

## TUCKER SMALLWOOD

**H**AVE you ever found yourself passing through a picturesque little town or village and wondering what secrets lay hidden behind its façade of neatly manicured gardens and white picket fences? As Sheriff Andy Taylor in *The X-Files* episode *Home*, Tucker Smallwood is bound to uphold law and order in such a community. His duties are complicated by a trio of gruesome brothers who see fit to run their household the only way they know how. While being far from hospitable to Mulder and Scully when the agents pay them a visit, the siblings also succeed in giving the sheriff and his wife everlasting headaches.

A house with a very old secret, and a very present danger in *The X-Files: Home*



## From Space to Home

Having worked with Smallwood on *Space: Above and Beyond*, writers Glen Morgan and Jim Wong were eager to use the actor on *The X-Files* when the two returned to the show as creative consultants. "I don't know how unique an experience this is for most actors, but it was for me in that there was no audition for my part on *The X-Files*," he says. "They [Morgan and Wong], in essence, offered it to me and that was very special.

"I hold Jim and Glen in high regard and I've always enjoyed their work. When they approached me about *The X-Files* I was already set to begin work on the television film *Apollo 11* and the feature film *Levitation*. Interestingly enough, the dates for which they needed me for the series dovetailed with these other two projects. Once I was clear on the nature of the role and who had written the episode I didn't have a great deal of hesitation going with *The X-Files* and passing on those other two films. So that's what I did."

Although Smallwood had heard of *The X-Files* and watched a few episodes of the series, the actor was not an avid viewer. "I co-host a poker game on Friday nights. An

actor by the name of Antonio Fargas, whom you may remember as Huggy Bear on *Starsky and Hutch*, lives about a mile away from me. On Friday nights he and I get together with some mutual friends and have a poker game that goes on until the small hours of the morning. It's a great way to interact with each other as well as a lot of fun and relaxing. However, with *The X-Files* on Sunday nights I may be able to watch the show more often," he laughs.

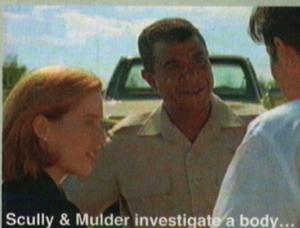
Smallwood was on his way out to pick up a pizza when the script for *Home* arrived. He took it with him and was surprised to discover that his character had the same name as the one played by Andy Griffith in the 1960s series *The Andy Griffith Show*. "Jim and Glen have a very wry sense of humour and I remember sitting outside on the patio of the restaurant reading the script while waiting for my pizza. When my food was ready I went inside and a woman there asked me, 'Are you all right?' I'd been interacting and reacting as I read the script and was saying things such as 'Oh, God! Dear, God! Oh, Jesus, that's twisted.' I told her everything was OK but that she should keep an eye out for an *X-Files* episode that will air in a couple of months called *Home*.

"I see Andy as a decent guy," says Smallwood. "He cares about his town very much and, given the realities of life around him, appreciates the quality of life it's given him and his wife. He uses this belief to justify why he does not carry a gun. Both he and his wife have discussed this and, in essence, what he says is, 'Yes, we're going to stay here. We're going to enjoy our lives, serve our community and, all right, I know you don't like guns so I won't carry one.' Of course, we live to regret that decision."

## Not Wonderful...

The dulcet tones of Johnny Mathis singing "Wonderful, Wonderful" cut through the night air as the three Peacock brothers drive over to the sheriff's house. Unfortunately, the three are slightly testy, having had strangers poking about their house, and decide to take out their frustrations on Taylor and his wife.

"*The X-Files* has a first-class crew. They're pros and very, very comfortable and secure in the fact that they know what they are doing. I don't know if you know this but the show's director of photography was changed this season. We filmed



Scully & Mulder investigate a body...



...and meet a nervous sheriff



# HOME, SWEET HOME



*Space: Above and Beyond*  
Commodore Ross, commanding  
officer of the USS Saratoga

my death scenes the first night but we ended up having to reshoot them. Physically, it was wonderful but the bad guys were lit like Shirley Temple," he laughs. "So a change was made and in order for them to work it back into their schedule I had to stay on for an extra four or five days.

