

Stewart L. Udall Oral History Interview – JFK #5, 5/20/1970
Administrative Information

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Biographical Note

Udall was the Secretary of the Interior for the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations (1961-1969). This interview focuses on the Hickory Hill seminars, Department of Interior's transition between secretaries, homesteading, the Public Land Review Commission, and National Parks and National Seashores, among other issues.

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Stewart L. Udall
JFK #5

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Fifth Oral History Interview

with

STEWART L. UDALL

May 20, 1970
Washington, D.C.

By W. W. Moss

For the John F. Kennedy Library

MOSS: ...and ask you something, since you'd brought the subject up off tape, about the questions of access to the White House and Mr. Hickel's [Walter J. Hickel] recent problems with the same. [Interruption] Were you involved in at all this so-called Hickory Hill group that used to meet out with Robert Kennedy? It involved people like Dillon [C. Douglas Dillon], Gilpatric [Roswell L. Gilpatric], McNamara [Robert S. McNamara]...

UDALL: Yes.

MOSS: I was wondering how functional this was as a means of communication.

UDALL: Well, it was, I would say, partly social and partly informal contact. I never understood exactly how the invitation list went out on that, because there were a few of us from the Cabinet who were invited and other members weren't. I guess this wasn't important, it was purely personal.

MOSS: That's what I was curious about.

UDALL: You now, I don't know how. But we were involved in this and it was a very interesting sort of extracurricular way of informally exchanging ideas. There

were some very vigorous discussions that went on and some equally good private conversations where you would discuss things relating to the administration's decisions, its activities. Of course, where you had a president's brother that was doing this, this gave it even more importance than it would have had if simply some of the Cabinet members had decided to meet informally. Bob Kennedy

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being as close to the President [John F. Kennedy] as he was, you know, you could feel almost if you were talking to him you were talking with the President.

That was incidentally one thing that neither Nixon [Richard M. Nixon] or Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson] have had, is someone who was that close, where you knew, you know, that instead of a Walter Hickel complaining to the president that he couldn't get in, or talking with his aides, he might feel satisfied if he could talk to the president's brother who's in his Cabinet. So we had in the Kennedy Administration an unusual thing in that respect and those of us that were close to Bobby could always, if we felt that we weren't.... I mean, if there was something maybe we didn't quite want to bother the President with, or maybe it was the Administration was missing a bet or was not facing up to something, that you could get through that way.

MOSS: Was this used very often?

UDALL: Well, in my case, not very often, no. But there were things, you know, rather than.... That was one of the advantages of Hickory Hill and the advantage of the kind of lively social life that existed under the Kennedys, that sometimes you didn't have to make an appointment and then go over to see somebody, you could simply get them off in a corner and do it casually and informally chat. That has certain advantages.

But I think I put on the record earlier, because I felt that Hickel and his experience was repeated what I had seen under both the Johnson White House and the Kennedy White House.... I remember in February, I believe it was, in 1963. I at that time had been on the job for two years and I'd begun to feel that I understood the country and my department and everything. I thought I could see emerging what we now call the environment movement and I wanted to just have a leisurely half-hour chat with President Kennedy, the kind of talk, not about a problem, but about what I saw emerging and the emerging role that his Administration or Administrations might play. I sent a memo over and called Kenny O'Donnell [Kenneth P. O'Donnell] on the phone. But because I didn't have a problem, because there was no urgency, I never got in. I thought then I was rather irate about it and I got in part of my discussion later that year on an airplane with President Kennedy when we were both along for a while. But, you know, it wasn't....

I had the feeling then that number one, a President ought to have conversations with people, under circumstances not where you were presenting some urgent problem or something he had to decide; but that there should be room, and that this was time well spent, where you could maybe once or twice a year or infrequently sit down and kind of think through things down the road and the direction of events and administration policy. But I suppose, having seen three administrations now, with the people surrounding the president

being too protective and too inclined to protect their own prerogatives, that this is an institutional thing that concerns the way the

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White House is set up, the way the president's time is controlled. And of course, depending upon the instruction the president has given his people, it can be, part of the blame can rest on him as well, if he doesn't recognize that it would be in his interest, would have value to him, to infrequently – I don't think this would be frequent – perhaps have sessions where people could talk about things they see coming up that haven't happened, for example.

