

An Oral History Interview

with

TERRY BRACY (part 3)

conducted by

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[END TAPE 45, SIDE B; BEGIN TAPE 46, SIDE A]

JF: Okay, we're beginning tape number 46. It must have been difficult to watch the campaign, in some senses, be wrested away from the very people who were there at the inception, you and John. Did you feel a little out of control? Did Mo feel a little....

TB: Yes, it was a very unhappy period for me. And it was frankly somewhat unhappy for Mo. But it's probably necessary, and things happen like that. But after Wisconsin, Mo calls me up, "You gotta help me, we're gonna make a run at Michigan." And so I went up to New York, and with a friend of mine, I redid the television, and we did two ads, both in black-and-white. I remember we had a meeting at Mo's house, and Peter Hart came, he was doing our polling and whatnot. We were going into Michigan, down something like 42-12. I went up to New York with a friend of mine and did these two thirty-second spots--one of them, which became somewhat famous--or infamous--was a cartoon of Carter, which was, "In Iowa, Jimmy Carter said this about abortion. In Alabama, he said this." And it would show a smile and a frown. Three issues, I think we picked, where he'd just taken diametrically opposed positions. I don't remember how we ended it, but it was a very effective little hit ad, which had the additional virtue of being true. And then all we had on Mo was a thirty-second summary bio of who this guy was, in black-and-white, and painted a thirty-second picture of him. P.S., we lost that state by a few thousand votes. I mean, the whole thing turned around. And if it weren't for the fact that the UAW and the business establishment were together, and the mayor of Detroit, Coleman Young, very powerful, and everybody who was everybody wasn't at that point lined up for Carter, we would have won. And we lost by--it was the closest primary Mo had in Michigan.

So I came back in and finished up the campaign for him, and I wrote his convention speech. That was a big success, the Democratic Convention, although he was "second-place Mo," he was triumphant at that convention. Then I decided to go on with my life. I told Mo I'd been there ten years, I'd done everything you can do on Capitol Hill. I'd now been through two presidential campaigns, one I really cared about. And I loved him, and I always wanted to be around, but I was going to leave. I was going to find another job and do something else. What did I want to do? he said. "Well," I said, "I don't know. I'm tempted to try to move back to Arizona." And so I talked to some people back here about different possibilities, and then I got a call from Brock Adams, who was one of the congressmen I'd worked for with Mo. He said, "Terry, this is secret, but I'm going to be appointed secretary of transportation, and I'd like you to be my assistant secretary." I said, "What?! What do you think Carter's going to say about that?"

JF: Had Brock Adams supported Carter initially?

TB: No. In the end. Brock, at this point, had been the first chairman of the Budget Committee. He was called the brightest member of Congress and close to Tip O'Neill. Carter seized on him as a way to sort of root himself into the party. And so Brock calls me in. I said, "Well, Brock, hell, that's one of the twenty best jobs in town, I'd love to have it. Only two problems: Problem Number One is I don't know a damned thing about transportation. I've been doing environmental...." "Oh, that's not a problem! You'll learn."

I said, "The second thing is, have you asked Jimmy Carter and Hamilton Jordan whether they'd approve of that appointment?" "Oh, let me handle that." Well, lo and behold, he handled it, and I was appointed assistant secretary of transportation, and after the due investigations and appearances before Senate committees and so on, my nomination was confirmed and I started off a whole new life.

JF: It must have been hard to leave working for Mo. Were you just kind of burned out at that point?

TB: Yes, it was really time. It was time. I mean, I was either going to be a lifer, or I needed to go on with my own life. So I decided to go on with my own life.

JF: How was Mo's health by the end of the campaign? I mean, it had started, it sounds like, in 1975.

TB: It was going downhill, and I could see it. I could see it. Of course after the campaign he was somewhat depressed for a long time. It's a big downer. It's the highest high and the lowest low. So it was a combination of that, but I could see his health slipping away. But anyway, after I left Mo, our relationship continued, although somewhat differently, and he was in a position of calling and asking me for things. That was always fun.

