[Editor’s note: Due to mechanical difficulties, the first tape and side one of the second tape are of extremely poor quality. All efforts have been made to fill in the blanks left by the transcriptionist where the tape was inaudible. Unfortunately, however, some parts of the tapes remained inaudible. For this we apologize.]

PS: This is the Morris Udall Oral History Project Tape 5. Peter Steere is interviewing Stewart Udall in his office in Santa Fe, New Mexico. It is Thursday, October 24, 1996.

Stewart, I'd like to thank you for agreeing to participate in this oral history project. I think what I'd like to do is take you back a ways. I'd like to start off by getting some thoughts and some reminiscences from you, from your early years growing up in St. Johns, both you and Mo, growing up as brothers in St. Johns. There was a newspaper article that was published some years ago, I believe in the Phoenix paper, in which you were quoted as saying "growing up in St. Johns was sort of like growing up in the nineteenth century." And I wondered if you might share with us some of your reminiscences of your early years growing up in St. Johns.

SLU: Well, what I meant by that--I have to qualify it a little bit--again Mo and I, our lives were very much parallel, two-and-a-half years' difference. He was my height when he was about ten or twelve, so we were always on equal terms. Some sibling rivalry, but we got a lot from each other. But the way that we lived, when I say nineteenth century--horses, we worked with horses. Most of our years, until I left when I graduated from high school, and that was the main form of energy. No electricity. They had a little bit. My grandfather tried to be modern and had a little hydroelectric plant. So we had lamps. The main energy was wood. The wood stove in the kitchen was very important, and that was harvested nearby. I looked at my life, I remember when I was in the cabinet, on one of these Lady Bird Johnson trips we went to Calvin Coolidge's home, which I think was a state park or state historic site in Massachusetts. And I went into the place and I'd been in Robert Frost's farm in Derry, New Hampshire, and I saw essentially the same type of living arrangements that we lived with. And I think we were very fortunate, because it gives your life a stretch that a lot of people don't have. You grew up with these nineteenth century accoutrements, you might say, and that gave you an experience of seeing really the beginning of this century that we're now ending, a little earlier than that, because your lifestyle, working with your hands, working with horses, with plows and things of that kind. Wonderful way to grow up.

PS: Stewart, “closeness to the land.” Do you feel that this was important in terms of both yourself and Mo in terms of some of your thoughts and feelings later on when both of you were involved in a number of important environmental issues? Did some of this come from that closeness to the land?

SLU: Well, people have asked me that question quite often in these later years, "Where did you get your interest in conservation?" In truth, you know, if you go back and read [inaudible] or Wallace Stegner ten years earlier, and you see the thoughts and values they were clinging to and trying to transmit, so much of that relates to living close to the land, and we certainly did that. I wouldn't say that either Mo or I--I don't think there's anything we wrote back in our teenage years, or a little later than that even, which showed the kind of insights that you might expect,
"Well, this guy, he picked up on a conservation philosophy as a boy." But I can say this: When I became a congressman or when I was living in Tucson and so on, and friends that I had, we used to go into the Santa Rita Mountains, or down to Baboquivari, camp. They were talking about conservation, and I picked a lot of it up there. I remember Joseph Wood Krutch when he came to Tucson, I began reading him. It became very natural to me, because if you live close to the land, you inevitably get a feeling about nature, the importance of natural trusts.

PS: Stewart, do you have any memories of your grandfather, David King Udall? He passed away in 1938, you would have been eighteen at the time. I talked about this with Elma and Eloise a little bit. I know David King, the book that he and Pearl worked on and Levi helped finish. Do you have any memories of talks with David, your grandfather, or at family get-togethers?

SLU: No, he was, it’s just . . . . It's one of my regrets that he wasn't more accessible and so on. With the Mormons' respect for patriarchs, the elders, they were on a kind of pedestal. I have some memories of him. I remember--this must have been the last year or two of his life--and I would have loved to ask him some questions about that. He had a habit of living in the old hotel there, of getting up before sunrise [inaudible] he'd walk--walking back out to the farm where he had farmed earlier. He must have had such a rich storehouse of memories about coming to St. Johns. That time that [we know now?] and we don't have hardly any details. The first year after he came, he was sent to Utah. He wasn't a cowboy. He had a couple of young kids with him, and they drove 500 head of cattle down from northern Arizona, up on the strip. They crossed the Colorado on the ice in January. And it’s mind-blowing to me [inaudible] that cold, they could get out in the middle of that river, and how they nursed the cattle across, what their concerns were. We don't know anything about it, but he must have had some extraordinary memories. But there was that distance of a patriarch.

