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SEARCH

May 7, 1920: Birth of renowned UFO researcher James E. McDonald

On this day in Duluth in 1920, physicist Dr. James E. McDonald was born right here in the Zenith City. During World War II McDonald worked as a cryptologist. After the war he completed a Ph.D. in physics at the University of Iowa before moving on to the University of Arizona, where he establish a meteorology and atmospheric program at the University of Arizona as a professor of meteorology. When supersonic transport plans were under development in the late 1960s, McDonald was among the experts testifying before congress against the planes, fearing they would damage the ozone layer. McDonald and two other meteorologists spotted a UFO in the Arizona desert skies one day in 1954, sparking a new interest in McDonald. Ten years later he was lecturing on the phenomena. According to biographer Ann Druffel, “McDonald also lambasted the U.S. Air Force for what he saw as their inept handling of UFO studies.” In 1967 the Office of Naval Research was paying him to look into UFOs. He noted that the Navy’s Project Blue book, a study of UFOs, had withheld some of the most compelling reports of UFOs and tried to explain away all others. That same year McDonald said, “There is no sensible alternative to the utterly shocking hypothesis that UFOs are extraterrestrial probes.” McDonald’s work eventually isolated him from the larger scientific community—and estranged him from his wife. She filed for divorce in 1971. He killed himself June 13, 1971. Read a biography of Dr. McDonald [here](http://zenithcity.com/archive/people-biography/james-e-mcdonald/) (<http://zenithcity.com/archive/people-biography/james-e-mcdonald/>).



UFO researcher and native Duluthian James E. McDonald. (Image: University of Arizona)

← May 6, 1982: Explosion & Fire rocks Riverside (<http://zenithcity.com/thisday/may-6-1982-explosion-fire-rocks-riverside/>)

May 8, 1869: Henry “Typhoid” Truelsen arrives in Duluth →
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