

Team disputes CIA account of Olson's death

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Injuries on the body of a germ warfare biochemist who was given LSD as part of a CIA experiment appear to contradict the official explanation of his 1953 death as a suicide leap through a closed window.

Skull injuries and the lack of cuts on Frank Olson's body, which was exhumed June 2, don't appear consistent with the CIA's description of events surrounding his death from the 13th floor of a hotel, said Patrick Zickler, a spokesman for a forensic team analyzing Olson's remains on behalf of his family.

Olson, a civilian employee at Fort Detrick, died Nov. 28, 1953. The death was listed as a suicide but family members have long suspected

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Olson

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he didn't jump through the window.

The initial autopsy listed a skull fracture above and behind Olson's right ear, Mr. Zickler said. However, the autopsy didn't mention an internal "hinge fracture," a horizontal break across the bottom half of the skull, he said.

"It's significant because it shows that the skull suffered a more powerful blow or series of blows than the original medical examination indicated," Mr. Zickler said.

"If Olson went through that piece of glass, there is a lot of glass that would have cut him," Mr. Zickler said. "If his body went through it, there would have been jagged shards left around the frame and he would have been cut."

The absence of any cuts especially bothers Olson's son, Eric, a Frederick psychologist.

"I haven't believed this story from the beginning," Mr. Olson said Tuesday in a telephone interview from New York. "How could you go through a closed window and not get lacerations?"

CIA spokesman David Christian said Olson's death was extensively investigated by Congress and administration officials in the 1970s.

"We have read the press reports on the private forensic investigation that was undertaken at the behest of the Olson family," Mr. Christian said. "If the conclusions of that investigation include any new information on the case, it obviously should be brought to the attention of the appropriate authorities."

On Monday, members of the team traveled to Manhattan to reconstruct the fall from the window of the former Hotel Statler. After suffering a negative reaction to the LSD, which was given to him in a drink during a retreat in Western Maryland, Olson was taken to New York to visit an expert familiar with tests involving the little-known drug.

Robert Lashbrook, a former CIA officer, accompanied Olson to New York and was in the room when Olson went out the window.

In a telephone interview at his home in Ojai, Calif., last month, Mr. Lashbrook said he never saw Olson go out the window. Mr. Lashbrook, who contends Olson committed sui-

cide, said he was awakened by a noise and saw the window shade flapping at the top of the window.

Armond Pastore, 75, of Melbourne, Fla., was the night manager of the hotel and the first to reach Olson after his fall. He said the shade wasn't rolled up at the top of the window, but was drawn and pushed out the window.

"After the ambulance took him away, I was looking up at the building. I realized that there was a window shade sticking out," Mr. Pastore said by telephone. "I could never visualize how anyone could get through this window by himself. There wasn't much running room."

The family's forensic investigators were awaiting results of tests to determine whether Olson had been given LSD or other drugs after his initial dose, about nine days before his death.

Further investigation of the skull and other remains continued. The investigation was expected to take about a month. If the investigation uncovers any evidence of homicide, the Olson family will go law enforcement authorities in New York, Mr. Zickler said.