

An Oral History Interview

with

Norma Gilbert Udall (part 1)

Tucson, Arizona

conducted by

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JF: This is Tape 52 of the Morris K. Udall Oral History Project. Today is Thursday, January 17, 2003, and I'm with Norma Gilbert Udall in her room at the Windmill Inn, in Tucson, Arizona. We just came back from the dedication of the new Udall Foundation headquarters on Scott Street. Norma, thank you for agreeing to be interviewed.

NU: It's a pleasure.

JF: Let's start at the very beginning. Where and when were you born?

NU: I'll tell you where. (laughs)

JF: Okay, we'll go with the where. (laughs)

NU: Well, actually, I was born in New York City, but I was six months old when they moved to California, so I really consider myself a Californian.

JF: What did your parents do?

NU: Well, my father was a white-collar worker. He was caught in the Depression, unfortunately. He had been in law school—at USC, as a matter of fact—and his father died, and he dropped out of law school to help his mother, and then the Depression really hit, and he had to go out and make some money. So he never went back to law school, and he ended up in white-collar work. He was a wonderful man. He was a very special person.

JF: Do you take after him more than your mother?

NU: I'm not sure. One thing I remember about him is he was so kind, and everyone loved him. Everyone who ever met him just adored him. Even the most difficult people took to him. He was so patient. He taught me to read when I was four years old—to sound out the words, which they were not teaching in those days—they were teaching sight reading. He taught me to read when I was four. When I went to school at six, they didn't know what to do with me, because I could read everything. I remember when I was a child, there was a program on the radio called "Information Please," where they had a panel of experts, and people would send in questions for them to answer. They were very difficult questions, and my father knew all the answers. He could answer every one of those questions.

JF: That's always so impressive when people can do that. What about your mom?

NU: My mother was very gregarious. She was from Boston, and she loved people. She loved beautiful things. We didn't have a lot, but she yearned for beautiful things. She loved to go to museums. She dragged me to so many museums when I was a child. Then she discovered Oriental art—Chinese art, specifically. She liked to study the arts on her own, and she was studying English porcelains, just for no reason—strange thing to do during the Depression. Then all of a sudden she happened upon Chinese art, and she just

fell in love with it. My mother used to spend hours and hours of the day. . . . We only had this one car my father used, and she'd get on buses. She was never in very good health, and she'd take buses and streetcars and go down to the museum and sit for hours. They used to let her back into the archives, because they knew she would come every day. And they would let her touch these beautiful things. Oh! it was just heaven for her. She never could afford to buy a beautiful antique like that.

JF: She sounds very industrious and interesting.

NU: She loved beauty. Then she discovered that you can't just study the porcelains, you have to study the religion and the philosophy, because everything has a significance in the patterns, in the designs.

JF: Did she ever try to publish or do anything with her knowledge?

NU: No. When she died, I found all her notebooks where she had copied down all the little markings so carefully. She just loved it. I remember once someone gave her a book, like a coffee table book, with beautiful plates in it, of porcelains. She just couldn't believe it. She looked at that. It was the most wonderful thing—she was like a child that Santa Claus had given the most beautiful gift to.

Anyway, she came to visit me in Washington, and I took her to the Freer Gallery, and she was just in heaven. We spent a whole day there. It took her an hour for each room. She just loved it, just loved it—and the paintings.

JF: Isn't passion and enthusiasm wonderful?

NU: Yes. My father, I forgot to mention, loved history, loved history. When I was a child, for some reason I didn't get European or ancient history in grade school, and he used to teach me. I got American history [in school]. We studied American history, California history, but we did not study European or ancient history. And he would tell me about the Peloponnesian Wars and the Greeks and the Romans, and all about Napoleon. Everyone said he should have been a teacher. He was very good with children, and very patient.

JF: I wish I could have sat in on his "class" with you. That's a part I've missed also. Were you an only child?

NU: I was an only child.

JF: Do I recall that you went to UCLA?

