

Exposing Roger Patterson's 1967 Bigfoot Film Hoax

*New revelations shed light on a world-famous, much-debated film
supposedly showing a Bigfoot creature.*

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The most famous recording of an alleged Bigfoot is a short film shot in 1967. Filmed in Bluff Creek, California, it shows a large, manlike creature striding through a clearing. In many ways the veracity of the film is crucial; unlike many alleged Bigfoot photographs, the subject in the film cannot be a misidentification. Either the film is a hoax or it is an unknown, hairy giant. The film's authenticity has been hotly debated, both among the public and among Bigfoot researchers.

After nearly forty years of secrecy, the truth behind the world-famous Roger Patterson Bigfoot film has been revealed. The man who actually wore the costume and played the role of Bigfoot in the film has been located and

has made a full confession. Moreover, the husband and wife team who made and sold the Bigfoot costume that Patterson used to fake his movie have also confessed, and several other important eyewitnesses have come forth with corroborating evidence. In a new book, *The Making of Bigfoot: The Inside Story* (Prometheus Books, 2004), Seattle-based author Greg Long reveals details of the hoax, the result of a six-year investigation which also clandestinely involved author Kal Korff.

The Legend of the Patterson Film

According to Roger Patterson, who died of cancer in 1972, he and a companion, Bob Gimlin, were riding their horses on October 20, 1967, in Bluff Creek, California, when they suddenly encountered a Bigfoot. Not coincidentally, the two were in the area to "look for the creature" and were hoping to capture it on film with a movie camera rented specifically for the occasion. Patterson was in fact working on a motion-picture documentary about the subject.

According to Patterson, the two men were quietly riding, when he saw the creature and his horse suddenly "reared and fell over." After spotting the creature and having his horse fall on him, Patterson managed to regain his composure and pull out his 16 mm camera. He started filming while running toward the Bigfoot, steadied himself, and capped off sixty seconds as it walked away, glancing back at them over its right shoulder.

The two men then purportedly made plaster casts of the footprints left by the creature and raced to the post office to mail the film for immediate processing. The rest of the story is now history.

The Hoax Begins to Unravel

The first concrete sign that the Patterson film was a hoax surfaced when a man named Clyde Reinke claimed to have firsthand knowledge of the fraud as a former office manager for American National Enterprises (ANE), a now-defunct movie company that specialized in wildlife films.

Reinke claimed that Roger Patterson was on the company's payroll as a "wildlife photographer." According to Reinke, Patterson and ANE "cooked up" the scheme to fake the Bigfoot film. ANE's alleged plan was to use the film as a "loss

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leader" that would attract huge audiences into theaters to see the footage (sandwiched in between their other movies). "The Bigfoot film increased attendance tremendously," Reinke claimed on the Fox network's one-hour special, *World's Greatest Hoaxes: Secrets Finally Revealed*.

When the program aired on December 28, 1998, it caused a sensation. One individual who saw the special was Bob Heironimus, a recently retired laborer and the person who had worn the Bigfoot costume in the Patterson film.

After deciding to come forth, Bob Heironimus says, "I told him (Bob Gimlin), 'I don't give a damn, I'm telling the truth. I'm tired after thirty-seven years,' and he tells me, 'Well, don't mention my name.'"

According to Heironimus, it was Bob Gimlin who first asked him, at Patterson's request, to wear the Bigfoot costume and help fake the film. Patterson and Gimlin "explained to me they were going to sell the film, naturally, and make a fortune. They would give me a thousand dollars, and then as they made money they would give me some." Despite keeping his end of the bargain, he was never paid.

"It was in July or August of 1967. Gimlin told me that Roger was going to make a film, and they needed someone to wear a suit." Heironimus was twenty-six at the time, and says he "thought nothing of it." From his perspective, it was just a way to make some quick and easy money.

Heironimus claims that the Bigfoot costume was made of synthetic fur and bits of leather from a horse's hide. Patterson had added "breasts" to the chest of the Bigfoot creature. Heironimus also remembers that it contained football shoulder pads inside it to "bulk it up," and that the head piece was, in fact, a dressed-up football helmet that had a mask attached to the front of it with two slits to look through. "Because the eyeholes were a little more than an inch away from my face, it was hard to see in that mask."

