

Barron back in 'Boat with book

Fantasy writer promoting his latest book, Steamboat Springs

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PILOT & TODAY STAFF

STEAMBOAT SPRINGS

Tom Barron, better known by his pen name, T.A. Barron, mentions Steamboat Springs whenever he gives a lecture anywhere in the country.

He came to Steamboat three years ago when the Steamboat Reads program featured his book "The Ancient One." Libraries and the Off the Beaten Path Bookstore held a month-long campaign to have everyone in the community read and discuss the book.

When Barron arrived to give a lecture and hold a book signing, he never forgot his impression of the town.

"I tell people wherever I go that this is a town that is really together in thinking about how to conserve the beauty and the values of (where you live)," Barron said. "I use it as an example of a community that is thinking about the big questions.

"If you don't think ahead of the curve, if you don't think about what is special as a community, you get destroyed by the forces of rampant development."

Barron will be returning to Steamboat today with his newest book, "The Great Tree of Avalon." The book, written in the style of other fantasy books such as the Harry Potter and Lord of the Rings series, tells a similar story to the one in "The Ancient One."

"There are none of the same characters and none of the same places, but just like 'The Ancient



GREG HARRING/COURTESY

Barron visited Steamboat three years ago with his book "The Ancient One."

One' the story is about a young hero and a magical world," Barron said. "That world is at risk. It's the classic hero's journey."

Barron is a one-time nature writer who tries to fill his fictional worlds with true details from the natural world to make it seem real.

Barron's main audience is readers ages 9 to 16 because of the age of his hero. "The Great Tree of Avalon" recently was placed on *The New York Times*' Best Sellers list for children's books.

"I want them to have a fabu-

If you go

What: Book signing with T. A. Barron, author of "The Great Tree of Avalon"

When: 5 p.m. today

Where: Off the Beaten Path Bookstore, 56 Seventh St.

Call: 879-6830.

lous read, but I also want them to understand how precious our environment is," he said. "'The Great Tree of Avalon' is a parable about living sustainably on earth."

The book is the first in a trilogy. Book two is scheduled to be published in October 2005.

Barron writes from the attic of his farmhouse outside of Boulder, in Lafayette. He is an early riser, writing for hours before he takes a break to send his five children off to school. After the "rocket launch" is complete, he makes a cup of cinnamon spice tea and works straight through the day until his family life calls again.

It's a discipline he developed in his life as an executive with a venture capital organization in New York City. In 1990, he left his corporate life to follow his dream of becoming an author.

"People usually ask me if that was scary," Barron said. "And I tell them, 'Of course it was scary,' but it wasn't nearly as scary as growing old and never having tried to follow my dream to be a writer. That thought was scary, of being in my 90s on my front porch and wondering, 'Why didn't I even try?'"

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