



May 2023

2023-3

A STORY

This is a story based on a true story. That is if my recollection of situations is trustable!

One year we flew to Hawaii for a vacation and attended a lovely little Episcopal Church. Being that the weather there is so balmy, it was an open-air setting. We noted that the plywood sides were simply propped open to let in the tropical breezes. Back at the ranch AKA Way of the Wolf, we thought how cool it would be to build our own chapel. We walked our property and pondered just where it would be located. Surely, we had enough limestone to build the basic shelter. We could even build a fireplace for those cool winter days. This is about the time the OOOW was evolving, and a chapel seemed the next right thing to do.

Since we are given to pondering, or procrastination, we had no concrete ideas when our dear friend came to visit. With sketch pad and black slender tipped pen in hand, we once again walked the property, searching for just the right spot for our new venture. He helped find just the spot where a large window would face the East. We made it simple. A 'Satterwhite' Log Home structure, electricity but no running water. Once the commitment was made, the Universe started to provide. One friend gave us a Yodel fireplace. Other friends, antique dealers gave us stained glass windows from a church in France, an acquaintance gave money to build a railing, and on and on.

There are so many stories that went into building the Chapel. Before the cabin appeared, we had a stone mason build the kiva. He had not a clue what that was about but was eager to hear. One morning we found his helper sitting on the side of that circle, crying. Something in that space brought memories of his mom and he said it felt holy to him. When the skirting was almost complete, he impishly implanted a rock with a hand hold in it on the back limestone skirting. I had changed my mind a couple of times and he wanted to be sure I could move that building if I needed to do so!!

One Gathering, Amir appeared with his drums and other musical instruments. After telling us how much Jesus meant to him, we traveled to the chapel. We joined in with flute, tambourines, and guitar, anything that would make a sound. The Holy Spirit filled this vessel and our hearts to overflowing. I was quite sure the whole place was levitating from the pure joy pulsating through the room. Surely, the Presence was in that place.

The spruce logs and rafters were permeated by the prayers, love and blessings left by baptisms, marriages, liturgies, poetry and so many other life-giving celebrations. There is no doubt in my mind that lives were deeply touched by a beautifully crafted structure. However, I suspect the most deeply ingrained memories are about what happened in the heart of each person sitting in silence together.



I was moved to write this particular piece because of a phone call I received from the new owner of 6 years. (Perhaps we will someday drop the “new”). They love the land and the dwellings as much as we did, only differently. They asked about removing the dividing wall between entry and chapel itself. Was it a load bearing wall? Was the beam from front to back solid?

After a big gulp, I assured her they could take the wall out. My mind started to download so many memories of how we had put our hearts into building and furnishing the Chapel. We wanted it to be welcoming, simple and beautiful. The double doors I bought from a stranger in a parking lot in San Antonio be cut up to become porch side tables. The front door bought from another guy in a parking lot has been replaced with a glass door to let in more light. So many

changes. I hesitantly entered for the first time in 6 years. It was so interesting. I knew they had already made changes and it is now a home for the owner's son. The long leaf pine wall is half gone and the logs painted cream. A TV hangs where the Bismillah hung, and the Kiva is now used as storage space. AND, it did not take my breath away. I can see how some day it will make a glorious Air B&B rental. I wonder if the vacationers will ever know its history.

Why this story? Why speak about a dream that grew way outside its walls when it is only a small part of what transpired over the 20 plus years we lived on that land. It is because the story represents the reality that everything changes. We live in an impermanent world. Initially, we held onto the idea the space would not change. Kindly, the owners have kept us informed of their plans. It seems as if they recognized how much we cherished it and they honor that.

The place known as the "Chapel" was simply a vehicle for something beautiful and life-giving to occur. It could happen at any place and at any time. However, all things came together in a way which will live forever in the hearts of those who brought their longing, their openness and their vulnerability to this place. And what lingers will be unique to each person who experienced part of their life there in that space.

~~~ Abbot (Emeritus) Karen Poidevin