An Oral History Interview

with

STEWART L. UDALL (part 2)
Santa Fe, New Mexico

conducted by
Peter Steere

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PS: Stewart, in the general election then of fall of 1954, could you tell me a little bit about your Republican opponent?

SLU: Well, my opponent was Henry Zipf, Z-I-P-F, a Tucson lawyer. He'd been a classmate of mine and we'd gone to law school together. He dated my wife once, as a matter of fact. He had gone to Washington with Senator Goldwater when he was elected to the Senate, and apparently the senator encouraged him to run, and he ran a pretty rough campaign. He made a lot of charges that I was too liberal and a fellow traveler even, and so on. It was a rather exciting campaign.

I have to tell you one incidence which shows you that Mo and I had patched things up and were back in Udall and Udall after he lost the primary. George Rosenberg of the Tucson Daily Citizen, who was the city editor or something, I had heard rumors that Zipf was going to make a list of charges. We heard fourteen, sixteen charges against me. And this was very serious. So he called me one morning and said, "I've got Zipf's charges here, and if you want to come over and write answers to these fifteen items," or whatever it was, "we'll run them side-by-side in the newspaper," which was wonderful. This was the Citizen, the newspaper that was against me--or for Zipf, let's say. So Mo and I dashed off to the newspaper and we both were typists, and they gave us two typewriters and we just batted out the answers right there, and that didn't scotch it completely, but it certainly put a lot of water on the fire.

But that district then was quite Democratic. I carried all the counties. Pima County began fading slowly on me. The Republicans were finding out how liberal I was (chuckles) on my voting record, and each election was a little more serious for me. I ran four times.

PS: Did Mo help at all, or get involved with your congressional campaigns?

SLU: Not in a serious way. I think he probably did anything I asked him to do. I don't remember whether he made speeches or whatnot. Mo, after he lost, was finishing his term as county attorney, and that was very serious business to him. Of course in some ways I rode on his shoulders. He'd been elected county attorney. He was more visible than I was in Pima County. So I never kidded myself that I won election on my own.

PS: Stewart, when you arrived in Congress for the first time, you joined a delegation that consisted of Senator Goldwater and Senator Hayden. And at that time, the only other congressman would have been John Rhodes, representing the Phoenix area. Could you tell me some of your early impressions and interactions with the other members of the delegation when you joined them? It would have been in January of 1955.

SLU: Well, John Rhodes and I--and this was true with Mo too--became very good friends. We never played games with each other, we never hassled each other. We were on the same committee. Our big goal was to get the famous Central Arizona Project.
There was an interesting personal side. John came from Council Grove, Kansas, you know, and he was one of the first people at Williams Field right after the war started. My wife was his secretary.

PS: I didn't know that!

SLU: Yes. And so they liked each other, and that gave us a strong tie. But John and I, our voting records are very different. But we liked each other. Senator Goldwater by then was in full flight, you know, as a politician. Barry really ran for the presidency all those years, and he got the job as the chairman in the Senate Campaign Committee, and he kept that for several years, and he traveled all over the country. I didn't have too many contacts with Barry. We would have a delegation meeting once in a while, usually to discuss water projects, Arizona things, and so on. But Barry had a wonderful set piece there, because Senator Hayden took care of all the Arizona matters, chairman of the Appropriations Committee. He had all this power, and Barry didn't need to worry about Arizona. He'd just ride along on Senator Hayden’s coattails.

Senator Hayden was kindly to me. He was in another way like my grandfather, you know. He was kind of on a pedestal, the all-powerful chairman of the Appropriations Committee, and he would give you advice and so on if you asked for it. He was helpful to me in my career. But we were of different generations, and I always thought, you know, if he had quit, or something had happened to him in 1956, after I'd been a congressman there for two years, I probably could have won the race for the Senate. But he didn't die and he stayed on all those years, and just closed that avenue of vertical opportunity for me. But I had very good relations with him.

PS: Stewart, during your three full terms that you served in Congress, did you and Mo keep in touch, confer, talk about issues, or perhaps very early pieces of environmental legislation that may have come in during your first three terms? I realize there was not a whole lot of it then. More of it came in as we moved into the sixties, but did you and Mo keep in touch?

