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Ex-C.I.A. Aide Says Scientist Who Died Knew About LSD Tests

By JOSEPH B. TREASTER

A former employe of the Central Intelligence Agency said yesterday he believed that a scientist who plunged to his death from a Manhattan hotel window 22 years ago had knowingly participated in a C.I.A. experiment with LSD shortly before.

The statement by Robert V. Lashbrook in a telephone interview appeared to contradict a report by the Rockefeller commission that the drug had been given to the scientist, Frank R. Olson, without his knowledge.

In describing the LSD incident, the Rockefeller panel did not identify the scientist who died, but a colleague later told his widow and children that the scientist was Mr. Olson. The family has announced its intentions to sue the C.I.A. for what it calls Mr. Olson's "wrongful death."

Neither the family nor the police and officials of the medical examiner's office who investigated the death were aware of Mr. Olson's exposure to the potent mind-altering drug until the Rockefeller commission's report was published last month.

In the interview from his home in Ojai, Calif., Mr. Lashbrook, who has a Ph.D. in chemistry and worked for the C.I.A. for 12 years as a researcher, recalled attending a "technical meeting" in November, 1953, with three other C.I.A. employes, Mr. Olson and five other employes of the Special Operations Division at Fort Detrick, Md., where the drug reportedly was given to four or five persons.

Mr. Lashbrook said he had not been present when "everyone agreed" to take part in a test with LSD, but he said someone he felt was reliable had told him of the arrangement.

"It was my understanding that actually everyone there had agreed in advance that such a test would be conducted, that they were willing to be one of the subjects. The only thing was that the time was not specified," Mr. Lashbrook said.

Mr. Lashbrook said that he had been asked whether he would be willing to be a subject in the LSD tests during the meeting and that he had reluctantly agreed. He said he had been a "guinea pig" several times in LSD experiments and added, "Frankly, I didn't like it."

In a section apparently re-

fering to Mr. Olson, the Rockefeller report said, "Prior to receiving the LSD, the subject had participated in discussions where the testing of such substances on unsuspecting subjects was agreed to in principle.

"However," the report continued, "this individual was not aware that 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 C.I.A. escort for psychiatric treatment. Several days later he jumped from a 10th floor window of his room and died as a result."

Experiment Not Noted

According to New York city police reports, Mr. Lashbrook was one of two men who accompanied Mr. Olson to New York and was sharing room 1018A at the Statler Hotel with Mr. Olson when Mr. Olson went out the window.

Mr. Lashbrook, who said that he was a "friend" and a "consultant chemist" employed by the "War Department," identified Mr. Olson's body at the Medical Examiner's Office and gave the police most of the information in their report. He did not mention the LSD experiment or his C.I.A. affiliation.

Mr. Lashbrook said in the interview that lasted for more than an hour that the police "wouldn't have known about" LSD and that the "question never came up" in what he said was a brief talk with an official at the Medical Examiner's Office. The C.I.A. did some of the pioneer research with LSD; the drug did not receive wide publicity until well into the nineteen-sixties.

"Any direct relationship between [the drug and Mr. Olson's death] would be a little difficult to justify," Mr. Lashbrook said, because the body would have eliminated any elements of LSD within 24 hours and the death occurred more than a week after the experiment.

"Possibly LSD had brought up something in his past that was bothering him," Mr. Lashbrook added. "Certainly at the time the LSD would appear to have been not directly related and it would have raised a lot of questions that I or no one else was prepared to answer."

When Mr. Lashbrook was asked why he did not mention the LSD to Mr. Olson's widow, he replied, "How would you explain it. The name itself would not have meant anything to her.

"At that time," he said,

"everyone was very, very upset. No one expected anything like this. Everyone was quite beside themselves as to what to do."