

BOOK REVIEWS

Firestorm: Dr. James E. McDonald's Fight for UFO Science by Ann Druffel. Columbus, NC: Wild Flower Press, 2003. 609 pp. \$34.00. ISBN 0-926524-58-5.

Like Dr. James E. McDonald, I am a mainstream “establishment” scientist who, at a certain point, became convinced that the UFO phenomenon deserves serious consideration. There, the resemblance between me and McDonald ends. In my case, I decided, very early on, that my particular mix of strengths and weaknesses was such that active effort by me on this problem was unlikely to be dramatically productive, and also would require such effort and time that I could not expect to have a normal scientific career if I were to pursue it. I therefore simply dropped it, except that I could not, in conscience, refrain from lending my name to the support of the legitimacy of this study. For example, I serve today on the National Board of Directors of the Fund for UFO Research (FUFOR), which funded Ann Druffel's archiving of McDonald's UFO files. And, I write an occasional book review: my slowly evolving views on UFOs, if they are of interest, are described in *JSE 15*, p. 385, 2001.

McDonald, in contrast, attempted to continue his very successful scientific career, and to elucidate UFOs on top of that. And he did a great, wonderful job of it, as I have now learned from reading Ann Druffel's fine biography. From her book, I have learned for the first time that McDonald's suicide had *nothing at all* to do with his UFO involvement. I dearly wish that we had someone to take McDonald's place, for, to my mind, the principal value of Druffel's book is *not* for its biography of a superb scientist, valuable as that is, but rather for the book's systematic exposition of the seriousness of the UFO issue, as ferreted out by McDonald.

My own interest in UFOs began forty years ago, and it is depressing to me that, forty years on, I find myself in exactly the same position as then. *Why* has there been so little progress? Reading this book suggests why. It hardly comes as a surprise that our society is conservative, and that most scientists, like me, are not up to what McDonald did. This is not unique to UFOs (and other areas that are regarded as “fringe” science), it even applies, as I have discovered, to mainstream science. I am thinking of the place of quantum mechanics in human attitudes toward the world. What happened with quantum mechanics, is what would likely have happened, had Galileo decided that Copernicus was wrong, and had therefore written his famous book to reflect that incorrect conviction. (And, please, don't think that to be an *impossibility*, without re-reading Galileo's “Dialogue.” One thing that shines through, is just *how difficult* Galileo *himself* found it, to believe the Copernican idea.) In the case of quantum mechanics, the “modern Galileo,” Albert Einstein, most unfortunately *rejected* the completeness of quantum mechanics, with the result that today, while everyone does use

quantum mechanics correctly technically, we are largely denied the profound insight into the human condition that quantum mechanics provides. The loss is enormous, but there is no one to mend it.

What this tells me, is the profound importance of the *individual*. But we can, each of us, only contribute within our individual limitations. For example, regarding the significance of quantum mechanics, Michael Frayn, not a physicist, has made an important contribution, not only with his successful play, "Copenhagen," but with his accompanying commentaries.

On the UFO question, Ann Druffel has made a *major* contribution with this biography of James E. McDonald. Her book is not perfect: when you read the important section on Rex E. Heflin, please, do be sure to *also* look at her *paper* on the subject, in this journal (*JSE 14*, p. 583, 2000). You will find there (Figs. 10, 16, 17) clear evidence for the connection between Heflin's third UFO photograph and his (historically very controversial) fourth UFO photograph; this evidence cannot be seen in the poor illustration that is in the book. But, by and large, the book is truly excellent, and it will be what I recommend that anyone read, who wonders why I remain deeply interested in the UFO controversy.

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