

Actor Gary Sinise Reflects on Prayer, God, Son's Death After Cancer Battle: 'A Man of Great Faith'

"He was a man of great faith—great, great faith."

That's how actor Gary Sinise describes his 33-year-old son, Mac, who died in January after a harrowing battle with Chordoma, a persistent and rare cancer that starts in the spine.

The "Forrest Gump" star told CBN News his son "loved his Catholic faith" and deeply embraced it throughout his difficult journey.

"It was just inspiring to see how it helped sustain him through this cancer battle," Sinise said of the health struggle that started in 2018.

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For years, the family fought alongside Mac, trying available medications and anything believed to be able to potentially heal him.

Sinise said he was there to battle alongside Mac as long as he kept fighting.

And that expedition wasn't easy, as the loving dad recounted the "very disabling and crippling" nature of the disease. After the first tumor was removed in September 2018, Mac was monitored. Tragically, by May 2019, the cancer had returned.

"It had come back and it was starting to spread throughout his

body,” Sinise said. “He was back in the hospital again, and he started chemo and radiation at that point, but there is no cure for this particular cancer. There’s no reliable drug that has been used to fight it that has been effective.”

The unpredictable nature of the cancer meant doctors would often throw different treatments and medications into the mix, hoping to thwart the malignancy—but to no avail.

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Mac faced spinal surgery, multitudes of hospital visits and more, bravely fighting for his life along the way.

“These tumors were growing very fast,” Sinise said. “Uncharacteristically fast for Chordoma.”

Mac had to resign from his position with the Gary Sinise Foundation as he mustered the energy to fight on, relying on faith to cope and process. Throughout the ordeal, Mac prayed, journaled—and revisited creating music he started years before but never completed.

“Early 2023, he said to me, ‘Dad, you know, there’s some music that I never finished in college, and I think I’d like to try to finish it,’” Sinise recalled. “And he hadn’t been thinking about music much at all, really, but early 2023, he starts talking about that.”

So, Mac embarked on that mission, partnering with a friend to help him see it to fruition. By July 2023, he was in the studio recording a beautiful piece called “Arctic Circles,” a song that left Sinise emotional.

“I was just a sobbing mess when I went to the recording studio with him, because he hadn’t played any of it for me at all,” he said. “I had never heard it when he wrote it in college.”

Sinise continued, "I was so unprepared for what I was going to hear. It was all a surprise, and it was all a beautiful, beautiful moment to hear."

When the family moved to Nashville, Tennessee, last year, Mac was able to continue working on an album, a quest sparked by his revisiting of "Arctic Circles."

As Sinise recounted, the roots of Mac's love for music ran deep, being fostered early on when Sinise and his wife, Moira, bought Mac a drum set.

Sinise said his son was immediately a natural who was quickly able to play a rock beat.

His musical chops only grew over the years, as he played throughout high school and later went to college for music, studying composition and songwriting.

"He got out of college [and] toured around Europe ... with different bands, and around the states with different bands," Sinise said. "I think, in his heart, eventually, he wanted to ... be a composer."

In early November—just two months before his death—Mac was back in the studio in Nashville recording more music, assembling a record that will now be sold to benefit his father's foundation.

"Mac thought, you know, if there were any sales, he'd like the money to go to help the troops and veterans," Sinise said. "So, we put it on pre-sale at there's well over 2,000 pre-orders for the record."

The record's completion was the recognition of one of Mac's ultimate goals, according to his dad.

"He fulfilled his dream," Sinise said. "He accomplished what he was looking to do, and he was happy at the end of his life—and that's comforting for our family for sure." {eo}

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