

Stewart L. Udall Oral History Interview – JFK #1, 1/12/1970
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Biographical Note

Udall was the Secretary of the Interior for the President Kennedy and President Johnson Administrations (1961-1969). This interview focuses on Udall's political background, his first impressions of Senator John F. Kennedy, Labor Relations of 1958, and the 1960 presidential nomination, among other issues.

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Stewart L. Udall
JFK #1

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Oral History Interview

with

STEWART L. UDALL

January 12, 1970
Washington, D.C.

By W. W. Moss

For the John F. Kennedy Library

MOSS: Mr. Udall, you have just told me informally, off the tape, that you decided to wait sometime after the assassination of President Kennedy [John F. Kennedy] to record your recollections of the Kennedy years, and you said that you might want to say this into the tape. Could you repeat what you've been talking about?

UDALL: Well, it's now January 1970, or over six years after President Kennedy's assassination. I was reluctant not to put myself on record at some time, as far as my recollections were concerned, but it did seem to me at the time, in the months immediately following President Kennedy's assassination, that there would be a tendency to be very emotional, to do it with tears, as I was saying a moment ago. It seemed to me this was the sort of thing that would be, perhaps in many aspects at least, bad history, and it would tend to make one want to think in ideal terms. I mean I had very strong emotional feelings about President Kennedy, about his death, but I think I can be a little more dispassionate in what I have to say now, and maybe the perspective of history, too, makes your judgments more mature. Certainly, I'm probably a much more mature person today than I was nine years ago or six years ago because of the experience I had in the interim. Therefore, although I know some of the historians – some of the Kennedy people were unhappy with me.... Bobby [Robert F. Kennedy] wrote me notes two or three times, which are probably in the file, urging me to do this, and I was always embarrassed that I didn't and that I was considered as kind of a holdout. Well, I wanted to wait until I was out of office, until I would have time on reflection to look at my files, to think things over, and simply not

do it in a hurry or in any kind of emotional atmosphere. So I find myself, still being alive and well, glad that

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I did wait, and whether that was wise I guess is up to you historians to say. But nevertheless, that's the way it is, and so here we are.

MOSS: On a philosophical point, and sort of getting you as a person and your values on the tape, you, then, would equate reflection and time passed and maturity as being greater guides to objective truth.

UDALL: Well, you know, I think of a lawyer when thinking of it from the standpoint of an eyewitness to an automobile accident. An event in history is the same way. What you remember immediately, what you saw physically, that is terribly important from a standpoint of.... I may have forgotten some of the things; my memory may be less clear – we may find that about some things – than it would have been had I recorded my thoughts six years ago. But on the other hand, I think I've acquired, because of a broader experience, a maturity – I think that I look back on that period of time and see it, perhaps, with sharper edges and see a clearer perspective than I would have in 1963.

Actually, with the less than three years that we had under President Kennedy, I'm one of those who stayed on the full eight years. I was just getting started then, as I look back on it now. I lacked some of the insights and, I think some of the maturity that developed as I went along. Not only that, but the intervening historical events, the development, I think, gives one a different and perhaps a better perspective. Maybe what I'm saying is that with some of these people who gave the immediate interviews, maybe it would be interesting to go back, in some cases at least, and look at some of the larger questions in light of history. So it's not only one's immediate reactions, but one's considered reflections that may be equally important in terms of getting at the truth of a period, a man, a time in history.

MOSS: You and Secretary Rusk [Dean Rusk] are the last of the Kennedy Cabinet officers to be taped on this. Secretary McNamara [Robert S. McNamara] was late on it and rather reluctant to do it. Do you think this was at all a function of your serving under President Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson] as well?

UDALL: No, it wasn't in my case at all a matter of.... I can understand Rusk and McNamara being the two, because as long as they were in the Cabinet, under such intense pressure, I can understand them wanting to back away from their jobs, as it were, before they began to put their reflections down. Certainly, in my case, there's no feeling at all that I wanted to finish my work, necessarily; nor was there any reluctance because of the confidentiality and all – or simply because I was serving under another president. It was really more a matter that I wanted to be honest with myself – this is

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really what it got down to – and I was afraid because (as you'll find as we go along) that my relations with President Kennedy and with the White House were not everything, looking back, that I would have wanted them to be. In fact, I felt that at the time. There were certain things that I wanted to say, and I probably wouldn't have said them; you know, it would have sounded disloyal to a president who had appointed me to be as critical as I really felt I should be – and as honest with myself. So that's another aspect as well.

MOSS: Okay. Well, I'm going to test this historic objectivity and skip over the Kennedy Administration and all the emotion, and so on, and go back to your origins as a politician in Arizona and talk about the congressional election of 1954. Let me ask you first, what or who induced you to run in 1954?

UDALL: Well, I can give you a quick thumbnail of my own personal background and my own political history. I came out of a political family. My father was a career judge, and judges were elected in Arizona. Therefore, living in a small town with a county courthouse, I grew up with elections. My father was involved in public affairs. He's really a career judge, although before that he devoted most of his time to public life. He was that kind of person; to him, public service was the most important thing in life. One of the sad things was that he died in the spring of 1960, just before the election. He didn't live to see me be the first person from Arizona to be appointed to Cabinet, which I'm sure would have been a fulfillment to him. So I grew up with the idea that public service being important.

One of the first things I did after I returned from the service in World War II... The summer of 1946, my father made his big move. He was a small county judge in one of the smallest counties in the state, and he decided to run for the state Supreme Court, which had been his great ambition. He had a very close election. I was sort of his campaign aide and campaigned with him. I got my first indoctrination in politics there. I also, that same year, participated rather vigorously – I wrote things and gave speeches on behalf of the labor unions – in what was one of the first national right-to-work fights. I was stamped at that point as a liberal then by everyone, if not a radical.

Subsequently, when I got out of law school in 1948, I immediately got into politics. In '48, '50, and '52, I was a party official. My father by then, you see, had been elected, so I had, presumably, a prominent political name. I managed campaigns for losing candidates for governor those three years. The only office I held – I was appointed to a vacancy in one of the large school districts – I served on a school board for three years, 1951-1954.

Then, suddenly, the congressman unexpectedly announced that he was

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not going to run. Having been a campaign manager, having the feelings that I had about public service and politics, having, in effect, prepared myself for the rough-and-tumble, I saw this as a great opportunity, because the door opened and I felt that I could run and win. I got into a primary campaign with five Democrats, won rather handily and then had a rather bruising general election contest in 1954.

I cut my teeth in politics in the McCarthy [Joseph R. McCarthy] thing...

MOSS: Yeah.

UDALL: ...and my opponent that year, my Republican opponent in the fall of 1954, when the McCarthyism was still a strong influence in American politics, was Senator Barry Goldwater's [Barry M. Goldwater] assistant who had been a person who was in law school when I was there. We'd always been halfway friendly, but he decided to McCarthyize me. He made a lot of challenges that I was a communist sympathizer. So I had a rather bruising introduction to politics and was elected and, of course, reelected four times subsequent to that. So that's all I think you need to know about my political background.

MOSS: Let me ask you what you expected to accomplish as a congressman.

UDALL: Well, I would characterize myself as a bit of an idealist I guess. I'm one who had very strong ideas about what kind of society I wanted to see us develop in this country. I was always involved from the beginning – in my public life, for example – on behalf of minority groups and their causes. I had the kind of New Deal feelings about labor unions, economic justice, social justice. Therefore, I was pretty much, I think, in the 1950s, as a young politician, what we'd think of as a New Deal liberal. That didn't necessarily fit exactly my state because Arizona was growing more conservative.

