



# Alexandria Times

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## Out of the Attic

### Willard Scott and Alexandria

*Alexandria Times, September 9, 2021*

*Image: Willard Scott's senior photo from George Washington High School. Office of Historic Alexandria*

Many in Alexandria were saddened by the passing of Willard Scott on Sept. 4 at the age of 87. Most famous for his birthday well-wishes to viewers of the “Today Show” on their 100th birthdays, Scott gained local attention in his hometown of Alexandria long before his elevation to the national stage.

Born in 1934, Scott grew up on Commonwealth Avenue, went to George Washington High School and starred as George Washington in perhaps the only city-commissioned play, “Alexandria, Thy Sons.”

In a 2009 oral history interview, Ralph Mills remembered that he knew Willard from the time he was 7 years old. The Scott home was on Mills’ paper route, and Mills would later remember that Scott’s father, an insurance salesman, often gave him a hard time as a means of joking. Mills also remembered the elder Scott’s appreciation when he returned from the army and stopped to say, “Hello.”

Scott graduated from high school in 1951. The image you see is his senior yearbook picture. Before then, he was cast as George Washington in the aforementioned “Alexandria, Thy Sons” in 1949. Commissioned to celebrate the 200th anniversary of Alexandria’s original incorporation, the play featured 16 scenes over two acts and was staged in the former amphitheater at Windmill Hill Park.

Scott started as a page at NBC in 1950 and first came to prominence in the larger D.C. area as part of “The Joy Boys,” along with fellow American University student and alumnus Ed Walker, which aired on WRC, an NBC-owned radio station.

The former airline pilot B.J. Sheridan remembered being surprised years later that Scott was on his flight from Los Angeles to Dulles. A fellow G.W. High grad, who was a couple of years ahead of Scott, Sheridan recognized Scott because the by-then television weatherman brought his vehicles to Hunter Motors, which Sheridan’s family owned, for maintenance. Sheridan remembered bumping Scott up to first class for that flight and reminiscing about their time in Alexandria.

Willard Scott became the full-time weatherman on WRC-TV in 1967 and stayed there until his debut on the “Today Show” in 1980. His trademark birthday wishes to centenarians began soon after that. He went into semi-retirement in 1996, and Al Roker took over the weather duties. Scott officially retired from the “Today Show” in 2015.

During the rise of morning television, Willard Scott was Alexandria’s representative to what became a nationwide audience. We were lucky that his rise as an entertainer started here.





## Office of Historic Alexandria City of Alexandria, Virginia

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*“Out of the Attic” is published each week in the Alexandria Times newspaper. The column began in September 2007 as “Marking Time” and explored Alexandria’s history through collection items, historical images and architectural representations. Within the first year, it evolved into “Out of the Attic” and featured historical photographs of Alexandria.*

*These articles appear with the permission of the Alexandria Times and were authored by staff of the Office of Historic Alexandria and invited guests.*