



EYE OF THE STORM

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There was a new presence at last year's Trial Lawyers College—a quiet, gentle but unmistakably powerful presence. He goes by “Storm”—a name he picked up a few years back when he was teaching heavy weather sailing off the California coast. The man is as exotic as his name.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DANA COLE

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Storm is not a lawyer. He's an artist—musician, painter and photographer. He was there ostensibly to record the experience of the Trial Lawyers College on videotape—not an easy task. The photographer or videographer will almost invariably change the event he seeks to record by his presence and, in the changing, fail to capture it. As Storm explains, "It is more than a mechanical process." The challenge is to blend in so completely that the subject becomes unaware you are there or, at least, is so comfortable with you to be natural. Only then can the moment be captured. Storm couldn't remain detached from the group and expect to go unnoticed. He made the commitment of time and emotion to become part of us. He earned our trust by being trustworthy—by respecting our privacy. "It's more important to know when to turn the camera off than when to turn it on," Storm pointed out to me one day at lunch. Only after he became one of us did he become invisible to us. He then moved seamlessly among us, his camera running without our conscious awareness.

Then there's the mechanical part of the art—the framing, the angles, the light—all uniquely Storm. With an eye for intimacy, he reveals the people of the Trial Lawyers College from his own fresh perspective. To see the footage is to know that Storm understood and fully appreciated what he documented. He was not a voyeur, but a participant—recording his own experience among us.

But Storm brought more to the Trial

Lawyers College than his cameras and left us more than the artistic product he was commissioned to create. I am convinced that the cameras were just an elaborate excuse for his involvement. He gave us the benefit of his wisdom—borne of difficult times and hard choices—a man who has made enough bad decisions to be non-judgmental and enough good ones to be content with his life. He is an intensely present person—acutely alive—highly aware. Because of this, each interaction with Storm is meaningful and memorable.

Storm is the loving father of five children, the latest born on May 1st—children who were delivered at home and given names like Snow, Raven, Jome, Shale and now, Ember. He is a dotting husband who has kept the passion alive through 11 years of marriage to Jinjee. His thin, muscular body belies his fifty-four years until you learn that for more than thirty of those years he has eaten only uncooked fruits and vegetables.



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His sleek, black skin seems to glow—lending credence to his dietary choices. At first sight he reminds you of a shaman. There's an aura about him—a distinctively spiritual vibe that makes you suspect he is a medium between the visible world and an invisible world—that he must practice sorcery for purposes of healing, divination or control over natural events. But during that first conversation you soon learn that he is quite human. In fact, that is his magic—to be without pretense or arrogance. He is approachable and engaging, open and humorous, self-effacing and charming.

He has led an eclectic and fascinating life. From his rough beginnings on the streets of the grim industrial east side of Detroit, Michigan to a beautiful and remote house on the edge of the national forest in Ojai, California, he has invented and reinvented himself in an image of his own creation. This unusual and disparate blend of experiences has produced in him an uncommon wisdom. As Storm puts it, "[I]f you are truly on the path of seeking truth, then you can learn anything at any-time from anyone, anywhere. ... [Y]ou must have no regrets about the past, no remorse for the present, and be ever hopeful for the future." And so I would look for Storm at lunchtime and sit across from him at the picnic table outside the cookhouse monopolizing his time—me with my cheeseburger



and iced tea, Storm with his plate of raw vegetables and carrot juice—and we would talk and I would learn something every time.

I missed that first Trial Lawyers College in '94, but I have been to each one since. Each class has its own distinctive character and its own memorable

personalities. For example, TLC '95 was John Johnson's last year and all of us seemed to sense that he was a precious gift that would too soon be gone. He was the heart and soul of that class and perhaps the Trial Lawyers College itself with his Velveteen Rabbit message of being real. TLC '96 was Bob Rose's last year—the most loving and patient person many of us have ever known. Each class, right up to the class of 2004, has its legitimate claim to uniqueness. When I remember the class of 2003 it will be Storm Talifero I most remember. He was the essence of that tenth Trial Lawyers College packaged in the unlikely role of videographer. 916

