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UFO UpDates Mailing List

Re: 50s UFO History: Role Of Dr. James McDonald

From: Jerome Clark <jkclark@frontiernet.net>
Date: Tue, 01 Dec 98 16:31:09 PST
Fwd Date: Tue, 01 Dec 1998 23:52:17 -0500
Subject: Re: 50s UFO History: Role Of Dr. James McDonald

>Date: Mon, 30 Nov 1998 18:36:29 -0500
>From: Gary <galevy@pipeline.com>
>To: UFO UpDate <updates@globalserve.net>
>Subject: A Bit More 1950s UFO History: The Role Of Dr. James McDonald

>Can one really believe that one day [Hynek] simply "woke up" and
>decided to change his position? Well, it was mighty convenient,
>wasn't it, since it followed a debunking effort so obviously
>bogus that it made him a national laughing stock. This is the
>aforementioned episode where Hynek attributed UFO sightings by
>law officers, college students and others in Michigan to "swamp
>gas". This disaster led then Congressman of Michigan, Gerald
>Ford, to call for a Congressional investigation of UFOs. As for
>Hynek, well, we know today moral turpitude is no obstacle to
>continued public service in this country, is it?

This is just silly. Allen Hynek, about whose personality we are learning nothing from the above, was a cautious man by nature. His reluctance to part company with colleagues, not to mention employer (the Air Force, whose fees helped the Hyneks educate their children), explains everything you need to know about Hynek's long skepticism, followed by dithering, followed by cautious advocacy. His longtime closet occultism explains why at the end he had moved into extremely speculative approaches. He once confided to me his belief that "elementals" (nature spirits, for the occult-unread out there) are behind the UFO phenomenon.

Jim McDonald, Hynek's harshest critic, never succumbed to baseless paranoia about Allen's motivations. He deemed Allen a coward for his long silence in the face of Blue Book's excesses, and he told him so, about as bluntly as one human being can speak to another. (A long, never-sent incendiary letter cites chapter and verse, one of the most amazing documents I have ever read. It's in the McDonald archives at the University of Arizona.) In person, as I know (having known Allen fairly well in his last decade), Allen often reflected back on McDonald's assault on his personality, character, and choices and attempted, again and again, to explain and rationalize his behavior. McDonald's charges troubled him the rest of his life.

>How hard is it to lock up the "agent status" of a personage in
>the UFO arena? In the case of Dr. Hynek, its easy. That is, in
>the 1950s Dr. Hynek filed Top Secret reports on his fellow
>astronomers, reports that were classified and only became public
>in the middle 1970s, a quarter-century later, when PROJECT SIGN
>papers were released. In those same documents is the statement,

>from Hynek himself (!), that Dr. Lincoln La Paz, of the
>University of New Mexico, the meteor expert who had helped
>investigate the "green fireballs," thought that Dr. Hynek was
>part "of a major cover-up." La Paz was still fuming in 1964
>about the way the earlier investigation had been handled by SIGN
>and Hynek.

Yup. A lot of people, including me, have fumed about how the various Air Force projects handled UFOs. Some have thought that a cover up, not a foul up, was responsible. La Paz, however, was wrong, to all available evidence. Sign/Grudge/Blue Book were largely incompetent, as anybody can see for himself reading their handling of most UFO reports. I am open-minded about the notion that a cover-up existed somewhere, but Blue Book was not part of it. Nor was Allen, who spent his last years more or less convinced that somebody within the inner circle had the answers and feeling bitter that, for all his loyal service, he had been kept out of the loop. These feelings intensified as he began to wonder if maybe there were some foundation to the long-standing rumors about crash/retrievals.

>Who worked for PROJECTS SAUCER, SIGN and GRUDGE and alone
>survived SIGN/Grudge purge in 1949? Why it was Allen Hynek!

So? Allen wasn't a military officer subject to reassignment. He was a civilian consultant of proved utility to the Air Force. He had a pleasant personality and worked well with the various Blue Book staffs, and for a long time he followed the party line. None of this amounts to evidence that he was anything more than a complacent, capable consultant. It's a real stretch to get a sinister agent out of these modest materials.

>Who started a brand new UFO organization, right after NICAP was
>destroyed from within by CIA psychological warfare operatives,

This is garbage, not to put too fine a point on it. To start with, the old Keyhoe-era NICAP closed on December 3, 1969. CUFOS did not come into existence until October 1973.

