

Ford offers apology

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President Gerald R. Ford personally apologized on behalf of his country to the family of Frank R. Olson who died 22 years ago after being covertly given LSD by Central Intelligence Agency employes.

Ford told the Olson family in his Oval Office that "he felt very strongly about this" and said he wanted to apologize for "a horrible episode in American history" for which he said he was outraged.

The President also instructed his counsel Rod Hills to arrange for the Attorney General to meet with the Olson's counsel and that all details and information be made available to the family.

Mrs. Alice Olson, of Old Braddock, and her three children Lisa, Nils and Eric received a White House invitation through their lawyer David Rudovsky last Friday.

"We discussed it among ourselves," said Mrs. Olson, "and on Saturday sent our reply, that we would be glad to accept the invitation."

At the White House Monday the Olsons with Lisa's husband Greg Hayward accompanying, arrived early for the 2 p.m. appointment with the country's chief executive, and waited in the Cabinet Room next to the President's Oval Office.

Meeting the President, Mrs. Olson said, "was a very, very awesome experience."

"We found him to be very serious, very

concerned, very genuine and really impressed. He spoke directly and most seriously to us," Mrs. Olson said.

Ford told the Olsons that he had read newspaper accounts following their press conference which received national attention and named their husband and father, Frank Olson, as the LSD suicide victim mentioned in the Rockefeller report on the CIA.

"He told us he hesitated contacting us because he didn't want to jeopardize our court case, Lisa said.

The Olsons' lawyer David Rudovsky informed the CIA through director William Colby of the family's intention to sue last Thursday, one day before the President contacted Rudovsky with the White House invitation.

"I do not think it was a political
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gesture at all, said Mrs. Olson, "he told us he could not bring back the 22 years but said he just wanted us to know of his concern."

"He commended Mom for raising three children for all those years," said Lisa, "and we talked later about our farm (Lisa's and Greg's) in Wolfsville and how he must have flown over it on his way to Camp David."

"I guess we expected only a short apology statement," said Mrs. Olson, who interrupted Ford after his opening statement, believing he was finished, to thank him and say:

"We deeply appreciate your concern and apology and are heartened to find this a great country where an individual family could call a press conference and tell their story and have the whole country hear it."

The President went on, however, to share his sympathies and understanding with the Frederick family. The audience lasted for 17 minutes according to White House sources.

Both the Olsons and the President released official statements after the

Monday afternoon meeting at which only the Olsons, Ford and White House photographer David Hume Kennerly and Ford assistant Donald Rumsfeld were present.

The family had decided against any additional news coverage during the audience.

In the family statement, the Olsons said, in part: "We deeply appreciate President Ford's expressions of sympathy and apologies to our family. His concern and his invitation to meet with him are of great importance to us.

"Frank Olsons' death was a tragic loss to his family, friends and colleagues and previously unknown circumstances which have been revealed recently have deeply moved the American people," the statement continued.

"We hope that this will be part of a continuing effort to insure that the CIA is accountable for its actions... We are grateful that President Ford has given us his support to be fully informed about Frank Olsons' death."

The Olsons said they did not discuss any aspects of their upcoming law suit against the CIA and did not discuss any other legal or political matters aside from the presidential promise to aid in the release of all pertinent information to the family through the Attorney General's office.