

# Idalee DiGregorio Interview

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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## SPEAKERS

Interviewer: Laura Sicari

Interviewee: Idalee DiGregorio

### Laura Sicari

Hi, my name is Laura Sicari. And I'm here with Idalee DiGregorio and we are on the online zoom platform. And we're here to do an oral history interview for the University of Baltimore Stories, the 100th Anniversary Oral History Project. The purpose of this project is to celebrate the university's Centennial by preserving the memory of those influenced by the University of Baltimore. Over the years, we will be creating a digital archive and exhibit and making these recordings available online. So, Idalee, hi, thanks for being here.

### Idalee DiGregorio

Hi, I am happy to be here.

### Laura Sicari

So why don't we start at the very beginning. You are from Baltimore. You were born here?

### Idalee DiGregorio

No, I was born in Carbondale, Illinois.

### Laura Sicari

Okay. Your parents were living there? Why?

### Idalee DiGregorio

Yeah, that's where dad's first teaching job was at Southern Illinois University. And that's where my mom got her PhD.

### Laura Sicari

Okay, and what were your parents' names?

### Idalee DiGregorio

Althea Wagman- Althea Margaret Illiff-Wagman. And my dad was William Dale Wagman.

**Laura Sicari**

And they were psychologists, is that right? Their field was experimental psychology.

**Idalee DiGregorio**

Correct. Both of them. Yes. Dad was the chairman of Psychology at the University of Baltimore.

**Laura Sicari**

And is that what he was- was that his first job out of his graduate program or?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

No, no, no, at Carbondale. He was an associate professor, I think, while Mom finished her PhD. And then he got a job at Edgewood Arsenal. And that's what brought us to Baltimore when I was four, and then the next job he got was the University of Baltimore and he was there till he retired.

**Laura Sicari**

And what is Edgewood arsenal.

**Idalee DiGregorio**

Edgewood Arsenal is an army facility up in the Hereford zone. And they were that was, you know, during the Vietnam War and things like that they were testing mustard gas and horrible things.

**Laura Sicari**

And so, his work there was as a psychologist somehow?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

Yes, looking at the effects, the psychological effects of these agents and other things, you know, like they were doing some psychedelic research and some marijuana research and things like that.

**Laura Sicari**

And then after that, he went to UB.

**Idalee DiGregorio**

Correct.

**Laura Sicari**

As the chair of the Department of Psychology Department. And you were born while he was a professor there. I take it. Yeah?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

I was born in Carbondale. Yeah, I was four when we came here. So, I think he was I can't remember exactly when he came- he became the chairman of the department. I'm sure that we could find that historically, but I can't remember exactly when that was, but I was pretty young. Maybe six or seven.

When he- because he left Edgewood Arsenal pretty quickly. It was just that it wasn't a good fit for him. Our army stuff was not a good fit for daddy.

**Laura Sicari**

What do you remember about growing up and in Baltimore like your earliest years?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

Well, I remember there- I mean, I remember the first night we moved into our house because we had no furniture and so we slept in the living room of this big old townhouse on Park Avenue and the bus came through. And it shook the entire house. That's my very first memory. And it woke us all up. We all were like frantic in the middle of the night because the house shook. But my first like, I remember the race riots. I remember giving coffee and doughnuts to the National Guard's guys while they were you know looking for snipers on the top of the apartment building across the street and things like that. So that's kind of my earliest.

**Laura Sicari**

What was your parent's relationship to the riots were they like, helping you head up- handout- handing out coffee and doughnuts or you know?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

They, they wanted- Dad was more active than mom was, mom stayed home with us and, but it got kind of hairy for a while there down in downtown Baltimore. And so, he was more centered around the house sort of later, as everything escalated profoundly. But yeah, I mean, we were, he kept, he was still working at Edgewood Arsenal during that time, there were several times that he got caught for curfew violations with one of his coworkers who was an African American person. And they got, you know, there are stories of him having to call his CO to get them out of trouble, because they were in big trouble for not making it back into the city during the riots on time. So...

**Laura Sicari**

How old are you around that time to remember?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

Well, I mean, I believe that the riots were '66, '67. So, I would have been 5? 4 or 5. I was born in '62. So somewhere in there, I think maybe even '68? I'm not real clear about that part. The dates. I'm not a good date person. But yeah, it was. I was very young. I mean, I remember being very young and scared, as this was all going on.

**Laura Sicari**

So, then it was this, I guess you were a teenager in the '70s in Baltimore. And you have mentioned that you spent a lot of time around the university, or your dad would bring you around a lot.

**Idalee DiGregorio**

Yes. Yeah, I actually went from school directly to the university almost every day.

