

An Oral History Interview

with

STEWART L. UDALL (part 3)

Santa Fe, New Mexico

conducted by

Peter Steere

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The Morris K. Udall Oral History Project
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[END TAPE 1, SIDE B; BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE A]

[Tr. note: In addition to poor tape quality, volume drops to zero. Accuracy of transcription cannot be assured.]

PS: Stewart, when we left off on the other side of this tape, you were in the middle of discussing some of your thoughts years later, looking back on the Central Arizona Project.

SLU: Well, I just talked with somebody from *National Geographic*, who's doing a piece on Glen Canyon Dam. I spent two hours with him the other day. I think Glen Canyon Dam was a mistake. Glen Canyon should have been a national park. But this whole Colorado River development idea, pushed originally by Herbert Hoover in a conference right here in Santa Fe, dividing up the river. Considering river basin planning, the highest and best use of water, what this compact between the states did--pushed by California and Hoover--was a tragedy. Arizona had to get its water. I presented testimony more than once on the Central Arizona Project, and we presented it as a project to rescue farms and farming. Arizona had--it's all going now--still has some of the richest farmlands in the world. In the desert where you have a twelve-month growing season you can raise crops that will produce high prices and so on. (tape turned off and on)

PS: Stewart, when we left off, you were just sort of finishing off your discussion about the Central Arizona Project and the farming.

SLU: Well, this was presented to Congress as a program to rescue farming, so the project is finished, the economics are wrong--it's so costly, the farmers can't afford the water. So naturally you have second thoughts. This is the largest, most massive project, and it's not going to be paid for unless the city dwellers in Phoenix and Tucson pay for it, because the farmers can't pay for it. So it's an example of bad planning, an example of bad economics. I naturally have a lot of regrets about it, because I spent fourteen years of my life, put in a lot of my best efforts to get the project. Now, to find out that the people that we said and believed we were trying to help, can't afford the water, is a shock. But I also have to say at the same time that I never in the 1960s thought of Phoenix becoming another Los Angeles, or Tucson becoming another Phoenix. Well, back to being a conservationist, I don't like to see over-development, and I think that's what we're seeing. I think ultimately the quality of life goes down.

PS: Stewart, I want to move on to a little more general question. Did Mo influence your thinking at all on environmental issues, and vice versa--did you influence his? That is a more general question, just over the years.

SLU: Well, I think there was a symbiosis. I don't think we had a big argument on things. In a way, because I was a congressman first, and secretary of interior, in a way I was Mo's mentor, but I don't think he'd like me to say that, because he'd say "he didn't teach me anything, I had the same ideas," and he's probably correct.

PS: I guess sort of coming out of that question--you may have already answered this--were there any particular environmental issues that you and Mo disagreed on?

SLU: I don't think so. There was one.... He picked up some of the balls that I was trying to carry at the end of my [tenure as] secretary of interior. The whole Alaska Lands thing, Mo played a crucial role, he and John Saylor of Pennsylvania, of keeping that option alive for the nation. And he did a tremendous job on that, and then of course as chairman of the committee, it's one of his most grand achievements, the Alaska Lands decisions. But we just....

Well, the other thing I was going to mention, that was one of the few times in his life that I ever saw Mo back out of a fight. I'm still trying today to get the 1872 mining law reform. And the golden moment to do that was in 1977 when he was the new chairman, and Scoop Jackson, they got along working together wonderfully. In fact Jackson and Mo and I had a very warm, cooperative relationship. So they were ready to amend that law, and Mo introduced a bill. But, he, after his presidential campaign, for good reasons, he was terrified that he was going to be defeated in the next election, because he had had to run as a liberal Democrat, more liberal than his district, when he ran for president. And of course his toughest election, other than that first election in 1961, was in 1978. Suddenly, he'd introduced a bill, the thing was starting to roll, and he backed out--not because of peer input.

PS: Political reasons.

