

The Death of Clifford T Ward - Newspaper Obituaries



Following a period in hospital suffering from pneumonia, Cliff died on 18th December 2001.

A range of local and national newspaper obituaries soon followed -

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OBITUARIES

Clifford T. Ward

THE EARLY 1970s was a golden period for singers who were also songwriters, with James Taylor, Randy Newman, Joni Mitchell and Carole King performing highly personal material. Clifford T. Ward was similarly individualistic: his gently romantic songs celebrated family life and living in Britain.

The American balladeer Jack Jones once recorded Ward's composition "Home Thoughts from Abroad" beautifully, but it is incongruous to hear Jones singing, "How is Worcestershire / Is it still the same between us?" The entertainer Richard Digance says, "Home Thoughts From Abroad" is still the greatest 'British' song that I have ever heard. Cliff had no pretentious Americanisms, and it's still the only popular song with the word Worcestershire in it."

Ward was born in 1944 in Stourport-on-Severn, a small village near Kidderminster, and he lived in the area all his life. He attended Stourport Secondary Modern School where he was a good pupil with an interest in arts and drama. He recalled a memorable day in 1958, saying, "I saw Buddy Holly and the Crickets when I was only 14 and he was great, marvellous. I named my first child after one of the Crickets' records, 'Deborah'."

In the same year, at school, Ward met Pat Rollings, and wrote the song "Coathanger" for her:

If you share my coathanger
Then I'll be hung on you.
If you try to break my neck,
We're through.

They were married in 1961 after Pat became pregnant, and the song appeared on Ward's first album, *Singer/Songwriter*, in 1972.

Ward sang and played piano and, like many youngsters at that time, he formed a beat group, Cliff Ward and the Cruisers, which later became the Secrets. They became popular around Birmingham and toured American army bases in France. Ward recalled,

We used to work very hard, but I was the only one who was married with children. The other members were able to pocket their money and have nights out in Paris. I would mail my money to my wife to enable her to pay the rent and feed the kids. I used to walk in the forests of Fontainebleau and I remember working on "Home Thoughts From Abroad" on a lovely sunny day there.

The song is written as a letter, in which Ward says, "I know how

Robert Browning must have felt." His lyrics place the mundane next to the significant with telling effect:

... Does your cistern still leak
Or have you found a man to mend it?
Oh and by the way, how's your broken heart?
Is that mended too? I miss you.

The Secrets recorded a single, "Candy To Me", for Columbia records in 1965. "It was a Motown song by that great writing team, Holland-Dozier-Holland," recalled Ward. "Unfortunately, it was the worst song that they ever wrote." Five singles for CBS followed but met with no success, and Ward decided on a change in career. He enrolled at a teacher training college and, once qualified, taught English and Drama at Bromsgrove High School.

He continued to write songs, and sent a tape to the Radio 1 DJ John Peel. Peel was impressed and, with his manager, Clive Selwood, signed Ward to their new label, Dandelion. Peel produced Ward's first album, *Singer/Songwriter*, the first single from it, "Carrie", was inspired by the 1901 novel *Sister Carrie* by Theodore Dreiser.

The Dandelion label was short-lived and Ward commented, "Clive gave Tony Stratton-Smith, who owned Charisma, a pile of Dandelion albums to see if he was interested in any of the artists. Tony picked me out, but he made the wrong decision, as Medicine Head had the hits." Nevertheless, Ward had his first hit in 1973 for Charisma, with the beguiling "Gaye". He explained,

There were three girls I knew called Gaye and I suppose they were all part of the Gaye in the song. There was also some imaginative input in there. It wasn't one of my favourite songs. It was just a song for the album, but Charisma thought it would make a good single and they released it.

With his long, flowing hair and an air of intensity, Ward looked distinctive on *Top Of The Pops* and "Gaye" reached No 8. The follow-up singles "Wherewithal" and "Scullery" (which made the *Top Forty*) reflected his love of the English language:

I have never made a conscious effort to write songs, but I am a lover of words and I know certain words sound very nice with certain melodies. We lived in a lovely old farmhouse and I can still picture Pat working away in that scullery to keep it nice and clean.

The song goes,
You're my picture by Picasso,
Lighting up our scullery.

