

A scientist's pursuit of the truth behind the UFO phenomenon



J T

Follow

Sep 17, 2018 · 4 min read



Professor James E. McDonald.

In my estimation, professor James Edward McDonald (1920–1971) might be the greatest hero in the history of ufo-investigations. His courage to go against the U.S. Government's official dismissal of the UFO phenomenon as scientifically insignificant should act as a template for everyone who calls themselves a scientist and/or who claims to be a (sound) sceptic.

His dedication to pursuing the truth of the ridiculed and stigmatized UFO subject is inspiring. At the same time, tragic since all the opposition he met from fellow scientists and politicians, in the end, took a toll on him. Professor James Edward McDonald took his life in 1971 (whether it was suicide or not is still an open question, according to some researchers).

I am not going to write a biography on the life of prof. James E. McDonald and his determination making the UFO phenomenon into a legitimate subject to study by scientists, and an issue to openly and seriously discuss in the media and general public (there already exists an excellent biography, *The Firestorm: Dr McDonald's Fight for UFO Science* (2003) by Ann Druffell).

Rather, this short article is a way for me to raise my hat for a human being who followed his heart, his curiosity and who truly practised the scientific approach of finding out the truth about reality no matter how that truth may turn out to be.

However, I do not want to romanticize being obsessive with a hypothesis, as in prof. James E. McDonald. His intense dedication — bordering on obsession — had devastating consequences for himself and his loved ones.

Besides being a homage to one of the greatest ufo-investigators up till the present day, this article also has the purpose of showing people with no or little previous knowledge of the UFO phenomenon that brilliant minds since at least the 1940s have taken the phenomenon seriously.

At the end of the article, you will find a link to “James E. McDonald papers” at Arizona Archives Online. I highly recommend everyone interested in the UFO phenomenon to spend some time exploring the material on the phenomenon that prof. James E. McDonald collected, analyzed and compiled for posterity.

During the short amount of time (5 years) that prof. McDonald investigated the UFO phenomenon; he interviewed hundreds of UFO witnesses; held briefings in the UN and the U.S.Congress; and presentations in scientific contexts about the importance of the UFO phenomenon.

He probably accomplished more in the field of ufo-research than many of the current so-called “ufologists” will ever hope to do (or me for that matter, but I am, on the other hand, not claiming to be a ufo-researcher).

Before the link to prof. McDonald's papers on the UFO phenomenon, I will leave a couple of other links that I hope can be of interest to someone. This first one is a list of prof. McDonald's publications as an atmospheric physicist in peer-reviewed journals.

This [second link](#)** goes to one of prof. McDonald's most famous presentations on the *inadequate* investigations of UFOs made by the U.S. Air Force from the late 1940s to the late 1960s (“Project Sign”, “Project Grudge”, “Project Blue Book,” and “The Condon Report”). He held the presentation with the title “Science in Default” at the symposium for the American Association for the Advancement of Science in December 1969. He said the following at the end of page 3 in “Science in Default”:

The Condon Report and its Academy endorsement have exerted a highly negative influence on clarification of the long-standing UFO problem; so much, in fact, that it seems almost pointless to now call for new and more extensive UFO investigations. Yet the latter are precisely what are needed to bring out into full light of scientific inquiry a phenomenon that could well constitute one of the greatest scientific problems of our times.

And lastly, [the papers](#) (“James E. McDonald papers”) of a pioneer in the field of ufo-research and seeker of truth and justice, professor of Atmospheric Sciences, James Edward McDonald.

****Addendum 2020-08-02:** The link to McDonald’s paper “Science in Default” is no longer working (for some reason, it takes you to an unrelated website). But if you are interested, you can listen to an audio recording in which McDonald is presenting his paper “Science in Default” at the symposium for the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 1969. You can listen to McDonald’s presentation on the following link: <https://youtu.be/C2Al9uCpGfQ>.

Get an email whenever J T publishes.

Your email

Subscribe

By signing up, you will create a Medium account if you don't already have one. Review our [Privacy Policy](#) for more information about our privacy practices.

Science UFO Curiosity Passion History