

Karen Ferguson: So most everyone, people also left this area too.

Mary Rogers: Yes, to better themselves.

Karen Ferguson: Right.

Mary Rogers: Uh-huh.

Karen Ferguson: What kind of values do you think your parents instilled in you? You've talked a little bit about that, but could you say a little bit?

Mary Rogers: Values. Honesty, perseverance, integrity, independence. I would think sharing. Volunteer, volunteerism, that was one thing that we did a lot of that. I think that's why we do a lot of it now because it's instill in us that you are supposed to help your fellow man. You're supposed to come to their aid if they need it.

Karen Ferguson: Right.

Mary Rogers: Now, they didn't instill in us that you just do anything to get rich. Now that was one thing they looked like they tried to suppress, they didn't want you to get out there. And they want you to be honest, you get an honest living. I said independence, didn't I? Oh yeah, good education. Go to school. They'd advocate that. I'm sure there are other attributes that I ought to have but.

Karen Ferguson: When you were at home, who was the boss?

Mary Rogers: Well, I guess maybe I was the boss.

Karen Ferguson: Oh, you were the boss?

Mary Rogers: Yes.

Karen Ferguson: After your mother died?

Mary Rogers: Yes, uh-huh. Yes. And it is like that they would sort of cater to whatever I say because they thought that this was okay.

Karen Ferguson: When your mother died, did you start helping your father out, making decisions about money and budgeting?

Mary Rogers: Well, that was no problem because there was no money.

Karen Ferguson: Right. Okay.

Mary Rogers: And while I was a child, he bought—he always would. He'd get groceries when mother was there. He would always go do the shopping. I could make the list and he could shop by the list.

Karen Ferguson: Why do you think he went? I've heard several people talking about how their fathers or their husbands did the shopping. The women made the list, but the men did the shopping. Why do you think the men went to do the shopping?

Mary Rogers: I guess they wanted to hold onto the money.

Karen Ferguson: Oh, okay.

Mary Rogers: Well, my mother wasn't able to go and shop.

Karen Ferguson: Right.

Mary Rogers: But now this role model that I was telling about, Ms. Adams.

Karen Ferguson: Right.

Mary Rogers: Ms. Adams did her shopping, her home shopping. I don't think she, they went together rather, in it together. And I don't care a whole lot about shopping myself right now. I don't know what reason. But that was just the way it was. We just had a few women in, even in that area that went to town to get the groceries, they would write the list and they would go pick the feed. I don't wonder why that, sure enough. It was just the culture, I guess.

Karen Ferguson: Right. Where did your father go to do the shopping?

Mary Rogers: And really, the funny thing they used to say about him, if he would take that list.

Karen Ferguson: Whoops, sorry.

Mary Rogers: And if this particular store didn't have everything on that list, you better go get there because he wasn't going anywhere else to look for it.

Karen Ferguson: Okay.

Mary Rogers: So he would bring it down here. We had grocery stores.

Karen Ferguson: In Enfield?

Mary Rogers: Yeah, uh-huh. And then they had some stores out in the rural, but now they were very, just like it is today. They were very expensive and you could do better on into the town.

Karen Ferguson: Right. So did he go to Meyer's or?

Mary Rogers: Yeah.

Karen Ferguson: Or where did he go for groceries?

Mary Rogers: They did not go to Meyer's. They had others. There was a Dickens grocery store, there was a Pearson. And I don't believe my daddy shopped at Meyer's much.

Karen Ferguson: Okay. Do you know how he decided what store he would go to?

Mary Rogers: Yeah, I think maybe he went to the, well, I started saying he went to the store where he could get credit if he needed it. But Meyer's, I think Meyer's credit is something, I don't know how he decided. I don't know why they, how they decided that.

Karen Ferguson: Do you remember your father ever getting a loan from a storekeeper? Not for things at the store, but for machinery or to buy a little more land or anything like that, furnishing him?

Mary Rogers: No.

Karen Ferguson: Okay.

Mary Rogers: There was a man that lived up below us. No, above us, that they would get money from to buy food.

