



## Interview with Mary Rogers

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Transcript of an Interview about Life in the Jim Crow South  
Enfield (N.C.)

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## Behind the Veil: Documenting African-American Life in the Jim Crow South

An oral history project to record and preserve the living memory of African American life during the age of legal segregation in the American South, from the 1890s to the 1950s.

### ORIGINAL PROJECT

Center for Documentary Studies at Duke  
University (1993-1995)

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Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University  
Behind the Veil: Documenting African-American Life in the Jim Crow South

Interview with  
Margaret Rogers

Interviewed by  
Kara Miles

Unedited Transcript by

1. **Rogers:** ... Ritter Elementary School near Walterboro, South Carolina. And this was 1974.

And as far as I was concerned there was no longer any Jim Crow in the south, especially North and South Carolina. But when I arrived in Walterboro I was sent to a doctor's office for what they liked to call a physical. My temperature was taken and my blood pressure was taken. But I had no idea the doctor's offices were still segregated. So I pulled up in my little sports car in front of the doctor's office, jumped out and I went in the front door. Well, I noticed when I entered there were no blacks in the waiting room but being naive as I am I just figured well, none of us were sick today. (Laughter) So I went straight up to the nurse and her face was red. She was very curt. But it still didn't phase me and I told her, she says we know who you are. The school board called. The doctor will see you immediately. And I said well, thanks. So she ushered me into the doctor's examining room. He took my temperature and my blood pressure and said I was fine and that was it. On the way out of his office, I just happened to turn my head to the left because I heard a sound. And there I saw a small, windowless room with black people in it. Then it dawned on me what I had done. I had come in through the white waiting room and this still was not done. And so I left immediately and I sat in the car for a few minutes trying to really get my bearings after that because I never expected to find that, not in 1974. And one of the things I enjoyed doing was roller skating. I used to roller skate for four hours every Saturday and every Sunday, even during my pregnancies. I loved to roller skate. So knowing I would be stuck, more or less, in Walterboro and only able to come home every other weekend, I asked about a roller rink and I was told that there was a roller rink in town. So I went over, had my own skates. I went over, parked the car, hopped out with my skates and walked up to the door. This white

gentleman asked me, just where do you think you're going. I stopped and I said well, I'm one of the new teachers at Ritter Elementary and the principal told me that since I love to roller skate I might be able to come over here to skate. He said this is a private club and only members are allowed. I said fine, then I'll join. He said you don't get the message. This is a private club. There are no niggers allowed. And I just stood there. (Laughter) We're talking 1974. I just stood there. I could not believe this man was saying to me what he was saying. So it hasn't completely died out and in the smaller areas you still may run into it in what we call the "backwood communities." But during the time that I grew up here, I'm fifty-four, I was born in 1939, so I was here during World War II and beyond. There was discrimination in this area, a lot of it. But it never really, really bothered me to the point that I felt violent about it because I like to use my education with it and I more or less would turn the discrimination against them. I would do little things I knew would aggravate them constantly but I was never hostile in doing this. The water fountains, of course, were marked colored and white and I would make a habit of drinking from the white water fountain, especially in the courthouse, and would be asked, you know, why are you drinking out of that water fountain. Don't you see the colored fountain. And I would say that my chemistry teacher told me that colored water is polluted so I don't drink colored water. My mother was always terrified. She swore out the Klan was going to kill me. We only had one incident personally with the Klan. The Klan came to my house. My father, Haywood Wesley Sampson, worked for Atlantic Coastline for fifty years but his father was white. He had a half brother who died in 1984 who was a very prominent lawyer here. His name was John Bright Hill. My father had, more or less, white hair as they termed it. It stood on end. It was very stiff. We used to call it horse hair because he had to wear it in a crew cut. It would not lay down. There was

nothing you could do. So black barbers had a problem in cutting this hair. There was one white barbershop on Market Street between Front and Water that would cut, the barber would cut his hair. But he'd have to go in late at night through the back when the business was closed, of course, and somehow the word got out. So the Klan showed up at our house one night. It didn't take long for them to leave. Although they had on sheets and robes, my father recognized voices. So he started calling them in by name and as soon as he called them by name they immediately left. But it was comical to me. That was the only incident that I can remember as a child personally being involved with the Klan. But I was never afraid of them. I don't know whether I didn't have sense enough to be afraid of them or I just simply was too stubborn to allow them to intimidate me. I just wouldn't let it happen. There was an ice parlor at Seventeenth and Dawson and my favorite dessert has always been cherry ice cream sundae. I just love them. A girlfriend of mine and I used to walk over there every Sunday. I grew up at 513 South Thirteenth Street so it was not a real long walk but it was a nice walk for a teenager on a Sunday afternoon. We would go to Shield's every Sunday. They didn't want to serve us. We weren't allowed to sit and eat. We could stand at the counter and eat the ice cream sundae although they preferred that you take it and leave. And they usually kept you waiting. And I'd stand there patiently because I refused to leave. I would just stand there. And as the white customers would look at me, I'd look at them and smile. No anger, I'd just stand there. We were well dressed. We were well mannered. So we stood there. We would just do it, more or less, to aggravate them because we knew they didn't want us there. So a lot of the, I never experienced the dogs and water hoses and that type stuff until the demonstrations in the 1960's. We didn't really have that much of a problem here in Wilmington. For one thing, we grew up in neighborhoods and there were

whites and blacks in those neighborhoods. So we socialized to a point. The children played together. There were times when my family would just go out on, what a lot of people did during that time, the Sunday afternoon drive. You just rode around. I went with the white children in the neighborhood. The white children in the neighborhood would ride with me and my parents. We played together. We just didn't go to the same schools. We knew that when it was time to go to school we would go to Williston and they would go to whatever school they went. So there were not a lot of problems in the neighborhoods. We would get on the buses and depending on how we felt or just what prank we decided that day, we may ride in the front and the bus driver would tell us, you have to move to the back. And we'd say the city is paying you to drive the bus. You drive the bus. We'll ride where we want, you know. And most instances, it went at that. They would argue you know you are not supposed to be here. You know where you're supposed to sit and all of this. We say I paid my nickel like everybody else did. Occasionally, there were a couple of incidents and the bus driver was beaten in the head with a lady's shoe. (Laughter) When the three inch heels first started coming out they were metal, those high heel, willow high heel shoes. And this driver decided on Castle Street which was prominently a black area that she was going to move. So he got up to, instead of driving the bus he got up, he was going to move her and she beat him in the head with the shoe. He had to have a few stitches but there was really not a whole lot done about it. So during the 1940's and 1950's the major thing was accommodations. When you traveled on the buses on what was then Queen City Trailway and Seashore Transportation, you sat in the back. Waiting rooms were very dirty, very unkept. You didn't go in the restroom. It had to be a dire emergency for you to go in those restrooms because they were just that filthy. And they would make you wait at the counter

before you got your ticket. And you could see through the window where you bought your ticket, you could see over into the white waiting room and you could see what kinds of accommodations they had as compared to yours. You saw that. The train was the same way. We traveled mostly by train. If we didn't, by car because with my father's employment we were able to ride free. When you left Wilmington going north the blacks were all in a separate car, not a very nice car. A porter would usually come through after you had been on the road for awhile with stale sandwiches and sodas and whatever. But generally black people carried their own food and the main staple was fried chicken. You never left to go on a trip unless you had fried chicken. You had to have fried chicken or you just couldn't go. Once you reached Rocky Mount then they changed cars but you were still segregated. Once you reached Richmond going north then the cars were integrated. But up until then, it was segregated. But even with those conditions that was still my favorite form of transportation and still is. I still love the train. I don't care. But the hotel or living accommodations along the way, in fact, the first time I'd ever heard of anything called cinches - I know that's a new word for you - (Laughter) my grandparents referred to them as cinches. They were called bed bugs. They were little tiny red things. I had never heard of these things and we went to Rocky Mount. Sometimes we would go to Rocky Mount when my father was on the run from Wilmington to Rocky Mount on the freight run and spend the night or spend the weekend with him up there and then come back. Well, when we did you stayed in one of the black, we weren't called black then, you stayed in one of the colored rooming houses or hotels. And that was the first time I'd ever run into anything called chinchies. Something was biting me and I just started screaming and my mother turned on the light and there were these little red bugs. So they were trying to kill them and, of course, I just sat up the rest of the

night. I didn't try to go to sleep. But you knew, more or less, what was expected and to a point you let it go. You learned how to deal with it. Here the most frustrating, maybe it wasn't frustrating, the thing that I remember most that still sticks in my craw, I don't like to this day, is Wrightsville Beach and I don't go to Wrightsville Beach. During the 1940's and 1950's when you went to Wrightsville Beach you were stopped at the bridge tender shack until they really became familiar with you. If a colored person came to that bridge you were stopped and asked where you were going. You had to give a person's name and a telephone number and they would call them to see if indeed you were going. And if that person said well, yes, I know them but I was not expecting them today, you didn't get across that bridge. Or if they said well, no, I have no idea who this person is, you did not get across that bridge. And so to this day I still don't go to Wrightsville Beach. And with all the controversy they're having now about the parking, the whole thing is they don't want anybody on Wrightsville Beach except the people who live there. That's a public ocean but it always has been. But blacks had a problem getting on Wrightsville Beach.

2. **Miles:** So were there blacks living on Wrightsville Beach?
3. **Rogers:** Absolutely not! Are you kidding? (Laughter) They didn't want you across the bridge so you definitely didn't live - if you lived over there it was a live-in domestic job and they were very much discouraged. They just didn't want you there. And even if you worked there you weren't allowed on the beach. This is the Atlantic Ocean and you were not allowed to walk on that sand out there. If you went, you were a nanny and you were walking the child. But to go out on that beach yourself, no.

4. **Miles:** So you would have to give a phone number of the white person?
  
5. **Rogers:** Of the white person that you were going to see, yes. Or whose house you worked in.
  
6. **Miles:** You would be with your family and you all...
  
7. **Rogers:** No, black families didn't go over there unless the whole family worked for one person or worked for several people and were traveling together. But as far as recreation was concerned, you didn't go over there. You only went to Wrightsville Beach to work.
  
8. **Miles:** So where did black people go to the beach at?
  
9. **Rogers:** There was a section, the north end of Carolina Beach at that time was called Freeman's Beach or Bop City and we had Sea Breeze. Sea Breeze was a very, very famous black resort. Bus loads of blacks would come here from as far away as California. And that's where you went. When you went to Carolina Beach, when you went to Bop City, you knew that as you, you had to travel through Carolina Beach to get to Bop City. So the parents would always say now you know we're getting ready to go through Carolina Beach so let's be quiet. Let's not make any noise. And you went through Carolina Beach to Bop City and on that end of the beach was where the blacks were. But there was a difference if you happened to stop at a store. You couldn't eat at the restaurants at Carolina Beach. You couldn't stay in the hotels. But if you went into one of the stores at Carolina Beach to purchase something you knew that you went in to purchase and you had to leave. But you didn't get that feeling that you did at Wrightsville Beach, you know. The people were at least

civil to you. But at Wrightsville Beach they didn't want anything to do with you period. They didn't want you there at all. I went to Wrightsville Beach with my mother when she worked as a domestic and even had a chance to go out on the boats with the families that she had when they would go out fishing. So I had a chance to go to Wrightsville Beach but I was not happy. She was very concerned because she was always afraid of what I was going to say because I had a habit, if I thought it, I said it. It didn't matter. It just didn't matter. If I felt it, I said that. And so she was always after me please, keep your mouth shut today. When you get there, go and just sit. And so I did that a lot and in doing that it helped me as far as my education really. The people that she worked with usually took time with me. They developed, especially a family, Ruth and Sidney Jones, really started me reading. They had their own library in their home. So when I went with her, Mrs. Jones would usually take me in the library and put me in one of these big wing-back chairs. My feet wouldn't touch the floor. And she would suggest books for me to read. And then for birthdays and Christmas that's what she always gave me, books. So I would sit and read. I was very comfortable with that because I used what I had to get what I wanted, more or less. I'm just a firm believer in you get more with honey than you do vinegar. So I usually tell them thank you very much and have a nice day, though my husband doesn't like for me to say that because he says usually when I tell somebody you have a nice day, they're in serious trouble. I won't argue with you. I feel it's always somebody above you. So if I'm not satisfied with your treatment I say thank you very much, you have a nice day. Then I'm going to find out who your boss is and then who that person's boss is and go from there. But it was rough I guess by today's standards. I really don't think, well I know for certain there will never be another peaceful revolution. There will never be another one of those. I don't think I could

go through it and I was very nonviolent. I really don't think I could go through it and I know your generation couldn't. (Laughter) They just could not take what we did. They really couldn't. They couldn't do it. But I learned a lot. I learned a lot of tolerance. One of the most deplorable things that I remember, the hospitals were segregated here like they were everywhere else. New Hanover Memorial wasn't here then. The main hospital was James Walker at Tenth and Redcross. Big, red brick building. But the black ward was in a separate building behind that one which meant if you had to have major surgery your surgery was done in that main building but then you were wheeled through the rain, the snow, the bright sunshine, whatever, back to this black building. It had basically one large ward. The women were on one end and the men were on the other and you were separated by draw curtains.

10. **Miles:** The men from the women?

11. **Rogers:** Yeah. Draw curtain and there was a curtain that they could pull between each patient. When you entered the ward, you entered the ward with the men on the left I believe and the women on the right but there was that big opening right there. And on the south side of town on Eleventh Street was Community Hospital, the black hospital. As I said, I lived on Thirteenth Street. One Sunday about one thirty there was a terrible accident at Thirteenth and Castle and a white female was seriously injured, critically injured. They were on their way to the beach and they had a head-on with somebody. Broken glass was just embedded in her body. This person could possibly have survived if she had been taken to Community Hospital which was two blocks away. But Community was a black hospital. So they took her all the way across town to James Walker and, of course, she died. That was just so stupid to me because a sick person is a sick person. And I just couldn't understand why, when it is

right around the corner. If you don't want her to stay there which I knew they wouldn't being white, she could have gone there to be stabilized and then taken to James Walker.

12. We had a lot of little stores in our neighborhood and usually we were treated kindly in those.

As children we played our pranks on the store owners and they knew it. There was one man, a Mr. Farrow, who had a store on Castle Street and he kept his empty bottles, soda bottles, outside in crates propped against the building. We used to sell him his own bottles over and over and over. (Laughter) We'd come in with two or three bottles, you know, and we'd sell them to him. He'd give us the money and we'd turn around and buy cookies. Cookies were two for a penny and bubble gum was two for a penny. And he'd tell us okay, when you leave, put them in the crate. Is there room in the crate outside, and we, of course, said yes sir.

And we'd put them in the crate. (Laughter) And we'd leave and a few of us would come back later and get those same bottles. Of course, we did that with a paper drive in the 1950's.

Williston was having a paper drive to raise money to buy band uniforms. We went all over the city on this one particular Saturday with flatbed trucks picking up newspapers and we'd take them down to the paper company and sell them. Well, what they did was, they knew the way to the truck. They estimated the weight of the kids on the back of it. Then they subtracted that and that gave them the weight of the paper and so they'd pay us for the paper.

So then we were to back the truck in, throw that load of paper off, go back and get another.