**Laura Sicari**

And would you hang out on your own? Or where would you hang out? Or who would you visit?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

So, I visited all sorts of people. We- so and those days, they were in the Gordon building. He had, I mean, I still drive by that building and see his window. He had this like closet like, office that he loved. And it was big and long. And then fat at the end with a big window. And I think it really was, had been a janitor's closet that he decided was his. And off of that was a big classroom kind of meeting room. And that's where all the students would hang out. So, I would hang out in there and do my homework. And once my homework was done, then I would go visit everybody in the psychology department, the dean and the president pretty frequently, and sometimes the provost who were what were their names. Um, so I mean, I would see Mebane, who was Mebane Turner, was the president. Dad was there before he came and was on the selection committee that hired Mebane. And then I'm trying to think at that point, Catherine Gira was there she was the- she became the provost later, but I think she was a dean, or maybe even just still an English professor at the time. The psychology people I remember are Fred Lassen and Al Gross who were the two other like that they were the Psychology Department for a long time, those three, those two with my dad. And we used to like spend holidays with them and things like that. So, they had a pretty close relationship for a long time. And I'm totally blanking on the dean's name right this minute- Guy, his last name was Guy. But I can't- Fred Guy I think it's Fred Guy was the was his name. So yeah, I would just make my rounds I was I, I would come, and I'd take the bus from Bryn Mawr, and I would come down and I would come into the into the building. And if he was in class, I just knew that I was supposed to like sit down in that room and get my homework done. And then I had free rein until he was ready to go home.

**Laura Sicari**

So, and you were so you were a student at Bryn Mawr, you graduated from high school?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

That's where I graduated from high school. Yeah, but I went there in fourth grade. Okay, so, I was at Bryn Mawr from 4th through 12th grade.

**Laura Sicari**

What was Bryn Mawr like in the '70s?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

So 'anti- what was going on in the world.' Very, I mean, it was- Bryn Mawr was always a not finishing school for women. It was the first not finishing school for women. It was very academically challenging. And that was why my folks put me there. But it was super straight. I mean, like, you know, there was all sorts of stuff going on around us and they absolutely refuse to let any of us be part of that. So, it was it was kind of wild to be and nobody would come visit us in Bolton Hill because they thought the city was scary and you know a place where people just got mugged and killed and things.

**Laura Sicari**

So, it sounds like got a big contrast between like going to Bryn Mawr and then going and spending the rest of your time at UB?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

Yeah, wandering around up in the middle of the city doing my thing, as you know, whatever. However, a lot of my day was 10-11, something like that. But yeah, I had a great time. It was I mean, one of my favorite things was going to visit Uncle Mebane, as I called Mebane Turner, the president of the university, and I would just go in and he had a big office chair, and I would swivel around in his office chair and he had these like poker machines, and you know, like little, tiny poker machines. And we I would, he would, I would play with those. And then he would have me call his girlfriends to find out what they were cooking for dinner, so he could decide where he was going for dinner. It was before he was married way before I mean, he's, he was single for a very long time. He actually married my fourth-grade English teacher.

**Laura Sicari**

Oh, from Bryn Mawr.

**Idalee DiGregorio**

Correct?

**Laura Sicari**

That's interesting.

**Idalee DiGregorio**

Yeah. So yeah, it was fun. I mean, it was really a lot of fun. I also would help Dad with his experiments. So, he was training pigeons and rats, very Skinnerian kind of work. And so, I would train up the pigeons and rats for his demonstrations for his classes. So, it would be my job to run them through their paces a lot to get them ready to be good demonstrations,

**Laura Sicari**

Were you're hanging out with students at the time?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

Oh, absolutely. Yeah, yeah, I was this little kid just wandering around. I mean, I, it was kind of unfettered access to ever everybody was happy to see me. And, you know, I was always inquisitive, and wanted to know what they were up to. And I would talk to everybody about what they their work was, or whatever. And it was just really a lovely environment. And I even like in ninth, I think it was the summer before ninth grade, Dad was teaching summer school. And I took English classes at the University of Baltimore, they let me take summer English classes. And I remember reading Lady Chatterley's Lover in this class with all of these adults, because it was a junior-senior college at the time. And so there were all these adults like adult people there and me, and they were like, we can't discuss this book in front of her. And the professor was like, "Look, her dad said we could do it, we're going to do it." And so we did.

**Laura Sicari**

Do you remember if that was if the university had gone public, or was it still private at that time? Do you remember that transition?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

I know- ah, gosh, had it gone public at that point? I think so. I think by then it had. Or it was right around that time, because Dad was on- Dad had been there so long and was such good friends with Meb that he was on all the committees to get, you know, he chaired a bunch of the committees as they were doing that process. And then he was also on the committee for all the state universities for a long, long time.

