JF: Okay, if you think we've adequately covered the strip mining bill....

JS: Well, not adequately, but to the best of my recollection! (laughter)

JF: Is there anything you'd like to add that you can think of before we move to Alaska?

JS: Well, let me just say I think without Mo's leadership, we never would have gotten the strip mining bill through--at least not as good a one as we did. When Mo got up to speak, other members recognized that not only was Mo a person who really did try to work out consensus, but Mo spoke for the environmentalist movement in the country. So Mo's stature made a big difference in getting that bill enacted.

JF: On January 4, 1977, you and Mo introduced HR-39, which I believe became known as the Udall-Anderson Bill, (JS: Yes.) setting aside over a million acres of land in Alaska--most of which I gather was already federal land. How did it all start? Did you and Mo collaborate from the very beginning on this?

JS: Well, first of all, let me say originally it was to be the Udall-Anderson-Seiberling Bill.

JF: I wondered about that.

JS: And in 1980, John Anderson was running for president, and Mo wanted to get him on the bill again. John said, "Well, I'll go on it if it's only Udall and Anderson." So Mo (chuckles) came to me and said, "It's a terrible thing to ask someone to take his name off a bill, particularly when he's had as much to do with it as you have, and if you don't want to do it, I won't take it off." And I said, "Mo, you know me, I'm only interested in results. I don't care who gets the credit. And if we get this bill passed, that's all I want, so take my name off the bill." So that's how it became the Udall-Anderson Bill.

JF: I wondered, when I was researching this. It just seemed so obvious that your name would be on it.

JS: (chuckles) Well, that's why it wasn't. Now, in 1975--well, let's start earlier--the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, which was passed in 1972, and which Mo was one of the supporters of, had the famous 17-D2 provision which said that before any more state lands are selected, and before any more native lands are selected by the native corporations, the secretary shall identify lands that should be considered by Congress for national protection as parks or wildlife refuges or wilderness or national forest; and said the secretary can set aside up to 80 million acres of land, which will not be open to mining claims and other claims for five years, or until Congress acts. So that's the famous 17-D2 provision.

JF: Someone once said that D2 was the most famous amendment or whatever, ever. Would you agree with that?
JS: Well, it was a very famous provision, which eventually was shortened in common parlance to just D-2. I still have a tee shirt that says, "Me too, for D-2." Anyway, in 1975, Secretary of Interior Rogers Morton designated over 80 million acres for consideration for parks, et cetera. And there was an article about it in the National Geographic, with pictures of some of these areas. And I read this article and I thought, "Gee, I'd like to get up and see some of these areas, and see what's involved." So I got two other congressmen, Congressmen Goodloe Byron of Maryland, a Democrat, and Congressman Alan Steelman of Texas, a Republican, to agree to go with me, and we'd go up to Alaska and spend a couple of weeks looking at these areas. And the Park Service very eagerly encouraged us, and they did all the logistics or organize a really wonderful trip, which we all took to Alaska. We floated the Charley River and we flew up to the North Slope, and we went down the Alaskan Peninsula--really went all around.

JF: [Was Mo along?]

JS: No, Mo wasn't, this was the three of us. I just became very enthused about Alaska, and took a lot of photographs, and had prints of some of them made, and showed them to my colleagues on the committee. The result was that in 1978, when the time was starting to run out for the D-2 designations by the secretary of Interior, Congress had to act before the end of 1978. So it was decided to set up a special subcommittee to deal with the Alaska lands issue. Mo and my other Democratic colleagues said, "Well, you're the most senior member of the committee who's actually been to Alaska, who's a Democrat." The only other member of the committee who had spent much time in Alaska was Don Young, a Republican, and he was from Alaska. So they said, "We're going to make you chairman of a special subcommittee. We'll call it the Subcommittee on General Oversight and Alaska Lands. You can chair it, and we'll get this process started."

JF: What year was this?

