

# Ron Gaches



Ronald “Ron” Gaches, 73, passed away peacefully on May 20, 2026. He lived fully, generously, with purpose, and will be enormously missed.

Ron’s early years spent camping and canoeing sparked a lifelong love of nature. He graduated from Kansas State University in 1975 with degrees in Political Science and Economics before earning his law degree from Washburn University School of Law in 1978. He built a successful career as a corporate lobbyist, especially known for his strategic thinking and trustworthiness as an advisor. He was an incredibly engaging communicator, both in front of a crowd and one-on-one, connecting people with causes he believed in. Politics and public service remained lifelong passions, and in Lawrence he devoted countless hours to affordable housing initiatives, local arts organizations, Rotary, and political campaigns focused on helping others.

In February 2014, Ron was diagnosed with stage IV renal cell carcinoma and given only a few years to live. After stepping away from work, Ron focused on what mattered most. One of his favorite sayings became: “Am I dying with cancer, or am I living with cancer? You get to choose.” Alongside his beloved wife, Colette, he embraced life fully — traveling the world, creating a beautiful garden at their Kansas home, strengthening lifelong friendships, golfing, mentoring others, and cherishing time with family. Though he endured numerous setbacks throughout his illness, Ron faced each challenge with grit. He often credited his will to keep living to his incredible oncology team at MD Anderson Cancer Center, especially Dr. Matt Campbell, whom he considered both physician and dear friend.

Ron had a rare gift for making people feel seen, valued, and encouraged. He is survived by the love of his life (and devoted wife of nearly 33 years), Colette; his children, Jordan and Katie, whom he loved fiercely; and his brother, Mike. His family was the center of his world and the reason he fought so hard for so long.

Ron will be remembered for his sharp mind, quick wit, unmistakable style, and extraordinary ability to inspire hope in others. His life is a reminder that, while none of us are guaranteed time, all of us can choose how we live it.

Please join us for Ron’s Last Party on Thursday May 28th, at the Lawrence Arts Center, from 530 - 7pm. In lieu of flowers, the family suggests donations in Ron’s memory to the Bert Nash Youth Recovery Center, or to Douglas County CASA.” Arrangements are with Rumsey-Yost Funeral Home of Lawrence.