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# BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

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DAVID CRIGGER/BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

Bristol Tennessee City Council will be forming an independent tourism board this summer after voting not to continue its working relationship with Bristol Chamber of Commerce after nearly 36 years. Above, the chamber's office at State and Volunteer.

Bristol, Tennessee

## Council moving ahead with independent tourism organization

BY MARIA BASILEO  
BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

BRISTOL, Tenn. — A free-standing destination marketing organization will take over control of marketing Bristol, Tennessee this summer following the termination of an agreement for those services

between Bristol Tennessee City Council and the Bristol Chamber of Commerce.

City Council plans to incorporate the organization — composed of stakeholders within the tourism community and

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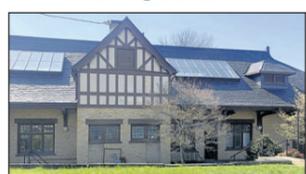
**COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

LOCATION	#CASES	#DEATHS
Worldwide	135,076,300+	2,921,300+
United States	31,148,400+	561,700+
Virginia	634,325	10,458
Tennessee	822,085	12,001

#VACCINATED IN VIRGINIA: 3,036,315  
#VACCINATED IN TENNESSEE: 3,237,146

SOURCES: Johns Hopkins, Virginia and Tennessee Departments of Health, AP

**INSIDE**



Outdoors shop opens in Abingdon train depot » B1

Thank you, Allen Torbert, for subscribing to the Bristol Herald Courier.

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Weather » A10



**50 YEARS LATER: A REMEMBRANCE**

# FOREVER LINKED



AP PHOTO

Actor George C. Scott portrays Gen. George S. Patton in the movie "Patton." Scott, who was born in Wise, Virginia, won the Academy Award for best actor for his role in "Patton," on April 15, 1971. Scott, who scorned the Academy Awards as contrived and degrading, said he would send the Oscar back if it was sent to him.

Like the man he played, Wise native George C. Scott was a rebel

BY TIM HAYES | BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

Actress Goldie Hawn, in her black spaghetti-strap dress adorned with flowers, stepped to the microphone inside the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion in Los Angeles on April 15, 1971, to present the Academy Award for Best Actor. ♦ On the other side of the country — three time zones away — in Southwest Virginia and Northeast Tennessee, many folks were probably tuned into the NBC telecast on Channel 5. Perhaps they were waiting for the local newscast on WCYB or had just not bothered to change the dial after sitting through "The Flip Wilson Show," "Ironside" and "Adam 12."

See SCOTT, Page A4



EARL NEIKIRK/SPECIAL TO THE HERALD COURIER

A sign simply states "Birthplace of George C. Scott Stage, Television, and Film Actor" as you turn off U.S. Highway 23 toward the town of Wise, Virginia.

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# Scott

From Page A1

Their interest was likely piqued when Hawn rattled off the names of the five nominees for an Oscar, the ultimate artistic accolade — George C. Scott in “Patton,” James Earl Jones for “The Great White Hope,” Melvyn Douglas in “I Never Sang For My Father,” Ryan O’Neal in “Love Story” and Jack Nicholson for “Five Easy Pieces.”

“I can’t wait,” Hawn softly said to the audience as she proceeded to rip open the envelope that had just been given to her by a stagehand.

“Oh my God,” the 25-year-old blonde actress then bemusedly exclaimed. “The winner is George C. Scott in ‘Patton.’”

Of course, it was a big deal in these parts as Scott was born in Wise, Virginia, and became the first native-born son to win an Oscar for Best Actor.

Yet, it was an even bigger deal in Hollywood as Scott became the first actor to outright refuse acceptance of the iconic gold statue. Scott had compared the ceremonies that dated back to 1929 to a “two-hour meat parade” and called them “degrading.”

He eschewed the event and was at home watching the National Hockey League playoffs that evening as “Patton” producer Frank McCarthy walked to the stage and was handed the award in Scott’s stead.

