

LYNDON BAINES JOHNSON LIBRARY ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

The LBJ Library Oral History Collection is composed primarily of interviews conducted for the Library by the University of Texas Oral History Project and the LBJ Library Oral History Project. In addition, some interviews were done for the Library under the auspices of the National Archives and the White House during the Johnson administration.

Some of the Library's many oral history transcripts are available on the INTERNET. Individuals whose interviews appear on the INTERNET may have other interviews available on paper at the LBJ Library. Transcripts of oral history interviews may be consulted at the Library or lending copies may be borrowed by writing to the Interlibrary Loan Archivist, LBJ Library, 2313 Red River Street, Austin, Texas, 78705.

STEWART L. UDALL ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW IV

PREFERRED CITATION

For Internet Copy:

Transcript, Stewart L. Udall Oral History Interview IV, 10/31/69, by Joe B. Frantz,
Internet Copy, LBJ Library.

For Electronic Copy on Diskette from the LBJ Library:

Transcript, Stewart L. Udall Oral History Interview IV, 10/31/69, by Joe B. Frantz,
Electronic Copy, LBJ Library.

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE

Gift of Personal Statement
By Stewart L. Udall
to the
Lyndon Baines Johnson Library

In accordance with Sec. 507 of the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, as amended (44 U.S.C. 397) and regulations issued thereunder (41 CFR 101-10), I, STEWART L. UDALL, hereinafter referred to as the donor, hereby give, donate, and convey to the United States of America for eventual deposit in the proposed Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, and for administration therein by the authorities thereof, a tape and transcript of a personal statement approved by me and prepared for the purpose of deposit in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library. The gift of this material is made subject to the following terms and conditions:

1. Title to the material transferred hereunder, and all literary property rights, will pass to the United States as of the date of the delivery of this material into the physical custody of the Archivist of the United States.

2. It is the donor's wish to make the material donated to the United States of America by the terms of the instrument available for research in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library. At the same time, it is his wish to guard against the possibility of its contents being used to embarrass, damage, injure, or harass anyone. Therefore, in pursuance of this objective, and in accordance with the provisions of Sec. 507 (f)(3) of the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, as amended (44 U.S.C. 397) this material shall not, for a period of ten (10) years or until the donor's prior death, be available for examination by anyone except persons who have received my express written authorization to examine it. This restriction shall not apply to employees and officers of the General Services Administration (including National Archives and Records Service and the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library) engaged in performing normal archival work processes.

3. A revision of this stipulation governing access to the material for research may be entered into between the donor and the Archivist of the United States, or his designee, if it appears desirable.

4. The material donated to the United States pursuant to the foregoing shall be kept intact permanently in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

Signed by Stewart L. Udall on May 20, 1971

Accepted by Harry J. Middleton for the Archivist of the United States, October 17, 1975

Original Deed of Gift on File at the Lyndon B. Johnson Library, 2313 Red River, Austin, TX

78705

ACCESSION NUMBER 74-259

INTERVIEW IV

INTERVIEWEE: STEWART UDALL

INTERVIEWER: JOE B. FRANTZ

DATE: October 31, 1969

Tape 1 of 1

F: This is interview number four with Stewart Udall in his office in Washington. The interviewer is Joe B. Frantz. The date is October 31, 1969.

Stu, let's talk today about the waning months of the Johnson Administration. There was some confusion there over land to be set aside and some other matters, and I thought we'd get right into that.

U: Joe, first let me say just for the record on this, because I'm talking today from memory without notes before me and this is one of the few things in the main because it was toward the end of the Administration, we had a few days when we were immediately out where one could do that sort of thing. I have a folder that's in my personal papers and I attempted to summarize chronologically the events that happened, because I thought I might want to go back at some time and reconstruct it. So I'm talking today not having refreshed my memory since late January. Of course, a substantial part of what occurred was in the public eye and the accuracy can be checked on that.

F: And eventually when the Udall papers surface somewhere we can get this.

U: Yes, but this will be my only oral account of that, and can be judged on that basis.