Karen Ferguson: Right.

Mary Rogers: And you paid back in the fall.

Karen Ferguson: Right, okay. So he wouldn't only get credit sometimes from the store owners, but he would get a loan from one of these—

Mary Rogers: Somebody that he could trust and he didn't mind.

Karen Ferguson: Right. So is this a White person who did that?

Mary Rogers: No, this one was a Black one.

Karen Ferguson: Okay. How did your parents, well, first of all, now you said when your father remarried, you lived in two different houses.

Mary Rogers: Yes.

Karen Ferguson: Now, did he live with his new wife?

Mary Rogers: Yes, he did.

Karen Ferguson: Oh, so you all were all by yourself?

Mary Rogers: Well, that's weekends when he would go.

Karen Ferguson: Okay.

Mary Rogers: And this is when these aunts would take their group, take their time to care for us.

Karen Ferguson: So he would go to his new wife's house on the weekends.

Mary Rogers: Mm-hmm.

Karen Ferguson: Okay. Did you have a good relationship with her or were you—?

Mary Rogers: Her children too.

Karen Ferguson: Okay. How far away did they live from?

Mary Rogers: I would say about five miles.

Karen Ferguson: How did your parents expect you to behave in front of adults?

Mary Rogers: I mean, be on your toes, I'm telling you. Yeah, they always had us to respect elders. They respect yourself, and anybody that you come in contact with. Is this what you mean?

Karen Ferguson: Now, did they ever tell you how to treat White people differently than Black people?

Mary Rogers: That's one thing that we did not do. We were not different. We didn't treat them differently.

Karen Ferguson: Okay. Do you remember them ever telling you how to stay out of trouble with White people in terms of maybe staying out of their way or anything like that?

Mary Rogers: No, they didn't, because see, we didn't have—I never had much contact with White people other than the little family that I helped.

Karen Ferguson: Right.

Mary Rogers: Until I went away from home, that was in 1943. And I think they just taught us to treat people as people.

Karen Ferguson: Right. Do you remember people getting into trouble with White people at all when you were growing up?

Mary Rogers: Growing up?

Karen Ferguson: Yeah.

Mary Rogers: No.

Karen Ferguson: No?

Mary Rogers: No.

Karen Ferguson: So you don't remember anybody there being any kind of violence or anything like that?

Mary Rogers: I really don't. The only, we read about it in Mississippi and places like that.

Karen Ferguson: Okay.

Mary Rogers: But so far as locally, no.

Karen Ferguson: Okay.

Mary Rogers: We had friends who lived on, or had a White farm owners too, but I've never known of anything to happen. Well, is that what you mean?

Karen Ferguson: Yeah, no, that's what I mean. What were the signs of segregation when you came into town?

Mary Rogers: Well, you had White water.

Karen Ferguson: Right.

Mary Rogers: You had White bathroom. And of course the eating places, you would have to go around to the

back. And to say if they had a hot dog stand, you would go to the Black one and the White went to the White.

Karen Ferguson: How about at the doctor? You went to the doctor's office?

Mary Rogers: Yeah, same way.

Karen Ferguson: Were there any Black doctors in this area?

Mary Rogers: Yes, we always had a Black doctor, but some of them could go to the Black doctor because if they had some means of getting money. But some of the sharecroppers had to go to—

Karen Ferguson: To the White doctor. And why did they have to go to the White doctors?

Mary Rogers: Well, because the farm on would not pay the Black doctor for their tenants. In other words, they'd have a contract. That's this whole thing in the relationship, they would just have a contract with a certain doctor and then these people would have to go to this doctor. And then whenever he sent the bill to them, the sharecropper would pay. I mean the landowner would pay the bill.

Karen Ferguson: Okay. Now do you think, because landowners didn't have this same kind of relationship with White, there's this White person who will pay your bills and so on, but you don't have independence because he controls where you go to the doctor and so on that, were there ever things that you could not do because you didn't have this White person protecting your family in that way?

Mary Rogers: Let's see. Run that by me again.