MOSS: If it's an institutional thing, how does a man break out of it?

UDALL: Well, he could only break out of it by altering the institution.

MOSS: He has to completely change the ground rules, doesn't he?

UDALL: That's right. That's right. And yet I think the thing that is worst institutionally is the fact that the O'Donnells and the Haldemans [Harry R. Haldeman] and the Marvin Watsons [William Marvin Watson], you know, the people that are making up the president's schedule and controlling his time.... Now much of that is done by the president's orders, you know, "I want to see this person, I want to see that person." But they also have to make the argument that it is worth his time to see somebody who wants to say something on something that may not be an urgent issue that has to be decided but is important.

And I gather, reading this, something I read recently and clipped, from Secretary Connor [John T. Connor], the Secretary of Commerce – came and surprised all of us by only staying two years and left – that he had a lot of these frustrations too. He felt that he was going to have the President's ear more, that he was going to be a major voice on economic matters. He felt that he was closed out and left early for that reason.

MOSS: Let me go back to the Hickory Hill group a minute and ask you what sort of things you talked about in those, does one call them sessions or parties or what?

UDALL: No. What you would do, and I forget whether this was every two weeks or once a month, you would have a, they normally had a guest. And this would be a distinguished guest. The guest would make a presentation. Then there would follow a very lively discussion of it.

MOSS: What sort of topics?

UDALL: Well, one of them was held in our home and Rachel Carson was the guest. I suggested this and Ethel [Ethel Skakel Kennedy] or whoever it was that was

arranging the agenda liked the idea. This was right after, I think the *Silent Spring* articles. I don't think the book had come out, but they had appeared in the *New Yorker* magazine and this attracted national attention. And of course, Rachel was ill, she was dying of cancer at that time. I knew her and was on very good terms and I said I thought I could get her and this would be interesting and they said fine.

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And so we held that session at our home. She talked for twenty or thirty minutes and then we had a rather lively discussion. As I remember some of the wives that were there and some of the questions that were asked, a lot of people had trouble grasping the real message she was trying to get across that we understand now, you know, that it wasn't just killing a few birds but that we were poisoning the whole planet. We had to stop some of the things that we were doing. And so there were a lot of sharp questions asked, quite a discussion. And then, both before and after, there was an informal period, you know, when you'd have drinks or you'd be talking and you could seek out anybody you wanted to talk and visit. It made a very lively evening.

MOSS: Do you recall one instance where the session was moved to the White House, one on the presidency, I believe? Because the President heard about it...

UDALL: Yes. I missed that one. I missed that one. I do recall that and, who was it, one of the scholars talked about it. Yeah, that was, we all were interested in the fact that the President wanted to hear that. But this was typical of the spirit in the Kennedy days of trying to reach out and get good minds to come in and sweep off cobwebs and challenge people. Keeping a lot of traffic on the bridge between the intellectual community and the Administration, I think that's really what it exemplified.

MOSS: I had brought to my attention for the first time the other day a Brookings [Brookings Institution] study by a fellow named Stanley [David T. Stanley], called ["Changing Administrations; the 1961 and 1964 Transition in Six Departments"]. He raised, oh, three or four things that I thought I'd ask you particularly. He says that Seaton [Frederick A. Seaton] did not show you the fiscal '62 budget in the opening of your Administration. Was this particularly difficult for you or did it really matter that much?

UDALL: Well, I thought, when I look back.... Seaton and I had one lunch and it was not stiff, although, you know, I had been in the Congress, been on a committee with him. He was not a particularly, at least I didn't find him a warm person. He was rather bitterly disappointed in the 1960 election returns because he wanted to continue in the Cabinet or to have an even higher position. You know, he'd aspired privately to sort of be vice presidential candidate in 1960. I was surprised how little he offered me. You know, he was friendly, saying the sort of things that you would, that he was there and anything I wanted I could have. Well, the sort of thing that would have been most useful was for him to tell me what he thought I ought to know, and certainly his ideas on the

budget would have been very crucial and very important. And in terms of substance, he didn't do much to enlighten me, I'll have to say that. I don't think that he did it with any motive of making my job more difficult. I think he just didn't feel that he wanted to go out of his way to be helpful by spending all that much time on it and that it would be up to me to kind of learn as I went.