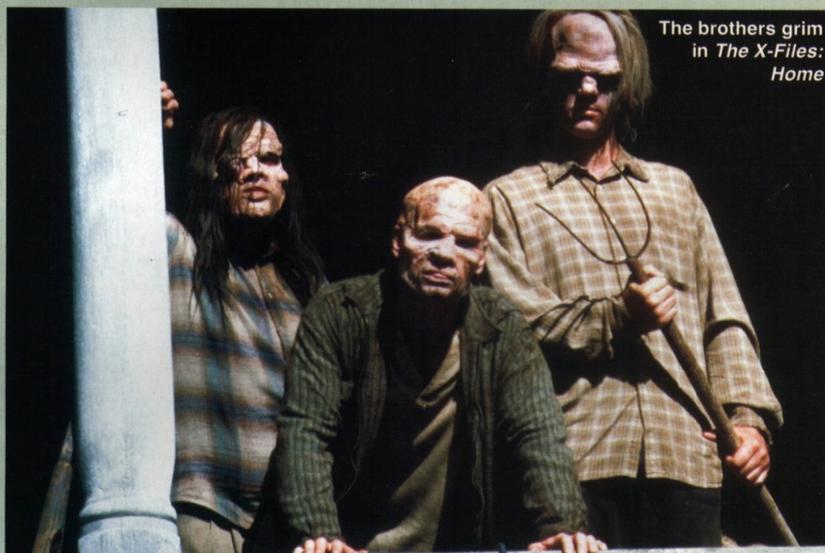
"I was exhausted when we finished shooting those scenes," recalls Smallwood. "I had to swing this baseball bat at full speed at this man and then relax my arms and check myself at the last minute so that I didn't go into his chest at full force. Even though it was a stunt bat and covered in foam it's still got a solid core, so I could knock out someone in real life. The next morning my forearms, hands and wrists were aching and it was then that I realized, 'Man, you hit this guy 60 times'. It takes a lot out of your arms to swing a bat at full speed and then stop it without making it look too obvious.

"The first time we did the shot the door did not open all the way. So in the process of checking the bat my forearm went into the door and that really hurt. I said to the stunt co-ordinator, 'OK, I'm going to trust you.

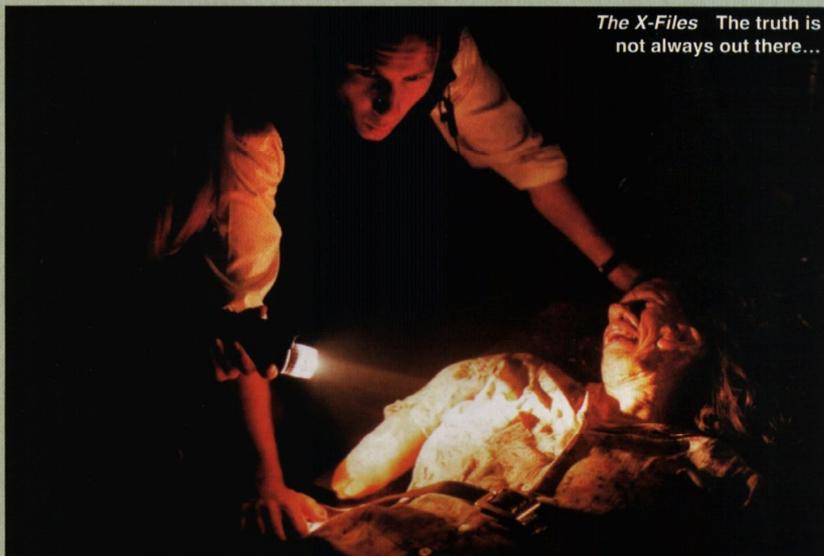
I'm going to swing the crap out of the bat. If I wait to see if the door is open I can't follow through on the action, so I'm going to count on you to move the door.' He did it every time. Our stunt co-ordinator was dynamite and I had a great deal of fun with him."