Well, we'd throw about half off each time and we'd leave the rest on there. Put a tarp over it and kids would get on it and we were playing and cutting up and the guys are telling us to be careful, not paying attention. We'd sell them that same load of paper five or six times. But this was necessary (Laughter) because Williston received, like all other black schools in the

south, we received the used materials that the white high school had. When funds were allocated the white high school got the new books and new equipment and then they gave us the old equipment. If we ever received a textbook that we opened that nobody's name was written in it we knew it was a brand new book. This was exciting but then we realized that we received that new book because the white high school was receiving revised editions. These books were now outdated. There was one incident, the student's had raised money to buy a new activity bus and they turned the money over to Mr. Fred Rogers. He was called Professor Rogers. He was a principal at the high school. The money was given to him. He was in turn supposed to go to the school board with the money so we could get a new bus. Well, Professor Rogers turned the money over to the school board. The school board bought a new bus and gave it to New Hanover High School and New Hanover High School gave us their old bus. This was in the late 1940's. The highway patrol, the police department and the sheriff's department had to be called in to escort Mr. Rogers from the school because the students were going to kill him. The school situation was Williston Primary which had now been demolished and the school now known as Gregory at one time was Williston Industrial High School and there was an open field between these two. Then in the 1950's they built Williston Senior High School in the middle. So then Williston Industrial High became the junior high. Okay, the high school boys came to the elementary school and they walked down the hall which was something that was not done. Teachers when we were going to school were more like gods. You did what the teacher told you to do or else. And if that teacher said she was sending a note home to your parents, the note got there. There was no doubt about that. And the teachers were very well respected. These guys walked down the hallway and they stuck their heads in each classroom and they said let the children go home

because there is going to be trouble. And we went! (Laughter) We went for more reasons than one. A student to stick his head in a teacher's classroom and say this, not get permission to speak, not say may I come in, good afternoon, just let the kid's go home, there is going to be trouble. We all ran home as fast as we could. But where I lived I could see back over to the school. So all of us in that area, I lived in an area they called the Bottoms, we watched and then with adults went back over onto Eleventh Street to see what was going on. And they had to get that man out of there safely because those kids were going to kill him. So there was such an outcry until the money was given back.

13. **Miles:** Was he aware that they...?

14. **Rogers:** Sure, absolutely. He knew exactly. He was what a lot of the superintendents referred to as one of the good ole boys. You know, he's a good ole nigger over there. He doesn't give us any problems. He does what we want him to do so everything's fine. We love Professor Rogers. Sure. But that was the problem. A lot of the problem during that time was that you had what people called "the Uncle Toms." They made certain that somebody knew what you were getting ready to do. Of course, that's the problem now. That's still a problem. And we are too busy fighting among ourselves to clear this up.

15. **Miles:** Who were some more people like that? Can you give me other instances of people being Uncle Toms?

16. **Rogers:** That one I think I remember most because it really stuck out. Not off hand I don't remember. Most of the Uncle Toms were people who were in a position to help. Instead of helping they did more harm. But that incident with Mr. Rogers I just really remember

because it was so unusual. It was just so unusual that instead of trying to help us to do better - but he was after his job and he felt that by turning us in, more or less, is what he was doing, that protected his job. But that was not the case. They liked him for what he was doing to his own people which is what the case is anyway. It's we do it to ourselves and that's something we just can't seem to get these folks to understand.

17. **Miles:** So did those boys get in trouble after that?

18. **Rogers:** Not really. They were reprimanded but it was just such a large group of people. It's like in the 1960's when we were doing all of the demonstrations in the streets. I was involved in one in Fayetteville and a rookie officer told the chief he wanted us arrested and he told him to stop and think about it. Where in the hell are we going to put a thousand niggers! You know it's just so many people until you leave it alone. Of course, that was really fun.

19. **Miles:** Fun?

20. **Rogers:** It was because the chief told him says well, alright, we can arrest them can't we? Says oh, yes. Get everybody's name and we'll take the list out to the college and we'll let the chancellor know that these people have been arrested for disturbing the peace. So we all gave him names. The following day a vesper was called and we went into the auditorium. The chancellor was on stage with the policeman and he says I understand because of disturbances downtown yesterday, the following people have been arrested. When your name is called would you please stand. And he started reading names. Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, (Laughter), Harriet Tubman, we just named them. Jeff Chandler. We

named anything and this stupid man stood there and read them. And so when he finished reading, nobody was standing. (Laughter) Nobody was standing. So Dr. Jones told him that he thanked him very much and the school would handle the problem. But the demonstrations were interesting because you really got to see different sides of people. One lady told her little boy two years old to throw his soda in my face. And I stopped and I told him, I said you always do what your mother tells you to do. That is your mother. You are supposed to do what she tells you to do. I said baby, I'm not going to hit you. But just as soon as that ice hits my face I'm going to beat the hell out of your mama. (Laughter) And this is the way we handled this. So, of course, she snatched him and run. But this is the way it was done. Now I don't know whether, I still don't think I would have hit that child. I really don't. Even today I would not hit a child because as I said, the child is doing what the mother is telling him to do. But I don't think the demonstrations would be, there will be no peaceful demonstrations because the fuses are too short. The young people today don't realize that what we did then is the reason you're where you are. And instead of taking where you are and trying to go forward, they're dragging us down. They're making it worse. And that's what we have to do. We have to turn it around. We have to turn it around. Jim Crow era was a terrible time. But then it left a mark according to the way you handled it. I don't think I could have made it in Alabama. No, let me rephrase that. I know I would not have made it in Alabama. They would have killed me. They really would because I could not have handled those fire hoses and those dogs or walking down the sidewalk and because there's a white person coming toward me, I have to go in the street. No! I was taught that I was not any better than anybody else. I'll rephrase that. I was taught that there was no one better than me but there are people that because of personality traits I feel that I am better than. So when the whites

started after me for something I said or something I did then I felt I had the right to stand up for myself and that's what I said. I'm an American first. I may have African descendants but I'm American first. And as an American I have freedom of speech and I am entitled to certain things. And I am going to say how I feel about whatever the situation may be. And I've always felt that way. And so I don't really have a lot of bitterness toward that era. It was a learning experience and with my father working on the train, he loved history. He loved history and he would take me, I was an only child, rotten to the core. He would take me on the weekends to visit a lot of the people he met along the tracks. So I got to meet a lot of, not just black people, a lot of white people. And I got to see that there were people who actually lived, whose living conditions were worse and the whites were considered poor white trash and were treated in a lot of instances almost as badly as we were. So in meeting all of these people and talking to them and hearing stories of things that happened to them, then it gave me a better feel about myself and where I lived. So, as I said, I turned a lot of it. Don't get me wrong, there were times when I got angry, sure there were. But instead of doing some violent at that particular time, I'd go and sit down and think about now how can I get back at this person for that. I was always conniving. I always wanted to use my head to do this because I never believed in fighting, never. I went all the way through school and I had one fight and the person came to my house to do that and then I lost control. I did and because, my mother had a Tiffany lamp and this child broke it and I knew that mother, as Bill Cosby says, was going to beat all the black off. So I was determined that she was going to be injured and I tried to break her neck. A neighbor called my mother and told her to come and stop me before I killed Marie Davis. That was my intention, was to kill this child because my mother I knew was going to kill me about that lamp. But when she found out what had

really happened I was punished, I wasn't spanked that particular time. But I always believed in using my mind and work out the problem. I'll sit up all night long and work on a problem. I will to figure out a way to get to it rather than to be violent about it.

21. **Miles:** Can you tell me some of those times you got angry and thought about what to do about it?

22. **Rogers:** Back to the Shield's ice cream parlor, yes, having gone in, the first couple of times that my girlfriend and I had gone in and the way that we were treated. You felt like well, I'll just break something in here, you know. Accidently knock something on the floor or whatever. In one instance we did stumble, heels got caught in the tile on the floor so you stumble against the table and knock the table over. And then I started thinking about that and said that's not really accomplishing anything. So that's when we decided that we'd go in and we'd stand there. If it took two and a half hours to get that ice cream sundae we would stand there because as long as we stood there you had to see me. You knew I was there. So we did that, more or less, not just with Shield's. The dime stores, you either bought the food and left or you had to stand at the far end of the counter. You weren't allowed to sit. There was an instance when I was teaching in Robeson County and I lived in Fayetteville. I taught in a little town called Proctorville between Lumberton and Fairmont and until I had my own car I had to catch the bus from Fayetteville. When I got off the bus in Lumberton usually one of the teachers would pick me up. But if you had to wait there was no colored waiting room. We're talking 1966. There was no waiting room. So if it's raining the blacks were just supposed to stand outside in the rain. I'm saying I don't think so. And I went in. The folks are saying you can't come in here. Oh, yes I can! I'm not standing outside in the rain. Well,

that's just too bad. No, it's not too bad because I had a ticket. I came on a bus that came here and I'm not standing outside in the rain. So then what I did was immediately starting writing letters to the company and I still do this til this day if I have a service I'm not satisfied with. I write the company and the first thing I let them know is the best form of advertising is word of mouth. I have a big mouth. I love to talk and I will tell everybody what you did, how it was done and why I won't use your services again. So they may call the police. I've had the police called because I have gone into waiting areas where I shouldn't have been. But I'm not doing anything. I'm just standing there. And when approached I would tell them, it's raining outside. It's thundering and lightning outside. I'm not standing outside in that weather. I'm not bothering anybody. I'm not trying to sit down. I'm not trying to use your facilities. I'm simply under the shelter of the building. And I would do that. But in Wilmington basically, as I said, the doctor's offices were segregated, hospitals were. You more or less took it with a grain of salt. And in most instances the doctors, the private doctors, were very nice. I don't remember going to doctors and having a problem. I can remember one incident when my left foot was badly frost bitten and at one point they thought they might have to cut it off. To save my foot the doctor worked on my foot from like three or four o'clock in the afternoon until two-thirty the next morning in his office because my mother refused to let me be hospitalized. She didn't want me in James Walker because of the separate building as I told you and Community wasn't the best hospital. She wasn't very happy with it. So then he worked on me in his office. Of course, he told her it was going to be expensive. She said money was no object. He worked for the railroad and the people who worked on the train had a very comfortable income during the 1940's and 1950's along with the doctors and the lawyers and people who worked for the state port. So with it just being the three of us there

really wasn't a big problem as far as money was concerned. So I went to Dr. Crouch's, my pediatrician, and when I became a teenager I went to John T. Hoggard for whom the high school is now named. And once I married, left home, came back with my children, I took the kids to see him and he was fascinated. Of course, he told them all the story of my being born so small they didn't think I'd live for one day. And now can you imagine this child has children. On occasions when I didn't take the children if I came into town sometimes I would just go by to see them. I enjoyed talking to them. I enjoyed always talking to the older people whether they were black or white because you learn so much from them. When I talked to the ex-slaves that we met around here and the things that they told us, I talked to one whose name was Charles McClees. When I met Brother Charles I was about thirteen and he was a hundred and five. And this man used to race the children in the community. And he would spot us, as he puts it. You know, you go ahead. He'd give us about half a block. And he run us down. He says you don't know how to run. See, we ran from slave catchers. You don't know how to run. He taught me how to peel potatoes with my teeth and cucumbers so that you had one continuous peel. He said we didn't have knives. We weren't allowed to have those things and you were hungry. You dug up what you could in the field and you learned how to survive on that stuff. So when I heard of the things that happened to them then what I was experiencing really wasn't so bad after all. It gave you some kind of focus so that's what happening with the young people today is nothing compared to what happened with my generation and they just don't see that. But as they said in Separate But Equal, a lot of black children were ruined forever because when the schools were separate they were taught, they felt inferior. And since they felt inferior then it bothered their psyche. I just never felt inferior. I didn't feel they were any better than me and so it didn't bother me.

I felt that anything I wanted to do, I could do. I was a physically sick child all my life, always have been, so I spent a lot of time reading. I loved music, still love music. I love history. And between those two it just helped me to build, to give me a base to deal with it. To this day, some blacks have a problem with me because I'm fascinated with the civil war era. But I'm fascinated because I know I could not have dealt the way these people did. And these were some very intelligent people. If you will stop and think about what the slaves did, these were some very intelligent people. Our people now like to look at it simply that they were slaves. They don't want the history really preserved. They don't want landmarks open that show - there's a big controversy about the slave quarters at Bellamy Mansion at Fifth and Market. I'm hoping that they restore that every way they possibly can. Our people need to know the slaves who lived there were a better class of slaves than a lot in this era. They had glass in their windows. There were a lot of whites in this area who didn't have glass windows. It may sound gross to some people but they had four-seater toilets. There were a lot of white people who didn't have one-seater toilets. You know, the Bellamys were high in society so their slaves had to be people of reading, of intelligence, to work with their friends. So I'm proud that there were black people who lived here. They helped me. I may not see it or I may not realize it but what those slaves did paved the way for us. And what we did during Jim Crow paved the way for the young people today. But you have to look a little further than your nose. And that's what I did in the Jim Crow era. That's what I did. I just looked a little bit...

23. End of Tape 1 - Side A

24. Tape 1 - Side B

25. **Rogers:** ...conversations with whites who figured well, this little lady likes to talk. Let me see if I can trip her up. There was a salesman from Sears who asked me about what do you think about Dr. Ralph Bunch? And my mother says oh, my God! And I said I am so glad you asked. This was right after hurricane Hazel and Hazel tore up everything around here and he had come out to inspect our roof. We had to have a new roof. And I told him to go back through history and see if he could name one white man who stopped a war all by himself. Said you couldn't do it. They sent everybody they could think of until they sent Ralph Bunch and then he stopped the war. I said now you think about that. We are a lot above monkeys. And my mother is grabbing me by the braids. And I made him call me Miss Sampson which was unheard of. My mother says you are going to die! You are going to die. Because he kept calling my mother, Mary and she was calling him whatever his name was. And so in talking to me I asked him what was his name and he gave me his last name. And I said no, what's your first name. And so he gave me the entire name. So then I called him by his first name. Mother looked at me and I said well, he's calling you by your first name then I should be able to call him by his. And he got the message. So then he called her Mrs. Sampson and he saw me a few weeks later in Sears and I spoke to him and I called him Mr. So-and-So and he called me Miss Sampson. So I just used ( ).

26. **Miles:** How old were you then?

27. **Rogers:** About fifteen.

28. **Miles:** (Laughter) Where did you get this from? Obviously not from your mother. Where did you get this?

29. **Rogers:** I don't know unless from my father's side, I guess. I was always an obstinate, stubborn child, to this day.

30. **Miles:** What did your father think of your outspokenness?

31. **Rogers:** He was afraid, he really was. Because my father was born in 1891 and my mother was born in 1899 and they were really afraid something was going to happen. When I graduated from high school I was given a four year scholarship to Texas Western in El Paso which is UTEP now. My mother wouldn't let me go because she said it was too far away from home. Being an only child, she was terrified. So Robert Floyd, the band director, because I was in music started asking around. We kept trying to find somewhere closer that would accept the scholarship. Well, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill expressed interest which, if I had gone, I would have been the first black female. My mother said absolutely not, the Klan will kill her before she can unpack. She cannot go. And I guess in a way that was the better thing to do because this was 1956 and I would not have gone through, I may have done what they asked me to do but they would have know how I felt about it. And that could possibly have been my downfall because as late as 1969 I was teaching in Harnett County, I went to sign my contract. At that time teachers signed their contract every year. I went to sign the contract, new job, and the superintendent in Lillington was just sitting having a conversation. So he said he had talked with the superintendent in Hoke County and I kind of smiled. He said I'd like to ask you a question. He says if you were driving down the highway and you saw me walking toward you in a Klansman's robe, what would you do? And I said run over you. He says but suppose I'm walking on the shoulder of the road. I said check your driver's manual. There's no law in North Carolina

against driving on the shoulder. He said why would you kill me. I said if you were coming toward me in a Klansman's robe, you're out to get me so I'm going to get you first. I said now, do you still want me to sign the contract. He said oh, by all means because I know where you're coming from. He says I don't have to worry about your telling anybody anything to tell me. You will tell me yourself. I said exactly. Because it does not matter. I have never, that the one thing that angered me most with Anita Hill. I've never worked with anybody, I don't care, I will tell President Clinton what I have to tell him. And I've never valued a job to the point that I will be harassed by you because you're my boss. I ran into one clear cut case of sexual harassment by a principal and I slapped his glasses off and then I asked him if he wanted me to leave. I said do you want me to leave now or wait until the end of the day, it doesn't matter. He says no. I said you can fire me because when we go before the board I will tell them why you slapped your face. But I will tell you what I think of you. It's doesn't matter that you're my boss because I am a person and I expect to be treated as an individual with respect and dignity and I'm going to treat you that way. But no, he told me fine. And then when the Klan came to the school, the Klan came to our school because of a silly incident between a white child and a black child.

32. **Miles:** Now, where is this?

33. **Rogers:** In Sanford at Johnson Elementary School, 1969. This was the first year that the schools were integrated in Harnett County. At that time there were signs along the highway, huge billboard signs along I-95 that said welcome to the heart of Ku Klux Klan country. So you saw this. When the school buses were loading a black child was standing on the ground, a black female. A white female got off the bus and stepped on the child's foot accidentally.