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MOSS: The study also makes the point that there was a little hitch in the career personnel morale over an order by you that appointments and promotions above the routine level be cleared with your office, and this didn't last very long. Do you recall the purpose of this and why it didn't last?

UDALL: Well, I think this was the sort of thing that any new administration is tempted to do, and most do do. In fact, the Nixon Administration has been much more rigorous about screening appointments and the input of partisan politics than we were when I look back upon it. I don't know whether this was inspired by the White House or by Orren Beaty on my old staff. But the idea was that we were a new administration and that there ought to be some kind of clearance procedure through the secretary's office, so that we could identify people and political allegiances. You know, you tend, in the early months, particularly of an administration, this is a heightened concern. It wanes as times goes on, and should wane. But just after an election, you know, well, who are the leading holdovers, the career service people who were close to the previous administration? You at least want to know who they were. You know, you shouldn't want to conduct a vendetta but, on the other hand, you don't want to be promoting people where there are other people just as capable, or more capable perhaps, where these people were essential cogs in the administrative process.

So I'm sure this order disturbed some of the career people. I don't think we were all that, you know, hard in terms of implementing it. I have the faint recollection, yes, that it was either modified or recalled within a matter of a few weeks, because I think we then, by that crucial period, you know, with demands by senators and congressmen and others for jobs for people, this was abating.

But you also have the problem, too, that you have to get resolved; it takes the civil service people time, you know, as to which jobs are schedule C jobs to be filled by the Administration and which are not. Until that's clarified there's a period of limbo there.

MOSS: Yeah. The study does not make clear exactly why the order was rescinded or modified. It leaves you rather with the impression that it was because there was this moral factor becoming quite clear. I wanted to get something from you as to whether that was a factor at all.

UDALL: No, I can't throw much light on that.

MOSS: Okay. One other point that he makes is that he says Otis Beasley [D. Otis Beasley] had close personal ties with Mike Kirwan [Michael J. Kirwan]. I

wasn't aware of personal ties, family or something of this sort. Was it simply a matter of friendship?

UDALL: No, it was a matter of long term friendship, from the fact that Otis handled budgetary matters, and I'm not sure they weren't poker-playing friends. Yeah. Yeah. They played poker. That's right. No, there was a close relationship that Beasley had and he used this, of course, to

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enhance his own position of importance that he could handle Mike Kirwan. Except Mike happened to be a good friend of mine as well from the House days.

MOSS: Now I wanted to ask you particularly today about things, programs and so on, in John Carver's [John A. Carver, Jr.] area, but let me open it by asking you about the whole Resources for the Future thing. How did this originate and why?

UDALL: Now are you referring to the study they made?

MOSS: Right. For you. You commissioned them to do a study on the possible programs that could be undertaken, I understand. Where did the idea of having them do it originate and why?

UDALL: My memory's vague on this. Now whether this was a John Carver idea.... Certainly Resources for the Future has a Ford Foundation function and is recognized as having probably the best capacity in Washington to make that kind of analysis. You know, one of the ideas you have when you come in, the one thing that you want, is that those who have been observing the department closest are those who have the capacity to know what the shortcomings have been, what new problems are upcoming and so on. I think it was this sort of thing that led me to believe that RFF [Resources for the Future] might make a contribution. And as I recall it, they did make a useful contribution to us, in terms of giving us some base lines on the future.

MOSS: Okay. Let me move right into the substantive area then and take public lands first. Initially there was the applications moratorium on homesteading and so on.

UDALL: Yes.

MOSS: Ostensibly it had a two fold purpose as I understand it, to clear up the backlog of applications and to curb speculators. Did it fulfill both purposes in fact?

UDALL: My recollection is that it did and I regarded it at this point as a step that was well taken, because there was considerable disarray; there was a tremendous

overload. BLM [Bureau of Land Management] always tended to be more criticized than most bureaus in the department; tendency for it and its directors to be a football as we found out. This was sort of an attempt to buy them some time and let them dig in and develop new policies and management techniques and so on. I think this was the purpose of it. The anti-speculation thing was real and I think was important and was valuable too, because there had been a tendency with the Desert Land Act [of 1877] and other acts for a lot of the people in Nevada and California and other places to be abusing the laws, basically.

MOSS: Another area in the public lands field was the grazing fees that I understand John Carver pretty well managed and talked the cattle and sheep people into?