JS: This was 1977. This was in our organizing of the Interior Committee for the new Congress. So I thought, "Boy, this is really some assignment! How are we ever going to get this through the Senate? where, in particular, they're very cozy about protecting the rights of other senators on matters involving federal land inside that senator's state?!!" So I thought about it and decided that the only way we were going to succeed was to make this a national issue. What we were going to have to do was really work to get news media all over the country involved in this, and get the environmental movement charged up. So we decided to have hearings in the lower forty-eight, before we ever had any in Alaska. And we had a hearing in Washington, and we had one in Atlanta, and Chicago, and Denver, and Seattle, and roughly covered every major region of the United States.

JF: Who testified at these hearings?

JS: Well, we heard over a thousand witnesses in the lower forty-eight alone. Environmentalists from.... See, the environmental organizations formed the Alaska Coalition. They had about fifty or more different organizations--labor unions, businesses, environmental groups, League of Women Voters, United Auto Workers--a tremendous
number of organizations. They all sent people to testify in our hearings in various regions. In fact, we had witnesses from every single state in the union. One of the results was we got a lot publicity in the local news media--not only television, but newspaper publicity, The Chicago Tribune, Denver Post, et cetera. Later I had people come to me and say, "You know, I testified, and I'd never been active as an environmentalist, but then I had the opportunity to testify before your subcommittee," in Chicago or wherever it was, "and I've become an active person ever since." Those subcommittee hearings really got us a tremendous amount of publicity. And a consensus developed in the country that we've got to protect our heritage in Alaska.

JF: How did Alaskans feel about these hearings?

JS: Well, that's an interesting question. The Anchorage Times, which was the principle newspaper in Alaska, was dead set against this legislation, and so was the newspaper in Fairbanks. The newspaper in Juneau was a little more favorable. But the Alaska Legislature was dead set against any legislation. They said, "We want to develop our state, and the federal government should keep their hands off of it," et cetera. But the interesting thing was that the legislature authorized the hiring of one of the top national polling firms to conduct a survey of how people in Alaska felt about the legislation, and to their embarrassment (chuckles) the survey showed that 62% of the people in Alaska favored protecting their natural lands, along the lines of such legislation. Anyway, we had all the monied interests against us. We had all these hearings in the spring and summer of 1977, and only after that did we then take the subcommittee to Alaska and hold hearings. In July and August of 1977, we went to Alaska and we held hearings in every major city in Alaska. We also went to villages all over the state, listened to what the local people and the natives had to say. And we heard another thousand people in Alaska in our hearings. And Mo and I were hung in effigy in Sitka and various other places.

JF: Now, who was behind hanging you in effigy? Was there a particular group?

JS: Well, there was an organization called Citizens for the Management of Alaska Lands, and the head of it was a guy named Tony Motley. They were actually funded by some of the big monied interests--mining and timber and that sort of thing. And they went around and tried to thwart the publicity we were getting. They were organizing counter-publicity. For example, in Sitka, tremendous pressure was put on the local stores to shut down the day we had our hearing there, to shut the whole city down.

JF: Why was that?

JS: Well, this was to supposedly mass public protest against this legislation. But the interesting thing was (chuckles), I remember some of the people from the Chamber of Commerce came in and complained that they were losing all this business as a result of our hearings. I said, "Well, it isn't our hearings, we didn't shut you down." And they said, "No, but we were told we'd be boycotted if we didn't shut down." So I said, "Oh, really? Where did that come from?" They said, "From the Alaska Pulp Company,"
which was one of the companies that was using all the timber cut in Alaska to make pulp so they could sell it to Japan and the Japanese could then make rayon and send it back to us, with a big mark-up.

Anyway, so we did learn a lot about Alaska. Mo and I flew all around. We looked at some wonderful places, as well as having some fascinating hearings.

JF: Did you chair any of those hearings?

JS: Yes.

JF: And that was in your capacity as the subcommittee chair?

JS: Yes. But of course Mo was chairman of the full committee by then, and he was the dominant person. We took along with us Margot Hornblower of The Washington Post, one of their writers; and Dave Hess of Knight-Ridder Newspapers, and a couple of others flew around with us all over Alaska, and that got us a tremendous amount of publicity, too.

JF: Did you have camping trips?

