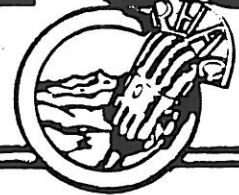


RETURN WITH US NOW...

The Radio Historical Association of Colorado, Inc.



VOLUME 14 NUMBER 2

OCTOBER 1988

2

DAILY NEWS, MONDAY, OCTOBER

Fake 'War' On Radio Spreads Panic Over U.S.

By GEORGE DIXON.

A radio dramatization of H. G. Wells' "War of the Worlds"—which thousands of people misunderstood as a news broadcast of a current catastrophe in New Jersey—created almost unbelievable scenes of terror in New York, New Jersey, the South and as far west as San Francisco between 8 and 9 o'clock last night.

The panic started when an announcer suddenly interrupted the program of a dance orchestra—which was part of the dramatization—to "flash" an imaginary bulletin that a mysterious "meteor" had struck New Jersey, lighting the heavens for miles around.

A few seconds later, the announcer "flashed" the tidings that weird monsters were swarming out of the mass of metal—which was not a meteor but a tube-like car from Mars—and were destroying hundreds of people with death-ray guns.

Thousands Flee.

Without waiting for further details, thousands of listeners rushed from their homes in New York and New Jersey, many with towels

across their faces to protect themselves from the "gas" which the invader was supposed to be spewing forth.

Simultaneously, thousands more in states that stretched west to California and south to the Gulf of Mexico rushed to their telephones to inquire of newspapers, the police, switchboard operators, and electric companies what they should do to protect themselves.

The "space cartridge" was supposed to have struck at Grover's Mills, an actual town near Princeton. Names of well-known highways were used in describing the advance of the monsters. The "Governor of New Jersey" declared martial law and the "Secretary of the Interior" tried to calm the people.

1,100 Call News.

Eleven hundred calls flooded the switchboard at The News—more than when the dirigible Hindenburg exploded.

Occupants of Park Ave. apartment houses fled to the street.

In Marion, excited crowds shouted that President Roosevelt's
(Continued on page 4, col. 1)

Senator Maps Bill to Censor Air Waves

Des Moines, Oct. 20 (AP).—Senator Clyde L. Herring (Dem., Iowa) said tonight he planned to introduce a bill in the next session of Congress "controlling just such abuses as was heard over the radio tonight." He said the bill would propose a censorship board to which all radio programs must be submitted.

Frank R. McNinch, chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, in Washington, said that an investigation would be held at once by the FCC. He would not predict what action might be taken, but said a thorough probe would be made.

RETURN WITH US NOW...is the official publication of the Radio Historical Association of Colorado, Inc., a non-profit organization. The cost of membership is \$20.00 for the first year with \$15.00 for renewal, which entitles the member full use of the Club's resources. For further information, contact one of the following officers or board members:

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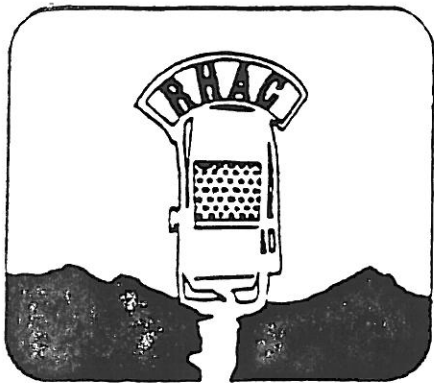
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ABOUT THE COVER

Possibly, one of the most dramatic moments of radio was Halloween of 1938 when Orson Welles and the Mercury Theatre Players frightened a nation out of its wits. Thanks to John Cook, we have photocopies of newspaper articles of that famous event to share with you, our readers. Also in this issue, you will find notice of a new version of this H. G. Wells story to be dramatized on National Public Radio later this month.

NEXT MEETING

The October meeting of RHAC will be held at 7:30 PM at the Church of the Master, 5152 E. 17th Ave., between Filbert and Forest Streets. Please enter from the Filbert Street entrance. We are pleased to have as our speaker, Mr. Gene Amole on October 20. Mr. Amole has been a columnist for the Rocky Mountain News since 1977. He began his radio career in Denver, then served in Gen. George Patton's Third Army. Following the war, he returned to broadcasting in Denver as news director of station KMYR. Amole also served as a news writer and anchorman for Channels 2 and 7. A television portrait of poet Thomas Hornsby Ferril, for which Amole was narrator and researcher, won an Emmy award and has been shown several times on National Public Television. Morning, a collection of 120 of Amole's columns, was published in 1984 and within a week of publication, it had become the number one non-fiction paperback. Don't miss hearing this remarkable man at the October meeting!



