

Margaret Sampson Rogers: —[indistinct 00:00:02] to fourth grade. So that, one of the other fourth grade teachers can take my class while I have hers 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 cartridge ink pens, and we just flung the pen, so it made dots on the paper. Then we drew 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.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: And, 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 16. I remember what it was like to be 17. And a lot of times, the folks forget that. That's the problem with the sex education stuff. I was watching Laurel Avenue. I was never so disgusted when this lady is hollering the daughter, 16, and she has condoms in her purse. She doesn't have any business with condoms. She's not old enough.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: I just wanted to ask one question. What were you doing when you were 16? 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 21-year-old son had her pregnant a few years ago. At the time, she said that she got pregnant, he was in basic training in Orlando. Now 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 a condom?" He said, "No." I said, "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 a 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.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: And when you ask, you were told, "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 hasn't chastised her child. So I ask questions while the Whites around, and then I get your answers. I had to figure that stuff out.

Kara Miles: When you were talking about—What did you say? Bastard youngins.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: Yeah, bastard youngins.

Kara Miles: I assume that means that unmade women with kids were treated were looked down upon.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: They were. 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. So it was still a double standard, because the 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.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: 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 told her how not to. But, you couldn't during that time. I know I couldn't ask my mother anything about sex. I had to ask my librarian at high school, because every question I asked, 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 ask, who would tell you what was right and what was wrong.

Kara Miles: And you would go to the librarian at school?

Margaret Sampson Rogers: Yes. Yes, I went to her. I used to call her my second mom. She had a miscarriage. And I was in the 10th 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 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.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: And so, I'd ask her. And she would sit and talk to me. My mother got married when—She ran away from home when she was 13. And she had a child. She ran away from home when she was 12. She had a baby when she was 13. Once I became 12, 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 street lights come on. I just simply refused to be home before those streetlights came on. I was just too old for that.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: She talked about people having children and not being married and people having sex. They never used the word sex of course. No, no. You said that, you got slapped in the mouth. The girls were called dirty and no good. And they usually would say, "Well, the apple doesn't fall far from the tree." I'd say, "What are you talking about?" "Well, the mom is no good, therefore the daughter can't be no good." If one person in the family did something, everybody in the whole family was blamed for it.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: And so, they did. They picked who you could talk to. People call 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, you can't talk to them. But I usually would pick—Those were the people I talked to. And if I had to talk to them about her knowing, then 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. And that's what's so sad. What is so sad.

Kara Miles: The men who got these women pregnant were they looked down upon?

Margaret Sampson 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 shallow as property, then the women in North Carolina know, if they're raped 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.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: I run into a lot of problem. 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. 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 will say, "Well, 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 the name didn't have anything to do with it. I don't have to change my name. I changed my name that I belong. He knows I'm his wife. Okay? I have my own life. And that's the way—I think I was liberated before they knew what the term was.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: I've never been a domesticated female. Never have. No. 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 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 '40s and the '50s, oh, good grief, it was definitely asserted. You had no life. You were Mrs. John Smith. You had no name, nothing. That was it. And, 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 it, and damned if you don't. And I just decided that, "No, I don't think so."

Kara Miles: Talk about that. Tell me more.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: What? About how the differences—The way you were treated?

Kara Miles: Yeah.

Margaret Sampson 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 teeth 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.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: 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 Ms. Ann's house, why can't she—" "Oh no, White women don't do that." "Well, why don't White women do that? White women, Black women. Why?" "Well, White women just don't scrub the toilet." And I want to say that, "But you use the toilet. If you use the toilet, then you can clean it."

Margaret Sampson Rogers: So you had the discrimination to belittlement, I guess, from both sides. And then, it 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. Yeah. 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. "But no, I don't think so." But it was there, and it still is, it still is. There's still Jim Crows—it's called something differently now, and it's not as out in the open as it was. But it's all still there. There's still organizations that, if you fight hard enough, they'll let you join, but they're going to try and make it so uncomfortable that you don't want to be there. But, those are the types of situations I love to get into.