With your pans and pots and hot-plates,
You'd brighten up any gallery.

The first Charisma album, *Home Thoughts* (1973), sold well, but Ward kept a low profile. He had no desire to spend time away from his home. His first child had been born with cerebral palsy and for her he wrote "For Debbie and Her Friends" on his third album, *Mantle Pieces* (also 1973). He bought a farmhouse and loved being with his children.

Ward made several fine albums, *Escalator* (1975), *No More Rock and Roll* (1975), *Waves* (1976) and *New England Days* (1977), but his romantic style conflicted with the ethos of the punk era and his songs were regarded by some as old hat. He recorded his finest song, "The Best is Yet to Come" as a single for Warner in 1981 and it has since been recorded by Justin Hayward and Judy Collins. His 1984 album *Both Of Us* included a poignant song about how the media trivialises serious events, "Watchin' the TV News".

That year, during a tour of Ireland, Ward made a trip home to visit his family and, while mowing the grass, fell over several times. He said, "I didn't know what was happening. I knew that there was something very wrong with me." He was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. Ward had helped his daughter, Debbie, overcome her handicap, but he had difficulty accepting his own predicament. He shunned medication and said, "I refuse to believe that a cure can't be found."

Ward had been experimenting with synthesisers and had built his own home studio, which should have meant an outpouring of new material. His album for Roger Whittaker's label, Tembo, *Sometime Next Year* (1986), and companion singles are excellent and indicate how he had taken his inspiration from watching television ("Crickle") or from seeing his wife cleaning the house ("Turbo"), but his illness prevented him from promoting it. A compilation album in 1987, *Gaye and Other Stories*, brought in much-needed royalties for Ward and his family. In 1992 his friend Kevin Gammond, a teacher, wrote a musical about Ward, *Shattered Life*, which was staged at the Kidderminster College of Further Education to considerable success and Ward's approval.

In 1994 he released the album *Julia and Other New Stories*. "I'm



Ward: 'I am a lover of words, and I know certain words sound very nice with certain melodies'
Redferns

like a bat," he told me at the time, "I function best at night, but I had to make some of it on all fours." The album opened with a message from Cliff Richard, who had recorded "Up in the World" from Ward's radio play *Pathos*, and the opening song, "Julia", was addressed to the newsreader Julia Somerville, begging her to maintain her dignity and not to make chat show appearances. "I didn't know her," said Ward, "but she did once buy me a meal at the BBC canteen."

Ward had kept all his old demos and tapes and so albums of unheard material have recently been released - *Hidden Treasures* (1998)

and *The Ways of Love* (2000). A sympathetic biography of Ward, *Bittersweet* (1999), by a family friend, Dave Cartwright, nevertheless showed the tensions that his illness caused. Ward was never a model patient. He told me in 1994: "I am still creative but I am trapped in a body that can't function."

SPENCER LEIGH

Clifford Thomas Ward, singer and songwriter: born Stourport-on-Severn, Worcestershire 10 February 1944; married 1961 Pat Rollings (two sons, two daughters); died Kidderminster, Worcestershire 18 December 2001.

The Independant (Thursday Review) - Dec 20th 2001

Plan to mark Clifford's life

■ By MIKE MALONEY

A PUBLIC memorial service and celebration concert is planned to celebrate the life of Stourport 70s pop star Clifford T Ward, who died last week.

The unassuming singer/songwriter, once dubbed the new Paul McCartney, lost his 17-year-battle with multiple sclerosis.

His final illness, pneumonia, was too much for his

weakened constitution to conquer.

Fan club secretary and friend Stephen Bagust said a celebration concert, including members of Clifford's old band was scheduled to take place in February and it was hoped a memorial service would be held sometime next month.

He said: "Tributes have been pouring in from around the world. Clifford's death has touched a lot of people and we think a celebration concert would be a great tribute.

"We think a memorial service in the county would be fitting too. Clifford loved Worcestershire and it was apt that he died in the county." The 57-year-old father-of-four was best remembered for his top 10 smash *Gaye* but it was his stoic battle against MS which brought him a new legion of admirers in his later years.

His last message to fans in August referred to his "stupid" illness.

Responding to messages on his website, he said: "Your continued support means so much to me. I am touched that my music still lives in your hearts. These messages give me the strength to survive this stupid illness called MS.