SLU: Well, sure. The way Congress functioned, my six years, Rayburn.... The law says Congress finished on August 1, and Rayburn took that very seriously, and we quit. So we would have two homes. We would go home, our kids would enroll in school. Our families, the children then were young, they were growing. We had a lot of family ties, family dinners and family weekends, you know. And the Udall and Udall law firm continued. Congress was not a full-time job, although I probably, when I came home in the fall, I'd spend half my time on congressional matters. And Mo would get me a few law cases to work on and to try. I had a modest amount of income from it. He followed my congressional career. He had essentially the same interests that I did. His record shows that the way he picked it up when he became congressman. Mo wrote a textbook on evidence, he became very prominent in the bar, he helped judicial reform. He was quite busy and consumed with the law profession. But it did not surprise me when suddenly Kennedy, after I'm elected to my fourth term, Kennedy offers me the job, and Mo said, "I'm gonna run for Congress!" I thought that was wonderful, that he could
aspire to succeed me and do it.

PS: Stewart, part of the time, one of the things that you became involved with, was the thing in Congress, both orientation for freshmen congressmen.  (SLU: Yes.) I believe that you were one of the influential people who sort of got this going. Could you tell me a little bit about that?

SLU: It's probably—the exact stuff is in my congressional papers, I guess, I don't know. It was strange, when you look back at it now and see all the organization they have. But I thought that there ought to be, for these new members of Congress coming in—both Republicans and Democrats—some kind of orientation. You know, they now have, they go to the Kennedy School, they have two- or three-day orientation courses, all kinds of experts come in. There was nothing then. And it just seemed to me a missing link. And I was an organizer, and I joined, I think, with one or two Republican congressmen. I think Fred Swangle [phonetic spelling] from Iowa became a very close friend of mine, and we organized a one-day or two-day seminar. I remember asking Scotty Reston of The New York Times to be one of the speakers, and tell them about Washington and how the legislative process worked. We got people from the Library of Congress to explain how a bill moved through Congress. That was successful. And I think we did it for two or three years. Later, because Mo knew a good idea when he saw one, he followed my path and he picked up on this. In the 1960s they had something similar. I think, actually, it developed into something larger and more important. But we started it then in 1958 or 1959, I think.

PS: I believe it continued and they called it the Freshman Seminar later on.

Stewart, could you discuss your views on some of the early Native American issues which you encountered during your time as a congressman?

SLU: Well, I was, as part of my civil rights convictions, I guess, I felt very strongly. My father did. He was determined when he got on the supreme court to reverse a 1920 decision and give the Indians the right to vote. In my six times when I ran for Congress, very few Indians in Arizona voted, even though the law had changed. They just culturally were not keyed-in to our electoral system. But when I ran for Congress there was a professor, Bill Kelly, an anthropologist at the University of Arizona. I turned to him, Jim Officer, and others. I was very much interested in understanding what was called "the Indian problem" and what was being done or not done for Indians.

In my first year as a congressman, the previous Congress had passed these termination laws, and I became convinced that that was very bad policy, and I helped Congressman Metcalf and others, working, trying to soften the impact of that. In fact I remember my first summer or second summer I got a member of the Interior Committee, a senior member, head of the Indian Affairs Committee to come out and hold a hearing. We went over to Sells, and had a hearing about their problems of getting potable water and things of that kind. But the whole Indian scene in the 1950s, I must say, was not all that improved over what it had been twenty years earlier. And this matter of getting
appropriations for roads or health care, all of that, this was important. Of course Senator Hayden, you'd go to him and he'd help on most of these things.

PS: Stewart, following up on that a little bit, could you discuss your role in the legislation that enabled the establishment of the Kitt Peak Observatory on the then Papago-Tohono O'odham Reservation?

SLU: Well, my memory of that is rather vague, but I remember being approached, being involved, and this seemed like a wonderful thing to happen, tied to the world astronomy picture and put the University of Arizona on the map. The Indian leaders then were not sophisticated, most of them. In many instances they were not facile with the English language. I don't think we ever asked the Tohono O'odham much about it. I don't think we even went out of the way to see that they got economic benefits from it. I don't know. It just was something that you saw as an astronomy project and put the U. of A. on the map.

PS: There wasn't any strong opposition then that you recall?

SLU: I don't remember any at all. I don't remember any.