Radio Historical Association of Colorado

BOOK REVIEW

By John Licht, RHAC Treasurer

Border Radio by Gene Fowler and Bill Crawford. Foreward by Wolfman Jack. Texas Monthly Press. Illustrations, index, recording, 282 pp., 1987. \$18.95

Radio from the Mexican border was not network radio; it was not prime-time radio (although its effective hours were after dark); and it was not organized radio. Border radio was no respecter of the FCC and its predecessors: it was no respecter of other licensed stations and their assigned frequencies, and it was no respecter of governmentally defined good taste.

It was wide open; it went out on 200,000 watts; it sold time to the performers, not commercials; and the performers sold entertainment, snake oil, prayer, and every thing else that could be sold. Border radio served a special market (or several of them) by selling salvation for souls, for impotent hopefuls, for cancer sufferers, and for poor digestion. Border radio introduced country and western music to the mid-continent; moreover, it produced its own stars and its own special products sold by mail with money-back guarantees. It also produced charlatans of this world and the next and a governor of Texas into the bargain. It reigned for 40 years and still lingers, but with only the shadow of its former profile.

Border Radio is the story of the "quacks, yodelers, pitchmen, psychics, faith healers, and other supersalesmen (including Wolfman Jack) who sought the listeners. It also tells of the engineers, capitalists, and discontents who put them on (and in) the air to be heard by the listeners from the Rio Grande to the Yukon and points East and West. We armchair radio buffs know of NBC and the Red and Blue, of Chase and Sanborn, of Jim Jordan, of "Tales well calculated..." of the Longbranch Saloon, and of transcription discs. We don't know of XEPN of Hillbilly Flour, of Dr. Brinkley's Goat Gland Operation, of Crazy Water Crystals, of the temperance of Sam Morris, or of the preaching of Reverend Ike. This book and the enclosed record tell of such wonders and more.

There was a Gene Fowler who wrote of W. C. Fields and John Barrymore (Good Night Sweet Prince, 1943) and several others. The Border Radio Gene Fowler was born in 1950. We are not told by the jacket notes whether this Gene is son, grandson, or stranger to that Gene. I am curious. Having read them both, and noting a similarity in style, I would guess they sprang from common genes (pun intended).

Gene's and Bill's style is light rather than scholarly (although the authors clearly did much research), and descriptive rather than analytical. One could have wished for more scholarship and analysis, but then one would be wishing for for a different, although not necessarily a better, book. This book is fine the way it is; it reads easily, and rogues are wonderful to read of.

I just donated the book to the reference library of the Club, and I recommend it as bedside, bathroom, airplane, waiting room, and general light reading.

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER by John Cook

October marks the 50th anniversary of the most famous radio broadcast of this century. On October 30, 1938, at 8:00 P.M., the Mercury Radio Theatre on the Air presented the radio adaptation of H. G. Wells' War of the Worlds. Many of our members remember that evening when nearly all of America knew the end had come. Reports from all over the country came in telling of attempted suicides, evacuations, and calls of volunteering to fight the invaders. In celebration of this memorable broadcast, the OTR Players will present their version of Wells' famous novel at the Aurora Fox Theatre on November 15th at 7:30 P.M. Admission is free. Also, look forward to KCFR's airing of a modernized version on October 30th of War of the Worlds. This production by Stephen Spielberg will star Jason Robards and Steve Allen among others. Please check local listings for the time. Perhaps we will get to hear KHOW's version of this story in case some of you missed its broadcast last year.

Last month, our members were treated to an entertaining evening with Pete Smythe. Pete told of his career in radio that included anecdotes and songs from some of the broadcasts from the famous little community of East Tin Cup, Colorado. Pete lost his job as mayor of the little berg because the Top 40 did not quite jell with goings on in the little community filled with all sorts of lovable characters. The East Tin Cup traffic reports will be long remembered. Our special thanks to Pete for sharing with us a long and memorable career in Denver radio.

Calendar of Events

October--Guest speaker, Gene Amole--October 20th at 7:30 P.M.

November--War of the Worlds--Aurora Fox Theatre--7:30 P.M. on November 15th

December--Annual Christmas Party st 6:00 P.M. on December 10th

Look for up-coming events featuring more guest speakers and radio re-creations in the new year.

CLUB NEWS

RHAC member Bob Loudon, 2574 Brittanica Place, Eugene OR 97405, writes that as a child he listened to a show on Mutual called "Roosty of the AAF" and wonders if any of our members has any of the shows. If so, please write to Bob. By the way, thank you to Bob for donating nine reels of AFRS shows from the 1940's to the Contributors Library which will appear in the catalog as soon as possible, although the wonderful response of donated tapes is keeping our librarians very busy processing them.

The following is a list and prices of reel-to-reel tape decks on hand at Second Sound as of September 30. Club members receive a 10% discount.

TEAC A 4300 SX	\$299	TEAC A6010	\$149
TEAC X7R	299	AKAI GX636	499
AKAI GX635D	450	REVOX B77MKII	995
TEAC 2300S	219	TEAC X3	249

John Cook's last word for this time: "Beware of close encounters of the third kind!"

