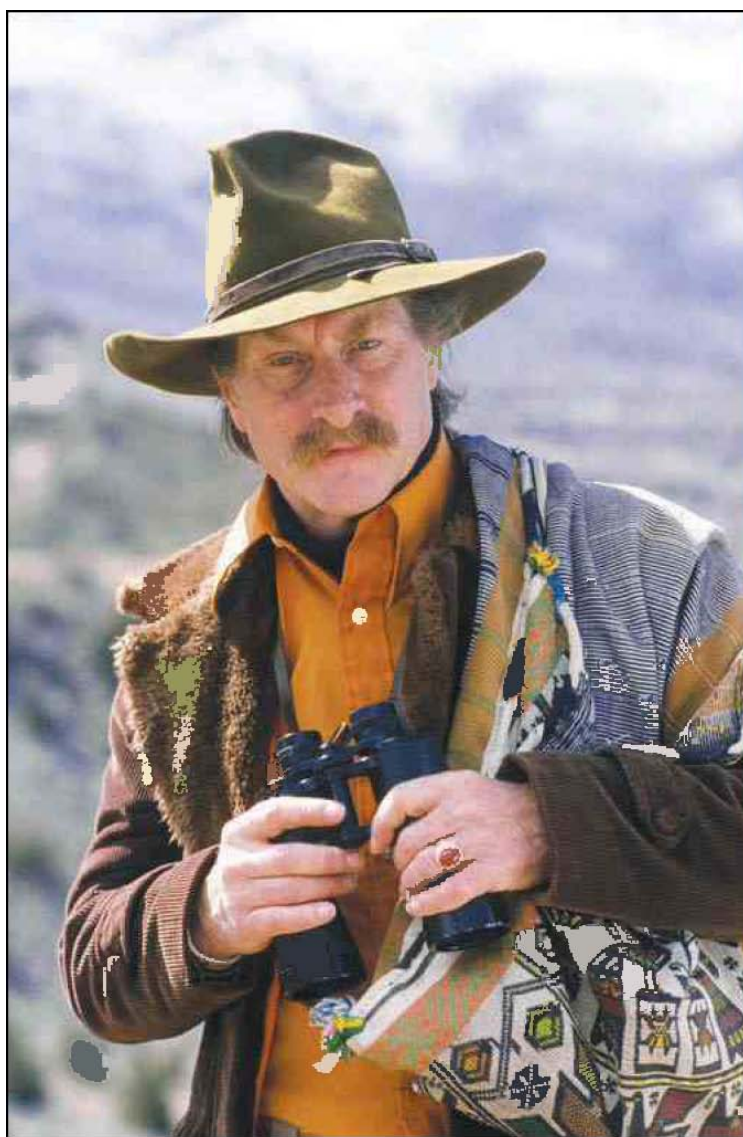
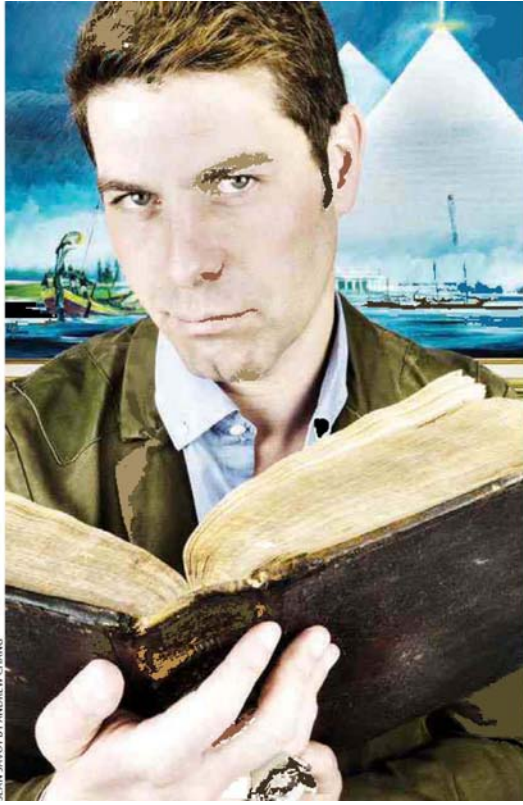


PHOTO COURTESY OF DALE WITTNER

Gene Savoy, *People Magazine*’s “Real Indiana Jones,” achieved international fame in the 1960s with a series of daring expeditions into the dense Peruvian jungles of the eastern Andes and Amazon region that led to the discovery of numerous ancient and mysterious stone cities and settlements where none were thought to exist.



