



WHEN A CITY GIRL *goes country*

By Annette Bridges

Who Remembers a Party Line?

Telephones are something that have gone through many stages in my lifetime. In my ear-liest memories telephones were black and had a rotary dial. For many years in my childhood our house had one telephone. We had a phone desk located in the hallway where the telephone was installed. And our phone always had a really long line so it could be pulled into most rooms of our house.

Many of my early childhood home movies featured my mother sitting at our hallway telephone desk talking on our black rotary dial telephone.

She talked for hours with her girlfriends. I think my dad thought it funny to capture her on film talking on the telephone while all of her children (four of us) sat on the sofa waiting for her to get off before we went to church.

I remember how excited my mom was when it was possible to get a second telephone extension in our house and it was one that could be hung on the wall.

She of course had it installed in the kitchen and was able to have a really long cord attached to the handset which make it convenient to talk while cooking and moving around the kitchen.

My memories of her on the telephone inspired the graphic image I had created to be published in my first book, "The Gospel According to Mamma," published many years ago that honored lessons learned from my sweet mamma.

Why she's wearing a swimsuit



would require another story but in short, I will say that my mother was very comfortable in her own skin.

I was excited when as a teenager in the 1970s I was allowed to have my own telephone extension in my bedroom. It was a blue princess style phone and was my first phone that had push buttons instead of a rotary dial. Mind you, all of these phone extensions shared the same phone number.

It would not be till the early 1980s when I married and moved to my husband's family cattle ranch that I had my first experience with a party line telephone.

A party line was a system where several telephone subscribers were connected to the same land line. In order to determine who was supposed to receive a call you had to be attentive to the

ringing pattern assigned to your household. It's my understanding that party lines began phasing out during our early married years and the last party line ended in the early 1990s.

We had to wait till the telephone company who provided service to our area put in more land lines for us to have our very own telephone line and not share with neighbors. Until then we shared a phone line with my in-laws and a sweet old lady who lived more or less across the street from our ranch. It was a few months before we got our own phone line and number!

There are many other memories around the evolution of telephones. I recall our first cordless telephone. That was revolutionary! I also recall cool features such as call forwarding and call

holding.

Mobile phones of course rocked the world of traditional telephones and they too had many shapes and sizes along the way. It would, however, be quite a few years after our cell phones became our primarily used phones that we were ready to discontinue our land line telephone.

I wish I could locate some photographs of our many telephones used through our marriage. Who knew we should have been taking photos before each became extinct!

Having a private phone line is one of many conveniences I had taken for granted before moving from a city life to life in the country. Having drinkable tap water is another convenience I had taken for granted. I'll share that saga with y'all another day! ®