



## Ronald Helveston

November 29, 1938 - February 8, 2026

Ronald Rodgers Helveston (11/38 - 02/26)

Ron grew up on Detroit's East side and attended the University of Michigan on an Evans Scholarship, majoring in English with a focus on writing. However, social issues were always on his mind; a speech by candidate John Kennedy, given on the steps of the Michigan Union introducing his plan for the Peace Corps, opened up Ron's interest in public service.

After graduation, he married Mary Anne ("Mimi") McDonough, who shared his interest in public service. Too late to join the Peace Corps, they took jobs in Turkey teaching English as a foreign language at a boys' boarding school. They arrived in Sampson, Turkey, on the Black Sea knowing nothing about the Turkish language or its customs. Shortly after arriving in Samsun, US officials from a nearby Air Force base warned them that they were in danger from Russia because of the Cuban Missile Crisis.

At the end of the school year, Ron and Mimi returned to the US where Ron enrolled in WSU Law School in order to acquire skills for a career in public service. In March 1965, Ron and several classmates, outraged by the violence in Selma, Alabama, on "Bloody Sunday," travelled to Selma's Ebenezer Baptist Church to march with Martin Luther King. However a temporary order halted the march, and the crowd began to peacefully

disperse. But the law students soon learned that they were not out of danger when their car was chased out of town by gun-toting segregationists. With the support of practicing attorneys, Ron with other law students started a clinic where law students assisted indigent criminal defendants. That project was so successful that the Free Legal Aid Clinic (FLAC) became a legal entity, becoming one of WSU Law's most popular programs. For many years, Ron hosted FLAC fundraisers at his Palmer Woods home.

After graduation in 1966, Ron served a year's clerkship with the Hon. George C. Edwards of the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeal in Cincinnati. From there he took a position with the Appellate Division of the National Labor Relations Board in Washington DC, arguing cases in appellate courts across the country. Ron left the NLRB after two years to take a position with nationally-known Detroit labor law attorney, Theodore Sachs, and soon became a partner. It was at the Sachs' firm that Ron began a life-long career representing firefighter unions, engaging in arbitrations and contract negotiations and arguing for his firefighters in the Michigan Courts of Appeals, the Supreme Court of Michigan, and the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals. He left the Sachs Waldman firm in 2000 and joined his practice with his wife's law firm under the name Helveston & Helveston. In the spring of 2020, during the covid pandemic, he and his wife retired.

Ron was an exceptional athlete: he was a runner, wind surfer, roller blader, marathoner (Boston Marathon), long-distance biker, and cross-country skier. He was also a music lover who hosted many house concerts and who travelled with his wife to the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival every spring for 25 years.

Ron lived for 47 years in Detroit's Palmer Woods where he helped raise his two sons and two granddaughters. He participated in the neighborhood events and enjoyed sponsoring numerous political fundraisers, election parties,

holidays, and concerts in the Balmoral home he loved.

Ron is survived by his wife Mary Anne, ("Mimi"), son Jason, and two granddaughters, Chloe and Sophia, his brother Eugene, four nieces, and a nephew. (Son Tobey preceded him in death).

The family is planning a Celebration of Life for Ron in the spring.