

A farewell to Mister Rogers

What's on TV and at the Movies

LISA DE MORAES

Mister Rogers isn't going to be our neighbor anymore. Fred Rogers, the slow-speaking, soothing star of PBS' "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood," says he will tape his last episode next month, although the show will live on in reruns.

The final original episode will air sometime in August.

This might come as a shock to those of you who were raised in Mister Rogers' Neighborhood of Make-Believe. Imagine the jolt it gave the folks at PBS. Rogers told them only a couple of weeks ago and they had to scramble to notify their station execs before the story broke over the weekend in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, to which Rogers had given the exclusive. (Rogers, who was born about 40 miles outside Pittsburgh, tapes "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" at the city's PBS station WQED.)

That's because Rogers' Family Communications, which produces the longest-running children's program in TV history, doesn't want a big fuss made about Rogers' exit. Its executives want the program to keep airing in reruns for years and years.

Recently, they emphasized that Rogers isn't retiring, he's moving on to other things, including writing books and public speaking.

PBS CEO Pat Mitchell said that shortly after she took the job in February, Rogers hinted he was getting kind of tired of the gig, which is understandable given that the 72-year-old was writing the scripts, the songs, and the lyrics, starring, and doing the puppet voices on most episodes.

So when he called it quits, Mitchell says,

she wasn't completely surprised, "but nonetheless I was sad," she said. "You like to think that something like 'Mister Rogers' goes on forever -- and there are so many programs it will go on, if not forever, for a long time."

But here is a surprise: PBS doesn't own the "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" library. Mister Rogers does. Mister Rogers is a lot shrewder than he seems at first glance. For at least the past several years, PBS has negotiated for broadcast rights on a year-by-year basis. Mitchell said that Rogers had given her his word he remains committed to PBS.

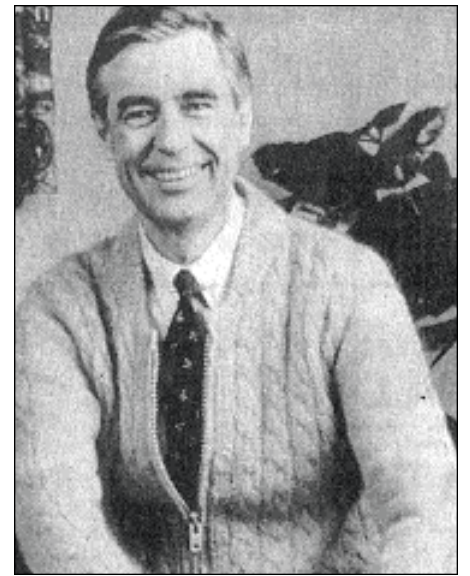
When that final fresh episode airs in August, Rogers will have put on his zip-up sweater and sung "It's a beautiful day in this neighborhood" on national television nearly 1,000 times. The ordained Presbyterian minister and former NBC floor manager started doing the show in 1968.

After August, there will be no more "Mister Rogers" on TV, only Mister Rogers Redux. But here's a little secret: The episodes of "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" that many of us watched as kids were reruns anyway. From 1979 until about four years ago, Rogers produced only 15 new episodes a year; recently, he's cut back even more, doing eight new ones a year. That's a far cry from the 130 he produced during his first season as Mister Rogers and the 65 per year he produced from 1969 to 1974.

Even though a lot of the episodes haven't been aired in years because they were shot in black and white, there are enough color episodes to take the show a whole year -- five days a week -- without repeating a single episode. That final episode of "Mister Rogers" will be about art education

and won't include any so-long speech by Rogers. That's so the episode can be put in the never-ending "Neighborhood" rerun loop.

"Kids grow into it," explained longtime "Mister Rogers" associate producer Hedda Sharapan. "If you are 3, the next year you are 4 and you're coming at it with different life experiences."



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FILE

YOUR HOROSCOPE FOR THE MONTH



SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22 -Dec. 21
Spend time with relatives who need reassurance in the family.

Your numbers: 8, 19, 33



ARIES
March 21-April 19
You will attract members of the opposite sex.

Your numbers: 2, 17, 41



LEO
July 23 -Aug. 22
Keep an eye on your investments. Don't let your mate get hold of your credit cards.

Your numbers: 4, 16, 37



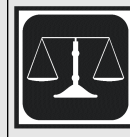
CAPRICORN
Dec. 22 -Jan. 19
Be reasonable, but let them know just how much you can and can't do.

Your numbers: 3, 29, 47



TAURUS
April 20 -May 20
Don't try to hold onto the past. Make changes now; don't wait another month.

Your numbers: 9, 22, 34



LIBRA
Sept. 23 -Oct. 22
Your family will put demands on you that will be difficult to handle.

Your numbers: 1, 11, 38



AQUARIUS
Jan. 20 -Feb. 18
Ask for favors. Be willing to accept personal changes; you won't be sorry.