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UDALL: Yeah.

MOSS: Why was it imperative that this should be done and at that time? Was it simply that they were lagging behind the open market?

UDALL: Well, the thing was that the fees had been not only modest, but extremely modest, that were paid for public land? This was increasingly coming under criticism. Bureau of the Budget, as a matter of fact, felt that it was a giveaway and had been working vigorously to get higher grazing fees in the last years of the Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] Administration, and they were always pressing us on this. And increasingly the wildlife organizations felt that these low fees, and felt very rightly, that this gave a sort of component of ownership to these people. So John Carver felt, and sold this finally, very begrudgingly, to the industry – they bought it begrudgingly – that they pay a very modest increase. Something moving in that direction would put them in a better position with the country and with their critics. And so with great effort this was done.

However, the Bureau of the Budget persisted and one of the last things that we did in the final months in 1968 was to institute what the Bureau of the Budget had been after for nearly a decade, which was to make the grazing fees on public lands roughly tantamount to the fees that the states were getting for state lands that the railroads were getting for railroad lands. In other words, that the grazing lessees ought to pay the going rate in the various parts of the country. And that was instituted on a ten-year basis. We weren't going to do it overnight. It was a series of either five or ten steps, increases. This is what Secretary Hickel abrogated in early 1970 after allowing one of those increases to take place.

MOSS: The Public Land Law Review Commission that was set up, where was the initiative for the public land law review, in the department or in the Congress?

UDALL: No. The initiative for Public Land Law Review Commission came primarily, I would say, from Congressman Aspinall [Wayne N. Aspinall] himself. I think I can say that Secretary Carver and people in the department, once Aspinall put it out, were rather enthusiastic about it, the Bureau of Land Management people and others

feeling that this would be useful. But it came out essentially, I believe, as part of the package that led to the wilderness bill and other legislation. Aspinall agreed to go along with things he was reluctant about provided there would be this kind of study made.

Now in a way I always felt, and I think the history of the last six years has demonstrated this, that Aspinall, who generally speaking was a status quo person and was conservative in his approach to things in that he always wanted to be sure that all the facts were known and all the alternatives looked at – kind of a banker like approach, taking things very slow making decisions – that he felt, probably sincerely, that studies such as this would identify problem areas and recommendations for legislation.

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But there was also the thought, too, that this would buy time, that this would, in effect, put a lot of problems on the shelf, which is exactly what happened. They extended the time. It was supposed to be done in four or five years, it's taken six years. And now the Land Law Review Commission, the report's coming in in June, I understand, of this year. I understand that the report is divided, a lot of dissents, and that it probably will not lead to legislation or the legislation it should lead to. And so the whole thing has become largely a rather sterile exercise in studying things.

MOSS: Is the characterization of Aspinall as “user-oriented” a fair one?

UDALL: Yes, in the main, except I think everyone should understand that he's a very honorable man and that nobody ever owned him or bought him with campaign contributions or anything of that kind. Aspinall's district, the western part of Colorado, was probably a district that was more tailored for users than any other in the country. He's very close to the mining industry in Colorado, always saw their point of view. I mean he considered that he was representing his constituents because he had a strong mining district, or one with a mining tradition. So he was always for the mining law and for mining. In the same way the cattlemen would always go to him. He gave them more of a hearing than Jackson [Henry M. Jackson] or Anderson [Clinton P. Anderson], or these other people. I think the conservation organizations always felt, and I thought quite rightly, that he tended to bend over backwards a bit to see the point of view and use the arguments that the user groups used.

MOSS: Okay. Let's move into national parks. Really the only major addition, at least during the Kennedy years, was the Canyonlands [National] Park, was it not?

UDALL: Well, no, I would say that an important breakthrough was made in the Kennedy years as far as national parks were concerned in that we changed, in a far-reaching way, one very basic policy, and this should be known. That was the idea that existed from the beginning of the country, that the government would not put up, appropriate money to buy park land. This is the reason most of the parks are in the West, because you created them out of public land. And most of the parks in the East – the Great Smoky [Mountain National Park], Shenandoah [National Park], the Acadia [National Park]

in Maine and so on – John D. Rockefeller, Jr. put up part of the money, or he matched with the states, or he bought it and gave it to the country. Laurence [Laurence S. Rockefeller] did the same with the Virgin Islands National Park, which is the only new national park created in the 1960s. The federal government didn't have to put up any money.

