Monika Maria Kordula (Wickert) Andrews

Monika Maria Kordula Wickert was born in Augsburg, Bavaria, Germany, on April 16, 1942. Kordula was the name of her godmother. Her parents were **Stephan Philip Wickert** and **Mathilde** (always called Thilde) **Kellner Wickert**. He was an art teacher and graphic designer. She was a housewife who later did piecework at the Hickey-Freeman clothing plant in Rochester. Monika was the third of five children, one boy and four girls. The family immigrated to the United States in 1952, settling in Rochester.



Fig.1. Monika around the time of her graduation from college in 1964.

Monika's entire education was in Catholic schools. She attended the Blessed Sacrament Elementary School, Mercy High School, and the nursing program at Nazareth College. She specialized in public health nursing. Also, she did some hospital nursing when she had been away from nursing for a time as a stay-at-home mother. She felt that she needed to do that in order to catch up with developments during her absence. She worked at Lakeside, Highland, Genesee, and Park Ridge.

As a teenager, she told her brother in a conversation about their future aspirations, "All I want is to do some good". She devoted her life to serving the needy. She was never really interested in money. Besides pursuing that most caring profession of nursing, Monika served in the Peace Corps in India for two years, first teaching health and hygiene in a school and then running a rural clinic.

She met Bill soon after returning from the Peace Corps in 1967 and they were married on March 22, 1969. She inherited Bill's four children from his earlier marriage. She never distinguished between them and the two sons she had with Bill, never referring to them as stepchildren. All six were her children and she loved and cared for them all the same.



Fig.2. The boy embracing Monika is Edgar, one of the children the Andrews sponsored through the Christian Children's Fund. Photo taken during their trip to Guatemala around 2005.

Besides nursing, Monika had a long and distinguished career as a volunteer, always serving the needy. She delivered Meals-on-Wheels and taught knitting to the inmates at the Albion Women's Correctional Facility. She joined a Twig hospital volunteers group briefly, but quit when she discovered that it was more conversational than service. While we were living in Paris in 1983-85 and 1989-91, she co-founded and co-directed a program at the American Church to help "trailing spouses" learn to cope with life abroad. Also, she recorded books for the blind and helped staff an English-language help line.

When she retired from nursing in 1996, she launched into volunteer service seriously. For fifteen years, she was president of Brockport's Food Shelf and she undertook to convert it to a "client-friendly" facility. She made food pick-ups, spent endless hours shelving food, preparing it for clients, waiting on clients, keeping the place clean, seeing to necessary repairs and improvements, recruiting volunteers and cash and in-kind donations, etc., etc. It now bears a plaque honoring her. She created the first handicapped-accessible playground in Monroe County and it bears her name. She got the idea, canvassed suppliers to find one that marketed handicapped-accessible equipment, secured a grant for funding, and organized 80 volunteers to build it. She helped build a Habitat for Humanity house in Clarkson and went to Mississippi twice for two weeks to help build Habitat houses after the devastation of Hurricane Katrina.

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Much of her volunteer activity was directed through her church, Incarnate Word Lutheran, in Rochester. She got the congregation involved in building three Habitat houses in Rochester, one of which was named the "Monika House of Hope". She organized volunteer nurses to do health monitoring at the church's Wellness Center. She organized and ran the Mustard Seed Kitchen, a program to provide warm meals for the poor who exhaust their resources near the end of each month. It regularly serves more than 100 people. She initiated the church's support for a clinic in the Dominican Republic and organized frequent fund-raising efforts on its behalf. She took the leadership in getting their church to participate in a program providing shelter for homeless families and in supporting the Southeast Rochester Food Bank.

She was constantly thinking of ways to help the needy. When food remained after an event at our church, she would donate it to the Open Door Mission. When she and Bill drove anywhere, she would knit caps, scarves, and mittens that she donated to an inner-city Lutheran church. Her compassion had no end. On the 5th of March, 2011 they went to a wedding in Hamilton, Ontario. A friend was getting married who had had a son out of wedlock when she was a teenager. Monika always made samplers for people getting married or having babies. In January, she had made one for the bride's wedding gift. When she wrote her a thank you note, she said, "I will always remember that you were the first one to accept me after my son was born."

It was so typical of her. I never knew that; she just did it.

The only times that she was so pleased by a gift from Bill that she broke into tears was when he twice gave her sponsorships of children in the Christian Children's Fund program. After she had sponsored a succession of children for more that thirty years, she decided that they had never met any of them and should go to Guatemala, where two of them lived. When they arrived at one facility to meet seven-year-old **Edgar**, he was waiting with his mother. When he saw Monika, he ran to her, threw his arms around her, and hugged her as she had never before been hugged. They took him downtown and bought him a suit of clothing, including his first ever baseball cap. They had been told to bring something, like a bedspread for the family. Monika would have nothing to do with a bedspread. She asked the mother, "What do you need?" The mother said that there were six in their family and they had only two chairs. So, they bought them four chairs.



Fig.3. A joyful Monika at a friend's New Year's Eve party about 2000.

One time, Bill got a credit card statement for $1,900 for clothing. He went into shock, and she was very defensive about the bill. It never happened again. But, when she was dying, she said she had saved $1,000 by not buying a Latte some days and by selling old clothes that didn't fit her anymore. She donated the money to the homeless shelter. Bill strongly suspects that the reason the large amounts never showed up again was that she was squirreling away money and didn't have to confront me when she overspent on clothes.

Her leisure pursuits were tennis, skiing, bridge, reading, music, travel, and family. Twice she biked 100 miles in one day. Twice she rode the 400-mile canal ride, She hiked 191 miles across England, the Inca Trail, the Milford Track, Grand Canyon and climbed several Adirondacks 46ers. She bicycled the Danube, along Dutch canals, and the Katy Trail. She knitted, stitched, sewed, quilted, caned chairs, painted her house, gardened and reveled in life.

In February, 2011, they were sitting in their TV room and she said, "I have lost the use of my right arm. It's something neurological."

She was scheduled to have a physical very shortly after that. When she went to see our primary care doctor, he suggested she go to a chiropractor, and her arm didn't get any better. Bill suggested they make an appointment with a neurologist. He did a nerve test on her arm and found nothing wrong. The next thing was an MRI.

On the 7th of March, Monika had an MRI. The next day she drove into Rochester and on the way back, she scraped the guardrail with the car. She didn't know how it happened. She went back to Rochester in the evening. As she was coming off the inner loop, she got a phone call from the doctor. She pulled over. It was the radiologist. He told her she had a brain tumor. She became hysterical. When she called Bill, he couldn't understand what she was saying. She calmed down, and Bill told her to go to the church, and he would come and get her. He went across the street, got their son, and drove to Rochester. Bill drove her home while their son brought her car home.

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She did radiation and chemotherapy for several months. Bill took care of her at home. He had home health aides for a while, and during the last ten weeks of her life she was in hospice. She had been a hospice nurse for ten years at Isaiah House and he arranged for her to be placed there.

They had wonderful support from their family and her siblings. Everyone came to help. Monika passed away on Halloween, 2011.



The Andrews Christmas card photo taken at Monica's 69th birthday party on April 16, 2011, at their house. The floral wreath on her head was made by her sister, Gabriele Wickert. Their children and her siblings threw the party.

Monika and Bill had two children:

Christopher Scott, born Jan 7, 1970, is a lawyer for E-Bay and lives in Berkeley with his wife and two children.

Thomas Nathan born February 14, 1978, is a social studies teacher in Henninger High School in Syracuse. He started his second year in September 2014 and loves the job.

Acknowledgements for above interview:

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