Thursday will mark 50 years since the occurrence of a moment that remains memorable in the motion picture industry, and footage of Hawn’s announcement of Scott’s win has more than 350,000 views on YouTube.

“It was an enormous decision that got a lot of press,” said David Sheward, who wrote a 2008 biography of Scott.

It was a decision made by a man with an enormous personality himself and whose magnum opus was “Patton,” a portrayal of an enigmatic, larger-than-life military man depicted by an enigmatic, larger-than-life thespian.

“Patton — A salute to a Rebel,” was a phrase uttered in the trailer for the film and was also used in promotional materials.

That could also describe the Southwest Virginia native who brought the four-star general to life on the big screen.

“He was a very complicated person,” Sheward said. “He would not suffer fools gladly; he wanted to do good work as far as being an actor goes, but I think his life is kind of tragic in that he allowed his temper and his alcoholism and his temperament to get in the way of his reaching, I think, his full stature as an actor.”

## Wise beginnings

George Campbell Scott was a son of coal-mining country, and even though he left Southwest Virginia as a toddler, he never forgot his roots and made frequent return trips to visit relatives.

Scott was the second child of George Dewey Scott and Helena Slempp Scott and was born on Oct. 18, 1927.

“His dad was a very ambitious man. It was kind of a weird dynamic between his father and mother,” Sheward said. “His father started out as a coal miner and then they moved to Michigan. He became a supervisor [in the auto industry] and then started in business in Michigan and worked his way up. He was very much all business and kind of gruff.”

“His mother was very artistic. She wrote poetry and she read it on the radio. Her nickname was ‘Honey.’ ... I think in growing up there was this conflict between being this tough, traditional type of guy and also wanting to express himself artistically.”

Scott’s mother died just before his eighth birthday and was buried in Big Stone Gap.

Her death — and the four-year stint he served in the Marines — had a profound impact on him.

“He dug ditches for the dead when he was in the Marine Corps,” said Karen Riehl, an author/actress who wrote “Love and Madness: My Private Years with George C. Scott” in 2017.

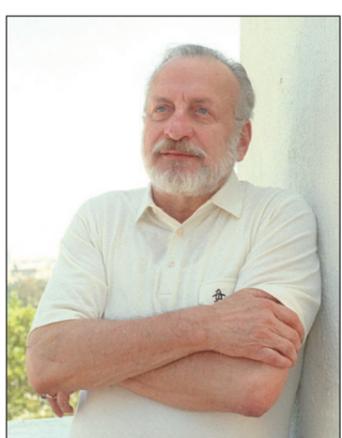
“He felt that and losing his



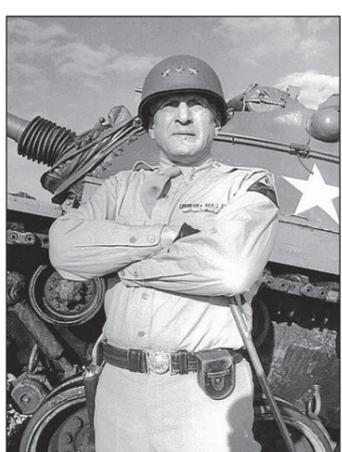
Charles Finley (right), owner of the Oakland A’s, presents an “Oscar” to actor George C. Scott during pregame ceremonies before the American League playoff game between Oakland and Detroit in this 1972 photo in Oakland, California.



Actress Goldie Hawn announces that George C. Scott had won the Academy Award for best actor for his role in “Patton,” at ceremonies at the Los Angeles Music Center in Hollywood, Los Angeles, on April 15, 1971.



Actor George C. Scott is shown in this Sept. 1, 1986, photo.



Actor George C. Scott portrays Gen. George S. Patton in the movie “Patton.”

mom at age of 7 was why he had demons.”

While attending the University of Missouri after his military service on the G.I. Bill, Scott initially sought a career in journalism.

