

Margaret Sampson Rogers: —conversations with Whites who figured, well, this little lady likes to talk. Let me see if I can trip her up. And there was a salesman from Sears who asked me about, "What do you think about Dr. Ralph Bunche?" 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 so 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 Bunche, and then he stopped the war. I said, "Now you think about that. We are a lot above monkeys." And my mother's grabbing me by the braids.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: I made him call me Ms. Samson, which was unheard of. My mother says, "You're going to die. You're going to die." Because he kept calling my mother Mary, and she was calling him whatever his name was. 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 and my 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. And so then he called her Ms. Samson, and then 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 Ms. Samson. So I just used my mind.

Kara Miles: How old were you then?

Margaret Sampson Rogers: About 15.

Kara Miles: Where did you get this from? Obviously, not from your mother because— Where did you get this?

Margaret Sampson Rogers: I don't know. Unless on my father's side, I guess. I don't know. I was always an obstinate, stubborn child, to this day.

Kara Miles: Well, what did your father think of your outspokenness?

Margaret Sampson Rogers: He was afraid. He really was. Yeah, because my father was born in 1891. My mother was born 1899, and they were really afraid something was going to happen. Because 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 it was in music, started asking around. We kept trying to find somewhere closer that would accept the scholarship.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: Well, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill expressed interest, which if I had gone, I would've been the first Black female. My mother says, "Absolutely not, the Klan will kill her

before she could 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 known how I felt about it. And that could possibly have been my downfall. Because as late as '69, I was teaching in Harnett County. I went to sign my contract. At that time, teachers signed a contract every year. I went to sign the contract, new job. And the superintendent in Lillington was just sitting having a conversation. He said he had talked with the superintendent in Hoke County, and I kind of smiled.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: He said, "I'd like to ask you a question." He says, "If you were driving down the highway and you saw me walking towards 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, "Well, why would you kill me?" I said, "If you are coming toward me in Klansmen'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."

Margaret Sampson Rogers: 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 was the one thing that angered me most with Anita Hill. I've never worked for 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 clearcut 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, "You want me to leave now or wait until the end of the day? It doesn't matter."

Margaret Sampson Rogers: He says, "No." I said, "You can fire me because when we go before the board, I will tell them why I slapped your face." But I will tell you what I think of you. It 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.

Kara Miles: Now, where is this?

Margaret Sampson Rogers: In Sanford at Johnson Elementary School, 1969.

Kara Miles: Okay.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: 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. 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.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: 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. 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 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. I don't believe this.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: His glasses were broken. His nose was broken. He got 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 halfway back to Fayetteville because I was not being involved. Because I had a highway patrolman, his daughter was in my class and I had problems with his daughter. So he came in and he told me, "I almost had to kill a nigger up in Asheville about my young'un. I hope I don't have to do it again." Well, the gentleman was about six-nine. I'm five-three and a half.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: So I climbed up in my chair at my desk, and then 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 29 children. I forgot. And I said, "Stomp your blankety-blank in the floor."

Margaret Sampson Rogers: And then it hit me, uh-oh, look what you just did. Uh-oh. And 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 says, "Oh no, we will not have this." The principal was surprised because he thought the superintendent would be on the White guy's side.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: They decided to take her out of my class, which was fine with me. And they put her in another teacher's class. Within two weeks, that teacher had a nervous breakdown. So then he came back and asked 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.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: 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, "Well, 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'm a professional."

Margaret Sampson Rogers: 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 where you have to hit each other, it's time for you to separate. Well, 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.

Kara Miles: Wait, this is a White soldier?

Margaret Sampson 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. And 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 cannot leave. Let your husband go. Stay until he comes back." But I just never backed down. I never backed down.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: When I was at Hoggard, the last year I taught, really taught, was '73-'74 at Hoggard High School here. This was a high school. I had taught before then in junior high and elementary, but I enjoyed it. Once the students found out that just because I was five-three and a half and weighed 110, you couldn't walk over me, once that was cleared up, I had one big football player, six feet-four 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. Okay? And I ask him, "You and what expletive-expletive army?"

Margaret Sampson Rogers: And one of the students jumped up, says, "I'm going and get the principal." I said, "Tell him to bring his mama because he's going to need more help." 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, "Breathe 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, "Put the chair down." And 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 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.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: And he said, "Why?" I said, "He has to apologize to me and his classmates for his behavior before I let him in." Okay. Well, I worked with Title IV, 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 IV, but I didn't have them. They were in the county building. I

kept asking for them and I couldn't get them. So I don't normally ask for anything more than three times anyway.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: 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 the stuff." So they called the principal and told him, "You 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. The folks said, "Oh God, this child's going to be fired."

