An Oral History Interview

with

JOHN GABUSI (part 1)

conducted by
Julie Ferdon

Tucson, Arizona
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John Gabusi was born in Florence, Arizona, in 1941 and raised in Clifton. He studied and taught political science at the University of Arizona before co-founding Behavioral Research, a public opinion polling firm, with classmate Earl DeBerg. In 1966 he began working for Arizona Congressman Morris K. Udall in a variety of capacities, including managing his 1976 bid for the democratic presidential nomination. He left Udall’s employ in 1977 to work for the Community Services Administration. He was then asked to help organize and establish the new Department of Education, where he later became assistant secretary for management. After Republican Ronald Reagan assumed the presidency, he went to work for Control Data Corporation in Minnesota. In 2002 he accepted the job of Vice Chancellor at Pima Community College in Tucson, where he has remained since.
JF: Good morning. My name is Julie Ferdon. This is Tape 60 of the Morris K. Udall Oral History Project. It’s Saturday, March 19, 2005, and I’m at the Tucson, Arizona, home of John Gabusi. John, thank you for agreeing to this interview.

JG: My pleasure. It allows me to bring back some memories that are dear to my heart, whether good or bad.

JF: I’m going to start at the beginning. Where and when were you born?

JG: I was born in Florence, Arizona, in February of 1941.

JF: In Florence?

JG: Yes, Florence, Arizona.

JF: Did you grow up in Florence?

JG: No, but I was born there, and that was the home of my mother’s family. It’s a very big family and a very big house, and she wanted to have me born in the same house where her mother was. So right before I was born, they drove down from Clifton—which is where I was raised—to Florence, so I could be born. I was born in Florence, using the infirmary at the state prison. This is in the early forties. And after I was born and everything was okay, they drove back to Clifton, which is where I lived, where our family was. That’s where my father’s family lived.

JF: What [was the name of] your mother’s family in Florence?

JG: Ortega. Her father’s name was—I think it was Fernando Ortega, because my uncle was also Fernando. He was named after his father. Her mother was Bustamante Ortega. They were immigrants from Mexico as a result of the Mexican Revolution. They had to leave because they were not on Poncho Villa’s best side. He became good friends of Poncho Villa’s last widow. She lives in a big house in Hermosillo—or did—I don’t know if she’s dead now. He had a number of wives, some dead, some illegitimate, some whatever. She had a big house in Hermosillo, and he would go visit her. She would tell stories. She did it for money. People would come, and they would leave her ten pesos or whatever. He had many pictures of him and Poncho Villa’s wife.

JF: That’s great. So you were raised in Clifton?

JG: Right.

JF: Did you go to high school there?

JG: Yes, Clifton High School.

JF: Graduated in....
JG: In 1958? Something like that.

JF: Did you get politically active at that time? Were you politically interested as a kid?

JG: Well, it’s interesting, my father was the one. . . . I wasn’t directly involved in politics in high school. My father was extremely active in county politics. He was, at one time, a county chairman, Greenlee County. He was active in the local Democratic Party, and was recognized as such.

JF: What was his first name?

JG: Frank.

JF: And what did he do?

JG: He was the owner of a photo shop, a portrait studio.

JF: So he was a photographer?

JG: Yes.

JF: And your mother?

JG: She was a nurse at the hospital.

JF: And you have siblings?

JG: Yes, I had a brother who passed away. He was in a horrible accident, was rendered a quadriplegic, and ultimately died from complications from the effects on his body of the accident and the quadriplegia. Three sisters. Martha is here in town, is a teacher at Doolen Middle School. She taught Dave Nix’s and Ellen Wheeler’s boy. My sister [Rebecca], who was a teacher in Yuma, and retired. And then my oldest sister, Christina, who’s been a manager/director of a division of HBO in Denver, their corporate offices. She is just retiring this year.

JF: So from high school in Clifton, did you go right to the University of Arizona?

JG: Yes, exactly. I got a scholarship with the U. of A.

JF: What did you study?