“In sort of a contradictory way, he was very shy with people, and he couldn’t get himself to intrude on people’s lives to the extent you have to do as a journalist,” Sheward said. “When he tried out for a production at the theater department — “The Winslow Boy” — he got the part, and it was of a gruff, no-nonsense bulldozer of a lawyer. He got the part, and he found, ‘Oh, if I’m somebody else, I can unleash all this energy and all this confidence in myself.’ He found out that way of how he could express himself.”

By 1958, he was on Broadway for the first time in “Comes a Day” and became a force on stage in quick order. Television and movie roles soon followed.

He earned Best Supporting Actor nominations from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences for “Anatomy of a Murder” in 1959 and “The Hustler” in 1961. He often played military characters, including in satirical form as General Buck

“What I admired, and why he was such a titan to me, were the sly choices and touches he could bring to individual moments. That’s what separates good actors from bad actors, and exquisite actors from solid ones.”

— Evan Handler, actor on George C. Scott

Turgidson in “Dr. Strangelove.” He later appeared as Brigadier Gen. Harlan Bache in “Taps,” a 1980 film about a military school.

“He did gaze out at us during that large muster scene and reminisce that it reminded him of his own days in the service,” actor Evan Handler, who was 19 years old at the time and had a minor role in the movie, said in a March interview. “I can’t guarantee if I’ve got the exact ages right anymore, but he did say, ‘I went in at 17, and came out at 21 and a lush.’ I’d never heard anyone say anything quite like that before.”

His imbibing and on-set outbursts became the stuff of legend, and his volatile life carried outside the workplace as he was married four times. However, when the director said, “Action,” Scott always delivered. That became apparent when shooting began in 1969 for a role that would change Scott’s career.

“This is the film that really made him a star,” Sheward said.

He was cast as George S. Patton, a legendary figure who had his own ties to Virginia, having attended Virginia Military Institute in Lexington for a time.

George C. Scott and George S. Patton would end up being forever linked and for the last 50 years, it’s been hard to think of the latter without picturing the former.

“One of the great war movies of all time,” said Colin Barron, a film historian from Scotland who has written several books on World War II’s depiction in cinema, in an interview last month.

## Iconic role

The 172-minute biopic opens with its most famous scene, a gripping and sometimes profane five-minute speech delivered by Patton about America’s military goals in World War II. He is

decked out in uniform with a plethora of medals and decorations with his pearl-handled revolvers at his side.

“He thought that scene should have been put last,” Sheward said. “He thought if you start the film like that, you have nowhere to go. They didn’t tell him and he was a bit angry about it. But I think overall, he was pleased with it and how it turned out.”

The movie did have other places to go and other scenes where Scott was superb, like when he visits a field hospital.

“In the first half of this scene, he displays great kindness and compassion towards wounded soldiers,” Barron said. “Then he flips when he comes across a soldier suffering from battle fatigue and promptly slaps him. This scene therefore portrays both sides of Patton’s mercurial personality. ... I think [Scott] did an excellent job. It is hard to see how he could have done better. All the criticisms I have of the film are unrelated to Scott’s performance.”

The goal of any biopic is to get the viewer to think he is actually watching the subject of the film and not the actor portraying him. Scott had dived into every newsreel and book he could find on Patton and pulled it off.

The only difference between them is the voice — Scott’s famous gravelly voice was much different than the general’s high-pitched tone. Still, Scott became Patton.

“George C. Scott captured Patton’s bluster and reflection and gives an unforgettable portrait of a commander whose foot was always on the accelerator,” said Dave Luhrssen, author of “World War II on Film.” “He didn’t know when to apply the brakes on his behavior or public comments.”

That the two men shared common traits in their behavior made it a perfect marriage of actor and subject.

“For all of Patton’s legendary bombast, Scott plays him in a way that is never predictable,” said Robert Burgoyne, a movie historian and a professor of film studies at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland. “He is just as likely to resort to charm as he is to display an outsized temper. Scott plays Patton as flamboyant, narcissistic and with signs of a pathological megalomania. But he also gives the character a quality of warmth. ... This quality of warmth also comes through in tiny, throw-away moments, such as when Patton joins the troops marching toward Bastogne, grinning from ear to ear as he walks with his men.”

