



# WHEN A CITY GIRL *goes country*

By Annette Bridges

## Ode to a Very Good Bull

It was one of those necessary, yet very sad days in the life of a cattle rancher.

We had to say goodbye to our bull, Frankie. We returned from the agonizing drive, and I felt compelled to sit down and ponder how to write an ode to a very good bull.

I have read all the rationale on when it is time to retire a bull. The average age for many ranchers is around eight years.

Our Frankie was beyond his prime.

We probably knew last year it was about time for him to retire.

His lack of enthusiasm when he returned to the herd after his spring hiatus was a clue.

The very slow start to our spring calving this year, and cows that never conceived confirmed what we did not want to admit last year. It was time.

Frankie was a handsome and gentle giant. A Charolais mix, but he could be fierce if he felt threatened.

I remember one summer when a neighbor's Charolais bull stepped over his broken fence and leaped over ours.

He was not welcomed. This neighbor bull was significantly larger than Frankie, but that did not stop our Frankie from defending his territory.

Frankie immediately challenged the intruder into a head-butting duel and trust me when I say Frankie would not be defeated. Size does not matter when it comes to fighting for and protecting those you love. Love makes



Frankie the bull had a polite and cooperative disposition. (Photo courtesy Annette Bridges)

you brave and strong.

What do you get when you mix a Charolais bull with black Angus cows? Stunning smokey gray calves.

Frankie produced the most beautiful calves we have ever had on our ranch, as well as one or two sets of healthy twins each year.

I know our girls appreciated

having calves fathered by Frankie. His babies were smaller than his predecessors.

Our gentle bull gave us gentle calves. His calves were the first to eat cubes out of my hand and loved to have their heads rubbed.

I honestly do not know if this is normal bull behavior, but I always loved how Frankie was the last in line on a pasture move.

I liked to think he was being chivalrous and gentlemanly and let his ladies go through the open gate before he did.

Watching our Frankie with his wife of the day was a sweet sight to behold.

When he was with his lady love he would graze beside her, give her sweet licks, and lay down next to her.

Even when mating season reached its conclusion, he remained a loving companion to his herd mates.

Frankie was a kind and patient teacher to his bull calves. I never saw him be aggressive toward or frustrated by his pack of young bulls who stayed beside him, or even in his way when it was time to inseminate. He simply waited for them to move aside so he could do his business.

Our Frankie had a polite and cooperative disposition with us and did what was wanted or commanded of him.

Even loading him up to make his last trip in our stock trailer was not difficult. You will be missed, Frankie.

I hope you know how much you were loved. 