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Udall was the Secretary of the Interior for the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations (1961-1969). This interview focuses on President Kennedy's tours of national parks, the Land and Water Conservation Fund, Conrad Wirth's resignation as National Park Service Director, the integration of the Department of Interior, and territorial and Indian affairs, among other issues.

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JFK #6

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Sixth Oral History Interview

with

STEWART L. UDALL

June 2, 1970
Washington, D.C.

By W. W. Moss

For the John F. Kennedy Library

MOSS: Mr. Udall, last time we were talking about parks and we broke off right after talking about the Indiana Dunes thing. A couple of more things I wanted to talk about in the general area of parks, one of which, of course, is the two conservative tours that the President [John F. Kennedy] took out West – one in late summer of ’62 and the other one in August or September of ’63.

UDALL: September.

MOSS: September. First of all, let me ask you, why these tours? What was the reasoning behind it, and how did you talk the President into doing it?

UDALL: Well, the first one was in August. I had been urging such a tour. You know, presidents had done tours of that kind in the past. Although in the old days with Truman [Harry S. Truman] or Franklin Roosevelt you had to go by train and it took two weeks of your time. So I was urging that this be done and that it combine the highest kind of politics – you know, presidential visibility as well as calling the attention of the country to some of the things that were being done in the resources field. It’s interesting when you look back at 1962. That was still a period in which we were trying to attract attention. The two things we selected out of the various things that I proposed both involved dams because dam building still had some magic then.

[-110-]

This first trip was a rather short and quick one. I think we hit South Dakota. I guess we stayed at Yosemite National Park that night. Then the President broke ground for part of the California Water Project, the federal portion of it, the next day. In this instance – and of course I had underscored this in my recommendations – Senator George McGovern, who was then of course very close to President Kennedy but had been the Food for Peace director, was running for the Senate in South Dakota. This was a chance for the President to be seen with him there. And Governor Brown [Edmond G. Brown], of course, was running against Richard Nixon in California. So the politics was very good, very low key. We had the three things really. No president had been back to – actually been in Yosemite Park as president since Teddy Roosevelt [Theodore Roosevelt] was there in, I think, 1903 or 1908, sometime way back there. And I kinda liked the flavor of that. So this was the general idea.

MOSS: Now, what were you holding out to him besides politics? Was there anything in the way of getting the President enthusiastic about conservation more than he had been for instance?

UDALL: Well, I, of course, had that very much in mind. I thought it was important that the nation have the picture of a president who was going to see these things, who was making statements about their importance. It was a wonderful way, too, of getting him away from his desk, of giving people like myself and others a chance to visit with him more casually, and of exposing him to the local crowds, the local politicians and the people who were concerned and interested in these things.

The dam dedication in South Dakota – of course this was one of the last big main stem dams on the Missouri – involved a significant increase in hydroelectric power. In fact the rural electric co-ops and their people were out in mass. This served as an opportunity to talk about REAs [Rural Electrification Administration] and electricity and so on. It was kind of a last gasp when you look at it in a way, because…

MOSS: Most of the big projects had been done…

UDALL: Most of the big projects had been done. That's right. And the REAs have had to turn in a different direction since then.

MOSS: Yeah. Let me ask this. I've had two different interpretations of the effect of all this on the President. One was that he went on these tours and in talking about dams and conservation and so on he didn't elicit much response; but when he started turning in his speeches to foreign policy and so on, he began to warm up and the crowds began to warm up, and he became enthusiastic about that. The other contrary impression that I've gotten from some people is that he did begin to warm up about conservation himself. He began to take a joy in being out there. Was that your impression of these things?

[-111-]

UDALL: Well, I think both impressions are correct, and I think it was a mixture of them. I think I can better describe this by talking about the second trip in the fall of 1963, just two months before his death. And this was much more elaborate. It was in part, I think, one of the reasons that we were able to get the President interested was the success of the trip a year earlier. He liked it and so on. This also was very good low-key politics, looking on to 1964. We billed it as a conservation tour and trip. It began at Gifford, Wisconsin, to the Grand Teton National Park and…. Where else did we go? Along to Utah, I guess, and California. Or we ended in Nevada, yes, California and ended in Nevada.

Now this occurred at a very interesting time period. In fact as we were en route, I think the first day, Congress either that day or the day previous had ratified the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, which has to rate as one of the President's major accomplishments. The White House press corps that accompanies the President…. These people are rather jaded when it comes to anything that they don't consider the big issues, and of course they were always looking for the political overtones. They're watching the thing very carefully. And in a way, you know, laying on a program where you're going very intensively for three or four days, as we were this time, with speech after speech on conservation, on resources, this was stretching it too much. And, inevitably, the President – although my sense of it was that both the appearance in Duluth, Minnesota and the one in Pennsylvania, that he was in good form and was enjoying the communication and had good speeches….

He got to Montana that second day and of course Mike Mansfield [Michael J. Mansfield] was then the Majority Leader and was with the President. The President sort of threw away his speech at Great Falls, as I recall it, in Montana, and talked about the Test Ban Treaty and the importance of it. This struck a good note. It was a timely note. I think he should have been doing this. In fact, Sandy Vanocur [Sander Vanocur] later wrote a piece on this that was in *Harper's Magazine* about what he sensed to be President Kennedy's – the trend he was moving in towards the 1964 election.

And so from then on there was a kind of mix. But the President, he stayed in Grand Teton National Park. We went on into – we stopped in, yeah, Salt Lake City; a dam dedication in California. So there was again a good cross section flavor to it. But you see he didn't, other than going out to give set speeches at particular places…. To take a trip of this kind was something different than what the President normally did and I think it was inevitable that he was going to try out several themes and not stick close to the script that we had laid out. I mean, this didn't surprise me.

