Code Name
Artichoke
“Code Name Artichoke” premiers in Germany.

August 2002
“Code Name Artichoke” premiers on public TV (ARD) in Germany. Later the film is shown in many other countries, and over 150 times in the U.S. on the satellite channel Link TV. A book based on the film is later published in German.

“Code Name Artichoke” tells the story of Frank Olson’s death by re-creating the global historical context in which these bizarre events unfolded. I worked closely with the film’s German producers for two years to make a documentary that would tell the story as accurately as possible.
This is the first film to set the Olson case in a broad historical context, which is the only way the story makes sense.

The film opens in the house my parents built in 1950, and to which I returned in 2003 after my mother died when I decided to try to get to the bottom of what had happened to my father.
By now the story has assumed sufficient shape that it can be told in a coherent, albeit frightening, narrative.

Forensic pathologists at George Washington University performed an autopsy and concluded that Olson probably was the victim of a violent crime.

“I was strongly identified with him, I loved him. And I am sure that’s why in the end I came to take on this task trying to figure out what had become of him.”
We are able to make use of Norman Cournoyer’s important contribution.

The biological weapons lab was founded in 1943. At the time, the Americans feared Hitler might attack the allied troops with a virus or bacteria. They quickly produced gas masks and anthrax weapons, in order to be able to strike back in kind.

Dr. Frank Olson, an army captain and one of the first scientists at Fort Detrick, worked together with Norman Cournoyer. The two became good friends. Their first sons were born within a few days of each other in 1944.
Despite his age and poor health, Norman is able to participate and tell his story, and Frank’s.

Voice of Norman Cournoyer/Friend of Frank Olson:

“We worked about five months in this thing called aerosols to see if we could test gas masks and impregnated clothing to see how good they were. And then one day he was transferred to working on hot agents. He said: ‘Norm, how about working for me in the hot stuff?’ That’s how we always referred to it. N was Anthrax, X was botulism and so forth.”
Among the things his father left behind, Eric Olson found some home movies and slides. Frank Olson made a hobby of home movies. These scenes reveal nothing of his secret task involving deadly weapons. They show the perfect world of a young father, captured with the latest 8-mm camera to hit the market.

Frank Olson also used photography. He brought home a lot of slides from his many travels. His photographs also primarily show private moments.


Voice of Eric Olson:

“The whole subject of the relationship between a wife and a husband who is doing top secret, classified work is a subject one could discuss at some length. The wife develops uncanny kinds of intuitions, about all the things that are not being said and she knows the limits of what she can ask. And for quite a long time, possibly ever since my father began working at Detrick, the whole business about the monkeys dying was a very delicate matter for him.
Arthur Vidich is Frank Olson’s brother-in-law. Their families regularly spent their summer vacation together. Vidich remembers Frank Olson as an American patriot, who was enthusiastic about working for the Army’s biological weapons program.

*Voice of Arthur Vidich/Brother-in-law of Frank Olson:*

“He was a person who believed in what he was doing, who felt the work that he was doing at the Center in Frederick was important for the United States. He considered himself a terribly loyal and patriotic person. That kind of an attitude of loyalty was one way of expressing your Americanism.”
Dr. Frank Olson had worked for the US Army’s biological weapons laboratory for exactly ten years when he died in New York in the wee hours of November 28, 1953. He spent the night at the Hotel Pennsylvania, along with a CIA agent who was there to guard him. That night, Frank Olson plunged to his death from his room on the hotel’s thirteenth floor. Through a closed window, it was said.

*Voice of Eric Olson:*

“I was simply told that ‘Your father has had an accident,’ and that ‘he has died.’ The only detail that I was then given was that he had fallen or jumped out of a window. I remember quite clearly just being quite stupefied by this.

As a nine-year-old I was old enough to have some idea of cause and effect. And I had no idea what does it mean to fall out of a window. How you fall out of a window in the middle of the night. What is that?”

Eric didn’t understand.

And for his mother, the subject of his father’s death became a taboo.

The search for the circumstances surrounding the mysterious death of Dr. Frank Olson begins in 1945, with the liberation of the concentration camp at Dachau, Germany. American troops discovered the corpses of hundreds of prisoners who had been murdered

*Code Name Artichoke*
or starved to death. Many of the survivors told US doctors about cruel experiments the camp’s doctors carried out using disease germs and various drugs.