JG: Ultimately ended up studying history and political science. At the time when I got there, who knows? I can’t remember. Beer. (chuckles)

JF: Is that where you first met Terry Bracy?
JG: Yes, as a matter of fact. Well, I may have met Terry when he was still a reporter. Terry was a reporter for Channel 4. No, that would have been after graduate school. I met Terry in graduate—Terry arrived from St. Louis to go to graduate school here in Tucson, at the Department of Government. And he came here, he told me, because the department chair, Currin Shields, had written a book, *Democracy and Catholicism in America*. Terry had read that book, and wanted to go to graduate school with Currin Shields as his mentor. So he arrived here in Tucson for graduate school. He and I and Earl DeBerg sort of became colleagues in graduate school together—got to know each other very well. Terry ultimately became a very good friend. I met his wife before she was his wife. She was in graduate school, too. So it was that sort of a thing.

[Short break during which they are joined by Martha Taylor, John Gabusi’s sister.]

JF: Okay. You were just telling me about your mother coming through Ruby?

JG: Yes. What happened was, this is 1915, and the Mexican Revolution, Poncho Villa is dominating the north. He comes through these towns in Sonora. Santa Cruz was the semi-rural town in northern Mexico [where] my mother’s parents and her brothers and sisters lived. And Poncho Villa came through and basically told my grandfather to get out. Well, actually, the way it worked, the neighbor came and told my grandfather that the word was that Poncho Villa was going to come to his house and burn it, and they needed to leave. So in the middle of the night, my grandfather, with these big oxen kind of—what are they?—big—the ones that oxen pull, these big….

MT: Well, remember, he—can I interrupt?

JF: Absolutely. What I would rather do, though is have you speak into this mic, if I can get it off of me.

MT: It was a wheat wagon, because our grandfather owned the town mill. And he was also the justice of the peace, and they owned a little bit of property. So, although they were a very poor little village, in the village they had more. And so that’s why Poncho Villa was going to burn. . . . .

JG: He wanted all the wheat.

MT: He wanted to get rid of the rich people, and he wanted the wheat, so my grandfather was a target.

JF: Now, what was your grandfather’s name?

MT: Fernando Ortega.

JG: Yes, it was Fernando.
MT: And that’s why they had the wheat wagon.

JG: Right, and it was a big wagon. So my mother’s a little girl, five years old, plus all the others, and they pack up their furniture, as much as they can, and it’s going to be taken by oxen to the United States. But to get to the United States, they’ve got to come across, and there are these mining camps, Ruby being one of them. My mother, as a five-year-old, said she was seated on the top of the wagon, and her father had said, “You can only have one toy. And so she got her favorite doll, a little girl doll. She had a word for it. She remembers vividly carrying it on the top of this big wagon as they went by oxen in the dead of night from Santa Cruz in northern Sonora, across the ridge and into the United States. This is 1915, of course—there’s not much there, no roads or anything. And they got to Ruby, the mining camp.

MT: My mother told me a little bit of a different story. She said she was in the wagon, and she forgot her dolly, and that she said to her father, “Can I go get my dolly?” And he said, “No, we’ll be back tomorrow,” because they were just leaving—or “we’ll be back very soon”—they were just leaving while Poncho Villa came through, would do his thing. They took very little with them, just enough to get out of there, because they left in the dead of night. And he said, “We’ll be back, don’t worry.” So they left with very little.

JG: So she never had her doll?

MT: She never had her doll. They go over to Ruby—this is what Mother told me.

JG: I’m sure.

MT: They go over to Ruby, they wait until they get word from the people in the town that they can come back, that Poncho Villa has come through, done whatever he’s going to do, leaves. They come back….

JG: It’s been flattened.

MT: Everything that they owned, burned to the ground: the house, the mill, everything. So when they come to the United States, they literally come—because then they came back, with nothing. So when the City of Tucson chose to put up the statue of Poncho Villa downtown….

JG: My mother….

