April 5, 2016

For the past 6 years, I have been attending art classes with Jennie Roles-Walter. For the past 15 months, I have had the privilege of working with her.

I have known this lady her entire life. She is a loving, that God had endowed with incredible talent. Not only with creativity and art, but with the desire to teach and share this talent with others. I have witnessed her grow into a considerate responsible young lady that has given so much back to her community. The time she spends with her students, community events, and the passion she exhibits for them speaks volumes to her mission.

During the past 2 years, she took a leap of faith and invested her money to renovate the present location of The Art Teacher Studio. We never stopped working, we just moved it all next door.

The night we painted the floor was so exciting. It seems like we were finally at a finishing point and would soon be in the newly renovated place. For several months we had been cramped up in the small building next door. Soon we would be in this large room with new tables and shelves, and we would not have to move what we were working on to make room for the next class every day. A couple of students from Jennie’s class at school, Allie Heffington, and myself were on our hands and knees with rags, splattering paint and working our way out the door. Jennie was at the high school working in Homecoming floats. She came in and added the finishing touches, and we were all so excited and almost drunk with exhaustion. We left that night with such a sense of accomplishment.

In the next few weeks, the rain began to fall and the floor became a nightmare. In the front of the building, water began to come in through the base of the wall, and the paint began to peel. I came in one day to find smocks, blankets and towels all over the floor. This was Jennie’s attempt to dry up the water, before she went to school. I removed as much water as possible and began to hang them up over chairs benches and shelves, basically creating a clothes line. They had to be dry to use again. Now every time it rains, someone has to go in and put them back down to catch the running water that is slowly destroying the foundation of this beautiful old building. Grit and grout can be wiped out of the bricks with a simple finger sweep. The floor, furniture, and walls have to be cleaned and dried each time as well, in order to keep it all safe from falls.

During this time, I have seen a downward change in the life of Mrs. Walter. She was always excited to be working, and now she is so worried that the financial and emotional investment she has made is crumbling before her eyes. She is so stained and apprehensive, and no longer the happy and gentle lady we all love.

She has been so shocked at the reaction of the persons who own the buildings connected to hers in that they are not willing to pay for repairs to their own structures. I am not an expert , but I do know that if my tree falls on my neighbors fence, I am liable to fix it. Why does this not apply here.

This is a small town with so much “charm” we have been chosen to be the setting for a couple of movies.  It is a privilege to own a piece of this charm, and a responsibility to maintain it for future generations. I would like to think that the owners of these buildings are also responsible citizens as well. No, they have not shown a responsibility nor do they plan to as they have not stepped up to the plate to make the repairs. They are not interested in the damage their neglect is doing to Jennie’s building. So many times, a small town is known for the “Good Ol Boy” group. I feel this is the case here and these good old boys are not interested in what this little girl has to say.

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