"I am amazed that my music has reached all parts of the world, even countries where I have never performed.

"I wish that I could reply personally to all of you but this is just not possible. Love to all of you, Clifford T Ward."

Pat, the singer's wife of 38 years and manager, said he died quietly at Tenbury Community Hospital.

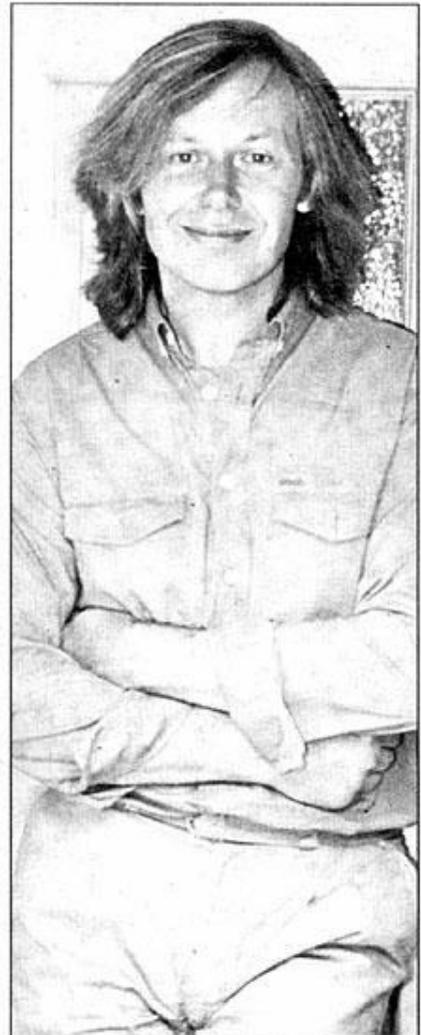
She said: "He deteriorated quickly at the end. He had become very frustrated with the illness but he is at peace now. He always maintained his passion for music and kept his great sense of humour.

"Right now he is probably up there laughing and wondering what all the fuss is about."

mike.maloney@newsquestmidlands.co.uk



● Off to see fans: Clifford T Ward last year with some of those who helped set up a trip to Ireland for his annual concert and convention.



● Stourport-born pop star of the 70s: Clifford T Ward.

Musical talent honed at town school

CLIFFORD T Ward's songs would be covered by Art Garfunkel and Cliff Richard but it was at Stourport Secondary Modern School where his singing first attracted attention.

He first honed his talent in the school choir and between classes met the inspiration for so many of his future songs.

Clifford, born on February 10, 1944, met wife Pat when he was 14 and she 13.

On leaving school he formed Cliff Ward and the Cruisers who became a big hit on the Midlands circuit.

The band was later renamed Martin

Raynor and the Secrets and ultimately the Secrets but despite extensive touring and six singles they failed to make it in the pop world.

With a wife and family to feed Clifford decided to get a "real" job in 1968 and after three years training taught English at Bromsgrove High School.

However, he continued singing/songwriting and within two years stormed the charts with *Gaye*, which sold more than a million worldwide.

Following his breakthrough hit he released his second album *Home Thoughts* - seen as the pinnacle of his career.

He quit teaching to concentrate on recording but the shy singer shunned the pop lifestyle and refused to tour and perform live gigs.

Interviews, photograph sessions and TV appearances were only made when absolutely necessary.

The family man was still producing highly-rated work but commercial success eluded him as Punk exploded on the pop scene.

Clifford was still busy recording albums from his home studio when he was struck down with MS in 1984.

It was a disease he fought bravely but ultimately its debilitating effect meant

he could no longer perform or record.

He fell on hard times financially but friends and fellow pop stars rallied round to support benefit events.

Two years ago Dave Cartwright's biography *Bittersweet: The Clifford T Ward Story* was published to critical acclaim.

At the time his wife Pat said: "It is not a hagiography of Cliff but a 'warts and all' piece.

"There is a lot of humour in the book and there is hope too - Cliff is waving not drowning."

He leaves Pat, four children and three grandchildren.