Your numbers: 13, 17, 30



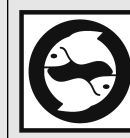
GEMINI
May 21-June 20
Socializing will lead to romantic connections; it's better than you expected.

Your numbers: 8, 17, 31



VIRGO
Aug. 23 -Sept. 22
Your competitive nature will put you in the limelight at social functions.

Your numbers: 6, 12, 18



PISCES
Feb. 19 -March 20
Be careful when talking to others. They may mistake your intentions.

Your numbers: 7, 20, 39



CANCER
June 21-July 22
Don't be shy around someone you like. Let him or her know you're interested.

Your numbers: 18, 21, 40

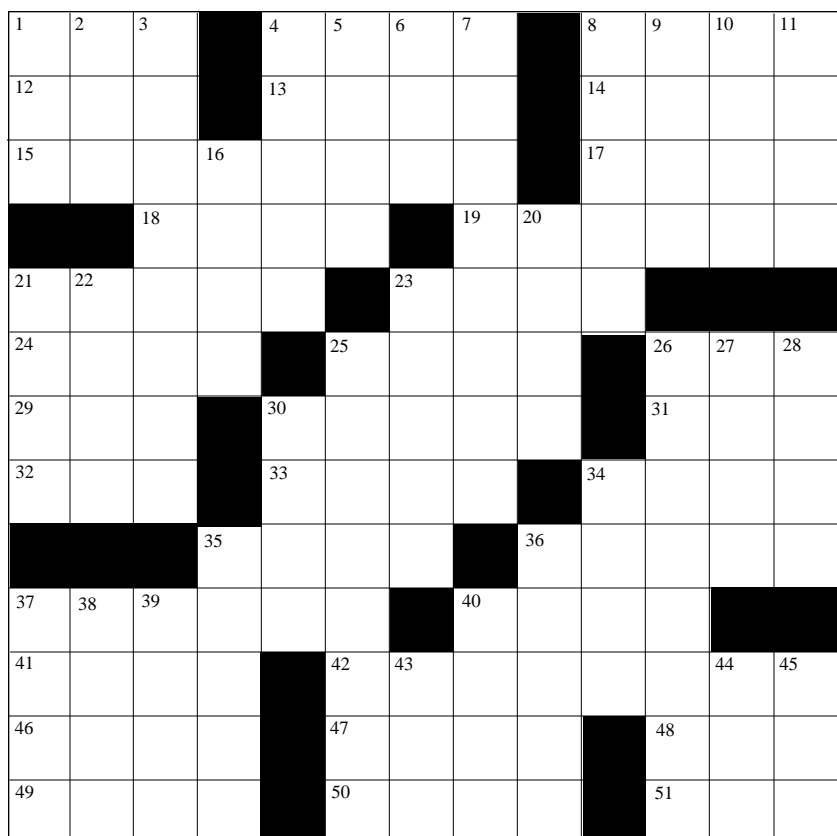


SCORPIO
Oct. 23 -Nov. 21
You have to stand up for your rights even if the end result could be estrangement.

Your numbers: 1, 26, 44

Answer on page A-12

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



ACROSS

- 1. Cozy room
- 4. Blueprint
- 8. Related to
- 12. Dental organization
- 13. Theater section
- 14. Chest rattle
- 15. West Indies island
- 17. Diva's solo
- 18. Track event
- 19. Pad of paper
- 21. "War and ___"
- 23. Potter's medium
- 24. Flat board
- 25. Den
- 26. Conflict
- 29. WWII command

31. Form of "to be"

- 32. Women's patriotic org.
- 33. Yearn for
- 34. Snatch
- 35. Glass section
- 36. Largest artery
- 37. Japanese hostess
- 40. Sweedish pop
- 41. Celebex ox
- 42. Engines
- 46. Invoice
- 47. Reverberate
- 48. ___ chi ch'uan
- 49. Dutch cheese
- 50. Fortune teller
- 51. Upperclassmen (Abbr.)

DOWN

- 1. Dollop
- 2. Writer LeShan
- 3. Storyteller
- 4. "Peyton ___"
- 5. Ore deposit
- 6. In the past
- 7. Newly hatched
- 8. "The Sheik of ___"
- 9. Mr. Marx
- 10. Tennis pro Nastase
- 11. Dapper
- 16. One of the three B's
- 20. Swiss river
- 21. Entreated
- 22. "I could ___ a horse!"
- 23. Judy, of "Laugh-in"
- 25. Starred in

- "Father of the Bride" (2 wds.)
- 26. Arrest papers
- 27. "I smell ___!"
- 28. Songbird McEntire
- 30. Mundane
- 34. Mongolian desert
- 35. King David work
- 36. Detest
- 37. Mr. Kaplan
- 38. Oklahoma city
- 39. "Mama's Family" neighbor
- 40. Have pain
- 43. Fighter pilot
- 44. Lobe location
- 45. Sibling, for short