NU: I went to UCLA.

JF: What was your major?

NU: English. I didn't do anything.... Well, I ended up doing press for political campaigns and things like that.

JF: So you were politically active in college?

NU: No, not really. I was interested. Nixon was president then, I think. No, Nixon was in Congress then. But that was when the Helen Gahagen Douglas thing came up, where he was poisoning her campaign, and calling her the "Pink Lady," and having a telephone smear campaign about her being Communist. And we all were signing petitions against Nixon. There were some bills [i.e., petitions] that some of my friends who were really political activists, brought to my attention, and I would sign them. But I was not an activist then. I didn't become interested until after I was married and had little children and moved into a neighborhood where many of my friends from UCLA lived.

JF: Now, when did you graduate from UCLA—did you get a degree there?

NU: Yeah, in, oh, let's see, fifty-something. Actually, not there. I finished at local colleges, because I left as a senior.

JF: Okay.

NU: I finished classes here, classes there. Although I would have loved to have the UCLA degree.

JF: It's the same thing, basically. How long after you graduated did you marry?

NU: Well, my first marriage, I was twenty-one.

JF: What was his name?

NU: His name was Samuel Gilbert, and he's a clinical psychologist, marriage counselor.

JF: In California?

NU: Uh-huh. He was a very good therapist. We were married for quite a number of years, but I don't want to trouble you with the difficulties.

JF: I think it could be difficult to be married to a psychologist, myself.

NU: Well, we just were not right for one another. He's a very nice person, and he loved his children, and he loved me. We were just wrongly matched. I have no negative memories, nothing to hold against him. It just was not right. We split around '67 or '68.

JF: And you said when you moved into this neighborhood, after you were married, is when you met political people?

NU: A lot of my friends from school, and we had a Democratic Club. In those days we were Young Democrats. Then I became very interested and very excited, and we had a lot of people who were living in the area who were in show business, also, and they were members of our club, also, and that kind of peped up interest. So we had a large number of members.

JF: This is still in Los Angeles?

NU: This was in Encino, California. And a lot of the film people lived out there, and so it made it easy to get a speaker. We were very involved. We had a really high-power club, and had a lot of wonderful events. A lot of our people have gone on to—one of the people in our club married Senator Cranston. And we had Steve Allen in our club.

JF: What a great club!

NU: And Dennis Weaver. I'm trying to remember—I think Jack Webb, I'm not sure. I may be wrong about that. But it was an interesting neighborhood.

JF: Sounds [like] it. Did you work for the state senate once?

NU: Yes, I did.

JF: Tell us about that, what did you do?

NU: I worked for the state senate as a speech writer.

JF: So your English degree came in handy.

NU: Yeah. I worked, actually, for one of the senators, but—how can I put it?—I didn't write speeches for all the senators, I wrote speeches for him, and I did his press, and I wrote a newspaper column for him, for the local newspapers. During that time I also wrote a newspaper column of my own for some local newspapers where I lived, down in the San Fernando Valley.

JF: So when you worked for the state senate, did you live in Sacramento?

NU: I was up there three days a week.

JF: Otherwise still lived in Encino?

NU: That's right. And so I wrote this column, which was printed in a chain of local papers, local throw-away papers. They were all the different communities.

JF: What was the name of the column?

NU: "Sacramento Report." (chuckles) Not very imaginative. I would write about a different bill every week, that would be of interest, and that was fun.

JF: Was this a part-time job then?

NU: No, it was a full-time job. I mean, up in Sacramento it was full-time. But I left there. I used to work on a lot of campaigns all over the state—started out as a volunteer, and then discovered it was more fun to be paid staff.

JF: Yes. (laughs) Who-all did you work for, do you remember?