The Kidderminster Shuttle - Dec 27th 2001

THE TIMES THURSDAY DECEMBER 20 2001

CLIFFORD T. WARD

Songwriter who had a '70s hit with *Gaye*, but shunned the high life

FATALLY dubbed "the new Paul McCartney" in the 1970s, Clifford T. Ward had only two chart singles, the better of them, *Gaye* reaching number eight in 1973. However, his

refused to tour. He remained in the Midlands, and would drive 125 miles twice a day when working in London.

"I never wanted to be famous," he said. "I did not want

songs were recorded by stars ranging from Art Garfunkel to Michael Jackson and Ringo Starr to Cliff Richard.

Thanks to Radio 2, Ward himself retained a following, and in 1998, when the station's listeners voted for an all-time easy listening chart, his *Home Thoughts from Abroad* (1976) was placed between the established hits *River Deep Mountain High* by Ike and Tina Turner and Sonny and Cher's *I Got You Babe*.

Gaye sold a million copies in Britain and two million — strangely — in Brazil, where it reached number one. It had been written for an air hostess with whom Ward had a brief relationship. His wife admitted that it was not one of her favourite songs, and added, "I've always thought the tune a bit trite".

Ward tried to pay her tribute, however, in *Scullery*, which compliments her domestic skills. It appeared on the album *Mantle Pieces* (1974), which also included *To Debbie and Her Friends*, for Ward's daughter, who was born with cerebral palsy. Each of Ward's songs told a story and the lyrics combined tenderness and eccentricity. "Life would be worthwhile / I could be true / I could be me / If it wasn't for you," he sang.

Clifford Thomas Ward was born in Kidderminster and went to Stourport High School, where he met his future wife at the age of 13. His first band, the Secrets, did not go far, and neither did Cliff Ward and the Cruisers, so he took a teacher training course in order to support his family.

He taught English and drama at North Bromsgrove High School, but spent the weekends and holidays writing his own songs. Eventually he began recording as a solo artist, and his debut album *Singer Songwriter* appeared in 1972 on the Dandelion label run by John Peel.

Eventually Ward gave up teaching and concentrated on music, although his album *Home Thoughts* (1973), with its allusions to Keats, Browning and Shelley, failed to approach the top of the charts.

Despite the comparison with McCartney, who by this time had made clear his itch to get back on the road after the breakup of the Beatles, Ward

to be a big star." Instead he was famous only within the music business, and stardom touched him vicariously when others covered his songs. He rarely played live.

An exception was a tour of France in 1985, during which one of the female backing singers told him that there was something odd about the way he was moving and singing. He was then diagnosed as suffering from multiple sclerosis.

He continued to record in a studio near his home, and fans went on holding annual conventions there. When he needed to raise money to attend a similar event in Dublin, Sting sent a favourite guitar to be auctioned — his wife, Trudie Styler, had been a pupil of Ward's when he taught at Bromsgrove High School — and Elton John, who was the session pianist on Clifford's first demonstration tape, sent some spectacles.

Ward's royalties continued to come in (the bulk of them from Radio 2), but this was hardly a living. His friends and colleagues rallied round in 1992 to make an album of out-takes and demonstration tracks to give him some financial assistance. He was helped again earlier this year, when a charity football day was arranged at the Kidderminster Harriers' Aggborough Stadium.

Ward's last album was *Julia and Other New Stories* (1994). Five years later a biography, *Bittersweet: The Clifford T. Ward Story*, raised £7,000 to help pay for his medical bills, and the magazine *Record Collector* named it among the top ten best rock books of 1999.

Sporting a shoulder-length haircut even in his later years when grey and thinning, he maintained: "I can still write songs and sometimes, in the middle of the night, my vocal chords are relaxed enough to sing. So when you ask which is my best song — all I can say is, I haven't yet written it."

He is survived by his wife Pat, and two sons and two daughters.

Clifford T. Ward, singer and songwriter, was born on February 10, 1946. He died from pneumonia on December 18, 2001, aged 55.

Singer Clifford T Ward dies at 57 after illness

BY LOUISE JURY
Media Correspondent



Clifford T Ward: Afflicted

THE SINGER-SONGWRITER Clifford T Ward, who was best known for his 1973 hit "Gaye", has died after a long battle with multiple sclerosis.

Ward, 57, who lived near Kidderminster in Worcestershire, had been weakened by the debilitating illness and died of pneumonia on Monday.