**Laura Sicari**

Do you remember anything about that process or that change, that transition?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

Um, I know that there were there was a lot of opposition to it at the time. But it was money, it was a money decision, they just really needed the money. They were only a junior-senior college then, and I don't even think dad had had created the first graduate program because he created the first graduate program, a master's program in psychology. And that was the first graduate program they ever had. That was before the law school that was before the business school, all of that.

**Laura Sicari**

And when you say the first graduate program in psychology, you mean the first in the University of Maryland system?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

No, the first at the University of Baltimore, they just hadn't had any graduate programs at all.

**Laura Sicari**

Okay, oh, I see the first graduate. Okay. So how did your relationship with the university change over time?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

Well, so I, you know, I wanted more freedom to do more things and not have to come to the university all the time, but my parents insisted that that was the that was their way of dealing with their latchkey child was to bring her to the school and they still didn't pay any attention to what I was doing, but they at least knew I was in an environment that I wasn't going to, you know, get into super big trouble. But I did start to like, do more, you know, outside of the university I would get my homework done. And then I would like bolt and act like I'd been in the gym, or I'd been in, you know, whatever, and actually have been out on the street doing whatever, going wherever that I wanted to go. But I always made sure I was back in time for Dad and I to walk home because we that was part of the reason he worked there was so that he could walk back and forth to work.

**Laura Sicari**

That was important to him.

**Idalee DiGregorio**

It was very important to him, super important to him.

**Laura Sicari**

Why or why?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

I think so when he was at Edgewood arsenal, it was an hour commute out there. And he just didn't want to do that. He was a New York City boy, you walked everywhere, right? They grew up in Greenwich Village, both him and mom grew up in Greenwich Village, and you just never got in a car. I don't even think his parents owned a car until much later, like after he left home. And so, you know, he really just was used to and wanted to be to have a real Baltimore, you know, a real city experience. And so, walking was part of that, he wanted to work in the city.

**Laura Sicari**

And so notably, they stayed in Bolton Hill through the riots.

**Idalee DiGregorio**

Yes, yeah. They stayed in Bolton Hill until I bought it when my son was in first grade, So

**Laura Sicari**

Go ahead. Sorry.

**Idalee DiGregorio**

No, no, it's okay.

**Laura Sicari**

And your mom, I am switching gears a little bit. So, your mom was also in the same field as your dad, right? Was she working also at the same time?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

Yes, she was at the Maryland Psychiatric Research Center for she taught at Towson first, and then she went, and she worked at the Maryland Psychiatric Research Center. She did a huge amount of research there. She was specifically interested in neuro psychology and the effects of different things on sleep. And she did some of the early cannabis research. She did all the tryptophane research where, came out of her lab like that was her work. And then she worked in schizophrenia and eventually ended up being the head of- the chief of NIMH's schizophrenia group. So, she was very she was more published than my father. Let's put that way.

**Laura Sicari**

Is that the National Institute of Mental Health, NIMH?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

Correct.

**Laura Sicari**

Did or did her and your father's work ever overlap, or did she ever have a relationship with UB also?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

Yes, she taught night classes that you be and then at one point she was working on polygraph research with the Maryland- she was working on polygraph research, I think at the Maryland Psychiatric Research Center and then the state police got involved and had her train their people on polygraph. So, she used to run classes at U of B for the Maryland State Police in polygraph.

**Laura Sicari**

Oh, wow.

**Idalee DiGregorio**

So yeah, she did a lot of really interesting research and work.

**Laura Sicari**

Was that what, you know, led you to decide to choose the same field or you graduated from Bryn Mawr and then went where did you go to school?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

I went to the University of Wisconsin. Well, I went to Beloit College first. For a year and a- year and a half, maybe? I think it was a year and a half. And then I transferred to the University of Wisconsin in Madison to do research in primates with primates psychological research with primates. So yes, yeah, I mean, there was a big part of me that wanted to be like my mom. It was also acceptable in my family for me to do that.

**Laura Sicari**

So, did you always know that's what you were going to do?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

Um, no, I really wanted to be in the theater. Or a chef and they were like, absolutely not. That's not good enough. You need to like figure something else out. And so, psychology was the thing that I went to.

**Laura Sicari**

Did you do any of those things also? Did you do theater and cook a lot when you were younger?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

I started cooking dinner for them when I was nine. So yeah, I cooked a lot. I always already did a lot of cooking early on in my life. And then I did a lot of theater in Baltimore when I was in high school, a lot of theater, and not just at school, but community theater and things like that. And was in a couple of films



as extras and you know, did stuff around. And when I went to college at Beloit, that was where I was doing theater, and they were like, "No, that's not an acceptable path," you know, profession. So, I was pretty compliant and listened to my parents at the time. I can't say I was compliant the rest of my life, but then I was.