## First Death

His appearance on *The X-Files* marks the first time Smallwood has died on the screen. Therefore, the actor wanted things



The brothers grim  
in *The X-Files: Home*



to be as authentic as possible and was determined to do all of his own stunts. Not only would it end up looking more convincing but it would also provide the cameraman with greater latitude when it came to shooting the scenes since he would not have to worry about hiding a stunt double's face.

"In the course of doing all this I got my foot run over by a camera, I was kicked and I bumped my head against the floor. When I smacked my head on the floor I saw stars. I suggested to the cameraman that he might want to defocus the camera at that instant because that's pretty much what I was seeing," Smallwood laughs. "It was pretty blurry there for a couple of beats. I soon realized that there's a reason why these stunt guys get paid to do stunts.

"I enjoyed the whole process but I can tell you having lain in a pool of my own blood in Vietnam that laying in film blood is not a very pleasant experience. It gets cold and obnoxiously sticky. I can't stand the feel of it and get creepy just thinking about it. At least your own blood is warm, but there's a lot less pain dying on television."

Along with showering praise on the programme's production crew, the actor has similar accolades for *X-Files* regulars David Duchovny (Mulder) and Gillian Anderson (Scully). "I never knew that they

wore such practical shoes. I get such a kick out of that," he laughs. "They're just two very neat and interesting people and I enjoyed chatting with them. The life of a series actor is hellish. We began filming *The X-Files* on Friday and I flew up to Vancouver [British Columbia, Canada] on Thursday. That night I stopped by the make-up trailer and there were David and Gillian finishing up the previous week's show.

"It's a grind and so you have to have empathy for these people who say, 'I don't know if I'm going to come back next year.' You say, 'What are you talking about?' For six or seven months a series is your life and the weekend is just about surviving. It's not about partying or any of that. It's going home and getting some sleep and hoping that you can get out of bed on Monday morning. Everyone has their own way to relax and to release tension and pressure so that they can be fresh for the next take. They all earn their money on *The X-Files*," he says.

### Space: Above and Beyond

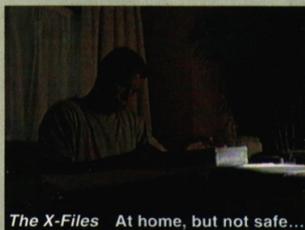
Smallwood speaks from experience, having appeared as Commodore Glen Ross in 23 episodes of *Space: Above and Beyond*. Despite a solid cast of regulars, imagina-

tive scripts and hi-tech special effects, the programme could not manage to get a firm foothold in the ratings wars. The actor feels that what went on behind the cameras, not in front of them, is the reason the series was not renewed for a second season.

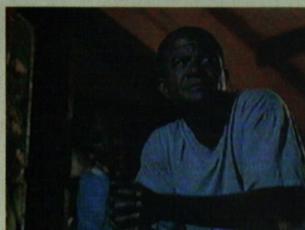
"I don't think we failed artistically, I think we failed commercially," he says frankly. "I think that the people who were empowered and mandated with scheduling the show and communicating about it were at fault. When you have a show that costs what our show cost there's obviously a major investment. So then you ask yourself, 'What is our best shot at recouping everything we've invested?' You advertise the show, give it a stable place so that people can find it and put it in a time slot commensurate with its theme. That to me is just common sense. I've said over and over that if the people selling the show were as creative and talented as those who made the show then we would have been in the top 10.

"We're very successful overseas, so there's no question about the quality of the show. I don't think it was very clear to the people selling the show what it was all about. They sort of lumped it into the *Babylon 5* and *Star Trek* category, which is just not right. Our show was, is and always will be about the nature of war. It just happened to take place in the future and that is very different from Science Fiction. It was a show that did not glorify war but it was certainly gritty, so a seven o'clock time slot was not appropriate. Things didn't get any better when they began to run amok and move the show around in an attempt to give it a new lease on life. In the end they just pre-empted it, so the people who loved the show and who wanted to watch it had no idea when it was going to be shown.

