

James Gamble Rogers, IV
2006 WPHS Alumni Circle of Distinction

James Gamble Rogers IV was born in Winter Park, Florida, on January 31, 1937, the son of famed architect, James Gamble Rogers III. During high school at Winter Park, he was a popular musical entertainer before various school events. Gamble Rogers studied architecture as well, but gave up that discipline for a career in music. Rogers first gained national attention as a member of the Serendipity Singers, appearing on television shows such as "The Ed Sullivan Show" and "The Tonight Show." Gamble Rogers balanced a love of balladry and folk songs with a passion for the oral tradition and storytelling. The son and grandson of influential architects, Rogers was described as both a "modern troubadour" and the "resurrection of Will Rogers and Mark Twain". Capable of enchanting an audience with Travis-style guitar flatpicking, Rogers was as effective relying his latest tales about the inhabitants of the fictitious Oklahowa County. The Atlanta Constitution called Rogers, "an American treasure worthy of inclusion in the Smithsonian".

He went on to perform at colleges, folk festivals and coffeehouses all over the United States. In the 1970s, he was a weekly guest commentator on National Public Radio's "All Things Considered." Rogers' performances were characterized by his guitar-playing and folk singing interjected with stories and jokes. He appeared regularly at the Florida Folk Festival. He died heroically on October 10, 1991 while trying to help a young girl's father in the rough surf at Flagler Beach. The Flagler Beach State Recreation Area was renamed Gamble Rogers Memorial State Recreation Area at Flagler Beach in 1992 to commemorate the site where Florida lost one the most talented and beloved folk artists in its history.

Gamble Rogers received a Florida Folk Heritage Award posthumously in 1993 and was later inducted into the Florida Artists Hall of Fame in 1998. In the liner notes of his album, *Fruitcakes*, Jimmy Buffett dedicated the recording to Rogers' memory and wrote that Rogers, "taught me how to move an audience with dialogue and delivery as much as with music".