My predecessor, the congressman, boasted the last few years that he voted more with the Southern Democrats, the Dixiecrat element in the party and he did, than any other congressman. So he had given the district that cast, and I took that kind of district and took a liberal stance. My brother, since, who succeeded me, has even done that better than I did.

But I had strong feelings about the importance of public service, the importance of change. I have always been one who believed that in the time we lived in, with the forces that were at work, that society and institutions and laws had to change. I came out of World War II with strong feelings about the importance of world stability and peace.

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I belonged to the United World Federalists Organization, for example. That was one of the things my opponent tried to use against me in 1954. I had very, very strong feelings that we had to have a kind of concern about peace and world stability and that all of us had to work at it if we were not to blow the world up and not have conflicts develop that would end up in some kind of nuclear holocaust. That's a pretty good description, I guess, of me.

MOSS: All right. Once you were in Congress.... Let's talk a little bit about Senator John F. Kennedy. Do you recall on what occasion you first met him?

UDALL: The time I first met him probably was, you know, casually, the way congressmen and senators meet. I didn't have any close ties with him at all in that early period. It's curious when I look back. I didn't go to the [Democratic National] Convention in 1956; my brother did. I was, at a distance, very strongly for him

being nominated for vice president. I recall I either made a phone call or sent wires to the chairman of the delegation urging that this be done. I was very disappointed when Arizona voted for Kefauver [Estes Kefauver] and not for Kennedy. It was in part because of my feeling, strong feeling then – this again will explain something about me – in that it was a disgraceful thing to have the kind of national tradition that we had, that a Catholic could not aspire to high office. This would apply to a person – I, being of a religious minority myself. I just felt this was wrong and that we had to challenge this, and the best way to challenge it was to elect somebody vice president and then make the challenge later.

When I look back at that period, as late as, I think, the winter of 1949, I wrote an article for the *New Republic* magazine that I gave the title, “Why Adlai Stevenson Haunts the Democrats.” I was a strong Stevenson supporter. I greatly admired his intellect. I greatly admired particularly his 1952 campaign. I had, therefore, a strong feeling that Stevenson set a very high standard. He came a long...

NYOSS: Excuse me. You had said 1949 for your article.

UDALL: No, 1959. So I had the feeling that Stevenson, because of his personal qualities, his intellectual qualities, set a very high standard. I just didn't see Hubert Humphrey [Hubert H. Humphrey], Lyndon Johnson, Jack Kennedy, Symington [William Stuart Symington] – any of these people that we had been talking about. In many ways, they didn't measure up to Stevenson. I was in effect saying to myself that my party was going to have trouble turning Stevenson down. I still was sort of intellectually, I think, in his corner. I hadn't made my mind up.

And the Kennedy charisma turned me off until I got acquainted with Jack Kennedy, because, if this Hollywood star quality and so

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on. That was not enough for me, particularly when I compared it... I was interested in the Stevenson intellect, and Kennedy, as good as he was in that period – of course, he was maturing, he was growing – but he didn't match Stevenson in terms of his intellectual powers, at least, certainly, in his eloquence and his ability to express things the way Stevenson did.

But where I really came into Kennedy's circle, where I saw him close up, where I became convinced that he had the qualities to make a good president, a strong president, was in the labor reform fight of 1958-59. I was on the Education and Labor Committee and, as you remember with the hearings of Senator McClellan [John L. McClellan] and others conducted on the Teamsters Union and the misconduct of some of the labor unions, the need for labor reform – this was building up in '57, '58. The Kennedy-Ives [Irving M. Ives] Bill was passed in 1958. The House [House of Representatives] committee, of which I was a part – the House didn't act. So the issue was carried over, and it was talked about a lot in the '58 election. Then, when we came back in '59, many of us felt that this issue was absolutely crucial, absolutely crucial to the future of the Democratic party and the politics of the 1960 campaign because we controlled the Congress, and if we couldn't write some kind of labor reform legislation, the Republicans would quite rightly make a major point with the

American people; that we were too close to the labor organizations; that we were, in effect, too tightly controlled by them; that we lacked the capacity, the statesmanship, to write labor reform legislation.

In any event, Senator Kennedy went to work quickly in 1959, and the Senate passed a new labor reform bill in April or May, as I recall.

MOSS: And it had two, didn't it? S.505 and S.1555, or something like that? One was Kennedy and Ervin [Sam J. Ervin, Jr.] and the other one was Kennedy, Javits [Jacob K. Javits] and Ervin.

UDALL: That's right.

MOSS: And there may have even been a third one, I think.

UDAL: At that time, because of the bill of rights that was put in and other things...

MOSS: By McClellan.

UDALL: ... the labor people were appalled, and they thought this was an outrageous bill. The question then became, because labor had wisely – from the time I went to Congress – built up a pro-labor majority on that committee, or felt they had....Their idea of strategy at that point was to throttle a bill, just have us sit on it. That was when I issued my own declaration of independence of the labor movement. And I took quite a few hard knocks at that point because I announced publicly and I told the committee that I thought we had to write a bill, that we were going to write a bill,

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and that we couldn't suppress the subject.

One of the first things I did, however, at that point, because until then the House committee – and I was a junior member of the committee at that point; I was not one of the prominent people; I had no seniority.... But it became clear to me early on, because of some of the meetings that labor organizations were holding – and I attended one fascinating meeting one night, downtown. Congressman Bolling [Richard W. Bolling], Lee Metcalf and others, we met with the top brass in labor, and they were in effect telling us what an outrageous bill this was and that we had to, in effect, sit on it in the House and just not pass legislation because labor was going to get crucified. Several of us thought they were wrong, that they were too emotional and their judgment was wrong.

But one of the first things I did was to go to Senator Kennedy and to talk with him about the legislation. We shared views on this; that Congress had to act; that we could write a bill that labor could live with; that we had to go to work on it. As a result of this meeting with Senator Kennedy, he, in effect, turned his staff over to me – his staff people. Archibald Cox of Harvard Law School, who later became Solicitor General, Ralph Dungan [Ralph A. Dungan], who was Senator Kennedy's staff man, they both worked very closely with me. In fact, I set up in my own office a kind of a school, and every afternoon we went at it for three

or four hours with Cox. We went through the Senate bill page by page, and he was, in effect, giving us a seminar on labor law. There were six or eight congressmen, who were the more open-minded types on the Committee.

MOSS: You mean Bolling and people like this?

UDALL: Bolling was on the committee. This was Edith Green, Carl Elliott, Frank Thompson, John – or...

MOSS: Teller [Ludwig Teller]?

UDALL: Jim O'Hara [James G. O'Hara]. No, Teller was playing games at that point. John Brademas of Indiana. They were freshmen congressmen; they were looking for leadership. The meetings were held in my office simply to find out what the Senate bill was all about. Of course, Cox was brilliant on this. We literally spent hours going through the whole thing, educating ourselves on it. Then I would go back from time to time to talk with Senator Kennedy himself about it.

But it was watching him operate in this environment, because the pressures – at least in my six years, in Congress, and I believe that this is true generally – from the outside are never greater than when labor and management in this country come into a head-on conflict.... There's been a book, incidentally, written

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about this whole thing. I forget the name of it. It's got a lot of the history, although there's a lot that's left out.

MOSS: Someone named McAdams [Alan K. McAdams] or something like that?

