

An Oral History Interview

with

STEWART L. UDALL (part 4)

Santa Fe, New Mexico

conducted by
Peter Steere

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

PS: Stewart, following up on something you mentioned a few minutes ago, that sparked an interest in me, and that was the 1872 Mining Act. Could you talk a little bit more--is this an organization, is this a personal thing, are you going to try to expand this into a national issue where hopefully . . . Congress would have to be the ones that would have to make the modifications in this? Are you hoping to move this in that direction?

SLU: We have. This organization was organized ten years ago. I've been the chairman of it. It's a small group, but we're raising a million dollars a year from foundations [inaudible]. We've had our ups and downs. Our main goal is to get Congress to amend this law, and put royalties in, and environmental protection. If we can regain control of the Senate, and if this Idaho senator should be defeated, I'm going to campaign against him. There'll be a letter I wrote in *The Idaho Statesman*, the main newspaper next Sunday. We think we're on the verge of getting changes, but it's western senators, conservative western senators who are willing to fight to maintain the old law, which is ridiculous. No royalties, no environmental controls--nothing.

PS: It's the 1872 Mining Act. When I was reading things in both your papers and Mo's papers, clearly it's one of those laws that have been on the books so long, and has been in need of reform for a long, long time. And Stewart, what's the name of this organization?

SLU: Mineral Policy Center is the name of it, based in Washington. I'm going back to the next board meeting in a month. We're in there for the long haul. We thought we had a compromise bill two-and-a-half years ago, and then we lost it. Now we're gonna try again. We got a vote to amend the law, a pretty good bill, two-and-a-half years ago, in the House, by a three to one margin, with Mr. Gingrich voting for the bill. So there we are.

PS: Stewart, any thoughts on President Clinton's recent designation of the new national monuments in Utah which I guess has caused an uproar amongst the Utah politicians?

SLU: Well, Clinton is--I hope he changes--does a lot of good things; everything's political. Political benefits are calculated. This idea of a national monument I've been kicking around with people as a way to jar the thing off dead center in Utah the last three or four years. I think it was a good thing.

PS: Isn't it true, Stewart, that some of the outrage [with] President Clinton's executive act actually came from out-of-state mining companies that potentially were going to move into those areas?

SLU: Oh, yes. There's no question about that. I got President Johnson--two of the proclamations he signed were in Utah, but I told the governor about it, then I got the senators to agree and support it.

PS: Any thoughts about the upcoming presidential election?

SLU: No, it looks like Clinton is going to win big. I have hopes that on environmental issues he'll be a good president in his second term and do positive things. In fact, one of the things we're hoping he'll do is put mining law reform up at the top of the list.

PS: If President Clinton is reelected, Stewart, obviously it'll be his last term, he doesn't have to worry about running again. Do you think this may signify some changes or some willingness on his part to go a little bit further on some of these things when he doesn't have to keep politics at the top of his head?

SLU: I was going to show you, to read, and I will when you turn the machine off, an article I've written that I'm going to submit to *The New York Times* as an op ed piece. And the title of it is, "What will the Democrats do with their victories?" assuming they win.

PS: Stewart, do you think the Democrats have a good shot at getting control back of the House and Senate?

SLU: I have my own reservations about the Democrats and why they lost the House, and I put that in this article. But I think there's going to be a surprise. I'm a student of this, at a distance. I think they're going to win both the House and the Senate and shock a lot of people. But that doesn't mean they're not going to face very tough problems.

PS: Stewart, I want to jump back to Mo a little bit. We were talking earlier before we started taping about Mo's declining health over the last couple of terms in Congress, and some of the problems that emerged with staff perhaps taking a few more liberties with getting things done, and probably I think maybe with good motivation. Would you talk a little bit about that, and some of your efforts to talk with Mo about retirement?