JF: Was Roger Lewis still there then?

TB: Oh, yes, Roger Lewis was still there--his whole staff. I'm the only one who left.

JF: And who took your place?

TB: Well, Chris Helms went to work for him for a while, but that was back here. And I can't remember.... Well, what happened was that he became chairman of the Interior Committee, and he got a much larger staff. And so one of the guys I'd hired, Stanley Scoville--God bless Stanley--became staff director of the committee. He would have taken my job, but instead became staff director of the Interior Committee, a job which he did with distinction for many years before he passed away. I don't know. I really.... It's funny, I didn't see Mo much for the next couple of years. I'd see a little of him. I'd see a little of him, but since I wasn't doing Interior business, and I was intensely involved in everything ranging from international aviation negotiations to getting major highway transit legislation through, to spending days before congressional committees myself, defending our eighteen- and twenty-billion-dollar budgets, it was kind of "Terry on his own" for the first time in Washington.

JF: How'd that feel?

TB: Oh, I loved it. I loved it. And so did he. But the relationship shifted some, and I don't know quite how, but we would be at radio/TV gallery dinners, and I'd be at *The New York Times* table, and he'd be at the other table. I mean, it was different. It was different. I was a bigger figure myself than I'd been. Of course he helped all that. But he seemed to take

some, I'd say, measure of pride in how I handled my executive branch experience. He advised me from time to time. He would take me to lunch and talk about this or that. We'd play golf occasionally. He'd invite me to a Redskins game. So it was different. And then as he got older and sicker--and of course I went on and opened up and had a very successful lobbying firm and went on with my life and career and did a lot of things--he and I were sort of reunited by his illness and the fact that.... Well, for example, I used to go up and have lunches with him, like on Wednesdays. I'd go up, and the lunch consisted of what he used to like, these strawberry yogurt milkshakes and a sandwich that he could do with his hands, because he couldn't use utensils anymore. He'd sit there, bent over in his office, didn't want to eat in public, and I'd come up and we'd visit. So I'd see a fair amount of him then.

When I was in lobbying practice, I would often get calls from mining firms or any resource-type people who would want to hire me to get a meeting with Mo Udall. Or they'd want to hire me (ugh) solely because of my relationship with Mo Udall, or perceived relationship or whatnot, and I really--and Susan Williams, my partner, supported me in this--stayed away from that. It preserved our friendship. And I think it's kind of funny, it became closer and closer and closer, again, as he went into the really bad period of his life physically.

But I had nothing to do with the Udall Foundation legislation. That was dreamt up by the University of Arizona and his staff at the time. I was off in a different world, really. I wasn't really involved. I had only one client in Arizona. Most of my clients were in New York or California or overseas or whatever. So I became a little bit disconnected from the stuff that was going on in his office, and the machinations of the things around him. But I did stay in touch with him, and Nancy and I would have him over for dinner, and that kind of thing. And God, he'd--I'd play golf with Mo until you just could hardly believe he'd even want to try. But there he'd be, just loved to play golf. I'd take him out to play golf, and he could barely move that club, but he'd play.

JF: Did there come a time when it was very obvious he was having a difficult time performing the functions of his job?

TB: Yes. The signs of Parkinson's really started setting in around 1980, I would say. And as you got into the mid-eighties.... Well, I can remember I arranged for the Democrats to do a tribute for him at the 1988 convention. I went up to see Mike Dukakis and asked him, and he said sure. And so we had a tribute for Mo at the 1988 convention, because I figured that was the last one he was going to. I remember I accompanied him up to the podium where the crowd cheered him, and they had the "Salute to Mo Udall." He wasn't really able to do that day. I mean, he sort of made it through that, but then he was in bed shortly thereafter, although he insisted on having a scotch. I said, "Mo, please. You have all this...." "God dammit, Bracy, I want a scotch. Have a scotch with me." I said, "All right, Mo," and he was asleep in a moment. But yes, you could see around 1988. You wondered, and I started to gently ask him, "What are going to do? When are you going to do your memoirs? What are you going to do after Congress?" and so on. I encouraged him a couple of times to think about retiring. And then in 1990, late 1990, I think the end of 1990, Dick Gephardt grabbed ahold of me and he said, "Terry, you have got to talk to Mo. He has got a full-fledged

rebellion in that Interior Committee. What are we gonna do about him? He just can't make it around anymore. Will you go talk to him?" What are you going to say?