PS: Stewart, jumping up a little bit in time now, could you talk a little bit about your role in the Arizona presidential campaign of John Kennedy and Mo's role? How involved did Mo get? I guess the campaign actually started in 1959, going into 1960, leading up to the election in the fall of 1960.

SLU: I was a great admirer of Adlai Stevenson. I campaigned hard for him, a lot harder than Senator Hayden did. Hayden was up that year and campaigned. He would hardly mention "vote for the president," you know. The old man had all his friends and this aura of an old man with great power, and he never was much on speeches anyway. I would give a "vote for Adlai Stevenson" speech as we made the rounds. Candidates traveled together then, as a party--he and I, Ernest McFarland, the governor. But I wrote an article that will be in my papers for, I think, The New Republic, in the winter of 1958-59 called "Why Adlai Stevenson Wants the Democrats." And my thesis was that this man was so eloquent and so impressive and so on, that if we didn't nominate him, did we have a person who could match his eloquence and stature? That was my feeling. I was a Stevenson person.

In the summer of 1959, beginning in May and June, I sort of became Jack Kennedy's counterpart on the House Education and Labor Committee, and I worked very closely with him, and I saw his qualities. What they call charisma now I called Hollywood, the personality of the man, the attraction. I wasn't impressed with that. Well, I liked him, but when I worked with him and with people like Archibald Cox, who was his expert on labor law, and I became acquainted with him that summer, and Ted Sorenson and others, I saw the strong qualities that he had, and I became convinced that the Democratic Party ought to nominate Kennedy. When Congress quit, I was never recruited. The Kennedy people had an organization, an early organization in Tucson, but
the night the Congress quit about three in the morning--this would be in September, I think--I called over to Kennedy's office and asked if he could see me and they said, "Yes, come on over." I told him I was gonna go home and work for him. So I was a volunteer, in effect. Of course they were delighted to have me. Arizona was thought to be in Lyndon Johnson's pocket, because of Hayden and MacFarland. They would control the Arizona delegation. So I didn't make a big public display of my support. I quietly went around my congressional district and recruited friends of mine. Jim McNulty, who was a lawyer in Bisbee then--he was one of them. I said, "Let's go to the convention, and let's work for Kennedy." And I had things quite well lined up. I would make the rounds--this is the fall of 1969--and the Kennedy people, of course, had begun to look to me as the Arizona leader. And I put in an enormous amount of time and energy on this.

One of my great memories, I told him, "Give me a day in Arizona." I got a call and they said--Kennedy had this little prop plane, the Caroline. He said next Friday, I guess it was, that he would go. So we left the capital in this little plane. We went to South Bend, and at Notre Dame he had a big rally, and so the campaign's beginning. In fact, this, I think, was after Wisconsin but before West Virginia. And then we got on the plane and went all night, and arrived at Flagstaff at six in the morning, and that day we did Flagstaff, Phoenix, Tucson, and Yuma, and I was, of course, the person that was with him. We had the state convention and we carried it. We had the unit rule, and Kennedy suddenly had all of Arizona going--not half of them or part of them--he had the whole thing. And the Johnson people were furious and desperate right away, and Gene Pulliam helped them, he tried to beat my brains out for two or three weeks.

But I don't remember Mo being involved. He may have gotten involved in the fall after Kennedy got the nomination, but in terms of helping Kennedy get the nomination, I was the leader and there were people--Harry Ackerman was the county attorney, Don Hummel had been mayor. There were others. There was a good Kennedy group, and all of them deserve credit. But of course I was the state campaign manager and I became chairman of the delegation to the convention as a result of that.

PS: Stewart, after President Kennedy's victory in November, could you describe your feelings when you were asked to join the cabinet?

SLU: Well, let me say first off I didn't.... It never entered my mind when I went to work for Kennedy that I was doing this and there was some big reward like that. Arizona had never had anybody in the president's cabinet since statehood--just think of that. And I did it because I believed in Jack Kennedy. I also thought that it was time to break the WASP mold, that if any Catholic could win, it was Kennedy, and it would be a great thing for the country if a Catholic were nominated and elected.