SLU: Well, the last six years of his decline, his capacity was so great, and his ability to take a bill to the floor and command the attention of the House, when you saw that waning, it worried you. And I was interested in seeing him quit before his powers withered away, and he wouldn't do it. I first started working in 1964 [1984?], I guess it was, when Bruce Wright, now with the University of Arizona, was his administrative assistant. Bruce said, "Make it your last term, Mo." And I joined in with him. But he didn't. He waited too long. He didn't want to consider quitting. It was a shame, in a way, because he could have gone back to Tucson and had things to do. We tried to tell him that, but he just was like a person in the ocean thrown a life preserver--he just held onto that congressional career and congressional seat. The longer he went on, the harder it was to get him to discuss it. He never appreciated my interest and thought I was trying to get him to quit.

PS: Stewart, why do you think that was? That the job in Congress had become the most important thing in Mo's life, and he was so into it and so involved with it, and dedicated and hard-working at it, and just didn't want to give it up?

SLU: Well, there are congressmen and senators--Strom Thurmond--we have a senator here, [Pete] Domenici, and so on. Goldwater wasn't that way, a credit to him. They reach a point in their lives, they can't conceive life not being a senator or congressman. And apparently it looks to them as something that would be depressing and that they would lose this power and respect that they have. But of course if you don't quit and you go on beyond your time, you lose respect.

PS: Stewart, do you think this happened somewhat to Carl Hayden, also, in his last term? I don't know, 'cause I wasn't around, but he appeared increasingly frail in the last years of his term. Did this same thing go on?

SLU: Well, his mental powers were declining, but he still had enough of his health. He didn't go home to campaign in 1962. He never went. The reason he didn't is the people would have been shocked by his appearance. He couldn't give a speech--of course, he never did. . . speech-making was not one of his strengths. That was part of the whole thing with Carl. But Mo, it's not all that different than athletics, when you see a great athlete--and Mo was certainly a great congressman. Their powers begin to decline. There's a time to quit. Most of them do. I just felt that he was harming his reputation, and that people were looking on him with pity. That bothered me.

PS: Stewart, I want to jump up to the younger generation. There's another group of Udalls who is becoming involved in politics. Your son, Tom, who has run for office and is now currently attorney general of New Mexico, and Mo's son who is running for the state senate, I believe, in Colorado.

SLU: I just went up and campaigned for him.

PS: This fall. I sent him up some old bumper stickers. He asked for some stuff to design, you know, designing bumper stickers. It looks like there's going to be another generation of Udalls involved in public service. Any thoughts, advice, you'd give to them?

SLU: Well, you know, you transmit values. My wife and I never pushed our two children, who are lawyers, to become lawyers. We thought we ought to--my wife's stronger than I am on that--let them find their own way. We didn't push Tom into politics. He's made a fine record, and he's got the right sense of what public service is all about, the importance of honesty and candor. And Mark seems to have the same attitude--Mo's oldest son. I wouldn't have—you know, they're in their mid-forties, I started at thirty-four. Mo started when he ran for county attorney--I guess he was thirty. But I'm glad to see this continue. You know, it isn't an easy life, and it's tough sometimes. I think I admire the tenacity of these younger people that dare to get into politics these days with money being so important, and with so much harsh rhetoric.

PS: Stewart, I've just got a couple more questions before we close off. Some of this came out of some of the discussions we were having earlier, before we started taping. There were two first ladies that you had close friendships with: Jacqueline Kennedy and

Lady Bird Johnson. Could you talk a little bit about your relationship with them? Certainly Lady Bird Johnson, the relationship was a little different, I think, than with Jacqueline Kennedy, and she was very, very active in conservation issues of one sort or another. Could you talk about that a little?

SLU: Well, my association with Lady Bird Johnson was very intimate. We did a lot of things together. We formed a friendship. She may have saved my job, I don't know. But I'm very fond of her. We used to sit on the plane, and she'd ask me questions about the environmental movement and so on. And she had in her out of her childhood, a love and interest in nature and natural beauty and so on. I was glad to be able to work with her, and have her help on things.

My relationship with Jacqueline Onassis was completely different. Most of this was after the White House, and our correspondence--I'm giving you today copies of the letters that we exchanged. My wife understood her more than almost anyone I know. She was a marvelous person--wonderful and unique person. We were lucky in the last ten years to have a warm and intimate relationship with her that we haven't advertised very much.