JS: Oh, yes! One of the interesting ones we had was at a place called Selby Lake. That's up in the mountains, north of the Arctic Circle. We camped on the shores of this beautiful lake. I even went swimming in the lake, although it was rather cold, north of the Arctic Circle. In fact, the Anchorage Times, or one of the newspapers, had a picture of me in my bathing suit, coming out of the water (laughs) saying, "Trim Congressman Seiberling takes a dip in the lake." Anyway, one of the things that happened was Mo and a couple of the others decided to go fishing. While they were fishing, lo and behold, an airplane lands on the lake, and taxis up near where we were camped, and out comes two guys with the Alaska Fish and Game Department, demanding to know if Mo, and whoever else was fishing, had state fishing licenses. I guess they were hoping to find that we didn't. And to their embarrassment, everybody had a license! (laughter)

JF: Probably wanted to arrest you for poaching!

JS: That's the only time we ever saw them in this entire trip all over Alaska. The only time they showed up was when we were camped at Selby Lake.

JF: So you think maybe that was a set-up sort of?

JS: Oh, yes, no doubt about it. (chuckles)

JF: Sounds like you had a lot of people up there who were bound and determined to stop this bill.
JS: No question about that--the Anchorage Times. Another interesting thing that happened--I guess I was a little more naive than Mo about reporters. When we first landed in Anchorage, in our field trip, we held a press conference at the airport. All the news media showed up, except there was no one there from the Anchorage Times. So after the press conference was over, in comes a reporter from the Anchorage Times, wanting to know if he could interview me. So I said, "Okay. You should have been here at the press conference, but I'll be glad to be interviewed." So the first thing he said to me was, "Well, the people of Alaska think that it doesn't really matter what they say in these hearings you're going to have, that you and the committee have already made up [your] minds. Is that correct?" And I said, "Well, if that were the case, we wouldn't bother to even come to Alaska. The reason we're here is because we're very concerned about what the people of Alaska feel is in their interests. We want to protect their legitimate interests, and that's the primary reason we're going to hold hearings here." And he said, "But isn't all you care about is the votes?" And I said, "Look, if all we were talking about is votes, 400,000 people in Alaska"--which was the entire total population--"wouldn't stack up much against 250 million people in the lower forty-eight, would they? Obviously, we're here because we're not just here because of the votes." The next day, headline in the Anchorage Times, "400,000 People of Alaska Don't Count--Seiberling." So I called up the Times and I said, "This is absolutely total distortion. This is what I said ..." and I demanded a retraction. The Anchorage Times printed another article the next day saying, "We've checked with our reporter, and we believe he was accurate, and so that's that!" I should have said, "I will not be interviewed unless someone else is here from our committee." But he wanted to get me off in a corner. That's the kind of atmosphere we were dealing with up there.

JF: It sounds like the press was not exactly unbiased.

JS: No. And in Ketchikan, where we also had a hearing--this is kind of interesting--the local pulp company, Ketchikan Pulp, which was doing the same thing, cutting Alaska trees, making them into pulp and shipping it off to Japan--and it was owned by a Japanese company--they got the local labor union that worked for the company to picket our hearing. And the day before the hearing, I was walking along the street in Ketchikan, and I came to a little storefront that was the local labor union office, and in it were a lot of signs saying, "Seiberling is a flat tire," and things like that. Just ahead of me was a woman with a little boy, and the little boy was looking in the window, and he said, "Mommy, what are all those signs there?" and she said something, "Oh, I don't know." And he said, "Oh, wait, I know! It's that man who wants to cut down all the forests and stop fishing and stop hunting here, and stop airplanes flying in Alaska." And I thought, "I ought to introduce myself, tell them I'm that man," but I thought, "He's obviously been brainwashed. I might scare him to death."

Well, the next day, we were picketed at our hearing--and I'm a strong labor supporter anyway--I went up and shook hands with each one of the pickets, and introduced myself. Then after we had the hearing, the head of the AFL-CIO local labor council called me up in my hotel, and he said, "Congressman, I want to apologize for picketing your hearing. We know you're a strong supporter of organized labor, but we
were told by the management that if we didn't picket the hearing, why, we'd be fired."
(laughs)

JF: Amazing, isn't it?

