

GMA Hall of Famer Gary McSpadden Dies at 77

Award-winning gospel music star and pastor Gary McSpadden died Wednesday, April 15, after a weeks-long battle with cancer. He was 77.

McSpadden died at the Cancer Center in Tulsa, Oklahoma. He was transferred from Cox Hospital in Springfield, Missouri, during his struggle with pancreatic cancer.

McSpadden's wife, Carol, posted the news of her husband's death on their church's Facebook page.

"As most of you know Gary and I have been in Tulsa at the Cancer Treatment Center of America," she wrote. "Gary has been battling cancer along with other complications over the last several weeks. This has been a quick and difficult journey we have been on. We knew this week that God had a plan and his healing would be here on earth or in heaven. As of 8:40 AM Pastor passed peacefully surrounded by his family into the arms of God. 2 Timothy 4:7 says I have fought a good fight I have finished my course and I have kept the faith. Pastor Gary fought hard, finished the race and was an unbelievable man of faith. I would like to thank all the Faith and Wisdom church family and all the many friends who have prayed with us during this time."

Over 250 comments on Carol's post expressed people's sorrow over the loss of McSpadden.

McSpadden was born Jan. 26, 1943, in Lubbock, Texas. His parents, Boyd and Helen McSpadden, were both songwriters and raised McSpadden to sing and worship God in Boyd's church, Faith Temple. That's where McSpadden's passion for music, worship and songwriting began.

At 18 years old, McSpadden replaced Jake Hess' place as lead singer in the gospel group The Imperials. Five months later, he joined the Oaks Ridge Quartet, which soon afterward changed their name to the Oak Ridge Boys. He recorded three albums with the band: *He Whispers Sweet Peace to Me* (1962), *With Sounds of Nashville* (1962) and *Folk Minded Spirituals for Spiritual Minded Folk* (1963).

In 1964, McSpadden rejoined The Imperials and sang with Jake Hess until 1967. During this time, the band served as backup singers for Elvis Presley.

McSpadden's musical relationship with the Gaithers began in 1977 when he joined the Gaither Trio, which included Bill and Gloria Gaither. The group changed its name to the Gaither Vocal Band in 1981 and added Steve Green and Lee Young to their new band.

During his time with the Gaithers, McSpadden served as a co-pastor for his father's church, Faith and Wisdom Church, in Branson, Missouri. He served at the church for three years, though in 1980 he began to focus again primarily on his music career.

In 1979, McSpadden began working on his solo career on the side, producing his album *Higher Purpose*. In 1988, he left the Gaither Vocal Band to pursue his solo work full time. Of his 30 total albums, 16 are solo works.

After hearing the news of his death, Bill and Gloria Gaither posted their condolences on Twitter, saying:

"Our good friend Gary McSpadden passed away this morning. This is a real loss for our whole family, for us and for the whole world. Gary was an incredible person." – Bill & Gloria Gaither

– Gaither Music (@Gaithermusic) April 15, 2020

McSpadden's music career also included working for Terri Gibbs, The Cathedrals, The Talleys and LuLu Roman. He also served as co-host of *The PTL Club* when it was under Jerry Falwell Sr.'s leadership.

In 2000, he was placed in the Gospel Music Association Hall of Fame for his great musical efforts.