The first indication I had--because you know, here's big ol' California and tiny Arizona, and I assumed that.... I didn't think during the campaign that fall, you know, if Kennedy's elected I have a chance to be secretary of interior. But the way the election turned out, Kennedy had a 2½ million vote lead when he hit the Mississippi River, and the West just turned him down flat. He carried New Mexico, Nevada, and Hawaii, I
think--that was all. California, when the absentee ballots were counted, Nixon carried California. So Kennedy didn't pull anything much to anybody. Two people were Edith Green from Oregon, congresswoman, who's a friend of mine; and myself. She'd come out early in Oregon like I did. But I got a call from Hy Raskin [phonetic spelling] who was Kennedy's western expert--he was in Los Angeles--and said, "I'm coming over. There seems to be a little talk about you being in the cabinet." (chuckles) I was pleasantly surprised. He came over and we went to dinner and things. He'd obviously been talking with Bobbie. I think three things led to my being asked to join the cabinet. One was the electoral outcome in the West. They didn't owe anybody anything. California was divided three or four ways at the convention, afterwards. And I think Kennedy, having worked with me on the Labor Reform Bill, they had a pretty good idea what kind of person I was. I had to stand up and take a lot of heat by working on that issue.

I think the other thing that factored in was that they wanted a westerner and who else was there? Now, Wayne Aspinall, the congressman from Colorado, really wanted the job and thought he was the logical person. He was a very proud man, and I think he was disappointed. He didn't campaign for it. Others did campaign for it, I found out later, and were very disappointed, like Clyde Ellis, who's the head of the Rural Electric Organization nationally. But it sort of fell in place, and then I got a call saying that the president-elect wanted to see me and what he wanted to see me about. So I went to see Kennedy in Georgetown. I made a trip back to Washington, went up and saw him. And I was going to be one of the first, second, or third members of the cabinet announced, and then a freakish thing happened: He called Senator [Clinton] Anderson from New Mexico, who was the new chairman of the Interior Committee and a very powerful figure. And he said to Anderson--from what Kennedy told me--he said he'd decided on Udall, and Anderson was, again, kind of a father figure with me, he liked me, and he said [to Anderson], "Of course, if you wanted the job, you were my first choice." Anderson said, "Well, I'm interested," and Kennedy was flabbergasted. Actually, it was a ploy. Anderson had been in Truman's cabinet as secretary of interior, and he was riding high as the chairman of the Interior [Committee]. He wasn't interested, but that held it up for a week while they found out what it was he wanted, and he wanted something.

PS: Stewart, can you talk a little bit about President Kennedy's inauguration? We all remember Robert Frost reading the poem. You were involved in getting Robert Frost to participate in the inauguration ceremony, weren't you?

SLU: Yes, it was really my idea. The idea happened in Tucson. The election's over, Robert Frost was on one of his poetry-reading "campaigns," as he called them, and he came to Tucson. Of course we were already friends and he had been in our home. We had him out to our home in Tucson. And Bill Meredith, a prominent poet, was traveling with him, and I hadn't seen Kennedy, but I had gotten calls that he was probably going to call me and wanted to see me. I didn't want to talk to Robert about it, because if you got his expectations up, you were in trouble if they were dashed. I said, "Wouldn't it be a wonderful idea to have Robert Frost, New England poet, be on the program at the inaugural? Kind of give a poet's benediction or something. Do you think he'd agree?"
He said he'd love it. I didn't talk to him, because I didn't want to build up. But I saw Kennedy the first afternoon, when the Anderson thing happened. When he finished, I said, "Jack, I've got an idea I want to talk to you about. You know I'm close to Robert Frost, and he's said a lot of favorable things about you. Why not have him on the program at the inaugural to kind of give a poet's New England benediction?" Kennedy, just like a flash said, "That's a great idea! We don't want him to give a speech. He's a master of words. It'd be like Lincoln and Edward Everett at Gettysburg. Let him read a poem." So then from that point Kennedy's people took over, and he told them that he wanted Frost on the program. That's where it started. But it was my idea.

PS: Stewart, after you had accepted the position in President Kennedy's cabinet, resigned your congressional seat, did you and Mo discuss shortly after then that he might run in the special election? Once you had resigned, obviously put the cards on the table, dictated they were going to have to have a special election. Did you and Mo talk about that at any length at all?