MT: You know, to many Mexicans, Poncho Villa was nothing but a criminal. He destroyed property, he brutalized women, he was horrible. So when they put a statute up to him, she was like furious! (laughter)

JF: That’s great Tucson history.
MT: And let me just say one more thing, since we’re getting this on record. What I think is so amazing about my mother’s family, is they moved to Florence, because they thought they had a cousin there or something.

JG: My grandfather had some relative who was working in the fields in Florence, or something like that.

MT: Right. So they go to Florence, they have eleven children. All of those children, all of them, either went into the military, like two of them became officers…. 

JG: Yes, colonels.

MT: Or, received professional degrees. My mother was an R.N.; a couple of uncles were educators, became principals; some went to business school; it was all different. But all of them received advanced education, after coming here with nothing.

JF: That’s amazing.

MT: That is amazing.

JG: Yes, all eleven of them.

MT: All eleven.

JF: Very unusual.

JG: Her father was a very modest guy. He didn’t have any education, as far as I can tell.

MT: He could do calculus in his head. That’s what Mother used to say.

JF: Calculus?!

MT: Yes.

JF: And what was his profession?

JG: He started out as a labor kind of guy, and ended up, his job, he went to work with Arizona Public Service. He was a lineman.

MT: He built a house in Florence. He and his sons built a Mexican hacienda in Florence—big, sprawling…. 

JG: Still there.

JF: And that’s the place where they took you to be born?
JG: Yes. And I have a spinster aunt that still lives there.

JF: Okay. All right, now we’re going to go take you back to college. You were saying that that’s where you….

JG: Terry and I met, in graduate school.

JF: And Earl DeBerg.

JG: Yes, and the three of us sort of hung out and went to classes and did all that stuff, got our graduate work done there. And that’s when Terry left and went to Channel 4 as a news reporter. And doing his news reporting, I think that’s how he got to know Mo. I think then Mo or Dick Olson or one of the guys hired him as a press aide in Washington. That’s how his career started in Washington.

JF: Okay.

JG: That would have been about 1966, 1967, something like that.

JF: So did you get a graduate degree?

JG: At the U. of A., many years later, I got my master’s. I left. Earl and I quit graduate school to open our business back in 1965. So we both dropped out of graduate school, but he then continued on, because he was still in Arizona, and I left because I went back to Washington.

JF: What was that business?

JG: The business that Earl has today. That’s the business he and I started in 1965.

JF: Was that Behavioral Research?

JG: Yes, Behavioral Research Center.

JF: And it was polling?

JG: Yes, polling, public opinion studies, commercial research, stuff like that.

JF: And was that in Tucson, or in Phoenix?

JG: We started in Tucson, then we moved to Phoenix.

JF: And it’s still ongoing?

JG: Oh, yes. Earl, that’s his business.
JF: So were you co-founders?

JG: Yes, exactly. It was the reason we both left graduate school, together.

JF: Obviously it’s successful.

JG: Oh, yes, he’s done very well.

JF: So how did you first get involved with Mo?

JG: Doing polling. Well, let me see now, for Mo. In the early sixties, when I was an undergraduate, I got very active in Democratic Party politics through the University of Arizona. I was active in Young Democrats, I worked as a campaign volunteer, and then as a paid aide, while in school, for Sam Goddard when he ran for governor. So I was in and around the Democratic Party in Pima County, fairly actively from the time I was probably the end of my freshman year, until I left the university, at some level. And it was in that period of time I got to know Stewart as a congressman, because he was a member of Congress. It was the beginning of the Kennedy years. He had gotten his job as [secretary of] Interior, and Mo was county attorney, I guess, or had just gotten elected. It was early sixties—or I’m not sure of the exact chronology. But I know that I knew Stewart, and I knew that through Stewart and Dick Schweitzer, who was his campaign aide, that I got to know Sam Goddard. And they hired me to help in the campaign. And in that mix of people, I know that Congressman Udall would come to town. And Terry then joined the staff, and it was in that period, about 1966, that we were doing our polling work.

