

News Release

C-SPAN

Tenth Anniversary

1979-1989

For Immediate Release

Contact:
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(202) 737-3220

C-SPAN AIRS ADDRESS BY CHILDRENS' TELEVISION HOST MR. ROGERS

Washington, D.C., April 14 -- C-SPAN will air a speech by Fred Rogers, host of the childrens' television program, "Mister Roger's Neighborhood," on Saturday, April 14, at 11:00 am ET.

In an address before the National Press Club, he discusses what he has learned from young people during his 35 years in childrens' television.

Mr. Rogers' career has included various childrens' programs in Pittsburgh and Toronto. "Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood" has been seen on the Public Broadcasting Service since 1968.

This speech will air during C-SPAN's "Communications Today," a weekly series focusing on media trends, technology, and communications law.

C-SPAN is available in 49 million cable households through 3800 cable system affiliates nationwide and around the world via satellite. The network is privately funded and is a public service of the cable television industry.

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A BRIEF SIDEBAR HISTORY

Fred McFeely Rogers was born in 1928 in Latrobe, Pennsylvania, a small industrial town about an hour's drive east of Pittsburgh. His family was involved in manufacturing and banking, and it was in traditional and "comfortable" surroundings that Rogers spent his earliest years. He was an only child until the age of 11, at which time adoption brought him a baby sister.

Rogers stayed in Latrobe through high school and then went off to Rollins College in Florida where he majored in music composition. After graduation in 1951, he was hired by NBC in New York as an assistant producer on The Voice of Firestone, later working as floor director for The Lucky Strike Hit Parade, The Kate Smith Hour and the NBC Opera Theatre. He was married in 1952 to Joanne Byrd, a pianist and a fellow Rollins undergraduate.

In November, 1953, Rogers moved back to Pittsburgh at the request of WQED, the nation's first community-supported public television station. The station was not yet on the air, and its management asked Rogers to develop program schedules for the following year. One of the programs which he developed and produced was called Children's Corner. It was a free-wheeling, live, hour-long visit with puppets and host Josie Carey, another Pittsburgher, and in 1955 the series won the Sylvania Award for the best locally-produced children's program in the country. There, on Children's Corner, several "regulars" of today's Mister Rogers' Neighborhood began their long lives -- among them, Daniel Striped Tiger and King Friday XIII. It was also during the seven years of Children's Corner that Rogers began spending his off-duty hours studying Child Development and attending the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. He was ordained in 1962 with a charge to continue his work with children and families through the media.

Opportunity led Rogers to Toronto in 1963 where he created a 15-minute children's series called Misterogers. For the first time he appeared on camera as the programs' host. By 1964 the series had been renamed Misterogers' Neighborhood and the programs were twice as long. In 1965, however, he chose to return to WQED in Pittsburgh, bringing the series with him. The programs were distributed over the Eastern Educational Network. In 1968, it was made available to the 200 affiliates of the Public Broadcasting Service -- the same year in which Rogers was appointed Chairman of the Forum on Mass Media and Child Development of the White House Conference on Children. Distinctions and awards have followed ever since, including a George Foster Peabody Award and Emmys.

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