



WHEN A CITY GIRL *goes country*

By Annette Bridges

We are all stronger than we think we are. Who hasn't survived disappointments, loss and failures?

I don't like to use the word failure. I think that label is often more subjective than reality. It usually means there was a goal set and not reached in the way the goal was defined.

Thomas Edison said it well, "I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work." I'm pretty sure every farmer and rancher could speak those same words. Sadly, loss is simply part of life. It is for sure the part of life none of us like or want. It is not easy to accept, and it changes our lives.

Disappointment is the hardest for me when I'm disappointed with myself. My beloved momma used to always tell me she didn't have to punish me when I did something wrong because I punished myself. Indeed, we all may be our worst critics.

I've never identified myself as strong or brave. Many times in my life I've allowed my fears to stop me and change my mind. Sometimes my fearful instincts were good ones that stopped me from harm.

My amazing, southern momma was the strongest and bravest woman I've ever known. She made bold, difficult decisions that were anything but easy.

Her life required her to swim in uncharted waters and traverse winding roads that included the steepest of hills. I have no memory of my momma being afraid of anything. She did whatever she had to do to keep her children safe and live a fulfilling and happy life



Annette Bridges in her world. (Photo courtesy Annette Bridges)

herself.

When I spoke at my momma's memorial service, there was a moment when I felt momma's southern belle strength running through me. I now believe what was actually happening was that I was beginning to feel my own strength. Heck, I was able to be composed enough to speak at momma's memorial service. How was I able to do that?

The more I reflect on that day, the more I recognize my strength, and the more I see I have been stronger than I've given myself credit for throughout my life.

I was able to help my momma

quickly pack what belongings we could when we were fighting the clock to escape a violent encounter with my daddy whom she had separated from. I was 10 years old.

I headed off to attend college in another state with no friends going with me. Plus, I had no idea every single semester how I would pay the tuition. It would require working many jobs, ingenuity, determination, and faith.

I lived next door to my in-laws in a strange new country world where I struggled with feeling inadequate, unloved and misunderstood.

I've survived scary surgeries and endured months of painful physical therapy. I've also been able to make many tough decisions as the primary caregiver for those I loved dearly.

Dang, I am a tough, strong and brave city girl gone country. These days I love to describe myself as "plucky." Do you know what that means? Plucky is having or showing determined courage in the face of difficulties. It allows for the determination to show courage even when you don't think you have it.

May we all take on our new year with our own kind of plucky. 🍀