

Klass  
U. Md  
12/18/69

The Sept. 26, 1967, edition of the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette reported on McDonald's talk to scientists from the Westinghouse Research and Development Center. It reported that McDonald "told about cases, which he said he had personally investigated, in which large trucks had apparently been picked up and moved short distances in the presence of UFOs." \*

If true, the Earth not only has alien visitors but they have malicious if not hostile intent. Clearly such evidence should be brought to the attention of top government officials and McDonald got his chance in the summer of 1968 when he appeared at Congressman Roush's "Symposium on Unidentified Flying Objects." McDonald's testimony and prepared statement occupy more than 70 pages or more than one-quarter of the entire published proceedings. He discussed more than 40 UFO cases, but there was not a single mention of those where the UFO allegedly had picked up a truck and dumped it into a ditch or farm field. What had happened to shake McDonald's confidence in what had seemed to be "credible witnesses" only a few months earlier?

McDonald feels competent to sort fact from fantasy in most UFO cases but he does have one strange qualification. If a witness merely claims to have seen a saucer-shaped craft, complete with windows and landing gear, McDonald feels confident he can himself appraise the person's credibility. But if the person adds a few more details, saying that he saw creatures in the craft or that creatures emerged from the craft and perhaps attempted communication, then McDonald doubts his qualifications to assess that person's credibility. For these "occupant cases," as they are known, McDonald says that "expert psychological opinion is badly needed in assessing such reports." [3.]

But occasionally McDonald does venture an appraisal of an occupant case. One of these, which he personally investigated during a Navy sponsored trip to Australia in 1967, involved an Anglican missionary named Father Gill, then based in New Guinea. In the late 1950s, Gill's superior, Father Cruttwell, had become very interested in flying saucers and wrote to a British UFO magazine for more information. To Cruttwell's delight, he was asked to become an official member of the International UFO Observer Corps with full responsibility for investigating all UFO cases in New Guinea. For a lonely missionary, this must have been an exciting responsibility.

Cruttwell promptly deputized several missionaries under his authority and they in turn alerted the natives to report any flying saucers. Soon the natives were turning in UFO reports, usually of glowing objects seen at great distances. But instead of being reported in the traditional saucer shape, most UFOs were said to resemble Tilley lamps -- a kerosene lamp widely used there.

The most fantastic UFO sighting report came from Gill and was said to have occurred on two successive evenings, June 26-27, 1959. Here is how Gill began his letter to Cruttwell to report the amazing incident:

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\* It seems strange that extraterrestrial visitors from advanced civilizations would waste time in such childish pranks. One might rather expect that they would have landed on the Moon and carried off all, or part, of Surveyor 3. Yet it was completely intact when the Apollo 12 crew arrived.

January 17, 1968

Mr. R.S. Greenbaum  
Public Affairs Branch  
Office of Naval Research  
Washington D.C. 20360

Dear Mr. Greenbaum:

Thank you for yours of January 12, enclosing a copy of the December 16, 1967, letter from the University of Arizona describing the research in atmospheric physics being conducted by Dr. James E. McDonald under ONR sponsorship.

It was especially interesting to learn that the University, and presumably McDonald, believe that "a great deal of information is to be gained on atmospheric optics, radar propagation and atmospheric electricity from a careful study of reported UFO sightings." (I should have imagined that more meaningful scientific data on atmospheric optics and radar propagation might be obtained through controlled experiments.)

And it was interesting to learn that McDonald, while on his ONR-sponsored trip to Australia, gave "a talk on various meteorological aspects of the UFO problem" while in Melbourne. Having heard McDonald speak on Oct. 19, 1966, to the Washington D.C. chapter of the American Meteorological Society on UFOs, I had understood that he firmly rejected any hypothesis that freak atmospheric electrical phenomena might have a significant role in the UFO mystery. This understanding was reinforced by his subsequent talk on April 21, 1967, to the American Society of Newspaper Editors in Washington.


But perhaps I err in this understanding, or perhaps McDonald has altered his views between April 21 and the time he left for Australia.

In any event, if I correctly understand the University of Arizona letter, any and all UFO studies which McDonald conducted with ONR funds were oriented to obtaining new knowledge in the field of atmospheric physics. Is this correct?

Following McDonald's return from Australia, he briefed the University of Colorado, among others, on the many interviews he had had in Australia with persons who had reported UFO sightings. The University of Arizona letter refers to McDonald's "interviews with a number of witnesses of unusual atmospheric phenomena having possible bearing on optical and electrical processes."

Is it possible to obtain clarification from the University as to whether the interviews to which it refers are the same as those involving UFO sightings?

Very truly yours,

  
Philip J. Klass  
SENIOR AVIONICS EDITOR

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