

Chapter 4

Incidents Involving Bigfoot

These are the stories from the people who lived it!

HANK MASTEN

Foreman/Modular Homes

Hoopa, CA

Incidents:

#1: 1966

#4: 1970

#16: 2005

I was referred to Hank by members of his family and was told he was an individual who has had Bigfoot experiences his entire life. Hank lives approximately 1,000 feet further down Lower Mill Creek Road from Inker McCovey. Hank's residence is one of the last homes on the road before it dead-ends at Mill Creek. I made a few initial attempts to contact Hank but we kept missing each other. I finally found him home at 8:00 on a Thursday night. Hank politely asked me to come back the next day as he was trying to get some sleep.

I arrived at Hank's house at 5:00 on a Friday night. It was on a lonely stretch of Mill Creek Road without neighbors nearby. Hank gave me an unnerving look and questioned me extensively regarding why I wanted to know about his Bigfoot experiences. After a 10-minute dissertation about my motives, Hank seemed to relax and slowly edged his way into his lifelong experiences with the creature.

Hank started his story by saying that he is a Hoopa tribal member, graduated from Hoopa High and he has lived his entire life in and around Hoopa. He said that he is presently separated, does not have kids and is a foreman at a local Hoopa business, Hoopa Modular Homes. Hank said that the furthest he has traveled from his home is Minnesota when he vacationed with



Hank Masten standing in the front yard where he found Bigfoot tracks. His house can be partially seen at the far right side of the photo.

the Hoopa softball team to the Indian National Softball Finals. He said that both times that they went to the finals they lost the last game by one run.

Hank said that when he was growing up he spent a lot of time with aunts, uncles and cousins camping, swimming and relaxing in the rivers, creeks and lakes around Hoopa. The first unusual incident occurred when he was five years old and camping at Mill Creek Lake. The lake is an eight-mile drive outside town on a dirt road east of Hoopa and an additional short hike on a well-maintained trail. Hank said that the trout fishing is superb and the camping is quiet and serene, normally. He stated that he was five years old and camping with his parents and he remembers that it was late, dark and cold and he was in his sleeping bag. He states that they all heard a very loud scream that seemed to be several hundred yards away. Hank said that the noise scared him a lot because it was something he had never heard. He remembers his dad telling him not to worry because it was only a mountain lion looking for a friend. Hank said he believed his dad at the time, but he never forgot the scream.

Approximately nine years after that first scream, Hank was camping, netting and barbecuing on the Trinity River with some friends. They were staying on the western bank just north of Tish Tang Creek. Hank said that it was July or August in 1970 or 1971 and it was a warm night. He and Clifton Wallace (deceased) and three other friends had just finished setting nets in the river and had started to barbecue hot dogs and marshmallows. It was probably close to 12:30 or 1:00 a.m. when they heard a very loud scream coming directly across the river from them. Hank said that he had heard that scream before, up at Mill Creek Lake when he was five years old, as previously stated. But this scream was louder than the lake incident and occurred several times over a 10-minute period.

Hank said that the scream had everyone's attention and they were a little on edge. After 10 minutes of screaming, he says that a huge boulder, over 40 pounds, came flying in their direction from the area of the screaming. The boulder landed in the middle of the river and wasn't too close, but it was close enough to scare all of the boys. Immediately after the first boulder, 6–9 more boulders came in their direction. After approximately 10 huge boulders were thrown in their direction the boys decided to get out of the area. They quickly gathered up their belongings and retreated to a friend's front lawn, safely out of boulder range.

The next morning Hank says that he and his friends went back to the river front campsite and could easily see the boulders in the sandy river bottom. He remembers all of the boys swimming out to the center of the river and trying to retrieve just one of the smaller boulders, but they couldn't move it. Hank believes the boulders weighed 40–50 pounds and were thrown in the air over 200 yards. He maintains there was no possible way that any man could have thrown the boulders the distance that they saw them propelled. Hank guessed that he wouldn't be able to get a boulder to the river's edge even if he rolled it from the flat where the boulders were tossed.

An interesting note on this encounter is that there are many documented Bigfoot incidents that involve people who are barbecuing hot dogs. The incidents sometimes involve rock throwing, yells and even visitations. There might be something about the odor, the people's presence, or maybe it is just coincidental because so many people cook hot dogs while they are in the outdoors. Maybe they could be cooking anything for the incidents to occur. Maybe Bigfoot associates the smell of cooking hot dogs with children, and this sparks their curiosity.

