

Ex-Colonel Thought He

By Bill Richards

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The survivors of a retired Marine colonel, who committed suicide in 1966 just eight days after he told his wife he thought he had been drugged by the CIA, said yesterday they are considering a request to reopen a civil case growing out of his death.

Edith W. Christensen, the widow of the officer, James R. Christensen, said yesterday that her husband, James R. Christensen, said yesterday that her husband told her in January, 1966, that he thought he had been drugged during an interview for a top secret job at the CIA.

Mrs. Christensen and her son, James R. Christensen Jr., said Christensen had returned from the CIA job interview acting depressed and erratic. "He was acting very strange and he said he believed one of the people at the CIA had slipped him some type of drug," Mrs. Christensen said. Eight days later Christensen shot and killed himself while sitting in a car near his home in Virginia Beach, Va.

Mrs. Christensen and her daughter, Linda Ann, sued the CIA for \$800,000 after Christensen's death. The suit was dropped by the family in late 1966 because they were told by their attorney

they did not have enough evidence. The CIA at the time produced what it said was a complete log of Christensen's movements while in contact with CIA employes and sworn statements that he was never given any drug.

Christensen's son, a 31-year-old San Francisco stockbroker, said in a telephone interview yesterday that the family decided to pursue their father's case because of information made public recently about the death of an Army scientist in 1953 after he was given LSD by the CIA without his knowledge.

The scientist, Dr. Frank Olson, committed suicide by jumping out a hotel window several days after he received the drug.

No mention was ever made to Olson's family that he was given LSD until the Rockefeller commission last month reported the circumstances surrounding his death without mentioning him by name.

Olson's family has said it plans to sue the CIA for its part in Olson's death. David Kairys, the Olson's attorney, confirmed yesterday that he had been contacted also by the Christensen family yesterday and asked to take their case.

James Christensen said yesterday

that he planned to fly here early next week to discuss the case with Kairys and to locate any available documents.

"Obviously doors are opening," Christensen said. "If President Ford is willing to open records to the Olson family we want to see all the records surrounding our father's death too."

Ford told the Olsons this week that he was instructing the CIA to make "all relevant materials and documents" surrounding Olson's death available to his family.

John K. Greaney, a CIA attorney who handled the Christensen case for the intelligence agency in 1966, said this week that no drugs ever were given to Christensen or any other applicant to the CIA.

However, one Justice Department attorney also involved in the case said that while the CIA had given affidavits to the Justice Department from a dozen employees claiming they gave no drugs to Christensen, he was told the intelligence agency could not provide an affidavit saying no agency applicants were ever given drugs.

No effort was made to check the accuracy of the CIA's affidavits by the Justice Department, the attorney said.

Christensen's family said in several telephone interviews this week that

Was Drugged at CIA Talks

the colonel, who held top security posts for the Marines including one in the war room during the Cuban crisis and another as director of joint operations for the Atlantic fleet's commander-in-chief, had gone "from day to night" after the CIA interview.

Mrs. Christensen said her husband came home the day after the interview and began telling her not to buy meat from the post exchange because it was poisoned. "He told me we couldn't talk in the house because it was bugged," said Mrs. Christensen in a telephone interview from her home in Laguna Hills, Calif. "We'd have to get into the car before he'd talk about anything personal."

Christensen saw at least one friend immediately following his final interview. Gen. Fred J. Delmore, commander of the Edgewood Arsenal at the time and who was a neighbor of Christensen, said Christensen came to his Washington office after the final CIA interview.

"He didn't tell me what it was and I didn't ask," said Delmore, who is now retired. He said Christensen made no mention of being given drugs.

"That last time, Jim just wasn't himself," Delmore said. "He wasn't the happy and easy-going guy I always knew. I think he had gone through a

very grueling experience. He was very depressed."

Greaney said it may have been possible that Christensen became depressed and shot himself because he had been passed over for promotion to general by the Marine Corps, or because he had been told he had high blood pressure by a CIA doctor.

Christensen's son said that his father had not been in poor spirits before the CIA interview and that he had been in good health and had been looking at a number of possible jobs. "He held some very important positions for the Marine Corps," he said, "and he wasn't happy about being passed over but he saw it as a new phase in his life."

A Marine Corps spokesman checked Christensen's medical record this week for The Washington Post and said that Christensen completed a thorough medical exam about six months before the CIA interview and was judged to be in good health with no high blood pressure. Christensen was still listed as on Marine flight status after his retirement, which the Marine spokesman said would have indicated he had no high blood pressure problems.

William L. Shapero, the attorney for the family in the 1986 suit against the CIA, said yesterday that he never

checked the accuracy of the CIA's statements at that time.

"It never entered my mind that there would be any reason to doubt their word whatsoever," said Shapero, who is now a judge of the Norfolk, Va. General District Court.

Shapero declined to say whether he would have urged the family to pursue their case in light of additional information available today on the CIA's drug testing activities.

He said he did not have any of the CIA's sworn affidavits because he feared that they might be stolen from his office. "The CIA kept them and said they would be made available on my request," Shapiro said.

Christensen said yesterday that he planned to seek all information available about the CIA interviews of his father in an effort to determine whether to reopen the case. He said he would wait for Kairy's advice before he decided to ask for access to CIA files similar to that given to the OI-sons.

"We have to be very careful about this," he said. "It's the second time around for us on this and we only have our knowledge of our father and his word. We don't have any Rockefeller commission to back us up."