

Wars of the Worlds – the century-old Halloween treat that never grows old

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It's that time of year again when county and other area residents take their best garden vegetables, quilts, handicrafts, baking and photographs to Milo for its annual fall fair. There was a good turnout at the fair this year as the curling rink was filled with people who stopped to take in the exhibits and admire the work of friends and acquaintances.

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NEEL ROBERTS
Sky's the Limit

On Halloween 1975, ABC aired a made-for-TV movie special called "The Night That Panicked America."

The movie was a re-enactment of Orson Welles's Oct. 30, 1938 CBS radio drama *The War of the Worlds*. Based on H.G. Wells's 1898 novel, the movie illustrated that over 32 million people tuned into Wells's play that night.

Welles plays astronomy professor Richard Pearson, who warns the world there's a Martian invasion that started as innocent fireball observations on Mars. As the aliens wage war on Earth's population, they seem to be in a hopeless battle as the Earthlings flee for wherever they can. Just as all seemed lost, Professor Pearson is walking one morning in New York City and notices all the Martians are dead, devoured by black birds. After analysis, it turns out the aliens were not immune like humans. As Professor Pearson explained "it was found that they were killed by the putrefactive and disease bacteria against which their systems were unprepared ... slain, after all man's defenses had failed, by the humblest thing that God in His wisdom put upon this earth."

The idea has been redone several times, including the Spielberg's 2005 movie starring Tom Cruise, but check out the original radio play for yourself at www.mercurytheatre.info while handing out treats on Oct. 31 and trying to imagine the days before social media and TV.

SKY WATCH

OCTOBER 3, 1990

Some of the top university hockey players in the province will be facing a tough challenge on Saturday, Oct. 13 when they will take on the Canadian Olympic hockey team in an exhibition game to be played at Vulcan. Sponsored by Vulcan Ford Mercury Sales and Alberta Treasury Branches, the game will be played at the Vulcan District Arena at 7 p.m. The University All-Star team will be made up of players from the Universities of Alberta, Calgary and Lethbridge. All the proceeds from the game will be donated to the Vulcan Minor Hockey Association. The contest between the Olympic hockey team and the

University All-Stars is part of the recreation board's winter program designed to generate more interest in hockey and to try and bring back the family support teams had in previous years. Another aspect of this program is the re-introduction of senior A hockey to the County of Vulcan. The Vulcan Thunderbirds, a new team also sponsored by Vulcan Ford Mercury Sales, will be part of the Ranchland Senior A Hockey League for the first time in six years. The team will be made up almost entirely of county players, with the exception with one or two from Calgary. A Booster Club is also being formed in conjunction with the Thunderbirds team.

On Tuesday, Oct. 8, the peak of the Draconid meteor shower Peaks can best be seen after twilight, facing north-northwest. While not as dramatic as other showers, it can occasionally spew hundreds of meteors an hour. The opposing waxing gibbous moon might be a deterrent.

On Tuesday, Oct. 29 look southwest after sunset until 7:45 p.m. to see Mercury, Venus and the moon sink into the night sky.

Did you catch the Zodiacal Light last month? It's a faint, roughly triangular, whitish glow seen in the night sky extended up from the vicinity of the sun along the ecliptic or zodiac. The best time to view the Zodiacal Light is from Saturday, Oct. 26 for two weeks, before dawn, in the east.

The Orionids meteor shower peaks on Sunday, Oct. 22, one to two hours before dawn, just to the north of the constellation Orion's bright star, Betelgeuse. With the second-fastest entry

velocity of the annual showers, meteors from the Orionids produce yellow and green colours and have been known to produce an odd fireball.

PUBLIC EVENTS

Mark down Saturday, Oct. 19 from 8-11 p.m. on your calendar for Sounds of Space Science Fiction at the University of Calgary's Rothney Observatory, located near Priddis. There will be an array of telescopes operated by University of Calgary astronomers and members of Royal Astronomical Society of Canada's Calgary chapter. The entrance fee is \$30 per car. For further information, contact Jennifer Howse at jhowse@phas.ucalgary.ca or 403-931-2366, or visit the website www.ucalgary.ca/rao.

Neel Roberts is a member of the Calgary chapter of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada and welcomes your questions and comments at 403-560-6574.