DJ has rockin’ April Fool’s joke
(http://www.irontontribune.com/author/admin/)

By Staff Reports

Published 12:00 am Tuesday, April 1, 2008

Move over Orson Welles. Your immortal April Fool’s joke only had to do with Martians invading the world.

Steve Hayes has done you one better. That’s because he was counting on The Rock.

At 5 this morning Hayes, a morning personality for Portsmouth station WNXT, announced to a disbelieving world that during the night a Kentucky militia had come over to the Ohio side and, Horrors of Horrors, stolen The Rock.

That’s the Portsmouth Indian Head Rock that amateur historian from Ironton, Steve Shaffer, this summer spearheaded a campaign to retrieve it from the Ohio River. That seemingly innocent act of trying to protect a piece of history has inspired a border war between Ohio and Kentucky on who owns The Rock.

It’s brought in media from The New York Times to CBS News to tell the story. And now a classic April 1 prank.

For four hours, Hayes in his morning news casts and with three planted phone calls told the story of the “heist.”

“We came on with a story within our regular news that the militia had broken into the city garage and stolen the rock back,” Hayes said.

One of the planted callers was Carl Smith, a friend of Hayes, who claimed to be a member of the militia that did the dastardly deed.

WSAZ-TV reporter Randy Yohe was in on the gag and called in to say the Huntington TV station was sending a news crew down momentarily.

Then came on Ohio Rep. Todd Book, who has fought to keep The Rock in Ohio.

“Todd played along and said how upset he was and how he couldn’t believe anyone could take it by force,” Hayes said. “And that he hoped there could be truce.”

All total there were 500 calls into the radio station during the four hours. Most of them, Hayes said, believed it was true.

“We had some people who were very distraught. Some very impassioned calls. ‘Please tell us It’s not true,’ ”Hayes said. “We had one guy who wanted to go and lynch them. Apparently, this rock has struck a nerve.”

Then, there were those who caught on quickly that anyone believing this story maybe had rocks in his head.
"The funniest was a lady -- Brenda Horr -- who called in as the scanner lady," Hayes said.

"She said she had been listening to people talking back and forth during the night planning something called Project Drudge. She didn’t know what they were talking about but was sure it was them planning the attack," he said.

Suddenly Hayes realized his April Fool’s joke, the first one he’s done on-air in two years, was taking on a life of its own. So how to come up with a punch line to end his verbal escapade.

Two years ago Hayes played an April 1 joke telling listeners that a miniature version of the Titanic was coming down the Ohio River.

"I never thought I could come close to beating that one," he said.

This time Hayes had a woman call in claiming to be at the Greenup boat ramp.

"She said she was looking at it as we were speaking as they were getting to load it onto a miniature version of the Titanic," Hayes said. "That is how we ended it."