After being fitted with the suit, Heironimus claims he was told to stand in one place and not move until Patterson gave him the signal to start walking. The first few frames of the Patterson film do indeed show the Bigfoot starting its walk from a standstill.

When the filming was complete, according to Heironimus, both Gimlin and Patterson helped him out of the costume. He had felt claustrophobic inside it, and had yelled, "Get me out of this damn thing!" and recalls that "[the headpiece] stunk very badly." Patterson then told Heironimus to take the film and mail it off for processing. The Bigfoot suit and the dressed-up helmet were then placed inside the trunk of Heironimus's mother's car, a blue 1967 Buick.

Corroborating Heironimus's Story

Bob Heironimus's mother Opal claims that while her son was still sleeping on the morning after he returned, she went to put crates of fruit into the trunk of her car. When she opened up the trunk, she was shocked to find what she at first thought was a dead animal. Upon closer examination, she realized that it was some sort of animal suit or costume. "After I saw it, I looked around to see if anyone was around 'cause I thought

maybe I might have to have help. . . . Then I discovered it was just a suit. But that head layin' there, you know, staring at me!"

Opal continued, "I went in the house, and my sister-in-law, Willa Smith, lived right up the street, and she came down—she was always down at my house two or three times a day—and so, when she got down, I said, 'I want to show you something.' I opened up the trunk and let her look." Opal remembers that Patterson and Gimlin came late that day and returned Chico, one of the horses they'd ridden. Afterwards, the Bigfoot suit was removed from the car, and she never saw it again. Its present whereabouts remain unknown.

Bob Heironimus's nephew, John Miller, was eight at the time and also recalls playing with the Bigfoot suit and putting on the headpiece. "I just remember they had the trunk open, and I remember looking in there, and, 'What's that!' and pickin' up and foolin' with it. And I can remember finding the head and, being a young kid, I just put it right on. It was hot. And it stunk. I can remember going up to their front porch and lookin' in the front window to see if somebody could see me. I was going to try and scare somebody." When asked what he thought of the claim that no human being can possibly walk the way the Patterson creature does, Miller replied, "I'll tell you what, if you ever watch that [Patterson] footage and watch him [Bob Heironimus] walk, and then you have him walk down the road, you'll see—they walk exactly the same. I always got a kick out of that."

Heironimus's two brothers, Mike and Howard, have also confirmed his story. Although neither sibling saw the actual costume, they distinctly remember learning of their brother's involvement around the time of the hoax. Howard Heironimus stated, "He [Patterson] said, 'Do you think your brother, Bob, can be the Bigfoot in this thing here?' And I said, 'I don't know.' I said, 'You'll have to ask him.' So, I seen him [Patterson] probably a week later." I said, "Well, did you ask Bob?" He said, "No." He said, "I didn't get to talk to him, but I think he said Bob Gimlin asked him. But I'm not really sure, he said he talked to Bob Gimlin, but he said, anyhow, he had talked to Bob [Heironimus] and that Bob had agreed to it [wearing the suit]. I don't know whether Bob Gimlin asked him [Bob Heironimus] or whether Roger asked him, but he [Patterson] had talked to Bob Gimlin, too. But I was in this thing before Bob Gimlin." Moreover, several other people in the small town of Yakima have all vouched for Heironimus's story and can prove that they first heard of it shortly after the hoax was created.

Still other witnesses, such as Merle Warehime, recall seeing the Bigfoot suit, which floated around the Yakima area after the hoax. "I believe we were out in the Ahtanum [Valley] by that old church. We was sittin' there. We were about to go jeepin', and somebody had the thing. It was in a box there, you know. It was just in kind of a box in the back. I didn't pay that much attention to it." When asked if he was convinced that Heironimus played the role of Bigfoot in the Patterson hoax film, Warehime was adamant, "Oh, yes. Yeah. That's the way Bob walks. All you have to do is watch him walk across the floor, and you know."

These statements dispute the claims made by Bigfoot

defenders that Heironimus is some sort of Johnny-come-lately trying to make a fast buck and garner media attention. The truth is, Bob Heironimus has never gone public with the details of his story until now and has never been paid any money for his involvement in the hoax, unlike Roger Patterson and Bob Gimlin.