SLU: He didn't talk to me about it. I was disappointed in that, but he never.... Somebody just said, "Well, Mo's quit the fight." And I asked him about it the next time I saw him, and I think he said it was politically.... They were threatening to run a recall election, the small miners in Arizona were gonna run a recall election. Of course they couldn't run a recall election, and Mo knew that, because the Constitution of the United States, you can't recall a congressman or senator. But they could have made a big fuss, and he may have been justified in saying he didn't want to take on that fight. But we're still now hoping to do something in 1997, twenty years later.

PS: Stewart, just a minute ago, you had mentioned a state far away from Arizona that was of interest to both you and Mo--Alaska. Could you talk a little bit, I believe there was an effort on your part to try and set aside some lands toward the end of the Johnson administration, that Johnson would not do. You mentioned that Mo sort of picked this up, and then later on some of this was set aside in the Alaska Lands Act. Would you talk a little bit about your effort there at the end of your....

SLU: Well, I tried--I did this consciously, the Park Service started working a year before, the idea that when Johnson's term ended, he would sign national monument proclamations creating a lot of national monuments. And I was pretty astute politically (chuckles). We had a presentation in November after the election, of these proposals. I proposed 10 million acres. One of them was in Arizona. I had to show my own *bona*

fides, and that would have put Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, and the Cabeza Prieta Refuge would have been wrapped in together as a national monument--Sonoran Desert National Monument--with the recommendation it be made a national park. I had two in Utah, I had several in Alaska, to be the Gates of the Arctic, which is now, of course, in the park system. It's a long story. Johnson and I got in an argument that dragged out 'til the last morning, he was president. For strange reasons, he didn't do it, but Mo and John Saylor picked up this D2 language, which they carried over, and that was in the Alaska Natives Bill, and that kept the door open for Congress to act as it did in 1980 with the Alaska Lands Act. But Mo was one of the real architects of that. That was one of his great achievements, no question.

PS: Stewart, that sort of leads me into the next question. I think the Alaska Lands Act is a good example. Mo is remembered in his legislative accomplishments for his ability to bring people together, to get a consensus and get the votes together on a bill. The Alaska Lands Act involved a lot of travel, a lot of hearings, a lot of debate, a lot of redrafting over and over again to reach a compromise that would pass, and eventually it passed by a very, very large margin in the Congress. Could you talk a little bit about your thoughts about Mo's approach to consensus-building and resolving conflicts?

SLU: Well, he had--one of his great skills--there were times when I wished I had his skills as a person who could bring people together and get them to compromise. I got angry quicker than Mo did, and I had arguments and battles of the kind that he didn't get into. Don Young from Alaska really was a great antagonist of Mo's, and Mo had a very low opinion of him, but he always joked with him. Mo had no rancor in his makeup. It was hard to stir him to anger. He'd laugh if he was defeated and go start over again. But when they took that poll, *U.S. News and World Report* took that poll about 1981 and 1982, and they asked the members of the house "Who is the member of your body [who] can take a bill to the floor and make the most effective presentation?" "Mo Udall." "Who's the one who handles things in such a way that makes it possible to enact difficult legislation?" "Mo Udall." That was a great gift that he had. It's a shame his time was cut short.

PS: Stewart, your thoughts at all coming from both your time in Congress and as secretary of interior--and this is an issue that still is with us to this day--I'd appreciate hearing your comments on the Navajo-Hopi land dispute, which is obviously still with us, and has been a long-standing issue. Were you involved with this at all, any efforts during your time in Congress or as secretary of interior?

SLU: (chuckles) Oh boy, was I involved! As a congressman in 1958, I think it was, we had to pass special legislation--a bill to set up a three-judge federal court to resolve the dispute. I was naive enough to think that you'd take the argument to the court. I thought the Hopis would win, but I didn't go into it with a preconception that you would create a three-judge federal court: serious, high-level court, and they would see it and resolve it. Of course they couldn't resolve it. I don't know why. I was gone by then. But I started it all by putting it in the courts. When the decisions were made in the early 1970s, which brought this all into a head--of course I had nothing to do with that, I was gone--I sensed

that Mo, because of my mother and his own sympathies, the Hopis being the underdogs, his sympathies were really there, and I think Goldwater's were too, for that matter. But I was just in the bleachers, watching it at that time. But I did feel it should be resolved, and I started in the court system, where it floundered for about ten years.

