

Christian Country Star Glen Campbell Dead at 81

Famed country music star and renowned Christian Glen Campbell died Tuesday. He was 81.

The “Rhinestone Cowboy” and “Wichita Lineman,” singer suffered from Alzheimer’s Disease for several years before passing away at an Alzheimer’s facility in Nashville, surrounded by his family.

“It is with the heaviest of hearts that we announce the passing of our beloved husband, father, grandfather and legendary singer and guitarist, Glen Travis Campbell, at the age of 81, following his long and courageous battle with Alzheimer’s disease,” according to a family statement.

Campbell was a musical legacy who impacted multiple genres.

According to *Rolling Stone*:

In his youth, Campbell started playing guitar and became obsessed with jazz guitarist Django Reinhardt. He dropped out of school when he was 14 and moved to Wyoming with an uncle who was a musician, playing gigs together at rural bars. He soon moved to Los Angeles and by 1962 had solidified a spot in the Wrecking Crew, a group of session pros. In 1963 alone he appeared on 586 cuts, and countless more throughout the decade, including the Byrds’ “Mr. Tambourine Man,” Elvis Presley’s “Viva Las Vegas,” Merle Haggard’s “Mama Tried” and the Righteous Brothers’ “You’ve Lost That Lovin’ Feeling.” ...

Campbell was married four times, and has five sons and three daughters. Despite his career successes, he struggled with alcoholism and cocaine addiction. In the early ’80s, he had a tempestuous, high-profile relationship with country singer Tanya Tucker, who was 22 years his junior. In 1981, he became

a born-again Christian, and in 1982, he married Kimberly Woollen, a Radio City Music Hall Rockette, who helped Campbell clean up his life.

He eventually turned to hymns.

“I love singing gospel music and hymns. Being a Christian, I love to tell people about Christ and what he’s done for me and can do for them,” Campbell said in 1990.

But he still struggled with the party scene that came with musical fame. He says he was a raging cocaine addict before his faith rescued him.

He told *Guideposts*:

I had promised Kim that cocaine would not be part of our marriage. I tried and prayed, but I didn’t keep that promise. One night shortly after our first child, Cal, was born, some musician friends were in town, and I stayed up till dawn doing cocaine with them.

When I got home Kim was heartbroken and furious, and I was afraid she was going to take Cal and leave. I can’t say I would have blamed her but I think it would have torn my heart out.

As I had done so many times before, I begged the Lord to deliver me. I don’t understand why, but that day it was as if Jesus reached down and pulled my hand back from the cocaine. I never touched the drug again.

But he still struggled with alcohol.

He told the magazine:

I used to argue with my pastor about how much wine they drank in the Bible. “Jesus turned water into wine,” I’d remind him. He’d look at me, shake his head and say, “Glen, when you can

change water into wine, then maybe you can drink it.” ...

When God lifted my obsession for alcohol it was as if he raised the curtain on a whole new life. He changed me in ways I never could have changed myself, and that is the key. Kim and I have a real marriage now, an honest marriage.

Today I truly have a peace “which passeth all understanding.” I really don’t understand it. But I thank the Lord all the time. I am a man richly blessed, despite myself. For all that God has given me, there is nothing for which I am more thankful than Kim.

Campbell is survived by his wife, Kim Campbell of Nashville, Tennessee; their three children, Cal, Shannon and Ashley; his children from previous marriages, Debby, Kelli, Travis, Kane and Dillon; 10 grandchildren, great- and great-great-grandchildren; sisters Barbara, Sandra and Jane; and brothers John Wallace “Shorty” and Gerald.