So, I would have to say, as I said earlier, I think both opinions are correct and it was a mix of things. The President with his health

problem, with his back and everything, never was able to do the things that Bobby [Robert F. Kennedy] would have done as president, you know, of getting out and running a river – the vigorous life things – which I always regretted. But that was not the case and this, in a way, and the fact that his big love was the sea – you know, he was tied to the seacoast and the sea

(that's where he spent his life) – he didn't have the kind of earth feeling that Bobby Kennedy developed, for example. So this always was part of it.

I remember one conversation that I had with him on that trip. We sat in the back cabin together, going in a prop plane from Montana to stay overnight in the Tetons. I told him that I thought that Barry Goldwater was going to be his opponent and I told him why I thought so. He was very interested by this. I could tell he was a little skeptical of my judgment on it, but he certainly rather relished the idea and thought that this would make for a very interesting campaign.

MOSS: Why did you think Goldwater would be the nominee?

UDALL: Well, I just had a strong feeling – I knew Goldwater's strengths. I knew him, of course, very well as a person. I knew how strongly indebted the local party people were all over the country. He had done the same thing Nixon did later, of making – going to all of the states. He was very popular. He was very well liked. And I had the feeling that the Republican party conservatives, who had felt that they were thwarted and never had a candidate of their own…. They were denied Taft [William H. Taft]. Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] and Nixon were not exactly their dish in those days. And they had the right to have a candidate run.

I thought Goldwater, in a sense, by all the work that he had done, had it locked up more than anyone thought. Because in those days the delegates were selected well in advance and I knew that he was going to go there with a great deal of strength and I felt he would be the man to beat. Of course you had the primaries that could trip you up, and it almost did trip Goldwater up. He won really because he salvaged that California primary by a narrow margin. But I just had the feeling that the tide was running in such a way, in fact with Kennedy's popularity and everything it didn't look like a particularly good prospect for the Republicans, so why not try what they had been denied earlier and run a true conservative. I told him that I thought it would be that kind of campaign where there would be not a discussion of little differences but of real big differences and big issues.

MOSS: Do you recall how he expressed both his skepticism and his relish at the thought?

UDALL: Well, I remember him saying, "Well that would be quite a campaign," with a smile, you know. Because I told him I thought Goldwater wouldn't trim and that he would take some hard positions and

that this would make for a real discussion of issues and one that could really educate the country, and that I thought that this would be good in a way in that you could, in effect, fight out some of these issues that had always been blurred over in the past. And that I didn't think Goldwater would trim his views and I thought he was a real stand-up fighter, you know, I think I compared it to the old John L. Sullivan bare-knuckled thing, you know, that that's the kind of thing it would be. He rather relished this kind of prospect.

MOSS: Pursuing this political line for a moment, what sort of things were you doing as Secretary of the Interior to gear up for the '64 election?

UDALL: Well of course, to the extent that I assumed political responsibility – I wasn't given any, but I mean he recognized me as being one of the politicians in the Cabinet…. I was the only westerner, you see, in the Cabinet during that period of time. The West was an area that he had lost – we discussed that before – and the question of ways that he could appeal and win the West this next time were certainly on my mind all along. We had more Democratic senators in the West. For example, we did reasonably well in the 1962 election. So some of the weekly reports I sent over to the President. I would occasionally try to highlight political things. In fact I think one of my arguments for that '63 trip was that this would be a good opportunity for him, number one, to identify himself in the minds of the people in the country that cared about conservation that he cared and was keenly interested and, number two, the trip was primarily western and it would get him into the western politics in identifying himself with their water problems, with their conservation problems and so on.

MOSS: Do you know of any incipient, perhaps, strategy for the '64 campaign emerging either from the White House or the Democratic National Committee at this time?

UDALL: No. Of course, you know, the way John Bailey at the national committee was substantially, not a figurehead – he was running a machinery and so on, doing fairly well – but Larry O'Brien [Lawrence F. O'Brien] and the President himself and Kenny O'Donnell [Kenneth P. O'Donnell], I always thought, were the political brains that were doing the political thinking and planning on it. So I tried to key myself in there with them, rather than with the national committee. But they certainly were very alert and were keeping their eye on the problems. I think the President certainly was aware when he went to California to be with Pat Brown when he was running with Nixon, that he might have a great deal at stake, because had Nixon been elected governor of California – I think in all likelihood he might have had another run at it in 1964 and I'm sure that's what Nixon calculated.

MOSS: Well, I was thinking in terms of figuring out where the trouble spots were going to be and handing out assignments of who was going to concentrate on what things.

UDALL: It hadn't got to that point in the fall. I think that was the kind of trip – you know, another good thing for the President – you get out under those circumstances and you're thrown in with senators and congressmen and you're inevitably going to talk politics. There was a lot of it on the plane here and there. The President's asking questions, both after you go to a place and before. And he gets an idea of

where things are looking up and where problem areas are and so on. So this was certainly a political exercise, I think in the highest sense, in the best sense of the term, this kind of trip.

Of course, President Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson] had a splendid one a year later, doing the things that we would have done had President Kennedy lived. I hope we would have had another trip of that kind because it was sort of putting the icing on the cake of some of the things that we had done, and were under way – like the Canadian Treaty on the Columbia River and the north south electric power intertie. We had some big successes that we'd been working on.

MOSS: Getting back to the general conservation area and so on. In the proposal for the Land and Water Conservation Fund, where did this idea originate?

UDALL: Well, the idea originated with me really, I think, and my people. I could tell from talking, from my experience in Congress talking to the Bureau of the Budget people, you know, conservation to a substantial degree had always had a crutch. And you had such things as the Pittman-Robertson, Dingell-Johnson programs [9/2/1937] to aid wildlife, you know, where there were special taxes, taxes on guns, ammunition and so on. I knew that we had to have a lot of new money if we were going to buy parks, park lands. I knew that the Bureau of the Budget had been disturbed for a long time, that they felt we ought to charge more fees in national parks and achieve revenues. So I combined these two thoughts by saying, "All right, let's have a fund. Let's earmark money for a fund." They were against that on principle but if you had a good package…. So we would put into that package revenues from national park receipts and we would increase the receipts – this never materialized as we had thought – and we would get other logical funds that could be earmarked and start a fund and get it done that way. And so essentially the proposal came from me. It was refined and modified by the Bureau of the Budget and the other people. But I never had any serious opposition. The main obstacle I had all along was to get by the Bureau of the Budget. The President and his people went right with it.