Radio Listeners in Panic, Taking War Drama as Fact

A wave of mass hysteria seized thousands of radio listeners throughout the nation between 8:15 and 9:30 o'clock last night when a broadcast of a dramatization of H. G. Wells's fantasy, "The War of the Worlds," led thousands to believe that an interplanetary conflict had started with invading Martians spreading wide death and destruction in New Jersey and New York.

The broadcast, which disrupted households, interrupted religious services, created traffic jams and clogged communications systems, was made by Orson Welles, who as the radio character, "The Shadow," used to give "the creeps" to countless child listeners. This time at least a score of adults required medical treatment for shock and hysteria.

In Newark, in a single block at Heddon Terrace and Hawthorne Avenue, more than twenty families rushed out of their houses with wet handkerchiefs and towels over their

which it is a part. The simulated program began. A weather report was given, prosaically. An announcer remarked that the program would be continued from a hotel, with dance music. For a few moments a dance program was given in the usual manner. Then there was a "break-in" with a "flash" about a professor at an observatory noting a series of gas explosions on the planet Mars.

News bulletins and scene broadcasts followed, reporting, with the technique in which the radio had reported actual events, the landing of a "meteor" near Princeton, N. J., "killing" 1,500 persons, the discovery that the "meteor" was a "metal cylinder" containing strange creatures from Mars armed with "death rays" to open hostilities against the inhabitants of the earth.

Despite the fantastic nature of the reported "occurrences," the program, coming after the recent war scare in Europe and a period in which the radio frequently had interrupted regularly scheduled programs to report developments in the Czechoslovak situation, caused fright and panic throughout the area of the broadcast.

Many Flee Homes to Escape 'Gas Raid From Mars'—Phone Calls Swamp Police at Broadcast of Wells Fantasy

From one New York theatre a manager reported that a throng of playgoers had rushed from his theatre as a result of the broadcast. He said that the wives of two men in the audience, having heard the broadcast, called the theatre and insisted that their husbands be paged. This spread the "news" to others in the audience.

The switchboard of THE NEW YORK TIMES was overwhelmed by the calls. A total of 875 were received. One man who called from Dayton, Ohio, asked, "What time will it be the end of the world?" A caller from the suburbs said he had had a houseful of guests and all had rushed out to the yard for safety.

Warren Dean, a member of the American Legion living in Manhattan, who telephoned to verify the "reports," expressed indignation which was typical of that of many callers.

"I've heard a lot of radio programs, but I've never heard anything as rotten as that," Mr. Dean said. "It was too realistic for comfort. They broke into a dance program with a news flash. Everybody in my house was agitated by the

shouting that enemy planes were crossing the Hudson River and asking what he should do. A man came in to the West 152d Street Station, seeking traffic directions. The broadcast became a rumor that spread through the district and many persons stood on street corners hoping for a sight of the "battle" in the skies.

In Queens the principal question asked of the switchboard operators at Police Headquarters was whether "the wave of poison gas will reach as far as Queens." Many said they were all packed up and ready to leave Queens when told to do so.

Samuel Tishman of 200 Riverside Drive was one of the multitude that fled into the street after hearing part of the program. He declared that hundreds of persons evacuated their homes fearing that the "city was being bombed."

"I came home at 8:15 P. M. just in time to receive a telephone call from my nephew who was frantic with fear. He told me the city was about to be bombed from the air and advised me to get out of the building at once. I turned on the radio and heard the broadcast which corroborated what my nephew had

believed was to be a gas raid. Some began moving household furniture. Throughout New York families left their homes, some to flee to near-by parks. Thousands of persons called the police, newspapers and radio stations here and in other cities of the United States and Canada seeking advice on protective measures against the raids.

The program was produced by Mr. Welles and the Mercury Theatre on the Air over station WABC and the Columbia Broadcasting System's coast-to-coast network, from 8 to 9 o'clock.

The radio play, as presented, was to simulate a regular radio program with a "break-in" for the material of the play. The radio listeners, apparently, missed or did not listen to the introduction, which was: "The Columbia Broadcasting System and its affiliated stations present Orson Welles and the Mercury Theatre on the Air in 'The War of the Worlds' by H. G. Wells."

They also failed to associate the program with the newspaper listing of the program, announced as "Today: 8:00-9:00—Play: H. G. Wells's 'War of the Worlds'—WABC." They ignored three additional announcements made during the broadcast emphasizing its fictional nature.

Mr. Welles opened the program with a description of the series of

calls from listeners or persons who had heard of the broadcasts. Many sought first to verify the reports. But large numbers, obviously in a state of terror, asked how they could follow the broadcast's advice and flee from the city, whether they would be safer in the "gas raid" in the cellar or on the roof, how they could safeguard their children, and many of the questions which had been worrying residents of London and Paris during the tense days before the Munich agreement.