Margaret Sampson Rogers: When I went to the lounge, everybody said, "How you doing?" I'm fine. "You 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 Sauce. 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 a time, just like everybody else. What's the difference?" "That's your boss." 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. This one doesn't work, I look for another one, didn't forget how to look.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: We got along fine. We got along fine until a Black child broke his leg. Any White student, and we're talking '73, '74 here, because now 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. Coach said, "Oh, it's just a sprain. Nothing wrong with you. You just want to get out of PE." So he came to my class and there's tears running down this child's face. He can't put no weight on it. I said, "Come on, I'll take you to the hospital."

Margaret Sampson Rogers: So my aide, I had an aide, a White aide who was about 25 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? 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, took him to the hospital, went to Gervais housing project, got his mother, took her back to the hospital. The child's leg was broken in two places, okay. Then I took him to school in the mornings to keep him from having to fight the bus.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: Homecoming came up. We were all asked to wear blue and white. So I had some white wool slacks and blue sweater. I wore that. First thing Mr. Sauce told me was, "Some of the students say they saw you dancing out at the Air Force base. Said, 'Ms. Rogers really can get down.' I don't think you should frequent the places the students attend."

Margaret Sampson Rogers: I said, "Hold it. First off, 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."

Margaret Sampson Rogers: So he says, "Well, while we're talking, I love your slacks." He says, "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, because 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 15 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." I just simply refuse to be intimidated by these people. I never have. Never have.

Kara Miles: So I see.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: No. 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.

Kara Miles: Why? This is Fayetteville State.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: Fayetteville State in Fayetteville.

Kara Miles: What year?

Margaret Sampson Rogers: 1963. April 1963. I took my plate of food to the—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.

Kara Miles: And you were allowed to stay at that school.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: That's what the dean kept saying, "You know, it's six weeks to graduation, you're 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.

Kara Miles: Dog food?

Margaret Sampson Rogers: Dog food. We found a five pound can, empty Dash dog food cans in the trash. And 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 the table in the dining room, and I told them that we had spaghetti 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's 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.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: I went and they followed me. But when we got to the administration building, they stopped and I went on in the building. So four or five of them went behind me so they could come back and report that I had gotten kicked out. And we entered the office and the secretary said he was in a meeting with Trustee Board. "You can't see him." I said, "You want to bet?" And 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 and that I had even taken a job working in the dining hall so I could see how the food was prepared. We used to take the bugs and worms and stuff we found in the food and stick them on the bulletin board.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: Everybody kept saying, "We got to do something about this. We need to do something," but nobody would. And just that particular day, I decided that was it. So I told them. The trustee members started talking about, "We better do something about this Jones. This could get nasty. This could really get nasty." So what I did was I went to the sororities and fraternities and had them to get their pledges to stand in front of the dining hall doors, not let nobody in. Nobody was allowed to pay their bill. They said, "After two, three days of going hungry, this will end." Said, "I don't think so. I know too many people at Fort Bragg." I called Fort Bragg, started calling the guys I knew. And they started sneaking food out of the dining hall, out of the mess halls, and we would eat sitting on the grass because it was spring, beautiful, beautiful weather, great food.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: 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's 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 1200 of us."

Margaret Sampson Rogers: 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 20th 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 13 original members to start the band. They didn't have a band until I started that, so everybody knew me at least. Okay. 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. But we got better food. We got better food. They used to call me Little Castro because they said—

Kara Miles: Little what?

Margaret Sampson Rogers: Little Castro, because they said Castro was willing to buck 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 behind you. Because since 1988, I've been fighting

the post office here to get a handicap ramp. And they kept saying they couldn't do it until I contacted the Architectural Barriers and Transportation Board. And so they're telling them, "Yes, you will have to put a ramp there." 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, later all turn their back, but I'll step out there.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: That was one of the reasons why I stopped teaching because it became a 24-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 11:00 or 12:00 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, and I'd find them. 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'd be all kinds of children at my house. Give everybody a couple of days to cool off.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: We had a student at Hoggard from Santo 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. 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."

Margaret Sampson Rogers: 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're 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 it, and it just got to be too much.

Kara Miles: Yeah. So when did you stop teaching?

Margaret Sampson Rogers: '74 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 19 times between September '85 and September '91. Three heart attacks. I have a pacemaker. I have costochondritis, 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 '39, a lot of medical attention was not given to Black children in this area. And I wouldn't have received the amount of healthcare I did if my parents had not had money.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: 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. And 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." I think that had a lot to do with the outgoingness because I was never certain that I was going to live. So rather than be reserved, I just went gung-ho and I just did it, whatever it was, I did it. Because we couldn't ride—There's 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.



Margaret Sampson Rogers: They turned the dogs on us, and we'd ride away from those dogs and get back into the section of town where as soon as we entered the Black community, then we'd all collapse on the grass and laugh about, "Boy, did you see that dog?" "Yeah, I kicked him in the mouth." "Did you see how fast they got away?" And like I said, this was stuff, we knew they didn't want us out there, and we went out there for meanness. It's like a child with a cookie jar. If you tell the 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? So 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 wouldn't stop. We wouldn't bother anything or anybody. We just rode the bikes through there because they said we couldn't.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: That's basically how we looked at it. You say, I can't. Well, I'll show you. Because my husband has always said, "For God's sakes, 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.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: Then when I can't do it, because 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 in trial and error. I stayed up one night until 4:00 in the morning trying to get one program to run. And I just kept saying, "I know I can do this." But I was a frustrated person and I don't like that. I don't like that. I don't like to start anything and not be able to finish it.

