

BIGFOOT A layman’s viewpoint on the phenomenon: by Vincent Spada

Part one of a two part series

Science, especially in the last 100 years, has solved a great many mysteries. Health, technology, nature. In short, questions have been answered. Smallpox is now a memory from the past, and human cloning seems likely. One day a woolly mammoth may lumber past your door, brought back from extinction through its DNA. Whether or not these events actually occur, one thing is absolutely certain: The world is learning more. Finding out about things.

However, intelligent as we are, we cannot know everything. To even hint at such an accomplishment is beyond arrogance. For every single fact we cement, there are a thousand that slip through our fingers. Knowledge, like water, is not always easy to grasp. That being said, there has been, for the past six decades or so, a subject which has raised much debate amongst the people of North America. I am of course talking about Bigfoot, or Sasquatch if you prefer. The legendary ape/ape man that dwells in the darker regions of the continent. That term, first coined in 1958, has set off a firestorm of controversy. Is it real or not? That is the question...

The following paper is a brief example of my take on the whole business. I am but an amateur on the matter, so please ingest it with a grain of salt. I do not pretend to know the truth, but am I willing to share my opinions. You may find them useless in the end, but then again, perhaps not...

Part One: History

There is, as far as I can tell, no known archaeological record of any native primates living or having lived in North America at any time

(Except for humans, of course, and even we are a transplant from other areas of the globe.) That is, the fossil evidence shows that Bigfoot was not present on this landscape, and that the entire region itself has only been occupied by humans for about 14,000 years (The Clovis People being generally accepted as the first Americans.) Therefore, one might assume from this very simple fact that the whole question has been put to rest, and that we should stop searching for something that has never been there in the first place. However, the lack of bones or other physical material does not necessarily mean the creature was or is not present. It just says that we have yet to find such specimens for ourselves. As I shall attempt to explain in the pages to follow, there may be many reasons why we find no ancient Bigfoot bones. A lack of evidence does not mean a lack of existence. Let us make that clear now.

It is a fact, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that stories of Bigfoot-like beings have been passed down from generation to generation by cultures all around the world. There is a memory within the human brain of a “wild man of the woods,” someone or something that was not quite human but not quite animal either. Now this in and of itself, while interesting, does not prove anything, but it does make clear the notion that this is not a new phenomenon. That in truth we may have been living side-by-side with these creatures for thousands of years now, and that the oral traditions and folklore regarding them did not just appear from thin air. There are Native American drawings on cave walls all across the United States which show large bipedal characters, either engaging with humans or even attacking them. While it’s possible that

this artwork could have been an example of pure imagination, it is more likely that it is based on an actual event. This is because prehistoric man, while likely capable of deeper thought, tended to draw what they saw, rather than creating images from their own mind. Once more, this is not proof, but it does give weight to the hypothesis that ancient man and Bigfoot did in fact meet once upon a time.

But besides the pictorial evidence from the past, there have been credible reports from more recent times, especially since Europeans started colonizing North America in the early 16th and 17th centuries. In the past 200 years there have been Bigfoot sightings in all 50 states, including Hawaii, where the Aikanaka has been seen on the island of Oahu (The term means “the man-eater of Oahu”.) The Skunk Ape has been spotted in Florida, as well as The Grassman in Ohio. All tend to speak of a similar being. Large, hairy, apelike. Yet, the main bulk of these reports tends to come from the Pacific Northwest, a region vast in size and distance and to this day largely unexplored. It is here one will find the greatest number of sightings related to the elusive beast: California, Oregon, Idaho, Washington. This is Sasquatch country.

Now there are two reports which tend to stand out from all the rest, due to the unusual nature of the first and the alarming evidence of the second. The first involved a man named Albert Ostman from British Columbia, who swore that in 1924 he had been abducted and held by a family of Bigfoot for nearly a week. There were four of them in number, three adults and one juvenile, and they fed him grass which tasted somewhat “sweet.” Ostman managed to escape but did not relate his story to anyone for over 20

years. To this day it is one of the more extraordinary tales attached to the phenomenon.

The second, however, might be the granddaddy of them all, as it may have produced visual proof of the creatures themselves. It pertains to Roger Patterson and his now legendary footage, known to this day as the Patterson-Gimlin film. Patterson, an adventurer, along with his friend Bob Gimlin, were out looking for the creatures along the Klamath River in California one day in October of 1967. After a spell they approached an area known as Bluff Creek sometime in the early afternoon, and when they did Patterson’s horse reared up in fear, nearly knocking him to the ground. As both men looked they saw a Bigfoot-like creature “crouching beside the creek,” and when it noticed them it rose and began to walk away. Patterson, grabbing his camera, told Gimlin to “cover him” with his rifle, and for the next minute or so filmed the creature walking off into the woods. An attempt was made to track the animal, although the men lost it in heavier brush. To this day the film that encounter produced is still being studied and debated.

Here we are now in the 21st century, and the reports continue to pile up. Again and again people are seeing Bigfoot, and sometimes even more than that. An alleged incident in 2010 had a man actually shoot and kill a baby Sasquatch, although no body was ever produced and therefore the story is in doubt. Regardless of hoaxes or tall tales, odds are these sightings will continue. Hundreds of reports across North America, with more to follow in their wake...

Part two will run in the August 7 edition of *The Illinois Valley News*.

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