



Friendship Backstory

You would be hard-pressed to find someone who hasn't heard of Mister Rogers Neighborhood. Fred McFeely Rogers is the man behind that show and the dream of bringing education to children and families through mass media.

Rogers began this dream at Rollins College in Winter Park, Florida where he graduated with a bachelor's degree in music composition in 1951. After graduating Rogers launched his career in broadcast television with NBC as assistant producer for The Voice of Firestone and later as floor director for The Lucky Strike Hit Parade, The Kate Smith Hour, and the NBC Opera Theatre.

In 1953 Rogers moved back to Pennsylvania at the request of WQED, the nation's first community-sponsored educational television station. One of the first programs he produced there was called The Children's Corner where several of the Mister Rogers' Neighborhood characters made their first appearances.

While in Pittsburgh, Rogers attended both the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary and the University of Pittsburgh's Graduate School of Child Development. He graduated from the Seminary and was ordained as a Presbyterian minister in 1963.

Rogers first appeared as an on-air host on Canada's CBC show MisteRogers. In 1966 he incorporated segments of the CBC into a new series, called Mister Rogers' Neighborhood, which was distributed by the Eastern Educational Network. Almost 900 episodes later, Mister Rogers' Neighborhood is the longest-running program on public television.

Fred was chairman of Family Communications, Inc. the nonprofit company that he formed in 1971 to produce Mister Rogers' Neighborhood and that has since diversified into non-broadcast materials that reflect the same philosophy and purpose: to encourage the healthy emotional growth of children and their families. Fred Rogers died on February 27, 2003 at his home in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He is survived by his wife Joanne, their two sons and three grandsons.

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