PS: So basically you as a young person then, or any other younger members of the family--he was not the kind of person you would sort of sit down and have a long conversation with?

SLU: Well, I'm a grandfather now, and I hope if you ask my grandchildren, who I spend quite a lot of time with, that they would have a much different answer. And it may have been the attitudes and the mores of that time, [PS: generational] but they were great gray-bearded figures out of the past. I don't think that David Udall had the touch with children so many grandparents have. I think there was a shortcoming on his part as well as ours.

PS: Stewart, what about Levi and Louise, your mom and dad, in terms of influences they had on you and Mo and your sisters as you were growing up?

SLU: Well, we had a close-knit family. We had very strong, caring parents. We were very respectful of them. I saw that [inaudible] Arthur Miller [inaudible] of television, and he said time and change in life usually have a structure. And now he only can see a flow. But part of that structure, he said, was mores of the time. That was respect for the parents, obedience, you were taught this. My father being, a judge and a church leader, he was a little bit remote but he was also a farmer and he used to take us out and show us how to farm and talk about things. But
in terms of influence, they shaped us in very important ways--also the small-town environment, working and living close to the land. And I think some of my liberalism, because my dad as a judge and church leader was sort of consciously judicious--not as emotional. My mother was more emotional. And I think some of my feelings about being the champion of the underdog came from my mother. She felt deeply the effect on the Lee family of the Mountain Meadow Massacre, John D. Lee, and that she told these [inaudible] person was on the side of the poor. So she expressed it in a way that my father never did.

PS: Stewart, when you finished high school, before your military service during the Second World War, you went on a church mission. Where was that to?

SLU: Well, let me give it a little background. This is true with a lot of these devout Mormon families today. Most of the kids, in fact, unless there's something I don't [inaudible] today, all the children do missions as part of the family tradition and so on. Here's my father, he is the stake president, he's the top church leader. And of five of us, I was the only one to go on a mission.

PS: Mo never did that?

SLU: Well, Mo had.... I felt, as the oldest son--we used to refer to "parent pleasing"--there was responsibility on me to set examples. I knew that my father wanted me to go on a mission, and I sort of accepted that, and I did it. I ended up feeling it was a good experience, particularly because of opportunities I had. I was the one that went through the hoops, as it were, in terms of church. I became, even while I was on my mission, much more of a free thinker than my father ever understood that I was, and I developed then, during the war years, particularly, because I lived in libraries and read a lot. I tried to be [inaudible] understanding of those things, tried to [inaudible] ideas [inaudible].

PS: But the decision to go on a mission was yours? It was a decision that you decided you wanted to do.

SLU: Well, I felt positively about it, I wasn't bulldozed into doing it by my father or my mother. I knew it would please them. I knew it was expected of me, the oldest son. Yes, I went into it with a very positive feeling.

PS: Was there ever any [indication] that Mo would do this also?

SLU: No. Mo had a kind of break with church going when he was twelve or thirteen years old. I was always very dutiful in going to church and doing the ward teaching and [passing?] the sacrament at church ceremonies and those things. I did that. I don't think either of my brothers ever did, you'll have to ask Burr [Udall]. Mo, his sense of humor came into play, and he was once thrown out of a Sunday school class because he poked fun at the teacher. He always had that sense of humor playing there. And I think that also worked with him to be more skeptical of church teachings and doctrines. There was always something to laugh and poke fun about--in life, generally--but Mo had this active sense of humor. He was always seeing the funnier, absurd
side of Mormon teachings and thought. He just didn't go down the line the way I did. He kind of—I wouldn't call it a break—but he just didn't do the church thing that young Mormons are supposed to do.

PS: So by the time that Mo finished high school in St. Johns and started at the university, just before the war started, at the university in Tucson, [a church mission wasn't something that he was gonna do?]