Earl and I started freelancing while in graduate school, and had clients. We had clients from the Chamber of Commerce, from the Tucson Citizen, and we were selling public opinion polls, both for policy reasons, but the Citizen was interested in a feature. They hired Earl and I to do what they called at the time, “The Citizen Poll.” And on a regular basis, about every two months, or three months, whatever, we would put out a series of—we would do—they paid us—we were graduate students, we’re getting paid to go get interviews done, to hire people to do interviewing. Then we would write the reports, and they would publish them. And we did that for about a year or so.

And it was in that context that Terry said, “Well, why don’t you guys do some polling for Mo Udall?” That would be about 1966, I guess. Yes, I think it was 1966—I’m not sure. So we did. That’s how I got to know him, because we were the pollsters. And I was more involved in that than Earl, because coincidentally, it was at about the same time that Earl—see, Earl’s a Phoenician at heart. He’s not a Tucsonan. He was here for graduate school, but his family lives in Phoenix, his father owned Berg Electric, a big company in Phoenix, and he wanted to go back. That was part of the motivation. So coincidentally, when this other stuff on the campaign was heating up, we were moving part of his business, the consulting business, to Phoenix. So he wasn’t that interested in it, so he didn’t play the same role that I did. And out of that, doing that work, I got to
know the other staff people, got to know Dick Olson and Roger Lewis, Terry. They were the three main ones. I think [Robert A.] Reveles was there off and on. I’m never sure when Bob was in and out, because he was connected to Stewart, but he was also connected to Frank Thompson, New Jersey, and I’m not sure. But anyway, it was after that period, after that campaign, that Terry then said, “You know, there’s going to be an opening in Washington soon, and I really think that you should consider moving to Washington to work for Mo in Washington.” And the other guys said that would be a good thing to do. And I’m still, at this point….

JF: The other guys being Roger Lewis and….

JG: Dick Olson. Years later, I found out what that job was. Mo was having his affair with Ella at the time, and Ella was one of his staff people that he had on patronage through the post office committee.

JF: Was she with the post office subcommittee, or . . .

JG: Well, they’re all the same. In those days, you had the post office committee, and then the chairman would say, “Okay, who wants to have that sub….” You would decide. You could be your own subcommittee chair, if you had the seniority. So yes, whatever he called it, you just called it. It didn’t make a dime’s worth of difference. Technically, the difference it made is if you were on what is called the permanent staff of the committee, you got a much higher pay rate. This was thanks to a guy named Charlie Johnson, which is a whole other story. So that’s really the only difference. But Ella had the slot, the patronage. And she was his girlfriend, working there.

JF: And what was her job?

JG: Hanging around with Mo, going to the club, drinking—I don’t know. There was no work involved, I gotta tell ya’. And then I found out years later the reason they said there might be an opening is it was an open secret—and I wasn’t there, I was in Tucson, of course—that he and Ella had a thing, and that they were working to get his divorce done so they could get married. And as soon as they got married, she would have to leave the committee, because you can’t be married—you could, but Mo wasn’t going to have that.

JF: But his divorce wasn’t final at that time?

JG: Well, maybe it was hers. I don’t really know. They said it was some legal—this is years later, they’re telling me these stories, because I didn’t know why I was hired, I just know I got a call and Mo said, “I’ve got this opening coming up, would really like you to join us.” So I said fine. My wife was—we were very well ensconced here in Tucson. I was an instructor at the U. of A., moving merrily along towards my doctorate.

JF: What were you teaching, political science?

JG: Three- and four-hundred level political science courses.
JF: And when had you gotten married?

JG: In 1965.

JF: And Angeline, your daughter, is a result of that marriage?

JG: That’s right.

JF: Okay. So you moved back to Washington, and what was your initial job? You were obviously with the postal committee.

JG: They put me on the committee payroll—initially. I ultimately ended up on multiple payrolls. It was just a question of putting—how much money could we get, and then which committee or subcommittee could we get the money from. You’re probably familiar how it works—or worked in those days—on the Hill.