Hank's third incident was closer to home, more recent and an actual sighting (although classified as an incident).

The winter of 2004–2005 in Hoopa had many, many days of heavy rain. It was a tough winter that was cold, wet and dark. On a weekend night in January 2005 Hank had two female friends at his house and they were all making Indian art. Hank remembers they had stayed up the entire night talking and doing various art projects. He said it was about 4:30 a.m., raining heavily outside and very smoky in his house. He said that he needed to get some fresh air and decided to get in his car, drive to the end of Mill Creek Road and see how far the creek had risen during the night. He says that he was almost to the end of the road and had gone off the paved portion when he passed a fir tree on the right side of the car. He said that he was at the point of where he was going to turn around when he noticed a huge shadow stand up from behind the fir tree directly next to his passenger's side. He said that the shadow took up the entire right side of his car. It was close to 7–8 feet tall, but it was too dark to distinguish specific features.

Hank said that he quickly turned his car around and drove right back to his house. He parked his car, entered the house and made a decision not to say anything to the women so they wouldn't be frightened.

Hank said he was home only a few minutes and back to work on his art project when one of the women in his house looked at him and said, "Someone is outside." Hank told her that she was crazy, but she insisted that she felt the presence of someone outside. Hank said he opened his front door, quickly looked outside and closed the door. It was still dark, pouring rain, and there was no way he was going out to look; and he said he really didn't want to see anything.

At approximately 7:00 a.m., with the first light of day, Hank said he went out to look around. He walked out to the entrance of his driveway and saw huge footprints in the dirt adjacent to his front fence. The grass in the area was matted down with such force that it left a deep indentation in the ground, many inches deeper than his foot could make. He said that he followed the tracks around the side of his yard and back down into Mill Creek. Hank guessed that the tracks had a stride of over seven feet and were indented 3–4 inches in the grass and dirt. He stated that the tracks appeared to be 20–24 inches long and much, much wider than any human footprint. Hank said that the print would remind you of a barefoot human print with large distinct toes.

The next evening Hank was lying in bed and thinking about the previous night. He knew that the Bigfoot had followed him down the road from where he saw it by the creek. The question that he continually asks himself is what the Bigfoot wanted or what was it interested in; or, was it just curious?

During Hank's explanation of his incident, he stared directly into my eyes with an intense determination to explain the story methodically and carefully. He sometimes hesitated and was careful in using words that correctly explained what had happened. Near the end of our meeting, Hank volunteered to escort me into restricted areas of the reservation. He even explained how he and relatives had built roads into certain areas where tribal elders believed Bigfoot resides. The elders tell members to stay clear of these areas and give the "big people" the area they need. Hank stated that he was serious in his offer and that anytime I needed a guide into those "restricted" zones, he would take me. He also signed an affidavit covering all of the incidents and sighting.

Location

The location of Masten's sighting fits the entire regional profile of Upper and Lower Mill Creek Roads. In this incident Bigfoot never took an action toward Hank, and merely followed him back to his house. The Bigfoot visiting this area do not appear to be afraid of people, but act cautious in their approach and do not stay long in a witness's sight line. They act almost as though they are as interested in human behavior as we are in Bigfoot lifestyle.

I have spent many hours in this area and have walked many miles of the Mill Creek water line. I have seen salmon and steelhead migrating up the creek and this may be one possible reason why Bigfoot is frequenting the region. The other obvious food source is the enormous number of berry bushes. The area where Hank found the footprints in front of his house was located in a huge patch of berries. The path the creature took back to the creek was also through a huge patch of berries.

During my exploration of the region I did find one almost completely intact animal skeleton approximately 100 yards from where Hank made his sighting near the fir tree and in the region of Mill Creek behind his residence. Directly adjacent to the skeleton I also found a huge mark



Photo of the footprint made in the water directly adjacent to a skeleton I found in Mill Creek behind Hank Masten's residence.

A photo of the skeleton found near Hank Masten's sighting. It is highly unusual to find a complete skeleton and one in as good of condition as in this photo.

in the sand that was partially submerged in a small pool of water. The mark appeared to be a Bigfoot print, but because it was in water positive identification could not be made. I must admit that it was highly unusual to find the print adjacent to a skeleton. The skeleton had obviously been there several weeks, but the print was probably placed in the last several days. This area of the creek is frequented by locals during the summer and is used as an area to barbecue, fish and swim. During the winter months few people use this area and it is rarely visited.

