



WHEN A CITY GIRL *goes country*

By Annette Bridges

I have often been asked how I come up with my ideas to both my writing and the products I create and sell in my little gift shop. The answer is pretty dang easy.

Everything in my life inspires me. Ideas usually come when I least expect them. I find it best to not attempt to force an idea.

My published writing began after our only child headed off to college.

She left a couple of weeks before 9/11. I remember wishing she was still at home, safe at the ranch with us.

It was living through the uncertainties and fears in the months following that tragic day that inspired my first guest column that was published in the Dallas Morning News.

That first column led to a decade of guest column writing that was published in a variety of Texas newspapers and magazines.

Being a published author was not a goal I was trying to achieve back then. That first column simply resulted in invitations to write more, and so I did.

These days my life on our cattle ranch is the inspiration for my writing, art, photography, and the many products I create for my little gift shop.

It is a delight to be surprised when inspirations make their appearance. I find the miracle is the idea often had been right before my eyes all along.

It has simply been waiting for the perfect moment to grab my attention.

I have had many ideas pop into my head while driving a tractor. I suspect there is something about gazing out at the broad Texas hori-



Annette Bridge's favorite and most tame cow affectionately named "Blackie" inspired what she calls her "LiveLoveMoo" products. (Photo courtesy Annette Bridges)

zon that triggers my imagination.

My favorite and our most tame cow affectionately named "Blackie" inspired what I call my "Live Love Moo" products. These items also feature a graphic image of my beautiful Blackie's face. The backsides and lovely udders of some of our girls spurred my "Love one an udder" products.

The graphic design on my "Drink your heiffin' water" bottle began as a watercolor painting. Our cows inspire both my paintings and my photography.

My MOO memo laptop stickers feature more of my watercolor

paintings that have been transformed into graphic designs.

I am pretty much an open book. If you read my magazine columns, books or simply browse in my Ranch House Gift shop, you will know pretty much everything there is to know about my life. You will even get glimpses of our cattle ranch as my hubby helped me take product photos for my Etsy gift shop at various settings around our ranch.

The bottom line, my friends, is if you are looking for some new idea or longing for some fresh inspiration, maybe you should

stop the search. Ask yourself what makes you happy or what you love most.

Ask yourself what you need or what you have always wanted to do but have not.

What makes you giggle and your heart go pitter-patter at the very thought of it? Answering these kind of questions brings me the clarity I need to visualize my next projects.

I believe our lives hold the answers we are all looking for. We just need to pay more attention, and asking the right kinds of questions helps too.