

# WHEN A CITY GIRL *goes country*

By Annette Bridges

## Appreciating the Quiet

Do you appreciate the quiet times in your life? I must admit this is something I sometimes have trouble with. My life has not always been as calm as it is now. When we were raising our daughter, my days were anything but calm.

My nest has been empty for more than 20 years, and my care of aging family members and pets as they came to their rainbow bridge crossing a few years ago ended as well. In the years since I have been exploring a new sense of purpose and have become more involved in our ranching life.

As I sit here on this very tranquil Saturday, I am recalling my years of tumult and pandemonium. I remember when I longed for a pause and wished for an escape to find some peace and quiet. Be careful what you wish for my friends because one day you will get it and realize how much you miss all the commotion you once had.

When I recount my first days and months living in the country, it was not so much the quiet that I noticed as much as it was the very different noises from what I was used to living in the city.

My husband had more than cows back then. He loved all kinds of fowl. In fact, when we married there were dozens of peacocks gracing the ranch as well as chickens, ducks and pheasants. Our little farmhouse did not have air conditioning yet so we slept with the windows open. We married in March so the nights were



In the years since her caregiving days came to an end, Annette Bridges has been exploring a new sense of purpose and has become more involved in ranching life. (Photo courtesy Annette Bridges)

not too hot, but I can also say that our slumber was short because peacocks and roosters are early risers.

These days, we do not have all the critters we once did and even our cows seem quieter to me than my first memories except when it is time to wean calves.

We have more neighbors surrounding our ranch acres than 40

years ago as farms and ranches have sold and subdivided so we do have more vehicle traffic now that I could do without.

We have one cutting horse rancher who I think rarely sleeps as I hear his truck or tractor driving by at all hours some nights.

I guess the quiet that bothers me most comes from my own uncertainties about what to do with

my time when my husband does not need my help. My old routines around the house have lost their appeal and some are more difficult, so I often sit consumed by the hush.

It is in my hours of solitude when I write. I also find joy in planning and creating products to sell in my gift shop. Still, I often find myself longing for more and wondering what else I can do.

I am committed to a healthier me so I have added more exercise to my daily routines. My limited capabilities these days make this type of exercise require a bit of creativity, but I am determined to move my body more any way that I can.

It is also in these hours of stillness that I think of my sweet departed mother. I ponder how she coped with her last three years on this earth when she became stationary in a wheelchair.

She was never one to sit still and needed to find ways to stay busy. Painting became her passion. If she was awake, she had a paintbrush in her hand and canvas on the table in front of her.

These memories of my mamma inspire me to keep thinking of new and fresh ideas to explore and experience while I sit in my stillness.

Honestly, I have found when I relish in the serenity of my life and find gratitude in every moment is when I appreciate the quiet times in my ranch life the most and when new inspirations begin to bloom and blossom. 