There was no question it was an accident. If the black child had moved when she got off the bus, the girl couldn't have stepped on her foot. So a fight broke out. So the next morning blacks showed up with ax handles and whatever and Klansmen showed up with ax handles and tire irons and all of this and the principal who was afraid of white toilet paper - this man was afraid of anything white, anything, white paper. The Klan had burned a cross on his lawn at one time so he was terrified. He instructed all of the teachers to grab a yardstick and go out on the yard to try to break up the fight. (Laughter) Said are you some kind of fool! You're out of your mind! I said I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to get my purse and get my car keys. I'm going to get in my Toronado and I'm going back to Fayetteville. And that's exactly what I did. (Laughter) I said I don't believe this! His glasses were broken. His nose was broken. He had a collarbone broken. Out there trying to break up this fight because of course, it took the law enforcement people quite a while to get there. But by that time I was half way back to Fayetteville because I was not being involved. I had a highway patrolman to, his daughter was in my class, and I had problems with his daughter. So he came and he told me I almost had to kill a nigger in Asheville about my youngun. I hope I don't have to do it again. Well, the gentleman was about 6' 9", I'm 5" 3 1/2". So I climbed up there in my chair at my desk and I stood up on the desk and I told him, at this moment I can only think of two things that are all head and that's cabbage and lettuce and I'm going to clean this up. When you come to kick butt you have to bring butt with you. Now, if you feel froggy, you hop. The principal went crazy. This man was terrified because I'm talking this way to a white man. The incident came about because the little girl asked me what would I do if she spit in my face. And I forgot, I did, I really forgot that I was a professional, I was a teacher and in a classroom with twenty-nine children. I forgot. And I

said start your blank-the-blank in the floor. And then it hit me, Oh! (Laughter) Look what you just did! The kids are looking at me and she left the room and ran to the office and called her father. And so he came to the school and stormed in my classroom. I said I don't think so! This will not work. So the principal had called the superintendent by this time and the superintendent came out there. He came straight to me. He said tell me what happened and I told him. He said oh, no, we will not have this. And the principal was surprised because he thought the superintendent would be on the white guy's side. So they decided to take her out of my class which was fine with me. They put her in another's teacher's class. Within two weeks that teacher had a nervous breakdown. So then he came back and ask me would I take her back and I told him absolutely not, I'd quit first. I said I ate, my husband's in the military, we'll eat out of the mess hall. I will eat. But I will not take this child back in my classroom. I simply will not have it. And I didn't have to do it. But that school was the worst place I ever worked as far as discrimination was concerned. I had a parent to come in. She was German, married to a white GI and she came in the second day of school and said she just wanted to meet me because she wanted to see what I was like. Her child never had a nigger teacher before. I mean this is said to your face. And I stood there and I said do you want me to spin around so that you can get a good look. I said I'm female just like you. I have two eyes, a nose, a mouth, two breasts and several other things exactly like yours, just a different color. I said now let me tell you, we won't have any problems in here. I'm going to teach your child just the way I'll teach any other child. I'm not going to blame your child because you're stupid. I said but don't you ever say anything like that to me again, ever, because I will forget that I am a professional. And the child went home and told her father. I don't believe in domestic violence. I really don't because I feel that adults, if you get to the

point you have to hit each other, it's time for you to separate. But they did have some domestic violence in that house and he brought her back to school, his wife, two days later with two black eyes and he brought her in there by her hair and he said now you tell her exactly what you said you were going to tell her. She says I am very sorry. I should not have said that. She went on to apologize.

34. **Miles:** (Laughter) This is a white soldier?

35. **Rogers:** This is a white soldier with a white German wife. And the white wife had called me a nigger and he made her come in there and apologize. She became our class mother. This lady volunteered constantly. I never had one more moment of problems with her. When my husband had transferred to Germany and we got ready to leave she was the one who spearheaded the project to keep me there. No, you can not leave! Let your husband go. Stay until he comes back. (Laughter) But I just never backed down. I never back down. When I was at Hoggard the last year I taught, really taught, was 1973-74 at Hoggard High School here. This was the high school. I had taught before in junior high and elementary. But I enjoyed it. Once the students found out that just because I was 5' 3 1/2" and weighed a hundred and ten, you couldn't walk over me. Once that was cleared up I had one big football player, 6' 4" or something, to tell me that he was going to drink a soda in my class and after he drank what he wanted I was going to drink the rest of it. And if I didn't want it he was going to pour it on me. Of course, these are not the exact terms that were used. I asked him you and what explicative, explicative army. And one of the students jumped up and says I am going and get the principal. I said tell him to bring his mama because he's going to need more help. (Laughter) So the principal came back and by this time I'm standing there with a

folding chair drawn over my shoulder. Because I told him breath hard, please just sneeze. I just need an excuse. That's all I need is an excuse. And he's standing there. So he's telling me to put the chair down. I said I'm not putting the chair down. He said I said put the chair down. I said I can get another chair, you know. You can get a chair too. But I'm not putting the chair down until he leaves from here. Okay, the child was suspended and when he came back the principal brought him back to the classroom and I refused to let him in. He said why. I said he had to apologize to me and his classmates for his behavior before I let him in. Well, I worked with Title 4 which meant I worked in the county, in a county building, but I was being paid by the federal government. I really wasn't being paid so they couldn't assign me to PTA duties and all this other stuff. I didn't have anything to do with that. Well, the federal government bought certain supplies for Title 4 but I didn't have them. They were in the county building. So I kept asking for them and I couldn't get them. I don't normally ask for anything more than three times anyway. So I called the superintendent's office and I told the superintendent I keep asking for these materials, I don't have them. I said now, it would be detrimental to the county if the auditors came down here unexpected and looked and they didn't find this stuff. So they called the principal and told him you'd better find whatever it is Rogers is looking for before she turns around and calls Washington on somebody. So he came bursting over to the trailer and he walked in and started cussing like a Georgia sailor. And I turned around and cussed right back at him. Folks said oh, God, this child's going to be fired. When I went to the lounge everybody said how are you doing. I'm fine. You're going to lose your job. I said let him fire me. Then everybody will know why he fired me. Fire me! Oh, my goodness. You know who you were talking to. I said Mike ( ), yeah, I was talking to the principal. You don't talk to the principal like that. I said why. He puts on

his pants one leg at the time just like everybody else. What's the difference? That's your boss. I said well, I was looking for a job when I got this one. I didn't forget how to look! I'll look for another job the same way I looked for this one. That's the way I've always felt about it. If this one doesn't work, I'll look for another one. Didn't forget how to look. We got along fine. We got along fine until a black child broke his leg. Any white student, and we're talking 1973-74 here, because not see the racism is subtle, it's not overt like it was before. Anytime a white child was injured on campus ambulances, everything was there immediately. This child broke his leg. He told the coach. The coach ah, it's just a sprain. It's nothing wrong with you. You just want to get out of PE. So he came to my class. Tears were running down this child's face and he can't put any weight on it. I said come on, I'll take you to the hospital. So my aid, I had an aid, a white aid who was about twenty-five years older than me, didn't like the idea. She immediately went to tell the principal that I was going to leave campus to take this child to the hospital. So he told me that I couldn't do that. I couldn't take him in my car. I said oh, now you make my car payment. You know, when you make my car payment then you tell me whom I can ride in the car. Your insurance doesn't cover him. I said oh, you pay for my insurance. You know what kind of insurance I have. And I put the child in the car and took him to the hospital, went to ( ) housing project and got his mother, took her back to the hospital. The child's leg was broken in two places. So then I took him to school in the mornings to keep him from having to fight the bus. Homecoming came up. We were all asked to wear blue and white so I had some white wool slacks and a blue sweater and I wore that. First thing Mr. ( ) told me was some of the students said they saw you dancing out at the Airforce base. Said Mrs. Rogers really can get down. I don't think you should frequent them places your students attend. I said hold it.

First of all, I'm a military dependent with an ID card so I can go to the military base anytime I want. They have no business there. I said but that's not the point. I work for the county from 8:30 to 3:30. At 3:33 if Margaret Rogers decides to take off all of her clothes and run naked down Shipyard Boulevard it's nobody's business but mine. You don't tell me what to do, not after school hours. You tell me what to do during school hours and I'll do it if I feel it's the right thing to do. But if I don't feel it's the right thing to do I'm not going to do that either. So he says well, while we're talking, I love your slacks but I don't think you should wear them anymore because I can see through them. I said did you enjoy the view. So my record is stamped rebel because that's why, I refuse to knuckle down. I stopped the supervisors from coming to visit my classroom because I said you don't come out once every nine weeks and stay fifteen minutes and tell me what's best for my students. I'm there all day. And you don't come for a surprise visit. You let me know when you want to come and if I feel it's an appropriate time, I will let you come in. (Laughter) I just simply refuse to be intimidated by these people. I never have, never have.

36. **Miles:** (Laughter) So I see.

37. **Rogers:** I went to college and did the same thing. Started a dining hall revolt at Fayetteville State. They now have catered dining services which is great. But I closed it up for six weeks, closed it, shut it down.

38. **Miles:** Why? This was Fayetteville State?

39. **Rogers:** Fayetteville State.

40. **Miles:** What year?

41. **Rogers:** 1963. April, 1963. I took my plate of food to, at that time he wasn't called a chancellor, he was called a president. I took my plate of food to his office and threw it in his face.

42. **Miles:** (Laughter) And you were allowed to stay at that school?

43. **Rogers:** That's what the dean kept saying. You know, it's six weeks to graduation! You are not going to graduate! I said I'm going to graduate somewhere else. But we had been eating Dash dog food. There are no dogs on campus.

44. **Miles:** Dog food?

45. **Rogers:** Dog food. We found a five pound can, empty Dash dog food cans in the trash.

When it started I feel the students followed me because they said here she goes again. This girl's going to get in trouble. We're going to see it. Because I stood up on a table in the dining room and I told them that, we had spaghetti and meatballs. The eggs were raw inside the meatballs and the meat had a foul odor and I said this is it. I've just had it! I have just had it. I am not going to take this anymore and I'm going to Dr. Jones' office with my plate. If you want to come with me, fine. But I have never been one to feel I can't do it, I have to have somebody behind me. I guess I don't have enough intelligence, no, something. You just can't convince me that I can't do it and I'll do it. And so I went and they followed me. But when we got to the administration building they stopped and I went on in the building. Four or five of them went behind me so they could come back and report that I had gotten

kicked out. We entered the office and the secretary said he was in a meeting with the trustee board. You can't see him. I said you wanna bet! I just opened the door and barged right in and I threw the plate. When I threw the plate it hit the table so some of the food splashed up in his face and they wanted to know, what's going on here and I went on to explain what was going on. That I had even taken a job working in the dining hall so I could see how the food was prepared. And we used to take the bugs and worms and stuff we found in the food and stick them on the bulletin board. And everybody kept saying we've got to do something about this. We need to do something. But nobody would. Just that particular day I decided that was it. So I told them, the trustee members started talking about, we'd better do something about this, Jones. This could get nasty. This could really get nasty. So what I did I went to the sororities and fraternities and had them to get their pledgees to stand in front of the dining hall doors and not let anybody in. Nobody was allowed to pay their bill. They said after two or three days of going hungry this will end. I said I don't think so. I know too many people at Fort Bragg. I called Fort Bragg. I started calling the guys I knew and they started sneaking food out of the dining hall, out of the mess hall and we would eat sitting on the grass because it was spring. Beautiful weather, great food. (Laughter) So then his wife made the statement that you need to look at people who start this kind of stuff. They have ulterior motives. Either they don't have any friends or they're failing so they're trying to get attention. Word got back to me. I went to Dr. Jones and said I want a public apology. The dean of women said this is it. You're gone! This man is not going to make his wife apologize. I said yes, she is. This lady is going to apologize to me or I'm going to take out a warrant for slander. She's going to apologize in front of the whole student body, all twelve hundred of us. So he made her get up on the stage and he told the student body, he says you

have to forgive my wife. She still lives in the horse and buggy days. She has not made it to the twentieth century but she does have something to say. And she said, because I had told them, we were on a 3.0 scale. I had a 2.85 so I couldn't be failing. I was one of the thirteen original members to start the band. They didn't have a band until I started that. So everybody knew me at least. So she got up there. She said I apologize for making statements that I should not have made and she left the stage. And that was all I wanted. (Laughter) But we got better food. We got better food. They used to call me Little Castro because they said Castro was willing to bump the United States as big as it was and I was willing to take on the whole college. I just feel that we have the intelligence, we have to use it. And we can't always wait for somebody to come by. Because since 1988 I've been fighting the post office here to get a handicapped ramp. They kept saying they couldn't do it until I contacted the architectural barriers and transportation board. So they're tell them yes, you will have to put a ramp there. You know, but everybody complains but somebody has to do it. And I'll stick my neck out there. I'll just stick it out there. Get it chopped off most times because most times the people that I go out to help, you know, later all turn their back. But I'll step out there. That was one of the reasons why I stopped teaching because it became a twenty-four hour job. Students were coming to me that I didn't teach because they knew I would stick my neck out for them. Parents would call me at eleven or twelve o'clock at night, I haven't seen my child and I'd get in the car - mind you, I have six children. I'd get in the car and I'd go out looking for these people's children, you know, and I'd find them. If they had problems at home I'd take them home to stay with me for two or three days. White kids, black kids, Latin kids, there would be all kinds of children at my house. Give everybody a couple of days to cool off. We had a student at Hoggard from Santa Domingo

and the school said he had to take Spanish as his foreign language. That's the child's primary language. That's all he ever spoke. And then the American educated Spanish teacher flunked him. So I went with him to the school board. His parents couldn't speak one word of English. I went with he and his parents to the school board and I said if he has to have a foreign language give him Latin, give him German. But you actually should be flexible enough to put down English as his foreign language because that's what it is. And so once the students found out that I really was on their side, when they had their little demonstrations and riots and whatever, they would come to me the day before and say we are going to have a little rumble on campus tomorrow, why don't you park your car over at the shopping center. And that's what I'd do. But they knew they could depend on me. And it just got to be too much.

46. **Miles:** So when did you stop teaching?

47. **Rogers:** 1974 was the last year. I did some substitutions since then but on a regular basis, my health kept getting worse and worse and worse and I've been hospitalized nineteen times between September, 1985 and September, 1991. Three heart attacks, a pace maker. I have coscongritis. I have multiple sclerosis, neuropathy, high blood pressure, diabetes, you name it. A lot of it came from birth defects that, when I was born in 1939 a lot of medical attention was not given to black children in this area. And I wouldn't have received the amount of health care I did if my parents had not had money. So the first time we really knew I had a heart problem I was nine. And so I went all through school and everything with that and the doctor told my mother I shouldn't continue to march because I would march down the street and drop dead. I said well, fine because at least I'll be doing something I want to do. I won't

be sitting in a chair when I die. So I just didn't - I think that had a lot to do with the outgoingness. Because I was never certain whether I was going to live, you know. So rather than be reserved, I just went gung ho. And I just did it, whatever it was.

There is a section of town here called Forest Hills where the wealthy whites live and we used to ride our bicycles out there on purpose because we knew they didn't want us out there. And they'd turn the dogs on us. And we'd ride away from those dogs and get back in the section of town, as soon as we entered the black community then we'd all collapse on the grass and laugh about it. Boy, did you see that dog! Yeah, I kicked him in the mouth. Did you see how fast I got away! And like I said, this was stuff, we knew they didn't want us out there. We went out there for meanness. Because as soon, it's like a child with a cookie jar. If you tell a child he can have all the cookies he wants he's not going to bother that jar. It's the simple fact that you said no, you can't have it. So I'm going to see can I get it. I can't go in there. Well, let's just see. I'm going to go in anyway. We'd ride through and ride right out. We didn't stop. We wouldn't bother anything or anybody. We just rode the bikes through there because they said we couldn't. And that's basically how we looked at it. You say I can't, well, I'll show you. My husband has always said for God's sake, don't tell her she can't do it because if you tell her she can't do it she'll kill herself trying. And that's just always been my mentality. You can't do that! Yes, I can. Or I have to prove to me I can't do it. And so that's what I did as far as school was concerned and generally with everything else. I can do it. I have to convince me I can't do it. And then when I can't do it, like now my son gave me a computer. I have never had a day of computer instruction. So everything I've learned to do on this thing I have sat down with a book and trial and error. And I stayed up

one night until four o'clock in the morning trying to get one program to run. I just kept saying I know I can do this. But I was a frustrated person (Laughter) and I don't like that. I don't like to start anything and not be able to finish it.

