



Richard Chaves stars in the TV series "War of the Worlds."

## Fate of the 'World' is in actor's hands

By JERRY BUCK  
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — One more thing to worry about: The invading Martians are still with us and determined to take over Earth in "War of the Worlds."

Reports of their destruction during Orson Welles' famous radio recreation of the H. G. Wells classic "War of the Worlds" on Halloween eve in 1938 or in George Pal's 1953 movie were premature.

Leading the fight against the alien invaders is Lt. Col. Paul Ironhorse, played by Richard Chaves in Paramount's syndicated TV series "War of the Worlds" (airing at 11:30 p.m. Sundays on Channel 50).

"Ironhorse is the head of the Special Forces," said Chaves. "I describe him as being able to fly anything that can fly, drive anything that can move and shoot anything that can shoot. He's a hard-charging spit and polish soldier, but he's changing."

"He's changing mainly in the direction of his Indian heritage. At West Point he had to shed his Indian heritage. Now, he's becoming more sensitive. He's going to need the instincts and special skills of his Indian ancestors."

In the TV series, the aliens have been in suspended animation since their defeat in the 1953 movie. But accidental exposure to radioactive waste revives them and sends them off again on their mission to wipe out human life and prepare Earth for alien colonization.

The hour-long series also stars Jared Martin, Lynda Mason Green and Philip Akin. It is a sister syndicated series to Paramount's "Star Trek: The Next Generation" and "Friday the 13th: The Series."

H. G. Wells' "War of the Worlds" was a Victorian classic that became a granddaddy of science fiction in 1897. Paramount purchased the film rights in 1925 for director Cecil B. De Mille. For nearly 30 years the script passed through many hands until it reached producer George Pal. His 1953 production won an Oscar for special effects and is considered a film classic.

The series is made in Toronto, where Chaves said he sometimes has a charcoal heater on each side during outdoor filming. "I'm hoping we'll be indoors for at least half of the shows," he said.

Chaves was born in Florida, the son of a Marine Corps officer. His father is now a Drug Enforcement

Agency agent in San Diego.

"The first TV show I ever did I played a Marine captain," Chaves said. "My father was so proud of me. It was 'Eight Is Enough,' the first thing I ever did."

Chaves served in the Army in Vietnam and co-wrote a play about his experiences, "Tracers." He and eight other veterans wrote and acted in the play, which won the 1980 Los Angeles Drama Critics Award for best ensemble and the Theatre World Award for outstanding new talent. Besides Los Angeles, they presented the play in New York and London.

He also starred in "Vietnam Trilogy" on the stage and participated in the Home Box Office special "Dear America: Letters Home from Vietnam." His last Vietnam-connected role was in the TV movie "To Heal a Nation."

He also starred with Arnold Schwarzenegger in "Predator" and with Don Johnson in "Cease Fire." The latter was taken from the third act of "Vietnam Trilogy," in which Johnson played his role from the stage and Chaves played his best friend. In "The Gambler III," he played Irondog, a Lakota Sioux.

"That role put me back in touch with my Indian heritage," he said. "Ironhorse was written as a Blackfoot, but I asked to play him as my own heritage. My mother was part Cherokee, Scottish and Irish. My father was a full-blooded Castilian from Spain. My grandparents came from Spain."

"This role is perfect timing. It's a role that combines my Indian background and my military experience. I've been very fortunate in my career that way."

Chaves said when he auditioned for the role in "War of the Worlds" he found that he was up against a close friend, Sonny Landham.

"I called Sonny and he started laughing," he said. "He took it wonderfully. We've played golf since then. He dropped out of the competition. I think his price was too high. In my heart I knew I was meant for this role."

Chaves, 37, is unmarried but said he has been close twice. He is an avid golfer.

"Recently I was driving my car and got to thinking," he said. "I played a doctor on 'Hill Street Blues,' a lawyer on 'Miami Vice' and an Indian chief on 'Gambler III.' I started laughing so hard I had to pull my car over."