NICAP was destroyed not by sinister conspiracies but by Keyhoe's authoritarian personality and managerial incompetence, which caused all kinds of financial and -- most important -- tax liabilities for the Board of Governors, who finally stepped in to protect their own money interests. All of this can be documented easily by consultation with the NICAP files, where the problems are discussed at length in internal correspondence. I discuss the real, not the imagined, reasons for NICAP's demise in The UFO Encyclopedia, 2nd Ed., pp. 559-60, 670-71.

>and put a former Counterintelligence Corps (CIC) member, Sherm
>Larson, in charge of the new organization, CUFOS?

This is not just silly, it's downright hilarious. Sherm Larsen (not Larson) as secret agent? Pardon me while I pick myself off the floor. I knew Sherm very well. My ex-wife (at the time my fiance) worked as his secretary for several years, and I'd see him several times a week. Nobody who knew him would ever mistake him for anything other than what he was: a hard-working, unimaginative George F. Babbitt type of average intelligence and conventional views, an insurance agent by profession and a living personification of every stereotype associated with that calling. (No offense to you insurance agents out there; yours is a perfectly honorable occupation, but you know what I mean probably better than anybody.)

Sherm had practical managerial skills, of which Allen possessed zero, and these skills did much to keep CUFOS functioning from day to day. Allen didn't put him "in charge." He wanted to start a UFO organization but didn't want to go through the hassle of incorporation procedures. Sherm suggested to him that he simply take over Public Education Group (PEG), a local flying-saucer discussion group Sherm had led for some years in the Chicago area; Allen agreed, insisting on the name Center for UFO Studies. The unremarkable story, which no one who was there at the time disputes, is related by Larsen in "The Founding of CUFOS," IUR, May/June 1986, pp. 13-14. Sherm had nothing to do with the setting of CUFOS policy, except in his capacity as a board member, where (with two exceptions, one noted below; the other, which involved a personality conflict, is irrelevant here) he tended to vote with everybody else.

Sherm left CUFOS after Allen's death. The rest of us board members, mostly younger men than Sherm (who was in his 70s, and retired from his day job), wanted to move headquarters from a strip mall in out-of-the-way Glenview into a more accessible office on Chicago's north side. Sherm wanted to stay in Glenview, which was also where he lived. When Sherm was outvoted, he resigned and thereafter had no contact with the organization. We didn't even know he'd died till several weeks after it happened.

Sherm was basically a good guy, and he deserves credit for his contributions, not censure on the fantastic and absurd grounds that he was some kind of double agent.

>Finally, who was it who always had money to travel and seemed to
>be everywhere on the UFO scene, for decades? Whose university
>would let him travel on the breaking news of a UFO sighting and
>yet held his job for decades? Why, it was Allen Hynek!

Yup, it was indeed Allen Hynek. The Air Force paid his way to on-site investigations, though it often circumscribed his movements once he got there. (Socorro was a particularly frustrating experience

for him; for details, see UFOE#2, "Socorro CE2/CE3," pp. 856-67.) Later, after Blue Book canned him in early 1969, his travel expenses were covered by the organizations to which he often gave lectures. Allen loved to travel, loved to meet new people, loved to eat in new restaurants, loved to oggle good-looking women. In his heart he was something of a kid. He thoroughly enjoyed life, and he was always fun to be around.

>Who was getting money from a "cut out" source, Dodge Corporation
>a subsidiary of McGraw Hill, even as he supposedly was working
>for the Air Force and could freely take money from THAT source?

Oh, give me a break. In common with many scientists, Allen got consulting fees from reference and encyclopedia publishers, to write or advise. Nothing sinister about this. Jeez, I get those, and I ain't even a scientist, much less a secret agent.

>Take a look at those PROJECT SIGN papers (released twenty five
>years ago), at the curriculum vitae of Sherm Larson, first
>President of CUFOS. And all of us must read Jacque Vallee's
>book "Forbidden Science" for crucial details about J. Allen
>Hynek, government agent extraordinaire. It's all right out in
>the open, if you know how to look. For example the cut out
>payments are described on pages 289-290.

>Folks, the UFO arena was and is very akin to a minefield.

Not just akin, but "very akin"? Is there a more overworked adverb than "very"?

>That
>is, if you don't have a good map to the terrain you're
>eventually going to get blown up!

In that case, Gary has just been scattered to pieces. This is one of the dumbest postings I've ever seen. Anybody who believes a word of it is nobody who needs to contact me, ever. Life is just too damn short for it to be wasted by exposure to this sort of paranoid delirium. I'd like to think you're a better man, Gary, than what you've just written would lead me to believe.

Head shaking at the dimensions of human folly and paranoia,

Jerry Clark

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