



*Roger Patterson*



*Bob Gimlin*

# CELEBRATING

## The 50th Anniversary of the Patterson/Gimlin Film

**By Christopher L. Murphy & Todd Prescott**

On October 20, 1967 Roger Patterson and Robert (Bob) Gimlin of Yakima County, Washington, filmed what is believed to be a sasquatch or bigfoot at Bluff Creek, California. Their one-minute (953 frame) film has become one of the most controversial films in the world. It has been debated by scientists and other professionals since October 26, 1967 and continues to remain a mystery. Absolutely nothing proves the film to be a fabrication, and nothing to date has been established beyond a doubt that the creature filmed is real.

The assertion that such a creature exists (now called sasquatch or bigfoot) predates the settlement of North America by Europeans and others. Aboriginal peo-

ple depicted them in their artwork and handed down stories of their existence through generations. They have over 100 names for them, each meaning a large, hairy, ape-like creature.

Reports of the creature by non-Native people emerged in the 1700s, and the total number of sightings and the finding of large footprints is now over 4,000.

Roger Patterson became intrigued with the numerous stories in the late 1950s. He went on expeditions hoping to see one of the creatures or discover footprints. He wrote a book on his findings, *Do Abominable Snowmen of America Really Exist?*. He then decided to make a documentary using a 16mm movie camera.

Reports of large foot-prints found on Blue Creek Mountain, California, in late August 1967 prompted him to ask his friend Bob Gimlin to join him on an expedition to that area. The two men, both experienced horsemen, went to the area with horses.

After researching Blue Creek Mountain, the men explored the nearby Bluff Creek, California area, in which footprints had been reported some ten years earlier.

Their entire trip was uneventful up to the afternoon of October 20. Upon rounding a bend in the trail they spotted a tall, hairy, ape-like creature that matched the description of sasquatch or bigfoot. The adjacent artwork by Michael Rugg shows the scene.

The creature turned (about face) and walked away; Patterson followed it on foot taking movie footage the whole time. He ran out of film as the creature disappeared into the forest.

The two men followed its path on horseback but did not see it again. They returned to the film site and studied the footprints the creature left along the creek shore. The depth of the prints indicated considerable weight. They filmed the footprints and proceeded to make plaster casts of two of



*Artwork created by Michael Rugg depicting the moment Patterson and Gimlin spotted the creature. Rugg consulted with Bob Gimlin in creating the scene so it is believed to be quite accurate. (Copyright, Michael Rugg)*



*A scale model of the film site. The scene shows the point at which the image of the creature shown on page 3 was taken. (Copyright, C. Murphy)*

the prints (a left and right footprint) and then left to have the film shipped for developing. They could not be sure that they actually captured the creature on film and wanted to confirm this before they left the area. They planned to stay longer and try again to film a bigfoot if

the film they had taken did not show anything. However, before they could receive word, torrential rain forced them to leave the area and return to Yakima, Washington.

The plaster casts made of the creature's footprints showed an actual foot size of at least 14.5 inches, and they were very wide by human standards. The image below shows the casts with a human male footprint cast (about 11.75 inches long) for comparison

Both the film of the creature and its footprints were shown to scientists at the University of British Columbia on October 26, 1967. The scientists were not allowed to express an opinion, but because further detailed study of the film was not requested it does not appear as though they were impressed.

Other scientists in the USA were consulted and their opinions varied. However, such were the result of a cursory look at the film, not a proper analysis. The first scientist to study the film in detail was Dr. John Napier in 1968. His book on the subject of sasquatch/bigfoot was published in 1972.<sup>1</sup>

In 1971 the film was taken to Europe for study by scientists in Finland, Sweden, Switzerland, Russia and England. Although the film was given much more attention overseas, there were no definitive conclusions that proved the creature was real, but some analysis pointed in that direction.

