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Firestorm: *Dr. James McDonald's Fight for UFO Science* by **Ann Druffel** Foreword by Dr. Jacques Vallée

Over the last fifty years a new phenomenon aroused public passion and created an immediate controversy within the technical community. That controversy centered on unusual flying objects. Dr. James McDonald, who was the most vocal champion for their physical reality, embodied every facet of the challenge they posed to the scientific establishment.

—Dr. Jacques Vallée from the Foreword

History is rewritten when we glimpse it through the previously unpublished journals of scientist Dr. James E. McDonald—an intellectual giant and fearless fighter who nearly accomplished what no one has yet to do: Examine the strange phenomena of UFOs through the uncompromising eyes of the scientific community.

Dr. McDonald was the first prominent American scientist to recognize the possibility that UFOs might be from extraterrestrial sources. With unwavering persistence he urged scientific and governmental establishments to study the evidence with adequate funding and complete objectivity. His courage, his honesty and stamina through years of governmental resistance are legendary.

Well acquainted with the formidable task UFO researchers face, author Ann Druffel takes ***Firestorm: Dr. James E. McDonald's Fight for UFO Science*** (Wild Flower Press, July 2003) beyond a biography of a scientist's attempt to solve the UFO question. She delves deeply into the behind-the-scenes manipulations, politics and intrigues encountered by McDonald and other researchers who have long sought to get UFOs studied in an open manner by the appropriate authorities, both civilian and governmental. Druffel's personal access to McDonald's private archives and the data gleaned from dozens of interviews with McDonald's academic colleagues allowed her to authoritatively document the real history of the early days of what is now known as the "Great UFO Cover-Up."

Dr. McDonald was an atmospheric physicist and professor at the University of Arizona at Tucson, where he co-founded the Institute of Atmospheric Physics; he was also a contract scientist for the Office of Naval Research.

After privately studying UFOs for eight years, McDonald went public in 1966, hoping to convince his colleagues that the subject deserved to be investigated openly by government and science. During his subsequent research he became the chief scientific spokesperson on the subject, convinced that the mounting evidence for UFOs created a legitimate scientific question, and trusted that interest by the scientific establishment in the subject would naturally follow. This was however, not to be the scenario that he and subsequent researchers would encounter.

Braving criticism, McDonald forged ahead for five incredible years, studying the most credible cases which came to his attention, always seeking sightings which had been reported by groups of trustworthy witnesses, such as military pilots, police officers, and tower control officers. With his high level of

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contacts in government, the military services, and in the scientific community, he seemed on the verge of unlocking much of the mystery that has puzzled the world since 1947, until his tragic death in 1971 ended this extraordinary endeavor. If he had lived out a normal life span, it is thought that the UFO field today would be very different from the chaos into which it has been tossed.

Druffel chronicles McDonald's unwavering commitment to exploring the topic, despite all odds. She demonstrates how, when McDonald realized that the question of UFOs was being neglected by both science and the government, his innate sense of fairness was offended. He felt the public had a right to know. McDonald assiduously researched Project Blue Book, urging the military to focus their research on the critical files that were more worthy of further study, and to correct valid reports that had been clearly changed to discredit the eyewitnesses. When the government selected a group of scientists to work on an official, funded government study and developed the Condon Committee, McDonald initially had faith that this report would document the truth about UFOs. However, insiders on the staff of the Condon Committee privately informed McDonald that it was not being completed in good faith but would, instead, result in a cover-up of scientific UFO evidence. When the Condon Committee's final report was released, this proved true. McDonald then set about examining the Condon's final report in great depth and wrote extensive articles about the discrepancies and coverup of evidential data within it.

McDonald was the first person outside the military-government complex to see many of the full and complete texts of these files, and he took complete notes that would live for posterity. As he read through one uncensored version of a meeting report, he observed the full title: "Report of Meeting of Scientific Advisory Panel on Unidentified Flying Objects Convened By Office of Scientific Intelligence, CIA, January 14-18, 1953." For the first time, a U.S. civilian held proof in his hands that the Air Force was not the only official agency interested in UFOs, as the public had been led to believe!

Even now some 30 years after the events detailed in this book, the scientific community is still challenged by the continuing presence of unidentified phenomena in a sky that is newly crowded with the devices of modern technology. Yet McDonald's premise that these unidentified aerofoms, physical and seemingly metallic, should be studied by a tracking system involving government, science, military, and members of the American public is still ignored. The issues are as perplexing as ever, and yet the attitudes of the scientific world have not changed very much from the closed-mindedness of the early days.

Druffel's meticulous assessment of McDonald's four handwritten journals that detail events during his years of UFO research involve hundreds of handwritten pages describing conversations, events and personal UFO sightings confided to McDonald by scientific and military colleagues. Her careful references to portions of McDonald's journals offer a rare glimpse at unedited history in the making. For over 20 years these files lay among McDonald's other files, unrecognized for their value until Ann Druffel began her own investigation into Dr. McDonald's life and research. **Firestorm** includes Appendices, a glossary, and a detailed topical index.



About the Author: Ann Druffel has been investigating UFO reports for 46 years. She served with the National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena (NICAP), where she became acquainted with Dr. James E. McDonald and shared data on Southern California sightings and photo cases. Druffel has contributed over 180 articles to prominent UFO journals and international magazines and is a frequent public speaker and media spokeswoman. She is the author of *How to Defend Yourself Against Alien Abductions* (1998), as well as the classic *Tujunga Canyon Contacts* (co-authored by D. Scott Rogo), and contributed to *Ron Story's UFO Encyclopedia* and Rogo's *The Anthology of UFO Abductions*, and numerous other major UFO reference works. Druffel lives in Pasadena, California.

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