UDALL: Yeah. It was an absolutely fascinating period. But here were all these pressures, you see, and Kennedy was really on the rack because he wanted the presidential nomination; he wanted to have some support from labor; he wanted them to feel that he was friendly to their basic interests and so on. On the other hand, here was the pressure from management, Chambers of Commerce, and everyone else from the other side; and the strong public pressures were built up, and this issue could have destroyed him. He handled himself superbly. That's where I saw the real steel in him, and how, the more pressures that built up, the cooler he seemed to be.

I think three of us really made our mark with Kennedy, and he, at least, made his mark with me, out of this whole fight. Arthur Goldberg [Arthur J. Goldberg] was one of them. Of course, Arthur represented the labor union. He was right in the middle of the whole business, was always the one who'd go out of the room to work out a compromise. But Kennedy always insisted that there was going to be a bill. He insisted, also – that's the reason he had Cox; he had the best people he could get in the country – on doing everything in a thoroughgoing, dispassionate way and looking at it on the merits, and this is what we ended up doing that whole summer. We battled this out. We went line by line in our committee.

And the little group that I had held the balance of power on the committee. So, in one sense, I was Senator Kennedy's counterpart to the extent that I was taking most of the heat in providing some of the leadership to get a bill. I think this is what brought us together.

We might as well put on the record, too.... My recollection is that Congress quit in mid-September, and it quit just after the Senate and House conference committee had worked out the final compromise on what was then called the Landrum-[Philip M.Landrum]-Griffin [Robert P.Griffin] Bill, which incidentally included the Landrum-Griffin amendments. The Landrum-Griffin amendments were two amendments out of the fifty-page bill or something. Most of the other provisions, some of which were very good, were what the committee had written and what, I think, I and my group were primarily responsible for.

The last night that Congress was in session before we quit to go home in mid-September 1959.... In those days with the last sessions, you'd stay in all night. As a matter of fact, I think that day we quit at six o'clock in the morning. About one o'clock or one-thirty, while the House and Senate were both still in session, I went back to my

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office and I called Senator Kennedy at the office.

I had been mulling over in my own mind what I should do, and I had decided to be bold in the 1960 election because I felt 1960 would be a crucial year in terms of leadership in my party. I was going to stick my neck out. I was going to go home. I was going to go to the convention. I was going to do what I could to nominate somebody. And I had been mulling it over for several weeks, and I decided to go for Kennedy. I called up his office and I asked to see him. They said, "He's here. Come on over." This was about two or two-thirty in the morning. I went in and visited with him a little bit and told him I was going to go home and go to work for him. You see, they never did recruit me. They never would have thought of recruiting me because most of the congressmen were cowed by Sam Rayburn [Samuel T. Rayburn]. You know, unless you were from Massachusetts or unless you were a close personal friend of Jack Kennedy, very few of the congressmen stuck their necks out. Edith Green and I did – Edith in Oregon and myself in Arizona. Of course, Frank Thompson in [New] Jersey was another. Frank was close to Jack Kennedy, much closer than I had been, originally. So Edith and I, I guess, were two of the few members of Congress that made an early decision for Kennedy and really went all out for him.

Now, I didn't announce this to anybody. I told him, I said, "I'm going to go home and see what I can do for you. I'm going to work." I didn't promise anything, and I think he was a little bit surprised. So I quietly went home in September and made the rounds of my congressional district, as I always did in the fall. Everywhere I went (because I knew, of course, the politics and the politicians of the district extremely well) would say to my friends who I knew were Kennedy types that would probably be for him. I tried also to tip some of them off – I said, "Look, let's go to the convention next year. You line it up so that you will go from your county, and we'll have a strong delegation, and we can put Arizona in the column of the person that's going to be nominated."

So I did my homework all fall. I put it together surprisingly well. I knew there were some shaky spots in it. The idea basically was, well, Arizona had two congressional districts then – Phoenix, and Maricopa County – although it had even then over half the votes. In a

state convention, the other counties, which was my congressional district, had the slight edge; and Arizona, like a few of the southern states, still had the unit rule, so if you could get a majority in the state convention, it's winner take all. So that was my objective.

When I had my work done, my work was essentially finished, I went back to Congress in January – because you didn't travel, you didn't go home as much as they do today. I was talking with some caution: I wasn't boasting about anything. I was very quiet about it. I didn't announce anything in the state. I just did this very quietly.

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MOSS: Would it have backfired if you hadn't?

UDALL: Well, yes, there was a good reason for a quiet strategy because the old guard of the Democrats...

MOSS: McFarland [Ernest W. McFarland]?

UDALL: McFarland, the Johnson people, the crowd that had normally run the Democratic party, that had always gone to the conventions – I knew that they were my antagonists, and I knew that if I was open about it, I would have given the ball game away, and they would have started very aggressive work. So I didn't announce anything, it was all just done quietly, working with my friends around the congressional district.

President Kennedy, then Senator Kennedy, had my wife and I out to his house for dinner – I think there was just one other couple there that night, Ben Bradlee, [Benjamin C. Bradlee] I think, from the *Washington Post*, then with *Newsweek*. We were at their home in Georgetown the night of the New Hampshire primary, which was the first primary. Of course, they had us out because he appreciated what I was trying to do, and this was a nice way to show it socially.

I had talked with his people, but I could tell all along that they weren't counting on Arizona. This was a dark-horse situation, and anything that I could pull off was a windfall. But I don't think that they expected then.... I certainly wasn't cocksure about it, whether Arizona could possibly go into Kennedy's column, because Lyndon Johnson was a natural in terms of Arizona being a southwestern state. He was also a natural in the sense that he had strong friends and allies in Senator Hayden [Carl T. Hayden], former Senator McFarland, who had just finished, in 1959, four years as governor. These were the people who would normally swing the big stick and control the state. So carrying this thing out with discretion and silence was absolutely vital. In fact, we never would have succeeded if they had known the extent to which we were operating.

MOSS: Okay. Now, there's several things I want to sort of go back and pick up along here. Back to the fight on labor legislation, first of all, and to the book that you mentioned. I believe the man's name was McAdams. At any rate the title of the book is *Power Politics and Labor Legislation*. In there he mentions an incident in

which a Teamster official by the name of Zagri [Sidney Zagri] upbraided you for not following his line and threatened to get you in line. Is that account substantially correct?

UDALL: Yes, this was in this first stage and the Teamsters in particular were violent about the secondary boycott provision in the bill. They just said, "This legislation's daft. This will kill us." Of course, the Teamsters Union was relatively strong in Arizona. Zagri moved in as Jimmy Hoffa's

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[James R. Hoffa] political operator. He was a very high-handed, tough operator. He learned early on that I was one of these that was resisting domination by the labor people; that I was not going to be rubber-stamped.

I remember that one of the first meetings the committee had after the Senate bill was passed – this was a rump meeting of the Democrats – several of the members of Congress like Jimmy Roosevelt, [James R. Roosevelt], Cleve Bailey [Cleveland M. Bailey] from West Virginia....I remember Bailey saying very bluntly that he was expressing the sentiment of probably two-thirds of the Democrats. He said, "Look, I've been a labor congressman; they've done more to elect me than anybody else. Whatever they want is what I want." In other words, If they wanted to throttle the bill, kill it in the crib, why, that's what he would do. I told all of them at the very beginning – I was the one who was most outspoken – I said, "Well, I don't think that's in labor's interests, in the national interest, and I think we ought to write a bill." And so the word immediately got out that I was showing intractable characteristics and trying to rally others to that view.

