

THE CREDIBILITY OF SASQUATCH WITNESSES

by Barbara Wasson

The approach to the Sasquatch question has traditionally been either from the theoretical, anthropological aspect, or from the unorganized trial and error techniques of the layman hunters and investigators. The first are conceptualized as having only sat in their ivory towers, the second as having rushed out into the wilderness in a frenzy chasing the tailless hairy monster. Some slight emphasis has been put on the gathering and naive statistical analysis of the data. Some of the investigators have taped interviews of witnesses to the alleged sasquatch sightings, tracks, and damage attributed to our great hairy friend.

I. THE OBSERVER

Basic to the total picture is the 'observer' of all these manifestations. The reporters of all this data seem to have been miserably neglected. They have been looked at in the grossest lay terms and without any worthwhile systematic study. Investigators have not neglected the question of witness credibility but none have been so versed or experienced in sophisticated techniques readily available, to, for example, statisticians or psychologists. After years of experience interviewing people claiming a Sasquatch sighting, investigators formulate their own cues; finally, no doubt, developing a sixth sense about reporters of incidents. Whether the sixth sense is credible in itself and is sufficient needs to be evaluated.

The criteria for acceptance of witness testimony should be evaluated. Considering the fact that no one but those few who have sightings can 'know', so to speak, that such a creature exists, the task of communicating this experience to the rest of us presents itself. Indeed, many of the witnesses to a Sasquatch do not even credit their own senses but try to find more 'reasonable' and logical explanations for the incidents. Not only does the reporter need to be assessed but the evaluator's criteria are significant to the problem. As a Clinical Psychologist, I have developed a myriad of behavioral cues to rely on to indicate part of the repertoire in certain constellations of behavior manifest in certain diagnostic categories. Some subjects I personally need not test in order to recognize their personality makeup and manner of relating, though to be objective one needs the psychological testing data in order to establish diagnostic impressions.

II. FRAMEWORK FOR ASSESSMENT OF HUMAN VARIABLES

Although 'people evaluating people' does not satisfy the totally objective criteria of other disciplines, the nature and structure of people have their own unique complexity and variations necessitating a different set of rules. In common with other disciplines, of course, is the subjective interpretation of the data no matter what scientific tool or framework is in use. (Note the Piltdown jawbone).

The difference between a scientific framework with one subjective human assessor of matter, and analysis of the human reporter as data is that there are two sets of wider variations in question: the variations of the interviewer interacting with the variations of the interviewee. This is more complex than the scientist and his individual variations (in spite of rigid scientific rules) interacting with a constant, ie., a concrete substance as a rock: variable but not capable of interacting in the same dimension with the evaluator. A new set of rules would

objectify the interactions of two people by categorizing and quantifying interaction in terms of defensive systems, biases, cultural influences on perception, memory and other pertinent variables.

Some of this complexity has positive value. People who have considerable experience dealing with people respond to a myriad of clues both on a conscious and subliminal level to arrive at a conclusion of a person's behavior, motives, veracity, etc. The feeling of the interviewer is a composite reaction from many years of experiencing people, automatic finally, after those years of interaction with and assessment of human behavior. The feeling of the interviewer is important. I believe that subjectivity is the end result of a multitude of objective assessments. Subjectivity can be analyzed and quantified, probably in a rigorous scientific fashion. The basis of this can be derived through psychological testing. In addition, other tests would have to be designed. If the experienced interviewer relies on his cues he is nearly always correct, inside or outside of clinical work. The product of this, a description of a credible reporter's response, is spoken of as "a ring of genuiness"; "an unrehearsed, natural flowing response"; "spontaneous"; "needed to rationalize the experience"; "needed to tell someone"(1) like "a real experience phenomenon"(1); "still baffled".(1)

III. THE WITNESS

The witness, the observer, the reporter of a Sasquatch sighting seems to be a major key to the entire question. So much weight or so much skepticism, depending upon one's belief, has been laid to the witness himself, it seems, far beyond the time when the witness himself should have been called into question in an objective manner. We need to dissect empirical observers. We need to define here what we are dealing with.