This goes back to the fact that most Presidents as they have left office--and most Secretaries of the Interior under their power to add areas to wildlife refuges, usually with the concurrence of the President, although you could do it on your own if you wanted. Because of the inherent power invested in the Executive, some Presidents have in those waning weeks or months of an Administration looked at the possible use of these powers to enlarge--not enlarge the public domain--take lands from the public domain and enlarge the national park system and enlarge the national wildlife refuge system. So being thoroughly aware of what other Presidents had done and Secretaries and wanting us to end on a high note, I first--as I recall it way back in July of 1968--submitted a memorandum to the President in which I recited the historical background and indicated to him guidance as to whether he wanted to have me lay out a series of options to be considered.

F: Do you get pressures from either organized or unorganized groups either to remove lands or not to remove lands?

U: Actually, you see, none of this was made public at the time. The people who are very aware of this, who know the history, and knew me and knew President Johnson would have known that we were going to do something, you see. But one of the complaints, because these are broad powers given to the Executive, by others are that you should have hearings and everybody should be heard and so on, except the trouble then is that you bring all the negative powers to bear and usually Congressmen and most of the Western Congressmen and Senators don't like it, you see. They raise hell about it and then--

F: And you delay.

U: You delay and then a President is going to do it over their dead body. That's one of the reasons that I decided to do it the quiet way. It's usually done the quiet way, but Congressmen and Senators knew that Presidents were going to do this. This became a kind of issue with me and the President along in December because of the fact he, because of his feeling about the Congress, always insisted that we check and brief with them and so on.

F: There is a kind of protocol involved in it?

U: There's a normal protocol that President Johnson was a master of, of always touching the Congressional base. But I kept telling him this is the one instance as you go out the door, you shouldn't care whether Congressmen like it or not. The issue is what's good for the country, and that they will accept it. In fact I had several of the key Senators and Congressmen that I had briefed on it last summer and I told him about this. So, in any event, I submitted the memorandum and the President responded as I knew he would, favorably, said, "Go ahead." He didn't approve anything except giving me directions, "Go ahead; make a review and in the fall sometime you can spread out your proposals to me."

So this is what I did. In fact, I called the Park Service in. I called the Fish and Wildlife Service in. I asked them to put the field people out--the Parks Service sent a team to Alaska--and to get recommendations to me as I recall in September as to what they recommended, both what I would do and the President would do--although the thought we had in mind is that although I was going to exercise Secretarial power, do the things on wildlife refuges, that it would be done with the President announcing and approving it and so on. So it would all be, in effect, his act.

So the next step on this, once we made decisions, as you would expect, the Park Director and the Director of Sports, Fish and Wildlife recommended some very large areas. I had to cut back their recommendations because I didn't want to rile Congress up too much. On the other hand I wanted to do some big, significant things. So this narrowed down finally to one new wildlife refuge, two major additions, both of them happening to be in Alaska, and a recommendation that the President add over seven

million acres to the National Park System, as national monuments by three areas in Alaska, two in Arizona, two in Utah--a total of seven.

Finally, we had this all prepared. We had a presentation. We had some magnificent photographs. In fact, we had a booklet that set it out. We presented on that day to President Johnson and Mrs. Johnson. I suggested to the President that I knew Mrs. Johnson would be interested and she came in for most of the meeting that morning in about mid-November, tenth or fifteenth of November.

F: This is at the President's office.

U: It was in the Cabinet room. I took a lot of my people with me. We made the presentation. We had slides and so on. The President made no commitment. As a matter of fact he did an interesting thing--that was in the dying of his Administration--and he had most of the members of his staff there, not just the lawyers, as a kind of board to do a critique. He invited Clark Clifford, Secretary of Defense who was there, and I wondered why Clark was there. It turned out, he invited him, which was fine, as a kind of general adviser. He'd served President Truman--"should he do it" and so on--and a lot of searching questions were asked. And Charlie Murphy, who'd also been President Truman's counsel, he was there. And the President, when I finished, went around the table asking them what their reaction was, which was very interesting.

F: Did he get specific as to places or were the reactions generalizations?