So I began getting phone calls from Labor union officials in Arizona. The pressure, then, was really on. Zagri was part of that, and he did make a threat to me. I saw to it that it got publicized in Arizona because the climate in Arizona, being somewhat anti-labor.... Although, again, I'd always been close to labor. Labor had always supported me. What I was telling the responsible labor union leaders is that it was in their interests to see some kind of bill written that they could live with and that would not damage their basic interests. But the Teamsters Union and some of the others were emotional and violent about it. He said he'd defeat me and do everything he could. We went at it real hot and heavy.

MOSS: All right. The book also indicates that the AFL-CIO [American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations] had a focus on particular congressmen at different times – first it was Teller and then, for a short time, you, and then Thompson – as sort of the funnel of their ideas on the bill. Is this accurate or not?

UDALL: Well, it was more complicated than that because Teller (gosh, I'd almost forgotten about him) was a labor law professor at one of the universities in the New York area – brilliant mind. It turned out – and this was one of the great disappointments.... He should have been the leader, but he played all kinds of cute games, and it turned out in the long run, when we really came to the showdown, that he had sold out, too, that he wasn't his own man. So he did make a good funnel for them.

You know, we fought violently in Committee, page by page, on various amendments. Teller, because he was a professor of labor law – he'd written books on labor law – he was, some said, as good as Cox. Of course, that's the reason that I had to get ready, with Cox's help, to meet Teller. So, Teller, at times, would be the spokesman in the Committee and, you know, bring amendments in.

The labor lobbyists, as well as the management lobbyists, were working equally vigorously. They'd be violent. I mean, very, very vigorous. Everyday when the Committee ended, finished its work, you'd go back to your office and within a matter of an hour, the labor and management lobbyists were working furiously with both sides, you know, as to what was going to be done tomorrow. All of them would have amendments and everything. At times, Frank Thompson, I think, would be the one who would carry an amendment into the room.

In the main, however, I kept the kind of position that I felt, ideally a congressmen should: that we shouldn't be owned by anybody; that we should exercise independent judgment; that I was going to vote each amendment, each issue, on the merits as it came up. As a kind of middle position, as a person who was trying to hold this middle group, I thought it was very important that I take that attitude and hold it because I knew on each amendment this little group that I had, the central group, was under tremendous pressures on each amendment from the labor unions, from the management, and everything else. Therefore, my job, that I set out to do and the leadership that I sought to provide, was in saying, "We're not going to let people write the bill outside the room of the committee and simply come in and rubberstamp an amendment; we're going to sit and discuss each amendment in the committee."

That's the reason Teller, for example, would propose an amendment. Well, we knew – we were going back and forth – this was the amendment that the Teamsters wanted or this was the amendment that the AFL-CIO wanted. But then you can always have amendments to an amendment. We discussed the merits of it, and we worked with it, and we wrestled with it. There were several Republican members of the committee who tried to be reasonably open minded. Most of them were just as dominated and cowed by the business interests as the labor congressmen were.

So it was fascinating, each amendment that would come up. We'd sometimes fight over amendments and fight over amendments to amendments. To a substantial degree we did write the bill in the committee. But everybody would come to committee every day with amendments that were prepared by the lobby groups outside. It was a fascinating experience; nothing like I've ever experienced in Congress.

MOSS: And just when all was over but the reporting of the bill out, Andy Biemiller [Andrew J. Biemiller] went trotting around to everybody with a new bill, didn't he?

UDALL: Yes, yes, that's right. I'd forgotten about that. That was because the labor people considered the amendment that Landrum and Griffin sponsored as so negative that they said, "Well, this committee bill just won't do." So then they cranked up this substitute bill, which I think ultimately bore the name of Congressman Shelley [John F. Shelley] from California or somebody. That was proposed as a substitute. But we knew all along – we thought and kept saying that the AFL-CIO leaders were erroneous in their assumption that you could take a bill to the floor of the House at that time that had a labor label on it and say, "This is what labor wants," and get a majority. We kept saying to them, "You're kidding yourself, and you're rendering a disservice to your own cause by thinking you can legislate this way. You can't do it. The committee's got to write a bill."

So we finally ended up – it all comes back to me now – in this exciting situation, where there was the committee bill – the bill that had been written laboriously by the committee, in the middle position – the labor bill, and then the Landrum-Griffin amendments over here. We finally got old Speaker Rayburn, who was then in his declining days and who was not very effective, but we got him to come out for the committee bill. But we ended up.... The labor and business lobbies polarized everything, as we would say now, and we ended up with the committee bill lost because we were in a middle position, and a middle position under this type of intense lobbying pressure couldn't hold forces, and so the cause of the committee bill was ultimately lost. All Landrum and Griffin did was to take the committee bill and tack on a couple of amendments, so that essentially, let's say, ninety or ninety-five percent of the bill that came to be called the Landrum-Griffin bill was our bill, the committee bill, with their amendments tacked on – on things like secondary boycott, and so on.

MOSS: The book we've been referring to also infers that in one of Mr. Sam's board of education meetings, then-Majority Leader Johnson appeared quietly and let it drop that he thought that every man should vote his own district and that this is what killed the committee bill, or that this had a bearing on it.

UDALL: Well, there are a lot of things...

MOSS: Excuse me.

UDALL: ...that happened. There were a lot of stories told that I was not a personal participant in. I think Dick Bolling, the congressman from Missouri, who was close to Speaker Rayburn and was part of his little clique, I think he's the one that related what that happened. I know that Johnson – some of his strongest supporters were George Brown [George R. Brown] the Brown and Root [Brown and Root, Inc.] construction people, and so. You know, the construction industry, as against the building trade, wanted certain amendments. Lyndon Johnson, who was then the Senate majority leader, he sided with business and, I guess, labor

on certain key amendments, but he was also one – because of his own ambitions, he wanted a bill. The crucial thing, as I remember the head count when we got down before the bill went to the floor, was that the state of Texas was almost absolutely crucial. In terms of Speaker Rayburn having come out for the committee bill, the question was, “Could we get twelve or fifteen Texas votes from the Texas moderates?” It turned out, I think, we got three or four Texas votes.

MOSS: Yes, Homer Thornberry started the walk away.

UDALL: It was clear that either Rayburn wasn't doing his homework or that Johnson was undercutting him. I always tended to believe what I heard about the role that Majority Leader Lyndon Johnson played because it fit in with his own frame of reference in Texas politics. He wasn't doing anything Machiavellian; he was doing what he considered to be the right kind of a bill for Texas.

MOSS: Okay, now looking back on that experience – you and Senator Kennedy – how much would you say his later assessments of Congress were based on that experience? He has been accused by his critics of handling Congress with kid gloves. I wonder how much did – it must have been a terrific experience to go through that.

UDALL: Well, this was really going through the fire. You know, we just had, last year, this big tax reform bill passed. You had tremendous pressures there, but they're not the same pressures. I don't think there's any issue.... Writing the Taft-Hartley Act in '47 or '48 and the writing of this labor reform bill, I think you put congressmen through the fire more on that issue. I think that the national pressures from labor and business were greater on this issue. Watching close up how Jack Kennedy handled the whole thing, the way he never did panic, the way he always was trying to get at the heart of the issue and always trying to focus.... You know, after all the people make their emotional speeches and say, “All right, well, how are we going to vote on this particular amendment? Does this make sense or not?” That's one of the things that Cox taught me early, that there was so much emotion surrounding this that when you actually got down to the language and the effect and how it would operate, it wasn't nearly as bad as the labor people would say. The management people were equally emotional in a lot of their presentations.