Karen Ferguson: I was wondering what, well, I'm not sure what I said. I'll just forget what I said. I just was wondering, were there ever times you could not go to the doctor because you couldn't pay the doctor, whereas the sharecropper could because the White—

Mary Rogers: Yeah, of course.

Karen Ferguson: Okay.

Mary Rogers: Of course. Well, that was with my father always tried to make preparations for that. He would. Yeah, that's true. They had the money and they could go. But we have never been turned down by our doctor.

Karen Ferguson: Right. But were there other things like that where sharecroppers could do go certain things or could get certain things because the White man would pay for it. And for landowners, you'd have to wait or you'd be denied something because you didn't have that protection or the payment.

Mary Rogers: Well, I can imagine so.

Karen Ferguson: Can you think of any other examples to that?

Mary Rogers: Well, I say using automobile mobile for an example, if I wanted a new car, I couldn't go down to that place and get no car. But if the sharecropper, if he had the confidence in the person who's working for him, yes, he could go and get a car and he would pay for that car. I seen that done.

Karen Ferguson: Right. But what was the negative side of being a sharecropper as opposed to a landowner?

Mary Rogers: It would be the negative side. He wasn't independent.

Karen Ferguson: Right. And what did that mean? What did his lack of independence mean?

Mary Rogers: Well, that's kind of like slavery.

Karen Ferguson: Right.

Mary Rogers: Suppress, so to speak.

Karen Ferguson: Right. Well, how would the landowner control the sharecropper's life? What kinds of things could he determine? Or tell the sharecropper he had to do?

Mary Rogers: Well, he'd take controls of the number of days the children could go to school.

Karen Ferguson: Okay. So he would say you can't send your—?

Mary Rogers: Not until the crop is out, where in them hours was getting out, but he was slowly getting out.

Karen Ferguson: Right.

Mary Rogers: Because three days you went to school and three days you would work.

Karen Ferguson: Yeah.

Mary Rogers: We didn't want to work on Saturday, but we did have to do it.

Karen Ferguson: Anything else can you think of that the landowner could control?

Mary Rogers: Well, they could control the amount of cash money you had.

Karen Ferguson: Right.

Mary Rogers: Now, I can't think.

Karen Ferguson: All right. I'm just interested in the difference between a landowner, and a sharecropper. But that's helpful.

Mary Rogers: And they control the amount of clothes that you could wear because they weren't going to put out so much money on clothes, so then you just weren't going to have a lot of it. He'd give you bare necessities.

Karen Ferguson: Right.

Mary Rogers: Because you wouldn't have—and then there are times when things would be going on and you want to attend.

Karen Ferguson: Right.

Mary Rogers: But you would have to, the crops came first.

Karen Ferguson: Right.

Mary Rogers: So you controlled some of your activities.

Karen Ferguson: Right. Do you think that was any ever a problem with, do you remember White people in this area ever being resentful or not approving of the fact that there were prosperous Black landowners in this area?

Mary Rogers: I guess maybe I was naive.

Karen Ferguson: Right. Can you imagine that happening?

Mary Rogers: Well, that would be the only way they could control things, is to keep landowners from owning which property. Yeah.

Karen Ferguson: And did that happen just, were Black landowners denied buying certain lands?

Mary Rogers: Well, I would think so.

Karen Ferguson: You don't remember your father getting into that?

Mary Rogers: No. I guess maybe he didn't tell everything.



Karen Ferguson: Right.

Mary Rogers: And he was the type of person that did shelter. I can't imagine they talked to themselves. But I think they tried to keep, he didn't want us to be hostile to nobody, really. I do remember that I had an uncle that, this was my grandfather's land. He was married to my father's sister and that had some land. And a lot of times he would go and get money from somebody here in town. And a lot of times, they would have them get the money and would be, might not quite pay for it.

Mary Rogers: Well, this would be hanging over his head, and never just get further and further in debt. Well, he did this on his own because he could have slacked up, not gotten any more money. And I think maybe this man was really waiting to get that land. But his wife was very smart, she wasn't going to let him do it. So they would make some kind of arrangements where they could get this bill paid. They'd keep him from getting land. But until this uncle got sick, were they able to get that land paid for? The boys just took it and worked and did without, and just took the money and put it on that debt.

