



WHEN A CITY GIRL GOES COUNTRY

By Annette Bridges

In my early years of country living I might have been described as a compulsive planner. Life on a cattle ranch would change that. I've learned to let go of unwavering expectations for how I thought my life or even my day was supposed to happen.

There is happiness in being ready for any possibility and ready to seize unexpected moments and opportunities. Happy is the life that is dazzled by each beautiful sunrise whether a cloudy or a sunny day. I've learned to be gracefully surprised by each and every event in my life – endeavoring not to be daunted, overwhelmed or exasperated when every detail doesn't pan out the way I had envisioned.

Yes, life on a cattle ranch is filled with the unpredictable and unplanned so all the better to embrace that reality.

Such an example happened one winter. Even though my husband tries to calendar the births of calves to avoid December and January, there often is that cow that got pregnant before he wanted her to. More than once Murphy's Law ruled the day much to my dear husband's dismay resulting in a calf being born during the worst weather conditions possible.

We were in the midst of a horrible winter storm. My husband was driving his four-wheel drive Blazer around the pasture to give the cows a final check before we headed to bed.

Our miniature dachshund and I were hanging out in the living room when through the front door enters my husband carrying a barely breathing sleet covered newborn calf. A mix of freezing rain and sleet at the time of its birth literally froze the poor thing to the



Annette Bridges has learned to let go of unwavering expectations for how she thought her life or even her day was supposed to happen. (Photo courtesy Annette Bridges)

ground. My husband was able to pull her up and get her on to the floorboard of his Blazer.

He carried the poor baby to our guest bathtub where we both worked diligently to cover the calf in warm water while struggling to keep her head above it. It was not easy. We gently yet vigorously scrubbed to melt the ice off. Her body was so cold the hot tub water almost immediately cooled off. We kept adding hot water until we actually ran out. After towel rubbing and blowing with a hair dryer, my husband carried the near lifeless calf and laid her down on a rug in front of our gas stove.

The calf was weak and lay very still, and so our long night began.

One trait I can tell you about my country boy is that he doesn't give up. His dedication to life and survival for all entrusted in his care is unswerving.

I wish I had a photo of the scene. My husband lay on the sofa. I lay for a long while on the floor beside the pitiful calf rubbing her head, and our dachshund remained in her bed not far from the calf on high alert for signs of any life. I eventually moved to our loveseat and dozed, as the calf lay unmoving in front of the stove. Dawn was still a few hours away. We would wait till morning to find the mamma cow and hopefully reunite the calf to its mamma. That is if she survived the night.

Our dachshund turned into our barking alarm clock when shortly before daylight the calf woke from its frozen sleep and began trying to stand. We took the now very alive calf to our barn and my husband created a small playpen area stacked with hay bales for the calf to stay warm. The successful reuniting did happen and other than damage to her ears from frostbite, she grew into a strong and healthy cow. My advice to anyone adjusting from life in the city to the country is to allow yourself to be flexible and open-minded for the many unforeseen amazing adventures that will surely come. If you are a planner, plan to be surprised. ☺