NU: Did a lot of Jim Corman's campaigns, because he was a very good friend for all of us. He was a wonderful, wonderful man. He just died recently, Congressman Jim Corman. We'd done a number of his campaigns, from when he first ran for city council back there. But it is interesting how many people from back then have gone on to much more significant roles in life. But anyway, and then I worked on Alan Cranston's campaigns quite a bit, and worked on local, oh, there'd be ballot propositions. I worked on the campaign of Wilson Riles to be the superintendent of public education. And that was a very exciting campaign. In fact, I think it was on the front page of *Time* magazine because it was the classic campaign of a black liberal running against a right-wing white—a very rabid right-wing white.

JF: Now, wasn't it . . .

NU: He was the same one who ran against Cranston later.

JF: Were there many women then actively involved in politics?

NU: There were in our club. The clubs were all volunteer. Oh, you're talking about in the paid positions? There were women, yes, a lot of women. You know how the Democrats are, they're always ahead of the game, they're always more advanced in their thinking. But there were a lot of women who were holding positions in the central committee and county committee.

JF: Did you have children during this time?

NU: I had three children, a son and two daughters. Basically, the marriage ended when they were about ready to go to college—all but one, and I took her with me as we drove across the country. Just before then, I had been doing a lot of things for Senator Cranston, and took around his petitions, as a matter of fact, when he ran for Senate. He had a syndicated column also, and I used to do research for that column for him. He often asked me if I'd like to write one of them, and I said, "No, no!" I admired him a lot. So I came to Washington, just to see what it was like. I came on a trip, and also to look up some—I knew quite a number of people from the press corps who were in Washington who had been in Sacramento. And I knew members of the legislature.

JF: Were you considering a move to Washington, a job move?

NU: No, I really just came to say hi to everybody and watch Alan at work. And I just fell in love with the place, and I decided I was going to come back. And I felt that I had a base there, because I already had friends, people I'd known in Sacramento. And there was a natural sequence in those days in California, which doesn't exist now, where you were in the assembly, and from there you ran for the [state] senate. Now, of course, they have term limits, it's all different. And after that, you ran for Congress. A lot of the congresspeople and their wives were people I knew when they were in the state house.

JF: So you had a pretty good base when you moved back there.

NU: Yeah, and I liked it very much, and I wanted to be in a different world.

JF: And you took your daughter?

NU: I brought her, and she didn't want to stay. She wanted to go back.

JF: How old was she then?

NU: She was fifteen or sixteen.

JF: That's a hard time.

NU: Yeah. And their father's office was a quarter of a mile, half a mile away from the house.

JF: What was her name?

NU: Her name was Kathy. She became a teacher. But the other two were going off to college, so she opted to be back there with her friends. But the girls always came to visit me summers. They spent summers with me. I had this feeling that I wanted to be in a place with different climate and different style architecture, rather than the Spanish look, and a different lifestyle and a different pace, and different foliage, and different flowers.

JF: Well, you sure found it in Washington!

NU: It was an entirely different world, and that's what I wanted to do.

JF: Did you find a job there?

NU: Yes, I did. I worked originally on women's issues, and did a lot of things for campaigns against capital punishment, [for] pro-choice....

JF: When would this have been that you moved back to....

NU: This was in the seventies—and that's when I met Mo. I did consumer—when they were trying to start a consumer agency—remember that? I worked on that. There were always committees being set up, and you could be lobbying for them.

JF: So you were a lobbyist essentially?

NU: Yes, I was.

JF: With any particular organization?

NU: Well, just not a specific group. But anyway, I met Mo at . . . Also, we did things for amnesty for the kids who went to Canada for Vietnam, conscientious objectors, all those issues, women's rights, ERA. I met Mo in 1972, January 1972, at a Consumer Federation of America reception.

JF: In Washington?

NU: Uh-huh. That's when we met. I don't remember where it was, but I somehow needed a ride back to the Hill, and he was talking with another congressman who I knew quite well, and I asked this other congressman if he was going back. I said, "I'd sure like a ride." Although I said probably I could look around and see if.... He said, "Well, I'm going on to the Machinists' party. You'd better see if you can get a different ride." Because I didn't want to go to the Machinists. He said, "If you want to go to the Machinists'...." And I said, "No, no." And Mo said, "I'll take you back to the Hill." So he gave me a ride and we chatted all the way back.

