

Trailing UFOs easy; getting into print is harder

By JAMES ADAMS
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For the last eight years, across the fields, streams and cities of North America, Edmonton's Douglas Curran has been tracking down and photographing home-made space ships, UFO citizens, backyard rockets and individuals who believe they came to Earth, somehow, from the farthest reaches of outer space . . .

It's been a fascinating, occasionally amusing, often arduous project for the 31-year-old Curran.

But it's earned him considerable attention both in Canada and the United States — attention that was to culminate this fall in the publication of his first book of photos by New York's prestigious Abbeville Press, with an introduction by Tom (The Right Stuff) Wolfe.

Things, however, seem to have gone wrong. And now Curran is unsure whether *In Advance of the Landing: Folk Concepts of Outer Space* — the title of both the book and the project — will be available for public perusal this year.

A print run of some 1,000 quality paperback copies by Abbeville in Italy was botched recently. Color plates were smudged; type was transferred to images; images were pressed against type. Curran didn't like the quality of the dummies. As a result, the edition was trashed.

Now Abbeville is going to reprint the book (to retail for \$19.95). Plans are to airfreight some 1,500 regional copies into the Canadian market later this month or early December, largely because the wheels of publicity are already rolling here.

The latest issue of *Saturday Night*, for

example, contains a four-page color extract from the book, while *Quill* and *Journal* featured Charles Mendel.

The American portions of the run, however, likely will be watermarked for three or four months, then released in February and March — after the lucrative Christmas sales period. A tour of Los Angeles, San Francisco, Toronto, Boston, Chicago and New York that was scheduled for this month has, obviously, been postponed.

"It's confusing and disconcerting," said Curran recently of his experiences.

It's no secret in Canadian photography circles that Curran was hoping *In Advance of the Landing* would serve as a kind of capstone for his time-consuming excursion of the UFO subculture.

"To see, the book is history. I want to be done with it. I've got other projects and I want some new opportunities, opportunities I thought the book might help provide."

In the last two years, Curran has developed a considerable reputation as a movie still photographer. He's been on the sets of movies like *Raid*, *Hyperspace*, *Draw and Loyalties*. He's also done a well-regarded series of photographs of Alberta Merit settlements.

He'd hoped to have *In Advance of the Landing* on the book shelves two or three years ago. However, a legal wrangle with a local publisher who originally planned to issue the book, as well as discussions with other, Eastern-based publishers,

negotiations with writers like Wolfe and William S. Burroughs and rewriting added years to the project.



Edmonton's Douglas Curran
... book beset by problems