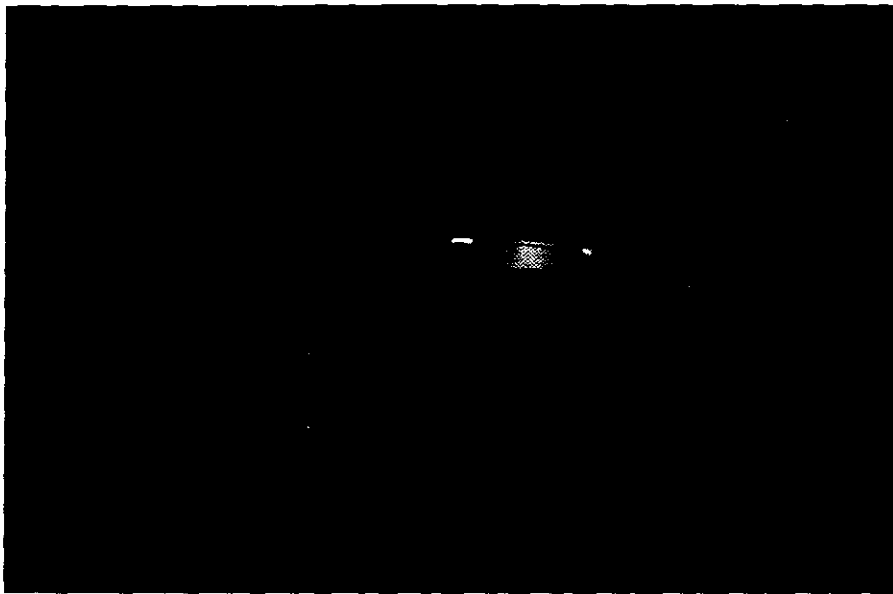


The Invasion Was Televised



by Kenn Thomas

The release of Oliver Stone's movie *JFK* in 1991 reminded many of the national brouhaha brought on by Jim Garrison's 1968 investigation of John Kennedy's murder and taught many others about it for the first time. Stone's movie carefully notes that Garrison believed the man he wound up prosecuting, New Orleans businessman Clay Shaw, represented only a toehold on a much larger conspiracy. Among the other players in the crime that Garrison never had enough on to bring to court was a man named Fred Lee Crisman. Garrison had

Crisman pegged as one of the trigger men on the grassy knoll. Although the details of this aspect of the Garrison prosecution remain obscure for most, those alive when Garrison's case grabbed national headlines knew Crisman better than they thought they did. Since the fall of 1967, they had watched fictionalized adventures from his life weekly in the form of a science fiction program called *The Invaders*.

At least that's how Crisman saw it. To many, Crisman came off as a scurrilous publicity hound and a teller of tall tales. Nevertheless, the verifiable facts about

Crisman's life make his possible connection to *The Invaders* the least of the biographical stories he could embellish for publicity. Crisman had witnessed the earliest flying saucer sighting of the post-war UFO era, three days before Kenneth Arnold's famous Mount Kanner sightings in 1947. Known as the Maury Island incident, it involved several spinning discs that spewed a weird substance over the shore near Puget Sound, and Arnold was later hired (by FATE co-founder Ray Palmer) to investigate it. The Air Force sent in two investigators as well, and they died in a plane crash trying to bring the substance in for tests.

Weird History

Crisman's connection to both UFOs and the Kennedy assassination is strange enough, especially considering claims that JFK was killed because he was going to expose the Roswell crash. Roswell happened a month after the Maury Island incident. Some researchers think that Roswell, Maury Island, and Arnold's Mount Rainier sightings might all involve the same craft.

Serious JFK scholars usually tangle up the assassination in a tapestry of anti-Castro Cubans, Mafia figures, and the CIA, and try to stay clear of the alien connection for the sake of already shaky credibility issues. Of course, credibility issues surrounded the Maury Island case early on.

The chief witness at Maury Island was a man named Harold Dahl, who worked with Fred Crisman salvaging runaway logs in a harbor patrol boat. Dahl later claimed it was all a hoax. Many UFO researchers

have dismissed it that way ever since, even though the slightest review of the historical records shows that Dahl made that claim only after his business was sabotaged, his son kidnapped, and his wife threatened. Dahl suffered an early visit from the infamous Men in Black and was told to keep quiet about what he saw. Thereafter, Dahl declared it all a hoax.

Crisman himself may not have seen anything at all. He visited Maury Island a day after Dahl's sighting and claimed he saw a single saucer on his own. Dahl had multiple witnesses to his sighting as well as physical evidence: the mysterious substance spewed by the saucers killed his dog and injured his son's arm.

Dahl reported the incident to Crisman, whom he regarded as his boss in the lumber salvaging business. Crisman later went out to the site on his own, to make sure Dahl and the others had not simply gotten drunk and wrecked the boat, and had his sighting without any other witnesses.

Nevertheless, when the Air Force finally sent its investigators, it was Crisman who gave them a Kellogg's Corn Flakes box filled with substances left behind by the UFO at Maury Island. The box and its contents went up in flames, along with the two airmen, when the plane crashed, leading some to suspect that Crisman may have even sabotaged the plane.

