

An Oral History Interview

with

Manuel Lujan (part 2)

Albuquerque, New Mexico

conducted by
Julie Ferdon

May 11, 2000

The Morris K. Udall Oral History Project
University of Arizona Library, Special Collections

© 2000
The University of Arizona Library
Arizona Board of Regents
All Rights Reserved

transcribed by
Jardee Transcription, Tucson

JF: Okay, we're on Side B. Then it really was helpful for you to be from Congress, as opposed to from the Senate or something, as well, it sounds like.

ML: Well, I think from the Senate would have been more or less the same, but coming from outside, not being a member a Congress, either the House or the Senate. Yes, it was a real advantage.

JF: In 1998, ten years after you left Congress, Stewart's son, Tom Udall, was elected to your old district, isn't it?

ML: Well, half of the old district. Now there's three districts, as opposed to two when I had it.

JF: Does the new district include Albuquerque at all?

ML: No.

JF: It's mostly Santa Fe now?

ML: Yes.

JF: Do you know Tom?

ML: Yes.

JF: What are your impressions of him?

ML: I didn't support him, obviously. I have my own.... I think he'll grow into it. I don't think he's a Mo Udall, nor will ever be, I don't believe. Mo had more definite ideas as to where he wanted to go, and maybe in time Tom will develop those.

JF: You know Stewart, you knew Mo, you know Tom. How would you compare these men?

ML: Oh, of course to me Mo's Number One--that was my good friend, and we worked together for many, many, many years. Mo had more of a sense of direction, where he wanted to go and what he wanted to do--and did. I think Stewart comes closer to Mo in that respect. It's too early to tell about Tom--it depends how he develops his career.

JF: Okay, I have one final question, which I ask everybody. We've talked a lot about Mo's strengths. What, if any, weaknesses did you observe?

ML: You know, I never looked for any, but I think we have missed one of his strengths, and that is his self-deprecation. He always had a story of some kind or another. My favorite one is--it's very famous now--that he was running for president in New Hampshire and he walks into this barbershop, and what was it he said? "I'm Mo Udall. I'm running for president." And the guy said, "Yeah, we were just laughing about that."

He always would tell the story about when Senator Hayden first went to the Senate. They asked him how Arizona was and he said, "Well, it's fine. All we need is a little water and a few good men." And somebody got up and said, "That's all they need in hell." And so he always had some kind of a story. And that was one of his great strengths. As a matter of fact, other than his sense of direction—and he knew where he was going—he could defuse the issue with a little story that he had.

JF: As you may know, the new United States Institute for Environmental Dispute Resolution was formed under the Udall Foundation, partly in honor of Mo. Was that part of how he resolved disputes, was the use of humor?

ML: Very much so. Or he'd run over you. At least from my perspective of it. I sat kind of as the opposition to the legislation.

JF: Did he run over you nicely?

ML: Oh, yes, he did. I could tell you--you know, that story about "this pile here looks like \$250,000 would be the right figure." Yes. Oh sure, that's why we always remained good friends. I would visit him when he was at the Veterans Hospital. It would break my heart to see him. I never knew whether he knew that we were there or not. I suspect that he did. And that's the tragedy of the whole thing, that I think his mind was working very well, but his body was not able to respond. And that must be the frustrating thing about it.

JF: Especially for someone like Mo who was such an orator (ML: Yes.) and an athlete.

ML: Yes. I never knew him as an athlete, but I did, of course, as an orator, and a player in the political business.

JF: Well, thank you very much for your participation in this program.

ML: All right.

[END OF INTERVIEW]