Webster defines a witness: one who attests to a fact or event; one who has personal knowledge of something. As we shall also be using the term 'reporter' I will define that (borrowing from J. Allen Hynek(1) to some extent) as a person who relates information about an event, object, or personal experience and the report is unverified. In this case, it is a personal visual experience of a creature with certain common factors attributed to a Sasquatch. Also inclusive are personal experiences with large human shaped tracks in conjunction with or independent of a sighting. A further restriction on the definition of a reporter must be that this individual be mentally and emotionally intact, a competent individual by the usual standards.

In light of these definitions, all witnesses are reporters (if they do so report) but not all reporters can be verified to be witnesses, for some will not in actuality be witnesses by definition. We must make discriminations about witnesses, as well. A person who believes he saw something specific but in actuality misperceived or distorted his view, is not a true witness but an inaccurate witness. If you and other persons saw the same thing and agreed on it identically, all are reporters of the event, but are true witnesses only if in actuality all were objectively accurate. The accuracy of witnesses can be described thus: If a person was influenced by externalities, ie., the sun shining, the shadows, the speed of a moving object or creature, etc., this is mistaken perception. If a person was influenced by internal needs, desires, or immediate fantasies, the object is changed in the view of the perceiver from actuality to suit his needs. This is distortion, the inaccurate perception of a reality, influenced by internal needs.

Thus it appears that a reporter must have verification in order to be called a witness. What are the criteria by which a person becomes a witness? Can verification be established through the corroboration of another simultaneous witness? Two people can be mistaken or distort, and so can many. How, then, can a witness be relied on to be accurate?

A. STANDARDS FOR COMPETENCY AS A WITNESS

Certain lay standards have evolved to credit a person as an accurate witness, by which something can be established. These are: a reputation for stability in relationships with others, in employment, in location, and in personal emotional makeup; honesty; responsibility, mental competency, prudence, intelligence, good judgment and character. Credibility also considers occupation, past performances, and education, training, and specific experience.

More specific criteria have not been assessed, ie., the critical faculties of the observer. These include: accuracy of observation, ability to communicate observation accurately and logically, objectivity in assessing an event, objectivity in evaluation of perception, logical thought process, accurate and good memory. Even more specific criteria are needed with less subjective assessment of people.

Are there no credible witnesses? Can no witness prove the existence of a Sasquatch? The task is to evaluate the witness so well that we can rule out lies, mistakes, distortions, and hallucinations. People are: anxious, misjudge, oblivious to detail, inattentive, fearful, suggestible, and some are at times out of contact with reality. People elaborate and exaggerate, and want to please others by telling them what they want to hear.

Is there a profile of a Sasquatch sighter? If we analyze the data and determine a profile, what then? Will that prove or disprove anything? Depending on the data itself, of course, one can speculate at this point that if a profile emerged (ie., certain characteristics prominent in most people claiming a Sasquatch sighting, not shown in a control group of people either not believing in Sasquatch or neutral about the existence of a Sasquatch), we can feel some leaning toward disbelief of the witnesses to sightings. This will not in itself disprove the existence of such a creature. However, if all the sighters of a Sasquatch fell into this profile, one would have grounds for sincere skepticism. How many Sasquatch sighters should one test and evaluate? If we interview, test, and assess all Sasquatch sighters and they do not fit a profile, this may not mean they do not fit another profile which we have not tested. However, we might lean more in the direction that a Sasquatch could exist.

Instead of analyzing, classifying, and describing in precise terms the content of the report the route may be to analyze data on the Sighters, not the creature data, in order to establish statistical Significance of the existence of a Sasquatch. Then a hypothesis, (similar to one proposed by J. Allen Hynes(1)), that there exists a creature as described by Sasquatch reports, which is now not known to science, is attacked through a viable source of data which is accessible to us and assessable by us: the reporter. (Tracks must be considered separately as they present different assessment techniques of more limited and undeveloped nature).

All reporters can be placed in these two categories:

ALL REPORTERS

TRUTH TELLERS

1. Believe they saw a **S**
 - a. Distorts
 - b. Mistakes
 - c. Accurately perceives
(This category exists only if **S** exists)

LIARS

Those who did not see a **S** but say they did.

If we find a statistically significant number of accurate, competent perceivers under non-stress situations who say they saw a creature matching the description of a Sasquatch then we can conclude one of the following:

1. They saw such a creature unknown to science.
2. Testing and evaluation techniques are inaccurate or inadequate

However, if the testing is that of the established, accepted categories, short of 'hard' evidence, this would lend high credibility to some reporters.