MOSS: It's my understanding, correct me if this is wrong, that the first time round the Budget Bureau really didn't get a good crack at it and this was deliberate on your part, that you were able to fog it by them the first time. Is this so, and if so, how did you manage this?

UDALL: Well, there may have been some finesse in that. As I say, I knew they would be the main obstacle. I knew what their objections were. But I tried to tie it in with the fact that the President – this was an area where he was going to go down in history, we were going to make a mark; we were going to make a breakthrough here, do some new things, and we had to have money and we had to have a sure source of money. If we were scrambling every year to get little dibs and dabs of appropriations, this would discourage the Congress from thinking that they could go ahead and pass all these bills that were going to cost money. And I was right on that. I knew the Congress. And so I think what

you're saying is that I tried to get some momentum outside and some interest in the Congress and so on, before the Bureau of the Budget could get its heels dug in.

MOSS: Right.

UDALL: And I think I sent little memos through to the President on this, as well, pointing out that I was working on this; that I thought it was a great idea; that I hoped we could do it.

MOSS: How do you find that as a tactic? Do you feel that it was a successful sort of thing?

UDALL: Well, you know, you've got to play your internal politics in administration slowly. When you know where your opposition is you have to try and outflank it, and that's all that I was doing, was trying to win support for an idea that I thought was very valuable.

MOSS: You had some opposition, didn't you, from the boating people, particularly the barge people on the user fee business, fearing that this would be extended to all inland waters and that sort of thing?

UDALL: Oh, yes. Yes. These people were strongly opposed to it. In fact, I had to go to Congressman Wilbur Mills and sell him on this direct, which I did. In fact, there was considerable skepticism on whether I could sell him on it and I succeeded in doing so. We got it through that way. The tax features of the bill, you see, had to go through the tax writing committee. It wasn't just the interior committee. I'd sold them on it. But that took a little doing.

MOSS: How do you sell a guy like Wilbur Mills?

UDALL: Well, Wilbur's a very canny politician. He's also a person who's very, very reasonable. And you know, knowing him the way that I did, having a pretty good friendship with him…. I mean I just went into him, tried to explain to him why this was very important; why it was something that had needed to be done; it was good for the country. I mentioned things like the Buffalo River in Arkansas and other ways that his own area would benefit from it, and that yes, this was a little bit irregular and that I knew nobody liked earmarking of funds, but that this wasn't anything earthshaking. Then I tried to sell him on the logic of it. He didn't balk very much. I think I had one good session with him and I pretty well had him on my side, although there were a lot of uncertain moments as to whether the whole thing would stick together.

MOSS: Moving to another area in a similar vein, the wilderness proposal. Where did this originate?

UDALL: Well, the wilderness bill originated with the Wilderness Society in the mid-fifties. They decided that the executive action taken by the Department of Agriculture and the National Forest [Service], that this could be undone and that it wasn't a very secure arrangement, and that there ought to be a bill setting out national policy and defining it and so on. Interestingly, one of the first people they got to introduce the Wilderness Bill, I believe in 1957, was Hubert Humphrey. This was considered a rather far-out bill at that time and it took them – they had been pushing it. The Eisenhower Administration never warmed up to it. They kind of talked out of both sides of their mouth. There was some testimony, I remember that George Abbott, who was the solicitor of the department in the last year in the Eisenhower Interior Department – went up to testify. The guys told me later that he just went up one side of the road and down the other. You know, they would ask him, "Well, wouldn't this inhibit mining?" And he'd say, "Yes, it would." And the wilderness people would ask him questions and he'd agree with them. And so the thing sort of languished.

Immediately when we came in, we saw this as something that was right and something that we could pick up and champion. I think in the President's first message he called for a wilderness bill, in February 1961. So we went right to work on it and pushed it. Aspinall [Wayne H. Aspinall] was, as usual, against it. It took three years to accomplish it, and three years of very hard-slugging work. The Senate had to pass two bills, passed them overwhelmingly, but the House was always the problem. He finally made his demands and got his pound of flesh. He and Senator Anderson [Clinton P. Anderson], essentially, compromised this out. They disliked each other intensely, basically. They'd wait until late in a session when they were at loggerheads and they each had a lot of trading stock and then they'd sit down and agree

on things. That was the way it would be done. We were kind of like beaters, you know, getting the thing positioned to where a compromise could be worked out. But President Kennedy sounded the – made the call for a wilderness bill and we went right to work on it.

MOSS: Well, you've got the very tough argument, I find at any rate, between this question of conservation and so-called "best use" versus preservation of pristine wilderness and so on. You had a couple of guys in your own administration. Carver [John A. Carver, Jr.] and Kelly [John M. Kelly], who were more of the "best use" line of thinking. How did this balance out? How did you argue this out within the department?

UDALL: Well, this is one of these classic arguments, you know, where people array themselves depending upon their views of resources and the world and life in general. And it's simply one where one finally has to form a judgment and have an opinion. Because the idea of a wilderness bill or a national park, the two ideas are closely related. In fact, the act that was finally written blanketed national park areas after they were master-planned into the system.

So, you essentially were asking the larger, philosophical question whether in terms of the long view of the country, thinking, you know, five hundred years ahead, whether there was an interest in taking 2 percent of the land mass of the country and deciding that it would be kept as a kind of laboratory, as a special outdoor area and left in its pristine condition. And of course I always found myself on that side of the argument. The other argument that, well there may be valuable minerals there and there may be national defense reasons and other paramount reasons, we shouldn't lock it up. We shouldn't make such a far-reaching decision. Of course, these things were argued out and in fact Senator Anderson and these other people finally put in this provision saying well if there's something like that the President would have the key to unlock it.

