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Martha Ramsey Papers

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Read collection overview

Martha Ramsey is the author of *Where I Stopped*, a memoir of rape in adolescence, and *Blood Stories*, a book of poems. Ramsey grew up in Flemington, New Jersey, a farming community 65 miles southwest of New York City. She had unusually creative, bohemian-minded, arts-oriented parents; her father was a pioneering jazz historian; both became alcoholics. She was a precociously intelligent child and was skipped two grades at her local elementary school; she escaped from the resulting loneliness and social insecurity into books and nature. She was happier as a day student at Solebury School, a progressive high school nearby in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. On a summer day in 1968, at age 13, while she was walking her bike up a back road near her home, she was attacked and raped by a 28-year-old man, a stranger. She insisted that her parents call the police immediately, "so it won't happen to anyone else." Her parents soon heard from neighbors that before Martha, the rapist had "molested other girls." She endured a confrontation with him at the police barracks and giving testimony at the trial that resulted in his conviction and sentence of 15 years. Five years later she also endured the shock of learning on a visit home from college that he had, while released on parole, sexually assaulted and murdered a 16-year-old girl near the girl's family's farm, on the anniversary of the rape. This time he was sentenced to life. *Where I Stopped*, written when Ramsey was in her thirties, tells this story in detail and follows her attempts to understand what had happened to her and how it was affecting her over the years as she grew into adulthood, pursued her calling as a poet, and married. The memoir also chronicles her decision to return to the place where she grew up to speak with people who remembered the crime and who had participated in the trial and to unearth the police and trial records—all part of her effort to come to terms with what she remembered.

A powerful collection documenting the writing of her memoir, *Where I Stopped*, Ramsey's papers include audio recordings of statements she and others made to the police shortly after her rape; a transcript of the trial; Ramsey's notes from interviews she conducted with individuals who remembered the crime; and drafts of her memoir, containing comments from early readers and material cut from the final version. Ramsey's unpublished writings, journals, and correspondence document her intellectual and emotional life from her

teenage years forward, including the drafts of all her published and unpublished poems. Family papers focus on the author's father, Frederic Ramsey, a noted jazz historian; they include correspondence, photographs, and the unpublished autobiography of Ethel Ramsey (1884–1965)—textile designer, painter, and participant in the artists' colony in New Hope, Pennsylvania—that contains acerbic discussion of the struggles of women artists in the late nineteenth century and later.

Background on Martha Ramsey

Martha Ramsey was born in 1954 in Flemington, New Jersey, a farming community about 65 miles southwest of New York City. She had unusually creative, bohemian-minded, arts-oriented parents; her father was the pioneering jazz historian Frederic Ramsey, Jr. As a child she was precociously intelligent, socially clueless, and a bookworm. She attended high school at Solebury School in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. The summer before tenth grade, in 1968, at age 13, while she was out on her own on a bike ride on back roads, she was attacked and raped by a 28-year-old man, a stranger to her. Within his family and immediate friends, he was suspected of having molested other girls, but none of his other victims' families had come forward.

After the rape Martha endured a confrontation with the rapist, at the police barracks, and giving testimony at the trial that resulted in his conviction and a sentence of 15 years. Five years later, on the same date as his rape of Martha, almost immediately after being paroled, the perpetrator brutally abused and murdered a 16-year-old girl in the same community; he was sentenced to life in prison for that crime.

Ramsey's memoir, *Where I Stopped*, was written when she was in her thirties, tells this story in detail and follows her attempts to understand what had happened to her and how it affected her over the years as she grew into adulthood, pursued her calling as a poet, and married, and her eventual decision to go back to the place where she grew up, speak with people who remembered the crime and who participated in the trial, unearth the police and trial records, and come to terms with what she remembered.

A literary memoir first published to high critical acclaim in 1995, *Where I Stopped* was ahead of its time, and was the first book-length autobiography focusing on rape during adolescence. It is a classic account of sexual trauma and recovery.

Scope of collection

A powerful collection documenting the writing of her memoir, *Where I Stopped*, Ramsey's papers include audio recordings of statements she and others made to the police shortly after her rape; a transcript of the trial; Ramsey's notes from interviews she conducted with individuals who remembered the crime; and drafts of her memoir, containing comments from early readers and material cut from the final version. Ramsey's unpublished writings, journals, and correspondence document her intellectual and emotional life from her teenage years forward, including the drafts of all her published and unpublished poems. Family papers focus on the author's father, Frederic Ramsey, a noted jazz historian; they include correspondence, photographs, and the unpublished autobiography of Ethel Ramsey (1884–1965)—textile designer, painter, and participant in the artists' colony in New Hope, Pennsylvania—that contains acerbic discussion of the struggles of women artists in the late nineteenth century and later.

Overall, the collection deals with issues of childhood trauma, family alcoholism, family mental illness (depression and schizophrenia), rape in adolescence, writing and the teaching of writing, women's friendship, marriage, living with chronic illness, and spiritual development.

Series descriptions

[Series 1. Memoir](#)

1968-2000

Materials related to the research and writing of Ramsey's memoir, *Where I Stopped*. Includes audio recordings of statements she and others made to the police shortly after her rape; a transcript of the trial; Ramsey's notes from interviews she conducted with individuals who remembered the crime; and drafts of her memoir, containing comments from early readers and material cut from the final version.

