

Karen Ferguson: What were the biggest changes that you saw in the condition of Black people in this county over the 30 years that you were working as a public health nurse?

Mary Rogers: I think the income has improved greatly.

Karen Ferguson: Right.

Mary Rogers: More jobs for us. We got more education. That's the income and just this overall economic situation has improved.

Karen Ferguson: Has there been anything that's gotten worse?

Mary Rogers: Well, I don't know how you would put this, but this violence that we have is the worst thing that I hear. And then the drug activity.

Karen Ferguson: Right.

Mary Rogers: This is just a thing that we didn't have when I came here. I felt free and comfortable to go in anybody's house in the community, but I couldn't do that now.

Karen Ferguson: Right.

Mary Rogers: And they always would respect the public health nurse. See, the White nurses didn't have any trouble.

Karen Ferguson: Right. So did the White nurses serve Black patients?

Mary Rogers: Yes.

Karen Ferguson: All the time you were working?

Mary Rogers: Yes.

Karen Ferguson: Okay. But you wouldn't serve White patients?

Mary Rogers: After 1964 I did.

Karen Ferguson: Okay. Did you get married? Ever get married?

Mary Rogers: Did what?

Karen Ferguson: Did you ever get married?

Mary Rogers: Yes. Yes.

Karen Ferguson: Where did you meet your husband and when did you meet him?

Mary Rogers: I met him the year after I came to the county to work.

Karen Ferguson: Okay.

Mary Rogers: His brother lived up there on the other end, and he came to Edgecombe County to teach.

Karen Ferguson: Okay.

Mary Rogers: And we were married, I guess maybe 17 months after that.

Karen Ferguson: Now you were living on your own when you met him?

Mary Rogers: Yes, we were. You mean independently from my family?

Karen Ferguson: You were living by yourself when you met him?

Mary Rogers: Well, I was living with my brother. My brother and I were living together.

Karen Ferguson: And did you live in Enfield here?

Mary Rogers: Mm-hmm.

Karen Ferguson: Oh, okay. So what was your courtship like with him, your husband?

Mary Rogers: Courtship?

Karen Ferguson: Mm-hmm.

Mary Rogers: Now that was just fun. It was just the happiest. He was such a nice person and both of us were really up in years when we met each other.

Karen Ferguson: Okay. So how old were you?

Mary Rogers: I was 28 I believe, and he was around—I think he was about 31. And because both of us had to

look out for ourselves and getting an education, because the family wasn't able to give us a lot of push.

Karen Ferguson: Right.

Mary Rogers: And that's how I got to meet him. And he was from—he's a North Carolinian though. The courtship was—now how do you mean?

Karen Ferguson: Well, what did you do? What did you do together?

Mary Rogers: Oh yeah. Well a lot of times we would carry the others. We had to go to something like a junior, senior prom if the parents would allow their daughter to go along with us. So we were more or less chaperones really. That's what we were. And we would go to the movies sometimes. He didn't care a whole lot about movies. We would go to concerts and well, we would go to a dance every now and then. They had the spring dances and Christmas dances and like that. And let's see, what else did we do? I don't know. We didn't do anything spectacular because wasn't much here to do really.

Karen Ferguson: Right, right.

Mary Rogers: This is a sort of a depressed area. I don't know how we managed to stay here. We got an opportunity to leave here too, when my first child was born, but he didn't want to leave.

Karen Ferguson: Did you want to leave?

Mary Rogers: I sure did.

Karen Ferguson: And why did you want to leave?

Mary Rogers: Yeah, I wanted—because it looked like I might be able to do better. And. we were going to a county that was really, they say this was pretty good, but I don't know, he just didn't even want to go. I was surprised at him not wanting to go. So he was working with veterans at that time and he got this opportunity up there. We went up for an interview and things just didn't look to suit him. He said, "Shucks, I believe I'll stay where I am." And it may have been that we might not have had the funds to move at the time. A lot of things entered the picture.

Karen Ferguson: Now, where did you get married?

Mary Rogers: Near what town or what?

Karen Ferguson: What was your marriage like? Where did you go to get married?