U: Well, there were such things as political questions: how would Congress react? Others wanted to know, "Well, is this too much in Alaska; what will the Alaskan people think; what will be the reaction of members of Congress?" There were legal questions asked. There were policy questions asked. In fact Secretary Clifford shook me up when he--you know the President right after the election had put out an order saying that he didn't want members of the Cabinet to be making far reaching Executive decisions and so on in the remaining days of the Administration, that we should leave issues to the new Administration. Clifford raised this, and said he felt this ran counter to the President's order. My reaction to that--I was prepared to this; I was ready for this--was that all Presidents in the past had done this. President Eisenhower did it, and it was traditional to do this.

F: This is bi-partisan really.

U: Yes, in the last days of the Administration. But I ran up against this argument. The result of it all was that I came away with the impression that the President wanted to do the whole thing, that he wanted to be satisfied on legal questions. In fact, this was referred over to the Attorney General's office to be sure that his authority to do it would not be questioned. There were other specific questions that were raised. I began dealing on

this--the members of the President's staff who handled this almost exclusively was De Vier Pierson, one of his lawyers. So I was told, "Well, the President only had these two or three reservations and the Department of Justice should get an opinion over." Then there was sort of some indication that the President wanted a few Congressional bases touched. I had already, way back in August, talked generally before Congress went home for the election with Senator Jackson, Congressman Sailer the ranking Republican on the House Committee. I think I touched base with Senator Kuchel a little bit, telling them not specific but in a general way, "You know, all Presidents had done this." I was going to be talking to the President. I wanted them to know about it so if they had any negative feelings I could convey them on. I didn't talk to people like Congressman Aspinall. I didn't talk to the Alaskan delegation and others, because I knew they would be negative about anything. I tried to explain this later.

So it moved on then to the next phase, but of course the thing, Joe, that you have to bear in mind--and I sort of kidded the President that day and I was probing for what I knew was one of the places he was vulnerable to my arguments and so on, in terms of adding new national park areas, both in acreage and number of areas--the Johnson Administration was a high water mark in many ways. And purely from the standpoint of expansion of the acreage of the national parks system, if the President had gone all the way with me on all of these, he in five years would have added forty percent, forty percent of the total acreage in national park system would have been done under his Administration, as well as about forty new areas, you see. And I pointed out, because Herbert Hoover, a one-term President, had in the last days put in Death Valley National Monument and one or two others, and I said, "Well, Mr. President, if Herbert Hoover could put in four million acres, I think seven million is about right for Lyndon Johnson." He smiled and so on. That was sort of the way we left it as we went out.

Then we went back and we began working up you know a press kit, press statement, White House press announcements, and then talking back and forth about these remaining problems. It rocked along and I then had the idea, because by then the election was over, the country's attention was focusing on the new President and his Cabinet and that sort of thing, when December rolled around. I thought the time to do this was some time just before Christmas and the President could sort of announce it as his parting Christmas gift to the American people. Of course, if this was going to be done it had to be done somewhere along the eighteenth, nineteenth, twentieth of the month, because the President was going down to the Ranch.

So I began pressing and pushing and so on, on this whole thing and I never could get a complete clearance. I never could get a complete green light. There kept being little problems, then Hickel was announced as being from Alaska. Then I got the word--this wasn't direct from the President; I was dealing through Pierson--well, the President's interested that I talk with Hickel, "What would he think about it?" I said I didn't think there was much point in trying to get Hickel to clear it because I knew he'd be against it.

He'd also feel that this was something that was hostile to the interest of Alaska, because President Eisenhower and Secretary Seton had created an eight million acre arctic wildlife refuge up beyond the Arctic Circle in the last month of the Eisenhower Administration, and all the Alaskans to a man were against it. The Congressmen, the Senators, the Governor--they all denounced it and so on because you were converting part of the Alaskan public domain into a permanent wildlife refuge.

But the request kept coming back, "Had I cleared this; had I cleared that?" I finally talked at some point in December, between the fifth and the fifteenth I guess along in there, with the President once about it. I thought I had it all settled.

Then the President--we may again, one of these little accidents--I recall he got the flu or something and wasn't too well just before Christmas and everything kind of got telescoped and canceled out and it wasn't done, except I was running out of time because either under an agreement with Congress or under the law if I was going to do anything with the Alaska wildlife refuges, and sign it as a Secretarial order, I had to give Congress thirty days notice. So that was the reason the nineteenth was a crucial date. So I had to sign those orders and I did go ahead with the wildlife refuges.