JF: That's a tough one.

TB: So I said, "Yeah, I'll do it." I sat down and talked to him about it and I told him, "Mo, they're going to take your committee away." "What do you mean, take my committee away?! How the hell they gonna do that? They can't do that!" I said, "Mo, they're gonna take your committee away. We've got to figure out some way that you can be vice-chair or something, but they're gonna take your committee away." And that was the last conversation I had with him before he had that accident, falling down the back stairs and was hospitalized ever after that. I always felt bad about that.

JF: I'm sure you weren't the only one thinking it, even if you were the only one saying it.

TB: I don't know that I was the only one who said it to him. But it's a funny thing, these power centers build up around senior members of Congress. And they really don't want you to retire, ever. I saw that with Carl Hayden. Carl Hayden was asleep most of the time that I knew, and Mo was getting like that. And it was clear, but people were still pushing him ahead, and figuring they could get the old man for one more appropriation. And he was just vain enough to fall for it, because what else was he going to do? So anyway, I'm sorry I even got into that, but I was trying to protect him.

JF: In 1980, which is when you said the Parkinson's was becoming very obvious, didn't he consider running for president again?

TB: And made a speech at the Press Club, which he had me do draft after draft, and then didn't use a word of it. Typical. But he had a last big appearance at the Press Club as a presidential potential, making the announcement he wasn't going to run, but he was going to go on with his career, and he was going to do campaign finance [reform], and he was going to do this and this, and sort of redefining his last years. It was probably his last great speech that I ever saw. It was a great speech, and he had them in the aisles.

JF: So he was primarily the author of it himself?

TB: Yes. At least I wasn't the author of much there.

JF: Was anyone in particular, or any persons in particular, pushing him to run for president that year?

TB: I went to a meeting at his house on that subject. I was invited to a meeting organized by Ed Coyle, that included Peter Hart and Mark Shields, who was then a writer, writing for *The Washington Post*, but who had been one of Mo's campaign advisors in 1976. And we're sitting around there in the old den, you know, down there by the fireplace, and I'm listening to this discussion about whether Mo ought to run for president, and I can't believe what I'm hearing. Is this kabuki theater?! What is this? So in my usual charmless way, I said after

about forty-five minutes of this, "Mo, you can't run for president, because of your health. It's not even in the cards." Well, it was a very short meeting after that.

JF: How did he respond?

TB: He knew it was true.

JF: Sounds like the initiative wasn't coming from him so much as externally from other people?

TB: I think it was coming from Ed Coyle. Whatever. I mean, he had Mark there ready to write it, and he had Peter Hart there ready to poll it. Well, I'm sure I was there not because Ed wanted me there, but because Mo wanted me there. So I played the heavy again.

JF: Well, that was part of your relationship with him, though, as somebody who he felt close enough to to hear your honesty from, too, I assume.

TB: Well, I guess the older I've gotten, the less honesty I'm interested in. But I mean, in that way. But yes. I remember feeling at the end of that meeting like I'd been.... I said to those guys at the car, said to Shields and the others, "Look, I'm sorry. I didn't want to say that, but you can't even get him thinking about it. It's not possible, so don't do this."

JF: So it was a short-lived sort of campaign?

TB: That was the end of it.

JF: In 1988, which is a time you were talking about before, in terms of it really getting difficult for him, is when Ella died. Were you in contact with him at all then?

TB: Yes.