Karl Malden’s performance as General Omar Bradley and Jerry Goldsmith’s unique score were also commended when it was released in early 1970, at a crucial time in the history of Hollywood.

“The film stands at the crossroads of the Classic Hollywood studio blockbuster and the emergence of the New Hollywood film initiated by films such as “Bonnie and Clyde” and “The Graduate.” It has an unapologetic grandeur about it, both in terms of the charismatic performance of George C. Scott and in terms of the production design, which is outsized and spectacular,” Burgoyne said. “But the film also dwells, at length, on the interior life of Patton, especially his

strange talent for self-destruction. The screenplay, by Francis Ford Coppola, contributes to this sense of a film that straddles two distinct eras.”

It was against that backdrop that Scott refused to accept the prize for his work, one of seven Academy Awards “Patton” was awarded.

Perhaps he was still ticked off he hadn’t won that Best Supporting Actor for “Anatomy of a Murder” back in 1958, or perhaps George C. Scott was just doing what George C. Scott wanted to do.

He’d rather watch hockey than take part in something he felt was hokey.

“The whole feeling of the country at the time was real anti-establishment,” Sheward said. “The Academy Awards at this point were seen as very traditional; every year it was the same thing, Bob Hope was always the host, there were always these corny jokes and at the time it was not the best performance that won, but whoever had the most friends in the industry and whoever was the nicest guy and whoever made the most money for their respective studio got the award and not what was the best performance. So, Scott said that was his reason for saying he wanted no part of it.”

## Lasting legacy

One of George C. Scott’s final roles brought him back to Southwest Virginia for filming in 1996, kind of a full-circle moment.

A CBS made-for-TV movie entitled “Country Justice” was shot in Tazewell County and debuted on Jan. 14, 1997. Fittingly, Scott portrayed a coal miner named Clayton Hayes in the crime drama.

Don Diamont of soap opera fame was cast as the villain.

“The highlight of my professional life, for sure,” Diamont said in a telephone interview last month. “I was really hopeful I would get that part largely so I could work with him. That’s just a fact. I had certainly seen “Patton” and some of his other work. The prospect of that was really enthralling to me.”

Diamont had grown up admiring Scott’s work, but wasn’t sure if working with one of his acting heroes would turn into a dream job or a nightmare.

“The first scenes I filmed were with George, and it was my first day on set,” Diamont said. “They were confrontational scenes, and I had a certain amount of anxiety. His reputation sort of preceded him, because I had heard of how irascible and challenging he could be.”

“I found him to be the completely opposite. He was friendly and charming. I said, ‘Mr. Scott, Would you like to run lines?’ and he said, ‘Call me George and however you are comfortable rehearsing, that’s what we’ll do.’ It was just an absolute privilege to work opposite him, and he was just delightful and a total pro.”

Diamont got Scott to autograph some pages from the script where they shared dialogue and also got Scott to sign a movie poster from “Patton.”

“Those are definitely prized possessions,” Diamont said.

Scott died on Sept. 22, 1999, of a ruptured abdominal aortic aneurysm at his home in California. He was 71.

A brown sign with white letters stating “Birthplace of George C. Scott Stage, Television, and Film Actor” sits just off U.S. Highway 23 as you enter Wise, Virginia.

“Patton” remains a timeless work, as does some of his other work. A viewer may stumble on one of those works the next time they are flipping through the channels.

So, whatever happened to the Oscar he refused?

“The last I heard,” Sheward said, “it was still in a warehouse belonging to the Academy in Los Angeles.”

While the trophy collects dust, Scott’s work still shines bright.

“What I admired, and why he was such a titan to me, were the sly choices and touches he could bring to individual moments,” Handler said. “That’s what separates good actors from bad actors, and exquisite actors from solid ones.”