But I don't recall that Secretary Carver or John Kelly who are two – Kelly might have been anti-wilderness – who had reservations, that they tried strenuously to argue me over to the side of what I would call a weak bill. Certainly I'm sure they presented arguments, but I think they recognized that my mind was strongly made up and I was in the corner of what we called a strong bill. And so we didn't have much, you know, knockdown-dragout arguments in the department, because they sensed the direction I was moving in. And the President's call, I think – I don't think the President wanted a watered down bill.

MOSS: All right. Now in the area of recreation, of course, on the heels of the OCR [Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission] Report, you went ahead with the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation despite the lack of congressional authorization and the Organic Act which came later. Now what made you move in this direction at this time, quickly, in order to co-opt the position?

UDALL: Well we had been very impatient for one reason. You see, the Outdoor Recreation Commission had a four year life, I guess, or a three-year life to get its report in. But it wasn't due until February of 1962, which meant we were just sort of waiting and I know Laurence Rockefeller sensed how restless I was. He sort of leaned strongly on me not to get too many things started before the report was in. But on the other hand, that was frustrating because we knew some of the things that were going to be in the report and we wanted to go. We also knew that the report in itself, except to the extent that it represented a broad congressional consensus, that it would have limited value as all reports do. So that we had been doing a lot of thinking. Secretary Carver served very well in this regard, pointing out that we didn't have to wait for legislation to be enacted, that we could do this by executive action. And then he, of course, recognized Aspinall in particular would be strongly opposed to this as always; he never liked things to be done by executive action. Congress had plenary authority and it should act and so on on anything concerning public lands.

MOSS: He was still smarting over that C. & O. Canal business, too, wasn't he?

UDALL: Yeah. Yeah. So we had to touch that base, but one of the things – again we finessed it. John Carver had the idea of us bringing Dr. Crafts [Edward C.

Crafts] over from the Department of Agriculture; he was one of the three top men in the forestry service. He was passed over in 1961 when Ed Cliff [Edward P. Cliff] was selected as Chief forester and this really frustrated his life's ambition. I happen to know Crafts. I had worked with him as a congressman; I was very high on him. And the minute Carver mentioned this to me I thought it was a brilliant idea. And we went right to work on it, would he come over to head this up.

Well it turned out Aspinall liked him, too. Aspinall had worked with him. And then we could tell Aspinall, "Well, look. We want to get off to a fast start. We want you to pass legislation setting up the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, giving it a mandate, and we'll get that ready, but why wait six months?" So that was the way that we got that done and got off to a very fast start. And this because a new bureau in the department and one that performed very well.

MOSS: Did you have any trouble shifting resources within the department to staff and to fund the new Bureau before congressional authorization?

UDALL: No, I don't…. You know, any new bureau has got about a year's gestation period unless it's given some big urgent assignment that has to be done immediately. You've got to get

your bureaucratic structure set up; you've got to select people and that takes time, you've got to do that carefully; you've got to decide what your organization looks like. And so we had to scramble around a bit in that first period, but Crafts again we had in Crafts an old pro. He took the load very readily and always worked very well with me. He was one of these people that I saw often in my office. So that he had – that's the reason we got him to come over, we said, "You have a chance to start a new bureau and a completely new operation in the government and we're going to give you strong support." So it went quite well.

MOSS: There's a story that the Forest Service and Agriculture people had a sort of master plan for recreation in their own areas and that this was supposedly to be coordinated with the new bureau and so on, but that it was leaked prematurely before everybody else was ready. Is this correct?

UDALL: I have a vague recollection that this is probably the case. Of course one of the frustrating things all along and it was our hope Crafts could bridge this to a degree, which he did quite well except for certain aspects of it you couldn't bridge…. The Forest Service and their hostility – I guess is the accurate word – for Interior and their desire to run their own show and make their decisions on land matters, this was always strong in their minds and here was a way that they could, in effect, be sure that this new bureau wasn't going to tell them what to do. Crafts of course knew – he'd been thirty years nearly in the Forest Service, spent all that time, and he knew them so well. Of course, he was able to sort of head 'em off at the pass on other things and he also knew where their

soft underbelly was at crucial times, and that was one of the reasons we brought him over. But he also would complain to me at various times how bureaucratic and difficult they were.

MOSS: Of course, another organization that was not too happy about it was the Park Service. I understand that some resources were pulled away from Park Service and that Connie Wirth [Conrad L. Wirth] wasn't particularly happy about this.

UDALL: Oh, yes. Connie was very vigorously opposed to Park Service giving up any of its planning functions. They were then working with the State Parks Boards, working on a national plan; and it obviously, logically, had to go to BOR [Bureau of Outdoor Recreation], but they didn't want to give it up. I remember him coming in and bleeding on me that they had done all this work; spent all this money; they were tooled up; they had these people; they were underway and they knew what should be done; and that parks planning was their forte; and it would be a big mistake. And we went into it, spent a lot of time on it, and just ruled against them and went ahead.

MOSS: At what point did he offer his resignation?

UDALL: Well, his resignation had nothing to do with that. That was an argument he didn't win and he was unhappy about it. But he decided, I think, as a result of a number of things, including his conflicts with John Carver and the sense that he wasn't exactly my kind of park director, that my feeling was that we needed a younger man, someone who was better able to communicate with the country. And so he came in in the fall of 1963, I guess it was, and suggested that he wanted to retire a year or two early, that he was ready to do that and that he wanted to have a good transition and help pick his successor. Actually, he wanted to pick his successor, I'm sure, but he respected me enough that he knew he had to give me a little say in it, and so we began working on it.

MOSS: Okay. And Tolson [Hillory A. Tolson] was in somewhat the same kind of situation, wasn't he?

