



True Homosexual Experiences: Boyd McDonald and Straight to Hell

William E. Jones

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Boyd McDonald (1925-1993) had the makings of a successful career in the 1950s--an education at Harvard, jobs at Time/Life and IBM--but things didn't turn out as planned. After 20 years of resentful conformity and worsening alcoholism, McDonald dried out, pawned all of his suits, and went on welfare. It was then that his life truly began. From a tiny room in a New York SRO hotel, McDonald published *Straight to Hell*, a series of chapbooks collecting readers' "true homosexual experiences." Following the example of Alfred Kinsey, McDonald obsessively pursued the truth about sex between men just as gay liberation began to tame America's sexual outlaws for the sake of legal recognition. Admired by such figures as Gore Vidal and William S. Burroughs, *Straight to Hell* combined a vigorous contempt for authority with a keen literary style, and was the precursor of queer 'zines decades later. William E. Jones conducted in-depth interviews with many people from McDonald's life, including friends, colleagues, and most unexpectedly, family members who revealed that he was a loving uncle who doted on his nieces and great-nieces. A complex portrait drawn from a wealth of previously unpublished material, *True Homosexual Experiences: Boyd McDonald and Straight to Hell* is the first biography devoted to a key figure of the American underground.

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