

# Magical books sprout from writer's love of the outdoors

By John A. Simone, Jr.  
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T. A. Barron writes majestic tales, penned in an eloquent and dignified voice.

His award-winning Merlin series, which spans across five volumes, and the new trilogy, *The Great Tree of Avalon*, are sure to please any lover of fantasy or fan of J.R.R. Tolkien or J.K. Rowling.

In the *Lost Years of Merlin* epic, Barron has tried to fill in the gap in the lore about Merlin—the legendary wizard of Camelot—to reveal the secrets of his youth. *The Lost Years of Merlin* is now in pre-production as a film. Dimension Films, a division of Miramax, has purchased the rights, and the story has been adapted as a screenplay by Simon Kinberg.



*The Great Tree of Avalon: Child of the Dark Prophecy* is Barron's 14th published book in 15 years and the first in his new series. Barron describes the trilogy as his most ambitious literary project. Avalon, Barron says, is a "complex world that inspires as well as disturbs, that challenges our sense of right and wrong." Avalon sprouted around a tree, which grew from Merlin's magical seed.

*The Lost Years of Merlin*, also the title of the first book in the series, was Barron's first published novel after having spent eight years as president and chief operating officer of The Prospect Group, a publicly traded investment fund based in New York City.

"It's easy to get caught up into thinking the next quarter's earnings or today's stock price change is really very important. In the long run it is not important at all," says Barron, who now lives in Colorado, where he grew up. In the end, it was not the life for him. The dream to write and nature's call were too strong.

Living in harmony with nature is a theme in Barron's books, which include non-fiction on nature and heroism. His love of the environment was formed during childhood. Barron grew up on a ranch outside Colorado Springs, surrounded by wildlife.

"Nature is the best place on Earth for people to stand and feel dwarfed by how grand the whole sweep of creation is, and at the same time feel big, because we are part of it all," he says.

Barron holds degrees from Princeton; Oxford, where he was a Rhodes scholar, and Harvard. He holds prestigious seats on national boards for organizations such as Princeton University's Board of Trustees, the Wilderness Society, American Farmland Trust, Alaska Conservation Foundation, and the Nature Conservancy state boards in Colorado and Alaska.

He says he got his real education backpacking extensively in Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Arctic.

"I have always found the best education comes from outside of the classroom," he says.

When asked if it was an unnerving transition from New York City to the unpredictable life of a writer, Barron explained:

"Yes, it was scary. But it was not nearly as scary as the idea of growing old and never having followed my dream."