

Ex-Mobil Oil Engineer Linked to Soviet Spying Is Called Suicide

By ELEANOR BLAU

A former engineer for the Mobil Oil Corporation who reportedly sold oil industry information to the Soviet Union and then became a double agent for the Federal Bureau of Investigation died yesterday at his home in Southbury, Conn., of what the police said was a self-inflicted gunshot wound in the head.

The man, Norman J. Rees, 69 years old, admitted accepting money for technical information he gave to Soviet intelligence agents from World War II through the 1970's according to an article in yesterday's Dallas Times Herald.

The newspaper said Mr. Rees reported that he had acted as a double agent for the F.B.I. from 1971 to 1975 after the bureau told him it was aware of his activities.

A son of Mr. Rees, John W. Rees of Ashfield, Mass., was quoted by The Associated Press yesterday as saying that the family knew nothing about his father's alleged contacts either with the Soviet Union or the bureau.

Speaking outside his parents' condominium in Heritage Village, a retirement community in rural western Connecticut, the son told The Associated Press he had informed his mother, Ann Rees, about the newspaper account and that she was "acting like it's unreal."

"She didn't know the story was coming out," he was quoted as saying.

Mr. Rees, 31, a junior high school science teacher, was called by a neighbor after the body was found at about 7:45 A.M. "I thought he was despondent about getting older

and "just never got out," Mr. Rees was quoted as saying, "Looking back on it now, it's enough to make me sick."

The article further relates that he said his most significant industrial espionage act occurred in 1950 when he passed along a Mobil design for a newly developed converter that increases the percentage of gasoline that can be derived from crude oil. He won a Soviet medal for that information, he said.

Spokesmen for The Times Herald could not be reached for comment on Mr. Rees's death yesterday. A spokesman for Mobil said the company could not comment until it examined its records about Mr. Rees.

The Times Herald article said Mr. Rees had worked for Mobil and subsequently, from 1967 to 1971, for the Dallas branch of the M. W. Kellogg Company, at

just never got out," Mr. petroleum consulting concern. It said his spying was so valued that, in addition to the medal, he received a \$5,000 annual Soviet pension that, Mr. Rees said, he turned over to the F.B.I.

Although Mr. Rees maintained that he had received a total of \$30,000 from the Russians, The Times Herald said it had learned that he had an account in the Saik Bank in Basel, Switzerland, and that in 1968 he transferred \$20,000 into the account.

Expressing surprise at Mr. Rees's alleged activities, a couple who were neighbors of his in the retirement complex described him as a reserved but pleasant man who was very much involved in the stock market and who also acted as a consultant in his field, going on trips for two or three weeks at a time.