

Parade

Parade Rewind with Al Roker: His Idea of Perfect Weather and How Oversleeping Inspired His First App

MAY 2, 2014

By ERIN HILL [@ErinHillNY](#)

America's favorite weatherman, **Al Roker**, stopped by to chat with *Parade* about his brand new app, Al's Weather Rokies ([available on iTunes](#)), his early morning routine, growing up in Queens, New York, and having a spouse in the same industry. Check [AlRoker.com](#) for all the latest!

Tell us about your new app, Al's Weather Rokies.

"Al's Weather Rokies is unlike anything out there. There are gaming apps, there are weather apps, but there isn't anything that puts the two together. So you get a forecast, you get information you need to know, but there's a little game involved. Of course I do early morning TV, both *Wake Up with Al* and the *Todayshow*, and there was a little episode last year when I overslept for the first time. There's a game that involves these cute little weather characters that you have to use to wake me up and help me get to the studio. So it's both a game and a weather app."

And it incorporates your love of animation.

"Yeah, I have loved animation ever since I was a little kid. I wanted to be an animator. What's been great is that I've been able to use some of that in designing these apps and working with the programmers to get the animation right. It's kind of addictive' it's fun. I think each of these little weather icons, these Rokies, whether it's a cloud or a sun or a windstorm, all have their own little personality."

What were some of your favorite cartoons as a kid?

"The classics, *Tom and Jerry*, *The Roadrunner*, *Bugs Bunny*, all the classic Disney feature animations, and then even as I got older, I still loved animation, *The Animaniacs*, and you move forward into *Batman* and *Batman Beyond*. I really love all genres and then you look at what's happened with *Frozen*.

That is just such a phenomenon that's exploded, it's the combination of these wonderful pictures that's created from somebody's head and this wonderful story."

Since you overslept last year, have you set multiple alarms to make sure you don't have a repeat?

"I have not set multiple alarms. Even in the light of last year's first time oversleeping in almost 40 years, it was a fluke, it was one of those things that just happened and people probably wouldn't have even known about it because I only overslept for *Wake Up with Al* on the Weather Channel, I was there in plenty of time for the *Today* show, in fact, it was kind of a relaxing morning because once I knew I wasn't getting up for *Wake Up with Al* I kind of took my time but no, usually, I would say 99% of the time, I wake up before my alarm. I've got this body clock and I'm like, bing! And this one time it didn't work, but no, plus, if you have a spouse, as I do, now you're setting multiple alarms and you're waking them up multiple times and that's not really going to go over really well."

What's your idea of perfect weather?

"I don't know that I have perfect weather. I know that I don't like it, I'm one of these people, I would rather it be really cold than really hot because if it's really cold, you can layer up if you have to go outside, if it's really hot, there's nothing you can do, other than have a 55 gallon drum of water and sit in it and be carted from one place to the other. There's nothing you can do. Yesterday in New York City it was a gorgeous day, it was sunny, it was about 67 degrees, and there was no wind, low humidity. It was the perfect day."

Were you interested in weather as a kid?

"I had zero desire to be on TV let alone do the weather. I had this love of television and animation and I wanted to work in television as a producer or director or writer, but I had zero interest in being on television and even less in doing weather and it was just a fluke. I took a meteorology class in my freshman year of college. I was looking for a science requirement and one of my suitemates said I should take that class, so I took it and took another one but had no plans on using it and at the end of my sophomore year they were looking for a weekend weatherman in Syracuse, New York, I went to SUNY, my department

chairman worked at the television station and he put me up for the job and I got it. But I thought, I'll just do this until I get a real job and now 40 years later, still trying to get it right!"

And you grew up in Queens?

"I grew up in Queens, New York. My dad was a bus driver, my mom worked part-time as a nursing assistant, I was the oldest of six kids and it still to this day it amazes me. My parents are both gone, but I have nieces and nephew who live in my parents' house in Queens and I'll come back over the midtown tunnel bridge and I can see all of Manhattan and I think, 'I can't believe I work in the city.' It was amazing when I was working just as a local weatherman at WNBC here in New York and then to get a job like the Today show was...people would say that must be your dream job, but no because I never dreamed I would do anything like that."

What were you like in high school?

"I was what an Internet nerd would be today! I was on the AV squad. We even had our own hand signal. Whenever there had to be a filmstrip played or a film shown in a class, we were the guys. Or if there was a record that had to be played, we were the guys. We were the keepers of all things audio/visual. This was before digital cameras and discs and CDs and all that stuff. Before video was on your phone. It was just analog stuff."

Then it makes sense you have an app and that you're the Today show host who enjoys tweeting the most.

"Using social media to a certain extent is fun, it gives the viewer a chance to get a little behind the scenes, but I'm not one of these people who lives online. I don't need to know everything about you, nor do you need to know everything about me. That's one of the things I'm constantly telling my kids. People don't need to know everything. And I keep preaching that just because it's on the Internet, doesn't mean it's true. Unfortunately, it's led to a less civil society, people tend to be ruder and cruder because their somewhat anonymous online. The art of writing a nice letter is being lost because why send a thank you

note if you can do it in 140 characters? I make my kids write thank you notes, and they're like, but I can just sent them a text!"

What do your kids think about dad being on TV every day?

"They don't care. My kids could care less that I'm on TV. The only time they care is if the Today show has a concert and its somebody they want to see, otherwise, there's no advantage as far as they see!"

Which of your *Today* show cohosts makes you laugh the most?

"I think it depends on the day as to which cohost can make you laugh the most. On a consistent basis, Matt Lauer, only because we have this twisted little sense of humor and we've known each other for so long. We do this thing called 'Joke Jeopardy' where a situation will arise and we'll just say the punch line, we don't even have to do the joke. Something will happen and I'll just say number 17 and we'll just start laughing. Savannah Guthrie is a very, very funny person. Willie Geist is very witty; Carson Daly is not so much funny, it's the flatulence is an issue. There's this side to Natalie Morales we call 'Dark Natalie.' She'll say these things on the air and we'll be like, what? Really inappropriate things and we'll just be like, who are you? And we've dubbed her Dark Natalie. And you never know when she's going to pop up, which is great. It's like an evil jack in a box."

What time does your day start?

"My alarm goes off at 3:05 a.m. and then I shower, shave, and do all that stuff. I start talking to my meteorologists at the *Today* show at about 3:30 and I'm online on the computer and we're talking on the phone, then I get on the phone with my folks at the Weather Channel and I'm on with them for about half an hour, but I'm multitasking while I'm doing that, I'm getting stuff together, getting ready, making my kids' lunch, and then I leave for work. I'm at the *Today* show by about 4:45 and then I go into special effects, or as we call it makeup, and then I'm on the air at the Weather Channel from about 5:30 to 6:47 and then I go back downstairs from 30 Rock to Studio 1A and we're on the *Today* show for three hours. Then after that we have a couple of *Today* show meetings and I have a production company and we produce a number of shows on Weather Channel and GAC TV. And then I'll get home probably about, depending, sometimes I

get back early enough to pick my son up from school, about 3:30 or so, 4 pm, most days make dinner. It's easier now because the kids are old enough, it used to be you had to hose them down and get them ready for bed, but they can do that themselves now. It's just making sure that they do take the shower."

Is it helpful having a spouse who is in the same line of work?

"There are good and bad things about having a spouse in the same industry, you understand what each other goes through, but by the same token, if you are competitive and doing the same thing, you really have to work at making sure each one is ok. At the end of the day, we also know we love each other and the job is not the most important thing, we are."