



What killed my husband?

Mrs. Alice Wicks Olson, wife of a former biochemist at Fort Detrick, ponders a question at a press conference at her home in Old Braddock. She wants to know more about her husband's death in 1943. Reports at the time of the death said Dr. Frank Olson committed suicide. Mrs. Olson charges the CIA with "illegally and negligently" administering the drug LSD to her husband shortly before his death. — Photo by Neil Sandier

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CIA's use of LSD cited

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By ROLLIE ATKINSON
Staff Writer

Dr. Frank R. Olson, a former biochemist at Fort Detrick, has been identified by his Frederick family as the civilian employe of the U.S. Army who committed apparent suicide after being secretly administered LSD by Central Intelligence Agency personnel in November, 1953.

The truth behind Olson's death, hidden from questioning co-workers and his bereaved family for nearly 22 years, is finally coming to light following the June 10, 1975 release of the Rockefeller Commission report investigating CIA activities within the United States which included an account of Olson's bizarre death without identifying him.

Olson's family, announced Thursday

by their attorney, David Rudovsky of Philadelphia, will file, within the next two months, a "several million dollar law suit" against the CIA for "negligently and illegally" administering LSD to their husband and father and for subsequent cover-ups of the true details and reasons of his death.

A former colleague of Olson's in Fort Detrick's Special Operations division revealed that he and three other researchers besides Olson had been given LSD by CIA employes on at least one occasion.

The disclosures by Olson's family now confirmed by David W. Bellin of the Rockefeller Commission make true suspicions of some of Olson's co-workers that he had died as a result of drug tests by a secret government agency.

The Rockefeller report on the CIA states that a man (Olson) was given LSD while attending a meeting with CIA personnel working on a project that involved the administering of such drugs to Americans.

ick Post

Good morning!

If you are out to describe the truth, leave elegance to the tailor.

Albert Einstein

JULY 11, 1975

From Home Post 17,150
Today News 13,000 Total 30,150

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in biochemist's death

"This individual was not made aware he had been given LSD until about 20 minutes after it had been administered. He developed serious side effects and was sent to New York with a CIA escort for psychiatric treatment," the commission report said.

"Several days later he jumped from a tenth floor window of his hotel room and died as a result."

Olson's family was told only that he "fell or jumped" from his tenth floor Hotel Statler room in New York at 2:30 on the morning of Nov. 28, 1953.

His wife, Mrs. Alice Wicks Olson of Old Braddock, stated in the prepared statement Thursday that her husband had returned from a meeting with other members of the Special Operations division research group conveying "self-doubt, self-recrimination and great anxiety."

At the time Mrs. Olson attributed her husband's mood to the nature of his highly secretive work in chemical germ warfare research. But during the

ensuing week Olson failed to improve his irrational behavior and was advised by persons at Fort Detrick to seek psychiatric help.

Dr. Olson was taken to New York by Special Operations employes and CIA liaison personnel and never seen again by his family. According to a colleague of Olson's at least four other Special Operations employes were also given doses of LSD by CIA agents.

Olson's colleague, who came to the family to verify that the recently publicized 'LSD suicide victim' was indeed Frank Olson, has not been identified.

Rudovsky said he expected, if subpoenaed, the colleague would come forward to testify in the Olson's court case.

Rudovsky said he also expected that several CIA officials and perfunctories would be called to testify in the court case.

Olson's family said it did not become



Dr. Frank R. Olson in 1952

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aware of the CIA inspired details surrounding his death until they read accounts of the Rockefeller Commission findings in the June 11, 1975, newspapers.

According to the Rockefeller report the CIA conducted its drug experiments on unsuspecting subjects until 1963. The report also states that all CIA files related to the drug testing were ordered destroyed in 1973.

Several of Dr. Olson's co-workers at Fort Detrick disclosed that many rumors and suspicions surrounded reports of Olson's death in 1953.

"There was a lot of discussion about it," said one co-worker, "and one of the stories which circulated had it just about the way it happened. Of course we didn't know what LSD was back then."

"Whenever anything happened like that," said another co-worker, "there were suspicions and we wondered about what might have really happened."

The Special Operations research division at Detrick was deeply involved with chemical biological warfare and

was carried out under Defense Department classifications for tight security and secrecy.