F: Did you get the idea that maybe he was getting counter-advice from someone close to him against just what you were up to?

U: No, but I began to get the idea that he was much too--there were two disturbing things. He was, what I thought, was much too concerned about Congressional reaction, because I couldn't clear this all the way through Congress. After all, after January 20 his relations with Congress are not important. He didn't have any legislation to get through. The question was had he done what he thought was right for history and right for the country in terms of a final conservation achievement. Then the other thing that began to crop up which was disturbing to me was that some of his people were apparently nervous about decisions that I might or might not make with the oil program. There began to be inquiries about actions that were pending or that people thought might be taken and this came into view. Then it later on, along in January, that the two became intermixed. At least this was the way I interpreted it.

F: Do you think these inquiries about oil were sponsored by the President, or do you think these were just people around him who were alert?

U: No, no, there were people around him. You see, there were quite a few Texas people who were there. Some of them were lawyers and some of them had their own contacts. And, after all, all of us were leaving office and so on. I came to the conclusion that some of them were raising issues with the President, that they were worried about some of the things I might do or might not do. This began to bubble along.

I'm probably leaving some of the details out here--but the next major event on this was on the fourteenth, sixteenth, whenever it was, when the President made his final State of the Union Message. Again the whole thing was sitting there. I had gotten no green light. The thing hadn't been cleared, but my assumption still was we were on the track; it was going to go; I had all the press releases; I had everything ready; we were ready at any day to do this. I felt naturally, because the twentieth was on a Monday, the twentieth of January, the last day this possibly could be done, it seemed to me, was on a Saturday before, or preferably the Friday before, which would have been the seventeenth. The President gave his State of the Union Message, my recollection is, on a Tuesday before. He said--and he ad-libbed it, Joe--in his State of the Union Message, when he got to the place where he talked about conservation and what he felt his Administration had done, what he hoped the country would do, and he said, "We haven't finished yet," he made this reference. Well, this let the cat out of the bag. I had the Saylers and Jacksons and others sworn to secrecy.

F: Up to that time there had been a premium on keeping this quiet.

U: That's right. And Hickel then was up on the pan at the Congressional committees--

F: Really kind of neutralized this thing--

U: Jackson and these other people--questions were asked; reporters were writing stories, "What's going to be done?" So I couldn't keep it under wraps completely. The stories were written and the reporters were scurrying around. We kept part of it hidden because we wanted it to be a surprise for several reasons, tactically, so Congress wouldn't rush to the White House and tell the President, "Don't do this" and "don't do that." I was trying to shield him from that kind of a thing. So then other new oil issues arose. One of them was a question that President Leoni of Venezuela felt that I had taken action on one of the Puerto Rico oil import quotas that was hostile to Venezuela's interest and that had broken some kind of tacit understanding he had had with the President. The State Department began raising this with me. I felt aggrieved on it, felt it was being misinterpreted and so on.

F: As far as you know was there any written understanding or was this just something men had talked about?

U: Presidents when they get together have communiques and something has been said. It could be interpreted the way they were choosing to interpret it. They felt strongly about it. I think something was sent over to the President. He was involved in it, too. But again, practically all of this, the President and I during that last week, most of the communication was through De Vier Pierson.

F: You weren't seeing him personally on this?

U: No, no. I may have had a phone call or two, but again, you know, I thought it was going to go. I had it all set. There was no reason for me to nag at the President or worry about it. It was just having a phone call come some day and say "go" or "it's go on Friday, get ready." My idea was that he was going to have the press in; he was going to tell them how pleased he was about it, and then he'd turn it over to me and I would do the briefing. And we had the briefing stuff all ready.

So at that point, along Tuesday, Wednesday of the week, we were still arguing strenuously--the State Department people and I with some of the White House people involved in it--on this Venezuelan thing. Pierson then for the first time began to hint that he thought probably if I would give in on the Venezuelan thing and just quit arguing--because I was arguing very vigorously that what I had done was not hostile and didn't have to be changed--that maybe this would be the thing that would get the President to give me the green light on the other. In other words, it began what I felt was a very unfair way of mixing things that ought not to be mixed. I felt that the parks, wildlife refuges and all this should have been handled on its merits and been done because it was a good thing for the country and a good thing to do and that the two were utterly unrelated. So this was a disturbing note. I, then, I think, got the word back that the President was very unhappy because I hadn't done my homework with the members of Congress, and some of them were kicking up their heels and were raising trouble about it.