There's no question in all of Kennedy's experiences – because his four or six years in the House, he was about like I was. Well, I guess he had to go through the Taft-Hartley fight; he went through the fight that the Education and Labor Committee, my committee, had, the big fight they had while he was on the committee. He and Nixon [Richard M. Nixon] both, incidentally, were on that committee. No one

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has ever written about this.

The other big fight they had was over aid to parochial schools, where there was a lot of inflamed opinion and so on. But I think that he probably learned more – I'm sure he did – out of the labor reform fight in '57, '58 and '59. He learned more about how Congress

operated, where the power levers were, how to write legislation, and what the forces were at work in the country and how they translated into votes. I think this was a tremendous education.

MOSS: To pick and choose words, then, you would say it was a growth in wisdom rather than a growth of a healthy respect?

UDALL: Yes. When I look back, the thing that I could say about President Kennedy and about Bobby Kennedy, too. I think part of their strength was their capacity for growth. I've never seen any two men in my public life that demonstrated a greater capacity to grow, to thrive under pressure. It was this sort of grace under pressure that a lot was written about at the time of his death. But you could watch him almost grow before your eyes in the sense, as I say, the more intense the pressures, the more he tended to try to be dispassionate and wise and so on. I believe what he really gained out of this in the long run was not necessarily these insights about power, but how to live with pressure and to thrive under it. It would seem to me that this is certainly what he came out with.

I don't necessarily agree – I don't agree with those who would say, “Well, he came out of this experience with Congress intimidating him.” After all, any senator or congressman, just in the work that Congress does, you know pretty much what the art of the possible is. I think he went to the presidency, just as Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, and other presidents who served in Congress – out of their own congressional experience, out of their own experience, whatever it happened to be in the Congress, they go in with certain assumptions and certain preconceptions. I think in that sense that Kennedy wasn't intimidated by Congress and didn't go into the presidency.... I think he went in with a pretty clearheaded idea of what could or couldn't be done. I think he probably didn't maybe demand as much as he should.

We all watched Johnson that first year when he was president operate so adroitly, almost like a Senate majority leader who'd suddenly become president, in getting some of the Kennedy legislation through. I think much of it would have gone through. In any event, it would have been harder for Kennedy; he wasn't Senate majority leader. He didn't have some of the Johnson skill. But he was a learner and a grower. I've always thought that his second term, as a result of his frustrations and experiences and everything else in the first term, would have been the best of his two terms, had he been reelected.

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MOSS: When did it become apparent to you that Senator Kennedy was making a serious effort for the presidency?

UDALL: Oh, I think it was clear to all of us, certainly after his reelection in 1958, that he was going to go for it. At least it was clear to me.

MOSS: Let's talk a little bit about some of the other contenders for the presidential nomination. You mentioned Stevenson a bit. What was your view of Stevenson's effort for the nomination, if it can be called that?

UDALL: Well, let me state my views, let's say, going into the 1960s...

MOSS: Okay, sure.

UDALL: ...what my view was at that time. I thought about it a great deal. Of course, I committed myself to Kennedy at that point. But I felt that Stevenson, because of his two defeats, had a loser tag and, despite my high admiration for him, he couldn't beat Nixon. I just felt that so many of the American people, particularly in that last election, having overwhelmingly voted against him, that he just wasn't the one to wage a winning campaign against Richard Nixon, who we were sure, of course, would be nominated. At that point, Nixon.... You were always figuring him as the opponent.

I felt that Hubert Humphrey.... I was a great admirer of Humphrey. In many ways, in terms of my own background – Humphrey being from a small town from relatively modest circumstances a country boy, and all that – I identified with Humphrey in many ways that I didn't with Kennedy. Humphrey's liberalism appealed to me. On the political spectrum, I was more a Humphrey man than anyone else; I was closer to him. But I felt Humphrey was too liberal to be elected, to beat Nixon in that climate. Lyndon Johnson, I felt his Texas base, his southern background, disqualified him. I just couldn't picture someone from his region, despite his adroitness and skill, being elected.

This brought me down to Kennedy. Now Kennedy had this marvelous blend. I mean he was liberal enough. His whole record was not as liberal as Humphrey's, but he was liberal enough. He had this charisma. He had, and I had seen it up close, this grace under pressure. I felt he'd be a terrific campaigner. I just felt he would beat Nixon in the homestretch, and that's the way it turned out. He had that quality of mind, that kind of appear.... In other words, he would thrive under the pressures of a campaign, which could make or break you.

At the same time, I had a strong feeling – I was willing to see Kennedy go down to defeat, if it were close defeat, if his religion was the fact that it defeated him, because I felt so strongly about that

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as a principle. There's no question at all this was the crucial factor. Had Kennedy been a Protestant, he would have, I believe, been nominated much easier; he would have been overwhelmingly elected. I think he would have won, in my mind, by four or five million votes in the 1960 election. The albatross he carried was his religion and the prejudice that existed at that time against a Catholic being president. But I felt somehow, in my own mind, that he could surmount this; that he had such an attractive personality that enough people would trust him. I knew it would cost him several million votes. In my own mind, that's the way things shaped up.

Stuart Symington, a senator from Missouri, was, of course, mentioned. He was one of those that was brought into the picture, but I never took him seriously because it seemed to

me that he was merely a stalemate alternative who the party would pick if none of the others could muster a majority – and one of the least desirable as a candidate.

MOSS: What about further out on the fringes? Meyner [Robert B. Meyner] was making noises. There were noises for Soapy Williams [G. Mennen Williams].

UDALL: No, I never took these people seriously because I didn't think they had the appeal that would be needed in the country.

 We might as well put on tape, though, that marvelous.... The most inventive quip of the 1960 campaign was the one that Gene McCarthy [Eugene J. McCarthy] made at that time when a newspaper reporter asked him – exhibiting the wit that later became associated with him, but all of us knew he had – “Well, what about you, Gene, why don't you run?” I think this was after his speech for Stevenson that was the hit of the 1960 convention. He said, “Well, maybe I should.” He said, “Just look at the situation: I'm twice as liberal as Humphrey; twice as Catholic as Kennedy; and twice as smart as Symington.” [Laughter]

MOSS: Back to the Arizona convention for just a moment. In order to carry the Arizona state convention for Kennedy, you had a numerical superiority in the out-state area, but you still had to overcome Maricopa County. How did you manage that?

UDALL: Well, like everything, historically, we like to personalize things. I was, you know, given credit as being architect of that thing. I mean I guess I was the indispensable person. But I didn't take my district that tidily. I mean, there were some weak spots.

 What happened was, about a month before the state convention which was in April, the word got out finally that I was hard at work for Kennedy. The other people got alert. In fact, Speaker Rayburn finally called me up to the rostrum in the House one day. This was, as I recall,

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three or four days before I was going out to Arizona for the convention, and the word had come back from McFarland or Senator Hayden or somebody that I was up to no good. He said, in his kind of clipped way, because I was one of the junior boys, the way he treated everyone – we were always friendly; I'd never clashed with him, although I've chaffed under some of the restraints of his leadership – “I understand you're having a state convention. Are you right in the middle of this?” I said, “Yes Sir, Mr. Speaker.” He said, “Well, I have a candidate for nomination, you know, my colleague from Texas. I don't want you to hurt him.” You know, I couldn't be bluffed out at that point. I said in a nice way, “Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not trying to hurt anybody. I committed myself several months ago for John Kennedy, and I'm going to do everything I can to help him. I'm not trying to hurt your man. As a matter of fact, if Kennedy can't get the support in Arizona, your man, obviously, is the man who will. If I can't put Kennedy over, I'm not going to be against him.” You know, I tried to fob him off that way. The old man, interestingly enough – because that was part of

his manner, anyway, he was never as tough as he appeared to be on the surface – had to accept that. He couldn't bluff me out, and that was our conversation.

