

The Frank Olsen Story: *A Deep Creek Lake Mystery*



Deep Creek Lake is well known as western Maryland's premiere vacation destination site as thousands of visitors enjoy year round activities at the resort. But few people are aware that Deep Creek Lake has been involved in a different type of activity, one that was deeply entwined in the shadowy world of espionage and Cold War intrigue that followed World War II. Deep Creek Lake's connection to top-secret government programs may never be fully revealed nor will the role of Frank Olsen who died on November 28, 1953 under suspicious circumstances.

Dr. Frank Olsen resided near Frederick, Maryland during World War II and was employed as a civilian scientist at Ft. Detrick, a top-secret center for chemical and biological research established in 1943. The federal government was concerned about communist nation efforts to develop weapons of terror that could be used against the United States. To counter that threat, the Central Intelligence Agency established a team of scientists at Ft. Detrick, located near Frederick, to conduct research into delivery systems for

lethal diseases and deadly toxins. Frank Olsen was assigned to the team known as MKNAOM.

For reasons unknown today, a cottage on Deep Creek Lake was chosen as a hideaway for CIA personnel in the project. Frank Olsen and nine other CIA men visited the cottage on November 19, 1953 for a secret meeting that set into motion a series of mysterious and even bizarre events worthy of "The X-Files." Upon returning home, Olsen's wife noticed a marked change in her husband's behavior, as he seemed to be withdrawn. Two days later, Olsen revealed to his wife that he had made a "terrible mistake" and was intending to resign from his position at Ft. Detrick. But on November 24th, and accompanied by another person affiliated with the CIA, Olsen left for New York City. He told his wife he was seeking psychological treatment, which was unusual because the trip would span the Thanksgiving holiday. Frank Olsen never returned as he died by falling from a hotel room window. Despite strange inconsistencies with evidence of suicide, it was officially

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determined that Frank Olsen fell or jumped from the 13th floor window. Frank Olsen was survived by a wife and three children, who were never fully informed about the circumstances of his employment or death.

A 1975 Rockefeller Commission report shed new light on the mystery of Frank Olsen's death when it revealed that the CIA had administered LSD to civilian scientists in November, 1953 as part of a mind control experiment. The CIA later confirmed that one of those scientists was Frank Olsen and that LSD had been administered during a secret meeting at Deep Creek Lake, Maryland. President Ford invited the Olsen family to the White House to formally acknowledge the government's role in the incident and apologize for the family's terrible loss. CIA Director Colby turned over relevant files to the Olsen family and a payment of \$750,000 was later provided to Mrs. Olsen. Eric Olsen, the eldest son, vigorously pursued information surrounding his father's death, as he and others doubted that his father jumped from the hotel window in New York City. Due to continued suspicions surrounding his violent death, Frank Olsen's body was exhumed in June 1994, revealing many contradictions between the official report of suicide and observable battery marks on the well-preserved body.

The Frank Olsen mystery continues to intrigue investigators and provide another lesson in the Cold War history of the United States. Unanswered questions about Deep Creek Lake's role as a retreat for the CIA also provides for an intriguing chapter in the history of Garrett County.

For more information on The Frank Olsen Story, see www.frankolsenproject.org.




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