JF: This was the first time you'd met him?

NU: I had seen him, and I knew who he was.

JF: You did know who he was.

NU: I think I told you last time about when I saw him walking down the hallway.

JF: Tell me again.

NU: (chuckles) I think it was my first trip, when I just came to see what Washington was like. And I'm walking down the hall of the Cannon Building, and here's these three or four men looking very busy, walking down the hall at a brisk pace. I think they were aides—and one of them was Mo. I recognized him right away. And I still remember what he was wearing: a brown tweed jacket. And I thought to myself, "Oh, my God, that's Congressman Udall!" And you know, when you work in politics, these are your stars. You don't care about movie stars, it's the politicians. And as he walked by, he kind of nodded his head at me, and he said, "Hi!" Well, I just about died! that he actually—the great man—said hi to me. Because when you work on campaigns, you become very stage struck. And that was the first time.

So anyway, he gave me a ride home, and after that we would see each other at various things. We discovered that we were in the same groove of a certain circle, of people of a liberal bent. And I'd see him at parties, I'd see him at gatherings. Sometimes we'd be at the same table at the Democratic Club, and little by little we became very good friends. It's just easy to do that on the Hill. You have a lot of colleagues you really like. And then at that time I had a job, I worked for Motorola.

JF: As a lobbyist again? (narrator nods yes) Uh-huh.

NU: So anyway, I was lobbying for corporate Motorola.

JF: Which is an Arizona company.

NU: Arizona company. And of course I was doing a lot better financially, than working for these difficult causes.

JF: You have to get real sometimes in Washington. (laughs)

NU: That's right. But it was very interesting. Of course Mo had Motorola in his district, so I'd go in there, and that's when I met Terry Bracy. He was working for Mo. And I got to know some of Mo's staff, and I'd be in there for various things. And I just saw him somehow in a lot of different places. Sometimes we'd have lunch, and he'd say, "What are you doin'? You wanna have some lunch?" that kind of thing.

JF: What were your first impressions of Mo when you met him at the reception?

NU: A very nice human being. A very nice, down to earth, human being. Never dreamed how things would turn out.

JF: And how about Terry?

NU: Well, Terry was his staff guy, and a very nice young man. That was about all.

JF: Who else do you remember in his office then? Was Bonnie Kell....

NU: I remember Bonnie, and Roger.

JF: Roger Lewis.

NU: Roger Lewis, yes. In fact, I talked more to Roger Lewis in those days. And then he had....

JF: Was Dee Jackson....

NU: Dee Jackson was there. And then once the company asked me to take the various members who I was covering, to visit the plants in their districts. So I flew out to Tucson and took Mo to visit the plants on the border, the twin plants on the border in the border town....

JF: Nogales?

NU: Nogales. Thank you. It's been a long time. And so I remember he said, "Wait a minute, I want to show you something. And he said, "Drive up here." And he pointed, and he showed me where to go, and he said, "This is where my first law office was. I'd like you to see it."

JF: In Tucson?

NU: In Tucson, with his brother. And then Chuck Ares came in later. And I thought that was very sweet, that he wanted me to see his first [law office]. And I just liked him—one of the people I liked very, very much on the Hill. He was not the only person I liked. There were a lot of wonderful, wonderful people on Capitol Hill. And there are a lot of special people who you just enjoy and have lunch with.

JF: Sounds like you had really good experiences.

NU: I enjoyed it. In those days, Capitol Hill was a very friendly place. It was not as confrontational as it is now.

JF: There weren't a lot of women on Capitol Hill then, were there, in professional positions?

NU: There were very few lobbyists. There were maybe four or five women lobbyists. Now they're all women. But in those days, there were only four or five of us. There was, of course Evie Dubrow of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, who's a legend. And there was a gal who worked for General Electric, and a gal who worked for the machinists' union, and there was me. But after that, by the time I left—I was there for about nine years—then they were hiring these young things from the Hill.

