

LSD Test Data Missing From Rockefeller Report

7/13/75
By Austin Scott and Bill Richards

Washington Post Staff Writers

The attorney in charge of the Rockefeller commission's report on Central Intelligence Agency experiments with LSD conceded yesterday that the report does not reflect everything the commission learned about the agency's use of the drug on unsuspecting persons.

James Roethe said, however, that he would not comment on what he admitted were discrepancies between what the report said, what the family of one of the experimental subjects has been told, and what another subject reported.

"You obviously don't put everything in a report, every tiny little detail. You put the main points in," said Roethe in a telephone interview from his home in Orinda, Calif.

"I think that's been done, and I don't think it will do any good to get into these details," he said.

Among the details Roethe said he would not comment on was what other high-level scientists were given the drug without their

knowledge at the 1953 meeting when the CIA drugged the after-dinner drinks of civilian biochemist Frank Olson and then Lt. Col. Vincent R. Ruwet. Ruwet has said three others were given LSD at that meeting.

Less than two weeks later, Olson plunged to his death from a 10th-floor New York City hotel room. His family said he had been uncharacteristically depressed when he returned from the three-day meeting, before he went to New York. They did not learn he had been given LSD until the Rockefeller commission report mentioned his case—and only his case—last month.

"I'm not about to give any names out," said Roethe. "I really don't feel that I'm going to be in a position to make a comment unless something so outrageous comes out that I feel I have to, and at this point I haven't seen anything."

The commission report said the CIA began testing drugs on unsuspecting persons in 1955, but added:

"The commission did learn, however,

See OLSON, A6, Col. 1

OLSON, From A1

that on one occasion during the early phases of this program (in 1953), LSD was administered to an employee of the Department of the Army without his knowledge while he was attending a meeting with CIA personnel working on the drug project."

That person was identified this week by his family as Olson.

David Belin, executive director of the commission, said from his home in Des Moines, Iowa, that he thinks "the commission did know that the LSD was administered to a small group . . . there certainly was no intent to imply that it was only administered to one, but it was only one person who had a very extreme reaction to it."

Belin said he assumes that Roethe learned the names of others who were given LSD at that meeting.

In searching through their records yesterday Olson's family came across a two-page memo containing what the memo calls a "tentative list" of those attending a 1953 meeting.

The list, prepared by the Special Operations Division at the Army's biological warfare research center at Ft. Detrick, where Olson worked on a secret CIA project, is divided into two columns.

The column on the left, the family said, contains Olson's name and names they recognize as being colleagues of Olson's: "Lt. Col. V. Ruwet, Dr. J. Schwab, Dr. J. Stubbs, Dr. F. Olson, Dr. B. Tanner, and Ben Wilson."

Of the four names in the column on the

right, the family recognizes two: Dr. S. Gottlieb and Dr. R. Lashbrook, CIA contacts for the Ft. Detrick project, according to the family and others.

Because they do not recognize the other two names in the right-hand column, A. Hughes and H. Bortner, the family said, they believe these two also may have worked for the CIA, although they are not certain.

The memo was signed "Mal" for John Malinowski, the family said. They said they believe he was present at the meeting but was not given LSD. The family said he is dead, apparently of natural causes.

The tentative list of persons who attended the conference at Deep Creek Lake 10 miles north of Oakland, Md., includes a cover story. It notes:

"Camouflage: winter meeting of script writers, editors, authors, lecturers, sports magazines. From Eastern Shore, Baltimore and Washington. Remove C.D. Tags." C.D. Tags, the family said, probably referred to the Camp Detrick stickers that were attached to bumpers or license plates.

The Rockefeller commission report says "reprimands were issued by the director of Central Intelligence to two CIA employees responsible for the incident."

It does not name the employees. "I think that there was knowledge of the existence of experimentation beyond those who were actually administering the drug," said Belin.

A number of apparent discrepancies among versions of the incident have come to light since the Olson family held a news conference Thursday.

The New York medical examiner's of-

office has announced it is reopening its investigation into Olson's death because records indicate that Lashbrook, who was with Olson at the time, withheld major facts from the police and from the medical examiner's office.

Dominick DiMaio, acting chief medical examiner who handled the case 22 years ago, said Lashbrook did not reveal that Olson had been given LSD and did not disclose that because of its strong after-effects, the CIA sent Olson to New York to be seen by a psychiatrist with a high-security clearance.

The family said it believes the psychiatrist, Dr. Harold Alexander Abramson, may have been working for the CIA. Abramson has refused to talk to reporters. Other apparent discrepancies include:

- The New York Police Department's report says Lashbrook told police a crash of glass awakened him at 3:20 a.m. Nov. 28, 1953. When he turned on the light, he said he saw that Olson was not in bed, and that the window was broken. He said he did not see Olson jump.

- Alice Olson said she was told at the time that Lashbrook had awakened about 1:30 a.m. to see her husband "going at full run toward the window." Lashbrook said he saw Olson "go through both the closed window and a drawn shade," she said.

- The Rockefeller commission report says: "Prior to receiving the LSD, the subject [Olson] had participated in discussions where the testing of such substances on unsuspecting subjects was agreed to in principle. However this individual was not made aware that he had been given LSD until about 20 minutes after it had been administered."

Roethe refused to comment on whether that meant Olson agreed to such testing, or was present when it was discussed, or disagreed but was overruled.

Belin said he remembers that there was a general discussion of the subject at the meeting, and that the LSD was administered either that night or the next. The Rockefeller commission report does not go into such detail.

The family said Ruwet, who refuses to talk to reporters, told it that at least one person at the meeting was not given LSD because that person had a medical problem.

They assume, from reading the tentative list of persons who were present, that Schwab and Tanner were the other persons given LSD, they said, because they knew that Stubbs had a heart condition and that Wilson was not a high-level scientist. Tanner died several years after the incident, apparently of natural causes.

Schwab, who is retired and lives in Columbus, Ohio, said from a relative's house in Cincinnati that he attended the conference but was not present when the LSD was administered.

"I had nothing to do with that part of the meeting," he said. "Very often at this type of meeting you have submeetings in different parts of the place where the

gathering was held."

Schwab said that despite the official explanations, he was aware Olson had been given LSD. "I don't know exactly when I learned, but I could not tell the family," he said. "I was under restrictions at the time. When you're in this sort of business, that sometimes happens." He said he could not give details of the meeting until he got military advice on what was classified.

Schwab said that Lashbrook and Gottlieb were "contact or control points" with the CIA. He said "roughly" seven people were at the conference, but he did not recall anyone named Hughes or Bortner being there. Other than Lashbrook, Gottlieb and Ruwet, he said, he could not remember who was there. Asked if other CIA officials had authorized the use of LSD, Schwab refused to comment, citing security reasons.

According to the family, Ruwet said Lashbrook and Gottlieb, who were frequently around the Detrick Special Operations project, vanished after Olson died. Ruwet said he never saw them again, the family said.

Stubbs, reached at his home in Frederick, Md., said, "I can't ever recall having been at or near Deep Creek Lake. I just can't recall ever hearing anything about this. It's been 22 years, and I don't want to struggle to recall it now."

The family said Schwab and Ruwet drove to Washington, D.C., the day Olson died to arrange compensation for the family.

Ruwet told them he talked to someone fairly high up in the CIA, the family said, saying in effect that either the CIA would take care of the family or Ruwet would tell them what really happened.

Within one week of the death, Mrs. Olson was told that employee's compensation would be paid because the death was a work-related accident.