So we were faced with really changing the policy and creating a law in the national policy that it was not in the interest of the government to appropriate and spend money to acquire land for national parks. Old Cannon [Joseph G. Cannon], the Speaker back in the early 1900s, once made the

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statement when somebody was trying to get him to put up a little money for parks, “Not a cent for scenery,” he said. And that was the attitude. And I ran into once when I was secretary a wonderful letter from FDR [Franklin D. Roosevelt] to Senator Carl Hayden, who wanted a little money to buy some land, I think, to add to the Petrified Forest [National Monument] in Arizona, and he said, “Well, get somebody to buy it.” He said, “The policy of the country has always been that land for national parks either has to be donated or come out of public land. We're not going to spend public money.” It was a feeling, you know, that we were just too rich in land, that we didn't have to do this.

So, although the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which is the vehicle for changing this policy, did not become law until September of '64, after President Kennedy's death the idea was approved, the legislation went forward. I think President Kennedy's administration deserves credit for that.

But then in addition to that, in 1961 the Cape Cod National Seashore was the first of the national seashores that was bought outright by the federal government. The only one in the park system probably at that time was Cape Hatteras [National Seashore] and that was purchased by one of the Mellon foundations in the state of North Carolina and given to the country. But Cape Cod, we just bought it outright. And then in '62, let's see, there were two additional seashores, Point Reyes [National Seashore], in California and...

MOSS: Padre Island [National Seashore].

UDALL: ...Padre Island in Texas, these were done. But as far as true national parks are concerned, yes, Canyonlands in Utah.... No, we did that in 1964, I believe.

MOSS: It was, finally.

UDALL: But again, this was part of the momentum. The legislation was cleared through and the idea was approved during the Kennedy Administration. We simply shook the tree finally and got the fruit in the early months of the Johnson Administration.

MOSS: Do you recall some local opposition on the Canyonlands thing, particularly with regard to the National Park Service film?

UDALL: Oh, yes. You see, the Canyonlands, probably of all the new national parks we created, I would take more credit for that personally than almost any other because I saw this fantastic area, flying with the commissioner of reclamation from Page, Arizona to Denver in the spring of 1961, when I was first in office. You know, we were flying about nine thousand feet, I guess, and we saw a whole panorama near where the Green and the Colorado Rivers come together. And I thought, this is incredible, the array that was spread out. It was not as deep and didn't have all the majesty of the Grand Canyon, but it had more variety. And so I began asking people. I could tell it was probably all public land.

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As a result of this, we took our summer vacation that way, a visit into this area in June or July, or August of 1961? It was my first summer. And Secretary Freeman [Orville L. Freeman] went along with me. You had two members of the Cabinet going. And we invited Senator Moss [Frank E. Moss] of Utah and the congressmen were there. We actually made a five-day field trip into this area. We could see then it was a majestic area.

So, Senator Moss, I naturally worked very closely with him, he and Congressman King [David S. King], and they were ready to go to bat. I persuaded them to go to bat on this. They could see there would be southern Utah opposition to it. The cattlemen were against it. You know, you were taking their lands. Mining groups – the usual groups, local groups – would oppose it. In fact, they had to, in effect, sell it as something good for the state and try and persuade the local people, or at least the local people that were their friends, not to oppose it.

So one of the things that I did, subsequently, was to get some money. Either the park service put a little bit of it up or I got somebody to donate it, just about six or seven thousand dollars. Charles Eggert, who was a filmmaker who knew and loved the area, I'd met him, he did a film ["Sculptured Earth"] showing the wonders of the area. We were going to have a premier showing of it in Salt Lake in the fall of 1962, as I recall it. The governor of Utah [George D. Clyde] made some objections behind the scenes. They wouldn't let us show it at the University of Utah so we rented a motel downtown and showed it there. We were trying to generate interest and support, and there were a lot of people in Utah that were against it. A lot of them fought it. The mining association and others fought it. It wasn't done easily, in fact, I hope some of the western historians will look into the whole history of it and write it up, because it was almost a classic case study of how at this late date.... You know Teddy Roosevelt [Theodore Roosevelt] could have set the whole thing aside as a national park in 1908, without anybody batting an eye, because there were maybe a few people that were running cattle there; there were no roads, there was no mining or anything. But nobody knew about it. It's the most rugged part of the United States. You know, the Colorado River cuts this great huge gash. There are only a few places for six or seven hundred miles where you could even cross the river, or until recently there were. So it was largely an unknown area. But in the 1960s we had to fight our way through and there were a lot of times when I wondered whether we'd make it.