48. **Miles:** Well, I want to go back some to some stuff we talked about earlier. Tell me more about Bop City. That's such an interesting name. Do you know what...?

49. **Rogers:** We called it, yeah, Bop City because of the rock and roll, the dance steps. There was a building there that was called Monte Carlo By the Sea. It was a restaurant with a big dance floor and an outside deck and it was right on the beach. They would rent umbrellas. The Freeman family from Sea Breeze which is the little resort. Sea Breeze was just before you cross ( ) bridge going to Carolina Beach. A lot of Freeman's lived there and they owned that land at that time and that was where we went when the blacks went there. We also went to a beach called Ocean City down at Topsail about thirty miles down near Holly Ridge. But there were lots of stories from Bop City. There was an article in the paper last week talking about the segregated beaches and told a story of the kids who captured the sea turtle and they flipped her over on her back. This was before we knew you shouldn't kill them. And they hacked this thing with a pocket knife. And it kept trying to get away and so we all ran and climbed up on cars. And this is summertime, hot. Trying to get away because we have always been told if a turtle grabs you it won't turn loose until it thunders. (Laughter) See how often we've had thunder down here lately. So everybody was running. Well, they finally hacked it and cut the neck and throat until it was just about dead and they brought it back into town and sold it. But then when hurricane Hazel came through Monte Carlo By the Sea became Monte Carlo in the sea because it washed it off the pilings and out to the ocean.

So after that there was never another building constructed but we still went there. And then once the beaches became integrated you just went anywhere on the beach you wanted. The only thing I dislike about Carolina Beach is the ( ) open air. I like to be able to get under the pier, as I said. I already have my tan. And that sun is hot and that sand is hot. And Carolina Beach unless you have umbrellas or whatever, you know there's nowhere to go. So we would go to Ocean City a lot, down to Topsail because the Chestnutts from Wilmington have a pier with a restaurant and motel and with the pier going out over the beach we could always get under the pier then you wouldn't be in the sun. So we would go there a lot. But Bop City was interesting. The churches went down for Sunday School picnics and the band went down every year. We would go to Bop City one year, go to Jones Lake one year, go to Topsail one year at the end of the school year as a treat for the band. So we all stayed, you know, in our own area unless, as I said, you stopped at the gas station or the fish market or something to purchase something. And they let you purchase it without a problem as long as you behaved. And I mean behave in the sense you act as you should not the way a lot of people say the black stayed in his place. No, that's not what I mean. I mean you went in the store and behaved the same way you would when you go into Wal-Mart's now. You go shopping. You get what you want. You pay for it. You leave. That's what I mean when I say you behave. When you say behave to a lot of people from that era, they think you mean as the whites said, you know your place and you're supposed to stay in it. I didn't have one. See, that was my problem. Maybe I didn't know where my place was. Maybe that's what it was. Because I had no place. I would walk up, I was mannered, excuse me, and I said what I wanted to say, you know. And they're saying you don't walk up to white people and say that. Why? I never understood why. I said excuse me or may I ask a question. I was polite, well

mannered. I couldn't understand why there should be a difference and I didn't accept a difference. When I went in a store, I think about the story of young Martin Luther King and his father took him in the store to buy some shoes and they sat down and the white lady had a fit. Niggers don't sit up here. You go to the back. No! (Laughter) No, I went no. I went in the store and I sat down where the chairs were to buy my shoes. And I felt you want my money. But maybe it did have to do with the fact that it was North Carolina. That's why I said, Alabama and Mississippi I would not have made it. Couldn't have made it because I couldn't have accepted that.

50. **Miles:** So you didn't really, I mean when you would do things like that, when you didn't stay in your place around white people, that had to be such a shock to them. What did they do? How did they react?

51. **Rogers:** Well, the majority of them, Wilmington during that time was a relatively small place. Most of the people knew my father if they didn't know anybody else. They knew my mother and they knew my father. This is Haywood and Mary's daughter. And then it got to a point where the ones who didn't know them after running into me for a few times remembered this person and then somebody else would say oh, I know, yeah. Well, if you have any problem with her you just call Netta, she'll straighten it out. So it wasn't a big problem. We had one incident on a bus. My mother decided not to drive and she went to King's Tree, South Carolina. She had previously worked for the man who owned Seashore Transportation Company, a Mr. West. When we were ready to return from King's Tree she had passes to ride the bus although she no longer worked for him. The bus driver in King's Tree, Mama went to hand him the ticket and he told her don't push that ticket out at him

again. If she did he was going to leave her right down there in South Carolina. You wait until I ask you for your ticket and then if I decide to take it, I'll take it. So when we came back to Wilmington and we got off the bus he was helping all the women down as they got off the bus and Mama got to the bottom step and he didn't offer to help her and she just stood there. Finally, he reached out. I convinced her to call Mr. West because I had gotten the man's name. I knew the bus number. I knew what day, time. I had all the information, very organized. She called Mr. West and told him what happened. He was fired. So there were whites around who did not allow their employees to be blatantly mean to black people. They went along with the segregation and the Jim Crow to a point but then there were whites who did help. As I said, I remember some that my mother worked for and how I feel they fostered my education. I could ask questions. They would answer them. If they couldn't answer them they'd let me use their facilities to find the answers. They talked to me as a person, not as "a nigger child." They talked to me as an intelligent individual. And I think all of that had a lot to do with it. I really do. And we traveled a lot. Whenever we went I was always inquisitive. I wanted to know and I asked questions. We went to visit my father's half brother in Washington. He was white, in the Senate, John Bright Hill's brother, and I was so uncomfortable there until we cut our trip short. We stayed at his house and he had a live-in maid and I couldn't handle it. I could not deal with it and then the lady was not happy with having to serve these black people and make beds and stuff. And he kept asking did somebody say something to you. Why do you want to go home? What's the problem? I kept saying no. Why is it you're so uncomfortable? I just want to go home. And I didn't say what it was. You know, it was the way she looked at you, the way she acted that she didn't like it and I can understand that from that period. I can understand it. Here come these

southern blacks coming up to Washington and you expect me to make up their beds and wash their dishes and serve them at the table. And whenever we went to visit any of the Hills we weren't treated as though we were black. And that bothered me. When we went up to Duplin County to visit John Bright's father who, his brother because his father was dead, he was my grandfather. When we went up to visit them I used to get very upset. My mother would have me dressed and I had the long ponytails and the ribbons and the frilly dresses with the crinolines and the socks with all the lace and the patent leather shoes. And I had to sit in the living room with my legs crossed at the ankles eating cucumber sandwiches, drinking tea. And I'm looking out the window at all of these little kids running around barefoot outside playing, you know. I want to get outside. And they would say you are not like them. And I'd look at my mom and she'd give me one of those looks that mean, you know, you don't say anything. You just sit there. They were the reason I started taking piano lessons. You need to start this child taking piano lessons. She's a very intelligent child. She can learn to play the piano. So at four I am taking piano lessons. I don't want to do this but this is what I had to do. So then when we went up I'd have to sit and play the piano so that they could fuss and fume. But I want to get up! And kick the shoes off and shorts and tee shirts and run and play with the rest of them. But I couldn't do that. So I guess I fought too to be more like everybody else because they made me feel differently so when I was not with them I wanted to be and all of the prejudice was not on the white side. Our black people are very prejudice. They always have been and my mother was one. She was a very fair skinned lady and she often made the remark that she didn't like black people. The only reason she wore black shoes where they was went with her outfit. So she was very particular about with whom I could associate. So then I went out of my way when she was not there, I used to

sneak out and go play with the other kids and have kids to watch. Let me know when you see that Buick coming down the street and then I'd be back in the yard and in the house when she came because I never felt that way. And I think I've bent over backwards.

52. **Miles:** So it was that she didn't want you to associate with a certain class of people or with darker skinned people?

53. **Rogers:** Certain class and color, both. It was both. Because she would say well, you don't need to associate with that person because his mother's not married or her mother's not married or they drink a lot. You don't need to be with these. She was a very bigoted individual, very bigoted. And I didn't feel that way. When I got ready to get married she told me I had to make certain, be careful whom I married because I could have children that looked like ink spots. But this was stuff that I was determined that it went in one ear and out the other. I couldn't see that. I never could see that. But she was like that until she died in 1978.

54. **Miles:** Is your father fair?

55. **Rogers:** Un-huh. She was my, I was an adopted child but I was adopted by my real father. But my foster mother didn't know I was his child. Cute. (Laughter) That's another thing, well I won't talk about that, the mike's on. (Laughter) I grew up in my father's house with his wife.

56. **Miles:** She didn't...?

57. **Rogers:** She had to. I just can't believe the lady didn't especially since I have that grey spot.

His was in the same identical spot. And as I became older, you know, I started to question that. And she used to say, well, you know what they say, you hang around people long enough you start to look like them. So I really didn't know he was my real father until I was forty-eight years old. And I just kept asking and kept asking and kept asking and kept asking and like older people do, finally, this elderly lady came down from Philadelphia and I was talking to her. I said I want to know, you say that's my adoptive father but I have that grey in my hair just like he had and I've had it since I was a kid. She said well, Honey, you still don't know the truth. I said no ma'am. So she went on to say that my real mother lived in Burgaw and my father worked on a train. Okay. So when she became pregnant with me her mother, it was a big mess, that's a whole nother story. Anyway, they decided, my father and his wife couldn't have children and they wanted a child. So a minister got with them and said, got with a friend, not with my dad and mom and says I know how we can get Haywood to get his child. I'm going to say that she's mine. The mother's mother already said she can't bring the child home. So we know that she'll be well taken care of in Haywood's house. So that was the story that was told. That this minister who was married had fathered this child by this lady and they were looking for a nice home for the child. And friends of my mother's told her, you need to take this baby. This is a darling baby. You need to take this child. And she needs what you can give her. It's just the two of you. You have the money. She has medical problems. So they took me when I was ten days old. And so I grew up in the house with them. And I knew I was adopted at an early age because of listening. My mother went to the doctor and she the doctor said she couldn't have kids because she had a tumor and she said well, I've known that since 1935. I know I can't have anymore kids until I have the tumor

removed. So my mind says, well, if you had a tumor in 1935 and couldn't have any kids then you couldn't have had me in 1939. So I just filed that on back and I left it alone. So then as I got older and I'd hear other people talk about it I said well, I already know that. So then they couldn't use that as leverage because children will do that. Yeah, that was really interesting. But I was glad, I didn't find out, I wish I had really found out before he died because I would loved to have told him I know. And just simply that, that I know. He was a wonderful person.

58. End of Tape 1 - Side B

59. **Rogers:** My father's father was white, Irish. My father had a half brother who was a lawyer here, had a half brother who was in the Senate and the family lived up in Duplin County near Warsaw. So we used to go visit these people all the time.

60. **Miles:** They were claiming you as family?

61. **Rogers:** Right in that group. It was not widely known. Because as an adult when I needed congressional intervention, I'm a firm believer in I'll write the president. I'll even call the White House. I have the number. I would call John Bright and say look, I need a favor and I'm not getting anywhere. So he'd say well, I'll tell you what you do, call Sam J. Erwin. You tell him that your mother was our maid for twenty-five or thirty years and I told you to call and see can he help you. And this is what we would do. I'd call and say that my mom worked for John Bright. My husband was overseas. We were trying to get a compassionate reassignment because there were a lot of medical problems and they were saying it couldn't be done and so I called John Bright. John Bright had me to call Sam J. Sam J. called

Lyndon Johnson, you know. So that's what I'm saying. I just used this stuff. I didn't let the anger and stuff embed itself. I used, they had the means, so I learned from them how to connive, how to do, what you have to do to get what you want. And that's what they do. So I took all of that stuff when I was in their houses and they were talking to their friends and associates on the phone and whatever. I was quiet as a church mouse because I was listening to everything they were saying. Then when it came time that I could use some of this stuff, then I brought it back. And that's what I'm saying now. We could catch more flies with honey. Stop fighting! Look at what they're doing and then see how you can use it. And that's what we need to do. That's exactly what we need to do. That's what I did and that's what I still do, still to this day.

62. **Miles:** Did your father grow up with...?

63. **Rogers:** He grew up on that plantation, is more or less what it was. He was born in 1891.

So he grew up right there. His mother's name was Sally and they grew up there. At eighteen he left and went to work for the Atlantic Coastline.

64. **Miles:** But his father claimed him?

65. **Rogers:** As his child in certain groups, yeah. It wasn't widely known. Because when John Bright died I was determined, finally, to say something. So I didn't go to the funeral. I wrote a letter to the family and told them how sad I was that he had died and I hoped they would donate his papers to the museum. I said and, as I did with my father, I'd like to remember the good things about him. I said one thing I do remember is the day John Bright spanked me and I was sixteen years old and couldn't tell anybody. I had borrowed the family car.

(Laughter) I could drive. And I had too many people in it. My mother had gone to work. She refused to stay home. She had to work and that much I took after her. She says I don't care how much money your father gives me, I have to have my own money coming in. Okay, I live by that. I have to have my own. She had gone to work and daddy had gone to church and I didn't go. I picked up a few of my friends and we went down to Sea Breeze. Coming back from Sea Breeze, because I knew what time I had to be back to pick my father up. He would not come out of that church until church service was over. Once he went in he stayed. A police officer stopped me. Well, he stopped me mainly because I had a lot of people in the car. So I decided hey, now's the time to use it. I said I'm on my way to my uncle's house. He said so what difference does that make. I said it's John Bright Hill. He looked at me and said lying will get you nowhere nigger. I call on your radio down to the police station. We can all find out. Tell the chief to call over to John Bright's house. He did and he told him do not give that young lady a ticket. Escort her to my house after she gets rid of all the people in that car. He made everybody get out and he escorted me to his house at Third and Greenfield. John Bright took me in the house. He took off his belt and he tore me up through those slacks I had on. He said now you take that car home. He said the officer is going to see that you take it home. He said I'll see that Haywood gets from church. We'll come up with some excuse. Took that car home, put it in the garage, raked the yard - now, see I'm still not smart enough to realize if my mom was thinking she'd look at the odometer, you know. Raked the yard, put the keys back. Mama came, steadily walking the floor. She said I wish you would sit down somewhere because you are getting on my nerves. The last thing in the world I wanted to do was sit down. And we talked about that about a year before he died. Because I would take the kids whenever we came back to Wilmington to meet him

and he was a very elderly man by the time he died. I think he was about ninety. And he would always tell them, did your mama tell you about that time I beat her butt. (Laughter) I couldn't say a word, couldn't say a word. My mother didn't find out about it until 1974 I believe and I finally told it. (Laughter) But I knew, I had been driving, she taught me to drive. I had been driving since I was thirteen. I just didn't have license. But I used that thing. So when I wrote the family when he died I told him that I will always remember, the spanking that Uncle John gave me. So I don't know how it went over with the family because none of them ever said anything to me about it. But whenever I was downtown I used to always go by his office and sometimes we'd sit and have lunch or we'd sit and talk about up on the farm in Duplin County, you know. And I'd ask him about the family because I would just like to know who all these people are. That was the way it was when I confronted my real mother, biological mother. As I told her, I didn't want anything from her, period, ever. I just wanted to see what she looked like. I just wanted to know who you were and to see if the story they told me was true. And then she admitted it and I cussed her out and left and then that was the end of that. I tried to tell my foster mother, you don't have to worry about me going to the person. This lady never did anything for me. But I feel I should know who she is and I can point her and her family out to my children. That way you don't have inter-marriages. You know, you don't know who your relatives are, you need to know. And that was all I wanted from her. And that was all I wanted with John Bright and them. I just wanted to know who they were. It didn't matter. I have since found out that the basketball player, Ralph Sampson, was my father's nephew, grand nephew. Ralph Sampson's father was my father's nephew. They had the same brothers. Robert was my father's brother and Robert's son was Ralph's grandfather. So that's how that goes. I often wanted to contact

him simply to get names and places and dates. But celebrities have a problem. They feel as soon as you contact them you want something. So I've hesitated. But he looks exactly like his grandfather. He looks just like him. I remember him well.

