

UFO POTPOURRI

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DR. THORNTON PAGE DIES

Astrophysicist Thornton Page died at his home in Nassau Bay, Texas on 2 January 1996. Dr. Page is known to ufologists for his participation in the CIA sponsored Robertson Panel deliberations on the subject of UFOs. The panel, consisting of five scientists in the physical sciences, two associate members and various Air Force and CIA representatives met from Wednesday, January 14, to Saturday, January 17, 1953, in Washington, D.C. Panel member Thornton Page was a former professor of astronomy at the University of Chicago, was a physicist at the Naval Ordnance Laboratory during World War II, and in 1953 was deputy director of the Johns Hopkins' Operations Research Office. More information on the activities of the Robertson Panel can be found in The UFO Controversy in America, by Dr. David Jacobs.

Dr. Page is quoted in the Houston Chronicle, on 12 February 1975. The article reads as follows:

"Some reported sightings of unidentified flying objects (UFOs) remain unexplained, a space scientist says, and the question of their validity should remain open.

"Dr. Thornton L. Page, an astrophysicist with the Naval Research Laboratory, said 95 percent of UFO reports are easily explained as natural phenomena and another 2 or 3 percent are hoaxes.

"That last 2 percent is what keeps the spice in life," he said.

"Page, coauthor of a book called "UFOs - A Scientific Debate," addressed the Houston section of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics Tuesday night.

"He said the crew of a military airplane flying over the Dallas area in 1957 reported a glowing light following them for 700 miles. The "thing" was also detected by the plane's radar and by ground radar, he said.

"One explanation held that the radars had temporarily failed and that simultaneously the crew had seen a meteor.

Page called it "a pretty forced explanation."

Six persons in his audience of 170 said they have seen a UFO.

Page, who said he has never seen one, added, "We should never claim that we understand and can explain everything."

Writing about The Search for Extraterrestrial Life: Recent Developments, Proceedings of the 112th Symposium of the International Astronomical

Union, Dr. Page said: "The IAU Symposium 112 book is very good. A case can be made for UFOs as primary evidence for ETI..."

Consultant with NASA, scientist dies

Astrophysicist Thornton Leigh Page, who consulted with NASA on the development of orbiting observatories and authored books on galactic evolution, died Tuesday at his Nassau Bay home. He was 82.

Born in New Haven, Conn., Page had a career that spanned seven decades and embraced advances in spectroscopy, high energy physics and NASA's Hubble Space Telescope and Gamma Ray Observatory.

He served as a research associate at the Johnson Space Center in Houston from 1968 to 1970 and from 1976 to 1993. He was a part-time instructor at the University of Houston-Clear Lake from 1982 to 1988.

Page graduated from Yale University in 1934. A Rhodes Scholar, Page earned his doctorate in astrophysics from Oxford University.

Page wrote books on astronomy, including a 1974 work with noted astronomer Carl Sagan titled, UFOs: A Scientific Debate.

He is survived by his wife, Lou, of Nassau Bay. Arrangements were pending Tuesday.



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On 9 February 1980, Dr. Page made the following statement on the need for UFO studies:

"While over half of the U.S. public is convinced that UFO's are real, it would be foolhardy to ignore them. Study of significant cases (reliable reports of very unusual sightings) is a minimum requirement. Data recorded soon after the event will surely be valuable in years to come. There is a possibility that they may indicate new physical phenomena, and a certainty that they will be significant in sociological-psychological studies. In our book, "UFO's - A Scientific Debate," we concluded that data available in 1968 showed that either physical scientists or social scientists must change their views about the UFO phenomena.

"Funds are needed to increase the number of high-reliability, high-peculiarity cases investigated each year by the Center for UFO Studies and associated organizations. At conservative estimate, this will require doubling the CUFOS budget.

"Two other specific studies have long been neglected for lack of funds:

1) A study of the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory Prairie Network photos for possible evidence of UFO's, requiring two photo-interpretors for three years at a cost of about \$200,000. (Time can be saved by selecting photos in those areas and at those times when UFO's were reported in the Midwest.)

2) An extended study of current NORAD radar data at times of UFO reports, requiring two electronic specialists and special computer equipment, costing about \$200,000 per year. (After systematic search is established, one or two years of negative findings should terminate the study; therefore the total cost would be about \$600,000.

"Plans should be made to report these studies in objective, scientific format, whether the results are positive or negative.

In 1995, the Fund For UFO Research published *UFOs and Science: The Collected Writings of Dr. James E. McDonald*. On page 175, Dr. McDonald provides some very interesting comments about "The Robertson Report and the CIA." It reads as follows:

"The Robertson Panel (Chaired by Caltech theoretical physicist H.P. Robertson) met in January, 1953, and reviewed selected UFO reports, apparently about eight in detail and about fifteen others on a briefing-basis. Two working days of case-reviews followed by two days of

summarizing and report-drafting constituted the entire activity of this Panel during the period January 14-17, 1953. I describe that Panel's work in more than passing manner because I believe that *the Robertson Panel marked a turning point in the history of UFO investigation.*

"On the first of three visits to Project Bluebook at WPAFB last summer, I asked to see the full report of the Robertson Panel and was given that report by the present Bluebook officer, Major Hector Quintanilla. He informed me that he had "routinely declassified" it earlier on the basis of the "12-year rule" covering DOD documents. I made extensive notes from it and discussed its content with Maj. Quintanilla. On my next trip to Bluebook, on June 20, I requested a Xerox copy of the report. The copy was prepared for me, but not given to me because a superior officer suggested that since "another agency" was involved, they'd have to check before releasing it to me. I reminded them that I already had extensive notes on it and that I had already discussed its contents with many scientific colleagues around the country. I was assured that their check was perfunctory and that I would be sent the copy in a week or two.

"In fact, I never received it. The "other agency," the Central Intelligence Agency, ruled that this document did not come under the "12-year rule" and reclassified it. Although a so-called "sanitized version" was later released, the full document remains undisclosed. A number of sections of the "sanitized version" have been published by John Lear, who asked for full release but got only the partial version.

Since Dr. McDonald had seen the full version of the document while it was in declassified status at Bluebook, he wrote about its content as a continuation of the above introductory material. Persons interested learning more about the outstanding work done by Dr. James McDonald should obtain the collection of his writings from the Fund for UFO Research, P.O. Box 277, Mr. Rainier, MD 20712.

Dr. McDonald spoke of the conclusions of the Robertson Panel, saying that "even persons who have not seen the entire document, as I have, can sense that a minor tragedy of science may have been effected in January, 1953."

He told that the fourth recommendation made by the CIA, asked for a systematic "*debunking of the flying saucers,*" to use the actual language of the document. The stated objective of the "debunking" was to "reduce public interest in flying saucers."