SLU: No. When I went to the University of Arizona after I was out of high school, they had Mormon Church seminaries, they called them “Institutes” there. I was very dutiful and I studied religion there before I went on my mission. I really tried to be a student of Mormonism and Mormon thought. I never had the strong faith. There are people who, almost by their makeup, want to believe, are believers, and they don't ask questions. I always... my mind still questions. I tried hard to believe. I don't think Mo ever did.

PS: Stewart, the reason I was asking, one of the things that has always interested me has been the attitude of the early Mormons, and later generations, toward the land. Your grandfather, David King—and I don't have the exact quote with me—but there was a quote, and I don't know if it was a speech or a letter, and I will try to remember it, but it was something to the effect that David King said that he lived on the land, it is holy, it is sustenance. And about fifteen years ago when I was living in Montana, I was renting a little cabin on the ranch of the stake president in that part of Montana. He was a gentleman who was in his mid-seventies, and I helped him out a little bit on the ranch, during the hours I was off work. We were walking one time in some upper pasture—he ran a couple hundred head of cattle there. It was a particularly beautiful day, the wildflowers were up, and there was a view of the Rocky Mountains above the upper pastures. I said, "Your ranch here is a beautiful place, this ranch you have." And he sort of looked at me and said, "It's not mine." And I said, "What do you mean, Dick?" He said, "Well, I'm just a steward for it while I'm here." And this was a gentleman who was in his mid-seventies. When I read, much later on, the statement that David King had made, I was struck by the resemblance between two men, many years apart removed, but basically sort of saying the same thing. That's why I think I sort of moved into this area. We were talking a little bit about David King and growing up in St. John's, living close to the land, there is something—and I've detected in some other people's writings also—that is a different attitude toward the land than perhaps some other groups, as these hordes of people moved west, the West was settled. You know, what was going on in the Salt Lake Valley seemed to be a little different.

SLU: Well, I absorbed some of this as a kid. My father.... I don't remember Grandfather talking about this. But there was the Old Testament ideas of land stewardship and so on—very important. There was our home in St. Johns, my father's home, was furnished rather simply. Above one of the doors—he used to buy these things, when he went to Los Angeles or somewhere—mottos, these were puritan Old Testament quotations that said, "The earth is the Lord's." [Inaudible.] You're seeing the world through religious teaching, religious thought. This concept of stewardship—I love that word, I used it a lot in my writings and what I said when I was secretary of interior, this idea of land stewardship, we're just brief tenants. I've used that phrase. But I think probably I was soaked in this more than my brother was. Mo came to it—he
may have come a little later and by a different route, but this is the attitude. Its deeply imbedded Mormon theology, Mormon teaching, and it really permeated their lives on a personal level.

PS: Stewart, during the Second World War, you were on active combat service in the Army Air Force, and Mo sort of was also in the Army Air Force before the end of the war. Any thoughts on the influence of the war on you and Mo, and did the two of you ever talk about your experiences and [how] you felt the war affected you in terms of your thinking?

SLU: Well, Peter, there were some letters between us during the war that to me are very interesting. They're in these files. My father kept some of them, maybe. They show us kind of trying to be intellectual, thinking about the meaning of life, and the meaning of the war. I wrote a piece--I don't know whether it's in my papers or in these private papers [inaudible], that I did right at the end of the war, sort of in the vein of Abraham Lincoln and Gettysburg, saying that you must pledge yourselves the lives of the soldiers lost, they did not die in vain. You know, that phrase that's in the Gettysburg address. This was deeply imbedded in my thinking, and I called it a testament--kind of pompous--called it a testament written on the completion of war. It's only about [200?] pages, a thesis on [inaudible] that those who died, that we must live so that their lives weren't in vain. We must try to help fulfill what we all were thinking about in terms of the sacrifices we were making, laying our lives on the line. And those who died, that we keep faith.

PS: Stewart, after the war you went back to school, Mo went back to school, you both finished law school, I believe you went to law school after the war, too, right?

SLU: Yes.

PS: Could you tell me a little bit about the setting up of your law practice in Tucson? I believe your dad swore both of you into the bar. And then you set up law practice in 1947?

