

An Oral History Interview

with

CHARLES ARES (part 2)

Tucson, Arizona

conducted by
Julie Ferdon

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The Morris K. Udall Oral History Project
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JF: Okay, we're on the air again. From 1961 to 1965, you were involved in what was called the

"Udall land syndicate." (chuckles) I'm very curious about that. Could you tell us about that?

CA: I can't tell you very much. I was sort of along for the ride, and I had a very minor piece in this, but we were making money as lawyers and had a little bit of extra. Morris and John Badger, I guess--I'm sure there were other people--got the idea that it wouldn't be a bad thing to do to buy land and hold it, and then see if, as this community grew, if it would appreciate in value--so that's what we did.

JF: Land speculators, huh?

CA: Yes. We kept that very quiet.

JF: (chuckles) It hasn't been talked about much since, I've noticed.

CA: I'm sure.

JF: Civil rights was a major issue during the 1960s. Were you aware of, or was there a role that the Udalls were particularly prominent in during that time?

CA: Stewart was. Yes, there were. I was a little behind this group, so I don't know that much about it, but when Morris and Stewart--particularly Stewart --were very much involved in civil rights. Stewart in particular, but Morris as well. I can't remember--called "Civic Unity?" something like that, multiracial groups attempting to deal with questions like school segregation, things like that.

JF: I think they were both involved when they were in college (CA: Yes.) in opening athletics to all races.

CA: Right. Well, the whole thing with respect to racial segregation, I think that was the legacy of the Second World War. I mean, we had fought this war against a nation that espoused a sort of master race theory, and we had rejected that. And a lot of bright, young, well-educated people like Morris and Stewart in the service took that seriously, and meant to make it work when they came home.

JF: Do you think that might have been the issue--or at least an issue--that led them away from Mormonism, which they had been brought up in?

CA: I'm sure it must have had that effect, though I don't know very much about that. I have never really talked very much to Morris or Stewart about religion, about their religion, and about their relationship to the church. I knew that Mrs. Udall was very active and devout, and I'm sure that Levi was, too. The boys just didn't seem to carry that on. And I think that was the time. They got away from home, they'd been out in the world, away from the grip of the church. They simply moved off into a broader world. And that particular aspect of life didn't retain its hold over them.

JF: In 1965, Pat and Morris Udall were divorced. Did you know Pat?

CA: Yes.

JF: How would you describe her?

CA: Pat was a very engaging person. She could be the most charming person. She could also (chuckles) be the toughest person you ever ran into. Pat had an ego almost as big as Morris'. She did not take well to his public life. She didn't take well to adulation directed at Morris. She detested homecoming [at the University of Arizona], because it was filled with good ol' boys that Morris knew before he knew her, and that didn't work well. So she was very generous, very outgoing. If she liked you, there was nothing she wouldn't do for you. If she didn't like you....

JF: But being a congressman's wife (CA: Was not her....) was not her cup of tea?

CA: I don't think so. I don't think so.

JF: You eventually returned to Tucson in 1966?

CA: That's right.

JF: And became dean of the law school here, which you retained for seven years?

CA: Seven years.

JF: The following year, Mo came back to the University to the Sunday Evening Forum, and gave a speech in which he came out against Vietnam. (CA: Right.) You introduced him that night. Did you know that he was going to do this?

CA: Yes.

JF: He had told you that?

CA: Yes, he told me what he had in mind. We talked about it, I'm not sure how long before the speech, but sometime before he came back to do it.

JF: Did he ask your advice?