SLU: Well, here was the sequence on it, because once it was out that Kennedy was going to nominate me, everybody, all the people in the Democratic Party, here's the magic seat open again--it only happens, like with Mo and I there all those years--that there would have to be a special election. Well, everybody who'd ever dreamed of running for Congress got their antennae up. There were a lot of candidates, you know, in that Democratic primary, but Mo immediately.... We're still law partners, we're still there, and he just right out said what did I think of him running for my seat? I thought it was wonderful, and he began plotting it. I told him who a lot of my key people were in the various counties: people like McNulty and others. I think he and Jim may have already been friends. He got busy and began making the rounds. Now, the seat wasn't vacant until I resigned, of course, and then they had a primary in April and a general election in May, which Mo almost lost. He didn't lose it, it was the circumstances. He sort of blamed me for it. But once I was out, and in the cabinet, I had no time to help him or to do anything. And the reason that election was close, all of us knew this in Arizona, the Democratic vote were the Hispanics, the labor people, the education people, the blacks, the poor, and so on. And if you have a general election, and all these county offices are getting out all of their people, the big get-out-the-vote, in a special election Republicans always ran very strong because they turned out the vote, nobody had to carry them to the polls or anything. Mac Matheson, who had run a strong race against me, and of course ran again, it was a close election because it was a special election.

PS: Stewart, one of the things I want you to get into now was I think maybe treating it as a whole period of time. With your tenure in the cabinet as secretary of interior through both the Kennedy administration and the Johnson administration, from January of 1961 until January of 1969, that eight-year period. At that time, Mo was serving his first four terms in Congress. One of the things that I was really interested in was could you discuss your relationship with Mo during that time period? You're basically serving in a high administrative position in the cabinet, making policy. Mo is serving in the House of Representatives as a congressman involved, obviously, with the drafting and passing of legislation. Given the fact that both of you had, if not identical, certainly similar interests
and support in terms of areas of wilderness conservation, and the number of bills that came out and passed in that time period. There were some landmark bills: The National Wilderness Bill, the Wild and Scenic River Act, the National Trails Act--a number of other ones. What was the relationship between you and Mo on these environmental issues, many of which I'm sure you both supported, and many of which became law. How did you two work together on these?

SLU: Well, there's two things that you have bear in mind. Mo is elected, he moves his family back there. Our children were close, still are. We had a lot of family things that we did together. So, there was no distance from the standpoint of opportunities for us to talk and exchange views. The other thing you have to remember, Mo was a junior member on the Interior Committee, and Wayne Aspinall from Colorado was a domineering character. He was the last of the one-man committees, and this meant that he decided. And the members of the committee, particularly the junior members, played the kind of subordinate roles that he wanted them to play. So there wasn't much opportunity at a national level--Wilderness Bill, Wild Rivers--for Mo to play any big role in the House, but he agreed with me, we were on the same wavelength on Wilderness, on Wild Rivers, on all these other things. He was telling me what was going on in the committee. Aspinall tried to hold up most of the major legislation. So we worked together, and Mo played an important role in a lot of the legislation and trying, along with John Saylor, a Republican, to make Aspinall move over. But on the other hand, he and John Rhodes were both on the committee. He didn't want to make Aspinall mad, because he's the one man who could block the Central Arizona Project. That had to be on their mind all the time. When the fight came on the Central Arizona Project, we were talking all the time. He and John Rhodes did a tremendous job in the House of lining up the support, and fending off the Sierra Club from killing the bill.

PS: Since you've led us into the Central Arizona Project, why don't we talk a little bit about that now? Obviously the Central Arizona Project or it's earlier predecessors by different names, has been a big issue for a long, long time. With the final signing of the bill for the final funding in 1968, and the last years leading up to that, from what you just said, you were sort of working together on this, Mo and John Rhodes on the floor of the House, getting votes together. Could you talk a little bit, Stewart, about--it was part of this issue at the time, that sort of galvanized the whole country--the dams in the Grand Canyon that had been proposed as part of the Central Arizona Project early-on, and the Sierra Club obviously got very involved. Could you talk a little bit about that and how that manifested itself?

