Guide to the
Reuel Stanfield
Autobiography 1934-1947
Table of Contents

Descriptive Summary 3
Information on Use 3
Access 3
Citation 3
Biographical Note 3
Scope Note 4
Related Resources 4
Subject Headings 4
INVENTORY 5
Descriptive Summary

Identifier  ICU.SPCL.STANFIELD

Title  Stanfield, Reuel. Autobiography

Date  1934-1947

Size  0.25 linear feet (1 box)

Repository  Special Collections Research Center
University of Chicago Library
1100 East 57th Street
Chicago, Illinois 60637 U.S.A.

Abstract  The material is an autobiographical account of labor activist Reuel Stanfield’s (1934-1961) organizing activities from 1934 to 1947, including the 1934 West Coast 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