Mary Rogers: In a parsonage. We used to go to this man's church and he was a friend of—This minister was a friend of his family. And we got married and went to Washington D.C, and came right back and went to work

Monday.

Karen Ferguson: So you went for one little—

Mary Rogers: And it was very short. We thought we'd have one after this, but no such thing.

Karen Ferguson: Right. Now was your family or anybody else pressuring you to get married since you were a bit older?

Mary Rogers: No. No they were not.

Karen Ferguson: Right. So it was acceptable for you to be single?

Mary Rogers: Well, I think so because I had about decided I was going to have to be a career woman anyway. Since I didn't get married at that usual time when my other classmates got married. And so I was just about ready to settle back and be a career lady.

Karen Ferguson: Right.

Mary Rogers: And he came along and swept me off my feet. He sure did. Yeah. He has had a stroke. He's not doing so well. Well, I'll say he's doing better than he's been doing, but he sort of takes it easy.

Karen Ferguson: Right. Now, after married and started having your family and so on, what kind of organizations did you belong to? Or did you belong to any organizations?

Mary Rogers: I belonged to the Missionary Society, Frontiers International. I belong to the Deaconess Club in my church. Belong to the Flower Garden Club, the State Nurses Association, National Nurses Association. And then we have another little club, just nurses belong to that. It's called it the Carrie Broadfoot Nurses Club. I guess that's about it.

Karen Ferguson: What did these organizations add to your life? What did they mean to you to belong to these organizations?

Mary Rogers: Well because the missionary thing that's a Christian organization, and the Frontiers International is sort of a civic organization where we'd be concerned about what's going on in the community, and for the betterment of people, period. And let's see, what was the other one? Well, and you know the nursing organization will be pertaining to nursing. And this Frontiers International level he belonged to, we were the auxiliary to it. And well, the Frontiers International, we were responsible for the—they just studied this disease, vitiligo. And they always made a contribution to that. But they made other contributions to other organizations too.

Karen Ferguson: Right.

Mary Rogers: Like NAACP and civic organizations of that nature.

Karen Ferguson: Now we haven't really talked very much about church. You went to a church that was in the school when you were growing up?

Mary Rogers: Yes.

Karen Ferguson: And was this a Baptist?

Mary Rogers: That's where we had our Sunday school. Baptist is right.

Karen Ferguson: Baptist?

Mary Rogers: And Sunday School. See, because we'd go there every Sunday.

Karen Ferguson: Right. Oh, and then you belonged to the school, this church that was a few miles away, several miles away?

Mary Rogers: Yes. And they had service once a month.

Karen Ferguson: What was the church's role in your community when you were growing up and then when you became a grown woman back here in Enfield?

Mary Rogers: Let's see. You mean what did it have to offer us?

Karen Ferguson: Yeah.

Mary Rogers: Accepted our religious instruction.

Karen Ferguson: Right. What sort of—

Mary Rogers: Oh, I see.

Karen Ferguson: —non-spiritual.

Mary Rogers: If there was a need like food and clothing and things like that. Yeah. Well anybody who would get into difficulty, they would come to the rescue. Fire. If somebody had lost a home, somebody lost a family member and needed assistance, they would help out in that situation. And the church and school were sort of separate.

Karen Ferguson: How so?

Mary Rogers: I don't believe the church was as strong and nurturing and fostering the schools like they should.

Karen Ferguson: Oh, okay.

Mary Rogers: So far as discipline and all. We may have been able to do a little bit better. Make things better than they are now. Things just going rock bottom for some reason. I don't know what it is. But I think that. And view the fact that you let the girl—like those people who would be an asset so far as Christian education, this was stopped. Remember how we used—you don't know anything about it because it probably didn't—you could feel free to have a devotion in the morning before you start the day. And I think this is the reason the situation is in such a chaos now. To me, it's chaotic when people are taking guns to school and killing and carrying on.

Karen Ferguson: When did you first vote?

Mary Rogers: After I was married. And I think we went to vote and we started voting in about 1950.

Karen Ferguson: Okay.

Mary Rogers: At '51, something like that.

Karen Ferguson: And did you have any trouble registering?