He was a gifted songwriter whose numbers were recorded by artists including Art Garfunkel and Ringo Starr. But he insisted on keeping a low profile and refused to tour, never achieving the fame his early success promised. Stephen Bagust, secretary of the Clifford T Ward fan club, said the musician was under-rated. "He leaves a great legacy of music that will last for as long as good songs are enjoyed."

Clifford T Ward was born in 1944 and formed a pop group, Martin Raynor and the Secrets, on leaving school. After

its demise in 1968, Ward became a teacher, but continued to write and perform, producing the single "Gaye" which reached No 8 in June 1973.

He was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 1984 and recorded a final album, *Julia and Other New Stories*, in 1994. Ward is survived by his wife, Pat, and their four children.

Obituary, Review, page 6

The Independent - Dec 20th 2001



DECEMBER: Stourport-born pop star of the 70s Clifford T Ward lost his 17-year battle with multiple sclerosis. Now fans are planning a public memorial service and concert to celebrate the life of the singer/songwriter who was dubbed the new Paul McCartney after he stormed the pop charts with his hit single *Gaye* which sold more than a million copies worldwide.

Kidderminster Shuttle - 'Review of the Year' Dec 2001

CLIFFORD DIES AT 57

By ALUN PALMER

POP star Clifford T Ward has died, aged 57, after a long battle against multiple sclerosis.

The singer-songwriter, best known for Seventies hit *Gaye*, died in hospital from pneumonia. The father of four, who lived near Kidderminster, Worcs, suffered from MS since 1984.

His widow Pat chose Terry Wogan to announce his death on Radio 2 yesterday because he loved his music. The DJ said: "We are all saddened."



LEGEND: Ward



Ward: "I never wanted to be famous"

The Times - Dec 20th 2001

The Mirror - Dec 20th 2001

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HIT MAN: Clifford T Ward

Clifford T is dead

SINGER SONGWRITER
Clifford T Ward has died after a 20-year battle with multiple sclerosis.

The 57-year-old, whose hits Home Thoughts and Gaye were million-sellers worldwide, died in hospital after a bout of pneumonia.

His widow, Pat, chose Terry Wogan's Radio 2 breakfast show to announce his death because the DJ loved and played his music.

A solemn Wogan told listeners: "It's an honour and a privilege to do this and we are all saddened by his death."

Among the singer's celebrity fans were Sir Paul McCartney and Sir Tim Rice, while artists as diverse as Art Garfunkel and Ringo Starr have recorded his songs.

The Daily Star
Dec 20th 2001



SINGER and songwriter CLIFFORD T WARD - best known for his 1973 hit Gaye - died from pneumonia, aged 55, on December 18. He had suffered from multiple sclerosis for more than 20 years.

The Sun ('Review of the Year')
Dec 28th 2001



Pneumonia... Ward

Clifford T dies at 57

SINGER-songwriter Clifford T Ward, best known for his 1973 hit Gaye, has died.

The 57-year-old dad of four, who suffered from multiple sclerosis for two decades, died from pneumonia.

His songs had been recorded by stars such as Art Garfunkel and Ringo Starr.

The Sun
Dec 20th 2001

Clifford T Ward dies

SINGER Clifford T Ward, best known for his Seventies hit Gaye, has died after a 17-year battle with multiple sclerosis. Ward, 57, of Kidderminster, Worcs, who was regarded by fans as one of the finest songwriters in Britain, died of pneumonia on Tuesday.

Stephen Bagust, secretary of his fan club, said: "Clifford leaves a legacy of music that will last as long as good songs are enjoyed by an appreciative audience."



SONGSMITH: Ward had devoted fans

The Daily Express - Dec 20th 2001

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2001 32p C2



TRIBUTES FOR SINGER CLIFFORD T WARD

Full story Page 2

Tribute to pop legend

A MEMORIAL concert for Stourport 70s pop star Clifford T Ward will be held next month.

A musical line-up will pay homage to the singer/songwriter at The Gainsborough Hotel, Kidderminster, on Sunday, February 3.

And a collection will be held with proceeds going to Tenbury Hospital where the singer spent his last days.

The unassuming star, once dubbed the new Paul McCartney, lost his 17-year battle with multiple sclerosis last month.