66. **Miles:** With your mother and the way she would talk about color and class, given that you weren't fair, how did that make you feel when she would talk about dark skinned people?

67. **Rogers:** I was very angry.

68. **Miles:** Did she know, I mean did she...?

69. **Rogers:** It didn't matter. As she taught me, you don't live in a democracy. You know, our family is not a democracy. That's it. But she was that way. She was very bigoted and people would tell her, I waved at you when you were driving down the street the other day. She said well, child, I didn't see you. I was just looking straight ahead. I didn't see a soul. Yes she did. Yes she did. My mother was not welcome in neighbor's homes. There were a couple. But my father was welcome in everybody's house. But she was. She was very bigoted that way and I didn't like it and that was one of the problems we had. I got slapped in the mouth a lot because she'd make statements and I'd, it just came out. But I didn't see it because I felt that we were having enough problems with the whites. Why do we have to have this problem within the race. And we still have it today. We still have it today.

70. **Miles:** Was it widespread?

71. **Rogers:** Widespread, very widespread. Very, very widespread.

72. **Miles:** Can you give me specifics?

73. **Rogers:** The fair skinned blacks, especially the fair skinned blacks with long hair, were very much disliked by the darker skinned. They didn't like to associate with them and a lot of them were very nice people. They really were. But they were made to feel, it was the jealousy. And the reason being, back during the 1930's, especially in Harlem, during the Renaissance, the Cotton Club and all of that, okay, you could dance as well as anybody but if you were not, as they put it, light, bright, damn near white, you didn't get to be in the shows. You were taught, it was perpetuated down through the generations that the lighter, the fairer were the more intelligent, the more talented and that's why you had a lot of blacks who tried to pass. Because if you were dark you weren't given the same considerations. And somehow it just kept going and then the children would pick it up from the adults and it just kept going and going even to today.

74. **Miles:** Would like your teachers play favorites?

75. **Rogers:** In some cases the teachers played favorites because of color. The teacher played favorites because of occupations. The doctor's children and the lawyer's children were treated differently. The very fair skinned were treated differently.

76. **Miles:** Were treated better?

77. **Rogers:** Yeah. In a lot of instances, when they had the beauty pageants within the schools and whatever, the Miss Williston or whatever, the fairer skinned girls were usually the first ones considered. It just went on and it was something that any thought was given to. It was

just an assumption. This is the way it's going to be. I always remembered a remark Mr. Sidney Jones made. He said that the black race, you have the most beautiful race in the world because you have them as white as you want them and you have them as black as you want them. He said in our race we're just white. Which is true, you're just white. But you can, there are people, and it's not color. I don't care about your color. I care about your personality. I dated a guy in college for about four months before I found out he was white. I didn't know. A jealous classmate found out he was white and told the administration. This was during the 1950's. They called me in and said you get rid of him in twenty-four hours or we're expelling you from school. And if I had been expelled and sent home, my mother would have killed me graveyard dead. Yes, there was no doubt in my military mind. This lady would have killed me. And I did not have the nerve, I could not find it within me to go to this boy and tell him the school says I can't date you anymore because you're white. I thought he was Puerto Rican, really, is what I thought. And how it came out, the guy who came to stock the coca cola machine saw us and made the statement to one of the girls standing there that he used to come see his daughter. We had been invited to the president's house for dinner. This is how well liked he was. At homecoming he sat with the president and his wife during the game. He would be on campus after curfew. He was a well educated person. His mother was a college professor and doctor was a physician. They were from Arizona I believe. He was stationed at Fort Bragg. He was in the Army, staff sergeant. I had a habit of talking to the military men. As I explained to my college classmates, you're going to school just like I am. You're broke. They get paid at least once a month. I know I'm not going to eat in the dining hall. (Laughter) I'm going to have dinner at least once a month. That's the whole thing, you know. I had money. My parents had money and they

sent me money. But sometimes my mother would get testy, you know, and she said you don't need this and I'm not giving it to you. Okay, then I'll just have to figure out something else here. So I would date the service men. They could take me to the movies. They had the money. Most of the college kids were like college kids today, they don't have a lot of money. So once they found out he was white, I could not come right out and tell him that these people are so prejudiced at this period of time, they say I can't date you. So I found a buddy, I love football so I have a lot of male friends that are just football buddies and I found this buddy and I had told the guy that I couldn't see him that day, I had to work. I did have a part-time job on campus. He was on campus anyway so when I saw him then I grabbed a buddy and we walked past and I was all over this guy like white on rice, you know, because I knew it would upset him. I walked over to another dorm and when he got ready to go my buddy turned around to go and I just jumped up and kissed him on the jaw, you know. And so the guy did, you know. He got upset. And so he called me later and was asking me about it and I say, hey, well, you know, that's how the cookie crumbles. And that was fun. We had fun. It was great. He said I can't believe this. He actually went AWOL. It was a mess. But I knew that I could not bring that white man home. I knew I could not let the school expel me for dating this white man because my mom would not have allowed it. She didn't like dark skinned black people but there was no way in the world I could bring a white man in that house. Not and ever plan to come back in there. But she was. But as I said, it's just generally accepted. Black people are prejudiced against each other still to this day. I told a colonel when we were in Manhiem, West Germany that the best way I knew to describe the black race was a barrel of crabs. Because as soon as one gets up another one will reach up and snatch him down instead of reaching up to try to help him. And we still do that. But

during that time that really was the way it was a lot. It was bad and it's still bad and it shouldn't be. We should have grown past that.

78. **Miles:** When did you go to West Germany?

79. **Rogers:** First or second time? My youngest son is twenty-one and he was born in Heidelberg in 1971. I won a trip to Europe in 1959 and I went to Paris and Preswick, Scotland and Copenhagen, Denmark. That was something. You talk about prejudice in this country, I was in Paris on the ( ) as a matter of fact, and this little French girl ran up to me and asked me to show her my tail. They had been told by white GI's that black Americans had tails like monkeys and we curled them up inside of our clothing. The little girl's mother ran, grabbed her and started hitting this child and I stopped her. And I said somebody had to tell her this. You shouldn't spank her, you should explain. I said do you mind if I talk to her. And I told her, I said we do not have tails. We're not monkeys. We're people just like you. We're just different colored. And the child is looking at me because this is not what the white GI's had told them. And so the mother is crying. I'm so sorry! I'm so sorry! I don't know what - yes, you know where she got it from. You just need to tell somebody to stop it. We were the only two blacks. It was interesting. We were the only two blacks in the hotel. When we went to Copenhagen we were the only two black people for three days in the city. Never want to do that again. I didn't realize it until people started telling us where we had been. We went to see the changing of the guard and there was a West Indian lady who was from England. She was so glad to see us that she wanted to pay our way to Sweden. She wanted to take us to Switzerland. She wanted us to go everywhere with her so she wouldn't be by herself. I kept saying I don't know this person. I'm not going

anywhere. So we left the changing of the guard and came back to a department store and went in a restaurant to eat pancakes. The greatest pancakes I've ever had in my life there. They're very, very thin. They're almost like crepes with all kinds of fruit. You had them with strawberries, with blueberries, with raspberries. And we walked in the door of that department store, four story department store and the people started asking us where was the other one. I said what are you talking about. When you went that way there were three of you. Where's the other one. That's when we realized, you know, that everybody was watching us. You turn and you look and people are just standing there. And I had a habit of looking, you know. Is there something wrong with my clothing? Is my hair alright? Why? And finally the manager of the hotel told us, you know, you are the only two here. Okay. And I fell in love with the ice cream. I ate fourteen dollars worth of ice cream in two days and they gave it to me because that was not part of the trip. He was just so fascinated with my - they skimmed the cream off of the milk and the ice cream is made from that cream, no milk. Ah! But they gave it to me. But I enjoyed the trip and I enjoyed the fascination. We went to the follies in Paris. I was very much embarrassed because I had never been exposed to nudity. In 1959, we were the only two black people in there. I was very naive. I didn't know why the men were leaving with their overcoats tied around them backward. And I always believed that the only stupid question is the one you don't ask. So I asked. I was always taught that. If you don't know, ask, you know, and folks say yeah, right. You're a junior in college and you don't know what - no, I don't know, why. And when they discovered I could turn red and oh, my God, I looked up and saw fifty women coming on the stage, basically the same height and size, with G-strings and nothing else. Some of them, they were basically about forty-two, forty-four. I mean we're talking huge here. (Laughter)

I started turning red and then everybody started pointing. Look, black, red! And then the lady sitting next to me, one of them came down off the stage and sat in a man's lap and his wife slapped him. And he said I didn't ask her. She did it on her own. She said you didn't have to look like you were enjoying it, you know, because when she sat in his lap then all this stuff was in his face. There was nothing he could do. It was interesting to watch how the Europeans looked at American blacks and at that period of time. Then when we went to Germany in the late 1960's, early 1970's, the Germans were fascinated with the black children. The German women didn't like the black women because they said we kept them from getting the black GI's. The Germans loved the black women. All of them loved the children and you had a few instances where a few would come up and touch the children. I used to tell them, it won't come off, you know, rub some more. I was fortunate enough to have attractive children so, you know, the week before payday, we were still getting paid once a month, I'd dress them up and we'd catch the ( ) and go downtown because they'd give them money, they'd give them candy, they'd give them fruit. We didn't have any money and we'd take them downtown. They'd just walk up, oh, they're so darling and they'd give them money. But they still looked at the blacks then comparing it to what the white GI's had told them. So it was widespread. It really was. It was widespread. But like I said, there's nobody better than me and that's the way I've always done it. And that's what I tried to instill in my children. You have the education, you have the means of the education, you get the education and you remember, you can be anything you want to be. But it's up to you. You can do it unless you decide to let your friends keep you from doing it. And I didn't have a lot of friends because I was determined. I was an honor roll student all through school. I was on the dean's list all through college. I was determined to be. And as my son would say, the

kids don't want to associate with me because I'm on the honor roll. So? And that's the way I felt in college. When that list comes out my name's going to be on there. I have done this. I can do this and I did. And at State during that time, during the 1950's, because I went three years, got married, stayed out three years, had three children, and went back and graduated. During the 1950's they were on semester for awhile and then they were on quarter, if you maintained an A average then you didn't have to take any finals. So you know what I did, yeah. So then when everybody is in the dorm cramming and studying I'm being Dennis the Menace. I would drag chains down the hall at two and three o'clock in the morning with a sheet over my head, you know. Folks would look out and they'd think it was a ghost. I rolled soda bottles. I had serious eye problems and I couldn't go to the movies. I couldn't watch films in class. So whenever they had films or they went to the movies I had to be in the dorm. So I'd go around short sheeting people's beds, putting Dutch cleanser in them and sewing the bedspreads and sheets together. (Laughter) I had to have something to do. I didn't have to study, you know, so I had to have something to do. So I would do this kind of stuff. But I was always there as far as studies or anything. If there was something I could do to help, I used to do people's term papers. Yeah, I did. Changed a few paragraphs around and we'd pass them in. I know you going to get an A. I got an A on it. I just changed it around. I didn't have money problems so I'd call my parents and say I needed this and that and a lot of times they didn't stop to think that they were paying my bills by the semester or quarter. If I called and said I have to have eighty dollars by tomorrow or I can't go to class, you know, Mom wouldn't stop and think. She'd either jump in the car and drive to Fayetteville or wire it to me. And if somebody who needed something I'd go and give it to them. I didn't need it so it didn't matter. But I guess sometimes I said maybe I did that

because I wanted them to think I was just like everybody else. Because I felt like I was like everybody else but a lot of time I was treated differently because they said my parents had money. So you were being treated differently because of your color or you were being treated differently because of your background. You were being treated differently because of what you had. So in the black race you have all of that stuff to put up with. I had a lot of my clothes stolen at one time and I didn't know they were gone until I happened to see a girl with a suit on and I liked the suit and I said I like that. That is sharp! It was a velvet suit. The skirt, it had a high waist with suspenders and the jacket was velvet. The lining of the jacket was the same color as the blouse. And I saw this girl in this thing and I said that is nasty, I like that. So I asked her could I try the jacket on. So she said yes. She said her aunt sent it to her from D.C. I said oh, I'm going to have to call my mama because I've got to have one of these. When I got ready to take it off to give it back to her I was looking at the lining and stuff so I could really tell her what it was, pulled the lining up and there was name stamped all inside of it. So I told her, I gave her forty-eight hours to get it to the cleaners and back in my room because I was so rotten I had my own room. I had to pay double monthly bill because I had my own room. The biggest reason I had my own room was I needed the closet space. So when I got back to the dorm I was still talking about that. So I went in the office and got on the P.A. system and I mentioned the fact that I had found somebody walking around with a suit on of mine. I said I don't know if anything else is missing but if everything is not back in my room by nine o'clock in the morning I'm going to the college president. I'm going downtown Fayetteville to the police department and I'm taking out a warrant and I'm having this campus searched until I find my belongings. When I woke up the next morning (Laughter) there was a bed full of clothes and two boxes of shoes. I never

missed it because I had enough clothes so I could change clothes three or four times a day for three or four weeks without wearing the same thing. So I took two trunks and a complete set of Samsonite luggage up in September and when I came back for Thanksgiving I brought all that back and I took some more. So I didn't miss it. But when I looked and saw all that stuff I had no idea because I didn't lock the doors. The valuable stuff I had, the furs I had, the dormitory matron had in her room and my gowns. So I didn't think anything about the rest of it. When I looked and saw all that stuff, I went crazy. (Laughter) And the dormitory matron told my mother, she doesn't need it anyway. She doesn't have any business with it up here. That's why they took it. Mama told her until you start buying it don't you worry about it. She can have what she wants and in fact, if that's not enough, we'll get some more.

(Laughter) Because she was like that. My mother felt that no matter how she treated a person, what she said, as long as she could buy you something or give you money, then that made up for it. Because when she was very abusive that's what she would do. She'd go out and buy me a complete outfit, two or three of them. Shoes, everything had to match. I had to have the hat, the bag, the shoes, the underclothes to go with that particular outfit. Stupid. But there were a lot of black people around here during that time who were prejudiced against each other than enhanced what the whites were doing to you.

80. **Miles:** So were there areas here in Wilmington that your mother would say no, you can't go to that area?

81. **Rogers:** Oh, yes and people's houses, I could not go to, most definitely. One of my dear friends lived on the street around the corner from me but our back yards connected. But I couldn't go to her house because her mother was not married and she said she had a bunch of

bastard younguns. So I played with Hattie anyway. Whenever my mother left me home and she went out in the car then I'd go out in the back yard, hop the fence and go play with Hattie. And the kids would whistle and let me know when they saw that Buick coming and then I'd scramble back in the back yard and when she came home I'm out in the back yard playing. Like I said, I used my mind. There were always ways to get around it. And then there were people she wanted me to associate with and I would over hear saying, we don't want to be bothered with her but every time you'd turn around her mama's saying you can't go unless you go with this one or you go with that one. I'm telling her I'm not going and that way I won't have to worry about her going with me. And I used to try to tell her this when she'd say well, you can go if you go with so-and-so. I'm saying they don't want to be bothered with me. Oh, you just say that because you don't want to be with decent people. What she kept bringing up to me was the fact that I was an illegitimate child. I was constantly told this. This was something that black people did too which does not help the children. But she was telling me I was going to grow up and have a bunch of bastard younguns just like my mama. So being as stubborn as I was I figured out there was one sure way not to have any and so I didn't have sex until I was married. But it was not because I did not want to. Let's clear that fact up. (Laughter) It was that I was so stubborn and determined that knowing me I probably would have sex once and get pregnant. The only way to prove to my mother I was not going to do this was not to have sex and I had all the opportunities in the world because she liked to go. She would come by school and tell me, I'm going to Jacksonville to do some shopping, you got your key? I said yeah. We're not talking the fifty miles to Jacksonville, North Carolina. We're talking Florida. But then she'd go, she'd drive all that way and wouldn't buy anything. Oh, I went window shopping. So she's gone a couple of days which

means I'm in that house by myself so I could have done anything I wanted to do. But I was determined that I wouldn't do that. And black children were told things like that a lot. You can't go to that person's house. His daddy ain't nothing but an alcoholic. His uncle's a wino. He's one of them D-Nature drinkers.

