

Two years ago, found was Steve McQueen's iconic 1968 Ford Mustang GT.

Only traces of its original highland green paint job remained as it had sat unnoticed in a backyard in Mexico for years. Collectors had been searching for it for decades.

Of course, this is not just any old '68 Stang.

This was one of the original cars used in the classic Steve McQueen film "Bullitt," a film that defined "cool" for a generation of Americans.

McQueen was Hollywood's "King of Cool" for a reason. In his role as the detective Frank Bullitt, he literally flies his car through the streets of San Francisco in what is regarded by many as the greatest car chase scene in cinematic history.

Steve McQueen was not cool because he drove the Bullitt car. The Bullitt car was cool because Steve McQueen drove it.

At the time, Steve McQueen was the number-one movie star in the world, and he is still used as a point of reference for masculinity and "coolness" to this day. He was (and is) the definition of an American icon.

Yet, until late in his life he struggled to find meaning in life, and he suffered because of it.

It might have been because he was born into a home of an alcoholic mother and a father that left him early in life, but eventually he found himself on the wrong side of the law more than once. He was arrested several times as a teen and sent to truancy homes for rebellious kids. He served in the Marine Corps, where he demonstrated both valor and rebellion.

He decided to become an actor, studying with Lee Strasberg. He went into movies, displaying skill at reacting to scenes and performing action roles. He eventually became one of the highest paid stars of his generation. Then, as his star began to rise higher and higher he began to chase harder and harder after every pleasure this planet had to offer.

Steve McQueen was a man with many paradoxes. He displayed humility and defiance, stinginess and generosity, gentleness and violence, self-assurance and insecurity.

Director Norman Jewison said, "He was a loner, and he was troubled, and he was looking for a father."

Many who knew Steve McQueen have different, fascinating stories about him. These include fellow Marines, young men from the Boys 'Republic, where Steve had spent some of his teenage years, fellow movie stars....

His superior Marine officers tell how he spent 41 days in the brig for resisting arrest after going AWOL. The young men from the Boys 'Republic tell how he regularly came back and visited the school after becoming famous, personally responded to every boy's letter, and financially supported the school until his death.

Magnificent Seven co-star, Yul Brynner, could tell how Steve stole scenes with distracting bits of business to grab attention. Bruce Lee could tell about a frightening ride in Steve's Porsche with Bruce cowering in the foot-well and threatening to kill Steve when they stopped. Steve hit the gas again, refusing to slow down until Lee promised not to hurt him!

Steve said that he lived for himself and answered to no one. He said, "I believe in me. God will be number one as long as I'm number one." That philosophy guided him as he burned through drugs, two marriages, and a slew of affairs.

In the late 1970s, when his career was fading, he felt empty, unsatisfied, and unfulfilled. He began to retreat and developed lung problems.

He followed doctors' advice and moved in 1979 to the small, quiet town of Santa Paula, where he eventually married his third wife, Barbara Minty. They lived in an airport hangar filled with his motorcycle collection. He bought a yellow Stearman bi-plane and learned to fly it. He was quick to master flying as he had done earlier with car racing. Having gone through multiple marriages and affairs, as well as harmful involvement in drugs, as a broken man McQueen started going to church. He had been exposed to Christians throughout his career and now he would become a Christian. Pilot Sammy Mason and Pastor Leonard De Witt each had a profound Christian impact on Steve at the end of his life.

Pilot Sammy Mason was Steve's flying teacher. In their long hours in the air, they talked about the meaning of life. Steve asked Mason what the secret of his was. Mason told Steve it was Jesus Christ.

McQueen respected Mason so much that he began regularly attending Mason's church. The pastor was Leonard Dewitt. DeWitt later recalled that the famous icon had sat quietly in the balcony without even introducing himself for several months. Steve requested a meeting with the pastor, Leonard Dewitt, and fired off questions about life and faith. Dewitt said, "Steve, I just have one question for you." McQueen with his signature grin said, "You want to know if I've become a born-again Christian." Then still smiling but serious, he told DeWitt that "When you invited people to pray with you to receive Christ, I prayed. So yes, I'm a born-again Christian."