Karen Ferguson: Right. So that was really people under—

Mary Rogers: Yeah, right.

Karen Ferguson: Saved the land at all costs.

Mary Rogers: Yes, saved. That's right. And we've had a lot of people to do it that way. Yes, of course. I think that's how a lot of lands got away from the people is by owing so much to the landowner.

Karen Ferguson: Right.

Mary Rogers: That you just lose that.

Karen Ferguson: All right, maybe we could talk a little bit about school now.

Mary Rogers: About school?

Karen Ferguson: Yeah. Now, where did you go to school first?

Mary Rogers: There was a little Eden Rosenwald. You remember Rosenwald Schools?

Karen Ferguson: Mm-hmm.

Mary Rogers: You don't remember.

Karen Ferguson: No, I know about them.

Mary Rogers: But you've heard of them, you've read of it. Yeah. Went to local, a three room school. I think they taught three classes in each room.

Karen Ferguson: And you said you could only go Monday, Wednesday, Friday?

Mary Rogers: Yes. Well, that was during the cotton picking.

Karen Ferguson: Were there some children who couldn't go, who never went to school or were only able to go every, just very—

Mary Rogers: I don't believe there were any children that were not able to go to school. I really don't. But they didn't go, they were not pushed to go. They were not encouraged to go. And then there were some that their fathers felt that work was more important. And then when the crops were in, they were so far behind, they were discouraged.

Karen Ferguson: Right.

Mary Rogers: So I think I was thankful for my father's method. His method was better.

Karen Ferguson: Right. Did many people follow this Monday, Wednesday, Friday thing?

Mary Rogers: Yes. All of them in my family did. Yeah.

Karen Ferguson: And how did you catch up with the lessons that you missed?

Mary Rogers: The teacher would send it to us.

Karen Ferguson: Okay.

Mary Rogers: Yeah. They always had good relationship with the teachers. I mean, too much so, because if anything happened, we were in school, she would bring us home. I mean, she would walk with us home, see the teacher lived in the community, knew everybody. And if we act up in school and she had to get us, they would get us again when we got back. Now, that's for sure. But that's how we managed.

Karen Ferguson: Right. Did you like school?

Mary Rogers: Not necessarily.

Karen Ferguson: No?

Mary Rogers: This is what thing that we had to do. This was on the agenda.

Karen Ferguson: Right. What didn't you like about school?

Mary Rogers: Too confining. We're used to being your own boss. Being the boss. You couldn't be the boss at school too.

Karen Ferguson: Right.

Mary Rogers: Well, I don't know. I am so sorry that I didn't apply myself because I could have done better. Much, much, much better. And I guess maybe I wanted to play.

Karen Ferguson: Were your parents very involved in your schooling?

Mary Rogers: Yes, we was growing up. Yeah. Like you talking about attending PTA and working with the teachers and.

Karen Ferguson: Making sure you do your homework.

Mary Rogers: Oh yes. Well now I did. It was something about homework that I liked to do and maybe I didn't dislike school all that much.

Karen Ferguson: Yeah.

Mary Rogers: It wasn't one of my favorites, I'll tell you that.

Karen Ferguson: Well, you did you have enough time to do your lessons at home? You were doing so much work.

Mary Rogers: Yeah, that geometry was my Waterloo. And I would study of those theorems more or less when I would be making the biscuits. I'd be doing the theorems. Theorems and studying my English. And we stood it all the way on the school bus all the way to school. You get with a gang that it likes to study. You get with them and then you start arguing and say this way and then they'll tell you no, it's like this. So you learn a lot like that. You say it wrong so you can get, that's how we did when I was in nurses training. We would all get together and study it. And that's how, listen, you get your lesson then. And this is the way we would be on that school bus, go get on that bus and study our lesson, all that. We didn't have some teachers, you better get back the night before, because you had it coming if you were not quite right. But the teachers would really get you if you didn't get your lesson, you didn't want to be embarrassed.