When I went on out to Arizona – I think I made one earlier trip, and we had some meetings and talks, and there was a lot of maneuvering going on. McCormack [John W. McCormack] and the Lyndon Johnson people had been very tardy in doing their homework. When they went to work in two or three of the small counties in my district...

MOSS: McCormack or McFarland?

UDALL: McFarland, former Senator McFarland. They went to work very vigorously, and they took these counties away from me.

MOSS: I understand there's a story about a man in Greenlee County. Some pressure was put on him. He was a dealer in coin machines, candy machines, and that sort of thing.

UDALL: Yeah. Well, they put some strong pressures, on the mining companies down there, some of the big interests in the state who had some influence on people.

The counties that slipped away from me were Greenlee County, which is a copper mining county; Panal County, which was McFarland's home county, where he really did a job on me; and then Coconino County, where Flagstaff is located. A couple of people turned soft up there. There were heavy pressures put on them from some quarters.

So it turned out, then, since I didn't have my district all put together, held solidly together, that Maricopa County was absolutely crucial because they had, under a unit vote system, or percent. All they needed was one or two small counties to go. And so the Maricopa County caucus vote became the real showdown.

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There you had had a – in the days just before the convention – very wild battle going on. They had a wild and woolly caucus, challenges, almost in fist fights, and everything else going back and forth. And Bill Mahoney [William P. Mahoney, Jr.] who was later the ambassador to China under President Kennedy, and Carl Muecke [Charles A. Muecke], who's now the federal judge out there, they were my allies. We had a lot of others, but they were the two ringleaders in Maricopa County. They went into this caucus, and they had a vote. Their first vote was so close and so bitter that it scared everybody. Actually, the anti-Kennedy forces won, as I recall it, by one or two votes, but there were some votes that were challenged, and the thing broke up in disarray. Now this was a county caucus before they came back into the state convention to cast their votes.

There were a lot of these people that were good friends and who didn't want blood all over the floor. And they had this long – I think this went on for a couple of hours. As I say, it was extremely close. It ended up with some challenges. The water was still muddy. So, they came out, and they said, “Well look, this is crazy because if we have this kind of bitter divisive thing in our county, it might hurt us. Why don't we appoint a little committee here and just divide the vote up – we see that it's roughly even – and honor some of the older

workers in the party and let them who want to go to the convention.” So they decided to do this. In other words, instead of winner-take-all, brutal situation, they selected what they called a representative delegation.

When they did that, we were in, you see, because, as I recall it, about a third of the people selected were Kennedy people, and about a third or more of the others were really free people who wanted to go to the convention and decide there; some of the others were for Symington and some were for Johnson. But that was the crucial thing. The Maricopa County vote was crucial because once they decided to go that way, my district had the votes.

But that wasn't the end of it. We had the state convention. In fact, this got surprisingly little national attention at that point. You know, things that happen late Saturday don't get in the Sunday newspapers, and then it isn't news on Monday. It never got out for several days. I think Scotty Reston [James B. Reston] of the New York Times finally wrote a column a week or ten days later, saying that this young congressman, Udall, had pulled a coup and stolen Arizona from Lyndon Johnson. The whole thing was rather curious.

In fact, I don't know whether I called the Kennedy people. I don't remember whether I called Senator Kennedy himself, in jubilation, to tell him we had just carried it. It wasn't all that clear, either, you know, because right at the end of the convention.... I mean, it was clear to me, but you still could have said, “Well, this thing

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could go the other way; some people could change their minds." It wasn't all that overwhelming, but I knew we had it because I knew how solid my people were. I knew that we had at least a third of the Maricopa County delegation that were solid for Kennedy. So I didn't report in to them. I don't even think I called Senator Kennedy to...

[BEGIN SIDE II, TAPE I]

MOSS: All right. You were just talking about the Arizona state convention. Let me ask what were the roles of two other people in all this: one was Senator Hayden and the other one was Pulliam [Eugene S. Pulliam] of the [Phoenix] *Arizona Republic*.

UDALL: Well, Senator Hayden was like Sam Rayburn; he was kind of a spent force. I always thought that Lyndon Johnson's basic miscalculation in 1960 was his failure to understand, which the Kennedy people understood, the politics of a Democratic National Convention. He was a great manipulator of congressional power; he knew how to manipulate individuals and to understand their own political personality, their own political necessities. He really figured all along that with Speaker Rayburn cracking a big whip over House members and with the control that he had over certain key senators, that these people could play the major role in delivering the nomination to him. The thing that he miscalculated on is that national convention politics, through the state convention system – that most senators and congressmen don't want to wade into these bloody, bruising fights and twist arms and deliver delegations the way I was trying to do. This is rather poor politics, for a congressman or a senator to get involved in this.

Many senators and congressmen would tell Johnson, as they did, that they were all for him. He'd say, "Well, we've got Wyoming," you see. There's this marvelous story that Larry King wrote about Gale McGee [Gale W. McGee], the senator from Wyoming. It appeared in *Harper's Magazine*. They had counted that they had Wyoming because they had Senator McGee. Yet when the final votes came, who bobbed up to play the key role to help Kennedy get those final votes, Senator McGee. The Warren Magnusons [Warren G. Magnuson] and Carl Haydens and Gale McGees and all these other people that were going to deliver state delegations to Johnson never had it in their own minds. They weren't going to get that bloody to deliver a delegation for Johnson because national convention politics is not something, normally, that a senator or congressman, unless he has very special reasons, is going to want to get himself deeply involved in because he can hurt himself. It's a prudent thing to do, to stay out of it. So Senator Hayden – I could never talk with him – he wasn't close to the party people, although he still was prestigious at that time in the state. McFarland, I think, was the one that Johnson relied on as his operator. Whether Senator Hayden made any phone calls before the State convention, I never found out. I never did hear from him, I never did talk with him; I just stayed away from him.

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After the convention was held, however, then the Phoenix newspapers pulled out their big guns, and they began to work me over fairly well. And what they were trying to do was shake the tree and shake some of the Kennedy people out. They succeeded to a small degree, but we had a little margin to spare. They printed all kinds of editorials. They said I was doing the state a disservice. Well, the records there, so you can see what they said about me. Then they had Senator Hayden issue statements saying that Arizona had to be for Lyndon Johnson: all that he had done for the state; that he was from the southwest and that it was all natural and so on.

So the *Republic* chose to say the issue before the Democratic Party in the state of Arizona was; "Are you going to follow this young, wild eyed, liberal Congressman Udall, or are you going to go with Senator Hayden?" These newspapers had this wonderful cartoon – that shows me riding off with the nomination and Hayden, the old marksman, shooting my horse out from under me. But it didn't work.

We held a follow-up meeting about a month later, which was six weeks or so before the Los Angeles convention, to elect the officers in the delegation. Of course, I decided to flex my muscles and be elected. They tried to make a big issue of that. This thing went right into Los Angeles – them trying somehow to break my grip on the delegates. But as I say we had enough margin that we really – from the day of the convention, the Arizona delegation was assured.