MOSS: How did you finally win the day?

UDALL: Well, Senator Moss deserves a great deal of credit on this because he hung tough on it and I think loved the area and thought it was a good thing for Utah. He took the criticism on it. Finally he got so far into it – he was up for the election in 1964 – that he felt that he better bull it on through and take credit for having accomplished it, you know, knowing a lot of people would criticize him for it.

You know, I think this is sort of the way it worked out. The problem all along was Senator Wallace Bennett from Utah, the Republican senator who was a senior senator. He obstructed, fought, was very negative. But he was

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not on the committee, fortunately for us. Moss was on the interior committee [Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs] and the committee members went along with him. And then on the House side we were able to get support there. But Bennett did everything he could to obstruct it. He played the tune, played the game with the user groups right from the beginning. But he took the interesting attitude.... At one point, he was for a national park of eleven thousand acres and I was for a national park of a million acres. That showed how far we were apart. What he wanted to do in essence, comparing this to the Grand Canyon, is that if you made the national park a little area up on the rim but the Grand Canyon itself was not in the park. This was the sort of really ridiculous thing that he wanted to do. But he never did dare say that he was against a national park, you see, so that played into Moss's hands. But somebody could dig that all out of the Utah newspapers and the congressional files and my files too. I think I kept a special file on that.

MOSS: Speaking of your files, your papers are at the University of Arizona.

UDALL: Yes. That's right.

MOSS: Who is the man out there at the moment who's in charge?

UDALL: Well, the librarian now is a Doctor Robert Johnson.

MOSS: Robert Johnson?

UDALL: Yeah.

MOSS: Okay, fine. Let's go back to the seashores a minute. Cape Cod, of course, had started before President Kennedy was elected. How did President Kennedy express his interest in the seashore when it was finally a fact, and there was need for acquisition of land? Did he play a role at all in getting over that difficult hump of convincing the local people they should sell?

UDALL: Well, it was very fortunate for me that President Kennedy was so deeply and personally involved in Cape Cod, because he know out of personal experience

a lot of things that I didn't have to tell him, you know, as to the fact that the national policy needed to be changed and that that these magnificent coastline areas that were left were going, going, gone. Because he introduced his bill as a senator in 1956-57. Of course he knew and loved the Cape and all the people up there were concerned, and they got the park service and others working on it. But the bill didn't go very far. There was a lot of opposition on the Cape. The congressman from there always was dragging his feet and Kennedy wasn't able as a senator to get much headway. I don't know whether a bill passed the senate. I don't think it did.

But when he became president, naturally, with the Democrats controlling Congress and everything, it was rather simple and easy to say, "Well

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boys, we're going to begin by giving the President a present of a national park in his own state." Naturally, he was all for it. This passed the first year and even Aspinall didn't raise too many objections. You know, he was always one to have about ten questions that bothered him. So this went through rather readily and it gave us the kind of icebreaker we needed. It was also something that the President knew intimately and watched closely and was very pleased with. But then naturally he was not going to be selfish. Well, I remember him saying to me, "Well, aren't there some more seashores we can save?" Of course that gave me my green light to go with Point Reyes and Padre Island and the others that we began working on. We set out looking at the entire coastline of the country to find these superb seashore areas that were left, could be bought and put into the national park system.

MOSS: The method of acquisition is a rather sticky one in all this, isn't it, the method and cost and how it's...

UDALL: That's right. This is one of the main problems that I noticed. I was just in Senator Ted Kennedy's [Edward M. Kennedy] office for lunch today – this is May 20 – and looked as the *Boston Globe* while I was waiting. President Nixon yesterday apparently signed a bill increasing the authorization of the amount of money that can be spent to acquire land in Cape Cod from fourteen million to thirty-three million, I think those were the figures. Two-thirds of the land has been purchased, but all the fourteen million has been spent so the land prices have escalated, you see. We were absolutely right ten years ago. We're going to have to spend twice as much money to acquire now the remaining third of the land. You see, the park service had very little experience in this. They had to tool up and get a whole system of land acquisition set up. The local people always fought national parks. Anybody whose land is going to be taken for a national park will fight it. And if you've got an anti-park congressman or congressman who's a timid person, he's going to listen to these people and tend to be negative about a park.

