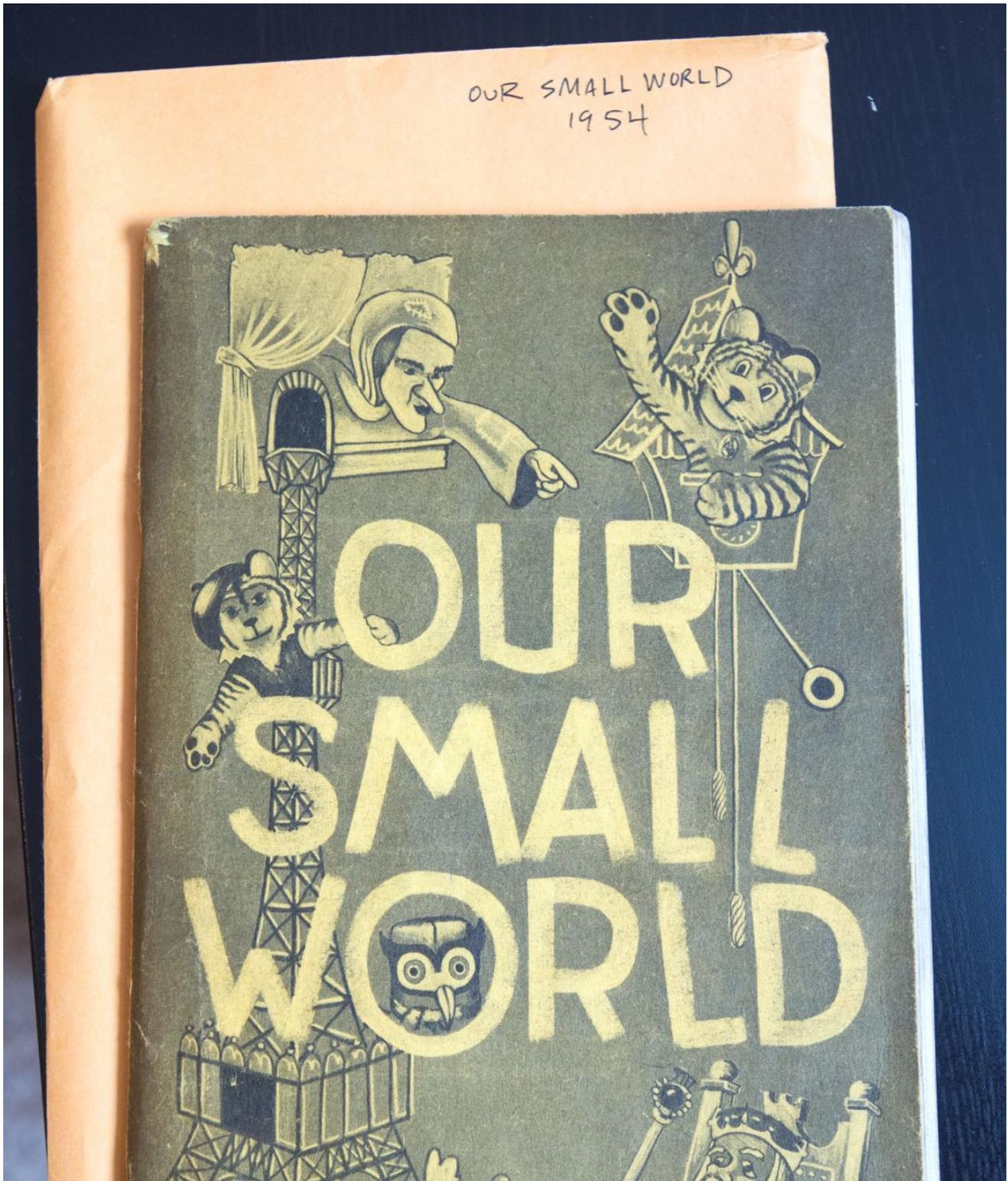


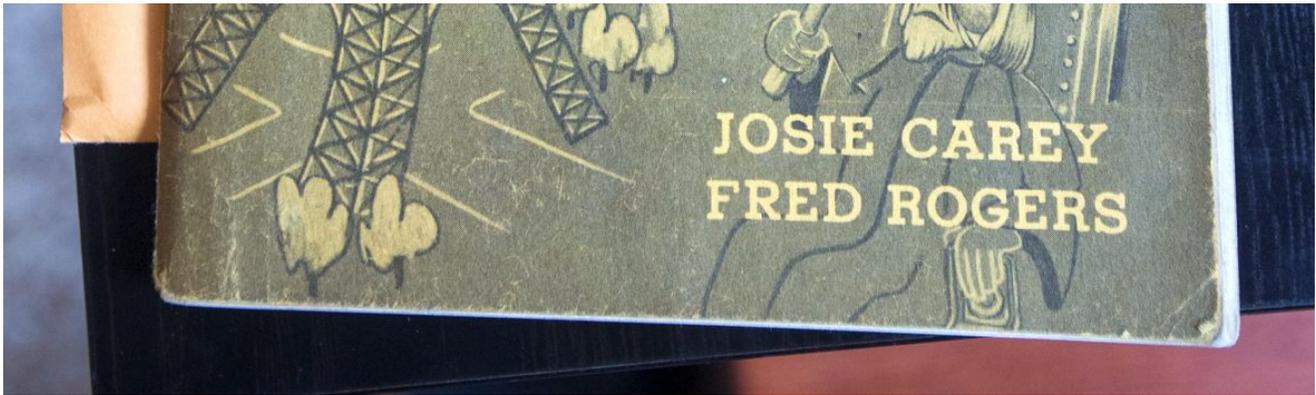
# It's such a good feeling: Mahomet man chronicling all things Mister Rogers (w/ video)

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MAHOMET — As he sat down for an on-camera interview last month, Tim Lybarger joked that his wife had forbidden him to wear a zip-up cardigan.

Trademark sweater or not, the Mahomet-Seymour guidance counselor's obsession with Mister Rogers' Neighborhood is clear to see with one look at the back wall of his Mahomet basement, which is replete with memorabilia from the children's show.

"My wife calls it my hobby that got out of hand quickly," he said with a smile.

Head to his website, [neighborhoodarchive.com](http://neighborhoodarchive.com), and it's clear how consuming his love for the long-running children's show is.

The site includes an entry for all 895 episodes that total a few hundred words apiece and include lists of songs, characters, screenshots and credits. Click on a song, and you'll be redirected to a page with its lyrics, which Lybarger typed himself. Click on a character, and you'll find a page with a Wikipedia-like page.

"I've spent a lot of dark, early-morning hours getting up and watching 'Mister Rogers' Neighborhood' and archiving this information over a pot of coffee," he said.

A simple letter sparked the obsession two decades ago.

Lybarger doesn't know why he thought of Fred Rogers when he was sending out invitations to his graduation from Eastern Illinois University. Maybe Rogers' message of self-worth and kindness had so thoroughly worked its way into his subconscious when he was a small child that the show drove Lybarger to a career as a guidance counselor. Decades later, he can't be sure.

The letter he received back amazed him.

"I received a response from Mister Rogers before I received anything from anybody else I sent (invitations) to," he said. "It was surreal to receive a letter from Mister Rogers."

The impressive part about the letter was that it was personal. While he didn't ultimately attend the graduation, Rogers congratulated Lybarger and thanked him for going into the education field.