Well, he had let the cat out of the bag himself. I hadn't. So if there's any fault on that, as I tried to point out to them--. In any event, as the thing rocked on towards Friday--which I had in my own mind this was the last day at that time--it seemed to me these things were all getting confused, it was all getting tangled up together and I began to really worry that somehow it was not going to get done; it was going to fall apart.

F: Let me go back one moment for clarity. All you had to do was sign the order a month before.

U: On the wildlife refuge.

F: Yes.

U: The President himself, he alone, had the power on the parks, Joe.

F: But you could go ahead.

U: I could go ahead and I did.

F: So long as you did it by the nineteenth of December.

U: That's right.

F: And nothing came from that?

U: No. I had to sign a final order--that was a temporary order--I had to sign a final order myself, which I did the morning of the twentieth, because the thirty days had then elapsed. That was one of the last acts that I did as Secretary.

F: The first one is just a sort of notification?

U: Yes. So the thing rocked along. Now I get vague and I forget whether this is Friday afternoon or Saturday morning. No, it's Friday afternoon that I'm talking about it because my public information man, Charlie Boatner--and, of course, Charlie was from Texas and knew the President well and he had been working very closely with me on this throughout-- and because that weekend was the pre-inaugural festivities, the reporters weren't working normally. Charlie had to alert all of them, and the President had alerted them to a degree anyway. They all were waiting, and, in fact, most of them were holding stories back. They had bits and pieces of it and they were trying to break it. They were all scurrying all over. So Charlie kept saying, "It's going to be Thursday; it's going to be Friday; there'll be a press conference," and so on.

Finally there were some of them who had Monday newspapers. He, even at one point, with my permission, passed out copies of the press release, White House press release and everything. Finally the President, Friday afternoon or sometime around noon in the day, something broke in the press, in the newspapers. And he called up and raised hell with me, that we had put out the announcement that this had been approved and he hadn't approved it. I lamely tried to explain. I wasn't apologizing because it was too damned late. In fact, I at that point considered Saturday afternoon the last time it could be done and in a way I guess--and maybe this was one of the mistakes I made--when I told Charlie to let some of them who were writing Monday stories have copies of it, and then they later leaked it to somebody. There was an Associated Press or some story got in that most of the facts. The President was very unhappy and bawled me out good that he hadn't made a decision and we turned it loose. And I pointed out that he had let the cat out of the bag himself and that we just couldn't hold it all back and I had, by my own personal relations with the reporters, been sitting on--just as a favor to me they'd been sitting on the story for three days and that time had just run out. His final comment was "Hell of a way to run a Department." And that was the last telephone conversation.

F: Did he ever explain why he ad-libbed that into the State of the Union Message?

U: No, no, I didn't go into that.

F: He didn't comment on it when you suggested this was the beginning of the reporters.

U: That's right. Then this same time, and the time sequence was important-- some later

thought, and only the President knows--I have no idea--and I always denied this, about ten days before my Under Secretary had come to me--

F: Is this David Black?

U: Yes. --with the idea of naming the District of Columbia Stadium for Robert Kennedy. He, of course, was a Kennedy man and with my ties with the Kennedys, I said, "Well, it sounded like a pretty good idea to me." He'd already done a lot of homework on it before he even came to me and he said, if I and the District of Columbia Stadium Board agreed on it, we had control of the stadium and it could be done. So the question then was whether the Stadium Board would agree on it. I made a couple of phone calls. I called the chairman of the Stadium Board and he came by to see me. He at first was very much--because he was an Irishman and a Kennedy admirer--he thought it was a great idea and was for it.

Then, apparently he went back and talked with some of the staff and with others and cooled off on it. He came back in a phone call to me--and I thought the thing was over at that time--and he said he didn't think they could do it. At that point I gave up on it. I had my hands full with this other problem. This by then was about Tuesday or Wednesday of this last week. I told Black that it looked to me like it was dead and if he wanted to go ahead and work on it he could.