MOSS: Clem Miller [Clement W. Miller], for instance, on Point Reyes.

UDALL: Well, Miller in that instance, of course, played for the larger constituency. One of the reasons we got Point Reyes is that, number one, you had that very

fine constituency in the San Francisco area. The Sierra Club fought on this; and then Senator Kuchel [Thomas H. Kuchel] and Congressman Miller teamed up very nicely together. But Congressman Keith [Hastings Keith], for example, the congressman from Cape Cod, who had that as a congressional district, he was always nit-picking and he'd raise a thousand questions, you know, on behalf of his constituency. If you had left it up to him, there never would have been a park, because he didn't want to face up to his constituents by saying, "I'm for a park and you've just got to accept the conditions that will prevail. And you know, you'll get paid." Because people always felt the government was going to cheat them or they wouldn't be paid the full value of their property or something like that.

MOSS: How much did the Vice President get into the act on the Padre Island one?

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UDALL: Not too much. However, in August of 1961, I believe it was, we went down to dedicate one of the water desalting plants in Freeport, Texas and he had an airplane. I went with him, Senator Yarborough [Ralph W. Yarborough] and others were there. And we not only dedicated the plant, we went on down to Brownsville, Texas and we met some of the people also from Corpus Christi. Or did we go to Corpus Christi? I'm not sure. A lot of them were there. And the President and I talked about Padre Island then. We both weaved it into our speeches and we were both making ringing statements that we had to save Padre Island from the people. And so that was, I think, the main point where he and I teamed up on it.

Beyond that, the person who deserves the most credit for Padre Island was Congressman J.T. Rutherford of Texas, who was then chairman of the national parks committee. He did a lot of mediating. Again, the local congressman, or one of them, a congressman from Corpus Christi, was for the seashore. The congressman from down in Brownsville was against it, Congressman Kilgore [Joe M. Kilgore]. Senator Yarborough, of course, was all out for it. And Rutherford had to mediate the whole thing and make little compromises and everything and he did a very fine job on it.

MOSS: There was a compromise with regard to a road down the middle of the thing, wasn't it?

UDALL: Well, there was a road compromise and a size compromise, whether it should be seventy miles or ninety miles. Then the people at the southern end, down near Brownsville, they wanted to run a road all the way up the island. We just couldn't go along with that. In fact, they originally took a very sticky position that if we didn't – no road, no park. We had to work that out of the way, which Rutherford did, without compromising very much.

MOSS: One of the fascinating ones was Fire Island. You had just about everybody, all the prima donnas up there, getting into the act. You had Lindsay [John V.

Lindsay], Pike [Otis G. Pike], Wagner [Robert F. Wagner, Jr.] and Rockefeller [Nelson A. Rockefeller]...

UDALL: Well, Bob Moses [Robert P. Moses].

MOSS: Moses. Moses certainly in the act.

UDALL: I've been wanting to read Moses's new book [*Public Works: A Dangerous Trade*] to see what he had to say about Fire Island because he tried every way in the world he could to kill the Fire Island thing. In fact he thought he had it killed and he invited me to come up and in effect told me, "Well, young man, go on home. We know what we want up here." His idea of the way to save Fire Island from erosion was to put a four lane road right down the middle of it, a little spit of an island. And he had his plans, had his money. In fact, he boasted to me that he had raised money from contractors and contributed it to Otis Pike's campaign to defeat Stuyvesant Wainwright, the Republican congressman that represented the area, because Wainwright had come out for a park and Wainwright didn't know

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what was right or what the people wanted. Very arrogant about it. And that was a very exciting one because you had, in that instance, the highway building forces and others arrayed against the conservative forces. That battle raged on for some time. It wasn't easy either.

MOSS: How did you finally get people to agree?