So many calls came to newspapers and so many newspapers found it advisable to check on the reports despite their fantastic content that The Associated Press sent out the following at 8:48 P. M.:

"Note to Editors: Queries to newspapers from radio listeners throughout the United States tonight, regarding a reported meteor fall which killed a number of New Jerseyites, are the result of a studio dramatization. The A. P."

Similarly police teletype systems carried notices to all stationhouses, and police short-wave radio stations notified police radio cars that the event was imaginary.

Message From the Police

The New York police sent out the following:

"To all receivers: Station WABC informs us that the broadcast just concluded over that station was a dramatization of a play. No cause for alarm."

The New Jersey State Police teletyped the following:

"Note to all receivers—WABC broadcast as drama re this section being attacked by residents of Mars. Imaginary affair."

Radio News

At 9 o'clock a woman walked into the West Forty-seventh Street police station dragging two children, all carrying extra clothing. She said she was ready to leave the city. Police persuaded her to stay.

A garbled version of the reports reached the Dixie Bus Terminal, causing officials there to prepare to change their schedule on confirmation of "news" of an accident at Princeton on their New Jersey route. Miss Dorothy Brown at the terminal sought verification, however, when the caller refused to talk with the dispatcher, explaining to her that "the world is coming to an end and I have a lot to do."

Harlem Shaken By the "News"

Harlem was shaken by the "news." Thirty men and women rushed into the West 123d Street police station and twelve into the West 135th Street station saying they had their household goods packed and were all ready to leave Harlem if the police would tell them where to go to be "evacuated." One man insisted he had heard "the President's voice" over the radio advising all citizens to leave the cities.

The parlor churches in the Negro district, congregations of the smaller sects meeting on the ground floors of brownstone houses, took the "news" in stride as less faithful parishioners rushed in with it, seeking spiritual consolation. Evening services became "end of the world" prayer meetings in some.

One man ran into the Wadsworth Avenue Police Station in Washington Heights, white with terror,

to the elevator. When I got to the street there were hundreds of people milling around in panic. Most of us ran toward Broadway and it was not until we stopped taxi drivers who had heard the entire broadcast on their radios that we knew what it was all about. It was the most insane stunt I ever heard of."

"I heard that broadcast and almost had a heart attack," said Louis Winkler of 1,322 Clay Avenue, the Bronx. "I didn't tune it in until the program was half over, but when I heard the names and titles of Federal, State and municipal officials and when the 'Secretary of the Interior' was introduced, I was convinced that it was the McCoy. I ran out into the street with scores of others, and found people running in all directions. The whole thing came over as a news broadcast and in my mind it was a pretty crummy thing to do."

The Telegraph Bureau switchboard at police headquarters in Manhattan, operated by thirteen men, was so swamped with calls from apprehensive citizens inquiring about the broadcast that police business was seriously interfered with.

Headquarters, unable to reach the radio station by telephone, sent a radio patrol car there to ascertain the reason for the reaction to the program. When the explanation was given, a police message was sent to all precincts in the five boroughs advising the commands of the cause.

Continued on Page Four

RADIO WAR DRAMA CREATES A PANIC

Continued From Page One

"They're Bombing New Jersey!"

Patrolman John Morrison was on duty at the switchboard in the Bronx Police Headquarters when, as he afterward expressed it, all the lines became busy at once. Among the first who answered was a man who informed him:

"They're bombing New Jersey!"

"How do you know?" Patrolman Morrison inquired.

"I heard it on the radio," the voice at the other end of the wire replied. "Then I went to the roof and I could see the smoke from the bombs, drifting over toward New York. What shall I do?"

The patrolman calmed the caller as well as he could, then answered other inquiries from persons who wanted to know whether the reports of a bombardment were true, and if so where they should take refuge.

At Brooklyn police headquarters, eight men assigned to the monitor switchboard estimated that they had answered more than 800 inquiries from persons who had been alarmed by the broadcast. A number of these, the police said, came from motorists who had heard the program over their car radios and were alarmed both for themselves and for persons at their homes.

Because some of the inmates took the catastrophic reports seriously as they came over the radio, some of the hospitals and the county penitentiary ordered that the radio be turned off.

Thousands of calls came in to Newark Police Headquarters. These were not only from the terror-stricken. Hundreds of physicians and nurses, believing the reports to be true, called to volunteer their services to aid the "injured." City officials also called in to make "emergency" arrangements for the population. Radio cars were stopped by the panicky throughout that city.

Jersey City police headquarters received similar calls. One woman asked Detective Timothy Grooty, on duty there, "Shall I close my windows?" A man asked, "Have the police any extra gas masks?" Many of the callers, on being assured the reports were fiction, queried again and again, uncertain in whom to believe.

