

WHEN A CITY GIRL *goes country*

By Annette Bridges

For the past few years you've been reading stories of my life and perspective as a city girl who transformed into a genuine country loving cattle rancher who's been married to her darling country boy for more than 40 years.

But our daughter could be described as a city girl who grew up country. I thought it would be fun to ask our PhD college history professor daughter to share about her journey from country girl to city girl. So I asked her a few questions.

What are some of your earliest memories about your life on a cattle ranch?

Many of my earliest memories have to do with the animals. I remember our dog Coco coming to the front door and me giggling and managing to say my first word, which was Coco. I remember the birds we had back then: peacocks, pheasants, chickens and ducks. One of my jobs was to help collect the chicken eggs and I remember how dirty the eggs were. The peacocks were loud and made the craziest sounds, but I thought they were beautiful. They are still my favorite bird today.

What's your first memory of what you wanted to be when you grew up?

I wanted to be a lawyer for the longest time, but I blame that on Matlock and Law and Order. I considered it as an adult as well, but decided it would not give me the kind of free time I value.

What was it like to grow up living next door to your grandparents?

One word: amazing. I feel so privileged to have had a close relationship with my grandparents, I know many people miss out on that special bond. I have so many early memories with them: driving my little battery jeep up the driveway to their house, eating Bluebell ice cream with vanilla wafers, coloring books and puzzles. Also, the Disney channel! I was very blessed.

What do you admire most about your parents?

Since you phrased this question about my parents as a unit, I will answer it that way. I always have been and am still in awe of your commitment to one another and your love.



Jennifer driving the red tractor on her parents' farm.

After 40-plus years together, and the many ups and downs that come with such a timeframe, y'all are still in love and still growing together. I know firsthand how rare and precious that is. Throughout my growing up years, you didn't hide your relationship from me, which I think is also an amazing gift.

I knew how much you loved each other and I knew when someone was upset, but I also learned how to forgive from watching y'all.

I think too many couples hide both the good and the bad from their kids. How else are we to learn?

What's a funny memory about living in the country?

I'm not sure how funny this is, but it's more about how strange country living is compared to the city. How every morning at the beginning of dove hunting season it sounds like a war zone. To people raised in the country, this



is no big deal, but to anyone else, it would be truly terrifying.

If you could repeat one day from your childhood, what day would that be?

Maybe one of my epic birthday parties. I think it was my eighth or ninth birthday when we had pony rides for all my friends, and water pistol fights. It was a blast and most importantly, everyone I loved was still alive.

How do you think being raised in the country influenced who you are today?

It's hard to say for certain, but I think it gave me a greater appreciation for the little things and the quiet moments. While I prefer the conveniences of a city life, I do not care for a hectic lifestyle. I am someone who takes things slowly and favors quality over quantity. Being raised away from the hustle and bustle, I still need a good amount of quiet, private time in each day to feel content. I definitely think being raised in the country influenced that need.

Whether we were raised in the city or country, our upbringing has undoubtedly influenced who we are today. We can see these influences in obvious and sometimes more subtle ways.



Annette Bridges with her daughter, Jennifer, when she was three years old.

Honestly, I'm still not sure how my city upbringing prepared me for my life in the country. But I am discovering more and more how I have embraced my mamma's strength and



Jennifer at her graduation for her PhD. (Photos courtesy Annette Bridges)

grandmother's courage to tackle doing things that I've never done before. I suspect we would all be surprised by what we are capable of doing if only we tried.

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