82. **Miles:** One of those what?

83. **Rogers:** D-Nature drinkers. That's a good one for you. (Laughter) They drank canned sterno, canned heat, and paint thinner. They mixed this stuff together and the people called them D-Nature drinkers. Why, I don't know. But that was what they were called. And those were our "winos," more or less that you might find on the corner somewhere drunk. But even still, you grew up in neighborhoods and these people weren't allowed to continuously be out there. Somebody got them up, gave them some coffee, gave them a bath, sent them somewhere, took them home, gave them a meal. They didn't sleep out like that, you know, unless they got drunk in the middle of the night and laid out somewhere. But this was a thing you were told. I remember a classmate gave me a beautiful necklace, earrings and bracelet for Christmas. I was fifteen. When I told her who it was she told me who his uncle was and you get on the phone and you call him and tell him to come and get this trash because you can't have it. And I don't want you having anything to do with them people. I said this will not work. And she finally conceded that the more I try to make you a bigot, the further you are going to the other side and that's what I did. No, as long as you treat me as I want to be treated, I'll treat you the same way I want you to treat me and then we'll get along fine. But as far as who your parents are, what color you are, that doesn't mean anything to me. It never has and it never will and that's what I've tried to instill in my children. In fact, my youngest

daughter is twenty-nine and the first day she went to Head Start in the 1960's she came home crying and I was ready to go to school to find out what has happened. I said you just tell me exactly what happened. I mean exactly, word for word. She said the teacher called me a Negro. I am not a Negro. I'm not a Negro, am I? I couldn't do anything but laugh and then she was really upset because I laughed. But I never made race distinctions in my family and so she didn't know what a Negro was. She really didn't. And she was upset about it. I'm not a Negro! I said oh, yes you are. (Laughter) But by being military they had a chance to live some of in and everywhere and meet all kinds of people and that's the way they are. They judge people by the way they behave not by their color. It's nothing unusual to see blacks, Latins, Orientals, all of them, in our house at one time. Everybody is eating, drinking, sleeping, whatever. It's no big deal. It was just never that way. We never looked at it that way and I've tried to get them to teach their children the same way because that's the way it has to go. Somebody has to stop this stuff.

84. **Miles:** You said your mother did some domestic work?

85. **Rogers:** Yeah.

86. **Miles:** That's surprises me given what you said about her.

87. **Rogers:** Yeah, that's what she did because she wasn't an educated person. So this was what she had to do to work. She was a very good cook. For awhile she was the baker, the dessert baker at one of the school cafeterias. Other than that she worked in prominent family homes as their maid, as their cook more than the maid. She did mostly cooking. And I was thrilled with it because it afforded me the chance to get in that house and to see what they had and to

read the books that they had and hear their stories. So I loved every bit of it. I enjoyed it. I did not feel insulted or degraded or anything because she worked in these people's houses. There was only one incident with working with them. She worked for the Grissoms and the little girl wanted me to play with her dolls and her brother had trains and I refused to play with the dolls. I was playing with the trains and the little girl spit in my face and I slapped her. At three years of age I was given an emerald birthstone and then the ring, every five years I got a bigger one, you know, because I got bigger. I was in high school so this was about the size ring I would have had as an adult and being left handed I slapped back with it. So when I did, yes, I tore that face up. So my mother had a fit. Oh, my God, these people are going to kill us all! And I'm saying nobody's going to do anything to me. She had no business spitting on me. Nobody spits on me. Slap me, you may get away with it. You spit on me, I'll kill you. It's simple as that. So it so happened while she's putting the ice and everything on this child's face to try and get that mark off, the parents walked in. The mother had a fit. You slapped my child! I said yes I did and I'll slap you if you spit in my face. My mom was going oh, Jesus! Her husband says wait a minute, wait just a minute. The little girl's name was Bonnie. He said you actually spit in this child's face? Yes, I spit in her face. She wouldn't play with me. That man snatched her up off the floor and he started tearing her behind up. His wife started, he told her you be quiet because I'll come get you next. He said but she's not spitting on anybody, ever and I'll see to that. So he told Mama, don't worry about her face and don't worry about your job. Nothing is going to happen to Margaret. I'm glad she slapped her. She should have slapped her twice. But I simply, like I said, I'm just not going to, no. It does not matter what color you are. I'm not going to treat you any way I don't want you to treat me. I'm a firm believer in the Golden Rule. I will not do anything to

you that I don't want you to do to me. And I'm not going to spit on you. If you spit on me I'm going to hurt you. It's simple as that.

I had a thing about being hit on the behind. Never have liked that. My husband cannot hit me on my behind. Don't do that. Just don't do that. Slapped a white guy for that. I slapped the band director for that at Fayetteville State. I don't play that. I just don't do that. Because you are white and you feel you can put your hand, no, you can't put your hand on me because you're white. Nobody puts his hand on me unless I want it done. And where you hear of the blacks during the Jim Crow era who let whites do all sort of things, no, they wouldn't do that to me and get away with it. Now I might have been punished for it but I simply would not have allowed it to happen. That's why I say I couldn't have grown up in Mississippi and I couldn't have been a slave because the very first time somebody told me to go in the bed so I could be a bed warmer, I wouldn't have made it to puberty. They would have killed me before. I never would have made it that far. I would not have made it that far. I just wouldn't have made it that far. That's why I admire those people. They were dynamite people. They took stuff I never, there's no way. I wouldn't take it here and everybody says you're from North Carolina? Well, didn't this happen to you? No, it didn't happen to me. In a lot of instances, a lot of things happened to people because they allowed it to happen. They knew, like today in classrooms, I still say that, students know which teachers, I didn't have discipline problems. In fact, I was so hung up on soap operas back in the 1960's when I first started teaching until I always scheduled some type of quiet activity at 1:00 so I could go to the lounge and watch "All My Children." I'm so glad I - I hate them. I just stopped like I stopped drinking. I stopped drinking one day because I wanted to stop and I was drinking

one day and the next day I didn't drink. I'm still around people who drink and I let them enjoy themselves. I have no problem with that. If that's what you want to do, that's fine. I don't choose to do it anymore. But I would leave my class and go and watch the soap operas and nobody ever knew I was out of class. And it was not physical punishment. It was intellectual punishment. I had a habit of putting one long division problem on a chalkboard and that one problem would cover that entire board. And that was it. Like I told them, don't think I won't check this because I will. I'm going to check it. And it would take seven or eight pages to complete this problem. So I didn't have problems. For Christmas I gave fourteen and fifteen page assignments for Christmas holidays.

88. **Miles:** (Laughter) I'm sure you were a very well liked teacher.

89. **Rogers:** They talked about me like a dog but just as soon as I said I was leaving everybody was upset. No, no. Because I went to Williston where the teachers demanded and you gave everything you possibly had to give. If you were not a student who could give A work, then they accepted B work. If they knew you were a student who could give A work, you gave it. I decided at nine years of age I wanted to be a teacher and I could not wait. This was something I wanted to do and I knew I could make a difference. Then I watched the system deteriorate. I got to the point where, this is not what I want to do because I'm not getting to do it. The child became low man on the totem pole, the pupil. Everybody else comes first. And then it got to the point where the parents say, well you are more or less babysitting but you can't touch my child. You can't do anything to them. I don't care whether he learns or not. And so then that wasn't working for me. So I was in the first four or five days of the school year. The first day of school I put my name on the chalkboard and I put on the other

side of the board the things Mrs. Rogers is afraid of so we'd get that cleared up. I'm scared of everything that creeps and crawls. I don't like snakes and frogs and lizards and if you try to put them on me I will hurt you. It's simple as that. So go home and tell your mother now if you come home with your nose broken, you tried to put a frog or a tadpole on me and I will break your neck. We got that cleared up. So from that, we went and I was not hung into a lesson plan like right now, if school were open and you had prepared lesson plans.

Everybody's talking about Davey Allison's death and the flood. These children do not want to learn what Constantinople did. They want to know about this flood. So you take the child where he is with what he wants to learn. You do that. Then you go back and get whatever it was you were supposed to do and this was the way I did it. And we didn't stay in the classroom. I hate building. I took every field trip that I was allotted. I went around to the other teachers and found out who wouldn't, if you're not going to use yours. On days that were beautiful like this we took chairs and went outside. We did a lot of hands on and a lot of seeing rather than a lot of notebook. And it surprises me now when I hear about new innovations. I remember when the school board came to me and said you can't use the newspaper to teach. No, they can't use the comic strip. This is what he wants to learn read. You have the same words so what difference does it make. But the high school girls when I taught remedial reading, they read "True Confession" magazines. That was what they wanted to read. So when they saw those words somewhere else they still knew what they were. What's the difference? But they said oh, no. So now they want to put them in groups in elementary school. I had departmentalized the fourth grade when I was up at Sanford.

91. **Rogers:** ...the fourth grade so that one of the other fourth grade teachers can take my class while I have her's to teach them music. So by the end of the year these kids were writing music. It wasn't Bach and Beethoven but they knew how to do the scale on the piano. They knew how to write music. And how we did it, we took a sheet of paper and the ink pens, the cartridge ink pens, and we just flung the pen so it made dots on the paper then we drew a staff and you made some of them whole notes, some of them half notes, some of them quarter notes and you went to the piano to see what you came up with. You just use your mind and think about, a lot of it is they forget what it was like and that's what I told the high school children. I remember what it was like to be sixteen. I remember what it was like to be seventeen. And a lot of times the folks forget that that's the problem with this sex education stuff. I was watching "Laurel Avenue." I was never so disgusted when this lady was hollering the daughter sixteen and she has condoms in her purse. She doesn't have any business with condoms! She's not old enough! I just wanted to ask one question. What were you doing when you were sixteen? That's all, just think back to what you did and that's the way I handled my children. And that's the way I still talk to them. The young lady tried to claim the twenty-one year old son had her pregnant a few years ago. But the time that she said she got pregnant he was in basic training in Orlando and I know he's good but he's not that good. So I just came right out point blank and asked him, did you have sex with her? He said yes. I said did you use condoms? He said no. I say why? And their friends can't deal with it when they hear me talk to them like that. They have problems. But I talk that way to my students. You have to talk to them on the level they can understand. And I guess I got that from trying so hard to combat what I experienced during the Jim Crow era. I think that has a lot to do with it really because I just felt that you didn't know and nobody would

tell you. And when you asked you were told to shut up. And so I asked and I'd like to ask when there were whites around because usually my mother wouldn't raise a bunch of sand at that time. She doesn't want to say she has to chastise her child so I asked questions while the whites were around and then I'd get two answers. I had to figure that stuff out.

92. **Miles:** When you were talking about, what did you say, bastard younguns (Laughter)...

93. **Rogers:** Yeah, bastard younguns.

94. **Miles:** I assume that means that unmarried women with kids were treated, were looked down upon.

95. **Rogers:** They were and the young women weren't allowed to go to school. If you became pregnant that was the end of your education. These children can go to school now up until the day the baby's born. They didn't want anybody to see you. Folks didn't want to associate with you because they were considered bad girls. See, it was still a double standard because these same people who were talking about this girl who's pregnant without a baby had done and in a lot of instances were still doing the same thing. Having sex wasn't the problem. She got caught because she got pregnant. But in a lot of instances she wouldn't have gotten pregnant if somebody had told her how not to. But you couldn't during that time. I couldn't ask my mother anything about sex. I had to ask my librarian at high school. Because every question I asked her I got slapped in the mouth. That's not something you need to know. So then you had to find an adult that you could go to to ask who would tell you what was right and what was wrong.

96. **Miles:** You'd go to the librarian at school?

97. **Rogers:** Yes, I went to her. I used to call her my second mom. She had a miscarriage and I was in the tenth grade but I had no idea what this was and I knew I wanted to go to the hospital to see her. I knew she was pregnant because I had seen the abdomen in the clothing. But when I went there it wasn't there. So the first thing I wanted to know was well, does it go down immediately, is it like a balloon. Because I had no idea what happened to the abdomen once the baby was born. I really didn't know how the baby came out unless she had an operation. So I asked her and she would sit and talk to me. My mother got married, she ran away from home when she was thirteen and she had a child. She ran away from home when she was twelve. She had a baby when she was thirteen. Once I became twelve I was not allowed outside after dark. That included the years I was in college. I had to be home, in the house, before street lights came on until my senior year and I had just had it. And I sat across the street at the people's house across the street on the porch and let the street lights come on. I just simply refused to be home before those street lights came on. I was just too old for that. She talked about people having children and not being married, people having sex. The never used the word sex, of course, oh, no. You said that you got slapped in the mouth. The girls were called dirty and no good and they usually would say well, you know, the apple doesn't fall far from the tree. You'd say what are you talking about. Well, the mama is no good therefore the daughter can't be no good. You know, if one person in the family did something then everybody in the whole family was blamed for it. And so they did. They picked who you could talk to. People called you on the phone. They had to know who it was and if it was somebody from a family they didn't want you to talk to you couldn't

talk to them. But I usually would pick, those were the people I talked to. And if I had to talk to them without her knowing, that's what I did because I don't see that. I just don't see it. But you fought that Jim Crow stuff on both sides. It wasn't just on the white side. That's what so sad, what is so sad.

98. **Miles:** Were the men who got these women pregnant, were they looked down upon?

99. **Rogers:** No! Never have been and never will be. That's the same problem it is today. As long as men still look at women as second class citizens and society does that. North Carolina was fighting to get a new rape law, marital rape. Two years ago I put a letter in the newspaper. I write letters to the editor quite often. And I said as long as North Carolina continues to look at women as shadow, as property, then the women of North Carolina know if they're rape by their husbands law enforcement will not help them. Since I know this if I should ever be raped by my husband I will kill him. I will take care of the problem myself. That is what all the women will have to do. And they put it in the paper. And I mean just that. That's the whole problem. I run into a lot of problems. I was teaching when I married this last time. This is my third husband. All my credentials said Rogers. So I didn't change anything. The Supreme Court said I didn't have to change it. My husband's name is Robinson. My name is Margaret Rogers if I want to /Robinson. Okay? So folks would say, why didn't you change your name? I don't have to change my name. In fact, his mother says why did I marry him if I wasn't going to change my name. So I told her name didn't have anything to do with it. I don't have to change my name. I change my name that I belong. He knows I'm his wife. Okay? I have my own life and that's the way, I was liberated before they knew what the term was. I've never been a domesticated female, never have. I don't see

why it should be automatically assumed that I'm going to wash dishes and cook and wash the clothes. But that's an automatic assumption. Why? If you are home and I'm working then you do it. If I'm home and you're working then I'll do it. But I don't see why it should be an automatic assumption. And it has been and during the 1940's and 1950's, oh good grief, it was definitely asserted. You had no life. You were Mrs. John Smith. You had no name, nothing. That was it. You fought your race as far as the way your race thought the wife should be treated, the female should be treated. Then you had to fight the way the white race felt the black female should be treated. So you were damned if you do and damned if you don't. I just decided no, I don't think so.

100.**Miles:** Talk about that. Tell me more.

101.**Rogers:** What, about the differences, the way you were treated?

102.**Miles:** Yes.

103.**Rogers:** It was expected and it still is to a certain degree in, well, I don't think that's just black and white. A woman, more or less, has three or four jobs. She works out of the house. She's the maid, cook and chief bottle washer. She is expected to be there for the husband whenever sex is required, whether she wants it or not. That's the third job. Okay. Then if there are errands, whatever, take care of the kids on top of all the other stuff. So you have a good four or five jobs that you do and this is expected that you do this. Your husband expects that you do this, white or black. Especially black, you were expected, you did this. Then you worked for the whites. You did everything that they wanted done. So then that added another job. And if you said well, this is Miss Ann's house, why can't she...? Oh no,

white women don't do that. Well, why don't white women do that? You know, white women, black women, what? White women just don't scrub the toilet. And I want to say but you use the toilet. If you use the toilet then you can clean it. So you had the discrimination, the belittlement, I guess, from both sides and then an added because as a black woman you were made to feel that you really weren't that good because now you're going to be asked to do something that a white woman would never think of doing. So it perpetuated itself and in a lot of ways it was just always there and it just depended on how you decided to deal with it. And I just decided to deal with it right out in the open. No, I don't think so. But it was there and it still is, still is. There is still Jim Crow. It's just called something differently now and it's not as out in the open as it was. But it's all still there. There are still organizations that if you fight hard enough they'll let you join but they're going to try to make it so uncomfortable that you don't want to be there. But those are the types of situations I love to get into.

