

### **One More Cast**

Ruth Pond in Valdez, Alaska isn't a world class fishing hole. One might prefer fishing on the Kenai River for trophy king salmon. Ruth Pond doesn't compare to a float trip into the Alaska wilderness on the Nushagak River for giant rainbows. Ruth Pond is a tiny dot on a nautical map next to the vast salty waters of Prince William Sound where 300 pound halibut roam. Ruth Pond is the not so famous favorite fishing hole for an exceptionally skilled little 5 year old boy named Kade Thomas Comer McPheters. Ruth Pond became his joy. As long as Kade was catching rainbow trout he didn't care if he was casting a dry fly, chucking spinners or flopping eggs at the water. His choice of fishing gear depended on whether it was raining, windy or sunny. Kade fished in all weather conditions. If the water was calm he patiently waited for the red and white bobber to start bouncing on the mirror like water. He would watch the circular ripples expand around the bobber as the rainbow nibbled on the bait below the surface. Kade's ability to select the perfect fly from his tackle box and watch it float on top of the water near the lily pads until the trout exploded on the scene was a thing of beauty. Kade would shout "fish on" as he excitedly fought the leaping rainbow. He simply loved fishing at Ruth Pond.

Kade's joy became my joy as I watched him masterfully conquer the trout on the tiny pond each time we worked the shoreline. He spent hours at Ruth Pond casting lures with his favorite fishing rod which he often borrowed from me. He laughed at his bad casts and things got serious when his cast would hit the sweet spot on the pond. Kade flashed his trademark smile of excitement when he felt the trout tugging on the line. His smile turned into wide eyed excitement when the trout leaped from the water and flopped back into the pond with a loud splash. He often out fished experienced older fisherman, like me. Kade wouldn't stop fishing when it was time to go home. He would beg to stay longer and every time he would say, "Just one more cast". I often laughed because I knew that one more cast was going to be three to twenty more casts depending on his degree of fatigue and hunger. Eventually one more cast became "As soon as I catch one last fish". Kade's patience to cast, reel, remove weeds from the lure and repeat over and over again was admirable. Kade experienced life one day at a time and each day he tried to include the outdoors. It was obvious that the trials and tribulations of life in a little boys mind, simply went away at Ruth Pond.

Kade was hiking with family and friends at Worthington Glacier State Park on a sunny July 4<sup>th</sup> day. Kade was eight days shy of his 6<sup>th</sup> birthday when he was taken from all the people who love him and the Alaskan outdoors he loved so much. Everyone that met Kade through fishing, hunting, playtime, sports and laughter loves Kade to this day. His passion for fishing with anyone who would take him fishing was legendary. Kade keeps his favorite fishing rod, hunting rifle and blanket with him today. Kade's family had a celebration of life for Kade at Ruth Pond. Family, friends and the town of Valdez gathered to fish, hear wonderful stories around the campfire and experience the profound joy at seeing the love from so many people whose lives Kade made eternally better.

Away from Ruth Pond there are many beautiful memories, stories, thoughts and adventures that can be shared about this beautiful little boy. Kade is the heart and soul for his parents, his family and all his friends when it comes to enjoying the moment and appreciating the innocence of everyday life. I miss Kade every day. I will fish Ruth Pond every year for the rest of my days so I can be closer to Kade's passion for fishing and hear his infectious laughter and watch his wide eyed excitement when a rainbow trout leaps from the water. When a leaping trout explodes on a top water fly at Ruth Pond and it looks toward the shoreline before flopping back into the water, it won't see Kade at the other end of the line excitedly fighting the fish. I will be standing there instead. I will be at Ruth Pond setting the hook and excitedly fighting that rainbow trout while laughing and shouting "Fish on!" When it's time to leave Ruth Pond for the day I will tell myself, "Just one more cast". We all miss you Kade Thomas Comer McPheters. I hope everyone with a passion for the outdoors takes a moment to enjoy some rainbow trout fishing at Ruth Pond in Valdez Alaska. I know I will. I love you Kade.



Kade fishing at Ruth Pond, Valdez Alaska



