

Aurora Borealis

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One night last summer we were camped at ten thousand feet up where the air is clear, high in the Rockies of Lost Lake, Colorado. And as the fire burned low and only a few glowing embers remained, we laid on our backs all warm in our sleeping bags and looked up at the stars.

And as I felt myself falling into the vastness of the Universe, I thought about things, and places, and times.

I thought about the time my grandma told me what to say when I saw the evening star. You know, Star light, star bright, first star I see tonight. I wish I may, I wish I might, have the wish I wish tonight.

The air is crystal-

clear up here; that's why you can see a million stars.

I remember a time a bunch of us were in a canyon of the Green River in Wyoming; it was a night like this. And we had our rafts pulled up on the bank and turned over so we could sleep on 'em, and one of the guys from New York said, "Hey! Look at the smog in the sky! Smog clear out here in the sticks!" And somebody said, "Hey, Joe, that's not smog; that's the Milky Way."

Joe had never seen the Milky Way.

And we saw the Northern Lights once, in the Bitterroot Mountains of Montana. They're like flames from some prehistoric campfire, leaping and dancing in the sky and changing colors. Red to gold, and blue to violet... Aurora Borealis. It's like the equinox, the changing of the seasons. Summer to fall, young to old, then to now. And then tomorrow...

And then everyone was asleep, except me. And as I saw the morning star come up over the mountains, I realized that life is just a collection of memories. And memories are like starlight: they go on forever.