PS: Stewart, during your period of service as secretary of interior, was a time of transition for the conservation movement and thought in the United States. It seemed as if your career at times reflected the tensions between, one, the old [Gifford] Pinchot style conservation based on scientific land management use, and two, a new emphasis on preservation of wild areas through aesthetic and spiritual renewal, which I believe you expressed so well in *The Quiet Crisis*. What were your greatest challenges in resolving those contradictions? Were you hampered at all by the power of the Bureau of Reclamation? And what kind of political mechanisms did you use to get compromise on some of those issues?

SLU: Well, I think I was fortunate to be where I was in the Interior Department when the conservation movement was transformed, in large, into the, which is a more sophisticated movement. And my thinking began to change when I read and digested Rachel Carson's book, *Silent Spring*. I remember Lyndon Johnson, of course, was great on bills, what bills that we passed and so on. When they did my oral history for the LBJ Library, I remember telling Joel France, who's gone now, a historian, I said, "Well, Joel, all this emphasis on bills and maybe the most important thing that we did in the 1960s was to help orchestrate the beginnings of what is now called the environmental movement." And I really believe that. I and my people did this, and out of this we began to change. The building of dams, the world now of building big dams, or any dams, is over. That's an era that's passing. We sensed it was passing then. And the thing that I take the most credit for, because we originated the idea in my office, was the Wild and Scenic Rivers Bill. That instead of building dams and damming every river like a staircase, that we ought to look at rivers and have a balanced system and decide which tributaries, which rivers would be left in their natural, free-flowing condition. Now that was a major change. When I began in 1961, I was told by Kennedy's people, "Read the Billings speech." Well the Billings speech said, "more dams, more dams." So we made some changes.

PS: Stewart, was the Bureau of Reclamation a problem? because they were a very powerful agency.

SLU: Oh, they were a very powerful agency. I decided to keep Floyd Dominy, a very able man, we were friends for a long time. He now sees me as a chameleon. He says so publicly. But you know who his great backers were? Carl Hayden and Wayne Aspinall. It was like Kennedy reappointing Allen Dulles and J. Edgar Hoover. I did the same thing, because I didn't want to have a big fight with them, so I reappointed Floyd Dominy. And Floyd recognized times were changing. He's a pretty tough guy, but he's also sophisticated. I had to respond. He never came in and argued with me that I was crazy to push the Wild and Scenic Rivers Bill, although Aspinall, when I got President Johnson to put it in the state of the union message in 1965, he left the floor and told *The*

Denver Post, "It was the craziest idea I've heard of." [Inaudible.] So, we had our arguments.

PS: Stewart, sort of following up a little bit on that, for you personally, did the emerging concept of ecology change the way you look at conservation?

SLU: Oh, it changed the scope of it. It changed values, you know, the essence of the old conservation idea was you create a national park, you create a wilderness, a wildlife refuge. It's safe. Rachel Carson said that nothing's safe: noise and pollution, encroachment, and all the rest. And it was adding that element of the totality of the environment: the air, the water, the wind, the everything, that you have to understand impacts and conflicts--otherwise you're not a good steward.

PS: Stewart, would you have described yourself as an environmentalist by the time you left public office?

SLU: Oh! I hope I would be remembered as a leader of the new environmental movement.

PS: Were there occasions when you clashed with Mo or other members of the delegation when you were secretary of interior, because of your responsibilities to the president and to the American public more generally?

SLU: Well, certainly the dams in the Grand Canyon is the number one instance in that. Probably if I thought, I could think of some more. But the delegation, including my dear brother, with the frame of reference they were working from, you had to have the dams in the Grand Canyon. If you didn't, the project went down the drain. It was up to me, using the power of that office that I temporarily held, to work out a way that we could save the project and have a project without the dams. But there are people in Arizona, some of the hydroelectric power people, still hate my guts to this day, some of the old men. "Those dams should have been built! Udall betrayed us."

