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# Guide to the Reuel Stanfield Autobiography 1934-1947



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## **Descriptive Summary**

<b>Identifier</b>	ICU.SPCL.STANFIELD
<b>Title</b>	Stanfield, Reuel. Autobiography
<b>Date</b>	1934-1947
<b>Size</b>	0.25 linear feet (1 box)
<b>Repository</b>	Special Collections Research Center University of Chicago Library 1100 East 57th Street Chicago, Illinois 60637 U.S.A.
<b>Abstract</b>	The material is an autobiographical account of labor activist Reuel Stanfield's (1934-1961) organizing activities from 1934 to 1947, including the 1934 Longshoremen's Strike in San Francisco.

## **Information on Use**

### **Access**

No restrictions.

### **Citation**

When quoting material from this collection, the preferred citation is: Stanfield, Reuel. Autobiography, [Box #, Folder #], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library

### **Biographical Note**

Reuel Stanfield was born on a farm near French Lick, Indiana in 1900. He came from a staunch Socialist family and at the age of six years began delivering *The Appeal to Reason* to his neighbors in Du Bois county. He had perhaps a sixth grade education when he ran away from home at the age of twelve. His first job was watering the hippopotami for a circus. At sixteen he went to sea and shortly became active in the labor movement. He was involved in the 1921 Coast Strike, the 1923 strike on the Great Lakes, the 1928 Longshoreman's strike in Antwerp, Belgium, and the 1932 Longshoreman's strike in Manchester, England, as well as the 1934 West Coast Longshoreman's Strike, the Modesto Dynamiting Case, for which he served a term in San Quentin Prison, and the Food, Tobacco and Agricultural Workers (FTA) in the 1940's, including the strike and boycott against the American Tobacco Company. Stanfield became an organizer for the Progressive Party in Florida in 1948. After an interlude in Pittsburgh, he settled in Cincinnati, Ohio, about 1950 where he worked at a series of jobs with electric companies, working on his own time as an unpaid organizer for the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers (UE). Stanfield was called as a witness before the Ohio Un-American Activities Committee in 1952 for alleged Communist activities, something that he neither

confirmed nor denied. He was also called to testify at a hearing of the Senate Internal Sub-Committee in 1957. He was a dedicated socialist throughout his life. In the last years of his life, he became a Democratic Party precinct captain in the slums of Cincinnati. He died in that city in 1961.

## **Scope Note**

The material in the University Library is an autobiographical account of Stanfield's activities from 1934 to 1947. The material was prepared in collaboration with Mrs. Ethel Edwards Morriss, who aided Stanfield by editing his life story. The manuscript deals with Stanfield's activities in the 1934 West Coast Longshoreman's Strike (which additionally resulted in an important law case, *People v. Fitzgerald* 1936 14 CA2d 180), when he was in command of a "beef squad" which went around persuading scabs not to take strikers' jobs. Stanfield describes the methods used, which were quite stringent in detail. In 1935, Stanfield and other union men were charged with the possession of dynamite and convicted after a trial at Modesto, California. He served more than three years on this charge at San Quentin prison, though a committee of the California legislature declared that Stanfield and his friends had been framed. The governor of California later pardoned him. While in prison, he was friendly with labor leaders J. B. McNamara, convicted in the Los Angeles Times Bomb Case in 1911, and Thomas Mooney, also convicted of responsibility for a bomb explosion that killed nine persons in San Francisco in 1916. Stanfield also organized a successful sit down strike in the prison industries, which won better conditions for the convicts. After his prison term, he returned to union organizing. During World War II, however, he was banned from serving on merchant ships as a war security risk by the F.B.I., according to his own account. He spent the war years and afterwards in Memphis, Tennessee, and Charleston, South Carolina, organizing workers in packing houses and tobacco plants. The account mentions, among other persons, Andrew Furuseth, long-time president of the International Seamen's Union, Harry Bridges, West Coast labor leader, William Z. Foster, leader of the American Communist Party, Mike Quill of the T. W. U., and numerous other labor leaders all over the United States. Stanfield describes in detail his travels across the country, generally by freight train, his dealings with the police, his union organizing, and numerous intimate details of his personal life.

The material is divided into three parts. The first section dealing with the years 1934-1938 is a carbon copy of the manuscript edited by Mrs. Morriss with Stanfield's collaboration. The original of this draft has been lost. Stanfield himself typed the original manuscript dealing with the years 1938-1947. There are also some pages from the original manuscript of the 1934-1938 account, which Mrs. Morriss held out for later reference. Included with the papers is a third section by Mrs. Morriss covering Stanfield's activities from 1947 until his death in 1961, mainly his work in Cincinnati, Ohio, where he spent his last years.

## **Related Resources**

The following related resources are located in the Department of Special Collections:

<http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/spcl/select.html>

## **Subject Headings**

- Stanfield, Reuel, 1900-1961
- Longshoremen's Strike, San Francisco, Calif., 1934
- Labor movement - United States

## **INVENTORY**

### **Box 1**

#### **Folder 1**

Manuscript Sections "San Pedro" "Union" "Back"

### **Box 1**

#### **Folder 2**

Manuscript Sections "With Bridges in Frisco" "Overland" "Framed"

### **Box 1**

#### **Folder 3**

Manuscript Sections "The Trial" "San Quentin" "Education"

### **Box 1**

#### **Folder 4**

Manuscript Sections "Prison Strike" "Out" "Worker Education"

### **Box 1**

#### **Folder 5**

Manuscript Sections "Pulled By the FBI" "Memphis" "Charleston"

### **Box 1**

#### **Folder 6**

Manuscript Sections "Past, Present, Future," Miscellaneous pages from 1-157, including handwritten notes

### **Box 1**

#### **Folder 7**

Manuscript Sections "Page One Last Half," pgs. 1-50

### **Box 1**

#### **Folder 8**

Manuscript Sections "Page One Last Half," pgs. 51-100

### **Box 1**

#### **Folder 9**

Manuscript Sections "Page One Last Half," pgs. 101-157

### **Box 1**

#### **Folder 10**

"1947-1961," by Ethel Edwards