J. Allen Hynek has proposed using philosopher Hume's 'betting criterion' (1) as a way of measuring strength of belief. Applying this to the reporters of Sasquatch sightings, we would be betting that they were not totally incorrect for one reason or another. Hume postulated that reporters of a phenomenon were not totally mistaken in what they reported.

B. LEGAL APPROACH TO WITNESSES:

It is also important to note that our legal justice system is based on certain criteria for admission of evidence and witness testimony. It would behoove us to view that now, in order to see the applicability to the Sasquatch question.

The most stringent requirements of judgment, and the judge's instructions to the jury, are, for criminal cases, that guilt must be proved beyond a reasonable doubt. This does not mean that no doubt exists. In civil cases there must be proof for one side by a preponderance of the evidence, ie., only more evidence present for one side than the other. One never does prove innocence in a court of law, only guilt or non-guilt, or liability or non-liability. The court thus recognizes that evidence presented is something less than the judge and jury having been at the scene of the event, at the time of the event, as witnesses. Evidence does not guarantee the truth. It does appear that our legal system has weaker standards requirements than does our scientific world. One can lose one's life or freedom on less evidence than required to establish scientific facts. Our scientific world needs a "corpus delectus", hard evidence, to prove a murder. In a U.S. Court we do not need a "corpus delectus", only guilt beyond a reasonable doubt judged by the evidence presented. By the scientific criteria, we need the corpus delectus of a Sasquatch. By legal criteria, we need a credible reporter, a witness.

A witness according to the legal criteria must have mental capability, memory, and perception capable of being tested, or he is not competent. If he cannot be cross-examined and thus communicate to both prosecution and defense, he is not a competent witness and cannot be used. Capability of communication is an essential criterion.

There are two kinds of witnesses in the legal system: 1. Lay witness. 2. Expert witness. The lay witness may testify only to facts. The court will not allow opinions or hearsay (what a third party says who is not in court and not able to testify and be cross-examined). The exception for the lay witness is that what we all form opinions on in daily encounters may be admissible, i.e., opinion as to whether an individual was intoxicated. The expert witness is not connected to the case but has special expertise which would have a bearing on the case, i.e., a psychiatrist. On competent witness testimony, reality is proposed to be established and reality decisions are made. The court assumes a witness is telling the truth, but the jury must evaluate witnesses by their manner and discrepancies. If one thing they say is not believable, the rest is questionable. The court tests the credibility of a witness and may impeach him informally through cross-examination which may reveal discrepancies or contradictions in his testimony. Formal impeachment may be reached by producing the fact that there was prior perjury committed by the witness, or a reputation for poor veracity, both of which bear on his believability as a witness.

The Court also has a rule about 'best evidence'. Objection can be raised as to a witness's testimony as there may be better evidence. For example, a witness cannot testify about the contents of a document when the original document is available. Circumstantial evidence may be more acceptable than witness testimony. For example: if a deer hunter was camped for several days in an area, and he says, "I have been here several days and there are no deer here," and you walk up the hill and see deer tracks, which is the best evidence?(3) The evidence is circumstantial. You deduce from the facts that a deer was there. Enough people have seen deer that those who have not seen deer accept the witness's testimony that deer exist. If enough people see a Sasquatch are we willing to accept this on the same basis?

When there are two witnesses disagreeing, the jury or judge decide who is to be believed. As our justice system is predicated on the basis of witnesses under controlled conditions perhaps our witnesses to Sasquatch sightings should be processed through the same type of system. The defendant in both civil and criminal cases bears no burden to speak at all, no need to present evidence to disprove liability or guilt.

Let us at this point review and establish definitions. I borrow from J. Allen Hynek's explicit approach to witnesses of UFO's.(1)

Sasquatch: An alleged hominoid creature with the following common characteristics: generally taller and heavier by far than humans, hairy, bi-pedal, and in a similar shape to a human. This creature would be a living creature, independent of the reporter, unclassified and unrecognized by science.(1)

Sasquatch phenomenon: The total class of alleged Sasquatch reports, reporters, and physical evidence. If no such creature as Sasquatch exists, this would be the unique products of individual or group psychological processes undetermined or undefined.(1)

Empirical observations: Experience through human senses that can be communicated to others, relating data about an independent existence not contingent upon the observer's observation or report.(1)

New Empirical Data: Experiential data not previously classified by science and foreign to the existing structure of anthropological data.(1)

Observer: Human who through visual, auditory, and sometimes kinesthetic senses, receives an impression of matter external to his consciousness and which is recorded in his mental state and memory in terms of what has already been defined to him and with which he is familiar.

