



# WHEN A CITY GIRL

## *goes country*

By Annette Bridges

I've had more than a few friends ask me how I deal with being out in the boonies, as they would describe it. That question is often immediately followed by another one, such as how do I borrow a cup of sugar. The sugar question used to be an easy one to answer. "From my mother-in-law of course," I would say, whose house was quite literally a stone's throw away from ours. That woman's kitchen was always fully stocked for any possible need. I soon learned why.

When I moved to my husband's family cattle ranch in 1981, there were many astounding inconveniences I never anticipated or could have imagined. I had seen movies where the characters had a party phone line, but I had no idea such a thing really existed. It did. We were on a party line with a sweet little old lady neighbor who loved to talk on the phone for hours. Fortunately, the phone company had plans to add more cables eventually, but our party line days turned into months.

I didn't know there were different types of water. It turns out the well water for our house wasn't drinkable, unless you don't mind your water tasting like salt and the color being a tad rusty. We were on the list for getting connected to the rural water company that was extending into our area a few months later. In the meantime, we could bathe and wash dishes using our well water, but cooking and drinking water came from our five-gallon water jug that we filled as needed at my in-laws' house. They had wonderful tasting well water.



The cattle ranch has become the center of Annette Bridges' world, and there is no place she would rather be. (Photo courtesy Annette Bridges)

My husband and I were living in the original farmhouse—original from when my in-laws first bought the place in 1963. Actually, the original farmhouse had been torn down long before and our house was built with old wood that had been salvaged. Try to envision a house without insulation in the walls and ceiling and old windows that are poorly sealed. Picture sitting in your living room watching your curtains blow and your windows are shut.

There was no central heat or air conditioning. My husband installed a wood stove in our living room. There was a window air conditioner unit in our living room, too. Needless to say, the

most pleasant temperature year round was only in our living room.

Another surprise for this city-raised gal was the long walk to our mailbox. Growing up in the city, back in my day, the mailbox was located on our front porch. Walking to get our mail here at the ranch was sometimes tricky especially on a windy day, and windy days are almost a constant living in the wide-open spaces of the country. I learned to take a tote bag or sack with me to collect the mail.

Although country living did require a few startling adjustments, perhaps the most welcomed, most pleasurable included traffic and

car engine noise and odors being replaced by soothing peace and quiet and the gratifying fragrance of clean fresh air. Even though some neighboring ranches have sold and subdivided, I can nonetheless gaze in many directions and see nothing but pasture and cows. I had no idea so many dazzling and breathtaking stars were visible at night until I moved to the country.

Even though the city continues to stretch itself northward, I still have some friends who describe where I live as the middle of nowhere, but our cattle ranch has become the center of my world and there is no place I would rather be. ☺