I should note that Hank's story of the boulders being thrown into the Trinity River also coincides with the boulder-throwing incident involving Corky Van Pelt. The stories are almost identical and the locations are very close.

DWIGHT "CORKY" VAN PELT

Temporarily disabled

Hoopa, CA

Incident #2: 1967

Early one brisk winter morning I made the long drive up Bald Hills and down the lengthy dirt driveway to Corky's residence. The trip reminded me of a classic Bigfoot location, slightly foggy with patches of snow scattered on the wet ground, and very isolated. The road was filled with potholes and water and was barely manageable with any two-wheel-drive vehicle; luckily I had four-wheel drive. I actually stopped for a few minutes on my way to Corky's residence and took a few photos, as it was a memorable spot.

I eventually made my way to the residence and Corky exited the front door to greet me. He invited me in and offered me some coffee as I exchanged greetings with his kids. Corky is a big man, a Native American and a lifelong Hoopa tribal member. Corky immediately opened up and told me about growing up in Hoopa and how he was an all county football player at Hoopa High School. He said that he was a very good athlete when he was younger. He explained that he had hunted and searched the far corners of the reservation when he was a teenager and a young man, and felt that he knew the reservation better than most.

Corky said that he has held a few different jobs in his life in Hoopa. He has been a certified timber cruiser, fire engineer and truck driver. He stated that the 48 years he has been on this earth, his back has been injured on the job many times. He constantly has pain and it has inhibited his ability to hold a job. He did say that when he was younger he was very strong and sometimes fearless.

When Corky was eight or nine years old he and a group of friends, Zek Van Pelt and Merwin Clark, went down to the Trinity River near Camel Creek. He stated that it was a fun thing to do in the summer. They would put out their fishing nets and usually catch nothing because they never did a great job placing them. Corky said that it was starting to get late when they began to hear screaming coming from the far side (east-side) of the Trinity River. He stated that the screaming was like nothing he had ever heard before or since. It sounded somewhat like a creature



Corky Van Pelt at his residence

was screaming at something that it was fighting. He explained that the screaming went on for several minutes with all of the boys being very scared. Merwin and Zek were so scared that they climbed into the cab of the truck and locked it.

Corky said that when the screaming stopped, the rocks started to be thrown. These rocks weren't small; they were really boulders, 150–200 pounds each. All of the boulders came from the eastern side of the Trinity and landed in the middle of the river. The boulders never got extremely close but it was enough to scare the heck out of them. Corky says that the screams coupled with the boulders were an event he could never forget. He is positive that there isn't a man or woman alive that could scream half as loud as what he heard, and there isn't a human alive that could throw one of those boulders five feet let alone 200 feet. Corky says that he is sure that he and his friends had disturbed Bigfoot, it got angry and it was sending a message that it wanted them to leave.

Corky had one other Bigfoot encounter and this was also associated

with the Camel Creek area. He stated that it occurred about 12 years ago when he was 5–6 miles up from the Highway hiking. He was walking for several minutes and felt that something was paralleling him on a ridge above him. He stated that he heard noises, but never saw anyone. After several minutes he decided to rest and take a small break. He said that he sat down when all of a sudden a huge bush 40 feet from him across a small clearing started to shake frantically. Corky said that this bush was much too large for any man to be able to shake that hard and fast. He said that he was scared, so he stood up and held his coat open and made large wings. He said that he wanted the creature to smell his odor and know that it wasn't wanted in this area. Immediately after opening his coat, Corky said that the shaking stopped and he heard bipedal running coming from behind the bush. The creature was so heavy that he could feel the ground shaking slightly. Corky said that he knew better than to try to chase the creature, so he just left the area.

The most recent Bigfoot related activity occurred in the last 2–3 months, on his property where he and I were now meeting. He said that he had found a dog that appeared to be half wolf. The dog was too wild to bring into the house, so he used a heavy gauge steel chain to tether it to a large tree 40 feet from their residence. Corky guessed that the dog weighed 100 pounds and was very tough. He explained that one night he and Tane (his wife) heard loud whistling coming from the area of the forest adjacent to where the wolf was chained. Both stated that there is no man they know who could pull the chain apart. Well, the next morning Corky went out to check on the wolf and found that the chain was pulled apart and the wolf was gone. The wolf has never been seen again and both Tane and Corky feel that Bigfoot possibly took it.

