

## Heart to Hart: Memories and Reflections

My memories of Brother Patrick are intertwined with memories of Bill Shannon. Long before I met Brother Patrick I would hear Bill speak of his dear friend with deep affection and admiration for his work on all things Merton. Their conversations and visits were for Bill a treasure trove of friendship. As I went deeper into my own study of Merton I was, and continue to be, inspired by and ever grateful for Brother Patrick's work as editor and writer. My own friendship with Brother Patrick began when he invited me to edit the sixth volume of Merton's journals. As general editor of the journals, Brother Patrick chose to edit the first and last volumes of the set of seven and to select five editors to work on the remaining volumes. I was both thrilled and terrified to take on the task. I came to see that, to me at least, the role of the general editor is very much akin to that of a shepherd and Brother Patrick was the best of shepherds – at once determined taskmaster and compassionate whisperer – determined to keep me on task and see the volume through to publication. I treasure memories of my visits to Gethsemani during that time. I would always be sure to stop at the general store, before turning down the road to Gethsemani, to pick up a libation to leave with Brother Patrick. Visiting with the ever cheerful and always hospitable Brother Patrick was a delight – even as we worked to break the code of Merton's handwriting to capture the elusive word, phrase or name. Conversation with Brother Patrick – in person and on the phone – always punctuated by laughter – saw me through the work of editing the volume published under the title *Learning to Love* – a title on which we settled together. One memory stands out. For reasons long forgotten, I mentioned that I collected thimbles as souvenirs of my travels and that friends added to my thimble cache when they travelled. When I arrived home, I found a little package containing a silver thimble from the sewing room at Gethsemani. It is my favorite thimble: it is to me a sign of friendship that playfully expresses Brother Patrick's kindness and, in a delightful way, points to his own spiritual journey at Gethsemani.




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