PS: Stewart, what would you say, or have you said, to Bill Martin or Bob Young since the CAP was completed?

SLU: Bill Martin? Bob Young? Who are they?

PS: This was a question that was passed on by one of the Udall Center people. I believe they were people involved with the Interstate Stream Commission.

SLU: Oh. Well, the hydroelectric people in Arizona--I was one of their great supporters in Congress--rural electrics. But they would have been major beneficiaries if those dams had been built. In fact, there were Arizona people who said, "Well, hell with Udall. Let's Arizona build it!" But in order for Arizona to build it, they would have had to pass a law and get the president to sign it, to cede to them the right to do it. So they felt, for good reasons, that I had betrayed what they thought was Arizona's rural interests.

PS: Stewart, I want to jump back just a sec, sort of to follow up on another question that we discussed earlier--the Alaska Lands Act. Did you and Mo consult at all during the years when he was forging that compromise that eventually resulted in the passage of the Alaska Lands Act? The early interests that you had in Alaska we discussed earlier. Did you and Mo talk, discuss, consult at all, when he was engaged in that long process?

SLU: Well, what we did--because he's in the driver's seat--I mean, I'm gone now, and so on. He would occasionally call me about something specific where he thought I knew more than he did. But I was essentially just applauding, encouraging him to hang in. That fight hung in the balance. And it was Mo's persistence that saw it to completion in a major way.

PS: Stewart, during your many years of public service, both as a congressman from 1954 to 1960, and as secretary of interior from 1961 to 1969, you had the opportunity to interact with many different individuals who served for varying periods of time in the Arizona congressional delegation, or in high state offices. Could you give some brief thoughts or observations on some of these people? One of the people I had on my list was Senator Hayden. You've already sort of talked about him. Just some of your brief thoughts and impressions on Ernest MacFarland?

SLU: Well, Mac was kind of an old shoe politician. He certainly wasn't able to stand up to Barry Goldwater, who was really sort of the newer generation. I never had a very high opinion of Mac, to tell you the truth. He was kind of a dogged character. I campaigned with him. He was a reasonably good governor for that time. I think it's sort of remarkable that he rose to the top and became the majority leader in the United States Senate for two years. I was in Washington as a lawyer a few months before that election, and I found his staff and his people very arrogant. They thought it was inconceivable that Arizona would elect this crazy businessman, Barry Goldwater, to replace the leader of the Senate! Here was Arizona with all this power: Carl Hayden, MacFarland. Mac, when you compared him with Lyndon Johnson or Mike Mansfield, these other people, he wasn't of their caliber.

PS: What about Paul Fannin, both as a senator and governor?

SLU: Paul wasn't very smart, and in my experience didn't have the kind of grasp of things to be a real leader. I never saw him . . . he'd chime in, not lead the discussion.

PS: What about Senator DeConcini? Any thoughts? I know you really didn't work together with him, but the families knew each other.

SLU: No, he came along later. He was a disappointment to me as a senator. I don't know what mark he left that he'll be remembered for.

PS: And Stewart, I may be going back a little too far, even for you, any thoughts or memories of Congressman Murdock?

SLU: Well, John Murdock, Rhodes beat him, you know, in 1952, and he was still hanging around in Washington, [Henry Fountain] Ashurst too, for a while. Murdock was a college professor in background, a very pleasant, honest man. Clare Engel [phonetic spelling] of California and the California people on the Interior Committee in 1951 and 1952 just ran circles around him. It may have been that they just had votes that he didn't have. But he was a good man, and I think he represented Arizona well.

PS: And what about Congressman Rhodes, John Rhodes, Sr.?

