



WHEN A CITY GIRL *goes country*

By Annette Bridges

My World at 1.4 Miles Per Hour

I was watching a television interview with a Texas rancher when he said something that made me stop what I was doing. I paused the program, re-wound it, and listened again. "It's great to enjoy the world at 1.4 miles per hour." As soon as I heard those words, I knew they were speaking to me. They gave simple, well-chosen language to something I already understood—feelings I had carried and conclusions I had reached after forty-five years of living on our cattle ranch.

He was sitting on his tractor when he said it, smiling a little, making reference to the slow, steady speed of a machine built for work, not hurry. And maybe that's why it settled so deeply into my heart—because I know that speed well.

One of my greatest joys of life on our cattle ranch has been driving my beloved red tractor while picking up square bales. There's no rushing involved. The tractor putters along slowly, steadily, just fast enough to move forward but slow enough that nothing feels missed. I can ease ahead, line up the bale loader, make small adjustments, and never feel pressed for time.

At 1.4 miles per hour, the world opens up.

I glance toward the pasture and see calves playing chase, kicking up dust like they've discovered joy for the first time. I spot a calf nursing its mama,



one of Annette's greatest joys has been driving her red tractor picking up square bales. (Photo courtesy of Annette Bridges)

that quiet, instinctive moment that somehow feels sacred every single time. Sometimes it's two "bestie" mamas grazing side by side, comfortable in each other's company, reminding me that

companionship doesn't always require words.

From the tractor seat, I notice things I would never see if I were moving faster. The sun beginning its slow descent, casting

a golden glow across the field. Birds perched on square bales, patiently waiting their turn to be picked up. The sound of geese or ducks flying overhead, announcing their presence long before I



There is so much more to see when you slow down enough to notice. (Courtesy photo)

see them cross the sky.

There isn't much I miss at that speed.

When I first came to living on the ranch after getting married, I didn't immediately appreciate the slower pace. In fact, I often felt impatient with it.

Chores felt like something to get through, not something to linger in. I was usually in a hurry to finish the task at hand so I could move on to what I thought was the fun part of the day. The

slowness felt like an obstacle, not a gift. It would take many years—many seasons—before I began to realize what that pace was quietly offering me all along.

The tractor doesn't allow hurry. It insists on patience.

It teaches you to work with the land instead of racing across it. And somewhere between bale after bale, I learned that slowing down isn't about doing less—it's about seeing more.

At 1.4 miles per hour, your senses wake up. Your thoughts quiet down. You stop multitasking and start noticing. Joy doesn't rush in loudly; it shows up gently, in scenes that might look ordinary to someone moving too fast to care.

I think that's why that rancher's words stayed with me.

They captured something I've been learning all along—that there's a richness to life that only reveals itself at a slower

pace. A pace where your eyes are open, your heart is present, and your mind isn't already racing ahead to the next task.

In a world that celebrates speed and hustle, choosing to putter along can feel almost countercultural.

But from my seat on my beloved red tractor, moving at 1.4 miles per hour, it feels like a gift.

Because there is so much more to see when you slow down enough to notice. 