A few weeks later, at Kransberg Castle north of Frankfurt, the scientific elite of Nazi Germany is arrested and questioned by American officers. The name of the project is “Operation Dustbin.” The American military hopes to evaluate and exploit the findings German researchers made during the war. Among the prisoners at Kransberg Castle is rocket scientist Professor Hermann Oberth, who collects autographs from his colleagues.
Blome will be among those charged in the case against concentration camp doctors brought before the military tribunal in Nuremberg. He will face the death penalty.

In spite of the fact that there is enough evidence against him, Kurt Blome will be acquitted in Nuremberg. The Americans have other plans for him.

*Voice of Professor Kurt Blome:*

1) I stated publicly and openly that I was a conscientious National Socialist... 2) and a follower of Adolf Hitler.

*Voice of Norman Cournoyer*

“We were interested in anyone who did work in biological warfare. Did they want to use that? The Nazis? Yes, absolutely! They wanted to use anything that killed people. Anything!”

*Code Name Artichoke*
The Americans save Kurt Blome, seen here on the left, from death by hanging. In turn, he provides them with information about the Nazi biological weapons program. One of the specialists interrogating Blome is Donald Falconer, a friend and colleague of Frank Olson. Falconer is responsible for developing anthrax bombs.
Today, more than 50 years later, Donald Falconer lives in a convalescent home not far from Frederick.

Eric Olson has visited Falconer several times, hoping his father’s old friend might one day confide a crucial secret in him. But Falconer refuses to say anything, feeling bound by his military oath, and doesn’t want to be interviewed.
...though he tells me privately that the moral equation had been complex and unstable for everybody at Detrick.

In one of his father’s films, immediately following images of his grandfather (Wicks), Eric discovers a sequence that seems to show secret crop-dusting flights that took place in 1947. Using the findings of Blome and other Nazi scientists, the Americans experimented with artificial diseases capable of destroying crops.

After this short clip, more family pictures of the children.

Meanwhile, in Fort Detrick, a massive arms program is taking place with bacteriological weapons, primarily anthrax spores, which have proven to be highly resistant and therefore suitable for biological warfare.
Anthrax was cultivated in this building, then placed in bombs. The Americans are concerned about the Soviets’ biological arsenal. If the cold war should ever turn hot, deadly bacteria might be used as weapons. The army demands ample weapons at the ready.

Frank Olson often uses the Air Force to test germ warfare in the field, for example on the Caribbean island of Antigua. These tests are carried out to monitor the spread of diseases under realistic conditions. Most of the tests Olson’s team carries out in the Caribbean and on the Alaskan tundra deal with relatively harmless bacteria, but some tests are conducted using actual pathogens – called “hot stuff.”
Voice of Norman Cournoyer:

“We did not use anthrax, we used bacillus globigii which is a very similar spore as Anthrax is. So to that extent we did do something that was not kosher. We picked it up all over. It was picked up months afterward.”
It’s an easy-going life they lead, but they have a secret mission. In California, Olson and his team drive up the Pacific coast in a yellow convertible to prepare an experiment to take place over San Francisco Bay. Spores will be released in order to test the city’s vulnerability to an act of Russian sabotage. Frank Olson loves life and has little interest in following rules. His unconventional manner seems inconsistent with his job working for the army.
In October of 1949, Olson is suspected of disclosing government secrets. He is interrogated by military intelligence.

"Olson was mildly impatient with the questioning conducted during the course of this interview. This attitude is regarded as typical by persons at Detrick who are acquainted with him."

I was present at the Dugway Proving Ground during July, and for about ten days during the latter part of August 1949. My duties during the second visit were to determine the amount of toxicity which could be stirred up from the ground after the bomb was detonated. No culture plates were used, except in the laboratory. The nature of my duties did not place me in possession of any facts concerning of the bomb's contents, or the amount of survive the explosion. In my opinion, it is stringently enforced. If any leaks of it is probable that they occurred or Dugway. Apropos of the revealing, I remember that I felt upon the book "Airborne Infection" that therein should never have been.

I have never heard of a case as
"Olson is violently opposed to control of scientific research, either military or otherwise, and opposes supervision of his work. He does not follow orders, and has had numerous altercations with MP’s..."
Voice of Norman Cournoyer / Friend of Frank Olson:

“He was very, very open and not scared to say what he thought. For that matter to the contrary. He didn’t give a damn. Frank Olson pulled no punches at any time. And I don’t know. That’s what they were scared of, I am sure. He did speak up any time he wanted to. Was he gonna be caught on this? Could be. Could be.”
As the scientist responsible for biological warfare experiments, Frank Olson was among the most important holders of confidential information during the Cold War.