Well, he began, apparently, from what he told me later, he really went all out on it and got some of his other friends in the Administration to help. He got all cranked up and suddenly on Friday he showed up and said it was all set. We never did touch base with the White House on it, maybe we should have, I don't know. But in my own mind, when I justified later--because I suspect there may have been some of the White House people feel that this was something, even though I had the right to do it, that I should have cleared it with the White House--it wasn't even clear, you know, it wasn't in a position where it was done, where it was ready to be done. In fact, my impression until almost the very day that it was announced was that it wasn't going to fall together.

So in any event, I didn't announce it. The District of Columbia Board announced it and announced that incurred in it. And some may have felt that this was the cause of the President's failure later to do the thing on the parks. The President never mentioned this to me. None of his staff mentioned it to me and, Joe, as I honestly said to others later, if this was a factor, I don't know. I have no way of knowing, but as far as any communications with the White House--

F: Your only idea of there being any kind of a flap there was what you read in the papers.

U: That's right. But the final conversation, the final two telephone calls, and this was within a matter of an hour from the time the President called me--and the Kennedy things was

announced in this period too. It was a wild day. Pierson called me and suggested--the President had obviously talked with him--he said, "I understand you and the President had a rough conversation."

I said, "Yes, that's right." I told him my side of it, I told him that time had run out. We just had to go. We couldn't wait any longer. And I couldn't understand it. Was the President going to do it or wasn't he going to do it--

F: Did you feel you had anyone over there like Pierson who might be an advocate for you?

U: No, I didn't. I dealt with him exclusively. I probably should have got some other allies, but I felt all along it was going to go because I knew Mrs. Johnson was enthusiastically for it. I had every reason to believe the President liked the whole idea, the whole package.

So Pierson then made a final mistake--again whether the President told him to do this or not, I don't know--but he said to me again, "Well, if you get this Venezuela oil thing all worked out, maybe that would get the President back in the right frame of mind and we can get it done this afternoon."

At that point I just really cracked because I had gone so far, and I said, "Look"--I had just been bawled out by the President in a rather savage manner a few minutes before--and I said, "All right, whatever you want on any oil matters including Venezuela I'll do." But I said "I've made my last arguments on the parks." I was very hot by then and very emotional about it. I said, "You can do what you damned please," I said, "I'm though," and I said, "I'll sign off on the oil and I'll do it within the hour, but I've made my case and if you don't want to do anything on the parks, that's fine."

And at that point I really quit, Joe. I came back into my office on Monday morning, but I felt that the whole thing had gotten out of hand. I had my solicitor and George Hartzog, the Director of the Parks Service--what I'm just telling you actually was on Saturday. They stood by in the building with my secretary in my office all day on Sunday. I was so upset by the whole thing that I went out, took a fifteen mile hike up to the C & O Canal all day, because when I said I was through I'd made my last arguments. And I assumed at that time that either nothing was going to be done or that my people would be called over on Sunday to discuss the details, and I would learn--nothing happened on Sunday.

F: They just sat and waited.

U: No, things were being done in the White House. They made some decisions. They had to be working on it Sunday. But Pierson accepted my word apparently all too literally that I was through. Therefore, he assumed the Department was through, because as far as we were concerned we had nothing further to do with it.

Monday morning came, I went to my office about eight or eight-thirty. I had Boatner join me there. He was talking to George Christian and others what was going to be done? Nobody knew. Nine-thirty came, ten o'clock came--here were the last two hours, which was a crazy time to do it because that was inauguration day, you see.

F: Among other things it gets lost--

U: Yes. I mean it was just the wrong time to do it. So finally Boatner got word through one of George Christian's people the President had signed some of the orders. He had signed three and not signed four or signed four and not signed three. He signed the small ones and didn't sign the big ones. Of course, one of the big ones was this million acre area right on the Mexican border in my own state in my own congressional district. I had to assume, and I still do, that among other things the President was trying to show me who was boss the last day he was in office. And he did!

F: There was never any indication of the President's rationale in what he chose and what he rejected? He never talked to you about what he should do?