According to the most fanciful speculation, Crisman may have kept control of the alien substance to use as blackmail to stay employed in the covert world, even to get choice assignments like the JFK hit. His

Science Fiction Nightmare

Because Harold Dahl put out the idea that the Maury Island UFO was a hoax, ufologists and the mainstream press gave the story very little play. Kenneth Arnold discussed it in his book Coming of the Saucers, and Air Force investigator Edward Ruppelt presented the case in his Report on Unidentified Flying Objects, with changed names and some focus on the Air Force personnel who died. By and large, however, Maury Island flies under the radar of even the most fanatic UFO enthusiasts.

The Maury Island incident made one significant appearance in popular culture, in a comic book by a publisher that also published four issues of a comic book based on The Invaders.

Critics will take obvious swipes at the TV and comic book approach to the JFK assassination. To do that, though, they must overlook those aspects of JFK's death that make it seem like a real-life science fiction nightmare. Jim Garrison believed that Fred Crisman worked as a hired assassin for the military-industrial complex, specifically for Boeing in Seattle. The last speech that JFK made had to do with a defense contract he had given to General Dynamics over Boeing in a highly controversial decision. The contract had to do with the TFX tactical fighter, which later became the F-111 and was sold to the Australians, creating a funding corridor that led to the de-

velopment of Pine Gap, considered Australia's Area 51.

Consider as well Lee Harvey Oswald, who served at the Atsugi air base in Japan out of which flew the U2 spy plane. After Oswald's defection to the Soviet Union, the Soviets had information enough to shoot down Gary Powers's U2. Before Oswald went to work for the Book Depository in Dallas, he worked for a firm that processed U2 film. The U2 was developed at Area 51.

With all of these often-ignored facts, a dispassionate observer will not be quick to dismiss Crisman's claims or refuse to consider how the JFK assassination may link up with the history of UFOs in modern America. **I**

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involvement with Maury Island may have had to do with covering up top-secret radar-fogging discs or the dumping of nuclear waste from the nearby Hanford plutonium reactor. Or he may have been holding on to proof of an extraterrestrial invasion, threatening to expose it to the world if he didn't get what he wanted from the world of spooks and spies.

Secret Knowledge of UFOs

Crisman wanted people to believe that last scenario. In early 1968, he corresponded with well-known UFO researcher Lucius Farish as the contact person for a group he called Parapsychology Research, under the pseudonym Fred Lee. The alias, which only dropped his last name, provided Crisman with a means to discuss himself in the third person, telling Farish: "Mr. Crisman is probably the most informed man in the United States on UFOs and also one of the hardest to find—as the FBI has learned several times."

Crisman presented himself as a man with secret knowledge of UFOs, on the run from the government. In real life, Jim Garrison was on Crisman's heels at that time as a suspect in JFK's murder. In the same letter, Crisman notes: "An interesting fact—one of our members sent a copy of one of the current TV series, The Aliens [sic—The Invaders]. It was my understanding that Mr. Crisman was not disturbed or angry, as few things seem to disturb him." Implicitly, though, he experienced a shock of recognition.

In late August 1967, a letter signed by Harold Dahl was sent to UFO researcher Gary Leslie about the show, although this letter too was probably penned by Crisman: "There is a TV series running now that I swear is based in the main on the life of F. Lee Crisman. I know him better than any living man and I know of some of the incredible adventures he has passed through in the last twenty years. I do not mean that his life has been that of this TV hero on the 'Invaders' show...but there are parts of it that I swear were told to me years ago by Mr. Crisman...and I know of several that are too wild to be believed...even by the enlightened attitude of 1967."

The star of The Invaders, Roy Thinnes, still makes the rounds of the ufological lecture and conference circuit, bringing hard-to-find episodes of the classic series for showing and offering behind-the-scenes commentary. I caught up with him in Roswell, New Mexico, and gave him a copy my book, Maury Island UFO, the only book ever written on this topic. I explained to Thinnes the connection to the JFK assassination. It was the first he had heard of it. He was unaware if any of the show's scripts had been back-channeled from the field reports of a covert agent, although the show's production company, Quinn-Martin, also produced a series entitled The FBI, based on true cases. The real FBI had final say over that series' cast, and one its technical advisers, Mark Felt, later confessed to being the "Deep Throat" of Watergate fame.

Sinatra and JFK

I was watching the DVD of *Robin and the 7 Hoods* with Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, Sammy Davis, Jr., Peter Falk, and others. One of the special features on the DVD is a commented version of the movie by Frank Sinatra, Jr. He tells a story that should be of interest to FATE readers:

On November 21, 1963, they were filming this movie. It was a location shoot in a Los Angeles cemetery, the scene for the "funeral" of "Big Jim," played by the late Edward G. Robinson. This was an older cemetery, with above-ground tombstones.

During a break in filming, Sinatra went for a cigarette break and sat on one of the tombstones. While the camera was being moved into its new position, Sinatra happened to look down at the name on the tombstone on which he was sitting. The name was "John F. Kennedy." This "JFK" lived from around 1873 to 1940, but given the event of the next day, Sinatra was affected such "that it would haunt him for the rest of his life," according to his son.

It's worth paying attention to all those extra features on the DVDs!—Patrick Garrison, Ithaca, N.Y. APRIL -06