

Weather
Sunny and very warm today with highs around 90. Complete forecast on A2.

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Frederick

Olson's cause of death sought after

By MATTHEW BARAKAT
News-Post Staff

The Manhattan district attorney is investigating the 1993 death of Frank Olson, a Fort Detrick researcher who was said to have committed suicide in New York City after the CIA gave him a dose of LSD without his knowledge.

Molly Connell, a spokeswoman with the district attorney's office, declined to discuss specifics of the case, but confirmed that they are looking into it.

"The only thing we can say is that we have received a complaint from the family and

Detrick researcher said to have killed self

we're reviewing it," Ms. Connell said.

Several people close to the investigation say it has been ongoing and intensive for more than a year. Eric Olson, Dr. Olson's oldest son, said he speaks with investigators on almost a daily basis.

And Dr. James Starrs, a forensic scientist at George Washington University, who has examined Dr. Olson's body and conducted a number of high-profile examinations, said he has also been contacted and that several

homicide investigators were present when he presented the final results of his autopsy in February to the American Academy of Forensic Science.

"There appears now to be quite an onslaught of sincere interest," Dr. Starrs said.

The case of Dr. Olson, once called "a horrible episode in American history" by then-President Gerald Ford, has slowly unfolded over the last 43 years.

Dr. Olson, a top germ-warfare researcher in

Post

Good morning!

The chief cause of problems
is solutions.

- Eric Sevareid

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44 years

Detrick's Special Operations division during the height of the Cold War, plummeted to his death from the 10th floor of his New York hotel room in November 1953. He had been brought to New York to receive psychiatric treatment from one of the few doctors with any expertise on the new drug.

At that time, family members knew only that Dr. Olson had been depressed and were told he committed suicide as a result of that depression.

It wasn't until 1975 that the family learned Dr. Olson's depression had been triggered by



FRANK OLSON

(Continued on Page A-16)

Olson

(Continued from Page A-1)

his unwitting participation in a CIA mind-control study, in which he was secretly given LSD at a weekend retreat at Deep Creek Lake.

Since that time, Dr. Olson's family has questioned the official explanation of suicide. They exhumed his corpse in 1994 for an examination conducted by Dr. Starrs.

The autopsy revealed several pieces of evidence that seemed to point to foul play. Based on the examination, the Olsons asked Manhattan District Attorney Robert Morgenthau to investigate the death.

The recent revelations about the investigation stem from a special to be aired on the Discovery Channel next Wednesday highlighting the case.

The episode of "Discovery Magazine," titled "Bones," details the forensic work by Dr. Starrs, said producer Lance Wisniewski.

"There is some new evidence that is very problematical from the standpoint of suicide theories," Mr. Wisniewski said. "There may not be a smoking gun, but if the gun's not smoking, then it's pretty warm."

Dr. Starrs said the new forensic evidence builds on evidence he released in his initial report in

November 1994. He said all but one member of his forensic team agree that one injury on Dr. Olson's head must have been inflicted by a third party.

"It's been my view as an individual that there is clear evidence warranting further investigation," Dr. Starrs said.

Eric Olson said he believes the CIA had little choice but to kill his father once the LSD experiment went awry.

"They had de-stabilized him. They had created a security problem that they could not solve," he said.

The only man in the room with Dr. Olson when he died was Robert Lashbrook, a CIA agent who had been present when Dr. Olson was given the LSD. Dr. Lashbrook, 78, has been accused of giving conflicting statements about the night of Dr. Olson's death.

Reached Tuesday at his home in Ojai, Calif., Dr. Lashbrook said nobody from the district attorney's office has contacted him recently.

"It was all long, long ago," Dr. Lashbrook said.

The one-hour program, which contains two other segments unrelated to the Olson case, will air Wednesday, June 18 on the Discovery Channel at 9 p.m. and again on Saturday, June 21 at 6 p.m.