[Series 2. Writings](#)

1967-2007

Drafts and final versions of Ramsey's poems and prose from throughout her career.

[Series 3. Personal](#)

1969-2008

Notes, photographs, publications, course materials and other items related to Ramsey's life.

[Series 4. Family](#)

1815-2007

Family history including photographs, publications, and family correspondence. Of particular note are materials relating to Frederic Ramsey Jr., a noted jazz historian and author of *Been Here and Gone* and the unpublished autobiography of Ethel Ramsey (1884-1965), textile designer, painter, and participant in the artists' colony in New Hope, Pennsylvania.

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undated
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undated
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undated
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undated
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undated
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undated
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undated
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undated
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1981, Nov. 16
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undated
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undated
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undated
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undated
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undated

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Prose: "When I think of my mother I think of rain"
undated

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Astrological Chart
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Birthday Party Invitations
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Booklet: Huntington Art Center Exhibition
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Books: BLOOD STORIES by Martha Ramsey
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Books: In Search of the Blues by Marybeth Hamilton
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Books: News Letters: A Magazine of Fine Writing: Literary Awards Special Issue
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Books: Scaffolding: New and Selected poems by Jane Cooper

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Books: WHERE I STOPPED: German Translation
1997

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Books: Telling a Memoir of Rape and Recovery by Patricia Weaver Francisco
1999

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Car Accident
1989 Nov.

Box 12: 6
Courses: "4 American Poets" Course with Jane Cooper
1983

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Courses: "Basic Themes in Mysticism"
1985

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Courses: "Biographical Notes for Application to Louise Gluck's Writing Workshop"
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Courses: Bunting Institute Fellowship Program
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Documents: Cleveland State University Poetry Center Agreement: Blood Stories
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Documents: Grants, Awards, Submissions
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1984, undated
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Documents: School Reports and Programs
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undated
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undated
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undated
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Map: Visitor's Guide, Brattleboro, VT
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Periodicals: Affordable travel newspaper article
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Periodicals: The Iowa Review: Volume Twelve Numbers Two/Three
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Periodicals: Segue Distributing
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Periodicals: Sojourner: The Women's Forum
1985 Aug.
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Periodicals: Sounding East: Feature Poet: Martha Ramsey
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Periodicals: The Whittmore Newsletter
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Periodicals: "Vermont poet Martha Ramsey emerges from Memory's dark past" newspaper article
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Periodicals: "Why Men Rape" article
1996 Apr.
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undated

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Davenport: Articles about New Hope tapestries
undated

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Davenport, Don Abbot and Ethel Ramsey: The New Hope business brochure
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Davenport, Ethel Ramsey: "Ladies Didn't," unpublished autobiography
undated

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Davenport, Ethel Ramsey: watercolor flowers
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Family Correspondence: unknown
1979, undated

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Gardening newspaper clippings
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Ramsey, Alida (Porter): School Papers and records
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Ramsey, Amelia: Obituaries
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1979

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1942

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Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Book: Been Here and Gone
1960

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Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Correspondence: Condolences
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Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Correspondence: Conscientious Objecter, Selective Service
1940-1944, undated

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Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Correspondence: Ramsey, Alida
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Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Correspondence: Beutner
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Ramsey Jr., Frederic and Amelia: Correspondence: Ramsey Sr., C.F. and Ethel
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Ramsey Jr., Frederic and Amelia: Correspondence: Ramsey Sr., C.F. and Ethel
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Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Correspondence: Ramsey, Loch
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Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Correspondence: Ramsey, Martha

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Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Correspondence: Runnette, Helen V.
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Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Correspondence: Runnette, Helen V.
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Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Correspondence: Sancton, Thomas
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Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Correspondence: Unidentified and Miscellaneous
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Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Been Here and Gone book cover scan
1960
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1949-1973, undated
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Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Charm Magazine
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Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Estate Planning
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Ramsey Jr., Frederic: "Excerpt from Martha Ramsey's journal"
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Ramsey Jr., Frederic: 50th Anniversary Retrospective Art Exhibit Booklet
1979 May-1979 June
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Ramsey Jr., Frederic: "Fred Ramsey: the heartbeat of jazz research" Newspaper Article
1986 June
Box 17: 4
Ramsey Jr., Frederic: "Guitar Music - C.F. Ruff"
undated
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Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Historic New Orleans Papers Transfer
2006 July-2006 Aug.
Box 17: 6
Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Jazz Record Book
1941 June
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Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Journal
1963 Dec.-1980 Dec.
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Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Leadbelly
1953, 1982, 1995
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Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Ma Rainey
undated
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Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Martha Plans
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Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Papers of Frederic Ramsey Jr. Transfer Information
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Ramsey Jr., Frederic: "Phonograph Record Companies"
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Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Poems and Resume from Martha
1979-1982
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Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Professional Records and Articles
1953, 1986, undated
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Ramsey Jr., Frederic: RCA Victor Picture Review, The Red Seal Picture article
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Ramsey Jr., Frederic: "Records"
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undated
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Ramsey Jr., Frederic: "The Story of Music of Africa in America"
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Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Vita
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Gift of Martha Ramsey, 2018.

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