JF: Did you find being a woman had any impact one way or another when you lobbied?

NU: None at all.

JF: It was during a time—I was in Washington then, and I recall there were almost no women administrative assistants, and now they're all women.

NU: Oh, yes! In fact, I remember when I first was looking for a job on the Hill. When I first came there, I thought, "Well, maybe I'll get a job on the Hill." That was before I had anything. I went to see the dean of the California delegation, an old-timer—I'm not going to mention his name. And Alan Cranston gave me a note introducing me to him.

He looked at it and he said, “Well, looks like the senator is trying to tell me what to do.” And Alan had just said, “If there’s anything in any of your committees that you could find for her....” And he said, “Well, I’m looking at your résumé, and I don’t see any clerical skills.” And I said, “Well, I type very well. I type all my own press releases.” “But do you do shorthand?” he said.” “No.” “Well, you’re not looking for a professional job, are you?” I said, “Yes!” “Well, we don’t give professional jobs to women here. That’s not the way it works. I recommend you go downtown and go to secretarial school and learn shorthand, and all the secretarial skills”—they didn’t have computers then—tells you how long ago it was, the seventies.

JF: That’s when I was in Washington.

NU: And he said, “Then after you are proficient at shorthand, come back, and I’ll see if there’s anything on any of my subcommittees for a secretary-typist.” And I said, “Thank you,” and I walked out.

JF: That was the typical attitude, as I recall, then.

NU: Oh, I never forgot that conversation.

JF: That was very much the attitude then.

NU: And then I left Motorola and tried it on my own for a while, and that wasn’t too good, because competition was tremendous. You’re competing with law firms, you’re competing with former members of Congress. I thought everybody loved me so much that . . . I was not realistic.

JF: That sounds like a lot of work. You’d have to go get clients for yourself.

NU: It was hard. So then I would find out about openings at places, and I was having a terrible time. And they would all say that my résumé was the best one of any that they’d seen. “Your résumé is the absolute best of any.” And they were very friendly, they seemed to like me, but I wasn’t getting the jobs. Then someone took me aside and they said, “Don’t you understand? It’s your age. They want somebody about twenty-nine years old, twenty-eight, twenty-nine.” And I was pushing fifty—I was fifty, I think. I don’t remember. But at least I was in that category. And they said, “As soon as you walk in, you are not a young woman walking into the office.” And that’s what all the companies are trying to push—these young women. And they were hiring girls who’d worked in offices on the Hill not even with terribly responsible jobs. But there was this aura, this myth that if they’ve been on the Hill, they know everything. “Oh! she’s been on the Hill, she knows all about how things work.” Many of them were just correspondents. I’m sure a lot of them were very good—a lot of those women were wonderful, in fact. They rose up to very high positions in lobbying.

JF: Was there, do you think, any sexism involved in terms of getting young, good-looking....

NU: Back then, yes, but times have changed. And now they've got marvelous women working in these places in the lobbying firms and on the Hill. And in so many cases, I think that they're better than the guys. Women, I think, are more conscientious. I admire these gals.

JF: When Mo decided to run for president was about '74, because I think it was two years before he actually ran that he announced. Did you know he was going to do that?

NU: Yeah. Because we were pals.

JF: Did he ask you your advice, or run it by you?

NU: Oh, I was so excited when he told me, because I had another friend who in '72 had run a rather quixotic campaign just to prove a point—not to win—for vice-president. And he did it to prove that you could run, that you don't have to be picked in the back rooms.

JF: Now, can I ask who that was?

NU: That was Endicott Peabody. And he ran to show that you don't have to be chosen behind the backs of the delegates who were voted by their districts to come there and vote, and that the delegates should have some input, and not say, "This is my decision, now just okay it." In other words, he said, you shouldn't have to put your hands in your pockets after you've voted for the president. There should be a choice, there should be several to choose from.

