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Dennis Letts

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Dennis Letts (September 5, 1934 – February 22, 2008) was an [American](#) college professor and actor. Letts made his [Broadway theater](#) debut in December 2007 in the production of *August: Osage County*, which was written by his son, [playwright Tracy Letts](#).^[1]

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Dennis Letts

Born	September 5, 1934 <div>Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, U.S</div>
Died	February 22, 2008 (aged 73) <div>Tulsa, Oklahoma, U.S.</div>
Spouse	Billie Letts

Early life

[[edit](#)]

Dennis Letts was born in [Oklahoma City](#) on September 5, 1934.^[2] He grew up with his parents, Haskell and Hazel Letts, in [Wagoner, Oklahoma](#). Letts graduated from [Wagoner High School](#) in 1952. He enlisted in the [United States Air Force](#) after graduation, where he served until 1956.^[2]

Letts received his [bachelor's degree](#) from [Northeastern State University](#) in [Tahlequah, Oklahoma](#), thanks to the [G.I. Bill](#). He went on to earn his [master's degree](#) from the [University of Tulsa](#) and his [doctorate](#) from the [University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign](#). He also earned a [Fulbright Scholarship](#).^[2]

Letts married his wife, novelist [Billie Gipson](#), in 1958.^[2]

Career

[[edit](#)]

Letts spent much of his professional career as a [writing](#) and [English professor](#).^[1] He taught for more than thirty years, mostly as a [faculty](#) member at [Southeastern Oklahoma State University](#) in [Durant, Oklahoma](#).^[1]

Letts first began acting at the relatively late age of 50 years old.^{[3][4]} Letts first started performing at university and [community theaters](#) while still working as a college professor.^[1] He began acting as a full second career after retiring from [teaching](#).^[1] Letts appeared in more than 40 [films](#) and [television](#) shows over the course of his career, including parts in high-profile films such as *Cast Away* in 2000.^[2]

His acting credits also included his debut in *Blood Suckers from Outer Space* a sci fi comedy written

and directed by Glen Coburn, *Where the Heart Is*, a film based on a novel written by his wife, **Billie Letts**.^{[1][2]} Letts also served as an editor for his wife's novels,^[1] which have won various literary awards and have appeared on the **New York Times Best Seller list**.^[2]

August: Osage County

[edit]

Dennis Letts originated the role of Beverly Weston in the original production of *August: Osage County*, which was written by his son, **Tracy Letts**.^[1] His character is described as an "**Oklahoma patriarch**" whose mysterious disappearance reunites his **dysfunctional family**.^[1] *August: Osage County* first opened at the **Steppenwolf Theatre Company** in the summer of 2007.^[1] The show, as well as Letts's performance, was a critical success.^[1]

Letts was diagnosed with **lung cancer** in September 2007.^[1] Despite his diagnosis, Letts chose to remain with the *August: Osage County* production as the show moved to **New York City**.^[1] The show, with Letts as a full cast member, debuted on Broadway in December 2007.^[1] It earned some of the best critical reviews of that particular season.^[1]

Letts continued performing eight shows a week of *August: Osage County* in New York City until February 2008.^{[1][4]} He kept up his schedule despite his illness and its treatment.^[1] Letts died in **Tulsa, Oklahoma**, on February 22, 2008, at the age of 73.^[1] A memorial service was held in **Wagoner, Oklahoma**.^[3] He was survived by his wife, Billie, and sons, Tracy, Dana and Shawn.^[1]

References

[edit]

- ↑ *abcdefghijklmnopqrs* "Dennis Letts, 73, a Professor Who Became Broadway Actor, Dies" *Associated Press* (The New York Times). 2008-02-25. Retrieved 2008-03-08.
- ↑ *abcdefg* "TV and film actor Dennis Letts dies" *Tulsa World*. 2008-02-24. Retrieved 2008-03-08.
- ↑ *ab* "Former Durant resident Dennis Letts dies" *Durant Democrat*. 2008-02-25. Retrieved 2008-03-12.
- ↑ *ab* Jones, Chris (2008-02-25). "Actor's dream came true in his son's play" *Chicago Tribune*. Retrieved 2008-03-12.

External links

[edit]

- Dennis Letts at the **Internet Broadway Database**
- Dennis Letts at the **Internet Movie Database**
- Chicago Tribune: Dennis Letts, 'August' actor and father of Tracy Letts, dies
- Tulsa World: TV and film actor Dennis Letts dies

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