



# WHEN A CITY GIRL *goes country*

By Annette Bridges

**W**hat do you wish you could tell your mother-in-law?

My husband's dear mom passed away more than 20 years ago, but my-oh-my, how I wish she would have sought out some relationship advice on how to get along with this city girl.

Perhaps I can share something now that will help country moms better understand us city girls.

Give us a break. We can't help that we have never before eaten sweet potatoes and collard greens.

When we say we have never eaten something you've prepared for dinner and are excited to try it, please don't take offense. We are not being disrespectful. It's called honesty and sincerity. When we say we are excited to try something we've never had before, we really are.

You will not learn how we feel about what you've cooked by staring at us while we eat and watching how quickly we take in each bite.

If we can't clean our plates, this does not mean we didn't like your cooking. It may mean we don't eat as much as your son does. Perhaps it would be best to allow us to serve our own plates so not to waste any of your delicious food.

Your daughter-in-law may very well be quite different from you. It also is likely she wasn't raised the same way you raised your son. These facts did not stop your son from falling in love with her. He accepts her for who she is, and you need to do the same.

Don't try to change her into who you would like her to be.



Annette Bridges has grown to love the land gifted to her and her husband by her in-laws. (Photo courtesy Annette Bridges)

Instead, be interested in learning more about the woman who adores your son.

It may be that your daughter-in-law is having a difficult time adjusting to this strange new world where she is living. It may be that she could use encouragement and reassurance and even compliments as she does her best to learn and acclimate to her surroundings.

Only give advice when she asks for it, and she will ask. She probably wants to ask but may feel intimidated by your critical eyes and wrong assumptions that stop her.

It would be kind and helpful to be a mother-in-law who is approachable and loves unconditionally rather than a mother-in-law whose manners and actions causes her daughter-in-law to believe and

fear she will never measure up to your expectations and standards.

What if you could both learn from each other? Perhaps this city girl has insights and experiences that might surprise you. That might even be of interest and helpful to you.

I've spent the past 38 years living next door to my in-law's house. My father-in-law passed away nine years ago so it has just been my husband and me on the ranch for almost a decade now. To be very honest with y'all, I still struggle with feeling a sense of ownership of the world where I live, and I believe my challenge stems back to never feeling fully welcomed and accepted by my dear mother-in-law.

So what do I wish I could tell my mother-in-law today?

I love your son as much or even more today than I did when we first met. You raised a good man, and I thank you for that. I do think I've succeeded at learning to cook your son's favorite foods. At least he says so. We still use all of your beloved recipes for holiday dinners. I thank you for sharing them with me. I've grown to love living on this land you gifted to us. I wish you could have lived longer so we could have become better friends. I think it would make you happy to see me driving the little red tractor or me sitting beside your son riding in the Ranger to check on the cows.

I still don't have your interest in gardening though, and that's okay. I didn't have to become exactly like you to love living in the country. ☺