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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

SUBJECT: Observations on Dr. Frank Olson

I first met Dr. Frank Olson the early part of 1952. Since that time I have seen him on an average of about once each month to six weeks, in connection with my official business. These contacts involved discussions of technical problems in fields of mutual interest, results of past scientific work, and planning of future activities. In general, other members of his Division were also present.

In addition, both he and I attended three 2-day conferences which were held in isolated locations to discuss the progress of his Division for the past six months, our requirements, and plans for the next six months. The conferences were attended by members of his Division and of my Division and involved living together in close proximity for the duration of the conference.

During the time I knew Dr. Olson, he has been Acting Chief of his Division, and Branch Chief. At all times he has held positions of responsibility and his importance to his Division appeared to remain at a consistently high level. Prior to the experiment, Dr. Olson was a competent scientist with an excellent command of his field. His judgement was sound and characteristically backed up by rational and carefully-considered reasons. In my observation he performed his duties in a superior manner. It was evident that Dr. Olson was highly respected by his colleagues, both as a scientist and as a friend. He was friendly and got along well with his colleagues. From what Dr. Olson has said (and the manner in which he spoke) and from what his colleagues have said, it appeared his home life was happy. In my experience, he drank only to be sociable, and then definitely in moderation.

His work was extremely exacting and definitely hazardous in a technical sense. He operated under very severe security restrictions, under which it was necessary to conceal the true nature of his activities even from the other Divisions at his base. He was permitted to discuss much of his work only with a very limited number of specifically designated individuals.

The experiment was on Thursday, November 19th. On Tuesday, November 24th, Dr. Olson's Division Chief telephoned me and said that, in the opinion of him, Dr. Olson, and Mrs. Olson, Dr. Olson needed psychiatric attention. I suggested that he and Dr. Olson come to Washington immediately. I conferred with the Chief of my Division, and it was decided that a certain New York physician specializing in such matters should be consulted. I telephoned Dr. Olson's Division Chief and suggested they prepare for a trip to New York. The Chief

placed both himself and Dr. Olson on orders and met me and the Chief of my Division in Washington. After a short discussion, Dr. Olson, the Chief of his Division, and I boarded a plane for New York and arrived at the New York physician's office about 1645. After a short conference with the doctor, Dr. Olson was left with him until about 1800.

From the time I saw Dr. Olson in Washington until I left him at the physicians office in New York, he seemed rather depressed, somewhat confused, and convinced he would never return to his home and job. These were quite different from the attitudes I had observed prior to the experiment.

At about 1800 Dr. Olson, his Division Chief, and I checked into the Statler Hotel, had dinner, returned to our room and watched television. From about 2200 to 2300 the New York physician visited the three of us in our hotel room. During the period covered by this paragraph, Dr. Olson indicated in my presence that he felt he had failed in his job, he was a disgrace to his colleagues, friends, and family, and that his memory and mental ability had failed. However, in the course of normal conversation, it was quite apparent that both his memory and ability to discuss scientific topics were excellent. Dr. Olson also indicated he was sleeping poorly, and said we shouldn't bother with him, we should let him just "disappear".

The following day (Wednesday) Dr. Olson again had a private session with the New York doctor (about 1500 to 1700). At the conclusion of this, the physician talked to the three of us, indicating Dr. Olson could go home for Thanksgiving (Thursday) if he desired, or he could accept his (the physician's) invitation to spend Thanksgiving and the week-end with the physician's family at his home at Cold Spring Harbor. Dr. Olson preferred to go home, and an appointment was made for Dr. Olson to see the physician the following Tuesday. Dr. Olson, his Division Chief, and I returned to the hotel, had dinner, then went to a play. At the intermission Dr. Olson became rather agitated, and said he wanted to leave. He and his Division Chief returned to the hotel.

The following morning (Thursday) when Dr. Olson's Division Chief and I awakened (about 0530), Dr. Olson was gone. We found him in the hotel lobby. He said he had left the hotel about 0400 for a walk, and indicated several things that had transpired. He felt his Division Chief had been talking to him. He said he had torn up his money, thrown it and several un cashed checks away (because he wouldn't need them anymore), and had thrown his wallet away, down a chute someplace. He said he felt his Division Chief was telling him to do these things. We then returned to Washington. However, we probably would not have returned had it not been that Dr. Olson never seemed to really believe that we would return home, and we had made it a point of honor that we would return if he wanted to (this was done after we had obtained the physicians' approval). We were met at the Washington Airport by a member of Dr. Olson's Division, and Dr. Olson and his Division Chief set off for their home town.