JS: Talk about tough pool! Anyway, at the hearing, we divided the witnesses up into
groups representing various points of view, and we had environmentalists all testify as a
panel, and industry and so forth. One of the environmental organization witnesses was a
big tall guy with long hair and a young fellow with long hair, wearing a tee shirt. Don
Young nudges me and says, "Looks like a hippie! Looks like a hippie!" So this man gets
up to speak and he says, "There's a lot of tension in this room. Before I testify, I want to
get us all a little more relaxed. Let us imagine we're out on a beautiful mountainside on
Admiralty Island, and the sun is gleaming on the bay, and way below us on the shore
there's a female bear and two cubs walking along, and a hawk circling overhead. Man!
that sun feels good! I think I'll just take off my shirt." (laughs) And he proceeds to take
off his shirt. And Don Young says, "You're gonna have a streaker! You're gonna have a
streaker!" Then he says, "In fact, that sun feels so good, I think I'll take off my pants."
And Don Young says, "Uh-oh!" And then the kid stops and he says, "No, on second
thought, I'll just tell you how I feel about Alaska. Yiippppiieeee!" And he turns around
and walks off the stage. And I thought, "Boy, that really summarizes it up pretty well!"
(laughter)

JF: Now, were the environmental groups very visible in the Alaska hearings?

JS: Yes, they were. There were environmental organizations in Alaska, too. But we had
all kinds of people speaking at our hearings. And of course some of the best hearings
were in the native villages. I remember a place on the Bering Sea there was a village
called Togiak, T-O-G-I-A-K, and some of the people who testified were really old
people, and they didn't even speak English, they spoke Yupik, which is an Eskimo
tongue. And I thought, "Gee, I wish I weren't chairing this meeting, because I'd love to
take photographs of the faces, they're just so wonderful." One old man said, and he had a
translator....

JF: I wondered if you had translators.

JS: Yes. He said, "We native people depend on the land for everything--for our clothes,
for our food, for our housing--and if you allow the land to be destroyed, God will forgive
you because he's merciful, but our children won't." And that all got written up in The
Washington Post and the Knight newspapers and everything. And that kind of
epitomized the whole thing. And that sort of testimony getting publicized really got us a
lot more support all over the country. Anyway, those hearings were just fascinating.

JF: Oh! I bet they were! Mark Trautwein has told me that you have just unbelievable
patience when you're running hearings, (JS laughs) that you have an ability to sit and
listen to countless people and absorb massive amounts of information.
JS: Well, that was what my job was, I thought. When the whole thing was finally passed, Mo said that I was his right arm. And I thought, "Well, I don't know anybody whose right arm I'd rather be!" (break) You were talking about my being a patient chairman. In 1975, when I was up on my own with Congressman Byron and Congressman Steelman, one of the things we did was spend three days floating down the Charley River, which is a wonderful wild river. The guide who was in my raft was a big burly backwoodsman type named Bill Brown. The first day we were out on this float, we stopped after a couple of hours to go ashore, and Congressman Steelman proceeded to take a leak in the river, and I said, "Hey, Alan, that's (laughs) our water supply! Go in-shore a little bit!" and didn't think anything more about it. And after the Alaska Lands Act was passed, it was five years later, I got a letter from Bill Brown, our backwoods guide, and all the letter said was, "Dear Congressman, ever since we floated the Charley River together, I've followed your career with great interest. You are a person of civilization, intellect, and excruciating patience. Some day, maybe even in Texas, people will understand that pissing in the river is a no-no. Sincerely, Bill Brown." You can put that in the official archives (laughter) if you want!

JF: That's great! Now, you and Betty were just mentioning during our short break about Mo taking over the controls of one of your planes.