JF: How did he deal with that?

TB: Painfully. I don't think he ever got over it. He called me, and I came over. I remember being with him up in his room and kind of holding him by the shoulders, and he was saying.... It was like his world had come apart. He said, "I thought I knew, but I never had any idea what depression would do." I think Ella's death came as such a shock to him. It wasn't that they were perfectly happy, and it wasn't that it wasn't yet another of his troubled marriages, because it was, but I think Mo always figured he had it handled, had the situation in hand. And her death, her suicide, crushed everything he believed. I just don't think he ever recovered from that.

JF: It wasn't too much longer, maybe a year later, that Mo married Norma Udall. Had you known Norma before?

TB: Yes, I met Norma years before. Actually, I met her when she was a lobbyist. She was

a lobbyist, as I recall, for the Antidefamation League, maybe. She had been a professional around the Hill, and I think she came from California. I was very impressed by her, generally, when I met her--and later. She's a very, very intelligent woman. And I could see why Mo was attracted to her.

JF: They were married, am I correct, in 1989?

TB: Yes, it's funny, I wasn't invited to the wedding, which shocked me.

JF: Was it a large wedding?

TB: No, it was a small wedding, just with House members and I think Norma arranged it. I know Norma arranged it, everything. And I didn't get to know Norma well until I got involved in the [Udall] Foundation and she became a member of the board. So I really know her more now than I did then, but I met her when she was a professional on Capitol Hill. Other than that, I've known her as a reasonably effective member of our board; good ideas.

JF: She's been on since the inception.

TB: Yes, good ideas.

JF: Backing up some here--backing up a lot here--you worked on a couple of bills that we didn't cover. One is the Alaska Native Claims Act, and also, I believe, the Alaska Lands Bill. Were you involved with those?

TB: Well, I was involved--yes, the Alaska Native Claims Act was really my--yes, I was the key staffer on that bill for Mo, and I was deeply involved in the drafting of that and the legislative work. And also, as part of that bill, as part of that settlement, we created what were known as the D-2 lands. We set aside many, many lands in Alaska as part of that to be studied for wilderness and parks and scenic wildlife refuges and so on. And that was in part my inspiration, working with some of the environmentalists. We cooked up this amendment that eventually passed, and set aside a lot of lands for further study. Those lands ultimately became the great lands that were saved in Alaska for wilderness and other things. So yes, I was very much involved in that. It was a great moment in my career.

JF: Was that something Stewart was involved in?

TB: Yes--initially Stewart was. When he was secretary of interior, Stewart put a land freeze on the state of Alaska, told them that no pipeline would be built to carry the oil. Nothing was going to happen until they dealt with the aboriginal claims of the Alaska natives, which had been widely ignored. And Stewart, by putting that land freeze in action, managed, through this marvelous act of political judo, to turn the oil companies into lobbyists for the Alaska natives, because they couldn't get their pipeline started until the lands were released, and the lands wouldn't be released until the Alaska native claims were settled. And that's what Stewart did, and then he handed the ball off to Mo in the Congress,

and Mo carried the Alaska fight for the next decade or more. And the two of them together settled the fate of Alaska.

JF: Now, was Stewart involved then in his legal practice in the Alaska Claims Bill at all after that? I mean, the Alaska Claims Act.

TB: No, not that I know of. Stewart was involved in what are known as the "down-winders." He represented the groups who, unbeknownst to them, were poisoned by winds carrying the results of atomic bomb experiments. Many of them were Native Americans, and many of them died of cancer prematurely. And Stewart won them a settlement from the U.S. government, but that was after he was out of office.

JF: I think that's what I was thinking of.

TB: What time's it getting to be?

JF: It's 5:30.

TB: Oh! I've got to go, because I've got to go down to Tucson Art Museum.

JF: Yes, for the reception. Well, thank you very much.

TB: You're welcome.

JF: I'm glad you were able to do this today.

TB: Good!

[END OF INTERVIEW]