# Warren William Biography

Born Warren William Krech on December 2, 1894 in Aitkin, Minnesota, Warren William was a stage and screen actor as well as an inventor. He started acting in the new opera house built in Aitkin Minnesota in 1903. After high school, he enrolled in the American Academy of Dramatic Arts in New York City.

He joined the Army in World War I during his senior year in the Academy. During a stay at Fort Dix outside New York city, he met his future wife, Helen Barbara Nelson. She was 17 years older than William. They would marry after the war in 1923.

During this time, he tried to break into the silent movies, but was only in three, The Town That Forgot God in 1922, Plunder in 1923, and a bit part in 1927’s Twelve Miles Out. He would return to Broadway from 1924 to 1931, his final play being a major hit called The Vinegar Tree. But he also worked as an inventor, with gadgets that included the Mobile Kitchen / Dinner Facility – which predated the modern Trailer. He created a remote communication device and remote control access gate for people who would come to visit (using 1930 technology). And he is credited with a patent on a yard vacuum, which would become popular after his death.

In 1931, due in part to his high quality, rich and deep speaking voice, Warner Brothers started to use him in roles that would give him the nickname of King of the Pre-Code. Prior to the Motion Picture Production Code being enforced in 1934, Warren William’s roles would include very suggestive lines and unscrupulous acts. The audience loved to hate him. His breakthrough role was in the 1932 movie, The Mouthpiece, in which he plays a crafty lawyer named Vince Day. He would go on to play another lawyer, being the first actor to portray Perry Mason in 1934’s The Case of the Howling Dog, and three subsequent Perry Mason movies. He was Philo Vance in 1934’s The Dragon Murder Case, and 1939’s The Gracie Allen Murder Case. He was The Lone Wolf in a series of nine films from 1939 to 1943.

Starting in 1946, he would work on Strange Wills, a transcribed radio program based on odd issue found in actual wills. He would portray probate lawyer John Francis O’Connell as well as narrate and support the production as part of the creative team.

All told, William appeared in 65 movies and has 21 stage credits. His last role would be in The Private Affairs of Bel Ami in 1947. Away from acting, Warren William was a private man, and he and his wife, Helen would keep out of the public eye. This public shyness and quiet private demeanor once lead actress Joan Blondell to say that William “…was an old man, even when he was a young man.”

Late in life, William would suffer from Virus X, a bone cancer thought to be caused by the effects of the use of DDT, as well as other issues possibly based on his inventions and mechanical work. He would pass away from Multiple Myeloma, on September 24, 1948. He was 53. Helen, his wife of 25 years, would pass away a few months later. They had no children.

Information for this biography was taken from WarrenWilliam.com, from the website Stardust and Shadows, from excerpts of the book Warren William, Magnificent Scoundrel of Pre-Code Hollywood By John Strangeland, from the Internet Movie Database, and from Wikipedia.