Karen Ferguson: What would they do to you if you didn't know?

Mary Rogers: Well, they had little things that they did. You were smaller. You get in the corner and they'll put a dunce cap on you. I don't think they do that now.

Karen Ferguson: No.

Mary Rogers: And I have actually had been paddled in my hands for not being able to get my lesson. First day in high school, they can just give you a D or E or something like that. Now that's just as bad as a whipping.

Karen Ferguson: Right. Do you remember a favorite teacher?

Mary Rogers: I didn't have a favorite teacher in the elementary school, but I did. I had some favorite teachers in high school. I had my English teacher and she was a good friend of mine. Maybe I didn't. Well, they were all so good to me though. And they were just so understanding. Really, they were really understanding. They knew my situation.

Karen Ferguson: Right.

Mary Rogers: And they worked with me faithfully.

Karen Ferguson: What would they do for you because?

Mary Rogers: They would make sure that I got my assignments and if I missed a test, they would let me come in and make the test up. Things like that. And the principal, this nurse that was my model. Well, she was the public health nurse in the community. Her husband was the principal of the high school.

Karen Ferguson: Oh, okay.

Mary Rogers: He gave me a, I forgot about that. I did have a job. I was working high school for \$3 a month. \$3 a month and looked like 50. And so he let me clean the teacherage.

Karen Ferguson: Oh, okay.

Mary Rogers: I would go, I had a period. I did not, in my activity period, I worked. I went over to that school and cleaned that teacherage up. And he just taught me a lot too because he move around in that, he'll go around the edges of that table and look at it and there was any dust, he let me know.

Karen Ferguson: Right.

Mary Rogers: And so I got a great education from that too.

Karen Ferguson: Did your teachers ever play favorite in school?

Mary Rogers: We thought they did.

Karen Ferguson: Who did you think they played favorite?

Mary Rogers: Well, I mean sometimes they would be favorite to me, and then sometimes they'd be fair to some of the others. All depend. They had the different reasons for favoritism.

Karen Ferguson: Right.

Mary Rogers: Because sometimes you have a good student, they would get all As, they deserve favoritism.

Karen Ferguson: Right.

Mary Rogers: Well, I didn't think there was favoritism. I just thought they were really being considerate.

Karen Ferguson: Right. How much schooling were your parents able to get?

Mary Rogers: How much what?

Karen Ferguson: Schooling, how much?

Mary Rogers: Oh, now my mother, I think she was about 5th grader.

Karen Ferguson: Okay.

Mary Rogers: And Daddy may have been about 7th or 8th grader. 8th grade.

Karen Ferguson: So you were really, were able to go beyond, much beyond.

Mary Rogers: Yes, uh-huh.

Karen Ferguson: Where did you go to high school?

Mary Rogers: Eastman High School.

Karen Ferguson: Okay. And did you enjoy, did you like that?

Mary Rogers: Yes, I did.

Karen Ferguson: Better than elementary school?

Mary Rogers: Did what?

Karen Ferguson: Better than elementary school?

Mary Rogers: Yes, uh-huh. Yes, because we got to ride on the school bus.

Karen Ferguson: Right. When you went to high school.

Mary Rogers: It was a long ways though. It was a long ways, but I didn't realize it was a long ways then I do now. I wouldn't want my children to have to do that for anything.

Karen Ferguson: Right. How far was it? How long did it take you?

Mary Rogers: It was 30 miles. It was 15 miles one way. 30 miles round trip. And you knew how hungry you can be in the evening. But that was another thing that my father would do. He would always be back there. He would have our dinner ready when we got back.

Karen Ferguson: So he cooked?

Mary Rogers: Yes sirree. Yeah, he did. He cooked, and all my brothers can cook.

Karen Ferguson: Do you think they would've learned to do that if your mother hadn't died?

Mary Rogers: Yeah, because she believed in teaching the boys like she did girls.

Karen Ferguson: Oh, really? Was that unusual?

Mary Rogers: Sort of. All the mothers in that community didn't do it.

Karen Ferguson: Right. When you were at high school, what kind of organizations were you involved in?