**Laura Sicari**

What was your favorite show to do? What do you remember?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

My favorite show to do was The Old Lady Shows her Medals. It was a two act short play. And it was about World War Two. And this woman who took in a soldier and made believe that he was her son, because in order to fit in with all the other women whose children were away at war, she had sort of made up this person. And he shows up and she has to, like, get him to, you know, care about her. And it was it was lovely. He was alone. She was alone. It was a lovely play.

**Laura Sicari**

And you were that was you. Okay.

**Idalee DiGregorio**

And I did it, I think three times. I mean, it was like I did it once. I think I did it once at school. And then I did it at the University of Baltimore at the Gordon library stage. We did it. And then-

**Laura Sicari**

I mean, who did you do it with? At the University of Baltimore.

**Idalee DiGregorio**

Robin Holt, who had, who was a local director, he was doing a bunch of theater at the time. So, this was my 11th grade year, maybe, either 10th or 11th. I think it was 11th grade year, and he had been doing some theater there for the university, you know, getting students involved in whatever. So, and because I was a faculty kid, and he and I knew each other well, from another show we had done, he brought me in to do that.

**Laura Sicari**

So, it was a department show, was it a theater department production?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

We didn't really have a theater department that I remember. Um, but they were trying to have some art, you know, as like, they didn't really have a lot of art. That, you know, MICA was up the street. So, there was no reason for them to really have an art department. Other than, I guess, a publications department, they, John Wilson, who you know, as well was at the University, and he headed up or was in the publication's department for a while, I think he was a student and then then stayed on. But that was sort of the artist that the university got.

**Laura Sicari**

Okay.

**Idalee DiGregorio**

But they were trying to do things to get people to stay on campus more, because they were a commuter college. And they had kind of let go of their basketball team by then, I think. And that way has always been a big draw for the University of getting people to stay on campus was the basketball team. So they're kind of trying to come up with other ways.

**Laura Sicari**

Why did they let go of the basketball team?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

That I don't know, I just know that we used to go to the Bees games when we were kids. And then all of a sudden, there were no more Bees games.

**Laura Sicari**

That sounds disappointing.

**Idalee DiGregorio**

It was we had such a good time. I mean, it was, you know, like, as it was a small college. So, you know, you got to be up close and personal with all the players and it was really fun.

**Laura Sicari**

And were the players like your dad students also?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

Yes, some of them though. Most of them didn't like him because they made- he made them work.

**Laura Sicari**

Oh, really? Was he a strict professor?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

He was very strict. Yes. Everybody always talked about what, I mean, I would say hard ass is really what they would call him. He was a hard ass and he just he didn't bend for anybody. And he didn't believe in grading on a curve and so that was he was it was a hard- he was hard. But they liked him also, that was kind of weird thing is that they felt like they learned a lot from him, and his students were around you know, well after they left, they would come back for to our house for parties and things like that. I mean, he made really good relationships with his student's long term.

**Laura Sicari**

And do you still know some of his students?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

I do. I do. Well, you, Tao and Whit, who are great friends of ours, Tao was one of Dad's students, one of his success stories. I mean, Tao couldn't even speak English when he really came. And Dad really helped him took him under his wing. And, you know, Tao manipulates data through a statistical program today. I mean, he's done it his whole career. And that was all through the university Baltimore and Dad. And he will tell you that, you know, like, your dad was so influential. So yeah, I mean, he really- I'm trying to think there's another Eric Woods, I believe is his name, who is another alumni who now lives in San Francisco, but we keep up on Facebook. So yeah, there were there were lots of them. And Deb Kohl, who is still there at the University of Baltimore as a professor was one of his students. And she that was, you know, back when she was 18. So, she was 18. And I think I was 12 at the time when I met her something like that. So yes, she's and she came back, she went off and got her PhD, and then came back in time.

**Laura Sicari**

So, did your parents shape the kind of student that you were?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah, definitely. Yeah, I mean, it was being studious in our house was very, very important.

**Laura Sicari**

So, you were doing theater at Beloit? And then you decided to study psychology and therefore go to Wisconsin? Is that how it happened?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

Um, kind of. There were, there was a lot of contention in our household that I that theater was not what I should be doing. So, I tried out a bunch of departments at Beloit and liked psychology, I understood psychology had been something that I'd been exposed to my whole life. And then they were like, well, if you want to do psychology really should go to Madison, you should at least go do a semester, they're doing some research, because they had the primate lab. And that is such a big deal mom and dad had done Primate Research in their youth. And it is, you know, a gift to be able to do that, because there are very few places that you can actually work with primates. And so, I went up there for a semester. And then they asked me to stay, because I was a good researcher, and a good student, and they wanted me to stay up there in Wisconsin. So that's how that happened.

**Laura Sicari**

And then you graduated from Wisconsin?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

I did.