Reporter: An individual mentally and emotionally intact, relating a visual and/or auditory experience with a Sasquatch.

Competent reporter: An individual who meets criteria for competency by professional and lay standards beyond a reasonable doubt.

Report: The statement by a reporter describing a personal experience with a creature with common factors attributed to a Sasquatch, inclusive of tracks or other physical evidence attributed to a Sasquatch.

Witness: One who actually experiences at least visually a Sasquatch or evidence attributed to a Sasquatch. (A competent reporter by definition may be considered as a witness).

Evidence: is the means by which a fact in controversy may be established or disproved.

Physical evidence: Concrete, material object or disturbance of the real environment, by nature circumstantial, and relevant to surmised Sasquatch activity.

Psychological evidence: Thorough psychological testing data on a reporter, including the common and voice polygraph, eye pupil dilation test, tests for observation accuracy, objectivity in personal experience, judgment, suggestibility, communication ability, memory, and mental capability.

C. FACTORS TO BE EVALUATED IN ASSESSING REPORTERS

1. Personality construction

It is time we took to the testing and evaluation criteria for witnesses or reporters. We have discussed the lay standards of stability, responsibility, and other criteria. Now we must turn to the Psychological assessment of people, their personality, behavior, and veracity.

Diagnostic impressions are grouped into three major psychopathologies.

First, let us consider the normal person.

This individual relies only minimally on psychological defences, he has a bare minimum of perceptual distortion, he is emotionally Stable and his anxieties are related to reality situations, not fantasized situations.

a. The psychotic

This individual has a traumatized core over which lie weak defense systems. This individual can become out of contact with reality so as to, under stress situations, hallucinate visually, auditorially, or kinesthetically.

b. The neurotic

This individual is the highly suggestible person with hysteric defences. The neurotic is influenced by many strong internal needs and will

consistently distort his perceptions in relationships. He experiences internal discomfort due to his high anxiety.

c. The psychopath

This individual experiences no sustained internal discomfort, handles his anxiety by externalizing it, manipulates people and openly, deliberately and/or defensively lies. At times this individual may feel he is being honest and he is very convincing, however, his pursuit of intentions, if any, are exceedingly brief. As soon as he achieves his immediate goal, all else is forgotten.

2. Tools for assessment

Through projective psychological testing the personality construction and defensive system utilized by the person would be apparent. The polygraph, eye-pupil dilation test, and voice test, all tapping veracity, are recommended. As indicated, tests on the critical faculties of the individual are necessary.

The most questionable in credibility would be the psychopath who so habitually does not tell the truth; also questionable is the individual with a psychotic core (even in a non-stress situation): and also the neurotic who, although in contact with reality, distorts and exaggerates reality to such an extent that we would throw out his testimony. Even if the individual is normal, how he handles stress is important. He, too, could give biased testimony as we shall discuss next. We must, however, recognize that even psychotics, neurotics, or psychopaths could be a legitimate witness, for anyone could see a Sasquatch if they exist. We must for purposes of scientific analysis, rule out any questionable reporters, however.

3. Influences on observer-reporters

If we have a reporter claiming to be a witness to a Sasquatch who meets both the layman's standards and through psychological and other testing appears normal there are additional considerations, namely:

a. Mistakes: Were there external influences which conceivably could have altered the view of this reporter.

b. Anxiety: What recent emotional experiences have come to bear on him which might influence him at this time.

c. Stress: Was the experience of the sighting in a stressful circumstance so as to increase anxiety to the extent that even the stable, normal individual would be liable for error.

d. Bias: Was there a substantial prior predisposition (familial or cultural heritage) or prejudice (experience) to influence belief or disbelief in a Sasquatch.

e. Expectancy: Was there a general psychological climate of expectancy preceding the experience. If an individual has a readiness to shape an identity to a mass of moving object perceptually unclear to him that indeed shall be it's identity. If Joe 'believes there is a Sasquatch' or 'fears monsters' and experiences a perceptually ambiguous figure he is likely to identify that mass with his ready response. Today and before people have publicity, legend, and history to rely on to feed their expectancies.

f. Fear: Many enjoy fear as an experience, and may elicit this by identifying a fearful creature in an ambiguous mass.