November 1953:

Four years after he was suspected for disclosing secrets – an accusation that was never proved.

During a trip to New York, Olson is accompanied by a CIA agent who watches him constantly, never leaving his side.

Olson and the CIA agent take a room in the famous Hotel Pennsylvania.

So, what are they doing in New York?

Armand Pastore is the manager of the hotel. He is on duty that night, when Frank Olson falls from the 13th floor, landing on the sidewalk in front of the hotel.
Voice of Armand Pastore / Former hotel manager

“He was laying there looking at me, trying to speak to me, very earnest look in his eyes, wide open. But there was blood everywhere: blood from his nose, blood from his eyes, blood from his ears. There was a bone protruding from his left arm, sticking straight out. And I kept trying to speak to him, but we were not really communicating, because I could not understand anything he was saying. And then finally he died.”
Pastore notifies the police and accompanies them to the 13th floor. In the meantime, he has determined that Olson must have fallen to his death from 1018A, and that there was probably another person in the room at the time.

*Voice of Armand Pastore/Former hotel manager:*

"'Wait a minute', I said, 'it is possible that there is somebody in there'. Then they became alert and they pulled their guns out and said: 'You open the door and we'll go in.'

I opened the door with my key and they rushed in. Here this guy was sitting in the commode with the hands on his knees, his hands up to his head.

The cops said 'what happened' he said: 'I don't know, I just heard a crash of glass. Then I see that Frank Olson is out of the window. And he's down on the street.'”
The CIA shadow testifies that he was fast asleep and didn’t hear Olson get out of bed. He can offer no explanation for the suicide. He has nothing else to say. He makes no statement regarding the reason the two were visiting New York. The case is closed quickly.

No one is interested in the telephone call that was made from Olson’s room immediately following his death.

*Voice of Armand Pastore/Former hotel manager:*

“The operator said, ‘Yes there was one call out of that room’. So I said ‘What was the conversation?’

She said the man in the room called this number out in Long Island and said ‘Well, he’s gone’ and the man on the other end said ‘Well, that’s too bad’ and they both hung up.”

Was that the CIA agent reporting that he had solved the “Frank Olson problem” in the Hotel Pennsylvania?
Eric Olson in New York. For years now, he has been searching for witnesses who might know something about his father’s death, which he considers to be a murder perpetrated by the CIA. He wants to know the motive. Was the government afraid Frank Olson might reveal state secrets? The recent terror attacks involving anthrax were a shock to Eric.

Eric finds himself wondering about a lot of things. Was the anthrax terrorist one of our own? Is that the reason he hasn’t been caught? Because he knows something no one else should find out about? A secret his father knew, too?
Voice of Ira ("Ike") Feldman/Former CIA agent:

“The source that I have was the New York City Police Department, the Bureau of Narcotics Agents and the CIA Agents themselves. They all say the same thing: that he was pushed out of the window and that he did not jump.

People who wanted him out of the way said he talked too much and he was telling people about the things he had done which is American secret. If you work on a top government secret, a city secret, a state secret, and it spills out to people who should not know, there is only one way to do it: kill him.”
In April of 1950, Dr. Frank Olson received a diplomatic passport, unusual for an army scientist. Did he have a new job? In the following years, he traveled often to Europe, including making several trips to Germany.

*Voice of Norman Cournoyer/Friend of Frank Olson:*

“He was a member of the CIA. I only found this out after he told me about it. To me he was a Captain. That’s all I knew about it at first. It turned out that he was a CIA agent. And stayed on, right on through to 1953.”

Pictures taken in Frankfurt and Heidelberg will later turn up among Olson’s slides. These cities were home to the US Army’s most important facilities in Germany. There is also a picture of the top secret CIA headquarters in Germany, located in the building of IG Farben in the heart of Frankfurt.

What is Olson’s new assignment? He is now working in an area that has nothing to do with biological weapons. Here, in the German offices of the CIA, the biochemist is conducting important conversations with US intelligence officers.

Increasingly, he can be found in the company of other CIA agents, including a certain John McNulty. It has to do with a top secret project to use chemicals, drugs and torture on human beings in order to break their will and make them submissive. Brainwashing. The code name for this operation: Artichoke.