Scores of persons in lower Newark Avenue, Jersey City, left their homes and stood fearfully in the street, looking with apprehension toward the sky. A radio car was dispatched there to reassure them.

The incident at Hedden Terrace and Hawthorne Avenue, in Newark, one of the most dramatic in the area, caused a tie-up in traffic for blocks around. The more than twenty families there apparently believed the "gas attack" had started, and so reported to the police. An ambulance, three radio cars and a police emergency squad

with calls for more than an hour and the company did not have time to summon emergency operators to relieve the congestion. Hardest hit was the Trenton toll office, which handled calls from all over the East.

One of the radio reports, the statement about the mobilization of 7,000 national guardsmen in New Jersey, caused the armories of the Sussex and Essex troops to be swamped with calls from officers and men seeking information about the mobilization place.

Prayers for Deliverance

In Caldwell, N. J., an excited parishioner ran into the First Baptist Church during evening services and shouted that a meteor had fallen, showering death and destruction, and that North Jersey was threatened. The Rev. Thomas Thomas, the pastor quieted the congregation and all prayed for deliverance from the "catastrophe."

East Orange police headquarters received more than 200 calls from persons who wanted to know what to do to escape the "gas." Unaware of the broadcast, the switchboard operator tried to telephone Newark, but was unable to get the call through because the switchboard at Newark headquarters was tied up. The mystery was not cleared up until a teletype explanation had been received from Trenton.

More than 100 calls were received at Maplewood police headquarters and during the excitement two families of motorists, residents of

WASHINGTON MAY ACT

Review of Broadcast by the Federal Commission Possible

Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

WASHINGTON, Oct. 30.—Informed of the furor created tonight by the broadcasting of the Wells drama, "War of the Worlds," officials of the Federal Communications Commission indicated that the commission might review the broadcast.

The usual practice of the commission is not to investigate broadcasts unless formal demands for an inquiry are made, but the commission has the power, officials pointed out, to initiate proceedings where the public interest seems to warrant official action.

his community, including children. He said he knew of one woman who ran into the street with her two children and asked for the help of neighbors in saving them.

"We were sitting in the living room casually listening to the radio," he said, "when we heard reports of a meteor falling near New Brunswick and reports that gas was spreading. Then there was an announcement of the Secretary of Interior from Washington who spoke of the happening as a major disaster. It was the worst thing I ever heard over the air."

Columbia Explains Broadcast
The Columbia Broadcasting Sys-

Also, the Brooklyn police reported, a preponderance of the calls seemed to come from women.

The National Broadcasting Company reported that men stationed at the WJZ transmitting station at Bound Brook, N. J., had received dozens of calls from residents of that area. The transmitting station communicated with New York and passed the information that there was no cause for alarm to the persons who inquired later.

Meanwhile the New York telephone operators of the company found their switchboards swamped with incoming demands for information, although the NBC system had no part in the program.

Record Westchester Calls

The State, county, parkway and local police in Westchester County were swamped also with calls from terrified residents. Of the local police departments, Mount Vernon, White Plains, Mount Kisco, Yonkers and Tarrytown received most of the inquiries. At first the authorities thought they were being made the victims of a practical joke, but when the calls persisted and increased in volume they began to make inquiries. The New York Telephone Company reported that it had never handled so many calls in one hour in years in Westchester.

One man called the Mount Vernon Police Headquarters to find out "where the forty policemen were killed"; another said his brother was ill in bed listening to the broadcast and when he heard the reports he got into an automobile and "disappeared." "I'm nearly crazy!" the caller exclaimed.

of eight men were sent to the scene with full inhalator apparatus.

They found the families with wet cloths on faces contorted with hysteria. The police calmed them, halted those who were attempting to move their furniture on their cars and after a time were able to clear the traffic snarl.

At St. Michael's Hospital, High Street and Central Avenue, in the heart of the Newark industrial district, fifteen men and women were treated for shock and hysteria. In some cases it was necessary to give sedatives, and nurses and physicians sat down and talked with the more seriously affected.

While this was going on, three persons with children under treatment in the institution telephoned that they were taking them out and leaving the city, but their fears were calmed when hospital authorities explained what had happened.

A flickering of electric lights in Bergen County from about 6:15 to 6:30 last evening provided a build-up for the terror that was to ensue when the radio broadcast started.

Without going out entirely, the lights dimmed and brightened alternately and radio reception was also affected. The Public Service Gas and Electric Company was mystified by the behavior of the lights, declaring there was nothing wrong at their power plants or in their distributing system. A spokesman for the service department said a call was made to Newark and the same situation was reported. He believed, he said, that the condition was general throughout the State.

The New Jersey Bell Telephone Company reported that every central office in the State was flooded

New York City, arrived at the station to inquire how they were to get back to their homes now that the Pulaski Skyway had been blown up.