Two prominent Russian researchers, Dmitri Bayanov and Igor Burtsev thoroughly studied and analyzed the film in the early 1970s and later years. They concluded that it definitely showed a living homin. Much later they published a book



*A film frame close-up showing the creature as it turned and looked at Patterson and Gimlin. (Public domain)*



*Film site casts with cast of a human foot. (Copyright, C. Murphy)*

detailing all their findings,<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, without bones or a body part, the “world of science” essentially stayed clear of the issue.

In 1975 previously unknown photographs of three of the creature's footprints emerged. As it happened, a timber management crew was in the area three days

1. Napier, John (1972), *Bigfoot*, Berkley Publishing, New York, NY.

2. Bayanov, Dmitri (1997), *America's Bigfoot: Fact, Not Fiction*, Crypto-Logos Publishers, Moscow, Russia.

after the filming. One of its members saw and photographed the prints as seen on the right. In that a regular 35mm camera was used, the photos have superior clarity

Undaunted by the lack of enthusiasm from the scientific community, Patterson proceeded to market the film and very soon “bigfoot” attained considerable notoriety. The idea that a creature of this nature might inhabit the forests of North America resulted in a virtual “industry”—television productions, movies, books, and novelties. The words “sasquatch” and “bigfoot” are now household names.

It would not be until 1983 that the clearest film frames were selected and printed, with enlargements of just the creature. There was highly limited publication of this material, so only a “select few” saw all the images. There were twelve film frames printed (full frames) and twelve close-ups of just the creature. Public disclosure was not made of all images until 2004.<sup>3</sup> One of the close-up images is that shown on the previous page.

The next scientist to evaluate the film in reasonable detail was Dr. Grover Krantz who was convinced the creature was real. He also published a book on his findings in 1992.<sup>4</sup> Other scientists certainly reviewed the film but did not do an in-depth analysis.

The lack of scientific involvement in the film with regard to a proper and efficient analysis bothered most researchers. In 1995 the bold step was taken to commission a forensic scientist, Jeff Glickman, to study the film and produce a detailed report on his



*Note the twig. Might this indicate a real foot made the print?*



*An American 25-cent coin was placed near the big toe for size comparison.*



*A smoking pipe was used for size comparison.*

*These photos were taken October 23, 1967 of actual footprints made by the creature filmed. Five days later, October 28, 1967, casts were made of ten of the prints by a researcher following up on the sighting. (Photos Copyright, Lyle Laverty)*

findings. His remarkable report was produced in 1998,<sup>5</sup> but it was not made

3. Murphy, Christopher (2004), *Meet the Sasquatch*, Hancock House Publishers, Surrey BC.

4. Krantz, Grover (1992), *Big Footprints: A Scientific Inquiry into the Reality of*

4 *Sasquatch*, Johnson Printing, Boulder, Co.

public (printed for sale). It was eventually presented on the Internet. In summary, the report established the creature's height at 7 feet, 3.5 inches, its weight at 1,957 pounds, and its proportions beyond human standards. Many other observations resulted in the following statement by Jeff Glickman: *"Despite three years of rigorous examination by the author, the Patterson-Gimlin film cannot be demonstrated to be a forgery at this time."*

In 2014 another professional, Bill Munns, published his findings on the film.<sup>6</sup> He approached the issue strictly from the standpoint of determining if the "creature" was wearing a costume. Using state-of-the-art equipment, he was unable to find any indication of a costume; in fact many of his findings were to the contrary.

As to the physical film, many copies were made of it in the late 1960s and 1970s, and it is these copies



*A reasonable interpretation of what the creature filmed actually looked like is this artistic rendering by Chris Murphy. It was created in 1996 using a color photocopy of the head as seen in one of the film frames (the frame previously presented). Pastels were used to reinforce what could be seen. The creature's mouth in the actual frame is partially open, so this was changed to a closed mouth to provide a more natural and aesthetically pleasing appearance. The final image has been used in many publications over the past 20 years and is likely the most publicized artwork of the creature. (Copyright, C. Murphy)*

that have been used for analysis. The ORIGINAL film of the creature was put into storage very soon after it was shown at the University of British Columbia. Unfortunately, the film

