



WHEN A CITY GIRL *goes country*

By Annette Bridges

Words That Changed Me



There is power and magic in written words. (Photo courtesy of Anette Bridges)

Sometimes the most powerful change begins with four simple words. Writing them down led me to a new way of seeing myself, my marriage, and my life.

Ah, the power and magic of written words! I've always loved to write. I started keeping a diary in my single-digit years. These days we often say journals instead of diaries, but whatever we call them, I've always been

drawn to words and phrases. My journals are filled with those that captured my attention and spoke to my heart in some profound way at various times throughout my life.

Even in decorating my home, I can't resist a good quote. My latest art purchases have been words printed on canvas, metal, or wood that now adorn our walls and shelves. Listening to a Robert Redford interview

that re-aired after his passing inspired a new custom sign order. He referred to a favorite T. S. Eliot quote: "There's only the trying, the rest is not our business." I fell immediately in love with that message and decided I needed those words sitting on my desk.

I've been celebrating the idea of trying. In fact, folks who know me often hear that word beginning my sentences: "I'm

trying to ..." fill in the blank, and I've probably said it! I've long believed that what we say can have a powerful impact on others, as well as on how we feel about ourselves.

Words matter, so we should choose them carefully and thoughtfully. But what I've discovered is that writing our thoughts, feelings, and even our questions down on paper can be just as powerful—maybe even



more so.

One of the most profound examples in my own life happened almost by accident. Years ago, I was preparing to speak at a women's conference.

As I scribbled notes to introduce myself, I wrote the words: I'm a cattle rancher. When I later stood at the podium and saw those words staring back at me, I froze. I was stunned. For decades, I had always referred to myself as a cattle rancher's wife. Yet here I was—after nearly forty years of marriage—claiming something entirely different.

I could hardly believe I had written those words, much less that I was thinking of myself that way. But in that moment, something shifted.

Those four words—I'm a cattle rancher—planted a seed that changed how I saw myself. It wasn't just about taking on a new label. It was about own-

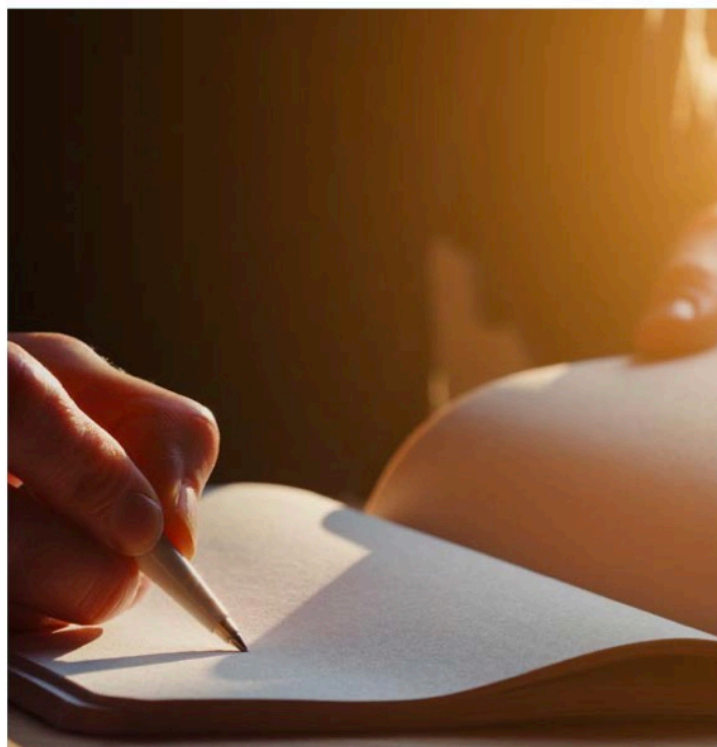
ing the life I was already living, about recognizing my role and identity in a way I never had before.

That simple act of writing changed more than just me. It transformed how I related to my husband and to our marriage.

For years, I had quietly carried the idea that ranching was his calling, his story, and I was simply along for the ride. But seeing myself as a cattle rancher, too, helped me step into our life together with a new confidence and partnership.

As we approach our 45th wedding anniversary, I can say those words now without hesitation. And they feel true.

So maybe it's worth asking ourselves: what would happen if we wrote down the words we've never dared to say out loud? You just might surprise yourself—as I did—with a new way of seeing, living, and loving. [®]



Maybe it's worth asking ourselves what would happen if we wrote down the words we've never dared to say out loud. (Courtesy photo)

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