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OBSERVATIONS ON DR. FRANK OLSON - 1951 - 1953

I have been personally acquainted with Dr. Frank Olson approximately since September of 1951. The nature of my personal contacts with him have been at the level of collaborators in research activities of mutual interest to his group and mine. This period has been characterized, among other things, by three periodic meetings in secluded areas where the group involved in the meetings lived together for two or three day periods. At these meetings the writer had an opportunity to personally observe Dr. Olson in informal surroundings and during periods of time when he was not engaged in official scientific activities. The other contacts, which averaged about one every two or three months involved official visits either by me to his research facility or vice versa. I would estimate that the total number of contacts which I had with him during the period September 1, 1951 up to November 19, 1953 totaled thirteen or fourteen. Although the principal topic of conversation at these contacts was official scientific business, a fairly close personal relationship had also developed, and a minor part of the various conversations I had with him concerned personal matters, unrelated to our scientific or official relationship.

During this period Dr. Olson seemed to me to be a very effective research scientist, in excellent command of his field of experimentation and very devoted to the successful execution of his duties. He seemed to me a stable individual, not particularly given to making snap judgments and able to get along very well among his colleagues. It was made known to me on several occasions, through incidental remarks made either by himself or his colleagues, that he had been suffering from recurring trouble with a duodenal ulcer. I had no occasion to observe any instance when this interfered with his work.

Dr. Olson appeared to me to be very impressed by the importance of the security aspects of his job. Working in an installation where extreme security measures were in effect for the entire installation, Dr. Olson conscientiously accepted the added security burdens that his group's collaboration with my group entailed. He was not at liberty to discuss these areas of research with any individuals except perhaps six to eight of his immediate associates. Occasionally, areas of effort were developed in which he was at liberty to discuss certain information with only one other person at his research facility. He seemed to me to bear these various security burdens well.

During this period (from September 1951 to November 19, 1953) I had no occasion to observe aberrant or unreasonal behavior in any of my contacts with Dr. Olson.

The November 18 - 20 meeting between Dr. Olson's group and my own, at which 7 members of his group were present and three of mine, was concerned with routine matters of evaluating results of the past six months research and planning the next six month's work. Up to the time of the experiment, I observed nothing in Dr. Olson's behavior or actions which was different from that described above.

On November 20, the day after the experiment, I had occasion to observe Dr. Olson for about two hours in the morning, between 7 A.M. and 9 A.M. Aside from some evidence of fatigue, I observed nothing unusual in his actions, conversation, or general behavior.

My next contact with Dr. Olson was on Tuesday November 24, just prior to his departure for New York with Dr. Lashbrook and Col. Ruwet. The meeting with Dr. Olson took place in my office between approximately 1:30 and 2:00 P.M. and lasted about ten minutes. I talked briefly with Dr. Olson about various scientific and personal matters. He seemed to me to be confused in certain areas of his thinking, particularly as regarded his feelings of incompetence in relation to his job and to the futility of trying to help him.

My last contact with Dr. Olson took place on Thursday, November 26 in Dr. Lashbrook's apartment, just prior to their return to New York to see Dr. Abramsen. I was with Dr. Glack and Dr. Lashbrook approximately 1 hour, spending the last 30 minutes driving Dr. Olson and Dr. Lashbrook to the airport. During this period Dr. Olson seemed more disturbed and agitated than he had been the previous Tuesday. He talked in a clear enough manner, but his thoughts were confused. He again talked about his incompetence in his work, the hopelessness of anybody helping him, and the fact that the best thing to do was to abandon him and not bother about him. It seemed to me that he was very mentally disturbed at this time.



SIDNEY COTTLER

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