The Bigfoot Prints

Another important eyewitness Greg Long discovered is Harvey Anderson, the former owner of a gun and camera store in Yakima. Anderson claims that Patterson came into his shop one day with a plaster cast of a footprint allegedly left by Bigfoot and sought to rent a camera and get advice on how to film such a creature in the wild. According to Anderson, Patterson claimed he had not only seen a Bigfoot, but that it had touched his car and had actually lifted up one end. Anderson decided to go along with the story: "I was kind of getting a kick out of it, but I realized that he was lying to me or having hallucinations about the thing that came out of the woods and picked up his car."

After talking briefly about his alleged encounter, Patterson unwrapped an alleged Bigfoot cast. Anderson immediately doubted the authenticity of the item. "I said to him, 'It looks like it's too narrow on the front part because it couldn't stand erect. Based on the description you've given me of this tall man or tall animal, you have to have it broader at the ball of the foot. 'Oh, no,' he said, 'he stands right up.' I said, 'Well, it doesn't appear to be correct. It looks to me like it should be wider on the front where the ball of the foot is. For the length of the foot, it won't work.' He [Patterson] said, 'Well, I can solve that problem. I'll take some more casts.'"

Three days later, Patterson returned to ask Anderson for input on his latest efforts, showing him new casts and asking, "What do you think of that?" Anderson replied, "That looks better. That looks proportionate." Anderson says, "See, I did not know the guy, did not know his intention. You have to realize that people came in and out of the store all the time. You don't know them. You just wait on them and service their needs. I thought he was pulling a joke on somebody."

Patterson then told Anderson, "I have to ask you never to say anything about this because I've done this for my wife because I'm dying of cancer. I want to leave something for my wife." "What the heck," Anderson says now, "If people will buy it, why not? People will buy anything. He was giving me this sob story about his health, and he wanted to leave something for his wife, and you know, I wasn't doing it [shooting a fake film]. I was just listening to his story. I really didn't pay that much attention to it. It wasn't important."

Additional eyewitness testimony that Patterson faked Bigfoot prints comes independently from Roger Patterson's brother-in-law Bruce Mondor: "Roger made the footprints, and he explained the whole damn thing to me. He showed me the big foot; it didn't have an arch in it. It had toes like it should have. . . . And I asked him . . . 'What do you do, you pick this up and slam it down?' It had to weigh twenty-five or thirty pounds. He said, 'Yeah, that's what I do.' I said, 'Then



Frame from the 1967 Bigfoot film; note the shape of the raised foot sole.



Footprint allegedly found at Bluff creek site.

what do you do there [in the impression on the ground]?' He said, 'I pour plaster of Paris in there.'

The Bigfoot Costume

Long also uncovered Philip Morris, the man who actually made and sold a gorilla suit to Roger Patterson—the one later used (with modifications) in his famous film.

In 1967, about two months before the film was made, Morris received a telephone call from Patterson: "I was the only one who was making a gorilla suit like that at that time. I knew what my gorilla suit looked like. It was brown. In the fifties and sixties, I made my gorilla suits only in brown. . . . Patterson asked me if I had a realistic-looking gorilla suit. I immediately

asked him if he was a carny [carnival worker]. He said, 'No, I'm a rodeo cowboy. We're just going to have some fun.'"

Morris recalls, "So I took one of my gorilla suits and shipped it to him. Parcel post, if I remember. It was a standard suit we sold to all our customers. Then, not long after he would have received the suit, I got a call from him. He said he had received the suit, and that it seemed okay, but, he said, 'I can see the zipper in the back.' I told him, 'Just brush the fur down over the zipper.' The fur on the suit was a material called Dynel. It was a nylon fiber, a popular material back then. It was used on lots of things, like plush toys, bathroom rugs, toilet seats. I bought it from my supplier in only two colors, black and brown. Then Roger wanted to

know how to make the arms longer. I said, 'Find a shovel handle or a stick and slip it in the sleeves. Then attach the gloves to the stick.' That's how to extend the arms in a costume. You screw the gloves onto the stick. Then he said he wanted to make the shoulders more massive. I told him to go down to a local high school and get some old football pads—the coaches would probably be happy to get rid of some old, cracked ones—and put them in the shoulders."

Bob Heironimus has never met nor talked to Philip Morris, yet Heironimus distinctly recalled the presence of shoulder pads in the Bigfoot suit that Patterson had modified, a fact that Philip Morris could not have known. This revelation is yet more evidence that the Patterson film is a hoax, and that

Heironimus not only wore the suit but that Morris supplied it to Patterson.

