

Death Inquiry Is Reopened in LSD Case

By JOSEPH B. TREASTER
A man believed to be an employe of the Central Intelligence Agency concealed major facts from the Manhattan Medical Examiner's office in an interview about a biochemist who plummeted to his death from a hotel window here 22 years ago, the authorities said yesterday.

The biochemist, Frank R. Olson, a 43-year-old civilian researcher, had reportedly participated unwittingly in an agency experiment with the drug LSD. The acting Chief Medical Examiner, Dominick Di Maio, said that as a result of recent disclosures about the death, he was reopening the case, which was closed in 1953 without a definite ruling.

Dr. Di Maio said that Robert Lashbrook, who shared room 1018 A in the Statler Ho-

tel with Mr. Olson formally identified the body, but apparently omitted "four big things" when he was asked about the death.

Members of the Olson family say that they believe Mr. Lashbrook worked for the C.I.A. The agency has refused to confirm or deny their belief, and Mr. Lashbrook's whereabouts are not known.

Dr. Di Maio, who personally handled the case 22 years ago as an Assistant Medical Examiner but left the interview to Max Katzman, a now-retired stenographer, said that records indicated Mr. Lashbrook "never mentioned the man had taken LSD."

Furthermore, the doctor said, newspaper reports have disclosed that Mr. Lashbrook told the police investigating the incident that he had been awakened by the crash of glass and found Mr. Olson's bed empty, but that he told the biochem-

ist's widow, Alice, he had seen her husband "going at a full run toward the window."

He saw Mr. Olson go through the closed window and a drawn shade, he reportedly told her.

The run toward the window would have been "characteristic of a man on LSD," Dr. Di Maio said, and the record indicates that Mr. Lashbrook made no mention of the run.

Equally important, Dr. Di Maio said, "He didn't tell us the man was under psychiatric treatment, and he didn't give us the name of the physician."

"In other words," Dr. Di Maio said, "we knew absolutely nothing."

Dr. Di Maio said that it was routine in cases of fatal falls for the Medical Examiner's Office to inquire about a victim's mental health, and whether he had been under treatment. He said that he felt certain Mr.

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Lashbrook had been asked these questions.

Referring to all of the omissions, Dr. Di Maio said, "He should have given that information to us — if not under questioning, then voluntarily."

Besides a brief description of Mr. Olson—his age, marital status, occupation—the only statement recorded as having come from Mr. Lashbrook in regard to him is that Mr. Olson "had been depressed for some time."

In a telephone interview yesterday afternoon, Mrs. Olson challenged that assessment by Mr. Lashbrook. She said that her husband had not exhibited any signs of depression until after a week-long conference at a mountain retreat where, she was later told, he had been surreptitiously administered LSD, as had three or four other colleagues who had worked in the Special Operations section at Fort Detrick, Md. Fort Detrick was then the United States Army's headquarters for biological warfare.

Over the weekend following that conference—Nov. 21 and 22, 1953—Mrs. Olson said that her husband "sat and brooded," seemed to be a "totally different person" and said that he was going to resign as assistant chief of the Special Operations Section, which, she said, was "known as a cloak and dagger division."

Said He Wasn't Resigning

On Monday, Nov. 23, she said, Mr. Olson telephoned from

work to say that "everything was all right," and that he was not resigning. But the next day after work he said that he was leaving Wednesday to be examined by a psychiatrist in New York, she said.

Mrs. Olson said that her husband had not previously been treated by a psychiatrist.

After three sessions with Dr. Harold Abramson, one of the first Americans to study the effects of LSD on people, Mr. Olson was determined to be suffering "severe psychosis and delusions" and was to be placed in a private sanitarium, according to a report by Detective James W. Ward.

Mr. Ward retired from the New York police force several years ago and is now dead.

Mr. Olson died in the early morning hours after his last meeting with Dr. Abramson.

Mrs. Olson said that she had been informed her husband "jumped or fell" from the window and did not begin to learn details until last month. Then, the Rockefeller commission disclosed that C.I.A. files showed that a suicide had occurred during a 10-year agency program of administering LSD to unsuspected subjects to learn its effects.

Children Were Told

After publication of the report, Mrs. Olson said that her children had been told by Col. Vincent Ruwett, Mr. Olson's superior at the Army post and an old family friend, that their father had been one of those given LSD without his knowledge. Colonel Ruwett added that he, too, had unwittingly taken the drug, Mrs. Olson said.

Lisa Olson Woodward, the 29-year-old married daughter of Mr. Olson, said that she was told that shortly after her father's death Mr. Lashbrook and another man who the family believes worked for the C.I.A., Sidney Gottlieb, "disappeared from the scene and were never seen again."