The women and children were crying and it took some time for the police to convince them that the catastrophe was fictitious. Many persons who called Maplewood said their neighbors were packing their possessions and preparing to leave for the country.

In Orange, N. J., an unidentified man rushed into the lobby of the Lido Theatre, a neighborhood motion picture house, with the intention of "warning" the audience that a meteor had fallen on Raymond Boulevard, Newark, and was spreading poisonous gases. Skeptical, Al Hochberg, manager of the theatre, prevented the man from entering the auditorium of the theatre and then called the police. He was informed that the radio broadcast was responsible for the man's alarm.

Emanuel Priola, bartender of a tavern at 442 Valley Road, West Orange, closed the place, sending away six customers, in the middle of the broadcast to "rescue" his wife and two children.

"At first I thought it was a lot of Buck Rogers stuff, but when a friend telephoned me that general orders had been issued to evacuate every one from the metropolitan area I put the customers out, closed the place and started to drive home," he said.

William H. Decker of 20 Aubrey Road, Montclair, N. J., denounced the broadcast as "a disgrace" and "an outrage," which he said had frightened hundreds of residents in

tem issued a statement saying that the adaptation of Mr. Wells's novel which was broadcast "followed the original closely, but to make the imaginary details more interesting to American listeners the adapter, Orson Welles, substituted an American locale for the English scenes of the story."

Pointing out that the fictional character of the broadcast had been announced four times and had been previously publicized, it continued: "Nevertheless, the program apparently was produced with such vividness that some listeners who may have heard only fragments thought the broadcast was fact, not fiction. Hundreds of telephone calls reaching CBS stations, city authorities, newspaper offices and police headquarters in various cities testified to the mistaken belief.

"Naturally, it was neither Columbia's nor the Mercury Theatre's intention to mislead any one, and when it became evident that a part of the audience had been disturbed by the performance five announcements were read over the network later in the evening to reassure those listeners."

Expressing profound regret that his dramatic efforts should cause such consternation, Mr. Welles said: "I don't think we will choose anything like this again." He hesitated about presenting it, he disclosed, because "it was our thought that perhaps people might be bored or annoyed at hearing a tale so improbable."

Updated 'War of the Worlds' airs Oct. 30

By The Associated Press

NICASIO, Calif. — "The War of the Worlds," the story of a deadly invasion by Martians that terrified believing radio listeners 50 years ago, has been refought amid the serene hills of filmmaker George Lucas' Skywalker Ranch.

The drama is coming back to national radio, but set in the present.

On Sunday, Halloween Eve 1938, a startled nation listening to Orson Welles' Mercury Theater on CBS radio heard what many assumed was live coverage of an invasion by monster aliens and their indestructible engines of war.

Welles eventually announced that the broadcast, based on a science fiction story by H.G. Wells, was a Halloween prank, but CBS' switchboards were swamped, and rumors of slimy, stalking death terrorized people who believed it was happening.

"Fake Radio War Stirs Terror Through U.S." cried a huge lead

headline in New York's Daily News.

Like the original, this 60-minute anniversary production will be presented nationally on Sunday, Oct. 30, on National Public Radio.

"We'll have disclaimers" before the broadcast, said director David Ossman.

"Of the creatures in the rocket cylinder I can give you no authoritative information," boomed the voice of Welles in the role of astronomy Prof. Richard Pierson, theorizing about what killed 40 people in the opening assault at Grovers Mill, N.J.

In the current production, set in the present, these same words are spoken to a clamoring news conference by actor Jason Robards, playing Pierson.

The cast also includes entertainer Steve Allen playing a network newsman broadcasting "to the last" and retired CBS newsman Douglas Edwards commenting on

the "end of civilization."

Real newspaper and television reporters who covered the production last weekend also wound up in the cast, playing reporters covering their "last" news story.

While the original thriller was done with sound effects in a studio, the update is high tech.

Half the production was recorded outdoors to get natural background sounds at the Lucas ranch in Marin County, about 40 miles north of San Francisco.

And unlike most radio drama, ...

which actors simply stand at microphones, the actors in this new production moved around as they would for film. The man behind this technique is sound designer Randy Thom, who won an Oscar for his work in "The Right Stuff."

But even without such techniques, the original broadcast was so realistic that some people contemplated suicide rather than die at the hands of the creatures.

In the story, the Martians finally succumb, not to man's weapons of war but to germs.

POOKY SHOW: Made your Halloween plans?

You can spend Oct. 30, Halloween Eve, listening to a new production of the landmark radio play *The War of the Worlds*, exactly 50 years after Orson Welles' original broadcast caused nationwide panic.

The framework of the play, recently taped, remains the same, although the script has been updated to suit the present time. The story unfolds through a series of increasingly alarming news flashes that interrupt regular radio programming.

The program stars Jason Robards as the Princeton astronomer who witnesses the Martian invasion. Other cast members include Steve Allen, veteran CBS newsman Douglas Edwards and actors Rene Auberjonois, Hector Elizondo and Phil Proctor.