CA: I don't know that he asked my advice, but we talked about how he was going to do it, and what he was going to do. One of the things he was very concerned about, Stewart was still in the cabinet at that time, and Lyndon Johnson was a pretty touchy person. So Morris wanted me to be very sure--they had a question and answer period after the speech--people in the audience wrote out questions and passed them down the aisle and they brought 'em up to the stage. And one of the jobs of the person who was the moderator, I guess, was to sort of pick out the questions and organize them in some kind of logical fashion. One of the things that we were.... We planted one question, and it was done deliberately, because Morris wanted to do as much as

he could to keep Stewart from paying any price for what Morris was doing. So one of the questions was, "Have you talked to your brother about this, and does he agree with you?" And the answer was, "No, I have not talked to him, and I have no idea whether he agrees with me or not. I don't think he does."

JF: Had he in fact talked to him, do you know?

CA: I don't have any idea. He may not have. I think he wanted to be very careful not to get Stewart implicated at all.

JF: Now, you told me a story about your introduction of him being particularly brief. Would you like to....

CA: Well, his wife, Ella at that time, they'd had a bad experience with a former governor of Arizona who introduced Morris at some kind of a rally at some time, and took all the speaking time, just making the introduction, so that by the time Morris got the microphone, there was very little time left, and the audience was exhausted. And Ella was adamant that we were not to do that, not to have that happen to Morris again. And she kept after me, saying, "You've got to be brief--a brief introduction." And I kept telling her, "I understand that, I don't give long introductions. I'm perfectly aware of what I'm supposed to do." So when I introduced him, I said, "I have the privilege of introducing a person who needs no introduction, Morris Udall," and sat down. And Ella was furious! (laughs)

JF: She probably never asked that of anyone else after that.

CA: Well, she didn't do it of me anyway.

JF: What do you think the long-term effect was of Vietnam on this country?

CA: Oh, horrible, horrible.

JF: In what manner?

CA: Well, for one thing.... Well, for the first time we had to face up to the fact that we could lose a war, which in effect is what we did. And we lost, of all things, to a third-rate Asian country that our assumption was we would just obliterate them. And it turned out that we were not as smart as we thought we were, and they were a lot smarter. And it was a war we did not know how to deal with, how to fight. And fundamentally, it was wrong for us to be there in the first place. It was hopeless and wrong. So that sobering experience of facing up to the fact that we were not invulnerable--we had won the Second World War, but we couldn't win this two-bit war in Asia--complicated by the fact that so many people saw this in terms of Communism versus American capitalism. And that bothered people a lot--it bothers everybody. So getting a more realistic view of ourselves is a very tough thing for us, and there are lots of myths that we believe about ourselves, and we tell ourselves these things over and over, and we believe 'em, and it turns out some of 'em weren't true. So that was hard for us, and it led to a lot of cynicism

and a lot of belief by a lot of people that somebody must be responsible for this, somebody did this to us. This wouldn't happen if real Americans had been in charge. And so there's a lot of suspicion, and a lot of animosity toward government.

The other thing, and perhaps more lasting, and you couple it with Richard Nixon's experiences, we learned that our government would lie to us. And the profound effect of that, we got that through the Vietnam War, and we got it through Nixon's presidency and the Watergate stuff. As we frequently do, we overreacted to that, we over-learned the lesson of holding people accountable. And we over-learned to the extent that we were very cynical about government, so that we don't believe anything they tell us. And I think that distance between us and our government, and the suspicion, the cynicism we have about politics and politicians has had a profound effect.

JF: And not really gone away. It seems to almost be snowballing.

CA: No, it's not gone away at all. It's not gone away at all. In many respects, one good effect has been that we have a more sober view of the world, I hope. We don't believe so many Fourth of July speeches anymore. But it also has undermined our respect for the many good things that government can and does do, and the many good things that politicians can do, because we don't trust anybody.

JF: That's right. The year after Mo came out against Vietnam, he made his mark challenging the seniority system. (CA: Yes.) In 1968, he challenged House Speaker John McCormick, and in 1970, he challenged majority leader Hale Boggs. He lost in both cases. Did you ever talk to Mo about these races?