5. Glickman, Jeff (1998), *Toward a Resolution of the Bigfoot Phenomenon*, NASI.

6. Munns, William (Bill) (2014), *When Roger Met Patty*, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.

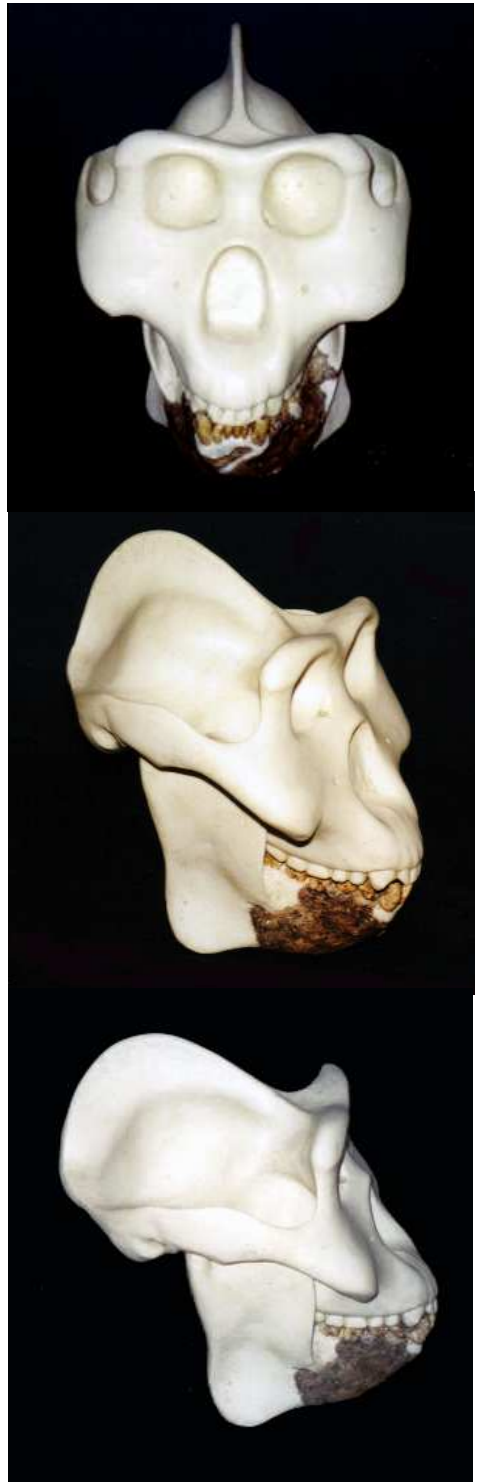
showing footprints was copied only once or twice (as near as can be determined) and the original was sent to England for a documentary. It does not appear it was returned and is now lost to history.

The last time the original film showing the subject was seen was in 1983 when it was taken to Hollywood, California, for analysis. Photographs had previously been made (1980) of twelve film frames. The film was borrowed from storage to do the prints and kept until 1983. It was either not returned or returned and put in the wrong storage location. Whatever the case, it too is lost to history.

The known history of the film, including the circumstances and aftermath, was detailed in a book published in 2008.<sup>7</sup> The work was created to address the many questions regarding the film and Patterson and Gimlin. Complications (court cases) as to film ownership came to a head after Roger Patterson died (1972). His death, at age 39, was the result of Hodgkin's disease. He never wavered on his recount of the filming events and took a great amount of criticism and ridicule for this. When the creature was first spotted, he grabbed his camera rather than his rifle. However, Gimlin also had a rifle and "covered" his friend as he ran after the creature. When

*The most popular theory on sasquatch lineage is that of a surviving Gigantopithecus blacki, a very large ape that inhabited Asia some 300,000 years ago. The skull shown here was constructed by Dr. Grover Krantz using an actual jaw bone for reference.*

(Copyright, C. Murphy)



6 7. Murphy, Christopher L. (2008), *Bigfoot Film Journal*, Hancock House Publishers, Surrey BC.