Say our reporter experienced his alleged sighting when he was in a relaxed, happy state of mind, in good health, in clear weather and in clear view within a close enough distance to see clearly and over an acceptable time period, but under such circumstances as not to endanger him or elicit undue anxiety for his own safety. He also has an

impeccable character and meets all the standards posed before to identify the best reporter as a competent one. What would be our opinion then? We have to evaluate stringently the most impeccable reporters. What are the parameters of misperception applicable to sane, responsible, competent, stable people? Experiments have demonstrated people are influenced at a subliminal level. In one experiment during movies messages were flashed on the screen at constant intervals in such marginal light as to be indistinguishable on a conscious level.(4) Individuals responded to these. Also, mass hysteria is an accepted and understood phenomenon. Mass hallucinations need further study.

4. Observer-reporter reactions

Let us examine the reputable individual's reaction. If he had had an experience which is unusual, and seeing, or believing to see, a Sasquatch is an unusual experience (in spite of some reporters who see them regularly), then he is going to probably respond in basically one of two ways:

a. He would not be able to totally credit his senses. Due to this, he would have to explain in a logical fashion what he must have seen rather than what he thought he saw. This is an attempt to rationalize, as people need to explain things logically. Because he is baffled he needs a rational answer.

b. He would be in such a circumstance and state of mind that he would have no question of what he observed.

We have certain limits for tolerance for unacceptable or unfamiliar baffling encounters in life. Beyond this limit our mental stability is taxed, and to retain a stable mental state we might block out or alter the grossly deviant experience and reduce our anxiety by taking refuge in the familiar: a 'bear not a Sasquatch'. Rene Dahinden calls this a psychological safety switch. He says the Sasquatch concept is beyond man's capacity to accept, in spite of all evidence.(2) Depending on the acceptability to the witness or the broadness of conceptualization of the individual witness, he might respond in one of the above ways. What he does with the data later depends on many variables, ie., if revealing this experience would jeopardize his job, close relationships, or reputation.

If we had a large number of reporters giving us strong indications of being reputable individuals under non-stress situations, having gone through the aforementioned criteria well, then what? Does this increase appreciably the probability that new empirical data is being observed and reported, so reducing the probability that new data is not being reported?(1) It is true that probabilities cannot prove anything, but at what point have we reacted 'beyond a reasonable doubt' or even with the 'preponderance of the evidence'!? In reports of Sasquatch are the accepted logical limits of perceptual influences exceeded so far that we could assume some reporters were not in touch with reality and that some did not experience what they related? "If all witnesses are sick, what is the sickness?"(1) Perhaps the sickness is reality. If not, we should be able to classify the reporters into psychological categories consistently. In addition, is there no confidence in the credibility of human beings, so that consistent reports of laymen are totally discredited? Have we no faith in humanity's credibility? The Court respects a lay witness in judging daily common observations.

Some of the prominent clues to falsification by a reporter of whatever sort or degree are mentioned. Some of these may be accountable by behavior natural to the event, but are also present in very doubtful situations, especially when demonstrated in extreme degree. That the

total context of the situation has important bearing on the interpretation given the report can only be stressed.

1. Obvious discrepancies.
2. Over-reactive manner. (He may be convincing both you and himself.)
3. Compulsive need to fill in many details beyond or within the parameters of the questioning.(5)
4. Rich fantasy life.
5. Completion of gaps in the report at a later date which has a different quality or ring and which does not fit with reasonableness that these details could have been viewed in the situation.
6. Rigid repetition of the story without variation of any sort.
7. After the spontaneous report, complete questions, some quite improbable. 8. All witnesses agree on everything.
9. Unnatural sequence of events.
10. Great reluctance to relate the story or return to the scene, unless physical assault has taken place or extreme fear was experienced at the scene.
11. Lack of spontaneity (with spontaneity an ingredient of the reporter's natural personality).
12. No anxiety or excitement present in the relating of the report (unless many years have passed).

IV. THE INTERVIEWER

In the complex interaction between interviewer and witness, the complement of the witness's variables are the variables of the interviewer. These are as important as those of the witness and need as much analysis.

