

WHEN A CITY GIRL

goes country

By Annette Bridges

In Search of a Happy Ending

The beginning of a new year gives this city-girl-gone-country a moment to pause, reflect on my life so far, and consider what's next. The older I get, the more I think about how I want my story to end.

Who doesn't want a happy ending?

I've always been a dewy-eyed optimist with dreams of a fairytale finish. I want to see the bad guy punished, the hero and heroine together, and everyone getting exactly what they deserve.

Some call this a craving for justice. I prefer the proverb "All's well that ends well."

This is probably why I generally ask my daughter whether I'll like "this" book or "that" movie. She knows what I'm really asking - does it have a favorable outcome? If she answers yes, then I know I can handle whatever problems the characters face because I trust I'll like the finale.

Even when I've been assured that the conclusion will suit me, the challenges characters meet can seem so insurmountable that I start to question whether my daughter's definition of a happy ending is different from my own. But it always turns out as she promises, even if the path to the feel-good resolution looks nothing like what I imagined.

I've heard it said that Cinderella doesn't always get her happy ending. But I wonder if that's because she believes there is only one desirable way for her story to conclude.



Annette is looking for a new year filled with adventure. (Photos courtesy of Annette Bridges)

Maybe - just maybe - there is more than one way to find the happiness and satisfaction she seeks.

Many parts of my life have not unfolded the way I first pictured them.

But I've learned, and continue to learn, that there is more than one route to acceptable and agreeable results in just about any circumstance. That usually requires setting aside my own preconceived notions and limited expectations. Holding onto hope is essential, too.

I believe in happy endings, happily-ever-afters, fairy tales, and Cinderella getting her Prince. It's just that simple. I never want to buy into the idea that the world is cruel and dark and people are doomed by their past mistakes or wrong choices.

These days my country boy and I keep wrestling with the question: is there another chapter after cattle ranching? I sometimes get

impatient and anxious, wanting to know what our next chapter will look like and when it will begin.

Lately I've been thinking I need to slow down and enjoy the journey more. What's my hurry anyway? I'm certainly not rushing toward my earthly finale, and I don't want to miss anything along the way. Every moment needs to be cherished, every lesson treasured, every triumph celebrated.

I'm learning that the more I understand happiness isn't something attainable only in some distant dream, the more I realize it's within my grasp right now.

The future isn't only what happens tomorrow - it's the next hour and every moment of each day. I suppose I'm not just searching for a happy ending, but for a happy new year filled with exhilarating adventures and captivating experiences.

Cheers to yours! ☺



New Years Eve 2019.

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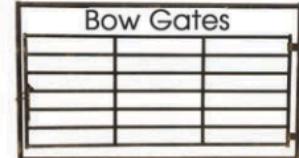
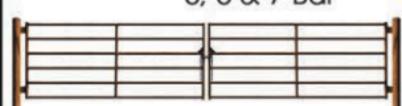
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