

From blog to book, Salem native traces 'Mister Rogers'

Tim Lybarger co-authors book he'll be signing at Bryan-Bennett Library Feb. 22

BY DENNIS ROSENBERGER
FOR THE SENTINEL

SALEM — Salem native Tim Lybarger has spent the last 10 years creating an online archive of all things related to Fred Rogers and the "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" television show, and last year he

published a book featuring photos and stories about the beloved children's television personality.

Lybarger will be at the Bryan-Bennett Library in Salem on Saturday, Feb. 22, for a book signing for "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood: A Visual History" from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

He said that his involvement with the book grew out of the work that he has done on The Neighborhood Archive, a website he created to document anything and everything associated with the classic kids' show.

According to Lybarger, the book was already in the works at Clarkson Potter, an imprint of Penguin Random House, when the initial author assigned to the project reached out to him.

"With the movie that just came out last fall, featuring Tom Hanks, the folks at Clarkson Potter had the idea to do such a book and they proposed it to one of the other authors, Melissa Wagner, and as she was starting to research stuff she came across what I have been doing

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online for the past 10 years or so," said Lybarger. "So she contacted me and asked me if I would be interested in being a part of the writing team and the two of us started working on it."

And they eventually added a third person to the team, Jenna McGuggan, to help finish the book, according to Lybarger.

He explained how The Neighborhood Archive started.

"Several years ago, I was looking for some information online about a Mister Rogers record that had as a kid, and there was nothing out there that was an all-encompassing resource of all of these things that Fred Rogers had done in his decades-long career," said Lybarger. "I just thought it was kind of a shame."

So Lybarger decided to do something about it.

"I thought, since there was nothing out there, who better to get something going than me," he said. "I started it out as a blog, just to see if there was any interest and to get a feel for what kind of response there might be, and it just caught on like wildfire. I started hearing from people right away."

After doing the blog for about a year, Lybarger said he had accumulated a wealth of information and decided that it all needed to be organized into a website of its own.

"So that's where The Neighborhood Archive site came into play," he said.

It didn't take long before Lybarger's site was noticed by people associated with Rogers.

"The folks in Pittsburgh, at Fred Rogers Productions, kind of caught wind of what I was doing and they contacted me and we started working together, unofficially, and they provided me with information to document," he said.

The site features information about just about anything that has ever been associated with Fred Rogers and "Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood," according to Lybarger.

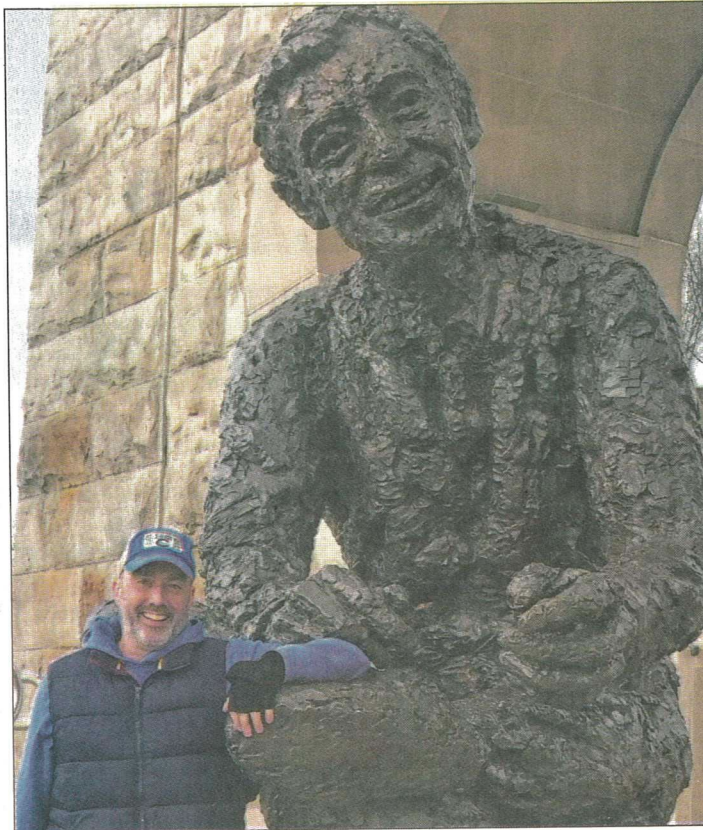
"The tag line on the website is 'A collection of all things Mister Rogers', and essentially, that's what it is," he said. "There's information about everything from really detailed documentation of every episode of the television show to song lyrics, albums, books and more."

He explained that people can even find information about the various times references to Rogers have come up in popular culture.

"In 'Seinfeld,' for example, he popped up in the background on a poster in one episode," said Lybarger.

