



WHEN A CITY GIRL *goes country*

By Annette Bridges

Still Merry!

It was in September 2022 when I wrote a column titled “Merry Maui Cows,” featuring a photograph of me with a group of Maui cows grazing in a seaside pasture.

That photo was taken in the very same spot as this one, captured a few weeks ago in March 2026.

Standing there again, looking out over that same green hillside rolling toward the ocean, I couldn’t help but smile.

I’m quite certain those cows were just as merry then as they are now—and I realized, so am I.

My husband and I had returned to Maui to celebrate our 45th wedding anniversary.

Forty-five years.

It feels almost impossible to say out loud without wondering where in the world the time has gone.

It truly does seem to have flown by. And yet, when I stop and think about it, so much life has been lived in those years—joys, challenges, ordinary days, unforgettable moments.

The kind of life that shapes you.

This particular trip carried an extra layer of celebration for me.

Since that first “Merry Maui Cows” photo was taken, I’ve lost over fifty pounds.

I found myself happily shopping for new tropical clothes, smiling in dressing rooms, picking up sizes I hadn’t worn in years.

It was fun in a lighthearted



Change is still possible, even later in life. (Photo courtesy of Annette Bridges)



way—but also meaningful in a deeper one.

A reminder that change is still possible, even later in life.

And isn't that part of what this season of life brings?

Birthdays and anniversaries begin to feel less like markers of time passing and more like invitations to reflect.

To look back. To take stock. To notice what has changed—and what has remained.

When I placed my new photo beside the one from 2022, I noticed the differences, of course. But what stood out most wasn't what had changed.

It was what hadn't.

Still merry.

Those two simple words felt like more than just an observation.

They felt like a quiet declaration.

Because being "still merry" after years have passed.

After life has unfolded in all its beauty and difficulty—really does say something.

It says we've held onto joy.

It says we've chosen gratitude.

It says we've weathered what needed weathering and still found reasons to smile.

Life doesn't stay the same. It isn't meant to.

There are seasons of ease and seasons of challenge.

There are moments that take your breath away and moments that take your strength. But tucked within it all, there can still be something steady... a thread of merriness that we carry forward.

Not a loud, constant happiness.

Not a perfect, untouched life. Just... still merry.

And maybe that's enough.

In fact... maybe it's everything. 



Annette's photo of the Merry Maui Cows from 2022.