*Code Name Artichoke*
Upon arrival in T. A. Tech, the team was greeted by an enthusiastic air force reception. The group was made aware of the details of their mission and given a tour of the facilities.

Artichoke Cases, June 1952, Tech

Chief, Technical Research Staff

Etc.
In Oberursel, in the Taunus hills north of Frankfurt, hidden in old half-timbered houses, the US Army led a quiet interrogation center: “Camp King”. It was primarily Soviet agents and defectors from East Germany who were kept here, people the CIA considered to be communist spies. Special teams, the so-called “rough boys,” interrogated the prisoners.

Former SS member Franz Gajdosch was hired just after the war by the Americans to tend the bar in the officers’ mess at Camp King. Sometime in the year of 1952, in the top secret interrogation center, Gajdosch runs across another German: Professor Kurt Blome.
Voice of Franz Gajdosch-dt./ Former barkeeper at “Camp King”:

“For a long time, Blome was a doctor at Camp King, he also ran the clinic. He was a protégé of the Americans, and had been a concentration camp doctor. He conducted experiments.”

The American officers who lived the good life at Camp King aren’t disturbed about Blome’s past. Was the former concentration camp doctor expected to lend his experience for their own planned experiments on human beings? A CIA consultant began planning the Artichoke experiments as early as September of 1951.
Voice of Franz Gajdosch / Former barkeeper at “Camp King”:

“Of course their methods were not humane, they exerted a lot of pressure. There are ways of breaking people. At Camp King, they were notorious, the “rough boys” – anything somebody didn’t want to reveal, they would try to get it out of them.”

There are many indications that the cruel experiments involving human beings – “Operation Artichoke” – took place in this isolated CIA safe house near Camp King, at the edge of a town called Kronberg.

The former “Schuster Villa”, now called “Haus Waldhof”, was built shortly after the turn of the century as the summer residence of a Jewish banking family from Frankfurt. The Nazis confiscated it in 1934, and the Americans took it over after the war.

Voice of Franz Gajdosch / Former bartender at “Camp King”:

“The neighbors, the community didn’t know who it was, what this place was, because the military personnel going in and out of the house weren’t in uniform, they wore civilian clothing. The vehicles had no license tags, so the community wasn’t even aware it was an American facility.”

At “House Waldhof,” in June 1952, the CIA begins conducting brain-washing experiments, using various drugs, hypnosis, and probably torture. One of the top secret protocols documents a Russian agent being pumped full of medication.

The goal of the experiments is to manipulate the human mind in order to extract secrets from its subjects. And then to erase their memory, so they can’t remember what happened to them.
Dr. Frank Olson arrived in Frankfurt on June 12, 1952, from Hendon Military Airport near London. He left the Rhine-Main region three days later, on June 15.

On June 13, experiments are conducted with “Patient No. 2”, a suspected Soviet double-agent.

*Voice of Norm Cournoyer:* “He was troubled after he came back from Germany one time. He came back and he told me. He said Norm, I’ll tell you right now, you and I never talked about this, but, hey, we’re both grown-ups and this was rough. He said ‘Norm, you would be stunned by the techniques that they used.’ They made people talk! They brainwashed people! They used all kinds of drugs, they used all kinds of torture.” The CIA’s unscrupulous experiments on human beings continued the Nazi drug experiments they learned of during the liberation of the Dachau concentration camp.

*Voice of Norman Cournoyer* “They were using Nazis, they were using prisoners, they were using Russians, and they didn’t care whether they came out of it or not.”
Meanwhile, the US army was conducting extensive experiments with a new miracle drug: LSD. Here, for example, a soldier was expected to assemble a rifle while under the influence of the hallucinogen.

The army’s LSD experiments took place on the campus of the Chemical Corps in Edgewood Arsenal. The scientists who worked in these laboratories in the early fifties, and who collaborated closely with Frank Olson, were looking for new hallucinogenic substances. They hoped to find a way to use the drugs on the battle ground.

Dr. Fritz Hoffmann, a chemist from former Nazi Germany, had been hired a few years earlier to spur the search for new behavior-modifying substances. Immediately after the war he courted the Americans, seeking to ensure a job in the United States.

*Voice of Bennie E. Hackley / Chemical Corps US Army*

“There was an interest in the U.S. during that time in looking at mood-altering drugs from LSD to BZ and other possible mood-altering drugs. Fritz was interested in that area as well.”