Morris's wife and business partner, Amy, helped make the famed suit. "Roger called us a second time and he asked us to ship him some extra gorilla fur. So we sent him some excess Dynel that was lying around," she said.

Philip Morris picks up the story: "He wanted to know how to fix the eyes. He said, 'You can see the white of the skin, when he [his Bigfoot actor] looks through the eye holes.' I said, 'Well, take some black makeup and put it around the person's eyes, and also have him close his eyes and put the makeup on his eyelids. That should do it.' A couple of months later, October '67, I was watching TV, and this film is being shown, and I see my gorilla suit. 'That's my suit!' I yelled." His wife came in and, upon seeing the broadcast, agreed.

Today, Morris Costumes is the single largest manufacturer and supplier of costumes to Hollywood and to stores across the United States. Morris adds, "I'd say, looking at the [Patterson] Bigfoot [film] in one of the those TV productions, the guy who wore the suit must have had his clothes on because the suit was really tight on him." This was another important revelation that further proves the Patterson Bigfoot film is a hoax. Prior to Morris's comment for the record, Bob Heironimus, without Morris's knowledge, independently testified that he had, in fact, worn his clothes under the Bigfoot suit, and that it did indeed fit him rather tightly.

Morris stated that a six-foot-tall person could fit inside the suit. Bob Heironimus is slightly taller than six feet, and he was very muscular as a youth, especially in the shoulders, arms, thighs, and legs. Photographs taken of Heironimus in 1967 confirm this. Using a technique called photogrammetry, a study of the Bigfoot film done by the BBC calculated the height of the Bigfoot at just slightly over six feet.

When asked about the length of the latex feet that he supplied to Patterson along with the rest of the gorilla suit, Morris replied, "Oh, I'd say fourteen inches." Not surprisingly, the Bigfoot tracks Patterson later submitted as his evidence measured fourteen inches. Morris adds: "The heel [of the creature] is too square-looking. It's a dead giveaway. Those are definitely my feet that I sold Patterson."

Regarding Bigfoot's gait, Morris states: "The Bigfoot researchers say that no human can walk that way in the film. Oh, yes they can! When you're wearing long clown's feet, you can't place the ball of your foot down first. You have to put your foot down flat. Otherwise, you'll stumble. Another thing, when you put on the gorilla head, you can only turn your head maybe a quarter of the way. And to look behind you, you've got to turn your head and your shoulders and your hips. Plus, the shoulder pads in the suit are in the way of the jaw. That's

why the Bigfoot turns and looks the way he does in the film. He has to twist his entire upper body." [See also David Daegling and Daniel Schmitt's article "Bigfoot's Screen Test" in the May/June 1999 issue of *SKEPTICAL INQUIRER*.] Heironimus also confirmed that he had to turn his entire torso, instead of just his neck, because of how he was constrained in the suit.

"The Bigfoot thing just wasn't a big deal in my life," Morris now reflects. "In the 1980s, the film didn't have the momentum it had at first. I decided to start talking about it. In the last few years all these documentaries have come out. Most people by now know the film is a hoax, or they should know.

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'That's my suit!' I yelled."**

We're at a point in the public's relationship with the Bigfoot story, it's time to tell my story. I've been thinking about the story for forty years."

The Eye Has It

The Patterson film also contains additional evidence that validates Heironimus's claim. It was originally discovered by one of the authors (Korff) when analyzing a first-generation, color-corrected copy of the film that Roger Patterson's widow Patty herself supplied and was later shown in Fox's *World's Greatest Hoaxes*. The key can be found in the seconds that surround frame 352, the famous portion of the clip where the "creature" looks back over its right shoulder and stares briefly at the camera.

When enlarged and studied carefully in detail, the frames reveal a sudden burst of light on the right eye, which cannot be explained by normal sunlight reflecting off of an organic eye. Curiously, its left eye remains in shadow, even though there is nothing around the face to block the light. According to Heironimus, a cloth with two holes in it for him to see through was draped over the front of the football helmet at least one inch away from his own eyes. This explains why the left eye of the "creature" is in shadow, because it is obscured by the cloth. However, this does not explain the light that appears in the right eye.