The interesting thing – at least this is my recollection is that of all the western states, including California – Arizona, on the ballot that nominated Kennedy, the first ballot, cast more votes with our unit vote than any other western state. We had a vote of seventeen, as I recall it. No, I think it was seventeen. I think Charlie Porter [Charles O. Porter] the congressman from Oregon, defected for Stevenson, so Oregon had sixteen and a half. I think California was divided three ways. So ours was a major effort in that it gave Kennedy a state

that he would not normally.... I think I can say honestly that without my determination to help him, without my going to work and all the work I did that fall, that he never could have gotten the Arizona delegation. It's very clear to me that the Arizona delegation would have gone to Johnson at the convention if it hadn't been for the work that I and the others did.

MOSS: How did it happen that you were invited to address the Minnesota convention?

UDALL: Well, after we had achieved this result, I remember getting a phone call from Ralph Dungan or Bobby Kennedy or somebody saying did I have a couple of days, and whether I'd go up to Colorado and help. They later asked me to go to the Minnesota convention in Minneapolis and give a speech for Kennedy. I remember Ted Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorensen] was there along with me. This was trying

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to use me as a congressman who was an all-out supporter of Kennedy to help him get votes.

I always remember one thing with interest because when I went to Denver – I went there and spent two days. The person who met me at the plane was Byron White [Byron R. White] – now Justice White on the [United States] Supreme Court. He took me – his wife had the other car – in an old, battered car and we drove around Denver for two days, in bars and out to homes to see people, talking to delegates or prospective delegates, and trying to persuade them to be for Kennedy. There we were, and within a matter of a year and a half later, I was in the Cabinet and he was on the Supreme Court. And here we were tooting around in an old car, going to bars. It was sort of a fascinating vignette of the whole American political system.

MOSS: Yes.

UDALL: Because I had always heard of “Whizzer” White, but I had never met him before. So we got acquainted and started campaigning around, trying to get as many people as we could, to vote for Kennedy in Colorado.

MOSS: Moving on to the convention itself, now, did Arizona have any particular reaction to the choice of Los Angeles as a site?

UDALL: No.... No, I don't think so.

MOSS: Because some of the other delegations that....

UDALL: No, it was convenient for us because it meant everybody could go. No problems.

MOSS: Do you have any feel for where Paul Butler [Paul M. Butler] stood as the convention was opening?

UDALL: Oh, I don't know. I felt all along that Paul, although he made an honest and sterling effort to, you know, be a nonpartisan chairman, he actually, in his heart, was for Kennedy and was helping set the stage right. I think if he had done anything very overt that was too helpful to Kennedy, Rayburn.... Rayburn and Johnson both loomed very large in the party hierarchy, at that time, and of course, he had to keep the thing pretty honest. I don't think that made the difference, quite frankly; I think Kennedy just won on the merits.

MOSS: Beside from keeping your own state in line, what did you do to help the nomination along?

UDALL: Well, other than the thing that I did, let me think, in Colorado, in Minnesota, before the convention.... Now, when I arrived at the convention, I was brought into the

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Kennedy operation that Bobby Kennedy was running in a hotel, and they were having a countdown on the different states. I remember that being one of the first times I saw Bobby in action. I didn't get acquainted with Bobby, really, until Los Angeles. For some reason our paths never crossed. He had this meeting every morning, and he'd go right down state by state. He was real tough about it because he was insisting that everybody be completely honest and conservative; and when he felt they were getting bad information, he was raising hell about it. It was quite an operation they were running.

Some of us were given states to work, and I was given the state of Washington. I went to the state of Washington to one of their conventions, made a speech, did some work talking with key people and so on. And that was the other responsibility that I performed at the convention.

MOSS: Let me interrupt this just a minute. At the convention, how was Senator Kennedy's staff operating? What was the strategy?

UDALL: The only operation that I had any contact with was the whole delegate roundup that Bob Kennedy was offering, and it was very clearly a very tough minded, professional job. Having a delegation that was solid made my work rather easy. I was, I think, at that point – I mean everyone recognized it, this was something that everyone could count on. There was no worry about it. It was just a matter of going through the motions and doing it right. But still, we had a lot of prima donnas in our delegation, and it was a rather strenuous business. We were up late and everything. It was the first convention that I had attended, and I was pretty worn out by simply taking all the precautions you want to take to be sure that everybody's solid and all checked out, and there are no problems.

MOSS: How serious was the Stevenson threat?

UDALL: I didn't take the Stevenson threat seriously at the convention. I thought that Stevenson's hope.... I put Stevenson in a category with Symington. The question that the convention first phrased was, could Kennedy get the number of votes that he needed? And I think that was the first test. This meant, of course, that the Johnson people, the Stevenson people, and the others, that they were saying to everybody, "Stay with us on the first ballot," and then, of course, they'd say, "Stay with us on the second ballot."

The first major issue of the convention was, could the anti-Kennedy forces prevent him from getting the nomination? I believe, had that strategy succeeded, let's say Kennedy had fallen short, and it was clear then, that he couldn't muster it – you would have gone into the third, fourth, and fifth ballots – I think Johnson, then, would have made his bid. I believe he would have fallen short. And I think, then, that having been done, Kennedy might have had a second crack at it,

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in the sense that it had been established that Johnson.... You know Johnson had some support from Dave Lawrence [David L. Lawrence], and some of the Catholics who were against a Catholic candidate, who were interested people; and Meyner of New Jersey and others. Stevenson's best chance was a deadlocked convention. I think the convention, then, at that point, would essentially have asked whether it was Stevenson or Symington. I think that's where the choice would have narrowed down.

So all of us considered the Stevenson effort as an anti-Kennedy effort. That's the way we tried to reason with the Stevenson people, was to say to them, "Look, you're playing into Johnson's hands. Stevenson doesn't have a chance, Kennedy is going to get the nomination, so go along with it." I think that strategy, in general, worked.

You might be interested in my reaction after all the excitement of that night at the convention, Kennedy being nominated. Some of us had gone out to Beverly Hills or somewhere to someone's house to take a swim and lie in the sun because we were tired and exhausted. In the car driving back we heard the news on the radio, of course like a thundercloud, that Kennedy had selected Johnson. Of course, I was jubilant because from my point of view, with Arizona in particular, I had begun to worry a little bit about my own political future. Had I gone too far? Were the Democrats going to feel that I had somehow betrayed Arizona's true interests, and so on? From the standpoint of Arizona, speaking very selfishly, Johnson was an ideal choice. I was overjoyed by it. I was flabbergasted. But I arrived, and I quickly went to the floor. At that point, a lot of the liberals, many of whom were friends of mine, were raising hell – Adam Powell [Adam Clayton Powell], Joe Rauh [Joseph L. Rauh, Jr.] people like that – saying this was a betrayal this was the biggest mistake this was going to defeat Kennedy.

There's one fascinating incident I have to put on the record here because I thought the most brilliant summation of the whole thing was one that Ken Galbraith [John Kenneth Galbraith] made. I ran into Galbraith on the floor. There was a cluster of people who were arguing and so on, and they were denouncing.... And Galbraith, in that wry way of his, listened to somebody make one of these impassioned statements, and he said, "Well," he said, "let's not get too excited. Let's just think back a little bit." He said, "This could be one

of those Machiavellian moves that elects a president. In fact, fellows, we haven't seen anybody do anything like this since 1932 and Franklin D. Roosevelt." Everybody laughed, and of course, I went around and where I found people hot under the collar, I began telling them Galbraith's story and the parallel of Franklin Roosevelt and John Garner [John Nance Garner]. The thing began to quiet down a little bit.