JF: I remember that campaign.

NU: And he said the press should be able to look at them in advance, and know who they are, know if there's any skeletons in their closet. And the interesting thing is, after that campaign—of course he knew he wouldn't win, he was just trying to prove something—that was when Nixon won, and there was Spiro Agnew as vice-president. You remember what happened with him? The scandals, and he had to resign. And that was when George McGovern was running, and then they had this problem with Tom Eagleton, because they said he'd had shock therapy and things. Of course today nobody would be shocked at that, but in those days.... Times were so different, people were so narrow-minded. But they didn't like the idea that he had been an alcoholic.... Was he an alcoholic? Or he'd had emotional problems.

JF: Yeah, I think he'd had severe depression or something, as I recall.

NU: Something like that, yes. I retract that other. And he was such a lovely guy. Tom Eagleton was a wonderful, wonderful man.

JF: Yeah, he was.

NU: Really a winner. So here were two cases of vice-presidential choices, the same year, that didn't work out well. So Peabody had the right idea. But anyway, I thought, "Isn't that interesting? Here's somebody who ran for vice-president, and another friend is running for president."

JF: Now, he was running from the House of Representatives, and generally people run from the Senate. What did you think about that?

NU: Well, Mo used to say, "When you come to the House, nobody thinks of you running for president. And you can serve in the House for years, and know your stuff, and be a powerhouse, and very popular and very authoritative. Then some young kid gets elected to the Senate, has no political experience, and as soon as—" this is Mo I'm quoting—"he gets off the airplane, and as he's coming off the airplane, the press runs up to him, 'Mr. Senator, when are you going to run for president?'"

JF: Yeah, it was a complete double standard, really.

NU: Yeah. He said they can have absolutely no experience whatsoever, but because they're in the Senate.... Well, with a large constituency....

JF: Did you think that he had a chance, running from the House?

NU: Oh, sure! I tried to help him on his campaign.

JF: I wondered.

NU: I raised some money for him. And I went to events, and brought people to the events.

JF: Were these events in primary states, or in Washington?

NU: I stayed in Washington. I wasn't going out to do that, although a lot of my friends went up to New Hampshire and rang doorbells for him. I kind of would have liked to do that, but I couldn't leave my job.

JF: And where were you working then? Was that with Motorola then?

NU: Yeah.

JF: Did you attend the convention?

NU: Oh, sure. I'll never forget that beautiful speech he made. Didn't Terry say he wrote it?

JF: That Terry wrote it? I don't remember. Terry wrote a lot of them.

NU: I don't know whether Terry wrote it, or Mo, or a combination. Probably a combination of the two. But I remember when he came into that room, and of course they'd already picked Jimmy Carter, the whole room just exploded—absolutely exploded. And he got such applause, it just wouldn't stop. Everybody was standing, and everybody was crying.

JF: Now, did you get in as....

NU: Just a spectator.

JF: Okay.

NU: But because I was connected as a lobbyist, I went to the VIP room. I could go there, and I'd see a lot of my friends: other lobbyists, members, and people like that. But it was interesting, I'll never forget that moment—I know a lot of people have told you about it—and he gave that speech. You looked around and people were absolutely in tears. Their faces were wet with tears.

JF: I had a different experience. I was underneath the podium with him. I was advancing him on the floor during the convention.

NU: Oh, you were?! How exciting!

JF: And I was underneath the podium with him when he went up.

NU: So you couldn't see the spectators.

JF: Exactly. I could hear them and see them on a monitor below.

NU: That ovation was incredible. And everyone just stood up in a way that just showed such love for the man—which made me wonder why they elected Jimmy Carter, if they loved Mo so much. These are the pros who were at the convention. And of course the primaries take place in the districts. So these were people in the districts, so it's not the same audience.

JF: If you were in the VIP box, I had heard that the Carter people had kept Mo out of the VIP box that night.