War of the Worlds is the first of six planned *Radio Movies Holiday Specials*, produced by Otherworld Media. The drama will be carried on National Public Radio's satellite system and presumably will be heard on KCFR-FM in Denver.

Regardless of how good the production, it won't have the impact of the program aired 50 years ago. Still, it's comforting to know that some broadcasters still care about the theater of the mind.

Puzzle

Creepy creatures

In recent years the list of things that go bump in the night has expanded far beyond "ghoulies and ghosties and long-leggety beasties." There are 74 horrific people and things in the puzzle—any of whom may ap-

pear on your doorstep this Halloween. Keep an eye on them as you search forward, backward, up, down or diagonally. Leftover letters spell a fearsome fellow from the 1950s
—Ruth Oakwood

S E E B Y L D A E D S T I R I P S L I V E N
 B E S T A R E D A V H T R A D E V I L A A D
 O S O D N E I F L A N T S S E I M M U M A R
 O R S T O B O R U I H A D I S M R O W P L A
 G E T S A T A N C N V I D N E F L O W I L E
 E T N P E M T F A E O I M O T G N C T R I B
 Y S A O C E O M R R C R N H R S R E B E Z E
 M N T L D L R T D O H I E G E G Y E A S D U
 A O N C R O O N R Y G F M L D R R Z T E O L
 N M A Y N A A N D E L S B T A E O U S L G B
 N R I C U J O E E Y L A R P P M A M E L O G
 S I G R A L I E N S N L E P B L S D S D O P
 D S E D T R I F F I D S I I S I E L Y F T S
 I N S T N A T U M R S R E K O N C S L H M A
 U I S H S L U O H G E S R V B S N A E O D L
 Q L T E B N B T A H E A H L L A D T T O R U
 S B S M U A E H T H H E O B T O H R G S A T
 T O O F G I B K C S L B A C C I W S I K G N
 N G H L S A C T N G S E H S N O M E D B O A
 A O G S N A I T R A M E O G Y D D E R F N R
 I S W A J W A H N A R I P E I R R A C E S A
 G A R G O Y L E S S N F G N O K G N I K W T

- | | | | | |
|-----------------------|------------------|---------------------|------------------|----------------|
| 1. ABOMINABLE SNOWMAN | 16. CUJO | 31. GHOSTS | 46. MARTIANS | 61. SHE |
| 2. ALIENS | 17. DARTH VADER | 32. GHOULS | 47. MICE | 62. TARANTULAS |
| 3. ANDROIDS | 18. DEADLY BEES | 33. GIANT ANTS | 48. MR. HYDE | 63. THE FLY |
| 4. APES | 19. DEMONS | 34. GIANT SQUID | 49. MONSTERS | 64. THEM |
| 5. BATS | 20. DEVIL | 35. GOBLINS | 50. MUMMIES | 65. THE THING |
| 6. BIGFOOT | 21. DOGS | 36. GODZILLA | 51. MUTANTS | 66. TRIFFIDS |
| 7. BIRDS | 22. DRACULA | 37. GOLEM | 52. NORMAN | 67. TROLLS |
| 8. BLOBS | 23. DRAGONS | 38. GREMLINS | 53. PIRANHA | 68. VAMPIRES |
| 9. BLUEBEARD | 24. DR. CYCLOPS | 39. HAGS | 54. PODS | 69. WEREWOLVES |
| 10. BODY SNATCHERS | 25. EVIL SPIRITS | 40. HAUNTED CARS | 55. POLTERGEISTS | 70. WITCHES |
| 11. BOOGEYMAN | 26. FIEND | 41. JACK THE RIPPER | 56. RATS | 71. WOLFEN |
| 12. BUGS | 27. FRANKENSTEIN | 42. JAWS | 57. ROBOTS | 72. WORMS |
| 13. CARRIE | 28. FREDDY | 43. KILLER TOMATOES | 58. RODAN | 73. YETI |
| 14. CATS | 29. FROGS | 44. KING KONG | 59. SATAN | 74. ZOMBIES |
| 15. CLONES | 30. GARGOYLES | 45. LIVING DEAD | 60. SHARKS | |

REEL 5084 SPOTLIGHT REVUE

1800'

- 1L 10-17-47 From Chicago. Guest, Frankie Laine
 10-24-47 From Chicago. Guest, Tex Williams
 10-31-47 From Chicago. Guest, Jan August
- 2L 11-7-47 From Chicago. Guest, Jack Owens
 11-14-47 From Chicago. Guest, Francis Craig
 11-21-47 From Chicago. Guests, the Dinning Sisters
- 1R 11-28-47 From Chicago. Guests, Jack Smith and the Clark Sisters
 12-5-47 From Chicago. Guests, the Three Suns
 12-12-47 From Chicago. Guest, Mel Torme
- 2R 12-19-47 From Chicago. Guests, the Dinning Sisters and the Harmonicats
 12-26-47 From Chicago. Guests, the Golden Gate Quartet
 1-2-48 From Chicago. Guest, Buddy Clark