"It's not my job to evaluate these people," he says. "This is purely my take on the whole situation. I was, of course, disappointed because it was a labour of love. Again, we knew the end was coming for quite some time. The fact is, we were never cancelled, we were just not renewed. We were told that our show was not slated for



The X-Files At home, but not safe...

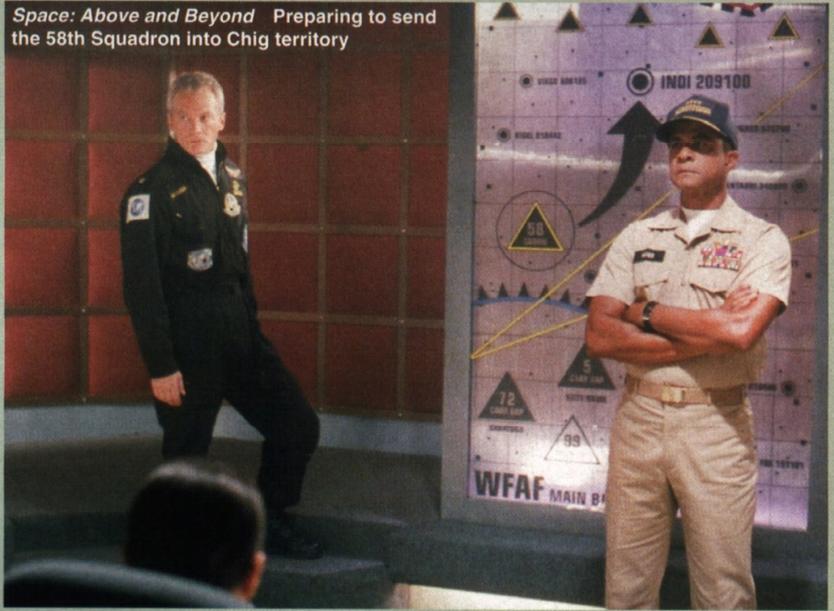


## interview

the fall schedule, which is not the same as being cancelled. We sat in limbo. Actors' contracts were valid until the 30th of June [1996], yet we knew for a good four or five weeks before then that we weren't on the fall schedule, yet they did not release us or cancel our contracts. It was very much the dog in the manger situation. 'We don't want you but we don't want anyone else to have you.' You start to think, 'Why would you do that?' but, ultimately, you just don't know."

Smallwood more recently appeared opposite Scott Bakula in an episode of the now defunct television series **Mr and Mrs Smith**. Prior to that he was in Australia working on the new **Flipper** series. The far-reaching popularity of **Space: Above and Beyond** was quite obvious to the actor during his time down under. "I was coming back from the duty-free store, my arms laden with packages and souvenirs, and a young Asian teenager ran up to me and asked, 'Are you an actor?' I said, 'Yes.' Then she asked me, 'Were you on a show called **Space: Above and Beyond**?' When I said yes she exclaimed, 'I love that show!' That was so nice. That was the only time I was recognized there – I had a full beard for my character [in **Flipper**] – but it was just very, very affirming to know that we have a fan base there as we do in other parts of the world. I'm so pleased that we con-

**Space: Above and Beyond** Preparing to send the 58th Squadron into Chig territory



tinue to be appreciated by audiences. I'm praying that the powers that be will allow the show to have a chance to be aired again at some point here in America."

Smallwood's part of Ross on **Space: Above and Beyond** was a dream come true for the actor as was his guest-starring role on **The X-Files**, which he hopes will lead to some new opportunities. "It was very gracious of Jim and Glen to give me a character who had a relationship with a woman.

I love children and I love women but on the whole the characters I have played have not manifested that sensibility. They've been isolated, alone or sequestered, for whatever reason. It was nice to have the dynamic of having a relationship. I'd like to have the chance for that sort of thing again in the future. Perhaps writers and directors will see me in a wider light and give me that chance."

*Steven Eramo*



**Space: Above and Beyond** Commodore Ross and the 58th 'Wild Cards'