NU: Well, I didn't go there because I was working for Mo.

JF: No, I know, but I wondered....

NU: I don't know anything about that.

JF: Okay. I had just heard that he was not allowed to go in the VIP box on the day of the convention.

NU: Really? I'm sure that that was not Jimmy Carter's doing. It must have been some petty person on his staff.

JF: Exactly, something of that sort.

NU: He had a couple of staff people, I think, who turned out to be....

JF: Well, and as I say, it could be a rumor, too.

NU: Yeah. But there could have been some vindictive staff person—you never know. Jimmy Carter himself would never do that. In fact, when Mo died, Jimmy Carter sent me a beautiful letter.

JF: Oh, how nice. Okay, so you were still working for Motorola, and Mo was back at the House of Representatives.

NU: Yeah. And by then we were part of kind of a clique of people who saw each other a lot.

JF: Was this mostly liberal Democrats?

NU: Yeah, staff people, members, press people. And we all—if I'd have a party at my house, I'd always invite him, and Ella, and I would invite my friends. In those days, there was not such a gap between staff and members.

JF: Was any of Mo's staff involved?

NU: No, they were just people I knew from California, good friends, members who were friends like I was friends with Mo. I'm trying to remember some of the people who were there. The [Lionel] Van Deerlins used to come. Norman Manetta used to come. I can't remember. I used to have little parties at my townhouse all the time. I remember Norman Manetta said once, "You have a way of putting just the right people together, where we have such great conversations. I don't know how you do it."

JF: That's a talent.

NU: I really felt good about that. To me, that was a great compliment.

JF: Where was your townhouse?

NU: On Capitol Hill. I would do the cooking. And Mo, he was so cute. I remember once the House was working late, and I had several members invited, and he called me and said, "Well, how's the party?" And I said, "Well, two-thirds of the people aren't

here. It's pretty boring." So you know what he did? He found a way not to be stuck there, to have someone do the vote or something—I don't know what he did—but he came over to the party and he sat there telling jokes and livening it up until the rest of the people came.

JF: Oh, good! How nice.

NU: I'm sure that he wouldn't miss a vote. He probably arranged for pairing up or something. But I thought that was so dear of him to do that. He'd come by, "Oh, I don't want you to have a bad party!"

JF: Now, was he showing any signs of Parkinson's at that time?

NU: No, but he told me when he had it.

JF: Was it soon after he'd been diagnosed?

NU: Yes. Right after he'd been diagnosed he told me, and he said.... He used to think he had a bad back, and he thought he had arthritis in the back, which he might have had, because they say many tall men with long spines have that problem. But he was never a complainer. But he called me once at my office and said, "Guess what, I have Parkinson's disease." In those days, nobody really knew what it was, because it was very much in the closet.

JF: When would that have been, approximately?

NU: He was running for president.

JF: It was during the campaign.

NU: I think later they said....

JF: That he was actually diagnosed after the campaign, right.

NU: But this was during the campaign. And he said, "There's no cure for it, so I'll never be cured, but it doesn't kill you. I'll just die with it, not from it." Those were his exact words, "I'm going to die with it."

JF: So during the campaign you were aware of symptoms?

NU: No, he just told me that he was diagnosed. There were no symptoms—except he was not comfortable, and he would shift his legs. He'd put his legs up on a table, and shift the other leg, and then cross his legs. That was about all. But I'm assuming that there was more, that I wasn't aware of, because I didn't see him that constantly. I would see him frequently, or sometimes not frequently—it was whenever we happened to see

each other. But at the time he said, "I'm going to have a press conference, and I'm going to tell the press about it." I said, "Oh, no! Don't!"

JF: And this was when he was running for president?!

NU: Yes! I said, "If you do that.... I know you're not going to listen to me. You've got others who give you advice. But you know how rumors fly. If you say you have something that's incurable, pretty soon they're going to say you're dying of cancer, or dying of some horrible disease. Don't do it! Don't do it!" Well, eventually he did, and I think he was a very brave man to do it.