Kara Miles: Yeah, for sure.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: Yeah. I chased the teacher at Hoggard 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 hers out. Yeah, yeah. I would drink out and tell, "No. What brand of coffee says. 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. Put my students at the table where they should eat in the cafeteria. And then, I'd go sit next to her.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: And I did this to her for a year. And, that's when she discovered that her lily White daughter was pregnant with a Black boy. And the clan 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 12 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 were 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. And so, we had to work together. So everywhere she went, I just plopped right down next to her. I'd sit on the arm with a chair, I'd squeeze next to her. She couldn't get rid of me. She just couldn't get rid of me.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: 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, "And see how it worked out." I said, "None of the Black rubbed off, none of it. 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 had three or four kids doing fine. When her daughter broke her leg, my husband was getting transferred, and so I was resigning.

The daughter came up missing. They had the highway patrol looking for her, couldn't find her. She had hitchhiked 27 miles to my house. And I'm saying, "You folk are going to get me killed yet. You got the highway patrolling everybody out looking for a White girl with a broken leg and here you are in my house. You're going to get me killed. They'll think I kidnapped you." "Oh, Ms. Rogers, they're not going to think that."

Margaret Sampson Rogers: 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 then, 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 any more 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. "We got homework, this the weekend." "I know." I said, "This way you won't have to bug your parents all weekend. 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 to students, mail them out of my own pocket, and let them know, "I'm sending such and such home, so that you'll know that they're supposed to have it." Oh yeah, I made you work.

Kara Miles: Well, you said when you were growing up that teachers were thought of as God.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: Yes. They were. Well, maybe that's too strong a word, but the teacher was bigger than life. You did what the teacher told you to do. There was no backtalk. There was no misbehave. If you misbehave, the teacher spanked you. When the teacher spanked you, then that meant she was going to call your mother. When she called your mother, you already knew you had a spanking for misbehaving. 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'd know that whatever you did is going to cause you at least three to four whoopings. Why do it? Why do it?

Margaret Sampson Rogers: And it was the same thing in the neighborhood, not just the Black folk 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 13th Street. Ms. Zora's Fish Market was their 15th and Castle. And 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.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: She says, "I'm sending Margaret up to the fish market and this is how much fish or seafood I want." I said, "Okay." Mama would stand outside, 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, Ms. Zora's standing out there. When I got there, she prepared the order. She would tell me, "Hold it." She'd get on the phone, she'd say, "Mary, she's on her way back." She'd come outside. She'd said, "Now stop and play with them little snotty nose youngins down there if you want to, and I'm going to come down the street and break your butt."

Margaret Sampson Rogers: I'd get on that bike and I'd come on down. She'd stand there until I got to the

corner. When I turned the corner, my mother could see me. If Ms. Zora saw me somewhere doing something I was not supposed to do, she would tear that honey up and call mama. My mama would get me, because Ms. 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. 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 get on the phone and call her." And you better say, "No ma'am." Or "Yes ma'am, she said I could come." And if you said no, she said, "Okay. And you got 10 minutes to get back where you belong. And I'm going to call me Mama and see if you're over there." And, you didn't have all these problems.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: But the parents now, you better not touch your children. And, the only time I lost it, I did, in the classroom I lost my temper. I completely lost it. And I snatched the 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 4:00, 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 a curtain. And when I snatched her by that arm up out the chair, I just ripped it. And I took her by arm to the principal's office, took my foot, kicked this door open and threw her in. And I said, "Take her, because if I look at her five more seconds, I kill her."

Margaret Sampson Rogers: And the next day, the secretary said, she didn't say anything to me, because she had never seen anybody's face look like that. She said, "Her eyes were blood-red and my face was gray." She said, "I'd never seen anybody look like that." It usually took me about 35 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, looked at the principal, he looked at me and dropped his head.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: 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?" Mama reached down and snatched her shoe off to beat her to death. The principle had to snatch her off of her. In the room, she told him he better move, "Because I'll get you too. This is my child, and she does not act like this." But see, parents don't do this anymore.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: Okay. So then, she was suspended for five days. And, the day she came back, we were going on a field trip to 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 a day in the library." We went to Chapel Hill. And the kids came back and talked about it with a wonderful time they had, and of course. But that was the only time I really lost it with a student.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: I had to defend myself from one, twice. Once down at Havelock Cherry Point. He was 18-years-old in the eighth grade. 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. I did. It was comical. It was really comical. For a long, long