After its experiments on soldiers, the army saw potential in using LSD and other drugs to sedate and “dope” enemy troops. In short order, it would be possible to conquer territory without a fight.
A short time later, the CIA begins conducting its own LSD experiments in the bohemian New York neighborhood of Greenwich Village, on Bedford Street. But unlike the army experiments, the subjects of these tests, which took place in an apartment disguised as a brothel, would not be informed. The CIA hired prostitutes to pour LSD into their customers’ drinks. And then lure them into revealing secrets.

*Voice of Ira (“Ike”) Feldman/Former CIA agent*

“My purpose was to see that we got guys up there we wanted to talk and through other people we got prostitutes to talk to these guys and each prostitute would put something — which I found out later was LSD — into their drink and made them talk. Either they wanted to talk about narcotics, security or crime. This was all part of the CIA experiments. They called it ‘dirty tricks’.

LSD, it was soon learned, was a much more effective way to loosen the tongue than alcohol was.
Deep Creek Lake in western Maryland, a three-hour drive from Washington. In an isolated vacation house at the edge of the lake, the CIA's “dirty tricks” department converged here for a meeting with ten of its scientists in November 1953.

The meeting is about Artichoke. According to the invitation, it was a conference for sports journalists. But in reality, the participants, one of them Frank Olson, were to be placed under the influence of LSD.

One of the drinks has been spiked. Later, it will be said the CIA was conducting a kind of self test – but without the knowledge of the participants.

Voice of Ira (“Ike”) Feldman / Former CIA agent

“I do not think, again from what I heard, that he was drugged because he was a security agent. He was drugged because he talked too much.”

When Frank Olson was later briefed about the LSD experiment, he knew immediately what it meant: They had interrogated him with Artichoke techniques.

Voice of Eric Olson

“Friday evening he came home and spent the weekend in this house with my mother, my brother and sister and me and during much of the weekend they sat on the sofa which was just over here. It was a foggy November weekend, as she described it, and they sat here, holding hands and staring out of this big window into the fog, and he described having made something he referred to as a terrible mistake.
The CIA brings Olson, accompanied by an agent, to New York. In the hotel they are joined by a doctor working for the secret service, who administers medication. Frank Olson has become a security risk. But it seems the CIA has already found a solution.

Forty years later, at the Institute for Forensic Sciences at George Washington University. The body of Dr. Frank Olson has been exhumed and is undergoing an autopsy. Eric wants clarity, once and for all. And as it turns out, the results of the first autopsy in 1953 in New York were manipulated.

"The report from New York City, from the Medical Examiner’s office which I had before me was totally inaccurate in some very important respects. It talks about lacerations, cuts of the flesh that in all probability might have been caused by glass in the course of his fall.

There were no lacerations. They were not there, totally non-existent.

Voice of Prof. James Starrs / George Washington University
We also noticed immediately that he had a hemorrhage, which we call a hematoma, which is under the skull by the frontal bone. That is only reasonably explainable as having occurred by reason of his being silenced, being rendered unable to defend himself, so that he could be tossed out of the window.”

Starrs arranges to visit the Pennsylvania Hotel with Armand Pastore, the hotel manager who found Frank Olson that night. Afterwards, he makes his judgment:

**Voice of Prof. James Starrs / George Washington University**

“It is my view and a number of my team members, not all of them, that it was homicide.”

That would mean Frank Olson was first knocked out by a targeted blow and then thrown out of the open hotel window.

Just a few months before the murder took place, the CIA had this “Study of Assassination” prepared, a how-to book for agents, on how to kill people without leaving any clues. In this report, it says:

“The most efficient accident, in simple assassination, is a fall of 75 feet or more onto a hard surface. … In some cases it will be necessary to stun or drug the subject before dropping him.”
So was it in fact murder?

But for what reason?

Why did Olson speak of a “terrible mistake” he had made?

Voice of Prof. James Starrs/
George Washington University:

“What was spelled out in that ‘Assassination Manual’ was almost letter for letter what happened to Doctor Olson and it was a protocol, as we call it, for an assassination, which fit like the fingers in a glove.”

Voice of Norman Cournoyer / Friend of Frank Olson

“There is a piece missing and I am not sure that I am the one to give it to you. What happened was that he just got involved in it in a way he was unhappy about it. But there was nothing he could do about it. He was CIA and they took it to the end.”
Summer 1953. Frank Olson and his father-in-law cut down a tree. Then the family goes to Tupper Lake on vacation. Just like every year. With Arthur Vidich, his wife and their children. Everything seems the same as always. But that appearance is deceiving. Frank is troubled by something. And he makes an attempt to confide in his brother-in-law Art.