104.**Miles:** (Laughter) I'm sure.

105.**Rogers:** Yeah. I chased a teacher at Hoke Elementary. I followed that lady everywhere she went. I drank out of her coffee cup. I don't drink coffee. I don't like it. And I used to tell them, I don't drink coffee because coffee will make you black, see what happened to me. And one lady poured all her's out. (Laughter) Yeah, yeah. I would drink out of it and say what brand of coffee is this? No, I don't drink that. Because I knew she wouldn't drink anymore. I would sit next to her. My classroom was right next to the principal's office and hers was on the other end of the building. I would leave and go all the way to her office and ask something. I'd park my car right next to hers when that was not my assigned parking space. I'd put my students at the table where they should eat in the cafeteria and then I'd go

sit next to her. And I did this to her for a year and that's when she discovered that her lily white daughter was pregnant for a black boy. And the Klan found out all at the same time and they started terrorizing her. And the first person she called was me. And until we finally lost contact about twelve years ago, she made certain she knew where I was at all times and she would call and come to visit and whatever. But when it started out, that woman, she was a pure redneck and I enjoyed it. It was a challenge. We're both sixth grade teachers and I have to work with this person and you despise black people! And we were working on a funded program from the Ford Foundation called Comprehensive School Improvement. So we had to work together. So everywhere she went I just plopped right down next to her. I'd sit on the arm of the chair. I'd squeeze next to her. She couldn't get rid of me. She just couldn't get rid of me. And so she said she finally decided, I can't beat her, I might as well join her. There's nothing I can do. I said, see how it worked out? I said, none of the black rubbed off, none of it. And I helped her arrange to secret her daughter out. We got her out, got her to New Jersey. We got the boy out first and got them both to New Jersey. They got married and they have three or four kids, doing fine. When her daughter broke her leg my husband was getting transferred so I was resigning. The daughter came up missing. They had the highway patrol looking for her. Couldn't find her. She had hitchhiked twenty-seven miles to my house. And I'm saying, you folk are going to get me killed yet. You got the highway patrol and everybody out looking for a white girl with a broken leg and here you are in my house. You are going to get me killed. They'll think I kidnapped you. Oh, Mrs. Rogers, they're not going to think that. But as I said, the students thought I was the worst person in the world. But the parents were impressed with what the children learned and when they found out I was leaving nobody wanted me to leave. They always wanted me to

stay there. But I would tell them, I'm not going to ask anymore from you than I know you can give. Don't let me find out you have it because you're going to give it to me. You are going to give it to me. And I'd make them give it to me. Oh, we got homework this weekend! This way you won't have to bug your parents all weekend. You know, they can get a little rest. And come holidays, I'd fix up these packets and I would mail letters home. Not send them by the students, mail them out of my own pocket and let them know, I am sending such-and-such home so that you will know that they're supposed to have it. Oh, yeah. I major worked them.

106.**Miles:** Well, you said when you were growing up teachers were thought of as gods.

107.**Rogers:** Yes. They were, well, maybe that's too strong a word. But the teacher was bigger than life. You did what that teacher told you to do. There was no back talk. There was no misbehavior. If you misbehaved, the teacher spanked you. When the teacher spanked you then that meant that she was going to call your mother. When she called your mother you already knew you had a spanking for misbehavior, you're going to get a spanking because she called, then you're going to get a spanking because that made your mother look bad because you don't know how to behave. Okay? So you know that whatever you did is going to cause you at least three to four whippings. Why do it! Why do it! And it was the same way in the neighborhood. Not just the black folks in my neighborhood. There was a white lady that owned a fish market. Her name was Zora. She died about three years ago and I'm glad we came back to Wilmington and I could see her before she died. I lived at Thirteenth Street. Miss Zora's fish market was at Fifteenth and Castle. My mother would call her on the phone and say I'm sending Margaret up. I had a three wheel tricycle with a chain. It was

called an English tricycle, something they ordered from Europe. Had a basket. She said I'm sending Margaret up to the fish market and this is how much fish or seafood I want. Said okay. Mama would stand outside and watch me on that tricycle until I got to the corner and when I turned that corner and looked down the end of that second block Miss Zora is standing out there. When I got there she prepared the order. She would tell me, hold it. She would get on the phone and say Marietta, she's on her way back. She'd come outside. She said now stop and play with the little snotty nosed younguns down there if you want to and I'm going to come down the street and break your butt. I'd get on that bike and I'd come on down. She'd stand there until I got to the corner and when I turned the corner my mother could see me. If Miss Zora saw me somewhere doing something I was not supposed to do she would tear that hiney up and call mama. My mama would get me because Miss Zora saw me doing it, because I had no business doing it and because she had to call and tell. And this is the way the kids grew up. It didn't matter. If your mother saw me doing it, she'd get me and call Mama. Or she'd ask me, does your mama know you're over here and don't lie to me girl because I'll get on the phone and call her. And you'd better say no ma'am or yes ma'am, she said I could come. And if you said no she said okay, you got ten minutes to get back where you belong. And I'm going to call Marietta and see if you're over there. And you didn't have all these problems. But the parents now, you'd better not touch their children. I had one, the only time I lost it, I did, in the classroom I lost my temper. I completely lost it and I snatched a sleeve out of a child's sweater and a blouse. And I told my mother when I went to work the next day, if I'm not back by four, have somebody to come down to the county jail because the parent has the right, she has grounds, to have me arrested for what I did. But it didn't happen. The child told me, go ahead and spank her but when I finished she

was going across the street and get her mom and her mom was going to come back and beat my black so-and-so. And I saw red. It was like a curtain. When I snatched her by that arm up out of that chair I just ripped it and I took her by that arm to the principal's office, took my foot and kicked his door and threw her in. And I said take her because if I look at her five more seconds I'll kill her. And the next day the secretary said she didn't say anything to me because she'd never seen anybody's face look like that. (Laughter) She said my eyes were blood red and my face was grey. She said I'd never seen anybody look like that. It usually took me about thirty-five minutes to get home. It took me an hour and a half because my foot would not stay on the accelerator. I couldn't stop shaking. I was just that angry that this child would say this to me in this classroom. So the next day when I went there her mother was there and I walked in and sat down. I looked at the principal and he looked at me and dropped his head. So she asked for an explanation of exactly what happened. I gave my side. The child gave her side. They were both identical. She said, and you actually said that? She said I actually said that. She said, to the teacher? She said, to the teacher. Her mama reached down and snatched her shoe off and liked to beat her to death. The principal had to snatch her off of her in the room. She told him he'd better move because I'll get you too. This is my child and she does not act like this. See, parents don't do this anymore. Okay. So then she was suspended for five days. The day she came back we were going on a field trip to the Morehead Planetarium and I refused to take her and that hurt her more than anything. I said, I'm sorry, she's not going with me because she will never embarrass me in Chapel Hill. And so the principal said fine. She can just spend the day in the library. We went to Chapel Hill and the kids came back talking about what a wonderful time they had, you know. But that was the only time I really lost it with a student. I had to defend myself

from one twice. Once down at Havelock, Cherry Point. He was eighteen years old in the eighth grade. (Laughter) And he pulled a wooden zip gun on me. He said I was going to leave my husband and go with him and I started laughing. (Laughter) I did. It was comical. It was really comical. For a long, long time I had long hair and never weighed more than a hundred and five or six pounds and I looked like a teenager more than an adult. And so I told him, well, if I were to leave my husband, I wouldn't leave for somebody eighteen years old in the eighth grade, you know. And he said, oh no, you're going. And I was on crutches because I was having a problem with phlebitis. While he's busy watching me, he's not watching my hands and I snatched one of those crutches and beat him down to the floor with it. The principal was very upset because she was afraid of his parents. She told me that if I couldn't handle my students then I shouldn't be in there. Well I was teaching sixth, seventh and eighth grade at the same time in the cafeteria. So I said okay, I agree with you. So I just walked out and got in my car and left. She's hollering, no wait, you can't leave! I said oh, yes. And I went straight to the superintendent's office and explained. He told me, don't worry about it. And so I tried to talk to the boy's mother and she said she was tired of people talking about her child all the time. I said well, I just wanted to tell you, if he pulls another gun on me, the sheriff's coming to get one, the undertaker is coming to get the other. I don't care which way it goes. Two weeks later he shot and killed her husband with that same gun. Then she wanted to talk to me. I said no, no.

Down in Raeford I stopped a fight. Two black guys jumped on a white girl. We were coming from the cafeteria and I just sent my students on in the room. Said I'll be there, you know what to do. Because I knew it would be no problem. They went in there and they sat

down until I got there. So I walked over and I said, say guys, hey, I love a good fight, you know, but let's make it even. Let's make it two against two. So one was telling me look, you don't have anything to do with this. Said why don't you take your little so-and-so right on in the classroom and mind your business. While he's busy running off at the mouth, I had gotten close to him and I snatched his arm and twisted it up behind his back and he had a razor in it, in his hand, straight razor. And I took him to the principal's office and when we got there and I opened the door Mr. Bledsoe looked up and he saw the razor. He said enough said, turn him loose. He picked up the phone and called the cops. So they expelled him. So for four days he kept coming back to campus just about time for school to let out and every day he'd stand out in front of my classroom. So finally the fifth day I said now, I've had enough of this. This boy is scaring me to death. I am really scared but I can't let him know this. So that's the day I took my trench coat and I took a piece of newspaper and I rolled it up and put it in my hand, draped the trench coat over it and I walked out there to where he was and I told him I was tired of him following me. I said now, if you do this again, I'm going to either cut you too thin to fry or I'm going to make you look like a piece of swiss cheese. I said you can choose which ever one you want because I'm ready right now. And all he could see was that coat and he could see there was something but he didn't know what it was. And so he left, he ran. I got in that car and I just sat there. One of these days your bluff is going to cost your life. But I had to do something. I had to make him know that I wasn't scared. But I was. I was terrified because all these guys were bigger than me. It didn't take much to be bigger than me at that time. It really didn't. I gained all this weight sitting in a wheelchair. But it didn't take much. At Hoggard the principal sent me to the office the fifth day of school because I didn't have a card to pass and I didn't argue with him. I went. He

said where's your card to pass young lady. I said I don't have one. I don't need one. He said oh yes, you do. Anytime you're in the hall you need a card to pass. I said I don't have one. He said then you go to the office. I'll talk to you when I get back. I said alright and I went in the office. The secretary and a few of the teachers and counselors asked me, what are you doing here? I said Mr. ( ) sent me in here. They said, why? I said I didn't have a card to pass. They started dying laughing. So when he came the secretary said, did you send this young lady in here? He said yes, I did. She's very impertinent. Said, what happened? He said I asked her where was her card to pass and she told me she didn't have one and she didn't have to have one. Said she doesn't, that's your reading teacher. I just looked at him and smiled. But I was glad when I started looking older because I ran into a lot of problems with the high school kids especially. But one thing, as I said, I didn't act above them. I was an advisor for the majorettes. I had a dance group. So I was out there with them. In Raeford, we had to practice at the American Legion field and a lot of time the whites locked it to keep us out. And so the first time, the second time that that happened I told the kids I had not driven from one side of town to the other to not practice. We're getting in here. They said, we can't get in here. I said watch. So I pulled the car up and climbed up on the car, got up on the hood of the car and climbed the fence and went over on the other side. And I stood over on the other side on the ground and said now, what are you waiting for? Then they did this and once the members of the American Legion saw that we were in there, they heard those drums because we passed the drums and everything over, then they went on and unlocked the gate so we didn't have to climb back out. But the folks kept saying, you don't act like any teacher we've ever known. I said, what? We have a job to do, so we do it. You respect me, I respect you, we get it done. It's simple as that. That's just the way it was.

Don't put an obstacle in front of me and think that I'm just going to take it if there's a way to get around it. That's why I'm fighting the post office. No, I'll get you one way or the other. I'm after a city councilman because I can't get into his store with my wheelchair. I don't want his furniture. But that's not the point. I have to be able to get in there. So now he says he's running for mayor. I said, oh, please go ahead and announce that you're running for mayor. (Laughter) I'll see what we can do about that. We have to use what we have and that's what we had to do then. We had to use what we had. And you can use it productively. And you can tell them off in the nicest way. And for some of them it takes five or ten minutes for them to realize they've been told off. That was what was so great about it. To simply tell these people off. First they didn't figure that a black and especially a black child in this era had this much intelligence and would know how to tell them off. Not curse at them or anything, just tell them off. And then by the time they realized it, son of a gun, she just told me off. Then it was too late because I was still smiling at you going on down the street. Yeah. And that's the only reason I think it really doesn't bother me because I had fun with you. I really had fun with it. It was great. It was a great time. It was fun because they didn't realize it.

108. **Miles:** I think I'm out of questions but if you're not out of words.

109. **Rogers:** No, because I'll talk until tomorrow. (Laughter) I enjoyed talking about it. It was a great time. One reason I enjoy talking about it is it's history. Recently the Coastline Publishing Company published a booklet that I did that's called "Bet You Didn't Know ( ) History Trivia." I tried to put in three quarters black history. But I knew I couldn't make it all black history because I wouldn't get it sold. But it's still not selling that well. They

published two hundred and I think the publisher said a hundred and ten were sold. But they were basically bought by the whites. I can't get the black people to buy it. There's so much black history in this area. I didn't make any money off of it because I didn't have any money to publish it so they published it. I just gave it to them and they published it. There is so much black history in this area that it's slipping through the cracks and it's things that nobody ever thought about. The one thing is, there used to be a festival here called the Cooners and the Cooner Festival was started by blacks in the 1700's. Blacks stopped them from having the Cooner Festival. New Orleans says in print, documented, and Freeport, Grand Bahamas, their carnival and Mardi Gras are based on Wilmington's Cooner Festival. The blacks here said it made us look stupid because the men put on masks or painted up their faces and dressed like women and they danced and sang and they went around from house to house to house and the people gave them cookies and pennies and whatever. So when I started talking about the Cooner Festival, folks said get out of here! I said yeah, you didn't know that. But blacks won't let them bring it back. This would be - I've been trying to get Dr. ( ) interested. Maybe it's something the black studies group at UNC-W might want to do because it's a Christmas festival. It would be a good fall festival and you can get the message out, this is what black people did. Three fourths of the people in New Hanover County in the 1800's were black. New Hanover County was black controlled. Had a black mayor, black sheriff, black aldermen, black everything, police. No, they don't know that. They don't know that there used to be a group that sang at Wrightsville Beach all the time called the Snowbirds. They were black people but they wore white shirts and black pants. So they called them Snowbirds. Okay. There are just, it just keeps snowballing. There are just so many things that happened. Where New Hanover High School is now, that property was

donated by a black man for them to build a school on. Then they built a school and the schools are segregated and his kids couldn't go to it.

110.**Miles:** Who was that who donated it?