SLU: John Rhodes and I were not only good friends, I had and have great respect for his judgment, his hewing to his convictions. Very wonderful person to work with. I think the real test of John Rhodes is that his colleagues elected him to be the minority leader of the House of Representatives. I think if it hadn't have been for--I agree with John--if it hadn't have been for Watergate, the Republicans probably would have taken control of the House, certainly in 1980 when Ronald Reagan was elected. But John was a moderate Republican. He was not an ideologue. That's what made him so effective. I wonder what he thinks of Gingrich?

PS: That would be an interesting question to ask him. There were a few other people, Stewart, who served for shorter periods of time. I'm not sure how much interaction you had, but one would be Sam Steiger.

SLU: Well, Sam was kind of a bomb-thrower, very outspoken. Mo used to handle Sam Steiger with humor. He had a rather short career, and I think he's more of this Newt Gingrich breed of Republican actually, going to change the world overnight.

PS: How about George Senner.

SLU: Well, Duke Senner was not there very long. He was easy to work with, but not a heavyweight.

PS: Stewart, jumping back again to a more general question: Many people, I think rightly so, believe that your book *The Quiet Crisis*, was a very important book, along with Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, to help initiate the modern environmental movement. How do you think the environmental movement, conservation activism, and conservation ideology have changed since your time as secretary of interior?

SLU: Well, the thing that I find most satisfying is that the environmental movement has changed the way people view their environment, changed the way we view the world. It is a major international issue. It's going to be--because it concerns understanding the balance of nature and the future of the world--a very big powerful, [inaudible] part of lives. And I take a great deal of satisfaction in feeling that thirty or thirty-five years ago, we were there in the beginning and helped move it along. It may be that some people a hundred years from now, or fifty, if they still remember me will give me more credit for helping initiate environmental concepts and ideas, and moving them along, than for other

things.

PS: Stewart, sort of following up a little bit on the same question, there are a great number of different environmental groups that have come into being, into existence. In addition to.... You know, some groups have obviously been around a long time, like the Sierra Club, the Audubon Society, and others. There have been a whole spate of organizations that have come up, sometimes often on a regional or local level. On a national level, one thinks of Earth First, where there have been dramatic confrontations, styles utilized. Any thoughts on some of the different strategies between the older, more traditional environmental groups, and in some of the ones that sprang up after the sixties with a very different kind of activism? sort of out there, laying down in front of trucks, and spiking trees, and doing other things. It was a very different strategy than the larger, older groups tended to carry out.

SLU: Well, I think it's inevitable, with all of the facets. The old conservation moment was quite tidy, in a way--you know, parks, wildlife, these categories. The environmental values and environmental thinking spawned different groups with different goals--some of them short-term, some of them trying to stop things. The conservation movement was all positive. That's the reason in my tenure, of most everything we did in the 1960s, was popular, and some of the arguments, clashes that grew later, were inevitable in my opinion. I think the effort people who worried about radiation, to stop nuclear projects, sort of emblematic of these new, larger concerns where people are not just interested in doing something that's good, but in stopping things that they considered bad. But I think that's inevitable, it was part of the evolution of this wide-ranging new concept of ideas.

PS: Stewart, I'm going to take a break now for a second. I think this tape's about to run out, and I'll take a break now for a sec. (tape turned off and on) Stewart, I had another question I wanted to ask you, of a more general nature, sort of summing up some of the broad-based conservation/environmental issues we've been discussing. Tom Power, who's an economics professor at the University of Montana has a new book out called *Lost Landscapes and Failed Economies*. And Tom, who was a former professor of mine when I was at the University of Montana, argues in this new book that's just out, "the old extractive economy, based on mining and agriculture and ranching, is dying. An economic prosperity will grace only those communities that preserve their landscapes and learn to profit from them respectfully." That's a very gross general summarization of many issues he discusses in that book. I was wondering if you've had a chance to look at that book?

SLU: No, I haven't. There are interesting new books coming out now. There's one on the Columbia River. Well, one was written by a journalist. Do you know the historian Richard White? Richard had written a monologue, apparently, that's in a book on the mistakes with over-development and everything on the dams on the Columbia River and how that happened, what the thinking of people was. This is a little bit jarring, but it's inevitable. and I think some of the younger historians and students who are looking at it, see things that are coming at us, and see changes. But I still, as much as I have negative feelings about mining and some of the other extractive industries.... You know, I

cooperated on a lot of the Columbia River matters. And we saw this as a good thing. The destruction of the salmon runs, I'm appalled at what was done, and what I was involved with, and the degree to which we just blindly shoved the real problems under the rug and went right on ahead.