As PBS began phasing out the show in 2008, Lybarger began recording episodes to show to his children. Around that time, he searched for information about a Mister Rogers record he had as a kid, and he couldn't find an all-encompassing site for the show.

At first, Lybarger created a simple blog, writing an entry on a different episode every few days. As a couple of entries snowballed into dozens, he decided to make a standalone site. From there, it blossomed into what it is today: an all-encompassing site chronicling "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood."

Lybarger made a goal a few years ago that he'd finish entries for all 895 episodes by this month's 50th anniversary of the show's first airing. In December, he finished his last entry.

What stood out to Lybarger, aside from Rogers' jet-black hair in the show's early days, was the consistency from decade to decade.

"The message always stayed the same," he said. "That's what's amazing to me, that the message that Fred Rogers was presenting in 1968 is the exact same message that he presented in 2001. It was a message of peace, it was a message of acceptance, of self-worth, of love, and just self-importance. The set and the people on the show can evolve and they can age, but that message never changes. A kid can watch the show, or an adult can watch the show, and they can get that same message."

His website receives about 40,000 to 50,000 hits a month, Lybarger said, and that following figures to grow as he adds more information.

If nothing else, this side hobby ties in perfectly to his day job. Cardigan or not, Lybarger tries to pass along what he sees as Rogers' universal message to his Mahomet-Seymour students.

"I see students who follow leads, I guess you could say, and I hope they understand that they're individuals, that what they're doing is just as important as what their peers are doing," he said. "Self-worth is something to me that's just as important as any biology or math or English, or any subject-area they're going to study in school. If they leave high school with a feeling of self-worth and value, to me that's more important than any academic area they're going to study."