SLU: Well, one thing to remember is, because of Carl Hayden's position, chairman of the Appropriations Committee, everybody in the Senate owed him favors. The Senate was never the problem--the problem was the House. And that's the reason what Mo and John Rhodes were able to do was so very important. But it was part of the tradition and procedure of the reclamation program that you had to build dams. If you're going to build this huge Central Arizona Project, you had to have a dam that would produce cheap pumping power. You had to have a dam to produce revenues to pay off the cost of the project. The things that the Bureau of Reclamation had planned were Marble Canyon
and Bridge Canyon Dam. They had to be, they were an integral part of it. And that's where the Sierra Club campaign put Arizona in a real squeeze, because these two dams were absolutely vital and integral. My sense of it was that if we were stubborn and didn't yield on that issue, that the project would go down, it wouldn't pass in the House. That was my political judgement.

Now, Roy Elson, who was manipulating and doing all kinds of things that I still resent to this day, on Senator Hayden's staff, was trying to play Hayden's cards by making threats and various things. But when I saw the Sierra Club and the national conservation movement mount their big guns on the dams in the Grand Canyon, I just felt that a compromise was necessary. And I ultimately, in the fall of 1967, said that the dams were misconceived--and, well, however I said it, it's there in the paper—that they had to be dumped. Well, then the immediate problem was--this had never been done before in western history--you've got to have a source of power. The thing that I did, which I really provided a push in the leadership on, was to get this Page power plant. It's the only power plant in the West, a coal plant, where the United States government owns 25% of it. And we had to put that together in a hell of a hurry, and the California power interests had to cooperate. I had done so much for them, I had the power to do it. But we had to put that together as part of the project. So Mo started out--and that's where he had this brouhaha with the Sierra Club--fighting them on Bridge Canyon Dam--that they were wrong and that this had to be built, and so on and so on. I think his judgement all along was the same as mine, but until we had this alternative source of power, if you didn't have Bridge Canyon Dam, you had no project. So of course he and Rhodes had to stand and fight.

PS: Stewart, my timing may be a little off, but there was another plan that was proposed, I believe, around the same time or maybe a little bit earlier--the Pacific Northwest Water Plan?

SLU: Southwest.

PS: Southwest, excuse me. The Pacific Southwest Water Plan. Could you talk a little bit about that? I think that was something that you did have an interest in.

SLU: I might have an interest in! (chuckles) I was the promoter of it, and it was an attempt at a compromise, a kind of a ploy, in a way on my part, to bring Arizona and California together, because the fear that a lot of us had is that if California mounted an all-out campaign against Central Arizona Project, they, combined with the Sierra Club--interesting combination--could kill it. So some of my people--Jim Carr had been my undersecretary, he was a Californian, and I was trying.... I always had very good relations with Governor Pat Brown and Senator Engle and others. I said, "Well, instead of having this fight over limited water, let's have an augmentation plan." The Bureau of Reclamation loved this. Their engineers put this up. "We'll tap the Columbia River. We'll bring the Columbia River. They have so much water, it's the biggest river in the West. We'll build a big project and bring water down, and then we won't have to fight, because we'll have augmentation of the Colorado River." Well, who shot this down--not
to my surprise--Scoop Jackson, the senator from Washington, because he now was very powerful. Anderson had moved on. He's chairman of the Senate committee. He said, "No way!" That was blown up. But it was a political attempt, at least, to show that from my standpoint--and my department initiated that, I gave the Bureau of Reclamation the go-ahead, "Let's look at this, let's develop this"--to alleviate a head-on conflict between Arizona and California.

PS: Stewart, in retrospect, in Mo's book, *Too Funny to be President*, he devoted a chapter in that book to the Central Arizona Project, and I think sort of looking back with hindsight, which we all do from time to time, and particularly with all the problems that have occurred with the Central Arizona Project, with people not buying the water, and some of the people it was intended for, and all the problems recently in Tucson with pipes falling apart and everything like this. Did you ever have, as Mo did, any sort of hindsight, second thoughts, about the Central Arizona Project that it might have been done differently, that it has basically helped to fuel tremendous growth in the Phoenix area and the Tucson area, that if there'd been more or a different type of planning? Mo talked a little bit about that in his book chapter. Cities have grown up in a little different way. Any second thoughts about the Central Arizona Project?

SLU: No. We talked about this a lot in the 1980s as the project was coming to fruition, and we both had a lot of second thoughts. Senator Goldwater did. Arizona people were startled--I wasn't. They said, "Is there any vote you regret?" they asked Barry when he retired. One....

[END TAPE 1, SIDE B; BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE A]