Mary Rogers: I was in the Home Economic Club, Glee Club and can't sing a bit. A Science Club and—well, we didn't have too much. They used to in high school. That was about the only thing I remember being in, because we didn't have any other clubs.

Karen Ferguson: Did many, the children that you went to elementary school, did they go on to high school?

Mary Rogers: I tell you, we had, it was eight, I believe, in that class. And three finished.

Karen Ferguson: Right. Okay. Just eight people in the whole class in high school?

Mary Rogers: Mm-hmm.

Karen Ferguson: So only eight people entered with you?

Mary Rogers: Mm-hmm.

Karen Ferguson: So most children didn't go to high school.

Mary Rogers: That's right. My high school class started off with 103. And at the end of the four years, it was 35.

Karen Ferguson: Why did people drop out?

Mary Rogers: Well, for a lot of them was they were not interested. And some of them didn't have the encouragement at home and, well, I wouldn't say they wouldn't be, they were not able to. And a lot of them, they wouldn't want to go to high school. They hate going to high school, but I went to high school with something great and you just had to be all dressed up and all fine and everything. And some of them said they didn't have adequate clothes to go with that wouldn't necessarily sew.

Karen Ferguson: Right.

Mary Rogers: So you just wear what you have. Just keep it clean.

Karen Ferguson: Right. Did more girls than boys go to high school?

Mary Rogers: Let's see. Yes because, no, we had quite a few boys. But now after that eight, only one was a boy. And more girls graduated than boys.

Karen Ferguson: Were you allowed to go out with boys when you were in high school, to court?

Mary Rogers: Did I like to?

Karen Ferguson: Were you allowed by your father to see boys when you were in high school?

Mary Rogers: No.

Karen Ferguson: No?

Mary Rogers: Not yet. Not yet.

Karen Ferguson: Were other people, were other girls seeing boys?

Mary Rogers: Some of them. Some of them had, their mothers were not as strict as our people as our parents were. 16, 17. We had company at home. But definitely no going out.

Karen Ferguson: Now, how did you decide to be a nurse? You said that this woman, this public health nurse

encouraged you. So you knew her all the way through high school?

Mary Rogers: That's right. When I was seven years old, she used to come to our house to see my mother. My mother, after I said she was ailing, but I think my mother had about, she had two children after she became ill. And this public health nurse, I could see her right now, she'd come to the house and she would do my mother's urine and then things that public health nurses do.

Karen Ferguson: Right.

Mary Rogers: And I said, "I think I'm going to be a nurse too." She said, "Yes, you are." And from that very day, she just kept nurturing me along. And when I finished I said, "Well, Lord, I don't see how—", we had done all this research and finding different schools and oh, I just wanted to go. I even had the ambition to go to Vanderbilt and you know I could have never entered, gotten into that school. But the Lord opened up the way so that I could go to Kate B. Reynolds Memorial Hospital in Winston-Salem.

Karen Ferguson: Okay.

Mary Rogers: She had provided this school for the Blacks. And that's where I started off.

Karen Ferguson: Right. Now, before you met this woman, did your brothers and sisters go to school after high school?

Mary Rogers: No.

Karen Ferguson: Okay.

Mary Rogers: They didn't.

Karen Ferguson: You were the only one?

Mary Rogers: That's right.

Karen Ferguson: And you think it was all because of this woman? Or was there anything else that encouraged you to go?

Mary Rogers: And the cotton field. No, I don't know. I just always said you wanted to just do better if I could.

Karen Ferguson: Was it a big difference for you to go to Winston-Salem?

Mary Rogers: Was a big difference?

Karen Ferguson: For you from moving from the country to the city?



Mary Rogers: Yes, indeed. Now that was a transition. That was a transition.

Karen Ferguson: Right.

Mary Rogers: Away. Oh, that's a long way. Well really, it took about seven hours to get home from Winston-Salem at that time. And I didn't get home except Christmas and a week in the summer. No, I didn't even come home at Christmastime sometimes. We was just spending most of the time on highways going in.

Karen Ferguson: So you said you were homesick the first.