As for the book, Lybarger said the recent resurgence of interest in Fred Rogers, with the movie "A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood" coming out last year and a documentary "Won't You Be My Neighbor?" released in 2018, it just seemed like the right time for the project.

And the authors actually



Submitted Photo

MEET THE AUTHOR — Tim Lybarger visits the "Tribute to Children" statue of Fred Rogers in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, during one of his trips while working on "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood: A Visual History."

got cooperation from Sony Pictures, the studio that released "A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood" to get access to information that was used in "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood: A Visual History."

"The last section of the book is dedicated to the creation of the film," said Lybarger. "We worked with Sony, who provided us with some photographs and information as they recreated the old show for the movie."

And that cooperation with the filmmakers led to another interesting development for the book, he added.

"Our forward was actually written by Tom Hanks," said Lybarger.

"Mister Rogers' Neighborhood: A Visual History" features an array of photographs from throughout the television show's run, according to Lybarger.

"There is also a good amount of text to it, because we have a lot of individual interviews with different people who were actually involved with the show 'Mister Rogers' Neighborhood," he explained. "But the majority of the book includes very vibrant photographs and a lot of stuff that hasn't been seen before."

The photographs in the book came from several different sources.

"A lot of them came from The Fred Rogers Center in Latrobe, Pa.," Lybarger explained. "And a few photos we were able to get from various photographers."

He noted that it should appeal to anyone, like himself, who watched the show when they were younger.

"People who grew up with the show will just be amazed at the nostalgia that comes up in them as they look through this," said Lybarger.

As a Salem native, Lybarger said he was pleased to be coming back to town to share

his work with the community during the book signing on Feb. 22.

"I used to work at Bryan-Bennett Library when I was in high school," he said. "So to go back and do a book signing at the library where I worked more than 20 years ago, it's just a cool and surreal experience."

And Bryan-Bennett Library director Kim Keller is looking forward to hosting the book signing with Lybarger.

"Tim grew up in this area," said Keller. "People here went to school with him and we're looking forward to welcoming him home during the book signing."

Lybarger attended Selma-ville Grade School and graduated from Salem Community High School in 1994. He is the son of Bob and the late Susan Lybarger. He currently works as a school counselor in Mahomet, Illinois.

Lybarger notes that his love for "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" is based on the message that Fred Rogers put into all of his work.

"On the surface, it just sounds kind of crazy that I'm in my early 40s and I'm spending all this time documenting a kids' show, but as you go a little deeper, that's what got me interested in Mister Rogers', and Fred Rogers overall," he explained. "It's just his overall message, when you sit back and realize that this kids' show we all watched when we were younger is so much deeper than just a guy and his puppets telling stories."

"His message is one that can be applied to anybody, whether they're 3 years old or 43 years old," Lybarger added. "It's just a message of being proud of who you are, self acceptance, finding the value in other people ... I think it's just something that, universally, people want to hear and long for."

Virus:

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That is forcing employees, from solo entrepreneurs to automaker Volkswagen AG's 3,500-member headquarters staff in Beijing, to stay in touch with customers and business partners and keep companies functioning by phone and email.

Millions of Chinese entrepreneurs operate house-cleaning, small trading and other businesses out of their homes. Many have suffered the same impact as bigger businesses from restrictions on movement and orders to families to stay indoors.

Maggie Zhang, founder of SheTalks, a company in Beijing that organizes events for women, is working out of her parents' apartment in the northwestern city of Zhangye in Gansu province. She went for the Lunar New Year and said she might stay through March.

Zhang temporarily stopped organizing talks and other public events and is gathering material for her company's social media account to attract users.

In the morning, "I will do some interviews over the phone or online with women working at the front in fighting the epidemic and sometimes foreign businesswomen working in China," said Zhang. "When I am working, my parents always try to keep quiet and not disturb me."

Zhang said she uses the sunny living room to write and moves to a bedroom to do interviews or talk to employees. She works out on an elliptical machine during those calls "because my mind works faster when I exercise."

Numbers of new virus cases reported daily have declined, but economists warn against assuming the disease and its impact on the world's second-largest economy might soon be under control.

Quarantines in the central province of Hubei, which surrounds Wuhan, and some neighboring areas still are in

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multiple ways to respond. The census can be completed online, by phone or by mail.

According to the Census Bureau website, the census will ask for information such as the number of people living or staying in the home of April 1 of this year. Residents will also be asked for their name, age, date of birth, sex and race of each member of the household, among other questions.

However, Smith said, census information must be kept confidential by law and cannot be shared with anyone, even with law enforcement. She noted that the census will never ask for sensitive items such as a person's Social Security number, bank account information or credit card number.

Smith said because information is kept confidential