JF: Well, tell us, because that needs to be recorded as well.

JG: Okay. I don’t know what it is today, because of all this post-Watergate and corruption and all that stuff. But when I went back there, every member of Congress had what was called their clerk hire. Clerk hire was a phrase meaning total control of the staff that you hire, on a bundle of money called clerk hire money. The vast majority of the congressmen’s staff came from their clerk hire. That would be like your congressional staff hire. And then there was other payroll that a member of Congress was entitled to. If he was a subcommittee chairman, he got a chunk of money. And so the more seniority you had, the more of these bundles of cash that you could apply for your staff.

JF: Did the staff have to work for that….

JG: No. You just had to get a paycheck. So for example, the majority of the years that I worked for Mo, I was doing 90% political. I was his bag man. This is before Watergate. I would get contributions from lobbyists. I would deal with that, and other political. I did a little bit of postal work, in the sense that I managed hearings, but there were other people that did it. I had a big staff, like you got to know that little Jewish girl who worked for Mo and the committee, and also in the Congress, and in the campaign. She has a nickname for herself.

JF: I know who you’re talking about, but I can’t [unclear].

JG: Well, anyway, she was an example. She worked for the Post Office Committee, but she worked for us. So the payroll you were on was not determinant of the job you had. In fact, in many cases—it’s all related to the seniority system. A first-termer would have his clerk hire, and he would hire whatever he could afford to hire on a small amount of money, relatively. But as his seniority grew…. I mean, I know, for instance, Mo—I’ll
try to think of a mature example. He would have his clerk hire, which is, say, half a million dollars. He was chairman of a subcommittee of the Congress—say that’s worth $300,000. So now he’s got $800,000.

JF: For staffing?

JG: For his use for staffing. Then he’s chairman of the Congressional Committee on Standards of Official Conduct. So you’re entitled to $200,000 for that staffing. Now theoretically, each of these are for staffing those things. But every one of these have professional staff. They’re not just…. It’s like the Soviet system: you had the bureaucracy and you had the party. In other words, they were doing the same thing. And then he was also chairman of the Franking Commission, which regulated the use of the congressional frank, because it had had some slanders on it or something. Now, that’s four that I’m thinking of as we speak. And then he and Ted Kennedy alternated the House Senate Committee on Technology Assessment—the Office of Technology Assessment. For all those years, he and Kennedy rotated the chairmanship. That’s how Jessica Tuckman [Matthews] got hired. She was hired—she worked for Mo, speech writer, political. But her payroll was the Office of Technology Assessment. So that’s five. So the point is….

JF: So these were all patronage positions.

JG: Oh, every one is patronage. The Hill had nothing other but that. And so you add all that up, Mo Udall might have $1½ million worth of payroll every year, but on the record, he’s a member of Congress. Well, he’s a hell of a lot more than that. Visualize yourself as the chairman of a full committee in appropriations or defense or…. When he got to Interior, I’m sure he had a big chunk of change. So that’s how it worked. So in my case, after I was there a while, we sorted out, like, say I started out, I was just on the post office committee, and I started doing other stuff, like we needed to get some polling done or something, so we would decide that I needed more money—me as well as the projects—so they’d say, “Well, we’ll add $5,000 from the Franking Commission budget.” So all of a sudden, instead of making $25,000, I was making $30,000, but $25,000 was clerk hire, and $5,000 was…. So there were times when I was on four different payrolls.

JF: For curiosity, what was your starting salary there, do you recall?

JG: I think it was around a little less than $20,000. I think it was a little less than $20,000, as I recall. I thought it was a lot of money, I know that.

JF: It seemed like when you went back to Washington, a number of people started around then, a lot of new staff came on: Terry, you, Bonnie.

JG: Yes. Well, Terry recruited me.

JF: And then Bonnie Kell.
JG: Bonnie came at about the same time. Dee Jackson. Her husband had died of cancer. She needed a job.