SLU: No, 1948. I got out--neither one of us had been to law school--I got out just in time, as someone who had done a string of [inaudible] missions out of Italy, out of Europe, I had a lot of points. So Hiroshima and the war ends, I was mustered out, fortunately, within a month or five weeks. I remember I had just got time of the discharge in San Pedro, I hitchhiked home to St. Johns. There were four days left or something. My dad drove to Tucson. And I got there on the last day that I could enroll in the school. So Mo didn't start law school until a year later, he was a year behind me. I got out in the spring of 1948.

It's interesting. Mo and I talked about buying the newspaper in St. Johns [inaudible] I think we could have purchased it, we didn't have the money, [inaudible] $12,000. It shows a whole town [inaudible] strong magnetic pull. You see so many people spend their lives out in these little towns. I thought of going back [inaudible], I was a little bit uneasy in a big town like Tucson which is big for me. Mo and I talked about buying the paper, but fortunately for me, Calvin Udall went to St. Johns. He was a semester ahead of me, so I couldn't go. I don't think my wife wanted to do so anyway. But Tom Chandler--you know Tom--he and Evo DeConcini--my dad then was on the Supreme Court, and of course that gave me a prestige, a little prestige.
But I just started. I took over Tom's practice. He had a little office, and Evo DeConcini had an office where the old water company is, and I was in there. I got clients [that Tom Chandler sent me?]. Mo came out a year, a year-and-a-half later I guess it was. We started the Udall & Udall office.

PS: How did that, Stewart, come about? Just something you and Mo decided to do together?

SLU: Yes, we decided together, we were compatible. I don't think, I don't remember any [inaudible] discussions . . . . We were fond of each other and we liked independence. I could, because my father was on the Supreme Court. I think either one of could have gone into law firms [inaudible]. I remember Harold Warnock [phonetic spelling] [inaudible] telling me once--of course this was telling me once--of course this was after I'd taken a radical position on the right to work, that if I'd just settle down, [inaudible] law office. But we liked our independence. We liked just the two of us doing it on our own, and that's the way we did it.

PS: The law practice in those early years, was it a general law practice, you did both civil cases and criminal cases?

SLU: General law practice. Mo, after a year or two—that was only a part-time job [inaudible]--he went to work with the county attorney. We still had the law firm, sort of divided time, and we had some interesting experiences. We kind of learned [inaudible]. We would make an argument to a jury that was very effective. We used to flip coins [inaudible] had the opening argument of the plaintiff, and you made the closing argument. The closing argument was the most important one, and he knew that. But we flipped coins. We were very successful in cases, I can tell you. That gave us a lot of confidence. Mo was a better lawyer than I was. He had more aptitude and memory and so on. [Inaudible] text or evidence that a lawyer’s [inaudible]. He was more of a scholar than I was, and probably a better courtroom lawyer. I didn't have.... [inaudible]. I mean, I felt reinforced that when we'd go together to court on important cases, we were there at the table together, [inaudible]. It was a great way . . . .

PS: So both of you helped put cases together.

SLU: Yes, if it was an important case. We had a couple of great cases [inaudible] gave us enough confidence.

PS: Stewart, as the law practice developed.... The next thing I want to talk to you about, both of you became involved in other community issues. I sort of wanted to get some of your thoughts and feelings on both your involvement, to what extent Mo was involved in some of the early civil rights issues in Tucson, and the Fair Housing Commission and some of the school desegregation. I know this was something that was of interest, I believe, to both of you. I'm not sure how much Mo was involved in that, more yourself? Would you talk a little bit about....