UDALL: Well, that's right. Well, Tolson had been Connie's right hand man all those years and was at an age where it was obvious that he was not the logical man to succeed him. In fact, I made it plain to Connie. I handled him very adroitly, if I may say so, because I told him rather than him to recommend someone to me, I wanted to see a list of names. I didn't say much other than that to him. He had a long retreat with Tolson and others and they came back with a list of four or five names. And I then told him, for the first time, that I thought rather than select an older man – there were a lot of fine, older, career men that were in their late fifties, early sixties – that I really wanted to go to a younger man who could server for fifteen or twenty years. And there was only one young man on his list.

MOSS: And this retreat, was it the one at the Grand Canyon?

UDALL: No. I think that was something he did here locally, just on a long weekend with some of his intimates.

MOSS: Now the real breaking point on the Wirth thing came, didn't it, with the Carver speech in which he castigated the Park Service generally, and particularly it's brochure, saying that it sounded like something out of the Hitler youth or something of this sort? He was pretty tough on him, wasn't he?

UDALL: Well, John had an abrasive quality to him that came out in the open at various times. He supervised the Park Service and he was always fairly critical of them. He was kind of a hair shirt for them and raising hell with them and he and Connie had at it quite a bit. And this was a very unfortunate thing because, you see, we had made the decision on George Hartzog [George B. Hartzog, Jr.] in December, as I recall, and we'd brought him on board a few months later. Everybody, not everybody, but the top Washington people knew that he was the heir apparent and so on, but we tried to sort of keep it a secret from the field people and everything.

And then this meeting of park superintendents that Wirth had every two years was scheduled in Yosemite. The whole thing should have been handled graciously because that's one of the best career services. They have a strong feeling about their people and their leadership. And the thing to do – and this was the truth, Connie Wirth wasn't being pushed out – was to heap flowers on him and let him pass the baton on and to have me there presiding. And John, for some reason that I never understood, gave a speech the day before I got there in which he raised hell with the Park Service, was rather harshly critical and said some other things that caused one of the *New York Times*' reporters or somebody to write a national story that Wirth was being pushed out. And I arrived and everyone was in complete disarray and this was going to put Hartzog in a very bad spot, and it was unfair to Wirth – which it was. So I tried, in a suave way, to smooth the whole thing over and we actually covered lost ground. But John knew all of Connie's weaknesses and he never let up, you know. I mean he told him what…

MOSS: Yeah. I was interested in this because, from the open material at any rate, I had gotten a slightly different impression that Carver was actually being your hatchet man and giving a cause for Wirth to move when he wouldn't.

UDALL: No. No, this was not the case. Of course John was a part of the whole decision process, deciding on the transition and everything else. I don't know whether John knew George Hartzog. George really was my personal choice, because I had spotted him and was very high on him and knew him…

MOSS: He had been down in St. Louis, hadn't he?

UDALL: Yeah. When I found out Connie was high on him, then I knew I had my man because I knew that if Wirth thought the service would respect him and that he could carry on the tradition and that the old man wouldn't be too balky…. I had one of the older superintendents, one of the senior men, Dan Beard [Daniel B. Beard] – he's the son of Dan Beard, the scout man – he came into my office right at the very time I selected Hartzog, very agitated, very distraught because it had been his ambition to be the park director and he told me I was making a great mistake, why he was qualified. You know, I heard him out. I spent a half hour with him, very emotional, but I just told him that I wanted a younger man and that I thought he had very many fine qualities but I decided on Hartzog and that I had considered his qualifications.

MOSS: He talked about the Park Service as a proud service and one with fine traditions and so on. It also is one of the lily-white services. You had the Geological Survey also, which is pretty well lily-white. What did you do to try and integrate these services?

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UDALL: Well, this was pretty appalling, you know, when you recognize that here we were, six years after the Supreme Court and *Brown vs. Board of Education*. You look back on it and you see how slow-moving they were in the Eisenhower years and we naturally wanted to quicken the pace. The Park Service, because its recruiting process is practically a closed circle, was almost lily-white. In fact, Wirth came to me in the first few months and wanted to know if I didn't want him to bring up a man from the Virgin Islands National Park – which, of course, is a black area – who he had been working up the ladder and was to be the first Negro national park ranger. I remember talking to John Carver, looking back, and my reply wasn't no, that if they were this late in getting anybody to this high status, I didn't think it was something to be boasting about, I think it raised more questions than it would answer. And so, go ahead and make him park ranger but, for heaven's sake, get busy.

Well part of the reason, I always though, that Interior had dragged its feet as much as it did, is that Otis Beasley [D. Otis Beasley] himself, the administrative assistant secretary – the one that Chapman [Oscar L. Chapman] had appointed and came all the way through under the Eisenhower years – was from Mississippi. And although Otis was a good enough pro to say all the right things, I never sensed in him there was any real drive to do anything about it. He'd go through all the motions and all the paper would be put out, but you had to get out and work at this.

And so Carver and I ended up with Wirth and these people. They sent a recruiting team out to the black colleges to try and get students who would go out as summer seasonal rangers and work some of them in this way, because that's the way the system worked, you see. The same was true of some of the other bureaus in the department, that it wasn't necessarily the fact that their leadership was racist, except that the whole system had been racist so long and that you really were having to crack it. And I never was completely satisfied with the department as a whole that we did as well as we could have or should have if we had worked more vigorously and had the kind of leadership. You know, actually, when

you sit as a secretary, to a substantial degree you're the prisoner of your bureau chiefs. I mean, they can give you whatever lip service they want but if they really don't want to do something on it, it's going to drag. And the only remedy you have other than to whip them from time to time, is to replace them.

MOSS: Moving on to a different area, still under John Carver's domain though, is the whole business of the territorial affairs. And I think home rule is one of the issues there that you were playing around with, at least, trying to get some kind of representative, local representative business going. What success do you feel that you had in steps in this direction?

UDALL: With the territories?

MOSS: Yeah. Particularly Guam and the Virgin Islands.