The 57-year-old father-of-four was best remembered for his top 10 hit Gaye but it was his stoic battle against MS which brought him a new legion of admirers in later years.

Ticket priority will be given to members of the Friends of Clifford T Ward society.

For tickets, send a stamped self-addressed envelope to Roy Smith, 13 Oakapple Close, Astley Cross, Stourport.

Kidderminster Shuttle



■ MARRIED 38 YEARS: Clifford T Ward and wife Pat

Singer Clifford T Ward dies

SEVENTIES pop legend Clifford T Ward, who suffered from multiple sclerosis, has died at a Midland hospital.

Clifford, aged 57, was born and lived in Worcestershire and topped the record charts in 1973 with "Gaye". His albums and singles of that period became classics and have been covered by stars such as Sir Cliff Richard, Art and Garfunkel and Judy Collins.

In 1985 he was diagnosed as having multiple sclerosis but he continued producing music from his home near Bewdley.

His world-wide fan club secretary Steve Bagust broke the news of his death today and said: "He loved Worcestershire and lived and died in the county. He was taken into hospital at the beginning of November suffering from pneumonia. "Clifford came out of

Ronkswood Hospital but last week went to Tenbury Wells Hospital where he died yesterday.

"His music is timeless. The more you listen the better it becomes. So many people covered his songs and he had literally thousands of fans worldwide."

Teacher

After attending Stourport High School, Clifford became an English and Drama teacher at Bromsgrove before turning to music and recording a string of critically acclaimed albums in the mid-70s.

A year ago a book about the ailing musician, by Dave Cartwright, from Worcester, helped raise £7,000 to help his family, his wife, Pat, to whom he had been married for 38 years, and four grown-up children.

Birmingham Evening Mail
Dec 20th 2001

CLIFFORD T. WARD

Clifford T. Ward, the singer/songwriter who scored a Top 10 hit in the summer of 1973 with the lilting ballad 'Gaye', died on 18th December 2001 after contracting pneumonia. He was 57.



Kidderminster-based Ward began his recording career as leader of Martin Raynor & the Secrets, whose version of the Holland/Dozier/Holland song 'Candy To Me' appeared through EMI's Columbia imprint in May 1965. A quintet of classy, self-composed pop singles, credited either to the Secrets or Simon's Secrets, then emerged through CBS, although arguably Ward's greatest song of the 60s, the heavily lysergic 'Path Through The Forest', was gifted to an obscure band by the name of the Factory. The single, which for some reason bore a composition credit to Rollings (the maiden name of Cliff's wife), is now widely recognised as one of the finest obscure UK psychedelic recordings of the era.

After a spell at a teacher-training college, Ward re-emerged in 1972 with the album *Singer Songwriter* and the single 'Coathanger', both issued by John Peel's Dandelion label. The 45, which effectively gave notice of Ward's clever wordplay, was a turntable hit, though it wasn't until a move to Charisma that he first tasted real success with 'Gaye' and the magnificent *Home Thoughts* album, which clearly announced the emergence of a major new talent in British pop.

Although press attention concentrated on the "singing school teacher" angle, more observant pop pundits acknowledged Ward's intelligent, literate lyricism and beguiling melodies, and songs like the heart-wrenching 'Home Thoughts From Abroad' led to some commentators hailing him as the natural heir to Paul McCartney. Yet he never quite consolidated that initial success, though 'Scully' — an innocently sexist portrait of domestic bliss — reached the lower rungs of the charts in early 1975.

Despite their relative lack of success, a series of albums continued to contain their fair share of stellar material, including the likes of 'The Best Is Yet To Come' and the superlative 'Up In The World', which attracted cover versions from Cliff Richard and Art Garfunkel.

In the mid-80s, Ward was diagnosed with a particularly virulent form of multiple sclerosis that effectively curtailed his career, though an extremely active appreciation society, The Friends Of Clifford T. Ward, attempted to keep his name alive.

He was a superb songwriter who has never been afforded the level of recognition that his body of work deserved. A full appreciation of his career can be found in *RC 246*, though mention should also be made of *Bittersweet*, a highly recommended biography written and published in 1999 by friend and erstwhile singer-songwriter Dave Cartwright.

David Wells

Record Collector - Feb 2002

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