I should mention that the area where Corky and Tane now live is the same area where Warrior Sanchez lived and had Bigfoot encounters. This is also the same hill where numerous others have seen Bigfoot or had Bigfoot encounters, such as the Marshalls. It's obvious that there is something very different about the Transmitter Hill/Bald Hills area and Bigfoot. There have been many credible reports from people of high integrity, people who didn't find me. I felt that they simply do not recognize that there is significant activity in this area.

The area around Camel Creek also is high on my list for Bigfoot sightings. This is around the same area where Michael Mularkey saw

Bigfoot on his way into his supermarket, and also very close to the area around Shoemaker Road where Leanne Estrada and her mom saw the juvenile Bigfoot in their front yard. None of these people were interviewed together or (to my knowledge) have ever spoken about their Bigfoot sightings with each other.

Location

The location of Corky's boulder-throwing incident is less than one-quarter mile from the Hank Masten boulder throwing. The dates are approximately one year apart, yet the description of each incident mimics very similar behavior, with the witnesses conducting themselves in almost an identical manner. This occurred on the Trinity River during summer months while boys were out having fun. This really makes researchers wonder how many other times over the years identical behavior has occurred and was never reported.

CARLO MIGUELENA

Forestry Tech
Hoopa Tribal Forestry
Hoopa, CA
Incidents:
#3: 1969
#13: 2006

On November 30 just after lunch I made a visit to the Hoopa Tribal Forestry office in an effort to locate a stream in the Klamath River basin. I had some new information in that area and was looking for assistance in locating a specific drainage area.

When I arrived in the office most of the staff were at lunch and there was only a receptionist at the front desk. During these types of visits I try to dress a little nicer than I do when I'm in the bush. I usually wear a pair

of clean jeans and my khaki long sleeve shirt with the “California Bigfoot Search” logo. I always have my notebook in my hand and business cards in my wallet. When I announced to the receptionist who I was and what I represented, she appeared a little shocked. She did say that there was one person in the back who may be able to assist me.

The receptionist walked me to a back room and I was introduced to an individual from the forestry group. He was in his late thirties, professional and well spoken. He stated that he could show me on a map the location I was looking for and then asked a series of interesting questions. This person had spent his entire life in the Hoopa area and truly didn’t believe in Bigfoot. He explained that he had spent countless hours in the most remote regions of the reservation and he had never seen any sign of the creature. He stated that he has heard rumors of people who have seen Bigfoot, but doubts they have truly seen something similar to what they are claiming. Just as this individual was letting me know his opinion, another forestry employee heard our conversation and started to level the same opinion my way. Both individuals were polite, professional but true pessimists on Bigfoot.

After I was shown the location for which I was searching on the map, I was walked to the lobby and more employees from forestry and also wildlife management started to enter the building. Within a few minutes there were almost ten people in the lobby area who were all talking about Bigfoot. Once the wildlife management staff arrived, the tide of opinion started to change. They seemed to be a much more optimistic group when it came to Bigfoot and its possible existence in Hoopa. Once the opinion in the lobby started to change, one of the forestry employees, Carlo Miguelena, stepped forward to make a personal statement. Carlo had the strength to speak his feelings and opinions in the face of obvious apprehension. He stated that he had a Bigfoot encounter, and the entire Hoopa forestry and wildlife room then went silent.

Carlo explained that he is a 53-year-old forestry tech for Hoopa Tribal Forestry. He stated that he grew up in the valley and spent his life in the mountains, streams and creeks surrounding Hoopa. He graduated from Hoopa High School and has heard stories about Bigfoot his entire life. He explained that when he was young, the Trinity Alps National Wilderness Area had not been established and where the tribal grounds stopped on the eastern edge, National Forest began. He said that when he was young his family raised 25–30 cattle on forest service property just

outside the reservation near Water Dog Lake. His family consisted of his mom and dad and an older brother and younger sister.

Every summer the family would spend at least a week near Water Dog and stayed at the Trinity Summit Lookout cabin. Carlo said that during his life his parents never got into long discussions about Bigfoot and never discussed their beliefs with him. In the summer of 1969 Carlo was 15 and his family was taking their annual trip up to Water Dog. He states that he can distinctly remember everyone loading up the family's Jeep Wagoneer and making the drive up into the hills. He remembers that they traveled up Big Hill Road until it turned to dirt, and then continued at a slower pace as they gradually went up in elevation. They were approximately 12 miles from the state highway and at 5,700 feet when they hit a very rough and steep location in the road. This area is now in the wilderness area and the public cannot drive it, but he remembers how rough it was and how slow they were traveling. Carlo also remembers that it was a very hot day and because they were in a steep section, his dad had the air conditioning off and the family had all of their windows open.