*Voice of Arthur Vidich / Brother-in-law of Frank Olson*

“I had never had a conversation with Frank about anything that might have involved moral values. What had startled me about it was that he had mentioned the Bible and that he was struggling with something. I knew that there was a problem that he was attempting to confront. But what that problem was, I did not know. I can visualize his face actually: It was drawn, in a way I had never seen it before.”

While the family enjoys summertime at the lake, Frank retreats into his own world.
Voice of Eric Olson

“My mother also recalled that my father was short-tempered during that last summer. She knew that he had been going through some kind of crisis. She knew he had not been sleeping well, she knew he wasn’t really at peace. He had been agitated and worried about something and from time to time discussed leaving Detrick, leaving his job and retraining himself as a dentist. She had encouraged him to do this if that is what he wanted to do.”

In Asia, at that time, a bitter war was going on between allied US troops against the North Koreans and Chinese. It had already been going on for three years. It was the first, long-awaited and long-feared battle between the West and Communism. Could the Korean War have anything to do with Frank’s personal problems?
Frank still has an office here in Fort Detrick, in the US Army’s center for biological weapons. At the same time, he is working for the CIA. Among the tasks of the dirty tricks department in Building 1412 are brainwashing, drugs and torture, as well as murder by means of poisons and bacteria.

On July 17, 1953, Olson celebrates his 43rd birthday with friends. A few days later, he leaves for the last trip he will ever take. He took his movie camera.

First stop: London. First objects filmed: Big Ben and a parade on the Mall.

Then on to Paris. Near the Eiffel Tower, his two CIA colleagues sit in a sidewalk café and watch pretty French girls go by. On the left is John McNulty.

His son Eric is seeing his father’s last film for the first time in his memory.

Then, suddenly, a picture of the ruins of the Reichstag and Brandenburg Gate. The Soviet Memorial for the Victims of the Second World War. So Frank Olson was also in Berlin early in August 1953.

In Zehlendorf he photographs the headquarters of the American army.

Is Frank Olson on a secret Artichoke mission? Several top-level communist agents were being interrogated in Berlin at the time. It was a time of intense political and military tension in the divided city, just weeks after the civilian uprising in the Soviet sector. At the army headquarters in Berlin, Olson apparently witnessed brutal interrogation methods.
"After he came back from Germany the last time he sounded different. When he talked to me he said, I can probably tell you things, that I can’t tell other people, because you are still in top secret material. The people he saw in Germany went to the extreme. He said: ‘Norm, did you ever see a man die?’

I said ‘No.’

He said, ‘Well, I did.’

Yes, they did die. Some of the people they interrogated died. So you can imagine the amount of work they did on these people.”

“He said, that he was going to leave. He told me that. He said, ‘I am getting out of that CIA. Period.’"
In Korea, it’s just a matter of days before the first American prisoners of war will be released. Some of them will face charges of high treason, because they accused their own country of conducting biological warfare.

Voice of US Air Force Pilot (Prisoner of War in North Korea):

“If my son asked me what I did, what I did in Korea, how can I tell him that I came over here and dropped germ bombs on people — destroying, and bringing death and destruction. How can I go back and face my family?”

Are their accusations accurate?

Or are they themselves the victims of communist brainwashing?

One thing is for certain: Back home, in Freedom, the soldiers making these confessions will be interrogated again, using drugs and torture — by their own people!
The American soldiers who claimed to have committed biological warfare were apparently manipulated using Artichoke techniques. This is documented in CIA papers.

“All hands agreed that (...) among the returning POWs from Korea (...) the ‘hard core’ group and those who had been successfully indoctrinated were excellent subjects for Artichoke work.”
And indeed, all discredited their confessions.
The similarity of expression in these pictures is uncanny. The liberated pilot closes his eyes as he refuses to talk about his “confession.” Norman diverts his gaze.

Voice of US Air Force-Pilot (after his return):

“I did sign a confession relating to germ warfare. The statements contained in this confession were false. They were obtained under duress from Chinese communists. When making these statements I deliberately attempted to put in much as was false and ridiculous as I could possibly get away with.”
The veil of secrecy surrounding this issue — certainly the darkest secret of the Cold War — is still impenetrable. Even now, more than a half century later, those who know anything are afraid to speak.

