

STORM AND WATER

Memories of the ITMS General Meeting,
Bellarmine College, Louisville, 1989

by **J. T. Ledbetter**

I

It was when I started counting
the seconds between thunder and flash
that I knew I was not in California!

How many times had I sat beneath
the soft maples on the farm
in southern Illinois and waited
for the farm to light up in that
strange purple light: my cousin
already running to the farmhouse
where they waited at the lighted
window, watching for us in the gloom.

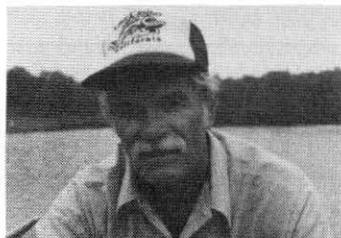
And in those long drafts of wind
around the Merton Center, I listened
for Merton in the rain. I even parted
the curtains and turned off the air
and opened the windows and breathed
in the rain, and listened. Sleeping
in the Center itself, with all of
him bound between leather and binders
next door made for magic I thought.
Wait! Listen!

II

After the storm. After a prayer.
After picking up even more small
pictures of Merton at the Center,
I followed the early sun down the hill
and heard the water coming through
the pipe at the bottom, splashing over
some rocks, running away by itself
without a thought to my night, or to
my search or memories: just water. Just
bubbling out of its old pipe into
the winding channel it had run through
for years and gone.
Wait! Listen!

III

Now, in this faraway place, I suffer
through another dry season waiting
for rain, for wet grass in the morning.
And I turn to my Merton books on their
shelf and turn to the window at night
when the wind comes through the sycamores
and stare at myself staring back,
and breathe a small puff of cloud onto
the cold window.
Wait! Listen!



J. T. LEDBETTER