JS: Yes, when we flew up to Alaska in August of 1977, we flew up in an Air Force jet transport. Mo asked if he could take the controls, and flew as co-pilot for a while. We were going along the coast of Alaska, over the Gulf of Alaska, just off shore. As we were flying along, all of a sudden the plane made a very sharp turn and bank, and I looked out and I saw right ahead of us had been a big mountain that had been in a cloud, and all of a sudden the cloud had lifted, and I guess the pilot had suddenly grabbed the controls and had to make a sharp turn. But flying in Alaska is very tricky. (JF: I'll bet.) Betty told about how after the hearing in Togiak we flew up this long river valley between two mountain ridges. As we got farther up the valley, the mountain ridges kept coming closer and closer together, and there was a low cloud ceiling. The peaks of the mountains were in the clouds. Finally, Betty said to me, "You know, it's getting awfully narrow here, maybe he should turn around." And I said, "Honey, he can't turn around, it's too narrow a space." At that point, the pilot pulled right up into the clouds, and we flew in the clouds for a few minutes, and finally came down out of the clouds, and we're on the other side of the mountains in brilliant sunshine, and there was this marvelous landscape of forest with one lake after another, just going off into the horizon. I forget the names of those lakes. Anyway, it's near Bristol, Alaska. But his flying right up into the clouds. The nickname of our seventy-year-old pilot, was "Radar Ray," and the reason was, he knew the terrain so perfectly that he could even fly in the mountains without radar--and we didn't have any radar.

JF: Was that in a small plane?

JS: That was in a small plane.

JF: How many congressmen were part of this?
JS: Oh, we had about six or eight congressmen. We had Congressman Teno Roncalio of Wyoming.... I'm trying to remember some of the others that were with us when we went up for the hearings. I'd have to look it up.

JF: So did you have a fleet of small planes?

JS: Yes, we had several small planes.

JF: And that carried camping equipment and all of that?

JS: Yes.

JF: What a wonderful experience!

JS: It was wonderful!

JF: On May 19, 1978, the House approved the Alaska Lands Bill, and the Senate approved a different version. (JS: Right.) They compromised on a conference bill, and then the House ended up passing the conference bill. But the conference bill, as I understand, died in the Senate, due to a filibuster by Mike Gravel. Is that correct?

JS: That's correct.

JF: Was that when Gravel was reading Ford's biography or something into the record?

JS: It could be. I didn't follow the details of what went on, on the floor of the Senate. But there's some interesting things that happened the first time around. Toward the end of the session in 1978, we tried to see if we could put together a kind of an informal conference committee, House-Senate conference committee, and reach an agreement on a bill that we'd submit to both the Senate and House as a consensus bill. We met for several days in a little room up on the top floor of the Senate wing of the Capitol, and Mo Udall chaired the House delegation, and Senator Jackson of Washington chaired the Senate delegation. We had all the principal actors there: Don Young, myself, Senator Mike Gravel, the other senator from Alaska--his name slips me at the moment--still is senator from Alaska.

JF: Ted Stevens?

JS: Ted Stevens, yes. And we had the secretary of Interior there, and a very high-level group of people. And we had all the staff of the Senate and House committees there, and we worked for two days and two nights, until ten, eleven o'clock at night. It looked like we were going to reach a consensus. Mike Gravel had sat there the whole time and not said a word. When it looked like we were going to reach some kind of an agreement, Gravel then finally pipes up and says, "Wait a minute, I haven't been heard from yet. I have some things I want to put in this bill." And so Mo said, "Well, all right, what do
you want?" He said, "Well, first of all, I want you to add a provision here authorizing a Susitna River Dam, a high dam on the Susitna River." And we said, "Well, you know that will kill the thing right there, Mike. There's a big controversy over that, as to whether it's cost effective, as well as environmentally sound." But Mo said, "Suppose we agree to that? Do you have any other demands?" And he said, "Yes, I want a provision that says the State can authorize the construction of a highway over any federal land in Alaska, whether it's in wilderness or park or what." And we said, "Well, you know that's impossible. That just would kill it right then and there."

JF: Sounds like he was trying to scuttle the bill.

