

MASTER OF INSPECTION

Retired Air Force pilot dives in to profitable home inspection franchise.

BY WARREN DUFFIE



FUN FACTS

Favorite TV show? "NCIS," "CSI," "Fox News Special Report"
Hobbies? Read, family gatherings, watch movies

DID YOU KNOW? //

Rogers was one of the first 100 female pilots in the Air Force. Rogers flew C-141s on numerous airlifts and humanitarian missions worldwide. She also was a flight instructor at the academy, flew C-21 Learjets during the fall of the Berlin Wall, and completed a six-month deployment running the Bosnian Airlift.

When the housing bubble burst a couple of years ago, thousands of homeowners lost their homes to foreclosure. Driven by rage, many of them found creative ways to lash out when the banks seized their houses. Just ask Wendy Rogers, who owns a HouseMaster Home Inspections franchise and saw much of the damage first-hand.

"We came across houses that were completely trashed," said Rogers, a retired Air Force pilot. "Sometimes running water was left on for days, with the doors and windows closed, flooding and allowing mold to permeate the home. Other times, concrete was poured down all the toilets and drains. We've also seen carpets ripped and windows smashed.

"But it wasn't all vindictive," she continued. "One time, one of our inspectors found \$5,000 in cash rolled in a bundle under the kitchen sink. He turned the money over to the local sheriff. After 90 days, no one claimed it, so it was his to keep."

ON THE JOB

These are just a few of the colorful stories Rogers, 56, can share about her career as a HouseMaster franchisee. Based in Tempe, Ariz., she owns the business with her husband, Hal (also a retired Air Force officer).

"I'm very much a marketer and communicator," she said. "Hal was an engineer in the Air Force, so he's very hands-on with the inspections. We make a great team."



ABOUT THE COMPANY

Based in Bound Brook, N.J., HouseMaster Home Inspections was founded in 1979 — when the home inspection industry was in its infancy. Since then, HouseMaster has expanded to 360 franchises in the U.S. and Canada, conducting a total of 2 million inspections since its inception.


New franchisees attend a three-week training curriculum. The first week covers proprietary office software, marketing and business management topics. Weeks two and three are reserved for the company's home inspection training program.

Since opening shop in 1996, Rogers and her husband have grown their business to 10 employees, performing between 100 and 200 home inspections monthly. The enterprise earns between \$600,000 and \$800,000 in yearly revenues, though it has sometimes broken the \$1 million mark.

"When we started out, I answered the phones, booked inspections, and promoted our business at local real estate offices," Rogers said. "My husband went out and did the actual home inspections. Nowadays, as we've grown, I attend more to strategy, marketing and giving presentations to clients."

GETTING STARTED

During their military careers, Rogers and her husband often discussed starting a business after they retired. While stationed in Italy, Rogers stopped by the base library and picked up a book about franchising. She saw a page about HouseMaster, liked what she read, and decided to contact the company during her next temporary assignment in the U.S.

"Learning about the business was an experience because my husband and I had always lived in communities where housing inspections were not prevalent," Rogers continued. "We didn't know what a home inspection was. But we worked hard, built up a very rewarding and satisfying business, and are having a great time." 

THE FRANCHISE

Wendy Rogers

Age: 56

Residence: Tempe, Ariz.

Military Service:

20 years in the Air Force (1976-1996)

Highest Rank Held:

Lieutenant Colonel (O-5)

Education:

- Bachelor's degree in social work, Michigan State University
- Master's in social work, University of Alabama
- Master's in National Security Studies, Cal State San Bernardino
- Pilot school, Williams Air Force Base

Rogers' Advice:

- **Do something you're passionate about.** "Have fun. Make sure you wake up each day loving what you do."
- **Have back-up finances.** "Have savings or make sure your house is paid off. My husband and I had our retirement pay."
- **Be practical.** "Don't buy things you don't need, like a Hummer. Keep your spending habits in check, so you have more money to invest in your business."

What Rogers Likes

About her Business

- Being my own boss
- The independence
- Having a flexible schedule

HouseMaster

Home Inspections. Done Right. Since 1979.™

HOUSEMASTER HOME INSPECTIONS

<http://franchise.housemaster.com>

HQ: Bound Brook, N.J.

Founded: 1979

of Franchises:

360 in the U.S. and Canada

START YOURS

Franchise Fee:

\$39,500

Total investment:

\$54,500 to \$81,200

Military Discount:

A member of VetFran, HouseMaster offers military veterans a 15 percent discount off the franchise fee.