CA: I don't remember talking to him about the Hale Boggs thing. I do remember talking to him about the John McCormick. I remember one story that he told was of the evening that he decided he should call the speaker and tell him that he was going to challenge him. And he'd always had this very easy relationship with John McCormick, and McCormick liked him. But Mo and Ella --she got on an extension phone at home, I think--and they called the speaker to tell him. (chuckles) The reaction was stunned silence, and then frozen, just frozen attitude toward him.

JF: That lasted, did that?

CA: Oh, yes, I think so, yes. Oh, you don't do that.

JF: Yes. It certainly had not been done to that point.

CA: No.

JF: So did their relationship ever get back on keel?

CA: I don't think so, but I wasn't close, so I don't know, but I don't think so.

JF: What do you think motivated him to do this?

CA: Well, one part, knowing that he could do it better. Morris almost always knew that. That's why I think on that television program that "Udall Scholars" thing, they asked was I surprised that he ran for president? It didn't surprise me in the slightest. Morris had the notion, and correctly, that he could do it better than anybody who was running at that time.

JF: He had a healthy ego.

CA: He had a huge ego. He also had huge abilities. And he was right, he could have done it better. He might have come to the surface at the wrong time. I think that's probably true. But among those who we've seen, he would have been vastly preferable to any of them. I'm an admirer of Jimmy Carter, but he would have been a better president than Jimmy Carter. He would have been much more open than Carter really was, because Carter had this streak of stubbornness, and I guess meanness in him, that Morris didn't have. But I just think Morris thought he could do it better than John McCormick could, and he was probably right. And it's, again, part of this--I think it was characteristic of Morris when he came back to the University after the war, he and Stewart were on the cutting edge of things, they were pushing things, they were doing things, they were moving things. The worst thing I think that Morris could contemplate was a static situation, where nothing was moving, where we weren't trying to do better, doing new things. And I'm sure that's what pushed Morris to do this.

JF: Well, and when he lost both of those challenges, he turned around a few years later and announced that he was running for president from the House of Representatives. So he, I guess, wanted to stay on the cutting edge of things.

CA: Right.

JF: Did he tell you about his plans ahead of time, then?

CA: No. No, we were in different worlds at that time. I was in academia and he was in politics.

JF: Were you in touch at all?

CA: Some, sure.

JF: So it didn't surprise you when he announced, just based on his character?

CA: No. I'm sure we had discussions about it now and then, but nothing serious, like sitting down and planning it out, or anything like that. I never participated in anything like that.

JF: How about after he lost the primaries? Did you ever have an occasion to sit back with him and hear his thoughts on the campaign?

CA: Well, we talked, but I don't have specific recollections. I remember hearing stories of the campaign, and why things went the way they did, and how tough it was, and how they ran out of

money, and everything was done on a shoestring and that sort of thing.

JF: Did you get any sense from that, why he felt that he had lost?, or your opinion as to why?

CA: I think it was resources.

JF: And you think he would have been a better president than Carter?

CA: Yes.

JF: Do you think he was just a product of his times in that sense, too? I mean, what if he were to run for president today?, and had the resources? Do you think he could make a serious run for it?

CA: (sigh) Well, I think he might have. I think the role that Clinton has played, sensing that a Democrat had to lean back to the center, and that this is a time for centerism--Morris could have done that. Morris was very successful in Arizona, and you couldn't run in Arizona and call yourself a liberal--you had to call yourself something else, and he did. And Morris, though, was always able to keep people to the right of him comfortable with him, even though he took some very interesting, challenging positions. But he was able to do it in such a way that they didn't regard him as a bomb-thrower. And I think he could have done that.

JF: He doesn't seem to burn bridges behind him, either.

CA: No.

JF: In 1979, he was officially diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. Were you aware by then that there was something wrong?

CA: Yes.

JF: What had you concerned?, do you recall?

CA: Just that he just seemed to be slower, which wasn't characteristic of Morris.