JF: Now, had she been a friend of Ella’s before?

JG: She could have been, I don’t know. I really don’t know how she got the job.

JF: But this would explain how he had the money to suddenly have the staff expand during that time.

JG: Who knows how he did it? This was Roger’s job. I doubt that Mo knew hardly any of this.

JF: Okay. Well, that gets me to your impressions, when you first got back to Washington and first got in the office. If you can, just give me your impressions of the staff, of Roger Lewis, Dick Olson, Mo. Just your impressions when you first got there.

JG: Well, you know, every congressional office in those years, at its core, is identical. So you walk in, there’s a particular reception area, and in the back in one room you could have your—it depends, you could have your press office, your A.A., whatever you had. In our office, you had Roger Lewis and Dick Olson in the same area. Roger’s main job…. First of all, Roger, when you got to know him, was a very odd fellow. He was Mo’s conservative keep-your-feet-on-the-ground person. He’s the one who would always say, “Mo shouldn’t be doing that,” or “We can’t afford that.” That’s what he did, and he was good at it. And so we’d come in there, brimming with some ideas, and we knew that Roger’s back in the corner mumbling to himself, and eventually he says, “That won’t work. We can go talk to Mo, but that ain’t gonna work.”

JF: Was he right?

JG: Not always. No, it was Roger’s natural conservatism.

JF: And he was the administrative assistant?

JG: Yeah, he was called administrative assistant, but what Roger was, was the district rep in Washington. Ninety percent of Roger’s work was dealing with local people in the district.

JF: So his focus was Arizona.

JG: Absolutely. He hated politics. He hated the campaign. He resisted to the bitter end that Mo was going to run for president. He said, “He should be the best congressman in America, he doesn’t need to be president. What’ll it get him? He won’t win.” Roger was the quintessential staffer who represents the district, who was very good at it. And Roger saw the job, I think, in terms of the major constituencies of the district. So it was water—spent half his time with Morley Fox, getting the Central Arizona Project passed.
JF: So he was the lead person on that?

JG: Well, inside the office. I know he advised Mo a lot on that, but you had, of course, an entire committee then, run by Wayne Aspinall, that was doing water. He wasn’t even on the subcommittee. So he had to do it extracurricular through conversation with members and the lobbyists. Morley Fox was the chief lobbyist for the CAP in Washington, and the others. So Roger, though—then it was the agricultural interests, a lot of agricultural interests: farmers, a lot of the big farmers, cotton farmers, things like that, would come. And then we would see the other constituents. Roger was the greeter, generally speaking. It wasn’t political. He never would deal…. I or Dick Olson—secondarily Terry, if a really serious politician was going to be coming to the office—serious being the governor, another congressman from somewhere else, or the mayor. Roger would talk to the mayor on occasion, if there was a federal grant that we might be involved in, like a housing grant, or money for grounds, highways, that sort of thing. But by and large, he didn’t do that stuff—that is, political conversation.

JF: But if constituents came in, he’d be the one to greet them.

JG: Oh, absolutely. We also had really good case workers. Roger would bring them in, but Roger had an assistant, a de facto assistant, for years, who’s face I see right in front of me. She [Linda Langston] was the chief case worker. And I can’t remember her name.

JF: And I’m not sure I have it here, though I would be able to supplement it.

JG: Oh, God.

JF: I don’t have the name here. I can add that in, though, to the transcript.

JG: So anyway, she was the one that really was quite good. We had, over the years, a few others, but she was there the longest, and the best. She was there all the way through the campaign.

JF: And she would take care of things like lost Social Security checks.

JG: All that stuff. She was a bulldog. And Roger and she worked very well together. She would go in and talk—they were very close—they would go have breakfast together, and stuff like that. So they worked together very closely. Damn, I wish I could remember her name! Anyway, so that was Roger’s bailiwick.

JF: And what about Dick Olson?