But one thing I always regretted at the convention – except that I was sort of worn out – is that when Kennedy was nominated, I didn't go see him. I never did see him at the convention. I remember thinking

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later that I had as much right to go in and shake his hand and congratulate him as anybody else and, you know, bask in the glory of the whole thing. I didn't and that was one of the things that.... I suspect Kennedy was the sort of person – unlike Lyndon Johnson, who was the master of flattery and so on – Kennedy with his reserve.... If you had reserve, he kind of liked that as a quality, the fact that you weren't trying to fall all over him or weren't trying to always be there in his moments of glory. He might have thought to himself – at least it seemed to me later – “Well, where was Udall? He did his job, and that was all that was necessary. He didn't have to come and be at the throne where all the pictures were taken.” But that was the way it went.

At the convention the next night, the nominating speeches for the vice president, Ted Kennedy [Edward M. Kennedy] called me up and asked me to give a nominating speech for Lyndon Johnson, which I did, and which was a very good thing for me because it enabled me to repair a few fences in Arizona and give Johnson his due and express my feelings about him. But, all in all, it was a very exciting convention. It was an experience one never forgets.

MOSS: Do you recall any other convention yarns, episodes?

UDALL: No, those were the main things. We had quite a flurry at one of our Arizona conventions because the Phoenix newspapers – the Pulliam press at that time, if anyone wants to go study it – were so vicious and so completely unfair, so partisan to their causes. In fact, Bobby Kennedy, when he came to Phoenix during the campaign in mid-October, characterized these newspapers as being the most biased in the whole country. But this one reporter, who'd been their hatchet man, had been tearing me up, clawing my back up every day, almost, for weeks. He came in – we let the reporter sit in – he'd gone to Los Angeles to sit in with the delegation. He was asking the kind of obnoxious, offensive questions that could only come from a reporter who's doing a hatchet job. One of the delegates from my congressional district, who's a very close friend of mine, upbraided him, and they got violent. We practically had a fist fight right in the convention. So I mean there was still some excitement right in our own little group, right up to the last minute.

MOSS: Moving on to the election campaign, what was your role in this campaign? Strictly Arizona, or were you involved nationally as well? You had your own election, didn't you?

UDALL: That's right, and of course, having done the job that I set out to do.... I always regretted later, quite naturally – but I hadn't the slightest idea I would be in the cabinet – that I didn't have more to do with the campaign, with the Kennedy people. But I had my own job to do. I had hurt myself. The election returns showed it. I lost nearly half my margin. I had miscalculated, too. I thought that Kennedy would run much stronger in Arizona than he did.

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Arizona has a nearly thirty percent Catholic population, a large Mexican population, of course. In Phoenix; Tucson, and the border towns. My recollection is that it was 58 percent to 42. I thought it would be very close. It turned out that some of the more middle class and affluent Catholics actually voted against Kennedy. They voted for Goldwater in Arizona. Some of this spilled over on me. That was my fourth campaign, and I had always won in my congressional district by district by 58, 59, 60 percent. I think my margin dropped to 55, or something like that. So I got hurt.

I didn't campaign, as I recall, outside the state at all. I had my hands full, and I also – like I did in the two presidential campaigns when I was a congressman – I devoted more time to the presidential candidate than to my own candidacy. I hurt myself – looking back on it – in both 1956 and 1960.

But Bob Kennedy came to Arizona during the campaign. There was a meeting one evening when he went on television. Then President Kennedy came about the last ten days of the campaign. I had urged him to come out. I think he came in part because of me, because I believe his people – I'm sure they had polls that showed Arizona didn't look too good. But he stopped off just briefly one morning, coming in from, I believe, California. I think he was headed for the big cities in the last closing days of the campaign. He made a good appearance in Phoenix. But I confined my efforts to Arizona in the full period.

MOSS: Do you recall a visit by Lyndon Johnson, too?

UDALL: Oh, yes, I do. Johnson came to Arizona early in the campaign. As I recall it, it was in late September. He made appearances in Phoenix and Tucson. This, of course, was the first time that I had seen him, and we were naturally together, although he had McFarland and his friends up front, too, on it. We got on the plane and rode to Phoenix, to Tucson, and so on. He was in the type of high form that featured his campaign that year, and I thought, for Arizona, was very effective. He didn't, at that point – well, he didn't go out of his way to be friendly, but he didn't show any vindictiveness towards me. But it was very clear that he knew what I had done, and I was sort of on the edges of the thing.

But as a campaign, I think in Arizona we did about as well.... You know, as far as our campaign was concerned, we had both the President and the Vice President appear in it. I was just disappointed that I misjudged the depth of the Goldwater feeling, the control of the Phoenix newspapers at that time, and the fact that the Arizona people, with their innate conservatism and when you added in the Catholic element, a lot of them, including some of the Catholics, weren't going to go for a liberal Democrat.

MOSS: What was your reaction to the narrow victory nationally?

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UDALL: Well, I remember election night. Of course, Kennedy by 10 o'clock or so – until he hit the Mississippi – he was two or three million votes ahead, and it looked like a nice, handsome victory. I remember my own statement I issued in the evening was of that tenor; that I was delighted that there was a national president, and that he would be friendly to Arizona and so on because we had helped him win the nomination – expressing my satisfaction. Then as the evening wore on, and California flip-flopped the next day and so on, of course this served to put a damper on your enthusiasm and your hopes. I was particularly appalled that President Kennedy lost overwhelmingly in the West. He only carried two or three states and those by very narrow margins. It just seemed to me that this detracted from what could have been more of a national mandate. It almost made him an east-of-the-Mississippi President, as far as the election returns were concerned. I think this is one of the handicaps he began under. It sort of affected his attitude toward the West. You know, we turned him down.

MOSS: You really think it did?

UDALL: Yes, it came through in subtle ways. There's a marvelous story I'm sure you've been told and retold. Senator Gruening [Ernest Gruening] of Alaska had finagled President Kennedy into coming out – sort of against his better judgment – for Rampart Dam, which he knew, even at that point, that there were a lot of pros and cons. They tell the story that late in the morning, or maybe on the second day, somebody rushed in and said, “We just lost Alaska.” Kennedy said, “Thank God for that.” You know, he didn't need it anymore. That's the way it went.

I was the only western member of the cabinet, unless you considered Ed Day [J. Edward Day], who was sort of a newcomer from Los Angeles. I was the only Western member of the cabinet. You know, not in any outspoken way; I mean I don't think President Kennedy ever said in a rather bold way, “The West turned me down.” But in little small things he said, and so on. It was clear that he read the election returns and that he didn't feel that he had any big, outstanding debts for the West. He wanted to keep his campaign pledges to the West, such as they were – they were relatively modest.

MOSS: The Butte, Montana speech for instance?

UDALL: That's right. It was essentially the Billings speech. He sort of put it in a secondary priority category in his own mind, I'm sure. Not that he wasn't the kind of adroit politician whose attention immediately turned to the next election; I'm sure that that was on his mind, too. But he was disappointed that he lost the West, there's no doubt about it.

MOSS: Okay. This is a fairly convenient breaking place in the

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chronicle, and we've reached the end of our hour and a half. Would you like to break here and pick up another time?

UDALL: I think so. That's fine.

MOSS: Okay. Fine.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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Stewart L. Udall Oral History Transcript – JFK #1
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