Mary Rogers: No, we didn't.

Karen Ferguson: Right. But other people did?

Mary Rogers: Some did.

Karen Ferguson: Why was that?

Mary Rogers: You had to read the preamble to the Constitution, I believe. And if you didn't read that to suit them, then you didn't register.

Karen Ferguson: But they never tried to tell you that you hadn't read it properly or anything like that?

Mary Rogers: They never did.

Karen Ferguson: Okay.

Mary Rogers: I don't think so. They may have told someone, I never heard about it.

Karen Ferguson: Right. Okay. The last question I wanted to ask you was, if you feel like anybody has ever treated you like a second class citizen?

Mary Rogers: Well, I would think that—you mean that I have been denied something?

Karen Ferguson: Yeah. Do you feel like anybody ever treated you, maybe not generally, but maybe more specifically a situation that you've been in?

Mary Rogers: I guess maybe it may have happened to me in the workplace.

Karen Ferguson: Right. Could you talk a little bit about that? Or if you don't want to, you don't have to.

Mary Rogers: I don't want to.

Karen Ferguson: Okay, that's fine. That's fine. Okay. Well I thank you very much for spending this time with me today.

Mary Rogers: Well I'm just sorry, but I just wouldn't want to say anything that is—

Karen Ferguson: No, no, that's fine. I was about to end anyway. I didn't mean to do it.

Mary Rogers: Well that's all right. But I would like to say though that, there have been times when I could have maybe gone up, but because of the color of my skin, I didn't.

Karen Ferguson: Right.

Mary Rogers: Opportunities could have been thrown my way that didn't get thrown my way.

Karen Ferguson: Why don't I put the question this way, because I'm assuming some of this stuff happened after integration, after '64?

Mary Rogers: Yes, that's right.

Karen Ferguson: What do you think though, that the system of segregation before 1964, how has it affected your life? Do you think you had fewer opportunities because of that?

Mary Rogers: We have more opportunities since the 1964 Supreme Court decision.

Karen Ferguson: Right. How do you think your life would've been different if you hadn't been living under segregation?

Mary Rogers: I could not have gone to school, I don't believe. And I couldn't have excelled. Well, I will say maybe I haven't excelled, but maybe I couldn't have had the opportunity to do what I had done if I had done anything.

Karen Ferguson: Right. If it hadn't ended? If segregation hadn't ended?

Mary Rogers: That's right.

Karen Ferguson: Okay.

Mary Rogers: You see, because opportunities opened up—just opened up after that.

Karen Ferguson: But if there hadn't been segregation when you were a little girl and when you went to school and so on, do you think your life would've been different if there hadn't been?

Mary Rogers: I would think so.

Karen Ferguson: Right. Okay.

Mary Rogers: Yeah, because you would have no fear. You would be comfortable with all colors.

Karen Ferguson: Right. Were you afraid of White people when you were young?

Mary Rogers: No, I wasn't because I—I don't know what I want to say, but in other words, they didn't bother us and we didn't bother them.

Karen Ferguson: Right. Yeah.

Mary Rogers: But nobody has ever taught us that they were different or that they were not kind or anything like that. And I guess, because I had a good working relationship with these people that I was working with. And when I would have to go to Chapel Hill or Duke to those seminars and things, there wasn't no problem.

Karen Ferguson: Right.

Mary Rogers: No problem. You'd never know the difference.

Karen Ferguson: Okay. All right.

Mary Rogers: Now tell me, will you screen this information?

Karen Ferguson: Okay. At the end, we can do this first if you like, in order for the people to be able to listen to these tapes, you have to sign a release form. But if you want to place a restriction on its use, you may. You



can do it without restrictions of course. But the kinds of restrictions people have put on it have been things like closing the interview until a certain time and closing the interview during your lifetime, for example. Or more commonly, people have put a restriction that if the interview is to be used in any kind of publication, that your permission must be obtained before that.

Mary Rogers: And I don't think my information was worth you using in no publication.

Karen Ferguson: Right.

Mary Rogers: Can you play some of it back?

Karen Ferguson: If you want to listen to some.