time I had long hair. And, I never weighed more than 105, 6 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 would leave for somebody 18-years-old in eighth grade." And so, he said, "Oh, you're going." And I was on crutches, because I was having a problem with phlebitis. And, while he's busy watching me, he's not watching my hand. And I snatched one of those crutches and beat him down to the floor with it.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: And the principal was very upset, because she was afraid of his parents. And, 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, then I don't. I agree with you." So I just walked out and got in the car and left. And she said, "Holly, 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 says, "Well, I just wanted to tell you if he pulls another gun on me, the sheriff's coming and get one. Undertaker's coming and 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. And, no, no.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: Down in Rafford, 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." I knew it would be no problem. They went in there and they sat down until I got there. So I walked on and I said, "Hey, guys. Hey, I love a good fight. But, let's make it even. Let's make it two against two." So one is telling me, "Look, you don't have anything to do with this. Why don't you take your little old so-and-so right on in the classroom, mind your business." And while he's busy running off with the mouth, I had gotten close to him, and I snatched his arm, 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. Bledso looked up and he saw the razor. He said, "Enough said, turn him loose." He picked up the phone and called the cops.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: 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 has scared me to death. I am really scared, but I can't let him know this." So this day, I took my trench coat, and I took a piece of newspaper, and I rolled it up, 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, "And you can choose whichever 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.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: I got in that car and I just sat there. "One of these days, your bluff is going to cause 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. And, 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 says, "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 are 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, "All right." And I went in the office.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: Secretary and a few of the teachers and counselors asked me, "What are you doing in here?" I said, "Mr. Sauce 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?" And she said, "Yes, I did." She's very impertinent. They said "What happened?" She 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." They said, "She doesn't miss. She a reading teacher." I just looked at down and smiled. But I was glad when I started looking older, because I did. I ran into a lot of problems with the high school kids, especially.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: 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 times, the Whites locked it to keep us out. And so, 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 are getting in here." They said, "We can't get in here." I said, "Watch." And 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 on the other side on the ground and said, "Now what you waiting for?"

Margaret Sampson Rogers: 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 locked the gate, so then we'd have to climb back out. But the folk kept saying, "You don't act like any teacher we've ever known. You just don't." I said, "What? We have a job to do, so we do it. You respect me. I respect you. We get it done. Simple as that." And that's just the way it was. Don't put an obstacle in front 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. Well, I mean, after the 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, "Please go ahead and announce that you're running for mayor. I'll see what we can do about that."

Margaret Sampson Rogers: 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 5 or 10 minutes for them to realize they've been wrong. And 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 that 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." It's too late, because I'm still smiling at you going on down the street. And that's the only reason I think it really doesn't bother me, because I had fun with it. I really had fun with it. It was great. It was a great time. It was fun. Fun because they didn't realize it.



Kara Miles: I think I'm out of question. But if you're not out of words—

Margaret Sampson Rogers: No. I'm not done talking until tomorrow. I enjoy talking about it. It was a great time. One reason I enjoyed talking about it, is its history. Recently, the Coastline Publishing Company published a booklet that I did, it's called, *Bet You Didn't Know: Lord Cape Fear History Trivia*. And 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. We'll let the answer machine get it. But it's still not selling that well. They published 200. And, I think the publisher said 110 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—

Speaker 1 (answering machine): [indistinct 00:30:28] I was still talking to my mind—

Margaret Sampson Rogers: That's my husband.

Speaker 1 (answering machine): —I'll talk to you later.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: There is so much Black history in this area that is 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 Kooners. And the Kooner Festival was started by Blacks in the 1700. Blacks stopped them from having the Kooner festival. New Orleans says, in print, documented, in Freeport Grand Bahamas, their carnival and Mardi Gras are based on Wilmington's Kooner 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. Okay. So when I started talking about the Kooner Festival, folks said, "Get out of here." I said, "You didn't know that." But Blacks won't let them bring it back.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: I've been trying to get Dr. Lucy interested. Maybe it's something the Black studies group at UNCW might want to do, because it's a Christmas festival. It'd 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 1800s were Black. New Hanover County was Black controlled. They had a Black mayor, Black sheriff, Black alderman, 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. And they were Black people, but they wore white shirts and black pants. So they'd call them snowbirds. Okay? 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. And then, they built the school, and the schools were segregated, and his kids couldn't go to it.

Kara Miles: Who was that who built it?

Margaret Sampson Rogers: I don't remember his name. I have been trying to get that information back. I

started to research in '84, and I lost a lot by going back and forth to the hospital. But I do remember the 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, 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.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: So, I thought about doing it that way. And I did 500 questions and answers. And, the folks that have read it have all come back with, "I didn't know that. That they 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, and she allowed me to make a copy of it.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: So, after all of the people in Washington had told me, just over and over, there were no POWs 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, our POW camp was not supposed to be within the city limits. But see, it was in a Black neighborhood, so what the heck?

