

## Yeti-Like 'Monster' Gives Staid Town in Illinois a Fright

By Andrew H. Malcolm

MURPHYSBORO, Ill., Oct. 31 —Mrs. Nedra Green was preparing for bed in her isolated farmhouse near here the other night when a shrill, piercing scream came from out by the shed.

"It's it again," she said.

Four-year-old Christian Baril was in his backyard chasing fireflies with a glass jar. He ran in the house. "Daddy, Daddy," he said. "there's a big ghost out back."

Randy Creath and Cheryl Ray were talking on her darkened porch when something moved in the brush near by. Cheryl went to turn on a light; Randy went to investigate.

At that moment it stepped from the bushes.

Towering over the wide-eyed, teen-age couple was a creature resembling a gorilla. It was eight feet tall. It had long shaggy matted hair colored a dirty white. It smelled foul like river slime.

Silently, the couple stared at the creature and the creature stared at the couple, fifteen feet apart. Then, after an eternity of perhaps thirty seconds, the creature turned slowly and crashed off through the brush back toward the river.

It was the Murphysboro Monster, a strange creature that has baffled and frightened the police and residents for weeks now in this southern Illinois town on the sluggish Big Muddy River . . .

Such monster sightings are bizarre indeed for an old farm county seat where brightly colored leaves fall on brick streets and high school majorettes practice baton twirling for the Red Devils' upcoming football game with Jonesboro's Wildcats.

"A lot of things in life are unexplained," said Toby Berger, the police chief, "and this is another one. We don't know what the creature is. But we do believe what these people saw was real. We have tracked it. And the dogs got a definite scent."

It all began shortly before midnight June 25. Randy Needham and Judy Johnson were conferring in a parked car on the town's boat ramp down by the Big Muddy.

At one point the couple heard a loud cry from the woods next to the car. Many were to describe the sound as that of a greatly amplified eagle shriek.

Mr. Needham looked out from the front seat. There, lumbering toward the open window was a light-colored, hairy, eight-foot creature matted with mud.

At that point, the police report calmly notes, “complainant left the area.” He proceeded to the police station and filed an “unknown creature” report . . .

Later, as Officer Jimmie Nash inspected some peculiar footprints fast disappearing in the oozing mud left by the receding river, he became a firm believer.

“I was leaning over when there was the most incredible shriek I've ever heard,” he said. “It was in those bushes. That was no bobcat or screech owl and we hightailed it out of there.”

Officers searched the riverbank for hours, following an elusive splashing sound like something floundering through knee-deep water. They found nothing.

Plains folk hereabouts do not excite easily. So the next day on page three *The Southern Illinoisan* published a 200-word account of the “critter.” That presumably was the end of the case.

But the next night came young Christian Baril's encounter and the experience of Cheryl Ray and Randy Creath, the 17-year-old son of a state trooper, who drew a picture of the creature.

That did it for Chief Berger. He ordered his entire 14-man force out for a nightlong search. And Jerry Nellis, a dog trainer, brought Reb, an 80-pound German shepherd renowned for his zealous tracking.

With floodlights officers discovered a rough trail in the brush. Grass was crushed. Broken branches dangled. Small trees were snapped. On the grass Reb found gobs of black slime, much like that of sewage sludge in settling tanks on a direct line between the river and the Ray house.

Reb led Mr. Nellis and Officer Nash to an abandoned barn on the old Buller farm. Then, at the door, the dog yelped and backed off in panic. Mr. Nellis threw it into the doorway. The dog crawled out whining. The men radioed for help. Fourteen area police cars responded, but the barn, it turned out, was empty.

Ten days later the Miller Carnival was set up in the town's Riverside Park, not far from the boat ramp. At 2 A.M. July 7 the day's festivities had stopped and the ponies that walk around in circles with youngsters on their backs were tied to bushes.

Suddenly they shied. They rolled their eyes. They raised their heads. They tried to pull free. Attracted by the commotion, three carnival workers—Otis Norris, Ray Adkerson and Wesley Lavender — walked around the truck and there, standing upright in the darkness was a 300-to 400-pound creature, hairy and light colored and about eight feet tall.

With no menace, but intent curiosity, the creature was watching the animals . . .

—from *The New York Times*