SLU: Well, I wanted to . . . . I'll save that for later, to answer that question, talk about the two of us politically. We sort of diverged . . . . But in 1947 or 1948, there was an organization formed, started in Phoenix, and we had a Tucson branch, called The Arizona Council for Civic Unity.
That's the name of it. It was a liberal organization whose purpose was civil rights. The main concern was to eliminate school segregation, which [inaudible] you had in Arizona. The lunch counter thing in drug stores. Civil rights, full rights for blacks. The black community in Phoenix and Tucson [inaudible] was small, probably about [inaudible]. We were working with the leaders of that. Bill Mahoney in Phoenix became a dear life-long friend of mine. He's about as liberal as I am. He was one of the leaders there. We had rather extraordinary success. Arizona desegregated its schools before Brown versus Board of Education back in 1970 and 1971. I was deeply involved in this. It fit my personal convictions. I don't know where I got this from. I joined the NAACP when I was in the service. I used to read [inaudible]. I just thought it was outrageous. They treated black people [inaudible] much stronger convictions. I think Mo did too. I think Mo shared my convictions, but I just.... My memory may be faint, and he may have attended meetings, but . . . . . As far as The Arizona Council of Civil Unity, this was the spear-carrying organization. I was an officer, [inaudible] remember the meetings [inaudible] were. I'm sure he shared my convictions, but I don't think he was involved in this organization as seriously. Some of this apparently crept into some of his campaign literature when he ran for president. He was involved in this, and I think [inaudible]. I was deeply involved [inaudible].

PS: As the early fifties came . . . . Can you talk a bit about--I'm not sure when he would have made his decision--I suspect sometime in mid-1953, he made a decision not to run for Congress in the fall of 1954. Can you tell me a little bit about the decision-making process that you went through when you made the decision? Did you and Mo talk about this a lot when you made the decision to [run]?

SLU: Well, this caused our first big split between us. It was quite serious. But I got interested in politics. [Inaudible] New Deal, Franklin Roosevelt. (passing train whistle further obscures comment) [inaudible] 1924 when he ran [inaudible]. And in 1946, I was my dad's assistant when he ran for the Supreme Court. That was a tough election. I wrote radio commercials, traveled with him, put up posters, everything. Then that same fall of 1946 I wrote this pamphlet which was published in the St. Johns newspaper, the labor union picked up, "A Veteran Looks at the Right to Work Bill." And that was sticking my neck way out. My dad [inaudible] shocked [inaudible]. This is after he won nomination [inaudible]. I remember saying to him [inaudible] get the benefit of the vote. But in 1948, when I was just out of law school and starting to practice law, I got involved in county politics in a pretty heavy way. I was the county campaign manager for Dick Harless, the Congressman who was running for governor. I went to all the meetings, I knew the party people . . . .

PS: What year was this?

SLU: Forty-eight [1948]. I think in 1950 I ran for the county chairmanship at the convention of precinct committeemen. [Inaudible.] I lost, but I became vice-chairman and was involved in the Truman campaign in 1948. I was deeply into party politics. Mo never did go that route. I'm not saying that he wasn't a solid Democrat or that he wasn't doing things. In fact, I'll tell you about months later when he did get heavily involved. But I was kind of a party person and heavy into it. Mo--this would have been.... Let's see [inaudible] 1949, a year-and-a-half later, he'd been in
the county attorney's office. We still had our law firm [inaudible]. He [inaudible]. He developed a lot of skills because he worked for the county attorney's office. My trials, [we got together on some other civil cases?]. He actually learned a lot more [inaudible] county attorney or attorney general. In 1952 Mo ran for county attorney [inaudible]. So he was setting out on a career of elective politics. And because he was such a [inaudible] high reputation lawyers and so forth. Here I am down at [inaudible] level. I managed Harless’s campaign the second time in 1950. I sort of dropped off in 1952. I still had my county contacts [inaudible]. But Mo ran for office [inaudible]. It was after 1952 he had a very successful run as County Attorney. He decided, I think, early on, that he was going to go the Levi Udall route and run for judge. [Inaudible.] He sort of decided [inaudible] Congress [inaudible] very convincing [inaudible] two terms. Later [inaudible] fall of 1953, and I [inaudible] contacts in the party and labor unions. I saw this as a great opportunity. I immediately got squelched, because my father's brother, Don Udall, was a judge in Holbrook. He told [inaudible]. My father [inaudible] that the older generation has first call and that I should back off, which I did. Still, [inaudible]. We're talking about the fall and then winter of 1953 and 1954. [Inaudible.] So what happened, this kind of [inaudible] state bar convention came [inaudible].

[Editor’s note: The next several minutes of tape are unintelligible due to poor tape quality. Although a few words can be heard here and there, because they are meaningless alone, we have left them out.]

[PS records tape test, remainder of this side (about 2½ min.) unintelligible due to poor tape quality]

[END TAPE 1, SIDE A; BEGIN SIDE B]