Margaret Sampson Rogers: So, there was one in front of Williston. There was one at the airport and one out on Carolina Beach Road. And 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 them 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'd love to hear them talk. We couldn't understand what these Germans were saying, but we'd love to hear them talk.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: So, once I started writing, since I've been home, I did a short story called The Friendly Enemy. And so, 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 liberty ships here that were used during the war to carry goods to the troops and whatever. And, you could walk from ship to ship from the state port over in the Brunswick County and never touch water. That's how many ships there were. So we had blackouts, we had troops, bivouacked in the park, and they patrolled the streets at night. Wilmington was shelled. The Japanese fired on Wilmington during World War II. They don't tell you that.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: 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 for even 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 they 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 to run the diesel, I could run the train too. So we used to run it up and down the yard. Mad fun running the train, but I was the only female around who 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.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: My kids have gotten to the point where they say, "Yeah, mom, we know. This happened there." Because I keep pointing it out. I'm saying, "Well, next week you come, that building could be gone. You won't know what was there." So that was why I tried to do that booklet. And, my problem is trying to get any of my writings published. Nobody wants to publish them, because I'm not a known author. But, 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 '50s and the entertainment we had, and 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 braid 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.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: One of the parents in our neighborhood had a store. And, they sold rice loose. So the rice that would fall on the floor, he would give to his daughters, and we would play with it. We would cook rice in the tops of mason jars. And, 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 of this. This was the type stuff that we played. We climbed trees. I walked around in my underwear and no shirt at 12 years of age, because at 12 I only weighed 50 pounds. So I was running around with just my underwear. We are playing. We were not hurting anybody. We were playing stickball, and playing with the grass dolls, and climbing trees, sitting on the steps, listening to the old people tell their stories.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: 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 his picture on a postcard, and they sold it around town. The one that I had, I gave to the Cape Field Museum. I gave them a lot of pictures to put in their archives. And, 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, and sugar, and stick it in our mouth, so we could be like them, while we sat and talked to them.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: And there was an old lady named Carrie Mosley who told us about seeing a mermaid at a hotel. That's what Ms. Carey 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, and to see, and let her go. And this was down, she said, at the Orton Hotel. So that's what Ms. Carey 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'd get tired, and you'd 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.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: When Bill Cosby tells the story about his dad saying he had to walk five miles of school uphill both ways, how they had to walk the dirt roads to school, and that was one thing that bothered me, I think, I missed. I was real upset. I never got to ride the school bus. And I thought that was the most fascinating thing. But I lived on 13th Street and the school was on 10th Street. So, the only time I rode the buses 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 tell you one thing that was the same though, during that time, bootleg whiskey. We met some very interesting White people at these country bootleggers that were run by Black people.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: The Blacks had the liquor steels. And they made the liquor. And the mayor comes driving up. 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 '50s and '60s, 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 this is what happened. They hit him in the head with the back of an ax, and then 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.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: I got married and went to Washington. And, my husband's grandfather was talking about—Because he was an elderly person. So immediately, I started asking questions. And he was saying his favorite food was muskrat, I'm saying, "Muskrat?" I said, "It says rat to start with. I know I don't want that." He was saying, "Oh, how great it was." He said, "But nothing in the world is as good as mountain oysters." So 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?"

Margaret Sampson Rogers: All the forks fell at the plate at the same time. Nobody said a word. Everybody stopped and started holding their breath. And 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 the 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 then, 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.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: 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 term, except the crude terms to use. And, I don't like to hear them even today. So, I think, that might've been one reason why they didn't tell. But, if I didn't know, I'd asked. I'd ask 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.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: But I enjoyed talking to the older people. They went through something. They did. And, it wasn't in the late-30s, early-40s, Wilmington City limits stopped at 17th Street. So all of this out here was woods, and dirt road, and all of that stuff. And there are houses out here that wouldn't even classify as shacks. And the inside, the wallpaper was the newspaper. They glued the newspaper up to keep the cold out, and a potbelly stove in the middle of the floor, one room and 9, 10 people lived in that one room.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: And I would love to just go sit and listen to them talk about the things. And then, the children would say, "And you have running water." And you'd say, "Yeah." But this is 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 great. You can stop me at any time darling, because I'll keep growing. I will.