PS: Stewart, I want to end with just sort of talking again--going way back in time--but talking about something we were talking about earlier when we were viewing some of your files. Your great-grandfather, Mr. Lee, and the Mountain Meadows Massacre. You were telling me, and I'd like to track with some of this on tape, about this effort on your part and others to bring together members of the Mormon families and members of the surviving families of the Fancher wagon train. Could you talk a little bit about that?

SLU: Well, I've told you today I'm going to provide files. It was one of the most poignant experiences of my life. I don't know if the word is "reunion"--this coming together of these families. It took 133 years. A lot of people filled with legitimate bitterness had to die before it happened, but it did happen, and it was a wonderful experience. I guess the best expression of what I felt is a poem that I wrote and that was read at the meeting at Cedar City, Utah, where we had, in effect, 132 years later, a memorial service for people who were slaughtered--needlessly, tragically. So the record is there in the papers.

PS: I think we'll end this here. And again, Stewart, I want to thank you for taking the time this afternoon, through my mechanical breakdowns and other things, to get some of your thoughts on tape. We will end this recording session now.

SLU: I'm glad I'm still lucid! (tape turned off and on)

PS: It's 10/25/96, resuming a little follow-up with Stewart Udall in his office in Santa Fe from the previous day. Stewart, could you describe, reassess, evaluate your role in Mo's presidential campaign of 1976--particularly as regards political strategy and the personal relationship between you two?

SLU: Well, there's probably a lot of documents in his presidential papers to rely on. I was . . . well, I wasn't reluctant, once he decided to do it, and they began getting started. He had these young people--Terry Bracy was one of the ones on his staff who were pushing him. They had a lot of ideas, and they thought Mo needed a senior presence, and of course with my background, I could provide that. And they asked me to be, they said the campaign manager. Actually, there were several campaign managers. In fact, one person who ought to be talked about, talked to on this subject, is Stanley Kurz, who is Mo's old friend. Stanley kind of became disillusioned through the campaign, in the way Mo didn't take his advice, and so on, but was very loyal. So I was brought into the picture. I remember I went with Mo to Tucson where he had his first fund raiser. I think he raised \$30,000 [chuckles]. Go to your home base, and we had that session. And then he wisely used that money to hire two fellows in San Francisco, who were experts of that day in writing letters. I think they worked for *Time* or *Life* or others. They were supposed to be the best around. He began building this very valuable mailing list by mailing letters to groups--the direct mail technique, which I didn't know much about then, although I worked with 'em, and I ultimately ended up writing the letters, which was probably one of the most valuable things that I did on the campaign.

As it moved along, I went to Iowa, and I made trips. I was making a very substantial sacrifice, because I was making my living--this is 1974, 1975--substantially from lecturing. I had to give up some of my opportunities. But I went into some states, and then I ended up having arguments with these young gunners who were the strategists. One of my arguments, which I lost, which was over Iowa, because it turned out... I had gone to Iowa in the summer, and we had two of George McGovern's key people, and they were supposed to know how to do it, and they didn't do what they were supposed to do, and it suddenly turned out that Carter had been living out there, and others had been working in Iowa. You see, McGovern pioneered Iowa in 1972. No delegates were selected, this was the first phase of caucuses. But with the help of the media and the political writers, this was elevated, as we see today, into a major event. And I said, "Well, no delegates are being selected," the polls showed we were running fifth. I said, "Why are we spending money? Why is Mo going to go there?" And I remember one of them told me, he said: "Well...." I said, "Why is it important?" They said, "Well, Johnny Apple of *The New York Times* and Dave Broder and the television people, if they're there, it's important, even though no delegates are selected." I favored cutting Mo loose. Scoop Jackson walked around Iowa, and just pulling out and going to New Hampshire.

