Elissa Stroman: So, today's date is August 1, 2018. My name is Elissa Stroman. We are here at the Southwest Collection. We are interviewing Grace Rogers for the LGBTQIA oral history project. Also here with me ... Jordan, do you want to say your name?

Jordan Butler: Hi, my name is Jordan Butler. I'm the student assistant with the office of LGBTQIA. One of my duties is to work on this oral history project.

Elissa Stroman: We'll start out this interview with if you state your full name for the record.

Grace Rogers: My full name is actually Mary Grace Wheeler-Rogers. I've never used Mary, so I just use Grace Wheeler-Rogers…

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Grace Rogers: I really got interested in PFLAG whenever -- it was fairly a quiet organization at that time. I hadn't heard a lot about it – whenever some children at Lubbock High School... They wanted to have a little out and pray proud club. This is all gonna happen around 2002 and 3.

Elissa Stroman: Okay.

Grace Rogers: The case is actually a 2003 case. I heard about these kids that was in the newspaper and so forth. They were meeting over at J&B's Coffee Shop, so I just started meeting with them. As a government teacher, this was something that interested me. I certainly cared that we start doing something better with our high school students in regard to that. By the way, Lubbock ISD, which I love dearly, is still not doing a whole lot for their gay kids…

Elissa Stroman: I don't know anything about this case. The students sued to have –

Grace Rogers: The sued asking if they could post fliers in the building and maybe make an announcement on the PA system about that there was this club, and they were going to meet off campus. They weren't trying to even meet on campus. They were wanting to know if they could do that, and they said no. And so they went through Lambda Legal out of the – I don't know if you know what Lambda Legal is, but it's a firm, an organization, that takes cases for LGBT folk. They took that case on. It was one of the few that's ever been lost. The students by that time -- It takes a while for these cases. Maybe the case might have started a little bit earlier, but the case was decided in 2003, because it takes a while. They went down. The case was decided negatively.

Of course, I was working for LISD, so I was not happy about it. I decided I would go down – when the case was decided, when Cummings made his ruling, they could have sent it to the fifth circuit. At that time, the fifth circuit was not quite as reactionary as it is now. But the students by
that time were out of school. They'd been mostly seniors. They just decided not to pursue it. That case stands as one of the few that ever been lost about students trying to the very minimal thing, which is to have an organization of support.

The LISD lawyers, I read the case, was a very – I did not like at all the things that they said. They kept saying you can't have a club about sex. It was just so backward and so wrong that I actually went down in August when I read the decision and submitted my resignation to the school. I said I am here to resign from school or to tell you that I’m not gonna support this decision if asked. Since I was the only one that could teach AP government, dual credit government, they asked me not to resign. I said, "Okay, I won't resign, but I won't support this decision. I want you to know that I will not support this decision."

They said, "Well, are you gonna talk about in class?" I said, "I'm a big professional, as I'm always in class. I'm not gonna express my opinions one way or the other in class, but," I said, "we do talk about gay rights." That is a topic that was in my college – We were teaching out of a college level textbook for AP. I said, "It's a topic." I said, "If asked, I'll –"

But I said, "I don't go around trying to – any more than gay kids try to recruit other straight kids into being gay," I said, "I don't try to recruit people into my point of view." But I said, "If asked, I want you to know, I'm perfectly willing to resign rather than support this decision." I did not resign. I taught until 2004. I resigned for other reasons. I retired for other reasons that didn't have anything to do with that. I started coming to PFLAG, my husband and I.