111.**Rogers:** I don't remember his name. I've been trying to get that information back. I started the research in 1984 and I lost a lot by going back and forth to the hospital. But I do remember that incident. I didn't put that in the book because I don't remember the man's name. But I tried to bring as much black history, a lot of them don't know that when the people surrendered at Fort Fisher, they surrendered to black troops. Three fourths of the troops at Fort Fisher were black. They don't know that either. So I decided if I could get it in the form of a trivia game, you know, children have a habit of learning more when they don't realize they're learning. Make a game out of it and they'll learn all sorts of things. So I thought about doing it that way and did five hundred questions and answers and the folks that have read it, they've all come back with, I didn't know that, that there were prisoners of war here during World War II. The federal government tried to tell me they weren't here and I had to get downright nasty with them after I wrote the East German embassy and the Russians. I wrote everybody. I found a lady here who had a letter that one of the ex-prisoners had written to her father after the war because the prisoners worked on the farms around here. She allowed me to make a copy of it. So after all of the people in Washington had told me over and over there were no POW's in Wilmington, I sent them a copy of the letter. I said now, tell me. So then they started sending me information and what we found out was a lot of it was according to the Geneva convention a POW camp was not supposed to be within the city limits but see it was in a black neighborhood so what the heck. So there

was one in front of Williston. There was one at the airport and one out on Carolina Beach road. The one in front of Williston was the one I was most concerned about because the teachers taught us to climb trees so that when the prisoners escaped and they ran through they couldn't use us for hostages. They taught us how to climb the trees but nobody taught me how to get down. So I'd be hung up in the tree. But I knew they were there because we would sneak over and give them candy. And we loved to hear them talk. We couldn't understand what the Germans were saying but we loved to hear them talk. So once I started writing since I've been home I did a short story called "The Friendly Enemy" and it's a fictionalized account of a prison break. But there were actual prison breaks and what happened, because I used to climb up on the top of my house and watch the guards chase them through our neighborhood. It was interesting. This was an interesting area during the war. They built the liberty ships here that were used during the war to carry goods to the troops and whatever. You could walk from ship to ship from the state port over into Brunswick County and never touch water. That's how many ships there were. So we had blackouts. We had troops ( ) in the parks and they patrolled the streets at night. Wilmington was shelled during, the Japanese fired on Wilmington during World War II. They don't tell you that. So when I started digging I just started bringing all of that stuff up to try to, so you need to know. You just need to know. So I'll talk about history forever and a day. And I got that from my dad because he couldn't read and so I would read. He had a photographic memory. He'd tell me what he wanted to know and I'd read it. So when he worked on the railroad and he went from coal engines to diesels then he couldn't read the manual to take the test. So I read the manual and would go with him on Saturdays and get up on the engine and I taught him how to run the diesel. So in teaching him how to run the

diesel I could run the train too. So we used to run it up and down the yard. I was the only female around here that could run that train. I'm sure I'm not the only one now. But that was fun. He instilled a love of history in me and I just kept it going. My kids have gotten to point they say, yeah, Mom, we know this happened there because I keep pointing it out. I say next week you come, that building could be gone. You won't know what was there. So that was tried to do that booklet. My problem is trying to get any of my writings published. Nobody wanted to publish them because I'm not a known author. Like I did a short story on the Bottoms which is the area where I lived and I talked about all the things that happened during the 1950's and the entertainment we and, you know, the stuff that would be completely boring now. But it was fascinating how we made dolls out of grass. We pulled up the long green grass and it has long white roots and we'd wash those roots and we'd put the green part of the grass down in a soda bottle and we took a comb and combed that white root and braided it up. That's how most of us learned to braid. We would take old bicycle tires and rims and we'd roll them. We played stick ball. One of the parents in our neighborhood had a store and he used to give us, they sold rice loose. So the rice that would fall on the floor, he would give to his daughters and I and we would play with it. We would cook rice in the tops of Mason jars. The parents would make the fire because you were not allowed to make a fire. And the fire was in a hole about this big. It was down in the ground. Really nothing could happen. We made the mud pies and all this. This is the type stuff that we played. We climbed trees. I walked around in my underwear and no shirt at twelve years of age because at twelve I only weighed fifty pounds. So I was running around with just my underwear. We're playing. We were not hurting anybody. We were playing stick ball and playing with the grass dolls and climbing trees, sitting on the steps listening to the old people

tell their stories. There was a man who worked at Bellevue cemetery. I don't know his name. The only name we ever knew was old black Joe. And they put him on a postcard, his picture on a postcard and they sold it around town. The one that I had I gave to the Cape Fear Museum. I gave them a lot of pictures to put in their archives. We would go and sit on the steps and imitate. He had what the old folks called snuff sticks. They'd take a small branch off of a hedge and they'd peel the bark back and then they'd just keep peeling the branch until it became fine like a brush. And then they would take that and dip it in the snuff and put it in their mouths. Well, we would do the same thing and dip ours in the kool-aid, you know, and sugar and stick it in our mouths so we could be like them while we sat and talked to them. There was an old lady name Carrie Mosely who told us about seeing a mermaid at a hotel. That's what Miss Carrie said so that's what we believed. And that she was in a pool and that she cried and cried and cried because she was so unhappy that they took her back out to see and let her go. This was down she said at the Orton Hotel. So that's what Miss Carrie said. That's what we believed. But we would sit and listen to these people. After we ran up and down the street playing and you get tired and you see them sitting on the porch, you'd go sit on the steps and listen to them tell their stories. And then they would tell us how much better it was for us than it was for them and how when Bill Cosby tells the story about his dad saying he had to walk five miles to school uphill both ways, how they had to walk the dirt roads to schools. And that was one thing that bothered me I think I missed. I was really upset. I never got to ride the school bus and I thought that was the most fascinating thing. But I lived on Thirteenth Street and the school was on Tenth Street. So the only time I rode the bus was when I joined the band and we went on trips. But the children that lived out in the county and they rode the buses to school, I thought that was the greatest

thing to watch them get on those big yellow buses. So then you'd go out to visit them and I'll tell you one thing that was the same though during that time. Bootleg whiskey. You met some very interesting white people at these country bootleggers that were run by black people. The blacks had the liquor stills and they made the liquor and the mayor comes driving up, you know. The police chief comes driving up. It was amazing. They didn't want anything to do with you really and they knew it was against the law but you would meet such interesting people at hog killing time. I remember the first time I saw that. When I married and moved north, people assumed during the 1950's and 1960's if you came from the south everybody lived on a farm. I grew up smack dab in the middle of town. I had no idea what a farm was like until my parents took me to one. I didn't know. The first time I saw a hog killing I had nightmares because I couldn't believe that this is what happened. They hit him in the head with the back of an ax and they cut his throat and then they hung him up by his legs and split him down the middle. Because I didn't know what mountain oysters were. I got married and went to Washington and my husband's grandfather was talking about, he was an elderly person so immediately I started asking questions and he was saying his favorite food was muskrat. I'm saying muskrat! It says rat to start with so I know I don't want that. He was saying how great it was. He said but nothing in the world is as good as mountain oysters. So at first I stopped. There were a lot of people there for Sunday dinner including the bishop. My father-in-law was a minister. I said now, I'm from North Carolina. I know what oysters are. My dad used to roast oysters in the backyard. So I said Papa, what's a mountain oyster? All the forks fell at the plate at the same time. Nobody said a word. Everybody stopped and started holding their breath. He says oh, get out of here child. I said I don't know. They told me if you don't know you ask. He said you really don't know what

they are and I said no. So he looked at my husband and he said take that child upstairs and explain the facts of life. So I'm still trying to figure out what it was and nobody would tell me and that was frustrating to me because if I ask a question I want an answer. And I felt I was an adult. Everybody there was grown. But during that time there were things that were not discussed in front of men and women. So when he took me upstairs and told me they were the testicles of a hog then, of course, I came back downstairs with my face red and wouldn't look at anybody. But that was the way it was. They just didn't talk about things that I felt. Of course, if you use crude language, then I think that had a lot to do with it because a lot of them just didn't know any other terms except the crude terms to use and I don't like to hear them even today. So I think that might have been one reason why they didn't tell me. But if I didn't know I asked. I asked all of them. If you started talking and I didn't understand I was going to ask a question. And I learned a lot that way. But I enjoyed talking to the older people. They went through something. They did. It wasn't, in the late 1930's and early 1940's Wilmington city limits stopped at Seventeenth Street. So all of this out here was woods and dirt road and all of that stuff. There were houses out here that wouldn't even classify as shacks. The inside, the wallpaper was the newspaper. They glued the newspaper up to keep the cold out and pot bellied stoves in the middle of the floor. One room and nine or ten people lived in that one room. And I would love to just go and sit and listen to them talk about the things. And then the children would say and you have running water. And you say yeah. But that's just something you took for granted because you had it. But then there were people in Wilmington in the city limits proper during that time who didn't have running water. So if you had running water and indoor plumbing you were doing

great. You were really doing good. You can stop me at any time, Darling, because I'll keep going. I will.

112.Tape 3 - Side A

113.**Rogers:** Organized religion is one of the greatest tragedies to befall especially the black people. It's a group, no, that's not exactly what I mean. The church, organized religion could be a great benefit but we are so greedy until we are using the church for more damage than good. I'll give you a good example. Three years ago there was a real big mess here in Wilmington. A minister caused a big ruckus. He wanted a raise and he was determined to have this raise. Well, the old brother was making fifty-two thousand dollars a year. Can you believe that? Can you believe this! Fifty-two thousand dollars a year to stand up in a pulpit while your members are starving to death. These people don't have any food. You want fifty-two thousand dollars a year. Then every time they come to church on Sunday give me, lend me, can't you have. No. And then Saturday night I watch them. I watch them in the field right across the street from where I live come out of church, reach in the glove compartment and get the liquor flask and start drinking before you leave. And Mr. John's out with Miss Sally on Saturday night and then he's in church Sunday morning shouting. Give me a break! No. I know that we have to believe in something and I do. I'm not stupid enough to think that man is a superior being. There is something greater than me. I understand that. I believe that. But I believe in loving my neighbor as myself, doing everything I can to help somebody. That's Christianity. Not hating people. But being in church every Sunday as soon as the church door opens where you can say yes, I attend Ebenezer. I'm a member of St. Luke's. Fine, but what are you doing? The biggest devils

are in the church. They really are. They're not out here in the community. And I decided after watching the minister I grew up with be asked to leave town because the male members of the congregation said they were tired of finding his pants hanging up in their closets. I know he fathered one child who was a member of the junior choir along with me. His assistant was drunk and we picked him up out of our hedges more than one Saturday night. And then I'm going to go to church on Sunday morning and sit there and listen to you tell me, thou shall not commit adultery. Give me a break! And that's what I finally told them. No, I can read. I know what the Christian religion is about. I know what I should be doing. I will try to live my life that way. But I stay out of there. I had one minister here to call me and ask me, invite me to his church and I told him I was sorry, I could not come. I didn't think I would be welcome. He asked me why. I had a hysterectomy and I understand right now there are seventeen young ladies in that church pregnant and you're the father of all of them. So I don't get it.

114.**Miles:** You said this to him? (Laughter)

115.**Rogers:** I said this to the minister. Yes I did.

116.**Miles:** What did he say?

117.**Rogers:** Ah, ah, ah, ah, beg your pardon? (Laughter) Yes I did. Yes I did. I have just seen too much and then when this man is raising all this sand because he wants a raise from fifty-two thousand to fifty-seven thousand and then one stands up in the church and says you don't tell me who to ride in my car. Even if you are paying for it I ride who I want to and if I want

to ride the young women around that's what I'll do. And then when I decide to come to church I'll come to church. No.

118.**Miles:** When did you make this decision?

119.**Rogers:** When I was sixteen.

120.**Miles:** You stopped going to church when you were sixteen?

121.**Rogers:** I attended sporadically when I was in college because this was something Fayetteville State at one particular time we had to do. Okay. But I found a way to get around that too.

122.**Miles:** How did you get around that?

123.**Rogers:** I got up every Sunday morning and I rolled my pajamas up above my knees. I put on my coat, my hat, gloves. I put on stockings and heels and I went to church. Then I came back and I got around having to go and stay a long time, I went to the Catholic church. I'm not Catholic. I went to the Catholic church because that was one hour. But we had to have on those heels, hose, hat, and gloves. So I put all that on over my pajamas and I went to the Catholic church and came back and took it off. Yeah. But after I got out of college, I can't do it. I'm not a hypocrite. I'm really not. If I don't like something I don't have anything to do with it. That includes people. If I don't like you I just, hello, how are you and I keep going. I cannot see sitting, I have watched them shouting up and down the aisles in the church and come outside before they leave church grounds, they're fighting on the church

grounds. And elderly black women fighting on the church grounds on Sunday is one more comical sight. So I just stopped. I just simply stopped going. I just stopped going.

124.**Miles:** Were your parents big church goers? Did they go a lot?

125.**Rogers:** Oh, yes. Yeah, they did and I was brought up in the church. I had my first Easter speech when I was three which I still remember. And I went to Sunday School. I went to church. I went to B.Y.P.U. I went to every vacation Bible school at a black church in this city in the summer. So I went to school all year round because we went from church to church to Bible school all the time. I did. I grew up in the church. I read the Bible from Genesis to Revelations and backward. I had to take correspondence courses, Bible correspondence courses. I was a member of the usher board. I was a member of the junior missionaries. I was in the junior choir. If it was connected with the church, I was in it. And if I didn't go to church on Sunday I could not go outside. I had to stay in the house because I was too sick to go to church.

126.**Miles:** When you were involved in the church was it because you wanted to or your parents made you?

127.**Rogers:** No, this was what my parents wanted me to do and during that time you did what your parents wanted you to do. It was that particular time. But when I had children, as my children grew up I did not force them. If a child of mine wanted to go to church, I got up, I helped them do everything they had to do to go to church. I did not tell them you're going to church on Sunday. No. I let them make their own decision about that.

128.**Miles:** Did any of them start going?

129.**Rogers:** Yeah. Yes and I have two who sing in church choirs.

130.**Miles:** So when you were sixteen and you said you weren't going to church anymore, how did your parents react to that?

131.**Rogers:** My mom was very upset. She was much more upset because she found it out when I told the pastor and I told the pastor in the church office when I gave him the Bible back that they had given me for graduation. (Laughter)

132.**Miles:** And you said to the pastor?

133.**Rogers:** That I can't continue to do this. I know all about the adultery. I know about the child who was pregnant for you because she lived right around the corner. So he would bring us home after choir practice. It was always, don't worry about the children, daughter, I'll be glad to bring them home after. You know I'll see that they get home. And I knew so I always had him to bring me home first. Take me home first. He says well, I have to go... No, take me first. I have something to do. I have to go home first. So I'd get him to take me home first. Then he took everybody else home. And then the next thing we knew the young lady was pregnant and she admitted it was his. Then after several husbands became suspicious, the minister with their wives, and found out that was true. In fact, he got caught running down the street one night in his underwear because he didn't have time to get the pants. No, I'm not doing this. I'm just not doing this because I couldn't sit there. I just couldn't sit there and I knew I wasn't going to sit there in church. I had enough respect for

the church not to sit there and be rude. So I just stopped going and I was graduating from high school so that was the end of that anyway. I wasn't going to be there. So since I have moved back they have asked me to come back and I said I don't think so. Especially when their present minister said that he was voting himself a raise and there wasn't anything they could do about it. He had their minds and if they tried to do anything to him he would see that they were cursed. I said and you want me, no. So I don't. I do not attend. But there was a record out in the 1970's that was boycotted. It said that black people blame the other people for the system because we don't have a system of our own. The only thing we really have is what our forefathers left us and that was a Hallelujah church. And that's really basically what it is. And they don't use it correctly. They don't. And I just got tired of seeing the hypocrisy. I really did. And I don't think that religion is anything to play with and I can't see it doing it the way they do it. So I stopped going. But if that's your choice, I feel if that's your choice, that's fine. I feel it's a disservice to black people. I really do because we don't think if the people who are really, really into the church, if the minister tells them to jump off of a bridge, no other reason except Reverend Jones said do it, they'll do this. You are no longer thinking for yourself. You're letting somebody else do your thinking and that's wrong.

134.**Miles:** You were involved though in the civil rights activism and the churches were very heavily involved in that.

135.**Rogers:** They were.

136.**Miles:** From Martin Luther King on.

137.**Rogers:** That's true.

138.**Miles:** How did you...?

139.**Rogers:** How did I relate to that? I looked at the church as "a plant," the building. You can always meet in a black church. Black church is one place in the community where everybody can gather. I did not look at it as the black church having an involvement although Martin Luther King did start this, more or less, yeah. I'm not too pleased with Reverend Jesse Jackson though. And if he becomes president I will immediately give up my citizenship. I'm moving to Switzerland. I think we...

140.End of Tape 3 - Side A