And then one of my other major things I contributed--I remember this very well, 'cause I went in early December to Massachusetts, and we had a fellow who later became quite a political operator, Paul Tully, who was there. And I talked to this young state senator, who was later a congressman--I forget his name--and he said, "I'm sorry to tell you"--this is early December with the Massachusetts primary in late February, and he said, "the Udall campaign is an amorphous mess," that there really wasn't much going on. So I went to see--this was one of my successes--the guys were supposedly the best political operating firms in Massachusetts, John Marttila was one of those people. They had run successful campaigns, and they liked Mo, and they agreed to take over. In fact, they later sort of took over the whole media campaign. They were very good, but they

were also--this is where I encountered these new hot shot media people and handlers--they would raise the money and spend it! And Stan Kurz, the treasurer at that point, he and I were beginning to see that we lost control, even though I was writing the letters for the direct mail, and Mo had a very loyal group who believed in him, and we would send out a letter. Well, this was every two weeks after the campaign really got underway in January. We would get back \$80,000. Well, under the matching scheme, which Mo was one of the authors of in Congress, that would be \$160,000, and we could keep going. These other candidates didn't have any direct mail list. It was rather extraordinary, because here was Sargent Shriver, the Kennedy family, he'd run as vice-president with McGovern. He's in the field. The Kennedys deserted him, and he didn't prove to be a very good campaigner. Senator Harris, who'd been prominent in the national party. Birch Bye, and oh, who were the others? They were all in there, and it looked like Mo, as a junior member of the House, that he was going to be the first one knocked out of the race, and of course he stayed in, all the way, because he had the determination, he had the money--we were coming in with \$160,000 every two weeks, like I say.

But these Massachusetts people, I didn't have a lot to do with the New Hampshire campaign. These organizers and Mo's real campaign managers, they had that staked out, and very well organized. They were running this canvassing system. Again, this is following the McCarthy-McGovern pattern. But I was heavily involved in Massachusetts. Mo, even before he had begun to run strongest--this is before the New Hampshire primary. See, Massachusetts followed a week later. Archibald Cox, who was a friend of mine--he was more my friend than Mo's--he agreed to come out for Mo. We did an ad that the Massachusetts people designed, ran in *The New York Times* where you'd run an ad to say "Cox believes in Mo Udall, clip the coupon and send your money in." And it made money! But when it got to the showdown in Massachusetts, Mo had something that showed his real strength, because he hadn't won anything. The "town and gown:" He had a picture, had a press conference, Archibald Cox on one side, and Tip O'Neill on the other side. Tip O'Neill at that time was the junior majority leader in the House, and he liked Mo, and he was soon to become speaker. And it looked like maybe we had it made. In fact, Carter ran fourth, but the media didn't pay much attention to this. They had picked Carter, "here's a winner." He's on *Time* magazine and everything else the next week. He ran fourth in Massachusetts. Scoop Jackson had walked around Iowa and New Hampshire and put all of his effort into Massachusetts, with a lot of help from the labor unions. And so he won that one--not by a big margin, Mo never lost [by a big margin].

But the way the thing came out... I was supposed to go on the payroll. Mo promised me that. I never did. I had counted on having some kind of income from that, and I was hurting bad as it went along. And as it got more frantic, Mo was paying less attention to me and to Stanley Kurz. I mean, I was writing these letters, and I was doing a lot of this, and I was with him in New York and so on, for photographs and so on. But it was quite an experience. We went to Wisconsin where he just narrowly lost, and what was as startling was Michigan. He didn't have much money then, and he was appealing to the labor unions and so on, and almost beat Carter there. Both of those were very exciting nights, considering that these other candidates were dropping out, and that he

was the standard bearer of the liberal wing of the party, which we were called "progressive" then. He just hung in and stayed in all the way to the end.

I was involved, too, because Henry Kimmelman [phonetic spelling], a close friend of mine, was one of Frank Church's close friends, and when Frank decided to get in, Henry was one of his key advisors. We sort of worked out a system where we backed out of Oregon and Nebraska and let Church make his beginning there. And then we were unhappy because we felt he should have backed out of Ohio. But it wasn't in the cards. They all said, "Why did Mo stay in?" I think he stayed in because we weren't sure of Jimmy Carter. "What is this guy all about?" you know. A terrific campaigner, the way he had spent all this energy for two years, and used his family and so on. But was he really a Democrat? What was he gonna do? Feelings got rather strained between Mo and Carter. They later patched it up.