UDALL: Well, in the first place, Samoa was a special case.

MOSS: Yeah.

UDALL: Because whether we were right or wrong, our people – the territories' people – and John Carver both strongly felt that they weren't ready to have a…. The Eisenhower Administration was always cited; they had tried to appoint a Samoan governor. Because of the involved, complicated Samoan culture, where you know, the elders were the leaders…

MOSS: The masai.

UDALL: This meant that you had a government within a government. To come in and impose our kind of government immediately created conflicts and required very adroit handling. And so this was always a special case. And Rex Lee [Hyrum Rex Lee] who we took out of the Indian Bureau because of his experience with the Indian people and their culture – was sent down there – we always felt of him as being one of our success stories, certainly in terms of the kind of development of schools; the educational television experiment he carried on; the improvement of their health and other programs. He did an outstanding job. I never was able to form a judgment of whether Lee moved the thing towards self-government as fast as he should. He always was a go-slow person on that and I had enough respect for him that I, you know he was so far away that I went along with him on it.

I think we were quite successful in Guan and the Virgin Islands, in giving these people pretty much a free rein to develop their own capacity to govern themselves. We had this one little interim that lasted only a year with Governor Daniel [Bill Daniel], the brother of the Texas governor, who was forced onto us and wanted out to Guam. We considered this a setback, but we quickly recouped our ground with Governor Guerrero [Manuel F.L.

Guerrero]. And quite frankly, the approach that territories urged and that I went along with was of largely keeping hands off, of letting them run their show, of giving them support on legislation on the things that they had to have, but of quickening the process of them learning self-government. I was always disappointed…. We were ready as early as 1963 or '64 to have Congress pass a bill and let them elect their own governor and really turn the whole show over to them. But Aspinall and the others dragged their feet on that and it wasn't done until '68 or '69, I guess, and they'll elect their governors this year in 1970. We waited too long. I think both Guam and the Virgin Islands were as ready in 1964 as they'd be in 1970, and that should have been done.

I think the area that was most frustrating and disappointing to me in a way was the trust territory islands, out there. This was in part because it was so far away and part because we had in Goding [M. Wilfred Goding] a very strong minded administrator, who considered himself as a sort of

the high commissioner of the President. Carver and these others fought him. We tried to pry him out two or three times. He was just running his own show out there almost as though he were a military commander, you know, who didn't take orders from anybody except the White House. It was very distressing. I think we should have moved a lot faster with our programs to buildup the infrastructure schools, hospitals and the things of this kind. And I always felt that some of the criticism that was visited on us was deserved in that we didn't move as fast as we could've. I thought Norwood [Bernard Norwood], the second commissioner, did a much better job. I insisted – and I did it deliberately (nobody in the trust territory was much for it) – on putting the Peace Corps in the Trust Territory. I knew they would raise hell and I knew they would raise the hackles of the old administrators but I thought this was needed. And that's exactly what happened.

MOSS: Now you had to go through the State Department and United Nations on that, didn't you, on the trust territory and the ports?

UDALL: It was a trusteeship and the U.S. group at the United Nations were always involved and we had to talk to the State Department about it from time to time. Again, I had the feeling that we moved too slowly in terms of, one, having a plebiscite and two, of developing self-government ability. They haven't had their plebiscite yet. I personally thought it should have been held two or three years ago. But the State Department people had their own ideas and the Congress, rightly or wrongly, took a very keen interest – some of the members of Congress – in what was happening in the trust territory and they, of course, were always skeptical and very slow about being willing to trust the capability of people to govern themselves. It was a rather curious thing.

MOSS: On the business of a trust territory in the UN and the State Department, there was also some agitation, particularly within the General Assembly, to get reports out of this on Guam and the Virgin Islands and Samoa, wasn't there? How was this handled and who was the State Department go-between on this?

UDALL: Well, the State Department had an office here – in fact, Joe Sisco [Joseph J. Sisco] headed it up in those last years – that worked with Ambassador Goldberg [Arthur J. Goldberg] and the other people at the UN and they always took a rather lively interest in the trust territory in the Pacific. They were always concerned that our performance would be good enough that we could pass muster when the UN ever two years sent a team out to look into our stewardship, and that was always a nervous moment. We always managed to get by somehow. We were doing well enough to get by, which in one way maybe gave us a feeling we were doing better than we were. But they were always – and the military and the CIA people would show up from time to time and they were concerned about these as potential bases for us. I always thought they overdid that when I look back upon it.

In fact, there's some of that concern today, if we're pushed out of the Philippines and Okinawa, of having one or two of those large islands as big Pacific bastions for the military. That was always in the picture and always caused a lot of people to consider it, I think, more strategically important than I think it will prove to be in the long run, but also it caused people to be very cautious.

MOSS: There are a couple of elements in the Virgin Island situation, of course, that complicated that a bit. One was the Virgin Islands Corporation and the question of the economic viability of the islands. And the other was, as I understand it, a particularly vituperative brand of politics that they have down there that sets mainlanders' teeth on edge. How did this…

UDALL: Well, their brand of politics was very, very vigorous and vituperative, no doubt about it. I usually stayed aloof from it. Others had to get in the melee from time to time. I didn't consider it was my job to get involved in their squabbles, and usually my trips down there were largely ceremonial and trying to congratulate them on the good things that had been done.

We had an interesting time with the Virgin Islands Corporation and the territories' people, and John Carver put a lot of effort in on this. We decided early on – and it's amazing to look at the progress they've made in the last ten years down there when you look back – that the corporation ought to be dissolved. We moved rather vigorously in that direction and were able to get its assets sold and its functions terminated. It was interesting to see that you could take a government entity, in this instance one that had been in existence nearly thirty years, and phase it out.

MOSS: There was some talk at one time of congressional action to phase it out, but this wasn't necessary. Is that right?