What does explain this sudden flash is a secret about Bob Heironimus that only he and his closest friends are aware of: Heironimus's right eye is missing, and he wears a prosthetic, or glass, eye! It was this glass eye of his that reflected the bright sunlight. Detailed enlargements and enhancements of this area suggest that these reflections are consistent with what one would expect of a glass eye and are not the result of anything organic in nature.

Further evidence in the Patterson film also vindicates Heironimus's story. The alleged "fur line" of the creature that



Frame showing the head and torso of the alleged Bigfoot.

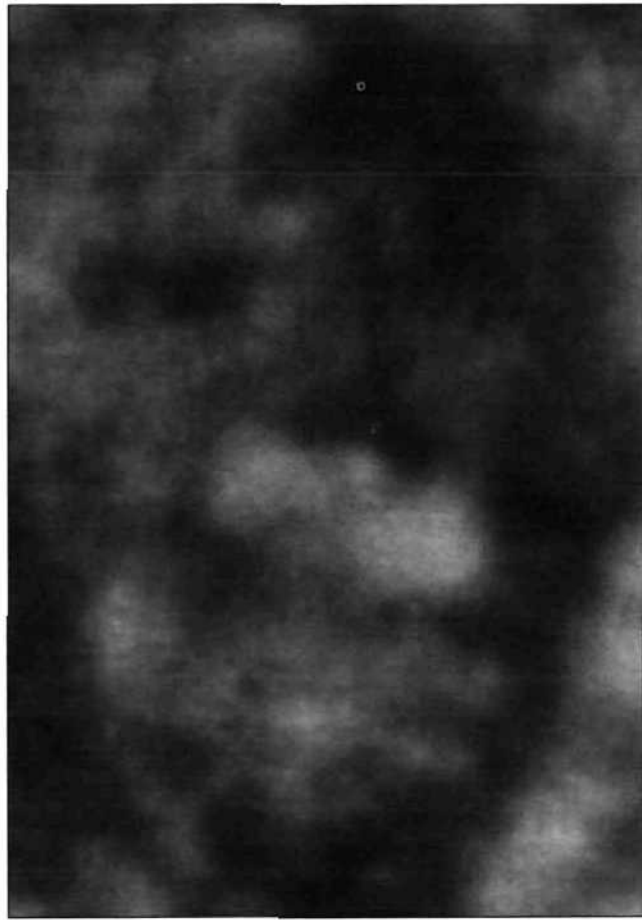
goes down its back is in the exact spot where both Heironimus and Morris claim the zipper is located. Remember, Morris distinctly told Patterson how to hide this zipper from view, advising him to comb down the fur on the suit with a brush. Sure enough, this Bigfoot, a wild creature presumably living in wilderness, is remarkably clean and carefully groomed. Also, in frame 61, the bottom of the Bigfoot's right foot is easily seen. Not only is the arch on the wrong side, indicating that Bigfoot has two left feet, but as this author (Korff) first pointed out in the Fox special, the shape of the feet do not match the casts from the tracks that were later recovered at the site.

Jeff Meldrum, an anthropologist at the University of Idaho, is a firm believer in the authenticity of the Patterson film. Meldrum is convinced that the tracks found at the site match the soles of the feet visible in the Patterson film.

With all due respect to Meldrum's enthusiasm, evidence has yet to be presented that the prints that were purportedly left at the site match the bottoms of the feet of the creature. Morris's fourteen-inch "gorilla feet" are not physically capable of making the deep tracks that were later supposedly documented.

Conclusion

Since the publication of Long's book, the media reaction has been overwhelmingly positive. The mainstream press is no longer taking the Patterson Bigfoot film seriously as evidence of



Enlarged frame of the head; note the reflected light in the right eye.

anything but a hoax. Sadly, the reaction by many Bigfoot researchers has been not only negative, but outright hostile. *Unable to disprove these damaging revelations, they have resorted to everything from name calling and threats of violence and lawsuits to accusing everyone of being liars.* Such behavior shows that when people cannot face facts, they tend to "shoot the messenger" instead of dealing responsibly with the truth.

"This book was written for the general public, who have been misled over the years, not the Bigfoot community," explains Long. "They never bothered investigating Roger Patterson and his long trail of fraud very carefully. Their standards of 'evidence' are not what science demands. It's their problem to find a way to deal with all of this now, the media and the public are moving on with their lives. We must remember, there are still people on this Earth who believe that this planet is flat and not round." □