U: No, Joe, there were talks--

F: If I don't do all, here's what--

U: But the rationale was in the White House Press release. It's on the record--put out in a White House Press release. As far as I was concerned its logic was very bad, because it said the President had not signed the others because he was deferring to Congress. Any President who defers to Congress in something like this was doing what I had said all along--. He ought to decide what was good for the country; because I had the congressional backstopping done. Jackson and Saylor between them, if anybody had tried--you know the Congress could undo these. In fact, I had briefed the whole Utah delegation. I had practically at one point sold them on the fact that the two in Utah--that this was a good thing.

F: Arizona was primed?

U: Well, in Arizona, the one that was in my brother's congressional district. I didn't talk to Senator Goldwater--it wasn't Goldwater--Senator Hayden, and the other people because I knew that I couldn't go tell the President that they were all hot and for it. But I knew them well enough--I knew all these people--that they weren't going to be violently outraged by it. You know, some of them might say it was a mistake but nobody was going to excoriate the President. As I kept saying all along, the conservation groups in the country would have regarded this as one of the great acts of the President in this field. This was the audience, and not what some Congressman did or didn't feel, that was the crucial element. I didn't give a damn personally if some of the Congressmen stood up and

denounced me because I would know that this was going to go down in history as a major step by a President. In fact, no President in history had done as much as the President in terms of the national park systems.

F: Did you ever hear again regarding Venezuelan oil? Or was that the end of that, too?

U: No, I signed off on it. It was done. It was straightened out. That was the end of that.

F: There was some talk in the press about your resigning in those last few days. Did you consider this or is this press talk?

U: No, no, I didn't because I didn't blow up myself until later. The President in his conversation with me was very heated and was telling me off, and so on. I was on the defensive, and I didn't say anything to him. When Pierson called back--in fact Pierson called back twice as I recall; I think there were two calls that he made to me--and it was the second call, which I believe I made back to him when I really had just got emotional and lost my cool and I told him, when I said, "I'm through; I said I made my last argument; I've signed my last order; there's nothing further I had to say to anybody." And I said, "As a matter of fact, if you want my resignation--if the President wants my resignation, I'll walk it over right now." I was that angry about it. So I did say that.

F: You weren't called in then, for any press briefings on that?

U: No, Joe, literally, this was Saturday afternoon at three or four o'clock in the afternoon. I left and went home. I never came back to my office until eight-thirty or nine o'clock on Monday. I signed a letter to Hickel and I signed this other final order and I had about six or eight of my most trusted people with me there and we just were sitting, talking, waiting to find out from the White House what had been done, if anything. Waiting to die.

F: Is this a good time to talk about the transition?

U: Yes, I think so.

F: Was there a transition?

U: I had a very bad transition, with Hickel, probably the worst of any of the members of the Cabinet. I made some notes on that. I kept a transition file although there isn't a great deal in it. In part because of these Alaska orders, the wildlife refuge that I signed, the others that I tried to get signed, he considered this--he's a very combative person--and he considered this kind of insulting and that I was preempting his rights and I was trying to do Alaska in the eye--that sort of thinking was going through his mind. He also, when he had his Press Conference and riled up the conservationists, he blamed me for a lot of his troubles that followed. He's hostile to me right to this day, Joe.

F: This hasn't diluted, particularly.

U: No, but from December 19, which was the only day he was in my office and we talked, he had one man with him and I had my Under Secretary and others and we talked for forty minutes and we went down to lunch together--never saw him again.

F: Did he ever talk personnel with you?

U: No. I talked with him that day. I told him that I thought I had in the Department the best career team in the government and the best bureau chiefs and that I had picked them all without regard to politics almost exclusively, and that I thought they'd serve him well. I later said--he had a man in the office and I sent him several memoranda. I offered to have him confer with me, to help me make decisions and everything. Nothing ever came back, nothing whatsoever. I finally left a final letter on his desk when I walked out that morning.

F: As far as transition is concerned, really, it was one visit.

U: Yes, that's right.

F: Was this at lower levels, was this done?

U: He had one or two men in the office. That's about where it came out.

F: Thank you, Mr. Udall, that's all for now.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview IV]