When he lost finally in Ohio, and the whole thing ended up in a heap, I was kind of at the bottom of the heap because I'd put all this time in. I hadn't gotten anything out of it but bruises and the satisfaction of helping my brother. So we could go on and on. Some of it is in the papers, and if you ever want to go through his presidential campaign papers, and come back to me and refresh my memory, I could give you some more answers.

PS: That's fine, Stewart. Another question: Could you summarize briefly your feelings concerning the uranium miners and the down-winder cases after so many years of personal involvement?

SLU: Well, I have summarized my views of the lawsuits, and there's not as much of my own personal experience in it as I should have put, maybe, in my book [*The Myths of August*], but a lot is in those chapters. But this was again a kind of major "going back to your roots." Mo and I were trial lawyers, plaintiffs' lawyers. After the 1976 election, for the first time I went into full-time law practice in Washington. It wasn't very fulfilling, I was frustrated. I was making money. I made more money in a year or two there than I had before. But I just wasn't satisfied with it. And then some of my relatives in Utah, Mormon relatives, called and said, would I stop by and talk to them, that there looked like there was too much cancer. So I got involved in that, and I was involved with teams of lawyers, other lawyers. I also took as my main case, and I became the main lawyer--that was the last case I tried as a trial lawyer--was the Navajo, the Begay case, uranium miner case. But it was a lost cause. All of these cases, the federal government, under the government immunity doctrine, the judges had their minds made up--most of 'em--when you went into court. It was quite a depressing experience, because for about eight years I was involved in preparing and losing these lawsuits. And then this Radiation Exposure Compensation Act, which I was very skeptical congress would do anything [about] in the beginning, and I was very depressed that this whole thing was going to end up as a dry hole; as an empty, black hole. So it finally turned around when they passed this legislation, and I'm still working now, eighteen years later, in helping Navajos and other clients of mine qualify under this program. So it was an interesting experience.

But when we moved from Phoenix over here in 1989, I felt a little bit like Job, and it was almost as though somebody had said, "Well, the old man's suffered enough, let's give him some good years." We've had some good years the last six years.

PS: Stewart, could you briefly evaluate your impressions regarding the impacts or lack of impacts of some of your successors in the position of secretary of interior, with particular reference to people such as Walter Hickel, Rogers Morton, James Watt, and Bruce Babbitt?

SLU: Well, to express judgments, I've been sort of reluctant. I'm not going to be reluctant here today to publicly criticize any of my successors, because history sets the stage. As I look back, the time that I came in was just ideal, because we had presidents--President Kennedy started it out, wanted to do more, and we had exciting things like the Wilderness Bill and then we developed the Wild Rivers Bill, and the enlargement of the national park system, the national seashores, endangered species--all of these things, and the beginning of the environmental movement made it a very exciting period. That period swept on through to the 1970s. Nixon is given credit, and deserves some credit for being a good environmental president. Actually, it's like a surfer: the wave was coming in, and they said, "What's this all about?" and they said, "Well, looks like it's important and it's permanent. Ride the wave!" So John Erlichman and others--I've never talked to Erlichman--they advised him to make it an issue, and he said, "This is the environmental decade." They acted as though it just began and they were the ones that initiated it.

Hickel is a phony. He gathered up some papers and took 'em to the attorney general and tried to have me indicted. This never got much publicity. The press sort of ignored it, because they had such a high opinion of me in Washington, and what I'd done. He is essentially a developer--he showed that later--showed it all his life, really. He likes big things. You know, "Let's open up the wildlife refuge, let's sell the natural gas, let's sell coal and minerals to Japan and Asia," and so on. He was never really a conservationist. And the guy that was his nemesis in Alaska, who really was, was Jay Hammond, who was governor for two terms--wonderful man, whom I like.