**Laura Sicari**

And after that, what was your the rest of your trajectory?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

I went to the University of Maryland, at College Park and was in the Human Development Department of the education school, working on research and a PhD in psychology and in experimental psychology, then I left there. It was a big clash of personalities and so I left there, and I went to UMBC. And worked for a very long time to get my master's and PhD, I did not end up finishing my PhD. There was I mean, I had kids at that point. And there was one of my major professors had gotten very ill, and it just ended up not working out. So, I left there after 10 years of trying, but I just finally gave up.

**Laura Sicari**

Well, and how would you describe the trajectory of your career, you have a lot of different skills and a lot of different work that you've done.

**Idalee DiGregorio**

Well, I from there, I you know, I started working for my husband's business and doing bookkeeping, I was always so, and this is something I learned that you U of B, Daddy got one of the first home computers, he had an apple, like the first Apple Computer at school. And so I was the kid who got to like play on Apple and figure out the Apple so that we could then teach all the students how to use this Apple, and then we got an Apple TV and again, I taught all those students how to use the Apple TV. So, I had a lot of computer skills. And at that point, people just didn't have a lot of computer skills. I know that's weird to think about, but I mean, when I was that The University of Wisconsin, other than mainframe computer, we got our first Apple 2E when I was there in my junior year, right think of college. So that was like '80? I went to college in '81, so like '83-'84. Now I had learned to program on the big mainframe, I actually did that at the University of Baltimore. I took a Fortran class at the University of Baltimore and learned how to do punch cards there. Which was great. So I knew a lot of- you had a lot of computer skills, went to work for my husband for a while, then I ended up in HR, I taught myself HR and then became a vice president in HR, then, you know, things happen. The big crisis of 2008 happened, and HR got outsourced by everybody. And as a vice president, it was an easy place to cut. So I got laid off. And then that, like sort of led me down my path to eventually going to be an acupuncturist. Go to acupuncture school with you.

**Laura Sicari**

That's right. That's how we met, in acupuncture school. And so now you it looks like or you've started to do more of the creative pursuits that maybe you didn't pursue in your younger years.

**Idalee DiGregorio**

Correct.

**Laura Sicari**

You're a full-time acupuncturist now.

**Idalee DiGregorio**

Yep.

**Laura Sicari**

And you've been a chef?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

I was a chef for a while during that period between HR and acupuncture. And actually, while we were in school, I was a chef at one of the private clubs downtown.

**Laura Sicari**

Which was, which is called?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

The 14 West Hamilton Street Club.

**Laura Sicari**

What did you like about that work?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

It was super creative. And I got to do what I wanted. And I got to cook every day. And I love to cook, I love to feed people. It's so fun to put on a party. And I just basically put on a party every day, it was great. And it was because it was a club. They didn't really, you know, as long as the food was good, and it all came off, okay, they really didn't care how much it cost and they really didn't care, you know, how I did it. They just wanted it done. And so, I had a lot of autonomy. And that was great. It was really fun.

**Laura Sicari**

And, you know, you've actually described, I think, how, in some ways, putting on the party at the club was similar to cooking and like being at the parties with your parents.

**Idalee DiGregorio**

Yes.

**Laura Sicari**

Is that true?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

Yeah. So, every year for my dad's birthday, we would have these big parties at the farm. And all these professors from the university would come and hang out, and students would come and whatever. And my sister and I would cook for the whole thing, so... and then I was pretty young. But they're, I mean, we had to get food out because their dad was, you know, entertaining and doing his thing. So, and he had all these people there for the weekend. So, Mom and Dad would entertain, and we would do all the scut work and cook and then people would come in and do dishes for us so that we didn't have to do the dishes too. But yeah, and I mean, it was that's really where I learned how to put on a party. So yeah, there's a lot of that.

**Laura Sicari**

Who do you remember from the party? Some of the same people that you mentioned from the department or?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

Yeah, I mean, Deb definitely was there. Jeff Sawyer was there he was in the history department. I think- I think he's retired. I'm pretty sure he's retired now. Katherine Gira would come. Neil Kleinman, who was now I remember the name of the Dean, who was the was the dean would come. Harvey Noyes and his wife would come and they had been- he taught, I think, adjunct taught at the University for a long time, but they had known each other in Carbondale, I believe. So yeah, there were all sorts of people who would show up and, you know, hanging out for the weekend. And then it was a lot of fun. And actually, even some of our acupuncture professors had been there, which I didn't know at the time, but

**Laura Sicari**

Just consulting my notes here.

**Idalee DiGregorio**

It really, I mean, when I think about how much time I spent there and what I learned at the University of Baltimore at a young age, like I had a lot of experiences that most kids my age wouldn't have gotten, you know, things like doing punch cards and learning programming in ninth grade. You know, like, that was unheard of, to work. I mean, I remember sitting the mainframe in a terrible loop at one at one point, because my program was. And you know, they were like, okay, well, we got up, we got to undo this, and you know, like, but yeah, I mean, I it was an amazing experience growing up around the university.