REEL 5085 SPOTLIGHT REVUE

1800'

- 1L 1-9-48 From Chicago. Guest, Nellie Lutcher
 1-16-48 From Chicago. Guest, Jan August
 1-23-48 From Chicago. Guest, Jack Owens
- 2L 1-30-48 From Chicago. Guest, John Laurenz
 2-6-48 From Chicago. Guests, the Mills Brothers
 2-13-48 From Buffalo. Guest, Vic Damone
- 1R 2-20-48 From New York City. Guest, Buddy Clark
 2-27-48 From Pittsburgh. Guest, Eddy Arnold
 3-5-48 From New York City. Guest, Francis Craig
- 2R 3-12-48 From New York City. Guests, Jack Smith and the Clark Sisters
 3-19-48 From Washington. Guests, the Milt Herth Trio
 3-26-48 From Washington. Guest, Jan August

REEL 5086 SPOTLIGHT REVUE

1800'

- 1L 4-2-48 From Indianapolis. Guests, the Ten Harmonaires
 4-9-48 From Detroit. Guest, Mel Torme
 4-30-48 From Chicago. Guests, the Page Cavanaugh Trio
- 2L 5-7-48 From Chicago. Guest, Burl Ives
 5-14-48 From St. Louis. Guests, the Eddie Heywood Trio
 5-21-48 From Kansas City. Guest, Ken Griffin
- 1R 5-28-48 From Omaha. Guest, Frankie Laine
 6-4-48 From Pueblo. Guest, Buddy Clark
 6-11-48 From Las Vegas. Guests, the Delta Rhythm Boys
- 2R 6-18-48 From Las Vegas. Guest, Buddy Clark
 10-8-48 From Hollywood. Guest, Gene Kelly
 10-15-48 From Hollywood. Guest, Don Ameche

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REEL 5087 SPOTLIGHT REVUE

1800'

- 1L 10-29-48 From Hollywood. Guest, Tony Martin
 11-5-48 From Hollywood. Guest, Jerry Colonna
 11-19-48 From Hollywood. Guest, Morton Downey
- 2L 12-3-48 From Hollywood. Guest, Frank Sinatra
 12-10-48 From Hollywood. Guest, Peter Lorre
 12-17-48 From Hollywood. Guest, Ralph Edwards
- 1R 12-24-48 From Hollywood. Guests, the Harry Stanton Choir
 1-23-49 From Dallas. Guests, Peggy Mann and Alec Templeton
 6-25-49 From San Francisco. Guest, Don Ameche
 End of Series
- 2R 8-16-58 CLUB OASIS (NBC-TV) Salute to College Songs
 8-30-58 CLUB OASIS (NBC-TV) Rock and Roll Salute to the Comic Strips
 9-6-58 CLUB OASIS (NBC-TV) Black and Blue Danube
 End of Series

EASY ACES Reels 5088 through 5097

The team of Goodman Ace (1899-1982) and Jane Sherwood Ace (1905-1974) are best remembered as the Easy Aces. Both born in Kansas City, they were married in 1928.

Goodman Ace was a reporter and drama critic for a hometown newspaper. To supplement his salary he broadcast movie reviews over KMPC. Filling in for another show one night, Ace called in Jane, who was waiting at the studio, and they ad-libbed conversation about a bridge game, thereby starting the Easy Aces.

By October, 1931 they were offered a CBS network tryout in Chicago. The format depicted Jane as an amiable but not very bright housewife and Ace as the indulgent and suffering husband.

The program moved to New York in 1933 and switched to NBC Blue in 1935, mostly as a three-a-week series for Anacin. Easy Aces went back to CBS in 1943 on Wednesday nights as a 30 minute show for two years.

More than 2,400 shows were aired, all written by Ace. After Easy Aces ended in 1945, they found 1,300 transcriptions of NBC-era shows, which were syndicated through Ziv productions for years. It is these programs, a total of 281, without openings or closings, that appear in the Contributor's Library.

Supporting players included Mary Hunter as Marge, Martin Gabel as Neil, Ethel Blume as Betty, Albert Ryder as Carl, Paul Stewart as Johnny, Helene Dumas as Laura and Ken Roberts as Cokey. Announcers during the run included Paul Douglas, Ford Bond and Roberts.

Ace went on to write for Danny Kaye, Robert Q. Lewis and the Big Show on radio and for Perry Como and Sid Caesar on television. Easy Aces appeared briefly (1949-1950) on the DuMont television network.

Timings to the nearest minute per side are on the index sent with each reel.

Reels were donated by RHAC member John Adams.

(Issued October, 1988)



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