

U-A PHYSICIST IN NORTHLAND

Still Pursuing 'Cloud'

By WILLIAM HOYT

A University of Arizona atmospheric physicist will arrive in Flagstaff Thursday to start a three-day swing through Northern Arizona in pursuit of detailed data about the mysterious and lovely cloud that flashed briefly over Flagstaff last Feb. 28 at a "remarkable" altitude.

Dr. James E. McDonald, of the UA's Institute of Atmospheric Physics, plans to contact at least four persons in Flagstaff who saw and photographed the weird cloud, and hopes that others who either watched its eastward progress over the San Francisco Peaks area, or who took pictures of it, will contact him.

Persons in Flagstaff or any other Northland community who may have photographs of this unique cloud can contact the Arizona Daily SUN Thursday or Friday and they will be put in touch with Dr. McDonald.

"At the present stage of the study of the Flagstaff cloud," Dr. McDonald said today, "it is the

photos that are of crucial importance in establishing the nature, height and dimensions of the cloud. Appeals by press, radio and TV have brought over 150 reports from observers all over Arizona and subsequent appeals for loaned photos have brought in over 20 pictures . . . But we need more photos."

McDonald began his week-long field trip seeking data on the cloud Tuesday, making visits to Scottsdale and Phoenix Tuesday and the Prescott, Black Hills, and Camp Verde areas today.

At 10 a.m. Thursday, he will check a report of a cloud sighting in Happy Jack and then come to Flagstaff where he will meet with William Breed, Museum of Northern Arizona geologist, F. E. Downum of Leupp, H. E. Graham and James C. Greenacre of the Air Force's Lunar Observation Office here — all of whom photographed the rare cloud.

Surveys of camera sites here will be made Thursday afternoon and Friday morning, with McDon-

ald heading for Winslow Friday afternoon to confer with Vernon Davis, and weather bureau meteorologist Dorsey P. Marting and others who saw the Flagstaff cloud there.

Saturday, McDonald will move on to Holbrook to check with cloud observer Ted Gerwitz, then to Snowflake and Roy N. Daniels and finally to Springerville where I. E. Daniels photographed the cloud. Sunday McDonald will check with observers in the Globe area.

Today, McDonald made surveys with William Shannon of Camp Verde, Bill Warren of Prescott, and Wesley F. White of Sedona.

In connection with his trip, McDonald also released the latest preliminary findings of his month-long study of the cloud — findings which show the formation is even more mysterious than first thought.

These findings, McDonald said, cast doubt on two initial theories as to how the cloud possibly formed.

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THE SUN, Flagstaff, Ariz.,
Wed., April 3, 1968 2

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ed. One theory held that it resulted from a wave disturbance caused by the San Francisco Peaks but this now is doubtful in light of upper atmosphere conditions at the time as indicated by Winslow Weather Bureau rawinsonde balloon soundings.

"A number of reports and photos subsequently received . . . indicate instead that the cloud formed somewhere to the northwest before drifting into the Flagstaff skies," McDonald said.

Data, the scientist added, indicates a tentative altitude for the cloud of about 125,000 feet and "such a height, it must be stressed, is remarkable."

If the cloud was indeed a rare "nacreous" cloud found only in the Arctic, it is higher than any such clouds observed over many years in the Scandinavian area.

McDonald said the theory that the cloud was only an unusually high jet contrail is also contradicted by two circumstances — (1) the upper atmosphere data from Winslow shows that condensation trails could not possibly have formed above an altitude of 78,000 feet, considerably below that of the cloud; and (2), that no operational aircraft can maintain horizontal flight at altitudes now indicated for the Flagstaff cloud.