Mary Rogers: Oh, I was so homesick. I'd go to that bathroom and I would cry and cry, and cry, and cry. After they get that little cry, that was like a dose of medicine. And they'd tell me. And those, I didn't understand why those other girls were not crying. They were not home. Some of them had already been to college and been away from home. But I had never been away from home like that. I went up to take my pre interest test. And I said, I don't care if I didn't pass that test because I don't want to come back up there anyway.

Karen Ferguson: Right.

Mary Rogers: They told me to come on and I did, I went on up there and really, that was a new place, was nice place. I didn't get to appreciate it until I left there.

Karen Ferguson: Now, who paid for you to go to there?

Mary Rogers: Well, Uncle Sam did.

Karen Ferguson: Oh, okay.

Mary Rogers: Now, I did not sign up for the cadet program, but I reaped the benefit. I reaped the benefit from that program.

Karen Ferguson: Okay. So the government paid your tuition?

Mary Rogers: Yes.

Karen Ferguson: And your [indistinct 00:35:53]?

Mary Rogers: No, I didn't get any stipend. So I had brothers. I had three brothers in the Army and one would send money this month. The other one would send makeups in the next.

Karen Ferguson: Oh, okay.

Mary Rogers: And that's how I got through. And I worked some then too. There was a lady who was in charge of this outpatient department.

Karen Ferguson: Right.

Mary Rogers: At the health department. I would go over into, out there where that boy and Grace School of Medicine is. Get on the bus and go out there and cleaning her house. Every weekend.

Karen Ferguson: Doesn't look like you enjoyed that too much.

Mary Rogers: Huh?

Karen Ferguson: You didn't enjoy that too much, huh?

Mary Rogers: Well, I was so thankful.

Karen Ferguson: Okay.

Mary Rogers: I was so thankful that I could get extra money. And then there was another funeral home director was there and right down there at the nurse's home and she had some little girls, three little girls, and she needed a babysitter sometime. And they would let me go over and sit with them. And so that was another way I have some extra spinning change.

Karen Ferguson: Did you think you would've been able to go to nursing school if you hadn't been helped by the government?

Mary Rogers: It would've been hard. Very hard. I think my brothers would've sacrificed, after I got started, but looked like it wasn't going to get started. I could not see my way. I couldn't see my way. And there was a teacher who was teaching out there where I went to elementary school and she had been, I didn't know that she was really looking for something. And so she brought the pamphlet home to me. I had tried in Charlotte and I was just about to give up. And so this nurse came and somebody must have tipped her off and said, "I don't believe Rebecca's going to school." And so she came down there and she took me there. I could not back up now. I just have to, you got to do something.

Karen Ferguson: Right.

Mary Rogers: In other words, you got to try to find some kind of finances. And so this girl from Winston-Salem brought the information to me and I said, "Well this is great." But my brothers didn't want me to sign up to go into the service. And that's why I didn't get the government stipend.

Karen Ferguson: Right, okay. What kinds of things did you do for fun in Winston-Salem when you were there?

Mary Rogers: I just went to church.

Karen Ferguson: Okay.

Mary Rogers: I just went to church. I don't move any fun things that I did. I was a serious-minded person and I didn't have a whole lot of fun. And I should have because they had plenty of things I guess. Now, if there would be a busload of fellas to come over into the nurse's home, we would entertain them or I would fix, help with the food. But so far as intermingling with them, that was just not my cup of tea.

Karen Ferguson: So where would they come from, Winston-Salem?

Mary Rogers: Fort [indistinct 00:39:35] at Greensboro.

Karen Ferguson: Oh, so they were army.

Mary Rogers: Yes. And the house lady always just thought that they were such fine fellas. We were happy to prepare their food for them. And then we entertained the other girls when they're going back to Greensboro.

Karen Ferguson: Did you—

Mary Rogers: I guess that was USO, I guess.

Karen Ferguson: Did you join any organizations when you were in Winston-Salem?

Mary Rogers: No.

Karen Ferguson: Does it?

Mary Rogers: I don't remember any organization?

