
The Invasion of Ragged Mountain

By Bill Russo

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Prologue

Along the starway of infinity there are millions of planets just like Earth. We need not be concerned with them. There are however many billions more that are not like Earth – these represent the biggest threat to humankind.

A slow moving, fragile rudimentary craft from the United States pierced the murky atmosphere of Jupiter on July 4, 2016. Strange cries, shouts and howls were captured by the ship's aural detectors. The voices, if indeed they were voices, were not made by carbon based lifeforms. The Space Agency quickly issued reports that derided the cries as nothing more than some sort of interference or radio static.

The collective mind of Earthlings however, is beginning to grasp the concept of intelligent life that is not carbon based. Such lifeforms may not even appear to be lifeforms to the primitive brains of the homo-sapiens.

Many of the beings are so different from humans, that they could not survive on an H-con planet (one based on Hydrogen, carbon, oxygen, and nitrogen). Conversely, the humans could not exist on planets like the Gas Giants – Jupiter, Uranus, Neptune and Saturn: known as the Juns. .

Superior intelligence is likely among the creatures of the Juns federation. They doubtless recognize humans as sentient beings – but most certainly regard earth creatures as cosmic infants.

What if the Gasmen of the icy giants decide to inhabit Planet Earth? How would they be able to adapt to an H-con orb?

Perhaps the invasion would start with a single icy Gasman. He might land his frosty ship on top of a frozen mountain. The story might unfold in a manner similar to 'The Invasion of Ragged Mountain' as told by a disc jockey spending a

solitary winter in an isolated dwelling on the flat top of the frigid mountain several hundred miles north of Montreal.

Chapter One: Ragged Mountain, Aroostook County, State of Maine

I'll tell you right up front that it's impossible. I am more isolated here than an astronaut in space. Nobody could have gotten up Ragged Mountain in the coldest and snowiest winter in a half century.

And yet as I sit before you now and see your disbelief, I tell you it did happen. It was five minutes before midnight. I remember the time exactly because I was giving the weather report which we always broadcast at 11:55 p.m., just before the news.

“The weather forecast for all of Northern Maine calls for more snow and a continuation of the extreme cold that has set records all the way from Bangor to Caribou. The overnight low will scrape the bottom of the thermometer at 20 below zero with a wind chill of minus 60. Residents are advised to stay indoors. The area police departments and National Guard troops are standing by to assist residents with heating problems. People in difficulty should call 911 statewide – except for customers of the Fort Kent Telephone Company, who are advised to dial Operator. Extra workers are on duty. Shelters have been set up in high schools and in the various campuses of State College.

“WNMR Meteorologist Jack Hambleton says that the record cold wave will continue for at least the next seven to ten days before any chance of moderation. The current temperature outside our studios atop Ragged Mountain is negative 12, with a further drop of eight degrees expected overnight to bring the temperature at dawn down to minus twenty below zero. Stay tuned for the national news from NBC Radio, which will be followed by your local and regional news brought to you as always by your local electric utility, the Maine Public Service Company.”

A verified temperature of minus 50 was recorded in Aroostook County in 2009. The previous record cold at Van Buren, in the County, was negative 48. Maine, besides being the most northerly of all the 48 states, is the coldest and snowiest.

The automated system kicked in after I gave the weather. It was programmed to play a few minutes of commercials followed by the network news feed. This gave me eight free minutes which I usually used to prepare my local newscast and bolt down a cup of strong coffee. My show runs from ten p.m. to three a.m. - the graveyard shift.

I gazed out the studio's picture window and watched the snow swirl around the five telephone poles that are strung around the tiny flat top of Ragged Mountain.

The poles are lit up like Christmas trees with large halogen street lamps arcing out from the top like long steel arms. Smaller marker lights, behind square protective cases, run down the pole at two foot intervals, stopping at a distance of four feet from the ground.

Each pole is the same. An amber light is first in line, a green light follows, then a red, and finally a blue. The sequence is repeated until the illumination reaches the big light at the top.

In winter I use the markers to gage the depth of the snow. That night I reported that the snow had just reached the red light, meaning that there were eight feet of frozen precipitation on the ground.

The first telephone pole is just a few feet beyond the studio, which is part of this cabin that also serves as living quarters for the announcer/engineer. As you well know, during the winter months no earthly vehicle has the capability of navigating the winding, steep five mile road that spirals around Ragged Mountain. Whoever takes the graveyard shift also has to live in the cabin by himself, in isolation for the entire winter.

During the day the radio station operates from studios and offices located in town, but at the start of my shift, the programming switches to here, the site of the transmitter, atop one of the largest mountains in the eastern United States. Though

we have a night time signal of only 5,000 watts, it reaches all of Northern Maine as well as parts of several other states and a few provinces in Canada.

I have a large audience and if mail were able to be delivered, I would have received anywhere from a few dozen to a hundred cards and letters a week. The correspondence goes to the station, where they save it for me until June when the roads open up.

You have probably heard the show. The music that I play is eclectic, ranging from folk performers like Pete Seeger to country performers such as Merle Haggard as well as some Jazz classics by Stan Kenton, Bill Russo, and Dave Brubeck, along with selected pieces from my personal extensive collection of hit 45 rpm vinyl records from the 1950s on.

The second illuminated pole is in the parking lot, which has four spaces. Only one was occupied. That, by my car, currently buried a few feet below the crusty surface of the snow and ice.

No attempts are ever made to shovel or plow anything on this little mountain tabletop that is home to the transmitter, the cabin that houses the studio, and two attached supply buildings.

I peered out the window that night and tried to look up beyond the pole into the sky but it was as if there were a ceiling fabricated of solidified, dark clouds, just above the halogen lamp.

The storm was intensifying. I lost sight of the pole in the parking lot by my car and could barely see the one right next to the window, due to the thick, speeding, wind-blasted snowflakes.

I felt a chill though the room was warm. I started to look away when unbelievably I spied something that looked like a shaggy ape walking towards the window.

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