**Laura Sicari**

What, I mean, you mentioned some changes that you noticed at the university, like what other, you know, changes did you observe at the university that you can remember?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

Well, I think that after it became a state school, it got more, there was not as much unfettered access, it seemed to get a little more restrictive in terms of like, who could take classes or, you know, trying to get in to, like, go sit in the Dean's office became harder, things like that. I mean, I just think that they got busier, they got more they had more reporting to do. I know, daddy always hated all the reporting that they ended up having to do, as a function of being a state school. They had lots more committee work to do, because it wasn't just their university that they were worried about at the time. And then it grew, like it just, the amount of the, you know, the Business School and the Law School. And then all of that got built, and everything just started to like, really grow. I remember when the library got built. And it was just kind of crazy to see this like, small university that had been sort of in them cozied up in the middle of the city, just sort of sprout all over the place. But with that became a lot of competition for space and money, and you know, all of that kind of stuff.

**Laura Sicari**

So, it sounds like or that the Psychology Department was first. And then the Business School, Law School, right? Yes.

**Idalee DiGregorio**

And now those were moneymakers. I mean, you it you make a lot of money with a business school. And the Business School has always done very, very well.

**Laura Sicari**

And your father was always the chair of the Psychology Department. That's what you remember?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

He was chair until one point they decided to do a- he didn't want to be chair all the time. So, they put it on a rotating basis, because he had been shared for probably 15 years at that point. And he just didn't I think it was the last 10 years he was there or 15 years that he was there that they decided to rotate it. And that didn't work as well. I mean, he thought he wanted other people to be the chair, but then he didn't really want to listen to other people. So that became a little bit of a hard thing. And but that's I think how they ended up and then they had they were sharing space with the math department for a while there too. So, it all just became a little less his domain and more, you know, structured, which was not his favorite part.

**Laura Sicari**

And how would you describe the relationship from your experience and your vantage point, the relationship between the university and the city at large, like the city of Baltimore.

**Idalee DiGregorio**

Um, like I said, In the beginning, it was this lovely little, it was just really one building. And there was, or two buildings, I guess, one bigger building and a little building and then-.

**Laura Sicari**

So, what was the one bigger building like that you remember?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

The Gordon building that's right on Charles Street, and they expanded that building. So, it had been a smaller building, and then they doubled the size of that building. When he got there, it was the small building. And then Meb helped, like get that expanded. And then there was a little building on the back side that had the worst greasy spoon in it. But that was basically the student cafeteria because there was no student like, there were, there- you know, when Meb expanded the building, we then we got a gym, but if there hadn't been any of that, really, when he when Daddy got there. And so, it really there was like the city was sort of moving around it and nobody lives there. There was no dormitories or anything like that. It was very much a commuter school, very much an adult school. I mean, it wasn't junior senior school, but it was really more adults who were coming. You know, who had already gone into the work field and now they needed a degree to like do the next thing that they wanted to do kind of thing. There were a lot of nurses around and things like that.

**Laura Sicari**

Yeah, what programs do you remember at that time? I mean, at that time,

**Idalee DiGregorio**

It was truly a liberal arts school and that was all that it really was a liberal arts school. So there was math and science and you know, biology I remember At the biology lab was right across from where dad's office was. So, I used to go play in the biology lab some and do some work for them and some chemistry, you know, like sort of basic stuff. And then it was, you know, as they began to dream bigger, and then as state money came in, and they could get bigger than it expanded into what it is now, and more professional, you know, more professional programs came in and things like that.

**Laura Sicari**

And so how do you how do you perceive a change in the relationship between the university and the city as time, you know, has gone on?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

I- Yes, I think I mean, it doesn't seem, so the university was always kind of open and part of community events. So, like, when we had the city fair, the University did a big table at the city fair, they were part of that thing. One year, they hosted the, the Christmas Tree Festival, which, back in the day, each neighborhood got a Christmas tree, and you could decorate it however you wanted. And so, they hosted that, and, you know, because they had a sort of that open courtyard area where the that comes off the old law school, and, and that was covered in Christmas stuff. And so there was a lot of more integration of them in the community. And that doesn't seem to be so much anymore. It seems like they're just sort of have taken over their little territory. And yet, it all seems pretty closed off to the regular people at this point, you know, like, you don't just sort of stop in at the university kind of thing.

**Laura Sicari**

And it sounds like now you pass by in your car, mostly, where do you live now?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

I live up in Mount Washington now.

**Laura Sicari**

Okay, so that's not close by not a walk away.

