



WHEN A CITY GIRL *goes country*

By Annette Bridges

Butterfly and Buddy

One might think living over four decades on a working cattle ranch there would not be anything not seen or experienced. The truth about this city girl is the more I embrace my life as a cattle rancher the more first-times happen. Remember, I've told y'all before that it took me almost 40 years to become comfortable with my life in the country. Perhaps the surprises that continue to occur is largely due to my increased awareness of and participation in our ranching operation.

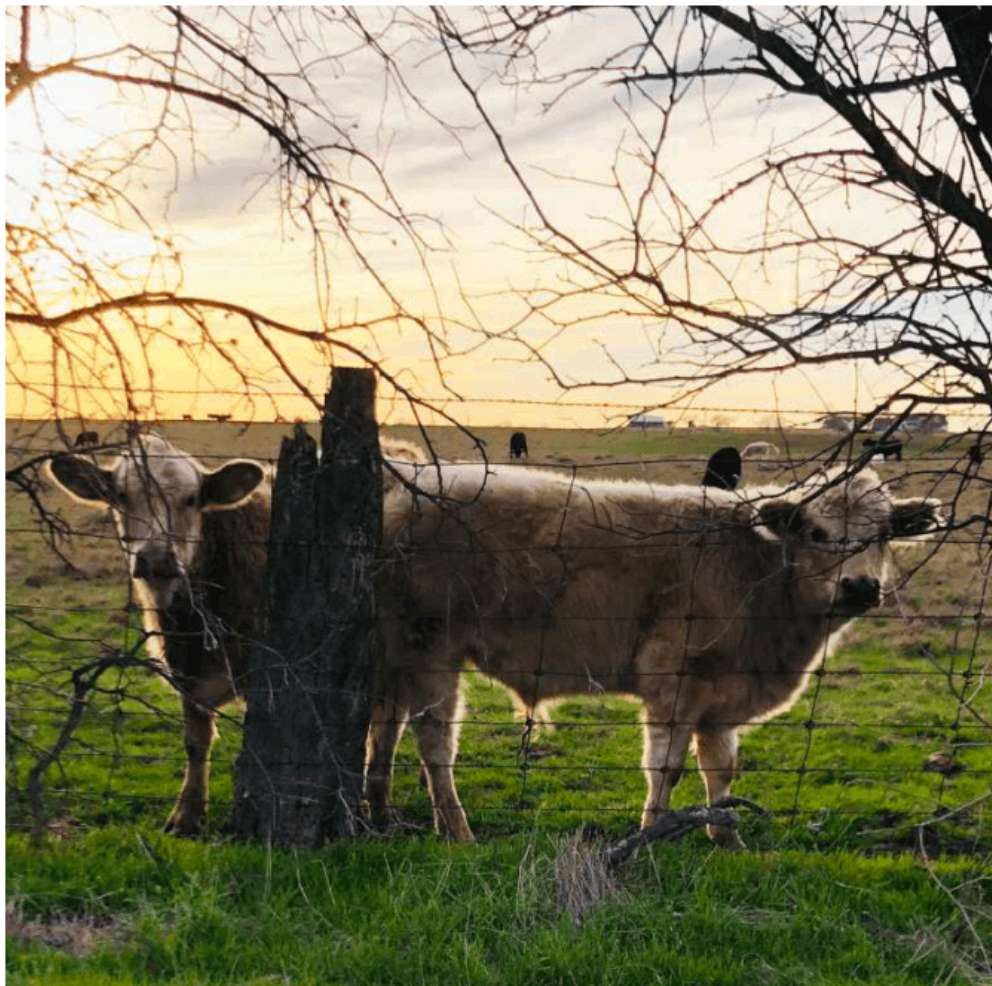
The summer drought of 2022 brought many unwanted firsts for our ranch, but amongst the ugliness was some beautiful and precious, too.

When the herd was in our southwest pasture, we could place the water tanks along the east fence that was close enough to allow for filling with water hoses rather than hauling the water tank. Of course, filling with water hoses was much slower so it meant I spent many hours hanging out during the process.

Our calves became very curious about their human mamma standing around their water tanks so I had many observers. I was soon able to give their sweet heads lots of rubs and I wondered if they would eat cubes out of my hand. It's funny to me that hand feeding was never an idea that crossed my mind before. I will say that our Charolaise bull has produced the tamest calves we've ever had.

It wasn't long before I had two calves in particular that were always ready for me to feed them. I named them Buddy and Butterfly. In fact to this day now many months later they will still find me when I'm nearby to see if I have some cubes exclusively for them. Of course I make sure I do!

I continue to be amazed how love can be felt and happen at the most unexpected times and ways. Even when I say I don't want to love again not wanting to experience the heartbreak of death again, opportunities to love still appear. Even when struggling through horrible and difficult times, tenderness and sweetness can still be experienced.



Butterfly and Buddy. (Photo courtesy Annette Bridges)

I certainly love my sweet Buddy and Butterfly. Besides their adorable desire to eat cubes out of my hand, it tickles my heart how they seem to know my voice. I hadn't been certain whether or not they had learned their names when I called them or if they recognized the sound of my voice. One day recently I was checking on the herd from the road. Parked in the ditch I was looking through binoculars when I discovered the birth of twins. I got super excited not only at how perky they were but

also about their colors. One was white and one was black. Another first for our ranch!

I was telling my daughter the twin news on the telephone when apparently Buddy was certain he heard my voice and came running to the fence. Butterfly immediately followed him! I had to apologize for not having a bucket of cubes with me. I'm pretty sure they didn't understand. Now I'm convinced these two sweethearts know the sound of their human mamma's voice. 