Kara 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—

Margaret Sampson 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. And it was a restaurant with the 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 Snow's Cut Bridge going to Carolina Beach. A lot of Freemans lived there. They owned that land at that time. That was where we went when the Blacks went there. We also went to a beach called Ocean City down at Topsail, about 30 miles down near Holly Ridge.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: The one story, there were lots of stories from Bop City. There was an article in the paper last week talking about the segregated beaches. And I told the story of the kids who captured the sea turtle, and they flipped over on the 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 you've always been told if a turtle grabs you, it won't turn loose until it thunders. Okay. 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 pylons and out to the ocean.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: 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 complete open air. I like to be able to get under the piers. 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, there's nowhere to go. So we would go to Ocean City a lot, down to Topsail, because the Chestnuts from Wilmington have a pier with a restaurant and motels. And with the pier going out over the beach, you could always get under the pier and you wouldn't be in the sun. So we would go there a lot.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: 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 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. I mean behave in the sense you acted 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 Walmart now. You go shopping, you get what you want, you pay for it, you leave. That's what I mean when I say you behaved. Because 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."

Margaret Sampson Rogers: I didn't have one, so 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, 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.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: 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, no. I went, no. I went in the store and I sat down wherever 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. I couldn't have made it because I couldn't have accepted that.

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

Margaret Sampson 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. 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 Mary. She'll straighten it out." So it

wasn't a big problem.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: We had one incident on the bus. My mother decided not to drive, and she went to King Street, 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 Street, she had passes to ride the bus, although she no longer worked for him. The bus driver in King Street, mom 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 in South Carolina. "You wait until I ask you for your ticket and if then if I decide to take it, I'll take it."

Margaret Sampson Rogers: 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 then mama got to the bottom step and he didn't offer to help her, and she just stood there. And so 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. So when she called Mr. West, we 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.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: 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. I think all of that had a lot to do with it. I really do. And we traveled a lot. And whenever we went, I was always inquisitive. I wanted to know, and I asked questions. And 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.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: He kept asking, "Did somebody say something to you? Why do you want to go home? What's the problem?" And 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. 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.

Kara Miles: Treated as if you were—

Margaret Sampson Rogers: Yeah. When we went up to Duplin County to visit John Bright's father, his brother, because his father was dead, he was my grandfather. We went up to visit them. I used to get very upset. My mother would have me dressed in—I had the long ponytails and the ribbons and the frilly dresses with the crinolines and the socks and all the lace and the patent leather shoes. And I had to sit in the living room with my legs crossed at the ankle eating cucumber sandwiches, drinking tea. And I'm looking out the

window at all these little kids running around barefoot outside playing, and I want to get outside. And they would say, "You are not like them."

Margaret Sampson Rogers: And I'd look at my mom, and she gave me one of those looks that mean, you don't say anything, you just sit there. Because 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 could learn to play the piano." So at four, I'm 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 they could fuss and fume. But I want to get out there, kick the shoes off, and shorts and tee-shirts and run and play with the rest of them, and I couldn't do that. I guess I fought to be more like everybody else because they made me feel differently so that when I was not with them, I wanted to be.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: All of the prejudice was not on the White side. Our Black people are very prejudiced. 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 were they 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 bent over backward.

Kara Miles: So it was that she didn't want you to associate with the certain class of people or with darker skinned people?

Margaret Sampson Rogers: 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 look 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 '78.

Kara Miles: Now, is your father fair?

Margaret Sampson Rogers: Mm-hmm. 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. That's a whole interest. That's another thing. I wrote—Well, I won't talk about that. The mic is on. Yeah. I grew up in my father's house with his wife.

Kara Miles: And she didn't—

Margaret Sampson Rogers: She had to. I just can't believe the lady didn't, especially since I have that gray spot. His was in the same identical spot. And as I became older, 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 48 years old.

Kara Miles: Wow.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: 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 and I said, "I want to know. You say that's my adopted father, but I have that gray 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.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: Anyway, they decided—My father and his wife couldn't have children, and they wanted a child. So a minister 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 a story that was told that this minister who was married had father 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."

Margaret Sampson Rogers: So they took me when I was 10 days old. I grew up in the house with them, and I knew I was adopted at an early age because—listening. My mother went to the doctor and she said, the doctor said she couldn't have kids because she had a tumor. And she says, "Well, I'd known that since 1935. I know I can't have no more 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.

Margaret Sampson Rogers: 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 love to have told him, "I know," and just simply that, that I know. He was a wonderful person.