JG: Well, Dick was the chief speech-writer, policy-maker. He was responsible for working with Mo on all of Mo’s writings: his newsletters—remember, he was writing a lot of newsletters those years, essays. And so Dick was responsible for the wordsmithing, the development, the initial press releases—then Terry took over the press
That was part of what Terry was hired for, to take on the actual press dealings, dealing with the press in Arizona. They were already beginning to think about ramping-up nationally, because Mo was wanting to run for majority leader, and then Speaker, and all of that. So they needed a national press presence.

JF: So part of that influx of new staff, during that period of time, was in anticipation of running for leadership?

JG: Looking back on it. At the time I didn’t think anything about it, but looking back on it, I could see what Terry’s job was. Terry’s job—there was no “Terry’s job” before Terry. So that meant that there was a function that had to be filled. And he became very—he schmoozed the national press, he was the guy that if you’re Jim Jones of the L.A. Times, first-name basis—that was what he did. Plus he did the press releases, any kind of media thing. If Mo was going to do an interview, he was responsible for briefing him and getting him to…. You know, all that kind of stuff that you do. Dick probably had all of those jobs before Terry.

JF: But it was probably a more minor role before.

JG: And then Dick focused more and more on the writing. You have to think of it in the late sixties, early seventies, for a congressional office to have this specialized thing—we’re talking about from 1967 on, basically—you have to have a highly-specialized staff. And even if you think about it today, there are very few congressmen today that have that specialized a staff. But here you had a staff, one person who did primarily writing—and I’m talking about serious writing, not these crap newsletters they do now that are pictures.

JF: Mo’s newsletters were incredible.

JG: Oh, yes, they were real essays.

JF: He wrote some himself, didn’t he?

JG: Oh, absolutely! The way it would work, was that Dick would have an idea and would talk to Mo about it, and sometimes Mo said, “Well, I’ll take a whack at it.” Or sometimes Dick would take a whack at it, and then Mo and he would edit it. Dick always edited in either event.

JF: Well, they were very substantive, as I recall.

JG: Oh, they are! Yes, just go into the archives: they’re essays. I mean, they’re real essays. And some of them still…. I mean, Mo’s early writings on the deficits, and the impact of a deficit on the economy…. 

JF: I remember reading one—I think it was when I was in college, and an intern or something—on environment, where he suggested saving water by turning off the water
faucet while you’re brushing your teeth. And I think about that, I swear, every third time I brush my teeth. (chuckles) So they must have had an impact.

JG: Sure. And we were sending these to everybody in the district. We had big mailings, because remember, before reapportionment, the geography was much greater.

So anyway, that’s what Dick did. Plus Dick would meet with certain…. It was unwritten, but there was sort of an understanding if certain types of people coming to the office, his constituents or guests, who Dick would handle, who I would handle, who Terry might handle. It was sort of—we just knew.

JF: It was unwritten, but obvious sort of?

JG: Yes. And Bonnie was the gatekeeper. A lot of times we’d just talk to Bonnie, “So-and-So’s coming, what do you think?” And she’d say, “Well, I think that this is something Terry would work with Mo on,” or something like that.

JF: Now, was Bonnie there when you arrived?

JG: She had just come.

JF: And did her predecessor leave—Louise Greenfield?

JG: I think Louise had gone back to Tucson—or was in Tucson, one or the other.

JF: Okay.

JG: Again, this is before I was there, so I don’t know the history of why she left, or any of that. All I know is Bonnie was there. And Dee was there. Dee had just arrived also. And Dee was the receptionist, and Bonnie was the personal secretary to the congressman.

JF: You also managed Mo’s campaigns, didn’t you?

JG: Not the first one, but all of them thereafter—I and Terry—but Terry did the media, and I did the campaign operations and all that.

JF: What was your first one?

JG: Would have been 1968.

JF: And who had run the campaigns up ’til then?

JG: I guess Terry and Dick. I don’t know.

JF: Starting in 1968, it would be you and Terry?
JG: Well, basically the way it worked was that in—let’s see, the election would be September—probably Terry and I would go out about late July, because typically we didn’t have a primary opponent. Sometimes we’d have these crazies from the West Side. I think even Raul [Grijalva] ran against us one time.