Karen Ferguson: Did nurses have sororities or?

Mary Rogers: No, we did not. We did not have sororities. It's just of late that they started having sororities.

Karen Ferguson: Right.

Mary Rogers: We didn't.

Karen Ferguson: So what did you do when you finished up at nursing school?

Mary Rogers: I stopped my nursing school?

Karen Ferguson: Yeah.

Mary Rogers: I got a job in Tarbor], North Carolina, a 21 bed clinic. See, headed for home. Wanted to get back home so bad. And you knew you take anything to get back home. So I stopped there and worked there six months. Then I went back to North Carolina Central to study public health.

Karen Ferguson: Okay.

Mary Rogers: And I went to say I went there a year and a half, and I got a job here in Halifax County. I was obligating. I got a scholarship to do public health from the State Department.

Karen Ferguson: Right.

Mary Rogers: And I was obligated to work two years in the Depressed areas. And I stayed at 31. You see, and I should have maybe.

Karen Ferguson: So you were 31 years in Halifax County?

Mary Rogers: Yes.

Karen Ferguson: Now what was that like? What kind? What you worked for the county government?

Mary Rogers: Well, local. Yes, that's right. County government.

Karen Ferguson: So they had Black nurses, public health?

Mary Rogers: Well, this Black nurse that was my role model, was the first Black nurse. She was a first nurse in Halifax County, public health nurse in Halifax County. And so she was just special and she was there. And then we had a super health officer. This man could see way over in the future.

Karen Ferguson: Right.

Mary Rogers: I mean, years ahead of most of the doctors. And he was just a conscientious, smart man and he wanted you to do your work. So then I came here and had an interview with them. I think maybe he interviewed me because of her. And I came here to work and on probation for two years. And I stayed long. I mean, right.

Karen Ferguson: Did you face much discrimination on the job?

Mary Rogers: Mm-hmm.

Karen Ferguson: What kinds of things?

Mary Rogers: Well, a lot of times I was discriminated against. And you could see the people being discriminated when you work in a setting where you had to serve both races.

Karen Ferguson: But now is this after, when you started, did you just have Black clients or did you—Black patients?

Mary Rogers: Yeah. That's mostly what we dealt with was Black patients. Right.

Karen Ferguson: What kinds of conditions did you see in the county when you started doing that? What was the—?

Mary Rogers: We have high infant death rate. A lot of unwed mothers, syphilis and gonorrhea, venereal diseases, tuberculosis, deep bone defects.

Karen Ferguson: Right.

Mary Rogers: Just all, they were the major things.

Karen Ferguson: Right. Were there midwives? Were midwives—

Mary Rogers: Yes, had midwives and midwife deliverers.

Karen Ferguson: Right. What do you think of that? What you think of midwives?

Mary Rogers: Well, I just thought it was just time for us to do better.

Karen Ferguson: Right.

Mary Rogers: I did. And they were just not trained like midwives should be trained and I'm sure there are a lot of things that they did that we never really ever know that they did. But the ones that we had were gracious ladies.

Karen Ferguson: Did you work with them at all?

Mary Rogers: Yes, I did. They were under our supervision. If this midwife lived in your area, she was your midwife.

Karen Ferguson: Did she have the midwives have to register with you?

Mary Rogers: Right, register. They had register. They had that 10 classes and they had their 10 clinics too.

Karen Ferguson: Now, were these the same midwives who had always delivered children?

Mary Rogers: Yes.

Karen Ferguson: Okay.

Mary Rogers: Yeah.

Karen Ferguson: So for the first time, they were regulated or—?

Mary Rogers: Say what?

Karen Ferguson: Regulated? They were regulated by the County?

Mary Rogers: Right. As I say, the man, the health officer was brilliant, honey. He covered everybody.

Karen Ferguson: Right.

Mary Rogers: He really did his job. He did his job. He was concerned about environmental and environment. He knew what he was doing.

Karen Ferguson: Right.

Mary Rogers: He was just a joy to work for him. You had to work hard, but it was a joy to work for him.

Karen Ferguson: Now, did—