UDALL: No it wasn't necessary. In fact I think we decided, you know, like any corporation, I mean if it just ceases to function it ceases to function. Congress

then would have wanted to get into it and go into all kinds of details. We made some interesting decisions like I wanted to be sure the electric power company was dealt off to the government, at least that they had the option to take it over rather than – others on the board favored putting it up for sale to private enterprise. I thought that if the government wanted it the government ought to have it. I took a strong line on that which some people didn't like.

MOSS: The highway situation was another thing, wasn't it, that was something of a plum?

UDALL: Yes. That and of course the old sugar mill there, which had been a money loser, was a big problem. It provided employment. John Carver went down there once in early [Interruption] stages of our work with what we call migrant labor camps that the sugar mill had working with what we call migrant labor camps that the sugar mill had working with corporations; the most appalling slums we've got in the whole United States, and that we sure ought to do something or somebody was going to discover it – take some pictures or write some articles.

MOSS: Now on the whole area of the Indian affairs. You come off the Eisenhower years in so-called termination policy. What were you doing to try and turn this around? What did you come in with as an alternative and….

UDALL: Well, the big problem that we always had and is still up there today – I may have mentioned this briefly, earlier – is that so many members of Congress, particularly senators, are so damn strong-minded about Indian affairs. They usually, in some way or another, you know, get fairly familiar with the problems of *their* Indians. Some of them, including some of the Democratic liberals, had surprisingly illiberal ideas on Indian affairs and some of them were quietly and privately pretty down on Indians in general, feeling that there wasn't much you could do and that they were hopeless and so on. So we didn't have the congressional support ever for a new policy because, after all, these were some of the same congressmen that had just passed the termination bill.

And one of the questions I remember Carver and I wrestled with at great length was whether the '54 Termination Act was a permanent – set up in law – a permanent policy which we had to repeal, or whether we should treat it as something that was merely a declaration of that Congress and just go right ahead and enunciate our own policies. So that the thing that we wanted to do, in terms of the Administration, was to very clearly turn our face away from termination and to substitute for it as major policy more Indian self-determination, more Indian leadership and more aid for the development of their resources, and of course a strong emphasis on education, on a better educational effort.

I look back on it today with mixed feelings because we did do better. And the Indians, I think we quieted their fears. I think they recognized that we were going to hold the line against any termination efforts. But we weren't able to do anything very dramatic. We weren't able to get any very big new programs going. I tried when I finally got Nash [Philleo

Nash] out and Bennett [Robert L. Bennett] in in 1965 or 1966, you know, to get this Indian, they ended up called it the Omnibus Bill, to get through some basic new legislation. And the interesting thing was the Indians didn't like parts of it; and some members of the House that were important didn't like parts of it; and some members of the Senate didn't like other parts of it and the whole thing just floundered around for two years. And this was typical of the frustrations that you had, because you couldn't get a consensus. And so you simply had to do the best with what you had. You had to encourage the Indian leaders and the

Indian leadership, and where you had an Indian reservation that was doing quite well or something was moving, well help them move along a little faster. You tended then to break it down into its components and not think about any big overall solutions, but rather your problem was to help the people who were ready to move. That was more or less my attitude in the last few years.

MOSS: You talk about the problem really being in getting a consensus. A lot of the popular stuff that's coming out now – a recent article in *Look* magazine, for instance – puts a lot of the onus on the Bureau of Indian Affairs as being sort of an old maid, hidebound, bureaucratic slough that you just can't get anything through.

UDALL: Well, there's an element of truth in this. In fact this always was one of the things again that you had very mixed feelings about. Now bear in mind, of course, the Indian Bureau, which is a very big bureau – ten or eleven thousand people, a lot of them schoolteachers, most of them schoolteachers, and half of them Indians themselves…. I mean it became a kind of employment bureau because they had preferential hiring in the Indian Bureau. But some of them used to say, that were cynical about the Indians, is that they had to have something like the Indian Bureau because this always gave them and their friends and everybody else something to blame, you know, for their own failures. And that bureau was quite happy to take the blame, you know, because it owed its own existence – I mean, it didn't want to go out of existence.

MOSS: Sort of a patronizing thing though, isn't it?

UDALL: But the Indian Bureau evolved out of…. That's the thing that you have to recognize. And the men that are always running it are men that have been in it for twenty-five years. You know, you go back twenty-five years. Most of those men when they came into the Indian Bureau, you're back in the late thirties or early forties when the Indians were under quite primitive circumstances in which the idea of the Indian agent or the Indian superintendent wasn't too far out of our history. And so they were the White Father, playing a paternalistic role, and had to check everything, and treating them like children who weren't capable. That was the whole tradition of the Indian Bureau. It's one of the oldest bureaus in the government. And this was part of my frustration with both Nash and Bennett, the two commissioners that I had, is that both of them would always say to me, "Well, we're improving and just give us some time. We'll nurse this thing along." It

was the idea of sort of slow, gradual change. But it was hard at times to see the change taking place.

Now I think one thing that both of them did fairly well, and again, it's like the thing you always have in the government; your people are very important. The younger men that were selected to be superintendents, to be leaders and so on, were generally much better. We were

constantly improving these people and we were particularly…. And I always pressed them to get people like Jim Cannon, who was in Montana, and Bill King and these other people who were the ones that the Indians really trusted and that were determined to give them a lot more authority, push authority onto them, make them make decisions and move more rapidly in the direction of Indian leadership and Indian self-determination.

MOSS: How do the Indian lobbies work? The National Congress of American Indians, the Association for American Indian Affairs and that sort of thing. Do they really have some clout or are they just….

UDALL: No. They didn't have a great deal of clout. They had a lot of moral clout as, you know, any friends of the Indians had moral clout. They could clout the hell out of you anytime, any day. But they weren't influential on the Hill. That was the most important thing. Now, Congressman Ed Edmondson who unfortunately never became, and hasn't to this day, the chairman of Indian Affairs, he was always very pro-Indian, very strong, and they could always get to him. But the people like Haley [James A. Haley] and Senator Anderson and Senator Church [Frank Church] and Senator Jackson [Henry M. Jackson], none of whom were very sympathetic to Indians or ever really spent much time on Indians, they never could reach them.