JF: In the eighties, he continued to be really highly productive, passing the Alaska Lands Act and Nuclear Waste Management Act, among a lot of other things. Did it become obvious to you at any point that the Parkinson's was getting in the way of his ability to do his job?

CA: Well, I don't know about doing his job, because I wasn't with him daily in the Congress. But you could tell that it was beginning to affect Morris very profoundly, and that he was struggling with the medication to keep him on the knife edge between undermedication or overmedication. And it was pretty clear that his speech was being affected, and his physical abilities were being really slowed down considerably.

JF: Did you ever have occasion to talk to him about that?

CA: No, only to the extent that we talked about the difficulties that he had in managing the medications and his health. But I never presumed to talk to Morris about whether it was time to stop or anything like that. That wasn't for me to get into. I wasn't with him daily. And he didn't ask my advice about that.

JF: In 1988, his second wife, Ella Royston Udall, died in what was ruled as a suicide. Did you know Ella?

CA: Yes.

JF: Can you tell us something about her?

CA: Well, we didn't know Ella nearly as well as we knew Pat, because she was a part of his life in Washington, not in Arizona. I thought she was a great deal more political. She obviously was more political than Pat, and she was a part of his political life, and that seemed to sort of characterize their relationship, was their common interest in politics.

JF: So she was better suited to being a congressman's wife, in your opinion?

CA: I suppose she was, right.

JF: Let me ask you just a couple of general questions. Compare and contrast Stewart and Morris. What were their greatest strengths and weaknesses? (pause) I feel like I'm giving a law school exam here!

CA: (laughs) Well, from my observations, Stewart was more ... ideological, more philosophical, more comfortable with the life of the mind. Stewart, for example, he and Lee became very enamored of Robert Frost, and saw themselves, really, as a part of the "literate society." Morris, on the other hand, was much more action-oriented, much more pragmatic. That isn't to say that Morris was any less intelligent or intellectual than Stewart--he simply didn't see himself as an intellectual--he saw himself as.... When they were in practice as a practicing lawyer, Stewart had--as one of his aides once said--"a very rich inner life." And I think in political terms, as it turned out, though, it didn't look that way to begin with. I think Morris was a much better, much more skillful political person than Stewart--had better judgement, had more restraint, had a better sense of where things were going. Stewart could float off.

JF: Now, he never, after he left Washington as secretary of interior, he never again ran for public office. (CA: Yes.) Why do you think that was?

CA: Well, I think Stewart had stepped out of the realm when he became secretary of interior. When he was such a good secretary of interior, and that was his calling, I thought. And he was good at that sort of thing. But by that time his political connections to the working party I think had evaporated, had eroded. And his base, he no longer had a local base, and you have to have a local base to run for things--unless you're a Kennedy and can move to New York and run for the

Senate.

JF: What do you think about the career that he did follow from that point? I guess he couldn't go back and be interior secretary--there's only one of those jobs.

CA: No, and he wouldn't sell himself as a lobbyist, for which I have always admired Stewart greatly. He just didn't sell himself. Nobody bought Stewart. As a result, I think it's been hard for to find a solid working base.

JF: And yet he's continued to practice law, and in some fairly cutting-edge issues.

CA: Uranium cases--he was involved in those, yes.

JF: And Native American claims cases. One more question: Over the years, how did you--if you did--see Mo change?

CA: I just saw him grow. He was a very effective, very active, small state lawyer, until he went to Congress. And he made the transition very easily, as a matter of fact, from the bush leagues to the big time, which I always thought was because Morris just had that kind of ability, he was a big-time person. And yet he didn't lose his aura of being a small state lawyer, small state politician. But he moved into the big time and people took him and respected him for his ability. And so I think he just grew in sophistication and ability to deal with all sorts of different people. In some sense, I don't think Morris changed a lot, but that was because he was pretty something when he was practicing law in Tucson. (chuckles)

JF: That sounds like a good note to end it with. Thank you very much for your participation, we appreciate it.

[END OF INTERVIEW]