

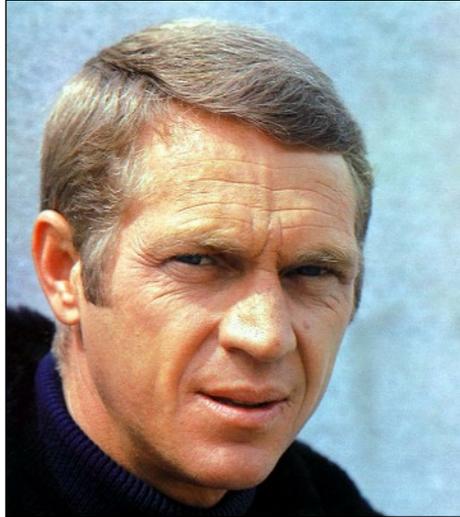
From Slater, Missouri

## Steve McQueen—The most famous and highest paid actor of his time

Terence Steven “Steve” McQueen (March 24, 1930 – November 7, 1980) was an American actor. Called “The King of Cool,” his “anti-hero” persona, developed at the height of the counterculture of the 1960s, made him a top box-office draw of the 1960s and 1970s. McQueen received an Academy Award nomination for his role in *The Sand Pebbles*. His other popular films include *The Cincinnati Kid*, *The Thomas Crown Affair*, *Bullitt*, *The Getaway*, and *Papillon*, as well as the all-star ensemble films *The Magnificent Seven*, *The Great Escape*, and *The Towering Inferno*. In 1974, he became the highest-paid movie star in the world, although he did not act in films again for four years. McQueen was combative with directors and producers, but his popularity placed him in high demand and enabled him to command large salaries.

McQueen was born in Beech Grove, Indiana. His father, William Terence McQueen, was a stunt pilot for a barnstorming flying circus who left McQueen’s mother. Unable to cope with caring for a small child, Steve’s mother left him with her parents in Slater, Missouri, in 1933. As the Great Depression set in shortly thereafter, McQueen and his grandparents moved to a farm in Slater. McQueen was raised Catholic.

In 1947, McQueen joined the United States Marine Corps and was promoted to private first class and assigned to an armored unit. Initially he reverted to his prior rebelliousness and was demoted to private seven times. He took an unauthorized absence by failing to return after a weekend pass expired, staying with a girlfriend for two weeks until the shore patrol caught him. He resisted arrest and spent forty-one days in the brig. After this he resolved to focus his energies on self-improvement and embraced the Marines’ discipline. In



Steve McQueen: “Man on the edge.”

late 1955, at the age of 25, McQueen left New York and headed for California seeking acting jobs in Hollywood. When McQueen appeared in a two-part television Westinghouse Studio One presentation entitled *The Defenders*, Hollywood manager Hilly Elkins took note of him. McQueen was hired for the film *The Blob* (his first leading role) which depicts a flesh eating amoeba-like space creature.

There were the missed roles. McQueen was offered the lead male role in *Breakfast at Tiffany’s*, but was unable to accept due to his Wanted: Dead or Alive contract (the role went to George Peppard). He turned down parts in *Ocean’s 11*, *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, *The Driver*, *Apocalypse Now*, *California Split*, *Dirty Harry*, *A Bridge Too Far*, *The French Connection*, and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*.

On November 7, 1980, McQueen died of cardiac arrest at 3:45 a.m. at the Juárez, Mexico, clinic, twelve hours after surgery to remove or reduce numerous metastatic tumors in his neck and abdomen. He was 50 years old. According to the *El Paso Times* McQueen died in his sleep. McQueen was cremated and his ashes spread in the Pacific Ocean.

Article & Photo Source: Wikipedia/Wikimedia.

## Steve McQueen’s “Great Escape”

*From what had he fled? From what was he running? What pursued him?*

His film titles give us some clues, as does his pace of life, the rapidity of life, the mood swings, the speed of his reactions—all lived as if in a race, one that, as he grew older, got ever more fast until the inevitable occurred—time ran out.<sup>1</sup>

*I fled Him down the nights and down the days;*

*I fled Him down the arches of the years;*

*I fled Him down the labyrinthine ways;*

*Of my own mind; and in the mist of tears,*

*I hid from Him.*

(*The Hound of Heaven* by Francis Thompson (1859–1907))

In the late fall of 1980, Hollywood’s King of Cool slipped the surly bounds of earth into eternity with a well-marked Bible from Billy Graham resting on his chest and Heaven in his sights.

Few people know of the radical change the actor experienced after trusting Jesus Christ as Savior more than a year before his death. Nor do they know about Billy Graham’s ministry to actor Steve McQueen in his dying hours.

Flying was the hook God used to pull McQueen in. He had purchased a vintage Stearman bi-plane and hired an expert pilot named Sammy Mason to train him to fly it. Mason was a devout Christian, and over a period of months and many conversations, McQueen gave in to the Holy Spirit’s pull.

While in Los Angeles, Mr. Graham received a message from Grady Ragsdale, McQueen’s ranch manager. “Steve really wants to talk to you,” the message said. “He’s in a bad way.”

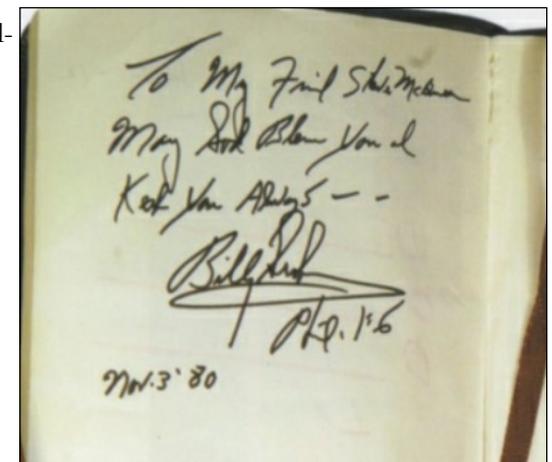
In an account Mr. Graham provided for the 1983 book by Ragsdale, *Steve McQueen: The Final Chapter*, Mr. Graham said, “He said that about three months before he knew he was ill, he had accepted Christ as Savior and started reading his Bible and praying.”

McQueen traveled to Juarez, Mexico, for a risky surgery not available in the United States. Before McQueen’s plane departed, he asked Mr. Graham to pray for him once more. Mr. Graham prayed, “Lord, it’s Your will. If You want to take him to Heaven, Thy will be done. He’s ready to go.” McQueen smiled and said, “That’s what I’m praying too. I am ready.”

The next morning, as his heart failed, the actor idolized my millions made his ultimate “great escape” into the presence of Jesus.

**Article Source:** Billy Graham Evangelistic Association of Canada, James L. Lambert, *Steve McQueen’s ‘Great Escape’*, December 17, 2015.

<sup>1</sup> “*Steve McQueen and the Hound of Heaven*” The Imaginative Conservative



An inscription to Steve McQueen from Billy Graham on the Bible Graham gave to McQueen when they met shortly before the actor’s death. The Bible was a New Testament Graham preached from when he traveled.

(Photo by Christian Examiner.)