PS: Stewart, you've mentioned earlier, and in this connection, sort of following up again on this last question: When you look at Arizona in relationship to some of the thoughts that Tom Power presents in his new book, the percentage of people employed by the ranching industry in Arizona, the mining industry, it's obviously made a dramatic decline for a long time. As we speak today in Arizona, and I'm sure it's true in New Mexico also, the percentage of people involved, as earning their living from those things, had dropped dramatically. Is there hope for this kind of movement, eco-tourism as part of this?

SLU: I come at it from a little different angle, 'cause I just wrote a letter that's being used in the Idaho senate race. An Idaho senator is a leader of the defenders of the Mining Law of 1872, which I'm campaigning to remove. And he is the point man for the mining industry. He says Idaho's a mining state. We had a study done--our organization--by a Montana economist, less than 1% of the income in Idaho is from mining right now. Someone says "mining state? What are you talking about?" Of course Boise is growing like Tucson, like Phoenix, and so on. It's a corporate center and so on. Arizona, when I became a congressman, the cliché at that time was, The thing that drives Arizona is the four 'C's': cattle, going down and out; cotton, cotton's going down; citrus, largely gone.... What was the other one? Copper. So you have a change, and the new things that are replacing it, what's in Tucson, what's in Phoenix, we don't need to discuss--that's very obvious. But the quality of life in Arizona rests on whether not only is the air clean, is there water available, but the great glory of Arizona is the out-of-doors. So we have Buenes Aires, so we have these other things. And if they begin to be destroyed, then I get worried about it. I get concerned about too much growth and population, and so forth. Those problems begin to loom larger.

PS: Stewart, one of the organizations that Mo served some time with, was chairman of for a while, was the Land Law and Review Commission. And this is a long time ago now, it's twenty years ago or more. They had made a number of very revolutionary suggestions regarding community planning, and a wide range of things. In the context of some of the statements you just made, how do you see communities moving in this direction, and being able--and I think Arizona is a good example. In Tucson you have neighborhood associations that are very powerful (SLU: Yes.) in all economic areas--both the very well-to-do folks in the foothills, but as well as some of the middle-class neighborhoods. These organizations swing a lot of weight with the city council and the county commissioners. I've been involved in a few frays myself. And in Phoenix you have a very, very different . . . continuing massive growth, more roads, building further and further out. Part of the problem with Phoenix and Tucson, the difference is the geography, because the geography in Tucson limits that to some degree (SLU: Fortunately.) which in Phoenix it doesn't. Are these going to have to be changes that are made in the state legislature, or is it something you see is going to have to occur at the local community level, in the city councils and the county commissioners' offices?

SLU: Well, I share your enthusiasm and positive feelings about the growth of neighborhood associations and groups who speak up. The front page of *The New Mexican* today, a Canadian company has some mineral leases, they want to open a copper mine about thirty miles from Santa Fe. Public meeting, people are raising hell, universally--they don't want it. What dismays me about Phoenix, you reach a certain size, and it's no longer possible, apparently, for voices to speak up saying, "That's the wrong kind of growth. Let's slow down. Let's have more controls." And so on. We've started a new organization, a conservancy here in Santa Fe, having extraordinary success. Of course we're going to be safe, we're running out of water. That's important. There are all kinds of political organizations that are out there today that are trying to raise questions about "What does this do to the quality of life? What do we have, if we allow certain types of growth to occur?" And I think that's inevitable and it's very healthy. Maybe out of all of this arguing and discussion there will be the right or better patterns of growth. So, I never expected in my life to see Phoenix [inaudible].

PS: Stewart, I think I'm going to take a break there, because I think my tape's about to run out.

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