The interviewer of a reporter of a Sasquatch sighting should be experienced as an interviewer. Certain criteria can be named here but the thoroughness of exploration and the quality of the rapport with the interviewee cannot be explained or underestimated.

Variables faulting the interviewer are:

1. Leading, non-neutral questioning
2. Being a poor listener
3. Stifling the spontaneity of the reporter with the interviewer's own utterances
4. Insufficient questioning
5. Inability to communicate accurately and logically
6. Inaccuracy of observation
7. Bias for or against belief in a Sasquatch
8. Instability in relationships with others
9. Dishonesty
10. Lack of responsibility and ethics
11. Mental incompetency
12. Lack of prudence
13. Lack of intelligent assessment
14. Poor character
15. Poor and inaccurate memory
16. Poor rapport
17. Lack of experience interviewing
18. Non-objective interpretations

V. REPORTER ANALYSIS

Now let us consider reports and see what clues we can derive from them.

This first report is interesting as part of it has been declared invalid by the reporter after three years.

At 12:30 a.m. in 1974 nineteen year old Mike was awakened by something kicking the tires of his van while he was sleeping in a campground. The van was rocked vigorously, and he peered out into bright moonlight to see the chest of a hairy creature. He looked up to see a chin and broad nose. He saw a hand on the side view mirror which had fingernails. He smelled a bad smell. Over a period of two hours the creature intermittently harassed the van, and appeared to want to get in. The rest of the story is irrelevant for the moment. In 1977 I received a letter from Mike from Chile, So. Am. He stated that he had lied about some of the details. I wrote to ask him why and why at this time he was advising me. I quote:

"What prompted me to lie about some of the details? This, I can't really say, because I don't know. After catching a glimpse of him and seeing what I did of Bigfoot I just added that he was standing by the van when I looked out (as that is really what I expected to see). When I really face the facts I only saw a glimpse of the Bigfoot 20-30 feet away and that, I can only say. I know what I saw, and believe what I saw to be a Bigfoot, as was described to me by other people. And I know I saw it! And so I guess I added to it, so that others would have that much less doubt as to what I saw, when told the story. What prompted me to tell you at this time? I just got tired of telling that part of the story that I knew to be a lie. Under the inspiration of God and feeling the need to repent, I wrote you and everyone else to whom I told the story, just to right the wrong. As for the remark about the 'fake fur' I used that to describe the kind of hair I saw. No, I did not mean to say I think it was a joke or hoax, and I will never deny my story to say it was a joke or B.S. And the reason I can remember that stuff down to the detail is because it is still vivid on my mind, just as it happened, and I give you my testimony of the things being the truth!"

Mike's style of writing is flamboyant. He writes a colorful description, uses exclamation marks frequently. This is like the exaggeration he utilized when adding details in order to be more convincing. He must have felt he would not be believed. In the case of really seeing a creature, any one of us would have probably felt we would not be believed, but we would not necessarily exaggerate and add details to convince others. If there were a basic theme in one's personality of feeling others would not believe one, a person would be very likely to add something he thought would be convincing. In the case of Mike one can more than speculate that that was the case. He reported it very clearly that he felt the need to convince others of the surprising and unusual truth. How much this colors the rest of the story is a matter of study in more detail. Whether Mike is an hysteric telling the truth or distorting becomes a matter for professional evaluation.

An example of a definite hoax presents other insights. In 1977 several people saw a hairy, human-like creature in broad daylight. It is the behavior of the main witness I focus on. This witness was in many experienced interviewers' opinions an excellent witness. In a tape recording of the reporter's description of the creature he was very precise and convincing. (6) This witness followed the creature into thick brush. He was angry at what he perceived to be a hoax, assumed he would find a man in a fur suit. After he was in the brush he related that he looked up to see eyes of a hairy creature. He felt anger, next awe, then fear. He felt the creature was breathing heavily, its nostrils flaring, then at a later time he thought it was sniffing the air. He then turned and fled, hearing the creature behind him.

