

Mr. Oates,

Sometime ago you contacted our Warren Oates fan site with questions about his genealogy. At the time I'm afraid we were not very helpful, but I recently stumbled across this article that may prove helpful. -

R. Wilson

Kentuckian Warren Oates Got His Big Break in 1954 Motion Picture Star Born In Coal Camp In Muhlenberg County By Warder Harrison -- 1998 Bayless E. Oates was born in 1809 in Kentucky, as was his wife, Elizabeth Randolph in 1814. One hundred and nineteen years later, their great grandson, Warren Mercer Oates, was born on the 5th of July, 1928 to Bayless E. and Sarah Alice (Mercer) Oates in Depoy, Kentucky. As Oates grew into manhood in this small coal-mining town his life was encompassed by hard times. This was the time of the Great Depression and men who worked in the mines were losing their jobs right and left. During endless labor disputes several miners were murdered causing citizens to move to safer towns. As a result, his father was forced to close his general store due to lack of business. To make ends meet, Mrs. Oates took in boarders and young Warren, at one point in time, picked strawberries for two cents a quart. Finally, their situation became so critical the Oates family moved to Louisville where his father became a helper at the Kentucky Baptist Hospital. Warren was thirteen at the time. Eventually, life became a little easier on one hand but on the other Warren found himself in fist fights when neighborhood guys would call him a 'hillbilly'. In 1945 he graduated from Louisville Male High School; after which he joined the Marines to keep out of trouble. Some of his buddies had been thrown in jail for various reasons and he feared he might be next. After serving two years in the Marines as an airplane mechanic he returned to Louisville to enter the University of Louisville. There, on a lark he tried out for a part as a hillbilly moonshiner in a student play. Discovering that he liked acting so much, he became a regular with Louisville's Shakespeare in Central Park operated by C. Douglas Ramey. By the age of twenty-five, at Ramey's urging, Oates caught a Greyhound bus to New York City with a head full of dreams and \$200 in his pocket. Once there, he took jobs washing dishes, checking hats at the "21" nightclub, washing cars and any other menial task to keep alive until his break came along. During this time, Oates made lifelong friends with two other aspiring actors, Steve McQueen and Robert Culp. Oates' determination saw him through the countless rounds of casting offices with no results. Finally, he landed a job at CBS which was earlier vacated by none other than James Dean. This job consisted of his rehearsing the stunts on the game show Beat the Clock. Finally, Oates' real breakthrough came in 1954 when he was cast, along with his friend Robert Culp, in a Theatre Guild TV play. Fortunately, the play won a 'Christopher Award' proving to be a calling card for both Oates and Culp. After friends and associates kept telling him that his rugged features and Kentucky drawl made him a natural for Western films he made his way west. In Hollywood for several weeks, he was cast in a small role in the TV series Have Gun Will Travel. Another brief appearance came in the film Up Periscope in 1959 for Warner Bros. During this same year he had a larger role in the Warner Bros. film Yellowstone Kelly. The 1960s saw Oates in a number of films including: Private Property, Hero's Island, Mail Order Bride, Major Dundee, Return of the Seven, In the Heat of the Night, The Split, Crooks and Coronets and the classic The Wild Bunch. During the 1970s, Oates' film credits were just as impressive. His role in the 1971 film Two-Lane Blacktop prompted Time magazine to name him as "among the finest American actors". After receiving "star" billing in the 1973 film Dillinger, Oates became one of the hottest properties in Hollywood with him being touted as the next Humphrey Bogart. In all, Oates appeared in more than 100 movie and TV roles. After his debut in films, the only year he didn't make a motion picture was in 1977 when he took time off to marry his third wife, Judith Jones, in a simple ceremony in Muhlenberg County, Kentucky. He was 49 and she was 30. At the time Oates told reporters, "I'd like to buy a little farm back here, have a couple of horses, and start living like a human being between films." Regretfully, this was one aspiration Oates never fulfilled On April 3, 1982, Oates died from a massive heart attack in his Hollywood Hills home. He was survived by his widow, and four children: Jennifer (born 1960) and Timothy (1964) by his second wife, and Torey (1979) and Cody (1980) by Judith. By his first wife he had no children. He was also survived by his brother, Gordon Oates, of Louisville. Warren Oates is buried in Forest Lawn, in Hollywood, California.

Ron,

Following is the way I understand the line from Jesse to Warren Oates. I got it from Kit Sinyard, another descendent of Jesse:

Jesse Oates --1756-1831 in Muhlenberg Co., KY

William Oates -- 1783 in Sampson County, NC -1933 on the Miss. River m Elizabeth Earle

Bayless Earle Oates --1809-1881 m Elizabeth J. Randolph

James Wallace Oates -- 1851 in Muhlenberg Co., KY-1901 m Sarah Jane Earle  
Bayless Earle Oates -- b 1886 m Sarah Alice Earle  
Bayless Earle Oates -- m Sarah Jane Mercer  
Warren Mercer Oates -- b 1928

Loretta