



WHEN A CITY GIRL *goes country*

By Annette Bridges

I hope it doesn't take you 40 years to become comfortable with your life.

It was the summer of 1980 when I was first introduced to the strange new world of cattle ranching. If you've been reading my columns then you know how foreign my new home felt to this city girl once upon a time. I felt uncomfortable, inadequate and unprepared. I was too shy and intimidated to admit my feelings to my husband or his parents who were my next-door neighbors on the cattle ranch we shared.

So what did this young city girl do? She stayed in her house and tried to do her best at making her new residence feel like home. She learned to cook for her sweet country boy who loved to eat.

She was ready to help anytime she was asked. But she was terrified to offer her help because of her uncertainties about her abilities to do the job anyone expected of her. To be very honest with y'all, I would say she quickly desired motherhood so she had someone to spend her lonely days with indoors. She believed she could be a good mamma and longed to feel proficient at something!

It was indeed some 40 years after moving to my husband's family ranch before I finally felt well at ease with my life and skills as a cattle rancher. It would not be until the passing of my husband's parents and mine. It would also not be until our nest was completely empty following the passing of our beloved dachshund and our daughter's final departure to make a home for herself.

I feel like I may have said this before but just in case not I will say it again. It wasn't until this unimaginable pandemic and spending much more time by my husband's side that I gained a fresh view of where I'd already spent more than 40 years of my life.

I suddenly realized how much I actually knew about our ranching life and started sharing my points of views and ideas with my partner. We had discussions about our precious cows and their babies. We talked about equipment repair needs and tasks to be accomplished. We started exploring our joint



It was 40 years after moving to her husband's family ranch before Annette felt well at ease with her life and skills as a cattle rancher. (Photo courtesy Annette Bridges)

ranching goals as we looked to our future.

Perhaps it's hard for some to believe I could have spent so much of my life and marriage feeling disconnected to the place I called home, but sadly it is true.

I sincerely don't want the same to happen to any other newbie adjusting from a city to a country life. So I have some suggestions for you.

Don't be afraid to ask questions. It's okay to not know.

You truly are capable of more than you think. Try. Try again. It's by practice that we learn and become more proficient. (Notice I didn't say perfect.)

There's always more to learn. Stay teachable.

There actually isn't only one right way to do

something, but we can learn much from those who are more experienced than we are.

Be patient and kind with yourself when doing something you've never done before. There are so many things that can't be learned except by doing. Making mistakes often provides us the greatest lessons.

My mamma instructed me again and again to not let anything or anyone take my joy from me. The truth is nothing or no one can rob you of your joy, your peace, your confidence and pretty much anything else unless you give them the power to do so. So don't.

Perhaps my best advice to you newbie country girls is to be plucky. In case you don't know, this means to be brave, bold, daring, determined, undaunted, audacious, spunky and feisty as you learn about your new world.®