



Photo by Kriss Jenny-Case

Literary visitor

Jill Blyth, second from left, and her daughter, Lauren, and friend Kelly Pertee, line up to get their books autographed by author T.A. Barron, seated, after his presen-

tation Nov. 13 at the Community Library. The author made a return visit to the local library. Please see story on Page 3.

The Sunbury News

SUNBURY, OHIO 43074

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 1995

Author T.A. Barron returns to Community Library

By Kriss K. Jenny-Case

A year and the approaching birth of another child into the family has made author T.A. Barron even more insightful of the miracles of life. Barron spoke before a standing-room-only crowd at the Community Library about his works and his life experiences on Monday night.

"Just yesterday I finished a book, and that's about as close to giving birth as I'm ever going to become," he said of his new tome, "The Lost Years of Merlin."

He based his talk on the experience of looking directly into the eye of a whale while kayaking to do research for one of his books, "The

Merlin Effect."

"While looking into the eye of that whale, I realized that using your imagination is like looking into that dark round eye — into forever," he said.

Barron is an excellent oral storyteller as well as a written one. He held the rapt attention of everyone in the room as he described a pre-dawn kayaking trip into the ocean. A baby cooed softly in her mother's arms at the back of the room as Barron told the mesmerized crowd, "The only sound I heard was the 'swoosh and drip' of the oar as I paddled along."

He said he was initially disappointed at not being able to see the whales he had come to research

close up, until his encounter that allowed him not only to look at one but also touch its back and place his hand into its toothless mouth.

"The older I get the more I am amazed at how things are connected in ways we don't even suppose," he said. "I'm a lot more sensitive to that after looking into the eye of a whale."

Barron, who lives in Boulder, Colo., with his wife and four children (soon to be five), was full of stories about his family. "My home, I've decided, is 20 percent pandemonium and 80 percent harmonious," he said, adding the idea for his first picture book, "Where is Grandpa?" came from his daughter's insistent questioning of that subject after Barron's father died.

Before his presentation, Barron related a family story to Children's Librarian Joni Paxton about one of his sons and his sweet tooth. He was

making a point about the result of igniting a child's imagination through story telling.

"We were outside a bakery, and my son saw a chocolate cake he wanted," said Barron. "He said we should get some because his it was his birthday. I told him, that being truthful, he would know that his birthday is at the end of November and this was August.

"He said, 'I know Dad, but this is my Italian birthday,'" said Barron with a hearty laugh. "In the face of that logic, we went inside and bought two pieces.

"I think we all should have birthdays whenever we want," he said with a wave of his hand. "One day we can have a Nigerian birthday, another a French birthday.... But the point is that it is important to read to children — even from a young age they'll get the feel for the language."

Barron said he has received many

gifts from fans of his works — everything from yellow pine needles from Georgia to a part of a deer horn from Alaska. On this night, he wore a t-shirt that had been designed by an elementary school student based on "The Merlin Effect." He said he has added to his collection buttons and posters announcing his presentation at the Community Library.

When asked why he decided to return a year after his initial visit, Barron quipped, "Because I love you guys.

"Seriously, I've been all around the country, but I've never received a reception that has been as warm or more engaging than the one here in Sunbury," he said.

He left his audience with the blessing, "I hope you have a dream inside of you that you'll pursue. Nothing is more important than following your passion."