**Idalee DiGregorio**

We lived in Bolton Hill for a long time. So, I moved my family to Bolton Hill. And we lived there for 11 years after my son started, first grade. So, we used to walk by the university all the time. But I you know; still didn't I didn't have as much of a connection to it. Even though there is a lab named after mom and dad, there that I think that they endowed.

**Laura Sicari**

So, so and so it's called the...

**Idalee DiGregorio**



Althea and William, or William and Althea Wagman psychology laboratory, I can't remember which way it goes. I think it's I think it was mom's name first. But I'm not positive about that.

**Laura Sicari**

Was that a subject of contention?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

It was. But Mom made more money than Dad. So, she was like, I put in more money than you did. I believe that that's how that worked.

**Laura Sicari**

And were you sorry to sell your childhood home in Bolton Hill?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

Um, yes and no. I mean, I think that living downtown is a rough gig at some points. And Bolton Hill is a lovely neighborhood, but very close to some not-so-great neighborhoods, which meant that when there was just a lot of theft, a lot, a lot of theft. And then Artscape really made it harder to be involved in Bolton Hill, there was you know, all these people would descend on Bolton Hill, and then there was even more theft. And that became harder. And I think the thing that really got me was I used to do all the gardening for all the flower boxes on our street. And people. I don't know who, maybe it was art students, maybe it was just regular people, I don't know who did it, but they would pull up with the plants and just drop them on the street. And, and that just it would break my heart. So, I finally was I had it and decided that it was time to and then I found this house and that really where I live now up in Mount Washington, and that really was a big game changer for us.

**Laura Sicari**

How so?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

Well, it's huge. I mean, we live in an old farmhouse with lots and lots of green space. And the truth is that I can leave anything I want out outside and it never moves. And in Bolton hill that was not the case. You know, if you left a shovel out by accident, it was gone very quickly. You know, whatever you left out was gone very quickly. I had a 100-pound mum, I know it was 100 pounds because I weighed the pot down with rocks. So that would be 100 pounds. And it disappeared in the middle of the day once. Yeah, I don't know how but they wait until the mum bloomed. That's my favorite part.

**Laura Sicari**

So, you're like, do you ever visit UB now?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

I haven't been to UB in years. We did have Daddy's funeral there. That was the last time I was there.

**Laura Sicari**

How did that come out? You had his, like a memorial there.

**Idalee DiGregorio**

Yeah, we had our. So, when Dad died, I contacted I believe I contacted Deb. And she found me- they allowed us to do it in the old law school's auditorium. And were very supportive of us doing it there. And it was lovely. And a lot of the old professors came and some of the people who were you know, more current came as well, it was really a lovely thing. So, I think that was last time and Dad's been dead 10 years, I think, something like that.

**Laura Sicari**

I think we've covered a lot.

**Idalee DiGregorio**

Yes, I think so.

**Laura Sicari**

Is there anything else, you know, that you remember that you think is important about UB or your relationship to UB or your parents', you know, relationship to UB that-

**Idalee DiGregorio**

I mean, I think that they spent a lot of time and energy on UB, they really loved UB. And I mean, I Dad was not a person who would stay a place he didn't love. So, it was obvious that he really, really loved UB. And you'd be allowed him to do like, he was a psychology professor. And then he became more of an interdisciplinary person. They started doing some more interdisciplinary work where they you would have a history professor and a psychology professor and an English professor all teach a class together on a topic, but it basically was like, you know, how do you research? How do you learn how do you write; you know-

**Laura Sicari**

When was he there?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

He that was in the last probably seven or eight years of his career at U of B that they developed this interdisciplinary approach. And I know that Jeff Sawyer was one of the people he taught with, and he loved that, and that he wouldn't have been able to do that many places. And so, I, you know, I think that that really helped him stay engaged long term in being a professor at the University. And he did a lot of work for, you know, the state system and the state universities and working on equity issues. And he was in Frostburg a lot for all of those meetings when Frostburg came in. And you know, like he really helped get that university system up and running.

**Laura Sicari**

And so, can you give me some context about that? I'm not sure. So, Frostburg, what was going on with Frostburg at that time.

**Idalee DiGregorio**

So, at that, so what happened was that the University of Baltimore so it used to be University of Maryland, right? That was that was the state system pretty much. And then the, I think, Towson came in either Towson or UB came in next, I'm not positive, which it was. And my timing may be all off. But anyway, my perception is that either Towson or University of Baltimore came in next. And then like, Frostburg College became part of the system. And so, it was like, how do we integrate them in and then, like, Coppin became part of the system. And so, it was really about like building this integrated educational system that was going to serve. And, you know, obviously, it wasn't done perfectly, because there's been some issues about, you know, how equity went. But they certainly worked hard at integrating them as much as they could.

**Laura Sicari**

What do you mean by that? The issue, the issues that came up with integration.