Carlo Miguelena in front of the Hoopa Forestry Office.



Miguelena says that at the point his family's car was driving slow and as they were ascending the large hill an incident happened that he would never forget. He says that the entire family heard the loudest scream he has ever heard in his life. He explained that he has heard mountain lion screams many, many times and knows precisely what they sound like. Carlo stated emphatically that this scream was not a mountain lion or any other animal in Hoopa that is accepted by scientists as a member of the animal kingdom. His entire family started to look at each other when the scream was heard. He said it was hard to tell how far away the screamer was, but he was sure that it wasn't far away and that it was probably sending his family a warning.

It was either Carlo's brother or sister who asked the parents what was making the scream. Carlo said that his dad immediately replied, "Bigfoot."

It wasn't a quarter of a mile and Carlo said that his dad had turned their Jeep around and they were heading home. There was no family discussion and there was no dialogue about the decision. The Miguelenas were heading back to Hoopa, period.

In the 53 years Carlo has lived in the Hoopa region, he's had only one Bigfoot encounter. Carlo says it has only taken one direct encounter to convince him that something large, loud and menacing lives in the forests surrounding Hoopa. He says that he has heard many friends tell stories about their sightings and their beliefs and he thinks many of their stories are quite credible. His best guess is that Bigfoot lives in the far reaches of Tish Tang, possibly into the wilderness area to avoid public contact. Carlo states that he has heard too many stories, knows there is plenty of food and cover to maintain a population and hide something the size of Bigfoot in the outer reaches of the reservation and beyond.

Carlo said that he would gladly feed me any leads and provide any new information should it develop. After we had a lengthy discussion, there were 4-5 additional employees who came to my vehicle and had private conversations about Bigfoot. One of the greatest Bigfoot stories I have ever heard, and is chronicled in this book, came directly from the family of one of these employees. I sincerely appreciated their inner strength and their belief in my integrity. Thanks guys for having the belief in my credibility and stepping up to be interviewed. The world appreciates your stories.

Update

In mid March of 2007 I was in Hoopa on one of my regular trips when I saw Carlo at the gas station. The station is a general meeting spot in Hoopa and if you are there long enough you will eventually see everyone, as it's the only place in the area for gas. The tribe owns the station and keeps prices comparably low for tribal members, yet everyone gets the discount.

I was filling my Jeep when Carlo came up to me and asked how the search had been going. After a short conversation Carlo said that he had recently seen Bigfoot tracks on the backside of Big Hill. He stated that he and his son had driven into the backcountry on some free time. He explicitly stated that they had gone way too far and driven into several miles of virgin snow and could've been stuck because the snow was very deep where they were. They exited their vehicle and walked around and saw one set of huge footprints. He said it was obvious that they were the only vehicle that had been in the area for weeks, and the prints were fairly fresh and an obvious Bigfoot track. He stated that the stride between the prints was much larger than a human stride, and he estimated that the prints themselves were over 16 inches. He also said that he could tell they were made by a bare foot and not a boot. Carlo told me that he has seen hundreds of bear tracks in his life and is positive that the tracks they saw were Bigfoot and not any other natural wildlife.

Several days after Carlo told me of his footprint sighting, I drove back into the region. I also encountered heavy snow with many fallen trees. The winter of 2007 had been very tough on the Hoopa reservation. Ed Masten had told me that every 10 years the oaks and other hard woods usually suffered a similar termination of life through heavy winds and snow. It would appear that 2007 wiped out many good trees on the reservation. My trip into the region that Carlo had visited produced no sightings, but a lot of intelligence. It was much more desolate than other regions of the reservation and it was obvious that nobody should venture into this area without four-wheel drive and great tires. I meandered around many downed trees and lots of huge mud puddles. I eventually reached an area that had several feet of snow and I felt it was time to turn around. When I reach a point when I know I am turning around I usually

exit my vehicle and walk several hundred yards further down the road just as an insurance measure that I'm not missing anything that's close. I did this at this location and didn't see anything unusual. I will be back to this spot over the spring. According to topographic maps, I was on the eastern fringe of the reservation and in United States Forest Service Property.