

# WHEN A CITY GIRL *goes country*

By Annette Bridges

Have you ever thought about how many generations of cattle have been raised on your ranch? I recently asked my husband this question about ours.

His parents purchased this land in 1962. At that time it would be a weekend and summer retreat for his family, but they had bigger dreams.

Back then they lived in Dallas. Their goal was to build a house on land where they would retire after my husband graduated from high school. They would raise cattle, grow hay and build an airstrip.

My father-in-law was a Braniff Airline pilot who enjoyed flying his private planes, too. My mother-in-law loved to garden so she wanted to have plenty of space for growing vegetables and planting fruit trees.

She used to brag to me about how she planted every tree on this ranch. I have always felt that cattle to my father-in-law were mostly for the agricultural tax deduction, but for my dear husband, raising cattle would become his passion.

My curiosity about our bovine bloodline started during spring calving season. These were the first babes from our new Charolais bull "Frankie."

They have mostly been gorgeous shades of smoky grays with white mottle faces. Although, there were some unexpected colors and markings that made me wonder, where did that come from?

As it turns out, our herd of mammas and daughters have lineage to a variety of bulls. There have always been beautiful babies, but I must say our Frankie should feel very proud to be fathering the most gorgeous calves I have



Annette Bridges' curiosity about their bovine bloodline started during spring calving season. These were a few of the first babes from their new Charolais bull "Frankie." (Photos courtesy Annette Bridges)

ever seen.

We have been blessed to have many healthy cows live out their lives on our ranch. I have read their lifespan is about two decades in natural settings, but my husband thinks we have had many surpass that average.

My in-laws only purchased heifers once when they started their herd 59 years ago. With many years of keeping the heifers born on our ranch, I do not really know how to begin to count how many generations of daughters and granddaughters have lived out their lives here, but I have

been having fun giving it some consideration.

One of the quirkiest markings that have been passed down from generation to generation from our favorite Angus beauty is a white tip on the tail. This mamma cow named "Blackie" is solid black at a glance, but upon further inspection you will notice she has some white on her belly, and she has a white tip on her black tail. All of her calves have had a white tip on their tails as well.

This unique feature makes it easy to spot her daughters. She is among our oldest mammas so

she has lots of daughters. Even her bull calves have had the distinguishable white tip.

My husband worries when we have mottle face calves or other sweet, quirky markings, fearing these features will bring a lower price when they are sold. It seems beauty is measured differently in the cattle world.

We have not planned to keep any heifers this year because our herd is about as big as we can manage, but I am not sure if I can let these little cutie-pies leave. Maybe next year we will not keep any heifers. 🐾