



# WHEN A CITY GIRL *goes country*

By Annette Bridges

## Worth the Effort

I'm not sure why writing about the passing of my very favorite cow has been so very difficult for me to do. I'm not usually at a loss for words. She was certainly worth my effort to give her the tribute she deserved.

Even though I've been married to a cattle rancher and living on his family's ranch for almost 40 years, it was only a few months ago when I embraced the title of "cattle rancher" for myself. And it was my dear "Sis," as I called her, that made me feel welcome in this world and in her pastures.

I say her pastures because I'm pretty sure my husband would agree when I say she was the leader of our herd. My husband said she was probably the oldest, too.

Sis would immediately gather her sisters and guide them in the right direction when she saw us coming to move them to a new pasture. Always the first through a gate if she could be. Always the last to leave the area where cubes were spread out so not to leave any uneaten behind. Always unafraid of humans and happy to get her head rubbed.

Sis was a good mamma having a calf every spring. She was blessed with strong and healthy, beautiful calves every year.

It was only a week before her passing that I told my husband Sis could never be taken to the sale barn. I wanted her to live out her years on the ranch of her birth. I wanted more time with this gentle giant. I needed more than another week.



"Sis" made Annette Bridges feel welcome in this world and her pastures. (Photo courtesy Annette Bridges)

When we found her lying on a bed of hay, we thought she had already traveled over her rainbow bridge. But it turned out she was still breathing, although unable to move. I informed my husband I was calling a vet. I had to see if there was anything that could be done for my beloved Sis. If not, I needed her departure to be

as gentle as possible. My friend deserved that.

It was a year earlier that I had been faced with a similar decision for my beloved 17-year-old dachshund. I told my husband to never, ever ask me to make such a decision for a dear pet again. I wasn't sure my heart could survive.

While waiting for the vet to ar-

rive, I texted my daughter with the sad news about my dear Sis. I told her I didn't know if I could be with Sis during the agonizing wait. My very wise daughter reminded me it wasn't about me, but about my Sis and what she needed.

So I stood by my sweet Sis and told her how much I loved her. I thanked her for being my bovine friend and for making me feel welcome at a time when I desperately desired to feel wanted and at home in her world.

I've had many opportunities in the past few years to discover I was stronger than I ever imagined I could be.

Caregiving of aging and terminally ill siblings, parents, and pets require tough love kind of decisions and actions.

No, none of us want to be in this position. I often lamented, "Why me?" Why did I have to be the one who had to say so, or do so or speak at memorial services?

I remember standing at the podium at my momma's memorial service sharing the many lessons I was blessed to learn from my amazing momma, when I felt her southern belle strength running through my veins.

I felt that strength again as I stood by my sweet Sis. My friends, love makes us brave. Love gives us the strength we need. Love overcomes our fear. Love really is all you need to do whatever is required of you.

You are missed my sweet Sis and dearly loved. I am thankful for the time we had together. Thank you for being my friend. ☺