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OBITUARY

Bobbie Brandenburg started new life at 74

By **AMY RABIDEAU SILVERS**
asilvers@journalsentinel.com

Bobbie Brandenburg found love and a second family when she married Kenneth Steele.

"She was 74 when she married my dad," said his daughter, Kathy Sampson. "Dad was 72."

It was her first marriage. She did not change her legal name.

"Marriage was a change for Bobbie, because she was pretty much used to being on her own," Sampson said.

Bernice H. Brandenburg — many knew her as Bobbie — died of cancer Aug. 28. She was 93.

Mutual friends decided to fix up Brandenburg with Steele, a Pewaukee farmer who became a Milwaukee schoolteacher, after he was suddenly widowed in 1987. He had been married for 46 years to Doris Steele.

Sometime later, Steele said he wanted to talk to all his children. He said it was seri-

ous with Bobbie. He wanted to marry her.

It was no surprise to his family. They had seen the way the two were falling in love.

"We wanted Dad to be happy," Sampson said. "We all really liked Bobbie. ... They had 19 years together. They were a really good match."

Brandenburg grew up in Wauwatosa. She long worked as a secretary at Cutler Hammer.

She first became familiar with Pewaukee after she began boarding her horse, named Jolly, at an area farm. She later moved Jolly to the Ryan Farm, becoming good friends with Frank and Joseph Ryan.

They died in the 1970s, leaving their farm to Waukesha County for development as a park with horseback riding trails. They also granted Brandenburg the right to live on the property for the rest of her life.

Brandenburg was long ac-

tive with the Retzer Nature Center, serving as the first president of the Friends of Retzer group. Interested in photography, she was involved in starting the center's annual photo contest.

She served as an interpreter at Old World Wisconsin, mostly in its schoolhouse and the general store. She also helped organize the Friends of Old World Wisconsin.

Both she and Steele took on each other's interests. He liked bicycle riding, but she had never ridden a bicycle.

"Ken's son designed and built a bicycle built for two, with two bicycles fastened together side by side, because Bobbie wanted to see more than Ken's back when they were cycling," Sampson said.

Together they gardened. He bought her two sheep. He also understood that she wasn't a vegetarian but considered her chickens "friends, not food." They were involved with the Pewaukee Area Historical Soci-



STEELE / BRANDENBURG FAMILY PHOTO

Bobbie Brandenburg found love and a second family when she married Kenneth Steele. It was her first marriage at 74, his second at age 72.

ety and as weather observers for WTMJ-TV.

Both continued going to their own churches, attending services and events together when something special was going on. Brandenburg was a founding member of Divine Redeemer Lutheran Church in Hartland.

In recent months, Steele had to live in an assisted living facility but went to see his wife every day. Brandenburg stayed at her home in Pewaukee, with the help of niece Martha Steiner and hospice

care.

"One of the days we were coming back from visiting Bobbie, he said he never thought he would be losing another wife," his daughter said.

Other survivors include her husband's children and grandchildren, and generations of nieces and nephews.

Visitation will be held from 1 p.m. Sunday until the memorial service at 2:30 p.m., both at Divine Redeemer Lutheran Church, 31385 Hill Road, Hartland.