JF: Oh, really?

JG: Back when he was a young firebrand—I think.

JF: There was a Grijalva. I’ll have to look that up.

JG: Yes, I think he ran against us once. But anyway, the point is, we’d get out there in July…. There was a guy named Harry Karchmer, who was a CPA, and Harry was our campaign treasurer. And we always had money from the previous campaign, so we’d go out there and we’d open up a campaign office in some storefront, typically on Broadway, down in that area.

JF: Downtown?

JG: Sort of down there somewhere. I think one year we did it on the West Side. I think it was a political reason—somebody owned a building, and we said, “Well, let’s give him some business.” We’d set up a campaign headquarters, and we’d pick a day and an announce the opening of the Udall campaign headquarters. Mo would show up, eat a taco or whatever, and be on his way. And our job—Terry and my’s job—was to formulate the campaign plan, if there was going to be any sort of serious opposition; and then to implement it. And that meant I was responsible for finding volunteers. Typically I would find one or two. I could pay them fifty bucks a week, and then tell them to go find me whatever volunteers we might need. Because we typically ran a media campaign, and the volunteer thing was for show, for enthusiasm, but we didn’t see it as an integral part of winning or losing. It was more of keeping things going, and the community activated. The party was very important. We had all these legislative district races, and we could put money to them. I could put money into a legislative district race under our campaign. So those kinds of things. And then after the campaign, we win, they’re in a much better frame of mind. Terry’s job was solely media.

JF: How many campaigns during that period of time in the sixties had active media going on? Was that sort of the early days of it?

JG: It was very early, and Terry was probably one of the earliest filmmakers, because Terry really worked to produce film campaigns—I’m sure you’ve got those in the archives—versus video or the station doing it, that sort of thing. And there was some really nice stuff. I don’t know if he did it in 1966, because he may have been in that interim between leaving Channel 4 and coming to Congress. It could have been 1968, the first one, I don’t know.

JF: I think it was probably 1968.
JG: Yes, I have vague…. I have very clear memories of certain of the campaigns. Others, they were just campaigns. I think if you asked me the name of the opponents, I couldn’t give you all of them, because we were working our way through them.


JF: I was there, and I couldn’t tell you who we….

JG: No. 1974. So I went through five campaigns: 1968, 1970, 1972, 1974, 1976. And both 1974 and 1976, Terry and I were managing two campaigns: we were managing keeping the one in Arizona alive, in the sense of visibility, but then we were responsible, also, for the midterm Democratic National Committee. Remember that? The Kansas City Convention, all that. (JF: Right.) So he and I were, at the same time, involved in nationally getting that put together, and organizing the members of Congress. Remember there was going to be a groundswell of support. We had to reorganize the congressmen who petitioned him to run for president. That was all in late 1974.

JF: Well, in 1972, you worked for [Edmund S.] Muskie, also, didn’t you?

JG: Well, Terry and I worked for Muskie and [George] McGovern. That’s another story. Mo had made a decision in 1972, that Muskie was going to be the guy that could beat Nixon. I think it was Nixon—1972? Yes, because the impeachment was 1973. And so he had told us that Muskie was his guy. So we’re staffers, okay, Muskie’s our guy. And Roger was the only one who really wanted McGovern.

JF: Really? The conservative in the….

JG: But he was a populist, and he was anti-Vietnam [War]. Roger hated Vietnam. Remember, Roger’s a Canadian-American—he’s not just an American.

JF: I didn’t realize that.

JG: Yes. So anyway, when Muskie blew up, when he went in New Hampshire and cried, and withdrew, we had no candidate. So Terry and I had—I had been an acquaintance, Terry a friend—with a guy named Rick Sterns. Rick Sterns is now a federal judge in Massachusetts.

JF: Oh, he is! (JG: Yes.) Hold on, I’m going to flip the tape over.