**Idalee DiGregorio**

Well, like I believe that there isn't it Morgan State that is the Morgan was really upset at the University of Baltimore, because they got the business school and rather than Morgan getting all the money for the business school in a big portion of it and gone to UB there was a whole big, I believe, I believe lawsuit about all of that, though, way past Dad's time. But that was I mean, I, I'm sure that part of that was set up at the time as they were trying to like figure out how to do this because they wanted as little redundancy- the state insisted that there be as little redundancy as possible.

**Laura Sicari**

And so, going back to Frostburg and your dad's work there, what was his role?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

So, there was this group that met in Frostburg and their job was to help figure out how to structure the state of Maryland education system. Collegiate education system. Catherine Gira was on it. I believe Neil Kleinman were was also there. And then there were people from all the different universities. So, it was this big thing. Dad was chairman for a while or vice chairman, for a while, of that committee. But it was really integral in in how do we, like UMBC was tiny at the time, and like, how do we what do we give them so that they, you know, can grow? And how do we structure how do we what do we give, because Western Maryland had so little education at the time, that was why Frostburg was so important. Because that was, you know, sort of Western Maryland's educational, collegiate educational system at the time, and so that it was became really important. And they met in Frostburg almost every time and I'm not even sure why that was the case. But I think it had to do with making them feel like they were still a part of what was going on, even though all the other colleges were over on this side of the state. So, it was I remember him just bitching about all that. You know, like, he was not a good committee guy. But he was on all of them. But he wasn't, he didn't like it.

**Laura Sicari**

Why?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

Um, because he didn't like to listen to other people's opinions very much. He thought he was the smartest guy in the room. And he was a really smart guy. I mean, there's no doubt. But he really, I think that there was a lot of contention about you know, how to do it, and how to make it work and that kind of thing. And he was really falling on the side of like, we need the education to work. I don't really care about the money, I don't really care about the you know, who's going to have the sports stuff that doesn't matter to me, I want to know that we're going to actually have good education at all of these places and be consistent. And that was not a popular opinion at the time. Still isn't I don't think it most colleges. Now, they're into research and they're into, like, their sports, they're going to where are we going to make our money? That's those of the money getters, teaching is actually not a really good money getter, so.

**Laura Sicari**

And you've taught right yourself?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

Yeah, I used to- I taught at the University of Baltimore.

**Laura Sicari**

Oh, what did you teach at the University of Baltimore?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

Statistics and research design? And I think a sex class. Yeah, yeah. There was one.

**Laura Sicari**

When was that?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

When was that? That was? Gosh, um, probably 20 years ago. Something like that. Yeah, I mean, it was I, Deb got me into it, Deb Kohl. Deborah Kohl, who is still there. I think she's the Dean now. Or one of them. And she got me into teaching for as an adjunct. So yeah, I taught there as well.

**Laura Sicari**

In the psychology department, I guess, is that right?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

Absolutely.

**Laura Sicari**

Who, on that note, um, who else would it be wise for us to speak to as part of the Centennial?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

Deb Kohl, you guys ought to definitely speak to because she has as much history as I do. I you know, and she was a student. And then, you know, has been a professor for a long time. And now as an admin, so yeah, she would be a great person to talk to. I believe Neil Kleinman is still alive. And he I

saw him at a funeral. Catherine Gira's funeral. That's where I saw him. I went to Catherine Gira's funeral, and I saw him there and so he would be somebody to talk to, if he's still around. Fred Guy, I believe, is still around, but I'm not positive about that. Jeff Sawyer is definitely still around, and he would be a great person to be talked to.

**Laura Sicari**

So, Fred Guy was a dean, is that correct?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

He was the dean, right. He was the dean early on.

**Laura Sicari**

And Jeff Sawyer was?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

Was a history professor for a long time. I think he retired from the University of Baltimore.

**Laura Sicari**

Is there anything else that I'm missing about the university or its history or?

**Idalee DiGregorio**

You know, it's a lovely institution in the center of the city, which is one of the things my dad really treasured about it was that it wasn't in the suburbs. And I think that's, you know, I do believe that it had a big impact on the city. And I'm sure it still does. I just don't I'm not as connected to it, which is kind of sad. But it's a very special place to me. I certainly learned a lot there.

**Laura Sicari**

Well, thank you for your time.

**Idalee DiGregorio**

Yeah, absolutely. Thanks for interviewing me. It was nice to talk to you about this. It was great.

**Laura Sicari**

Yeah, yeah. Thank you. It sounds like you've been Yeah. greatly impacted by the university.

**Idalee DiGregorio**

Absolutely. 100% Which is why, you know, I was willing to do it because I think it's important for this history not to fade away.

**Laura Sicari**

Thanks, Idalee.

**Idalee DiGregorio**

You're welcome.