Olson's family says they have reason to believe that other CIA activities surrounded the Detrick research group and at least two CIA agents were permanently assigned to the Special Operations division.

The Rockefeller Commission also reported that the CIA "explored much larger programs for controlling human behavior including electrical shock, radiation, psychology, psychiatry, sociology and harassment substances."

"In light of these patterns of CIA activity we have concluded that the CIA, envisioned as an organization to protect the freedom and security of Americans has in fact substantially threatened these values," the Olson family said in their prepared statement Thursday.

Present at a news conference in the Olson home in Old Braddock Thursday afternoon at which several representatives of the national media

attended were Dr. Olson's three children, Lisa Olson Hayward, Nils Olson and Eric Olson and his wife, Alice.

Olson's superior at the time of his death, Dr. John L. Schwab, who headed the Special Operations division at Fort Detrick, said, when contacted, he had "no comment" regarding the Rockefeller commission reports of CIA links with the germ warfare research unit and with Olson's death.

He said he knew of no unusual circumstances surrounding the biochemists' 1953 death although several of Olson's fellow workers disclosed that rumors of a CIA induced LSD drugging had occurred.

Schwab said as far as he knew, details and arrangements of Olson's death were handled in a usual manner through Army public relations.

Vincent L. Ruwet of Frederick was a superior of Olson's at the time of his

death and was charged with notifying the family of the biochemist's death.

When asked what official explanation he had given the Olson family, Ruwet gave only a "no comment."

Ruwet was also asked what the Special Operations group had been involved with and if recent Rockefeller Commission findings were related to Olson's death and the germ warfare research group. He said: "I am not authorized to talk to you (News-Post)."

Shortly after the death according to the Olson family account and the Rockefeller Commission report, the family received word that the death resulted from "circumstances arising out of an experiment undertaken in the course of his official duties for the United States government."

The Olsons subsequently received employe's compensation (two-thirds of Olson's salary) because the death was declared work-related.

Dr. Olson who held M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in biochemistry from the University of Wisconsin and first came to Frederick in 1943 to begin the biochemical research at Detrick was buried in Frederick's Memorial Park at Linden Hills on Nov. 31, 1953.

Olsons relieved, want facts known

By ROLLIE ATKINSON
Staff Writer

After 22 years of "shrouded mystery," Frank Olson's family is now experiencing "great relief" to know more of the truth than ever before, "renewed deep sorrow" at having to recall sad memories, and newfound disbelief that their husband and father had died in such a "bizarre" and "pointless" manner.

"The most secret part of our lives for all these years," eldest son Eric said Thursday, "is about to become our most public. We do this because there are many things we still do not know and because we want the full story told of what we thought all along to be a suicide but which turns out to be one of a series of CIA atrocities."

Back in 1953, when biochemist Olson never returned from a New York psychiatric visit, widowed Alice Olson was left to rear children Eric, 9, Nils, 5 and Lisa, 7.

Olson's family has been a cloud of uncertainty and receding moments of self-doubt that Olson's suicide may have been their fault in some way.

When playmates asked the Olson children the painful question about their father's death, they didn't know what to say.

Alice Olson admitted she always had doubts about the circumstances surrounding her husband's death, and,

believing it had nothing to do with their homelife or marriage, had only his highly secretive work to blame.

For 22 years, the Olson family, while knowing of some sort of CIA involvement with Olson's work and presence at his death scene, never realized or suspected the bizarre story which they first pieced together from June 11 newspaper accounts of the Rockefeller Commission report studying domestic activities of the CIA.

"A neighbor called me the morning the reports came out in the papers and asked me if I had seen the stories on Frank's death," Alice Olson recalled. "There was never any doubt that the stories, without mentioning the name of the LSD suicide victim, were about Frank's death."

Thursday, the scene around the Olson's home which Alice and Frank had

built back in 1943 when they first came to Frederick, fully depicted the abrupt changes the Olsons now face as they prepare to take on the CIA in a court battle to obtain the truth surrounding the biochemist's death and secure payment for damages.

Seated at a family picnic table where, perhaps, the family, in more private times, enjoyed casual picnic dinners, the Olson children and their mother faced the microphones and cameras of most of the major networks, newspapers and wire services.