When another witness saw this man come out of the bush he immediately asked him what had happened. The reporter revealed that he had been 25 feet from this creature, but had smelled nothing. Our reporter then saw the tracks for the first time. Although he did not appear to be in emotional shock, the first witness said later he felt he was in an incoherent state. The interesting part of this event is that the hoaxers 'confessed' and the man in the fur suit said he never saw the man in the brush. He glanced back once but did not linger at all. Therefore we can state with a good deal of certainty that the detailed report of our reporter was either:

1. Based on a fleeting backward glance of the hoaxer although the hoaxer did not see the man following him. If this did occur, the distance in the thickbrush would have held to a bare minimum any view, and been a very fleeting one. Or

2. The reporter was: a. lying, or b. mistaken, or c. distorting, or d. hallucinating

We shall consider these based on the clues we have of this person's personality construction. I shall give no consideration to possible motivation as this would be a very complex matter not relevant or possible to explain with the data available. We must note, too, that we must give credit to the witness' first impression, which was very correct: "a man in a fur suit". What transformed his initial opinion is what we need to assess. The facts are:

1. The reporter created by some internal process some data, which could not have occurred according to the hoaxer, who was investigated and his story verified.
2. The reporter states on tape that he is a naive individual.
3. He describes himself as being in an incoherent state when he came out of the brush, and fearful.
4. He describes copious facial detail and exact behavior of this creature in a close confrontation, in a five second view.
5. In the tape recording of the individual who spoke to the Sasquatch reporter when the witness emerged from the brush the alleged witness said there was no smell. In his tape recording interview he later described the smell distinctly.
6. His first impression of the creature was quite accurate: "It was a man in a fur suit."
7. The taped interview manifested great detail in reporting his activity prior to the sighting. Although detail was being elicited by the interviewer the reporter gave strong evidence of having compulsive defences both in his ability to report detail and his direct report of compulsive habit.

This reporter appears initially to me, with the data available, (extensive but not in such depth as psychological testing would reveal), to be a neurotic with hysteric defences, his anxiety level controlled to some extent through compulsive defences. Under stress, anger and fear in this situation, (although the particulars are, in the interest of anonymity and time, not related) he could not maintain an objective observation and he grossly distorted this event.

Naivety is characteristic of the hysteric, as is over-reaction and a high anxiety state. Initial impressions are frequently accurate but discarded by the hysteric in precedence for a more intense need to fulfil stronger needs, whatever those may be, over and above the reality. Perception in this case undoubtedly was distorted to meet underlying needs.

One other most questionable report because of the objective investigation conducted immediately is of two young men who shot four times in the woods at a bi-pedal hairy creature, very tall, with silver fur on its shoulders, which came at them. An Oregon State Trooper investigated this within an hour or so of its report which came shortly after the alleged sighting. I tape recorded the Trooper's report to me. There were no tracks of anything besides men with shoes in the area. Although the area was known to maintain bear, there were no bear tracks. There were four bullet holes in a stump at the precise area the boys indicated the creature had been. Fear and expectancies are strange mediums, and powerful. One of these boys had seen what he thought were Sasquatch tracks in the area the year before.

VI. CREDIBILITY

When evaluating an incident, perhaps three or four evaluators might use a Credibility Rating including:

1. Total assessment (as proposed here) of the reporter
2. Assessment of circumstances under which the report was first given.
3. Assessment of circumstances surrounding the entire report.
4. Internal consistency of report.
5. Manner and affect of the reporter when first reporting the event.
6. Conviction transmitted to the interviewer.(1)
7. Total context fit.

If a reporter can be tested and evaluated by the best instruments available and be found to be very high in credibility, then it would behave the disciplines involved in the Sasquatch endeavour to give appropriate and legitimate credence to those demonstrating this degree of high credibility.

At this conference we have the only living man with a motion picture which demonstrates uniqueness to such an extent that it has not been discredited by any scientific evaluation. As a reporter of and a probable witness to a Sasquatch, what credence will you give Bob Gimlin? He is the defendant in the Sasquatch trial. The scientific community is the plaintiff-prosecutor who claims disbelief and it is their burden to disprove. Are they willing to meet the challenge with the tools of assessment available? Bob Gimlin is not compelled to defend himself at all, he is not required to prove anything. It is the plaintiff or prosecutor who bears the burden of proving against the defendant by the preponderance of the evidence, or beyond a reasonable doubt. They must prove by scientific criteria that there was no live Sasquatch when Roger Patterson filmed his film, and Bob Gimlin watched from his horse, unencumbered by a camera in front of his face.

Perhaps Bob Gimlin may volunteer to take the stand.

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(From: Sasquatch Apparations by Barbara Wasson 1979, pp.116-132)