Sammy Mason said that the difference in Steve was "dramatic." He also said, "I doubt that I have ever seen a man flourish with more spiritual reality in such a short time." Another close Christian friend, John Daly, said, "I think I had more faith than my hammer

and saw would have gotten converted before Steve, but I was hearing it from the horse's mouth. I was blown away." Under the discipleship of Mason and DeWitt, McQueen would often pray and read the Bible. He shared his faith with others, including his former assistant, Mario Iscovich. Mario said, that McQueen "felt he had hurt a lot of people" but had finally "made peace with God." Steve McQueen was finally fulfilled by his faith in Jesus Christ.

Billy Graham visited him and gave him his personal New Testament from which he shared with him the teachings of Jesus.

Tragically, Steve McQueen found out he had cancer about six months after his conversion.

His newfound faith played a key role in dealing with the hardship that was to come, and he fought with great faith and courage to the very end.

As Steve's son, Chad, said in a recent interview, "I think Dad was finding his way to go to the next place. I remember, he would wake me up at seven in the morning to go to church, which never happened before he got ill. So I think he was looking for peace."

When McQueen died on an operating table in Mexico trying one last time to beat back his cancer. He died clutching the Billy Graham's bible.

As much as I'd love to have a 1968 Mustang, there's something I'd much prefer, and that is, namely, to be a saint. And while there may not be a formal canonization ceremony for Steve McQueen coming up, his actions in the last part of his life suggest that he eventually came to that same realization, knowing that there could be only one number one, namely, God.

In our lives, while we all don't end up as movie stars or have the fame that McQueen has, it can be quite easy to get off course. We all say we want to go to heaven, but we might not be quite all that sure of how to get there. We can make ourselves number one and God number two. Or we can be impacted by the sins of others that can make finding God even more difficult. Today's feast of All Saints, which honors all of the saints in heaven, helps us to have hope and teaches us how to get on the right track.

For one, we are loved, unconditionally. As we hear in that second reading from 1 John: "See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God." God loves us without any condition. Other people in life will inevitably hurt us. But God is always there. And once we realized we are loved, it allows us to act.

What is it we want more than anything? Hopefully heaven. As the second reading goes on, we are told "we shall see hi as he is" and that "everyone who has this hope based on him makes himself pure, as he is pure." God's grace cleanses the soul. So as our lives go on, it's so important to regularly examine our consciences. Where are we going

and where do we hope to go? Where are we lacking? What are we ignoring or covering up? We turn these things over to God and ask for the grace to have the right focus.

Third, we reach out for guidance and help to guide others. Sammy Mason taught McQueen how to fly a plane, but more importantly than that he, his pastor, and Billy Graham all helped McQueen to get on track for sainthood. Sometimes we don't want to address the white elephant in the room because it's unpleasant to think about challenging things. A priest, Fr. Leon Pereira, a Dominican friar, who is chaplain to English speaking pilgrims in Medjugorje, tells a story of a young man with a same-sex attraction came to speak with me. He was angry with the Church, because he struggled to find priests and laity who would tell him the truth: that Christ loved him enough to redeem him from sin and misery. Instead he was encouraged to experiment in sin. They did not love him enough. 'Why, 'he raged, 'didn't they think Christ's grace could help me live chastely? 'If the Church forgets who she is, then she fails to believe sufficiently in the power of the Holy Spirit's grace. Then we would have a travesty of mercy: if sin be no longer sin, why would we need mercy? To tell someone their brain tumor is just a headache isn't mercy, it's cruel and unloving. Unfortunately we can do that because we both do not want to hear the diagnosis, but we are afraid of being disliked or making others feel uncomfortable. But we must not forget, we have a job to do to help people find the way to heaven, meaning we need others guidance and must help one another.

Lastly, we live out our faith. Later in his life, McQueen not only went to church, but he became the guardian of a young girl and provided for her education. He'd share his faith and live it out through good actions. The beatitudes teach us how to take our faith to the next level; so it's good to sit with them, and to think about how they impact us. They challenge us to be detached, to think of others, to be willing to be hated by others on account of our faith. As I shared last weekend, life is a marathon and being a saint is a grueling race, but the good news is we do not run that alone - God is with us every step, as are the saints in heaven to spur us on.

McQueen didn't win an Oscar though he was nominated for one in 1967 for *The Sand Pebbles*. But he had his sights set higher because he wanted something far better, the crown of eternal life, so he spent his remaining days studying for the most important role he'd ever been given. Hopefully we do as well as like him, we strive to join the saints in the kingdom of heaven.