Shortly afterwards I received a call from the Division Chief, now on the outskirts of Washington. He said Dr. Olson had changed his mind, was quite agitated, and that he (the Division Chief) now felt Dr. Olson should be hospitalized and definitely should not return home. I told him to come to my apartment at once, meanwhile I contacted my Division Chief, who also set out for my apartment. When he arrived at my apartment, Dr. Olson appeared depressed and restless. He repeated his firm decision that he could not face going home. Dr. Olson's Division Chief then returned to his home town to explain to Mrs. Olson, and my Division Chief drove Dr. Olson and me to the airport, where Dr. Olson and I boarded a plane for New York. We met the New York physician at his Huntington, Long Island, office about 1600, and Dr. Olson was alone with him about one hour, followed by about 20 minutes with Dr. Olson and me. The physician obtained local lodgings for us, and Dr. Olson and I then went to a restaurant for a Thanksgiving dinner, after which we went to bed. During the period covered by this paragraph, Dr. Olson told me he felt he had cheated the Government in connection with his retirement from the Army, and that he should be punished for this. (I am not familiar with the details of what he was referring to, but both Dr. Olson's Division Chief and the New York physician had indicated to me that they could see nothing dishonest or morally questionable in connection with his retirement.) Dr. Olson said everyone, including me, was in a plot to "get" him; he said I and the others knew the master plan for the plot, and he wanted to know what it was. He said he had failed in his job, that he was so disgraced he could not face returning to his family. He said he felt he was guilty of security violations because he felt he on occasions had exceeded his interpretation of the need-to-know principle. Except in certain well defined areas he spoke intelligently and rationally, and he acted in a socially acceptable manner.

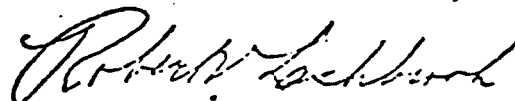
The following morning (Friday) we drove with the physician to his New York office. There we had a conference during which the physician told Dr. Olson that hospitalization would be in his best interests. After a while Dr. Olson agreed. Dr. Olson preferred some place near his home and friends, so after discussion and a telephone conference with my Division Chief, a private hospital near Washington was selected. The physician made arrangements with the hospital, but they had to prepare his room and could not take Dr. Olson until the following day (Saturday). Dr. Olson agreed he would be a voluntary patient (it was agreed he would not be formally committed).

We could obtain no reservations for a return to Washington that day, so we made reservations for Saturday morning and checked into the Statler Hotel. At this time and for the remainder of the evening, Dr. Olson appeared no longer particularly depressed, and almost the Dr. Olson I knew prior to the experiment, although he still maintained the various misconceptions I have mentioned before. He washed out his dirty clothing, and when I called his Division Chief to clear our proposed course of action with him, Dr. Olson talked to him in a

cheerful manner and happily anticipated meeting him at the Washington Airport upon our arrival there. On his own volition he telephoned his wife (this was the first time he felt he dared speak to her). At about 1830 we went to the hotel's main cocktail lounge and each had two martinis. At 2000 we entered the main dining room and had dinner, leaving for our room at 2200. At both the cocktail lounge and the dining room he was cheerful and appeared to enjoy the entertainment. He spoke freely of the hospitalization the following day, and indicated he wanted books from home to study, and other things he wanted to do while hospitalized. (The physician had assured him he could do this, and had said he would help outline some activities of mutual scientific interest Dr. Olson could work on.)

After returning to our room, we watched television for a while, then Dr. Olson suggested bed, saying he felt more relaxed and contented than he had since we came to New York. He asked the hotel telephone operator to call us at a specified time in the morning (so we could make our plane).. I would guess it was a little after 2300 when we retired.

Somewhere around 0230 Saturday morning I was awakened by a loud noise. Dr. Olson had crashed through the closed window blind and the closed window and he fell to his death from the window of our room on the tenth floor of the Statler Hotel. Later in the day I officially identified the body for the New York authorities.


ROBERT V. LASIEROCK

7 December 1953