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Foreword To New Edition

BARACK OBAMA'S EVOCATION OF JFK'S PRESIDENCY WENT beyond his foreign and domestic policy initiatives. He announced his intent to retool America with new, green technologies in much the same way Kennedy waxed enthusiastic about the space program back in the early 1960s, although Obama's actual plans for NASA remained less ambitious. UFOlogists beamed that Obama's transition chief, John Podesta, had in 2002 called upon the Pentagon to release its classified files on the subject. "It is time for the government to declassify records that are more than twenty years old and to provide scientists with data that will assist in determining the real nature of the phenomenon." Although such a high-placed simpatico gained enough credibility for ufologists to get a press conference aired on CNN, in the end no grand effort for total release emerged. Podesta proclaimed that he was a big fan of the *X-Files* TV show and his UFO interest became just another popular culture footnote.

The story of the Maury Island case resides in that nexus of parapolitics and popular culture. Although the original edition of this book remains the only full book on the subject, updated and expanded here, the case itself comes and goes in the popular memory. The release of Oliver Stone's movie *JFK* in 1991, for instance, reminded many of the national brouhaha first 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 noted 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 remained obscure even to Oliver Stone's audience, those alive when Garrison's case grabbed national headlines knew Crisman better than they thought they did, almost subliminally, through television. 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*.

Nevertheless, the verifiable facts about Crisman's life as discussed here-in 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 Rainier sightings in 1947. It involved several spinning discs that spewed a weird substance over the shore near Puget Sound, Washington, and Arnold later was hired by a pulp magazine publisher 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.

Roswell happened a month after the Maury Island incident. Considering the wilder claims that assassins killed JFK because of plans to expose the infamous New Mexico alien spacecraft crash, it's not surprising that Crisman's connection to both this, the earliest of post-war UFO cases, and the JFK assassination would capture the attention of people obsessed with conspiracy connections. Some researchers have argued 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, keeping it fit only for those following Garrison's arcane investigation and as the focus of a creepy TV program.

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 have dismissed it that way ever since, even though the slightest review of the historical records offered in this volume 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 who told him 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.

JFK & UFO explores all that in great detail. On the fanciful side, it examines the proposition that Crisman may have kept control of the alien substance to use as blackmail in staying employed in the covert world, even to get choice assignments like the JFK hit. A more mundane but equally compelling idea suggests that his 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.

Crisman wanted people to believe the first scenario, however. 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. Following 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, however, he ostensibly had a shock of recognition when he saw the show.

Previously, in late August 1967, the main Maury Island witness, Harold Dahl, ostensibly had written to another UFO researcher, Gary Leslie, about the show, although this letter too probably was 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 her 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 show and offering behind-the-scenes commentary. I caught up with him in Roswell, New Mexico and gave him a copy of the previous edition of this book and explained to him the connection to the JFK assassination. It was the first he had heard of it, and was unaware if any of the show’s scripts had actually 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 of its technical advisers, Mark Felt, later confessed to be the “Deep Throat” of Watergate fame—one more interplay of weird reality and weird fantasy involving Maury Island. (The case made another significant appearance in the popular culture, in a comic book, by a publisher that also published four issues of a comic book based on—*The Invaders*!)

Critics, of course, will take the obvious swipes at the TV and comic book tapestry of JFK and UFO data points. To do that, though, they must overlook actual aspects of JFK’s death that make it seem like a real-life science fiction nightmare. Again, Jim Garrison believed that Fred Crisman worked as a hired assassin for the military-industrial complex, more 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 documented in this edition. The contract had to do with the TFX tactical fighter, which later became the F-111 and later was sold to Australia, creating a funding corridor that led to the development of Pine Gap, considered that country’s Area 51.

Throw Lee Harvey Oswald into that mix and it becomes apparent why this case continues to demand the attention of conspiracy scholars and pop

culture fans alike. Oswald served at the Atsugi air base in Japan out of which flew the U2 spy plane. After his defection to the Soviet Union, the Soviets had information enough to shoot down Gary Powers' U2. Before Oswald went to work for the Book Depository, he worked for a firm that processed U2 film. And the U2 was developed at Area 51. As early as the 1964's release of *Seven Days in May*, movies made reference to right-wing government takeovers directed from a secret desert base in the American southwest, but it was a full twenty years before Area 51 became the country's best known such facility and a regular reference on John Podesta's favorite TV show.

Looking at this collection of hidden historical facts that perpetually leak into the popular consciousness, a dispassionate observer will not be quick to dismiss Crisman's claims nor easily abandon taking seriously how the JFK assassination may really link up to UFOs and a commonly shared popular history.

Kenn Thomas

Introduction

THE TOTALLY UNINITIATED READER SHOULD KNOW THAT THE Maury Island incident involved the sighting of a group of flying saucers in 1947 that preceded the Roswell affair by over a month. It even happened before pilot Kenneth Arnold's sightings on Mount Rainier, which helped trigger the post-war obsession with UFOs.

Arnold became the first person to investigate the Maury Island affair. The Maury Island story contains elements that have become recurrent themes in the UFO literature, lore and reality. It includes the recovery of UFO crash debris; a secret investigation by the Air Force that turned deadly; a visit by one of the notorious Men In Black; missing time; figures who would later become associated with the Kennedy assassination; and links to present day conspiracy scandals. Critics have often dismissed the Maury Island event itself as nothing but a hoax, but those who have looked at it closely know that it at least contains some elements of truth that remain important to understanding the UFO experience and the JFK assassination. Others would challenge the "nothing but" notion of whatever part of the Maury Island story was hoaxed.

Readers unfamiliar with the basic story of the Maury Island UFO will find it here, based on the earliest first-hand and press accounts. Veteran ufologists will find that meat added to the all too familiar bare bones of the basic story. Much of what this book offers those readers appears in the extensive footnotes. *JFK & UFO* draws from a detailed look at the accumulated available record. It relies as much as possible on primary and early sources and direct interviews with Maury Island scholars and people connected to the incident itself.