

WHEN A CITY GIRL *goes country*

By Annette Bridges

Undoubtedly, we have all lived a lifetime full of firsts. In fact, from the very beginning of our lives every first was momentous. From the first time we stood, took our first step, spoke our first word, and so many others.

Do you ever feel like you have got so stuck in your routine that you are no longer doing something or trying something for the first time?

There is comfort to be found in what is familiar, but sometimes I simply long for the exhilaration that comes after experiencing something for the first time.

Life on our cattle ranch has certainly provided me with many. I giggle at those early years on the ranch. The first time I had a party line sharing a phone line with a neighbor or the first time to drive a stick shift.

There was the first time to live in a house that the only source of heat was a wood stove. That is the first three that come to mind, but there have been many more.

After you are married for 40 years, sometimes it can be difficult to think of something we have never done before or even something we have not talked about before. I can't help but think that is because we have simply become too used to our tried and true regimes and not that there is nothing new to experience or share. I do believe that sometimes "firsts" need to be sought after.

It was 10 years ago when I experienced one of my most memorable.

My husband and I had been married for 30 years. Neither one of us had traveled out of the country. My best friend from college was given an opportunity to go to Italy to stay at a friend's villa, and she could invite a friend. She was sure I would say no because she knew I had not been apart from my husband since the day we married, but I told her to let me think about it.

At the time I was feeling much trepidation about approaching my middle age season. I told my husband I felt like I had to go, that I needed to go, and he wholeheartedly supported my desire.

Standing on top of the Italian Alps was a



Annette Bridges standing on top of an Italian Alp. (Photo courtesy Annette Bridges)

magnificent moment. I had never skied before in the United States so I had never been on a snow-covered mountaintop. As I plodded my way to the scenic point, I was astounded at the glistening blanket of white that surrounded my view. I was especially awed by the little hamlets dotting the sides of mountains that you would never have known existed without looking down on them from the top of a neighboring mountain.

I think about those little hamlets now and then. They remind me to not give up hope even

though there is not a foreseeable solution. All truths, possibilities, goals, and first-times are simply waiting to be discovered, experienced, seen, and reached just like the hamlets that were always there but simply hidden from my point of view.

My Italian adventure set me on a course to keep longing for and looking for more exhilarating firsts to be experienced and lived.

I also learned sometimes we must force ourselves to get out of our groove to find the miracle. 🍷