"We feel that this is an intimate family story," the Olsons said, "and, while a very sensational story, we are concerned that neither the personal pain this family has experienced nor the moral and political outrage we feel be slighted." Eric, now 30 and a research assistant at Yale and graduate student at

Harvard, spoke of how he thought the death of his father had affected the family member's lives.

"If you look at us," he said, "it seems we have all chosen work in helping professions. My sister, Lisa, works as a speech therapist at the Maryland School for the Deaf. Nils is a dental school student at Maryland, and I am working in psychology."

The Olsons presented themselves to the national press corps assembled in their backyard as a determined close-knit family—who had decidedly made up their minds to seek the truth both, as they said, for their own satisfaction and for the reason of making the CIA responsible and accountable for their actions.

At times, Mrs. Olson was asked by
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newsmen to recount incidents around Frank's death and his behavior the week preceding his fatal plunge.

"He returned from a weekend retreat very silent and not at all like himself. I remember him saying he had made a mistake, but he didn't say what kind," she said.

"Then, one day, he returned home from work early and told me he had been advised to seek psychiatric help. He said that his colleagues feared that he might do me bodily harm.

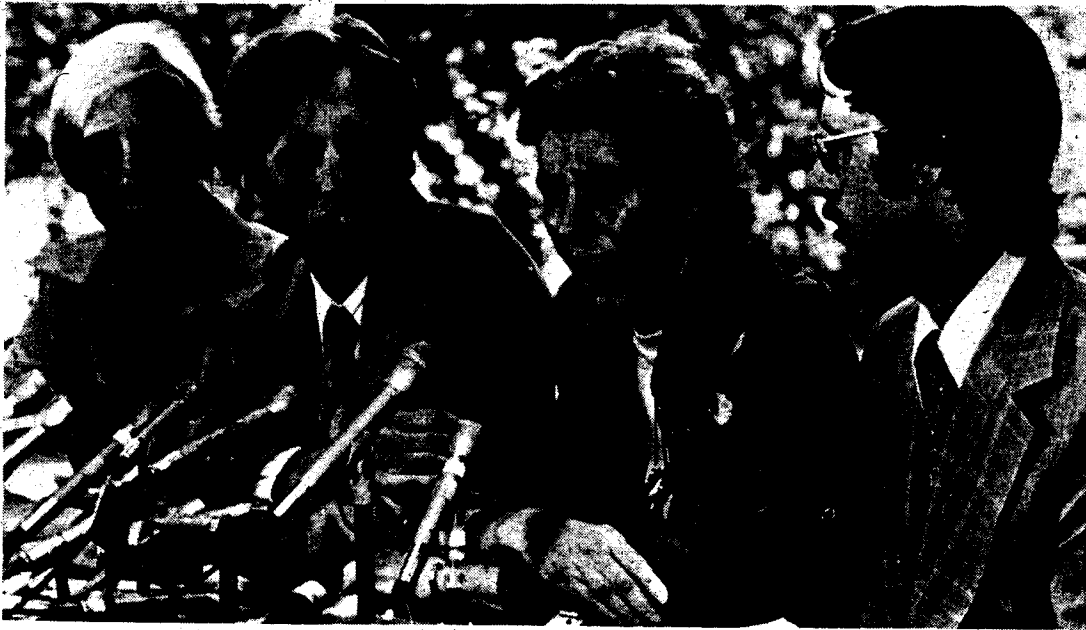
"A car driven by a special operations division employe came soon after that and I accompanied Frank to Washington where he departed for New York. I never saw him again."

Page A-10 — THE POST, Frederick, Md., Friday, July 11, 1975



The Olsons—23 years ago

Dr. Frank R. Olson posed for this photograph with his family about a year before he died. Next to him is his wife Alice Wicks Olson and in front (l. to r.) are Eric W. (Hayward) and Nils W. Olson.



The Olson family today

Mrs. Alice Olson (speaking) wife of the late Dr. Frank Olson, who died 22 years ago, announced that she and her children (l. to r.) Lisa W. Hayward, Eric W. Olson and Nils W. Olson, are suing the CIA for his death. — (Photo by Neil Sandler)