I didn't know Nixon, but I told Robert Finch, who was one of his top people, when Nixon came in, I said, "Bob, I want to say something to you. We've taken the western label off the Interior Department." See, I had brought the water pollution program to Interior. It had been there for two-and-a-half years. We had the national seashores. We had just spread our wings, and the Interior Department had a stake all over the country. I said, "Why don't you tell the president that the secretary doesn't need to be a westerner." Actually, I was pulling an oar for Rogers Morton. He said, "Well, who would you pick, if it's not going to be a westerner?" I said, "Well, we could look at Rogers Morton." He was a congressman from Kentucky, able guy. Mo and I both liked him. A good conservationist, and not a partisan. He always supported me. And so Hickel betrayed Nixon, and Nixon fired him and brought Morton in. Morton was the one person, the first thing he wanted to do was talk to me when Nixon asked him about the department and what to do. And he made a pretty good mark as a secretary. I give him quite good marks. Morton got cancer and died.

Kleppe came in under President Ford. He was a congressman from North Dakota, a nice fellow, but he was sort of a caretaker. He wasn't there long enough to make much of a mark, so I don't have much negative or positive to say about him.

Cecil Andrus who came in under Carter, was a strong secretary, made a good record. He kept me at arm's length, as the Carter people did generally. Carter was a new Democrat, and they didn't want an umbilical cord to the Roosevelt or Truman or Kennedy or Johnson administrations. But I would put Morton and Andrus--maybe Andrus a little ahead of Morton in terms of performance.

Of course Watt was a disaster, and I've discussed him in *The Quiet Crisis* and *The Next Generation*. Don Hodel, who succeeded him and was an electric power person, had been with the Bonneville Power Administration, was more than a caretaker. But you look when they get through and say, "Well, what did they do? Or what are their new policies that were made?" I mean, that's the way I judge presidents or other people. Did they break new ground? Did they create new policies? Did they make major decisions? And it's hard to see, because of course Reagan didn't want to do very much. He hired a friend of mine who he'd known in California--I guess he'd been in his government, what was the old boy's name, the head of the Park Service. And he was absolutely frustrated because there was no money to do anything new and Reagan didn't want anything done new, unless you did it in California.

Babbitt, it's too early to say. I just kind of have a gut feeling that he's gonna move on, and they only have four years there. But he inherited a horrible situation. I'm inclined to judge it leniently. I have a file on that that I've kept, and probably ultimately should go in my papers. I'm not so much expressing judgments on him. I've made some notes. I think he had a bad hand because of the time, but I think he misplayed it to some degree. If he does stay on, I'm hoping that he has a better second term. But Clinton hasn't treated him well, in my opinion. I ran my own show and had a lot of authority in my day, even compared with other cabinet members. And Clinton, on big issues, doesn't use Babbitt. This Yellowstone Park thing that they just did, the monument in Southern Utah. Some of Babbitt's people worked on it, but he was not the architect of it like I was in my day.

PS: Stewart, in *The Quiet Crisis*, in describing Teddy Roosevelt, you said, quote, "Teddy Roosevelt was a man with distance in his eyes," unquote. Could you explain exactly what you meant by that?

SLU: What I meant by that phrase--and I may have picked it up and borrowed it from somewhere, I don't know--is foresight, that he was looking down the road. And that's the essence of conservation and the conservation movement, that it's your responsibility to future generations--your responsibility to establish patterns of stewardship that will prevail. I have very mixed feelings about Teddy Roosevelt now, both as a president and as a person. But in launching the conservation movement, he was tremendous. I think he deserves a lot of credit.

PS: Stewart, considering your long time of public service, and Mo's, and those of other Arizonans such as John Rhodes and Carl Hayden, do you think there is an Arizona approach to policy-making?

SLU: I wouldn't say that. You know, the thing that all of us worked on, was that damned water project. Barry Goldwater and Carl Hayden were two of the twelve senators that voted against the Wilderness Bill. I remembered that, a few weeks ago as I was going through something, I was startled--both Hayden and Goldwater.

PS: In 1964.

SLU: In 1964. Of course Mo then converted Barry back to the movement, and they did a lot. But I think to say that Mo and I either were influenced by or had influence and that there was some kind of Arizona approach, I....

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