JF: Was that while he was still running for president?

NU: Yes. He did have a press conference, and he did announce it. In those days, it was something that you hid. If Uncle George had Parkinson's, nobody knew about it, except they knew his hands shook, and that sort of thing. People were embarrassed to admit. So I think that he was certainly very brave.

JF: When did you start noticing that it was really beginning to affect him?

NU: Around '84.

JF: Where were you at this time?

NU: In Washington.

JF: When did you switch from working with Motorola to working for yourself?

NU: Oh, that was in the early eighties. And then that didn't really work too well. As I was saying, I was not too successful in my job search. Oh! well, I was working for myself for a while, and I had several clients. The one that paid me the most changed their mind, and I thought, "I'll never survive on what I have left," and that's when I started looking for a job. I forgot to insert that before. But that's when I said, "I'd better get a job." And that's when I had the problems, not realizing it was my age. Nowadays they probably wouldn't do that. Who knows? Maybe they would. You never know.

JF: They couldn't probably do it as overtly.

NU: But you never know. And it wasn't civil service, you see—these were corporations. In civil service, they can't. And I understood then, finally, that that was my problem. So I told Mo about it. He said, "Well, you know, why don't you work on the Hill? I've got a couple of subcommittees. I think they may need people." So I went to two different subcommittees and worked for two different subcommittees of his. I worked for him for about a year and a half.

JF: Which subcommittees were those?

NU: One was the parks, and one was the island territories.

JF: So these were when he was chairman of the Interior Committee (NU: That's right.) and Subcommittee on Parks and Subcommittee of Island Affairs.

NU: Yes. So he was not really my boss, although he was everybody's boss. But every once in a while he'd call the subcommittee if he had a special thing that needed doing in his office. Then he'd borrow me to come up and work on some special project.

JF: Some Interior oriented project?

NU: Yes. I remember once he wanted me to look up a lot of things on Alaska and things like that.

JF: That's when he was doing the Alaska Lands Bill. So he'd pull you out to do special research projects, something of that sort?

NU: Sometimes, yeah. But then I was on a trip to California, and a friend of mine called and said Ella Udall died. And I was very shocked.

JF: What year was that? I should know.

NU: It was in '88—summer '88, and I was in California. And there was nothing about it in the California paper. So I felt just terrible. Then I came back and Mo was not in the office. I left my good wishes, my good thoughts on the phone, left a message with his staff, my condolences. And then he called. He was at Mark's house. He'd been out staying with Mark and Maggie.

JF: In Boulder, Colorado?

NU: Uh-huh. And he told me all about what happened.

JF: How much later was this?

NU: Well, I came back about a week or so after she died—a couple of weeks after—and this was about—all in all, it was about a month or so after her death, because he didn't call me right away. He called me a week or two after, when he finally got the message. I'm sure I'm not—he's probably sitting there answering a million phone calls from all the people who called. I mean, I don't flatter myself that he only called me, because when you think of all the people who left messages for him.... But it was very sweet of him to do that. Then he said that he really thought he ought to sell his house, because there were a lot of bad memories. He called me up—I think it was at the committee—and he said, "Would you help me with selling the house and moving my stuff and getting out?" And so in those days you could get interns to do things for you.

JF: (laughs) Yes, I remember. I was one of those!

NU: And so we got some interns and they boxed up a lot. I mean, they didn't do his main packing, but they boxed up a lot of stuff, things that he had at home—I guess mostly stuff that related to the job. They didn't pack his personal things or anything. But they came out, and they helped clear out a lot of things. And then he lived there for a while, while they were showing the house. And then I was out looking for a place for him to live. I screened it down to three choices at a time, and then I'd call him and say, "Okay, Mo, can you take a half-hour off or so? I have three choices." And some he liked, some he didn't like.

JF: What was he looking for, primarily?

NU: He wanted a condo. And then finally there was one that he just loved.