UDALL: Well, again, I would say, the local congressman in this instance, who was Pike, by coming out in a stalwart way, coming out for it, this helped a great deal. But we had very vigorous conservation organization support. There was a group, a sort of vigilante group, that was formed up there just for this purpose. It included some New York PR [Public Relations] men who were very smart, very aggressive. Then there were some national people like Charles Collingwood, the CBS [Columbia Broadcasting System, Inc.] television commentator. He owned a little place on Fire Island. He was all for saving it. This is an instance where the local people wanted the park, to save what they had. And he took Moses on at one point and made a laughingstock out of him at a hearing.

The other thing that benefited Fire Island, however, is that there was a feeling then of momentum. We got Cape Cod the first year. We got Point Reyes and Padre Island the second year. And Fire Island, then, Congress more took it in stride. It didn't have that big a price tag on it either at that point. It also made sense, what President Kennedy had always said to me and President Johnson said the same thing later, is that, "Hell," he said, "all the parks are out in the West. Let's get some parks near the big urban centers in the East." So this was a good example of that.

MOSS: Now there were two areas in which you were not as successful, Oregon Dunes

and Indiana Dunes. What was the story, as you remember it, on the Oregon Dunes?

UDALL: Well, the Oregon Dunes, of course, hasn't been done to this day. Here's a rather sad example. Most of this land is owned by the Forest Service in federal ownership. There'd have to be some substantial purchases. Much to my surprise, the person who did the most to obstruct that was Senator Wayne Morse. He played a very curious and very negative role all along, by even taking the position that he was against the use of eminent domain power to acquire land for the park. He only talked with me about this about once. I think he came to my office once. Maurice Neuberger, the other senator.... Dick Neuberger [Richard L. Neuberger] of course had been all out for the dunes way back, and Maurice just lacked the strength to really confront Morse head-on and to embarrass him. She'd just sort of wring her hands and talk with you about it. She never really fought for it the way I thought she should have. Then the local congressman were people that, we had a Democrat, I guess Charlie Porter [Charles O. Porter] was strongly for it, but we kept having a change with a new congressman all the time and they were always listening to local people.

But I never felt the urgency about Oregon Dunes as I did the other. You know, a lot of it's in federal ownership. It could be done today. You weren't

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losing time the way you were on these others and so I guess, in a sense, confronted with somebody formidable like Senator Morse and somebody who is being nasty and obstructive, that we didn't put the effort in that we did because we had our hands full in other areas. But it was a disappointment.

Now Indiana Dunes was done, finally, largely because Senator Paul Douglas was just so stubborn and so determined and wouldn't give up. The Indiana people, the Indiana state people, the senators, particularly, Charlie Halleck [Charles A. Halleck] who, of course, as the Republican minority leader, swung a big stick, they either were, Halleck was just against it, I don't think he ever said much publicly, but he fought it and obstructed it. The senators, including Senator Hartke [Vance Hartke], took a middling position on it, never did come out clear-cut. It was a strange incidence where a United States senator from an adjoining state forced a part onto Indiana.

MOSS: It was heavily compromised by the time it happened.

UDALL: Well, it was not only heavily compromised, but, you see, this was one where you had the bulldozers actually operating. They were hacking away at it and they were putting their steel bill in. It was literally heavy industry closing in on it and clobbering it. The tragedy in Indiana Dunes is that Stephen Mather, the first park director who was from Chicago, in 1918 he's supposed to have publicly proposed – I never saw anything on this but I read about it – that a forty mile area east of Gary, along Lake Michigan, be made into a national park. Some of the most magnificent dunes in the country are there, high dunes, beautiful dune country. And it should have been done. But you see you were at that point up against, it was all private property. Nobody had enough money to buy it.

Probably it could have been done for a million dollars and the federal government wouldn't appropriate any money. And so he threw out the idea and nobody did anything about it, so that time goes by; it's all chewed up. They literally, you know, some of the dune sand, hauled it away. Some of it was sold to Northwestern University or somebody.

MOSS: Yes, they did.

UDALL: Right while we were sitting there, you know. But generally the Indiana people were either fighting it or obstructing it and Senator Douglas, and the Administration was pushing it and we finally got this compromised. It's a rather sad little remnant, in a way. I'm glad to have a remnant rather than nothing. But we have the remnant really because Senator Douglas just wouldn't give up.

MOSS: Okay. I'm pushing you on time so why don't we cut it off here.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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