So here again you didn't have a very good Indian lobby, and the Indians themselves went with hat in hand to see these congressmen, senators, you know, and they were always very passive. I told a young Indian the other day that attacked me on a college campus for not doing enough. I said well I was glad to see young Indians being militant. I thought we needed this for several years and I thought it was the passivity of the Indians, the way they had accepted everything, that caused so little to be done, that this was one of the reasons at least.

MOSS: Excuse me while I flip this over.

[BEGIN SIDE II, TAPE 6]

MOSS: Now, I don't think we can quit with the Indians without mentioning the Kinzua Dam controversy and how this was hired out with the corps of engineers. How much of a role did Interior have in this settlement?

UDALL: Well, quite a considerable role, although, you know, I wish we had been, looking back on it, even more aggressive than we were. John Carver and the

others…. It was the lack of aggressiveness, you know, was the thing that bothered you most about the Indian Bureau. I mean they never really fought for anything, always on the theory that, you know, they would tell you why you were going to

lost the game before you got in the game. It was that kind of thing. Well, you know, Congress won't go along. They'll all give you ten reasons why it was hopeless. Kinzua Dam, of course, fifties, I guess, before we came along. And the question of compensation was the main thing that was being talked and fought about. Actually, I personally feel now, and I felt then to a degree, that the dam never should have been built. I think…

MOSS: Yeah. Well there's a question of the legality of the thing under the old Seneca Treaty, wasn't there?

UDALL: That's right. That's right. And that, after all, dam building wasn't that important. But this was the last gasp of the period when dams were almost as sacred as Indian rights, you know. If the Corps of Engineers said the dam should be built, the dam would be built; it was important to the country and so you sweep the Indians aside. And there were strong moral reasons why this was bad but the thing had congressional support; it had the pork barrel behind it; it had all this momentum up. You know, everybody said, "Well, you can't stop it." And it bothered a lot of people in the Administration, including me, but there you were.

The Senecas actually were given a, I think, rather handsome settlement – not handsome really, but I mean as compared with other Indians got. This was partly because Congressman Haley from Florida who has a rather strange streak in him, he always considered himself pro-Indian – and in some ways he was pro-Indian and in others he was very much not so. But he took up the cudgels for them and, by gosh, thought injustice had been done and was going to do right by them. And part of our job was persuading the Bureau of the Budget and others to be generous and to go along with the most generous settlement possible.

MOSS: Was it in Haley's area in Florida that they got this sort of showpiece Indian reconstruction area where they built them the new homes and got the new industry down there to them, a new handicrafts industry?

UDALL: Well, this is the Mikisuki's down there along the Tamiami Trail. They're a quite self-reliant people and had pretty good leadership. This is an example where we did what I was talking about earlier, where you found people that were ready to move and so on, and to give them extra help. And this was done in that instance and it became something that was a little bit of a showpiece. I don't think this was in Haley's congressional district, but it was in Florida and he took special interest in it. And things were done down there.

I always regretted afterwards that I didn't do the sort of thing that I did the last year or two, earlier, where I told my people that

I wanted to go out of my way to make any decisions that were pro-Indian, you know, concerning legal rights or anything else, and then just to ransack and bring the things to me. This, Lister [Joseph Lister Hill] in particular worked on this. But the Indian Bureau – you know, you would have thought they'd lined up outside the door and had fifty things for you to do, but you had to pry it out of them. It was that kind of a thing, you know.

MOSS: Well, you had your task force on Indian affairs to begin with, with Bill Keeler [William W. Keeler] and so on, and then Nash on it. Did nothing really come of that?

UDALL: No. I think two things came out of the task force. One was its report, which we adopted, which turned away from the termination and set forth the new policy, enunciated the new policy. I think that was a very definite…. And the other thing that came out of it was Nash, because Nash was on trial and I told Keeler and Jim Officer [James E. Officer] who was close to me, who were members of the task force, that I was skeptical of Nash and that if they thought he should be commissioner when the work was done that I might go along with them. And they recommended him at that point.

MOSS: But there was no attempt, was there, to do, say a kind of pilot project with the Navajo or something of this sort that would be a experiment in the way things could be done?

UDALL: Well, the task force report speaks for itself and I haven't looked at it in years. My recollection of it is that it was general in its tenor and has a lot of specific recommendations in it, many of which we followed and a few that we didn't, but that it didn't have that type of thing. Of course, if you picked the Navajo, you'd probably make all the other Indians mad because of the hostility.

But I think there did grow out of this – and Nash's administration reflected this – and Nash's administration reflected this to a degree – that where there were economic opportunities, other opportunities, you know, where you had good leadership why go with it, play with it. Give more of your time and attention and effort there. And some of the ones that are mired down or that had weak leaders, that let the Indian Bureau plod along at its pace there, but push hard where you had people that had favorable things moving for them.

MOSS: Okay. One more area under John Carver and that's the Alaska Railroad. The only thing that I found that was of any significance was a shift of the rate of making from Interior

to the ICC [Interstate Commerce Commission]. And, as I recall, this was hung up a bit on the question of presidential prerogatives, whether it should be moved from something that was part of presidential power to an independent agency. How troublesome was this?

UDALL: I didn't participate too much in that. Now I may have signed something in the end…

MOSS: It was fairly early on, I think.

UDALL: Yeah. I think John Carver primarily handled that. And of course the other interesting thing with the Alaska Railroad is the fact that we agreed, I readily agreed to transferring it out and into the new Department of Transportation when that came along.

MOSS: Okay. That takes care of John Carver's area. Now the other two areas we have left, Mineral Resources and Water and Power, I think are worth one session each. So shall we leave it at that for this time?

UDALL: All right. All right.

MOSS: It's okay. Good.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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