



## Laurinda Wessel

August 3, 1955 - February 16, 2025

Laurinda Wessel, DVM

Laurinda “Laurie” Wessel passed away on February 16, 2025 in her home on the farm that she’d renovated and lived on for the past 25 years in Bangor, PA. For the past several weeks, she was with many loved ones, including her partner Brian. Laurie was born on August 3, 1955 in St. Louis, MO, to Camilla F. and Richard A. Wessel. She was the eldest of three siblings and remained close to her younger brother Rick and baby sister Tania throughout her life. As a child, Laurie grew up riding and caring for horses on her grandparents’ farm in Kirkwood, MO. Before long, she wanted a pony of her own. Met with practicality, she was told ponies are expensive. Undaunted and with her mother's counsel, Laurie set out to make her own money and began her first business - selling her grandfather’s eggs out of a wagon around the neighborhood.

Some years later in 1972, the family formally moved to her grandparents’ farm and took over the family business, Wessel Stables. Laurie, then a teenager, was already making strides in her horse ambitions. An adept equestrian, she regularly competed at local horse shows and excelled in a variety of riding styles including western saddle, english saddle, jumping, and dressage. Her interests, though, were diverse, and when she began studying at Beloit College in 1973, she focused on music (specializing in flute) and theater. After also studying abroad at Edinburgh College, she returned to Missouri as a transfer student at Webster College and as a horse trainer and riding

instructor back at Wessel Stables. There, in Webster Groves, MO, in 1978, Laurie first met Brian Kehnemuyi, who'd become her life partner of 47 years. Had Laurie's father not decided to sell the property and close the stable, Laurie and Brian might've stayed in their first home on the river in Kimmswick, MO. But with the stable closing, Laurie thought, as she later told it, well, I guess I'll go to vet school. And so to vet school she went. Together with Brian, she moved to Columbia, MO, where she graduated in 1983 from the University of Missouri, Columbia, with a Doctorate in Veterinary Medicine. Laurie's first veterinarian job was at Warren Animal Hospital, a mixed veterinary practice in Phillipsburg, NJ. Laurie had dreams, though, of specializing in equine medicine. So, in 1998, Laurie founded her own all-women practice, Cross River Veterinary Services. Soon after, in 2001, Laurie and Brian moved to a 38-acre property in Bangor, PA. Here, they renovated an old stone house and stone barn into their home and Laurie's budding veterinary practice. Over the next 24 years, Laurie mentored, hired, and worked alongside many young equine veterinarians, technicians, and general horse-enthusiasts. In 2023 she sold her practice to her mentees-turned-associates Dr. Megan Eick and Dr. Kelly Corcoran, who continue today to operate the practice out of the farm.

Laurie has always said that "everyone could use a pony." A playful assertion, but one she stood behind. Every summer, Laurie, a proud aunt, hosted "Pony Camp," for which family members, with and without children, flocked from near and far. While ponies were, of course, a characteristic feature of the gatherings, Pony Camp was, at its core, a time and place for family and friends to come together and hang out. Tents popped up across the farm, and Pony Campers shared days of horse riding, assorted crafts, DIY slip 'n slides into the farm's creek, play productions (with all-children casts), bonfires, and crepe-breakfasts and Brian's acclaimed barbeque-dinners. For more task-oriented adults, there was always a new farm project to be tackled. Projects involved things like fencing, concrete-laying, and tree-removing, and often required tractors or backhoes and occasional ingenuity. While the adults

returned to their usual lives and jobs after the week, many nieces stayed the entire summer. They mucked about, became increasingly feral, and sometimes even completed their assigned chores. Laurie kept the kids from getting into too much trouble on the farm, but largely enjoyed (and encouraged) the young freedom and mischief.

Laurie owned and loved not just horses (many of which she bred and raised herself) but a myriad of other creatures, including cats, dogs (she had a particular fondness for so-called 'weiner dogs'), and a mule. While the financial success of her early foray into entrepreneurship (local Missouri egg-selling) remains unclear from Laurie's later retellings, the spirit of the venture seems to have taken off. Not only because she ultimately ended up with many ponies of her own, but really because she lived her life with a will, enthusiasm, and vitality that spread to the lives of many around her.

Four years ago, in 2021, Laurie was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. Until her passing, however, Laurie continued to ride horses, gather with family, travel, cultivate a large spread of dahlias on her farm, and share her spirit and love with family, friends, and animals. She is preceded in death by her mother Camilla F. (1987) and her father Richard A. Wessel (2020). She is survived by many she loved and who continue to love her, including her partner Brian Kehnemuyi; brother Richard A. Wessel Jr. (sp Laurie) and sister Tania E. Wessel (sp Paul); nephew Nathan; many nieces - Kaitlin, Margaret, Charlotte, Nola, Sarah W., Taylor, and Sarah K.; stepmother Mary Pat Wessel; brothers-in-law Craig (sp. Angie) and Darah (sp. Sora); dogs Ella and Rosie; and her dear horse, Gus.

A Celebration of Life will be held outside at the East Bangor Park pavilion at 2:00pm on Saturday, May 10, 2025, when the weather will likely be more pleasant.

If you wish to contribute something in Laurie's honor, in lieu of flowers, please consider donating to the American Association of Equine Practitioners' (AAEP) Foundation for the Horse Memorial Program. Services are under the

care of the Fiore Funeral Home 230 Market Street Bangor, PA

# Previous Events

## Celebration of Life

---

MAY 10. 2:00 PM.

East Bangor Park Pavilion