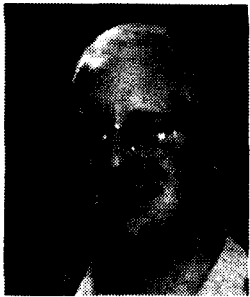


It's A Sad Day in the Neighborhood

By **ROBERT TRISHMAN**
Copy Editor

Beloved child entertainer and mentor, Mr. Rogers, dies of cancer on February 27



We are in the midst of an onslaught of "reality TV." From shows like COPS which broadcast people's misdeeds everywhere, to "Survivor" and "Fear Factor" which put people in dangerous situations they really do not need to be in even if it is their choice. And most recently, "Joe Millionaire" and "Married by America" among others have trifled with one of society's most sacred institutions.

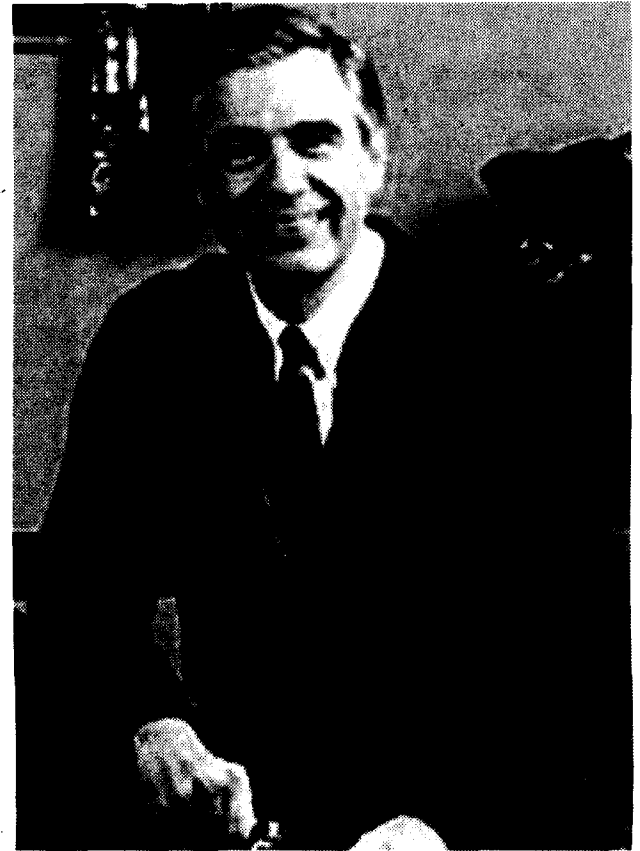
Lost in all of this, and only found when it was gone, was "Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood." I know I grew up watching the mild-mannered minister juggle his shoes and zip his sweater every day. For me, his loving, fatherly tone of voice was an escape from the fighting of "Transformers" and "G.I. Joe." The beautiful neighborhood remained an island oasis, unscathed by tidal waves and hurricanes on the

sea of declining morality that television is. Fred Rogers, very plain in manner and dress, didn't change with the times. He delivered the same message over 30 years in word and song. He made it child-friendly through the characters in "The Land of Make Believe." He had people on the show doing arts and crafts projects to teach children to be productive with their time.

Was "Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood" reality TV? It was. Parents Magazine editor Sally Lee explained why in a letter to USA Today. She wrote, "...the gentle, decent, thoughtful, soft-spoken Mister Rogers of television was not a persona-it was exactly who Fred Rogers was." In this he set a great example for us to stick to our values and be who we really are.

Rogers was an ordained Presbyterian minister, and no doubt took Jesus' admonitions to love children and be humble to heart. God called Fred Rogers back to Him, but it is my hope that He sends another just like him. And make it "speedy delivery."

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Fred Rogers says farewell, neighbor, when he died of stomach cancer. He was 74

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