*Voice of Norman Cournoyer / Friend of Frank Olson*

“I took an oath when I left the Army that I would not talk about that. Sorry.”
The Korean War Memorial in Washington honors the Americans who died in that fight. Of those who returned, some were interrogated by the CIA using cruel methods, and forced to rescind their confessions.

But were the confessions the truth?

Did the Americans in fact use biological weapons in the Korean War? As a test?

And was this the secret Frank Olson knew, and might disclose?

*Code Name Artichoke*
Voice of Eric Olson

“This fits with what my mother had always said: Korea really bothered your father.

Finally one my father’s colleagues within the past year only told me that my father had come to understand that Korea was the key thing and that they were using biological warfare methods in Korea.

And then I preceded to ask him about the germ warfare confessions. This was alleged to be by the American government, these confessions made by the American servicemen were immediately discredited by the U.S. government under the idea that these were manipulated and produced only by the effect of brainwashing.

And at that point my father’s colleague looked at me as if to say ‘read-my-lips’:

‘IT WASN’T ALL BRAINWASHING,’ he said.”
Would this colleague, Norman Cournoyer, repeat this statement in front of the camera? He has never made a public statement. Neither about Frank Olson, nor about biological warfare in the Korean War.

Will he, now in his 80s, pay last respects to his old friend Frank Olson? And to Frank's son Eric, who takes part in this conversation?
Motivated by his love for Frank, made fearless by age, Norman makes a startling revelation.
“There were people who had biological weapons and they used them...”

Voices of Norman Cournoyer and Eric Olson

“I took an oath when I left the United States Army that I would never divulge that stuff.”

“You divulged it to me.”

“You cannot prove it, can you?”

“I can assert it. You told me.”

“Hearsay!”

“So you don’t want to say it?”

“No .... I don’t want to say it. But, there were people who had biological weapons and they used them. I won’t say anything more than that. They used them.”

Voice of Norman Cournoyer/Friend of Frank Olson

“Was there a reason for your Dad being killed by the CIA?”

Probably so.”
Around Frederick, Maryland, where Frank Olson lived while working for both the US Army’s biological warfare program and the CIA, the FBI is still looking for the anthrax terrorist.

For months, the largest investigation in the history of American justice has been underway. Should the perpetrator be accused and the case brought to court, the government in Washington might be forced to reveal what Eric Olson believes is top secret information about illegal research on biological weapons, about the use of anthrax in the Korean War, and about his father’s murder.
Eric wants to tell his friend Bruce about he latest evidence. Bruce has been at his side throughout his years of research. Once, in the summer of 1975, the American government didn’t hesitate to see to it that the truth wasn’t made known.
The conspiracy originated at the top, in the White House, initiated by Donald Rumsfeld and Richard Cheney. It had just been learned that the CIA allegedly drugged its employee Frank Olson with LSD before his supposed suicide.

Rumsfeld and Cheney, heads of the White House chiefs of staff, at the time recommended to President Gerald Ford that he apologize to the family in the name of the government, and support retribution, in order to prevent worse things from happening. That’s the content of this White House memo:

“There (is...) the possibility that it might be necessary to disclose highly classified national security information in connection with any court suit or legislative hearings.”

Ten days later, Ford hosted the Olson family and apologized. This allowed him to remain silent about state secrets – and the true reasons for Frank Olson’s death.
For: Don Rumsfeld
Dick Cheney

The Olson Matter / CIA

There (is...) the possibility that it might be necessary to disclose highly classified national security information in connection with any court suit or legislative hearings.

...
Voice of Eric Olson

“What this means for me is that a national security homicide is not only a possibility, but really it’s a necessity, when you have a certain number of ingredients together.

If you are doing top secret work that is immoral, arguably immoral, especially in the post-Nuremberg period, and arguably illegal, at odds with the kind of high moral position you are trying to maintain in the world, and at the same time judged to be of the highest national priority, then you have to have a mechanism of security which is going to include murder.”
The two politicians who collaborated in the conspiracy in 1975, Rumsfeld and Cheney, are back in power, as Vice President and Secretary of Defense of the government of the United States. The Frank Olson case, it seems, is far from being closed, even 50 years later. That, at least, is one thing of which Olson’s son is now certain.
A film by
Egmont R. Koch
and
Michael Wech