Patterson was terminally ill in 1972, he told a friend, “We should have shot the thing and then people would believe us.” Nevertheless, the two men had a pact that they would not shoot a bigfoot unless their lives were in danger. The film reveals that the only “danger” the creature showed was a very stern look—it just calmly and intently walked away from the men.

Bob Gimlin has also suffered criticism and ridicule; so much so that for many years he did not talk about the event. In recent years he has participated in conferences and documentaries. He is about the most sincere and genuine person one could hope to meet. Now aged 85, he is still highly active and most personable.

Perhaps the most intriguing question is why has the film persisted? Why does it get so much attention and “heated” discussion? At this point in time, the most critical question with those who believe in the creatures’ reality is what kind of an animal is seen in the film: Non-human or human? If it is proven to be the former, then some kind of unrecognized ape inhabits North America; with the latter then we appear to have a very primitive human—perhaps providing greater insights into human evolution. In both cases, their discovery (proof of existence) would be highly significant, but more so for a human connection. To most people, news of either would simply be another news item (the world would not stand still). The world of science, however, would need to make some corrections ranging from, “We were wrong”

(wild apes do live in North America) to “We were VERY wrong” (we are not the only “humans” on the planet). The ramifications beyond that point are left to the reader.

Although stories and artwork dealt with what we now call sasquatch or bigfoot for probably thousands of years, a color movie film that cannot be written off as a hoax is a completely different situation.

With all of this in mind, it can be seen that Patterson and Gimlin took far more than a simple movie film of “something” on a creek shore. Their film broke through the barriers of preconceived scientific notions raising numerous questions. Such would not be the first time in history that this has happened. There are many examples of “science being wrong.” However, in this case the stakes are much higher, especially (again) if the creature is human.

Fifty years is a very long time for something like the Patterson/Gimlin film to “hang in the balance,” as it were. When first viewed by researchers it was thought that it would be only a matter of weeks, at the most months, before a sasquatch was found and classified. Remarkably, this was not the case and many of the early researchers have passed away.

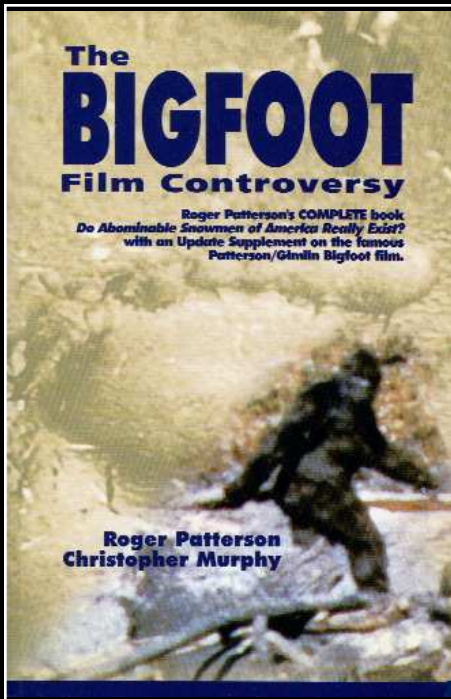
We can thank Roger Patterson and Bob Gimlin for providing us with an enduring mystery that has become a great source of pleasure and intrigue for many, many people.

*Happy  
50th Anniversary  
Patterson/Gimlin Film!*

Hancock House Publisher in Surrey, British Columbia, is the primary publisher of bigfoot/sasquatch titles. Please review the fine selection of titles available on their website.

<http://www.hancockhouse.com/>

The most comprehensive book on the Patterson/Gimlin film was published by Hancock House in 2008. It is full color with 98 photographs and illustrations.



Roger Patterson's 1966 book, *Do Abominable Snowmen of America Really Exist?* was reprinted in 2005 under this title. An update supplement was added providing details of the filming and addressing issues raised up to that time. It contains 123 photographs and illustrations.



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