SEAN SAVOY BY ANDREW CHANG

Sean Savoy is the son of Gene Savoy and attorney Sylvia Ontaneda-Bernales, a native of Lima, Peru.

He is an ordained spiritual educator, archaeological explorer, radio personality, writer and editor, raconteur, and public speaker, who lectures in the United States and abroad. Sean has been trained in Cosolargy®, the religious-scientific system that teaches the restored ancient arts and sciences of personal transformation by means of solar light-energy techniques. As such, he now holds the office of Chancellor/VP of Cosolargy International and the Jamilian University.

As an explorer, Sean is president of the Andean Explorers Foundation, and has spent over 20 years in the field uncovering the mysteries of the ancient pre-Columbian cultures of Peru. He has translated several works by Peruvian literary giant, Ricardo Palma.

In 2005 he was dubbed "Indiana Jones, Jr." by *Men's Journal* and acknowledged as one of the outstanding world explorers of "Generation EX." He has been profiled and featured in various documentaries.

Sean is the host of "House of Savoy" (www.facebook.com/HouseofSavoy), a public affairs radio program. He is also co-host of "Living Conscious," a 30-minute to 1-hour segment on "Broad View." Both shows air out of Reno, Nevada. He was formerly a reporter for Reno Public Radio KUNR 88.7 (NPR), and currently is a featured columnist for the alternative Reno publication, *Reno Tahoe Tonight* magazine for which he writes the quarterly column "The Light Factor." He also writes for the *LeRue Review* and blogs for *The Huffington Post*.

You can find out more and read his latest blogs at his website www.seansavoy.com.

the hidden city, which he uncovered, explored and surveyed. In terms of pre-Columbian history, this was like finding the Troy of ancient Greece. Naturally, this find propelled my father to international fame as an explorer and opened him up to controversy and speculation, as he was not a papered archaeologist, a fact which would dog his career until the very end. The Vilcabamba discovery is recounted in his book *Vilcabamba: Last City of the Incas* (Robert Hale, London, 1971). The American edition, *Antisuyo: Search for the Lost Cities of the Amazon* (Simon and Schuster, 1970), has become a classic of students of Andean archaeology and history.

After the success of the initial Vilcabamba expedition, my father set out north on a quest that no one before had dared undertake, let alone imagine. Although the Vilcabamba discovery secured him in history as a major explorer, alongside the likes of the British Lt. Col. Percy Fawcett or the American Hiram Bingham, some even claiming him to be the inspiration for the fictional Indiana Jones character, it was his next series of expeditions that were perhaps his greatest contribution to Andean history – the rediscovery of the fabled white stone cities of the pre-Inca Chachapoyas (s) culture of northeastern Peru. These cities were briefly mentioned by the great Peruvian chronicler "El Inca" Garcilaso de la Vega in his *Royal Commentaries of the Incas*, as well as by his contemporary the Peruvian priest-chronicler Blas Valera.

They were not, however, considered by archaeology or history. Even with the mid-19th century discovery by Juan Crisostomo Nieto of the monolithic Chachapoyan citadel of Kuelap, the Andean highlands and high jungles immediately east were not generally believed to have been territory for important or advanced culture, save by the forward thinking "father of Peruvian archaeology" and inspiration for much of my father's work, Julio C. Tello.

With the idea that high culture could indeed exist east of the Andes, my father set out on a series of "El Dorado" expeditions in search of the legendary "Seven Cities of the Chachapoyas." The *Antisuyo* book recounts the early discoveries (1965 through 1970), which we continued through the Andean Explorers organization through the 2000s, most recently under my leadership.

There have been reports and documentaries produced on the recovery and exploration of these lost cities, including the ancient metropolises of Gran Vilaya (1985-1995) and Gran Saposoa (1999-2004), not to mention one of my father's most memorable finds, the picturesque Gran Pajatén (1965), the Bird City of the Amazon. Although my father is often not credited with discovery of Gran Pajatén, suffice it to say that he was the first to explore it and it was he who brought the site to the world's attention, including to that of the Peruvian government who later declared the site and much of the surrounding area protected within the Rio Abiseo National Park.

There is no doubt that without Gene Savoy's foresight, determination, research and skill as an explorer the Chachapoyas territory would not be the hotbed of activity that it is today. It is no exaggeration to claim that without his pioneering work a whole culture would likely not have been considered worth investigating by science.

New expeditions under more recent explorers, including myself, have assigned great historical importance to the Chachapoyas civilization, which is inextricably tied to the historical period related to the rise of the Inca Empire and its fall under the Spanish.

Readers can learn about exploration programs by emailing Sean at: sean@expeditions.org