JS: Yes. So then the senator from Vermont--I forget his name--said, "Well, Mike, I understand that if we agreed to that, you have one other demand, and that is to add an authorization for a sea-level Panama Canal. Is that correct?" And Gravel said, "That's right!" So everybody said, "Well, it's obvious that you don't want us to have any legislation, so I guess you've just wasted two days of our time, Senator." And that ended the meeting. So that was toward the end of the session in 1978. And I thought, "Well, you never know what can happen in the Senate." So I made it a point to be on the floor of the House constantly, and every single bill that came over from the Senate as a conference report, I would interrogate the manager of the bill, whatever congressman was managing the bill, as to whether there were any provisions dealing with Alaska. And if there were, I would then demand an explanation, because the Senate has different rules than the House--they can put in non-germaine amendments--and I was going to make sure they didn't sneak anything in that would have wiped out the designations of Secretary Rogers Morton, or some other thing. And I was on my feet for forty hours straight on the last weekend of the session, just trying to monitor these bills from the Senate. At one point, they sent over a rivers and harbors bill, and of course it had a lot of authorization for rivers projects and harbors in Alaska and other places. Every bill requires unanimous consent to pass at that point. And so when they brought that bill over from the Senate, I got up and objected. That killed the bill. But it was a pork barrel bill anyway, so I didn't mind killing it. So at that point, Mike Gravel comes over to me--he's come over from the Senate to see how this bill would fare, because he was chairman of the committee that passed the bill in the Senate. So he came over to me and said, "Why don't you agree to this? It doesn't hurt you any." And I said, "Well, you guys are playing hardball. I just want you to see that two people can play at that game. But let me ask you this: Why don't you agree to the consensus that we worked out in our little ad hoc committee meeting over the last few days? You know if we don't have it, the secretary of Interior and the president are going to designate all these as national monuments anyway, but why provoke a confrontation between the Congress and the State of Alaska? Why not have this done in the right way?" And he said, "Oh, well, I like a conflict. I believe in secession." I said, "Well, all I can say is, if you want to have secession, you'd better get a lot more people than 400,000 in your state." That was the end of the conversation.

JF: What kind of guy was he?
JS: Oh, he's a nice fellow in many ways, but he just was determined that he was not going to agree to what we wanted. He wanted to have Alaska wide open to whatever they wanted to do.

JF: He ended up effectively killing the bill that time around, didn't he?

JS: That's right.

JF: In order to prevent--or I should say, to protect the land until Congress could act again, the executive branch put into effect some major emergency measures, including withdrawing thousands of acres, if not millions (JS: Millions, yes.) of acres of land. Was this mostly Carter's doing?

JS: Yes. In fact, Carter and the secretary of Interior said that if the Congress didn't enact legislation in 1978, they were going to exercise the president's powers under the Antiquities Act to withdraw these lands and designate them national monuments, which they then proceeded to do.

JF: That's a pretty unprecedented move, isn't it?

JS: Yes, on that scale, although it had been done before. That's the way we got a lot of our national parks. For example, Death Valley was originally created under the Antiquities Act by presidential proclamation--Death Valley National Monument.

JF: What was Carter's interest in Alaska? Had he been up there?

JS: Carter was very strong on environmental issues. I don't think he'd ever been to Alaska, but he saw that this was one of the big environmental issues of the day.

JF: And I understand he put the Alaska Lands Bill as his number one environmental priority.

JS: Yes. Now, one interesting little feature: In 1980, when the House had passed the Alaska Lands Act, and sent it to the Senate, we passed it earlier on. This wasn't 1980, we passed it in 1979, as I recall, and sent it over to the Senate. Senator Tsongas [phonetic spelling], who had been on the House Interior Committee before he was elected to the Senate, had a meeting with Scoop Jackson and whoever was the majority leader in the Senate at that time, and Ted Stevens, and Paul Tsongas was a freshman senator, a Democrat, and he got sandbagged into agreeing to a unanimous consent agreement, under which there wouldn't be any filibuster of the Alaska Lands Bill, but they wouldn't take it up until toward the end of the second session of that Congress--in other words, the 1980 session. So when I saw Paul Tsongas later, I said, "Gee, Paul, by agreeing they wouldn't take it up 'til toward the end of the session, I'm afraid you've played into Gravel's hands, because he can figure out stalling tactics to keep you from taking it up until finally the Congress has adjourned." And of course that's what they did. And finally the senators passed a bill in September, as I recall, after the summer recess, and the Senate bill did not
have some of the protections that were in the House bill. It wasn't too bad a bill, but for example, it did not provide for making the North Slope of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge a wilderness. It left open what Congress would do in the future about that part. And of course that's still a bone of contention today.

JF: I'm going to stop you there, because I think we're just about to run out of tape. And then we'll flip it over.

JS: All right.