

WHEN A CITY GIRL *goes country*

By Annette Bridges

Are there things you never thought you could do? Things you never even dreamed you would do?

I can honestly say when I was a kid I never dreamed of being a cattle rancher. I grew up mostly in two big cities: Atlanta and Dallas. Living in the country was not a concept I comprehended.

We officially announced to our families the Christmas of 1980 we were going to get married. At the same time we said we would be living on my husband's family cattle ranch. Of course, I thought the little farmhouse we were busy cleaning up and repairing was only going to be our "starter home." I never imagined we would be living in it for 40 plus years. I will never forget my mamma's first words to our happy news.

"I didn't send you to college to get your hands dirty," she said.

"What's makes you think I'm going to get my hands dirty?" I responded with a giggle. My mamma simply looked into my eyes with a twinkle in hers. I think about that twinkle now that she's passed. What did she know that I didn't?

That twinkle wasn't about dirty hands, my friends. My mamma knew that in life all of us would have many opportunities to do and experience things we never thought possible. Indeed, I've had many.

Besides becoming a cattle rancher, living in the country and getting my hands dirty from time to time, I also never imagined myself running in a half marathon.

The year this feat was indeed achieved would be the year I lost my sweet Mamma and my beloved 17-year-old dachshund in the same month. I needed to prove to myself I was stronger than I thought I was to be prepared to face what would be the most difficult moments of my life.

My goal when the half marathon began was simply to complete it even if I was the last to cross the finish line. I had not lost the weight I wanted to shed. I had not been consistent with my training. It would have been tempting to drop out before I began and to believe I wasn't



Annette Bridges truly was stronger than she thought she was after an already rough year. (Photo courtesy Annette Bridges)

prepared or capable.

That year had already been a rough one preceded by a couple of very challenging years. I had lost two brothers and had two surgeries myself. There had been many hospital stays for my mom and vet visits for my aging dog.

The half marathon was taking place at the happiest place on earth – Disney World. I needed some happy and the thought of doing something I had never imagined myself doing was exhilarating.

Plus, I would be doing it with my daughter and only child that gave me incentive. She reached the finish line before me, and I will

never forget the delight in her eyes as she cheered her mamma on.

So I began and indeed crossed the finish line. Laughing and crying as I mustered the strength to run across, I couldn't help but assume the Rocky Balboa stance and yell, "I did it," again and again.

I truly was stronger than I thought I was. I have no doubt that you are, too. If you ever question your abilities, consider putting yourself to the test by doing something you never thought you were capable of doing. I'm pretty sure you will be surprised and proud to discover that you are. 