

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF STATE POLICE
HARTFORD, CONN.

June 5, 1950

H-25-2

TO
FROM
SUBJECT:

Commissioner Edward J. Hickey
Captain Paul Lavin

**H-25-2 Ringling Bros., Barnum & Bailey
Circus Fire**

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Dear Commissioner:

After receiving your order to proceed to Portland, Maine, on May 30, please be advised that I joined Captain Paul Beckwith of the Hartford Police Department, leaving Hartford at about 3:30 P.M., D.S.T., and proceeding to Dover, New Hampshire, arriving there at 8:00 P.M. We reported directly to the Police Station located in City Hall where I made an appointment to interview Andrew H. MacDaniel, Chief of Police of Dover, New Hampshire.

On May 31, 1950 Captain Beckwith and I interviewed Chief MacDaniel who gave us some pertinent information to the effect that the Segee family was known to them in the City of Dover, and he assisted us greatly in our investigation while there doing everything in his power to cooperate.

We also called upon Chief Edward Knott at Fire Headquarters located on Broadway, Dover, New Hampshire and there were afforded every courtesy relative to the investigation that we were on. We made inquiry while with both these gentlemen as to whether or not R. Russell Smith, or any representative from the Fire Marshal's Office of Columbus, Ohio, paid them a visit, and we were told that no one arrived at that point to this date. They did state, however, that they would communicate with you, at your office, if and when anyone arrived and made inquiry as to the Segee matter.

Through Chief MacDaniel, Colonel Caswell of the State Police was also advised of our presence and assured Chief MacDaniel that the State Police would also inform your office if and when any representative from Ohio appeared.

After completing our business in the City of Dover, we proceeded to Scarborough, State Police Barracks, and was advised by Sergeant Gorman, the Officer in Command, that we could expect 100 per cent cooperation from the officials of Portland, Maine, and arrangements were then made with Captain Edward Kochian, Inspector of Detectives of the Portland Police Department, located at 132 Federal Street. We immediately went to his office and explained our mission relative to the Segee matter, and he gave us the information that R. Russell Smith

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of the Fire Marshal's Office of Columbus, Ohio, had arrived a short time after one o'clock on this date and had requested two officers to assist in the investigation of fires located on the water front and in the vicinity of 20 Brackett Street, the former home of the Segee family. Smith further stated that he had secured from Fire Chief Oliver Sanborn a list of fires located on the water front and in the nearby vicinity of the home of Segee. Captain Kochian assigned two inspectors of the Bureau, John H. MacDougal and John C. Keaney, to assist R. Russell Smith in his investigation. We explained our mission to the Captain who stated that we could be guaranteed that the Portland Police Department would do everything in their power to assist us and to keep us posted as to the progress of R. Russell Smith's investigation, and that he, personally, would see to it that the Inspectors now assigned would report to us as to their investigation and give us all pertinent facts that they would secure while with R. Russell Smith, and that we would be kept advised to his every move.

The above-named Inspectors returned to the station and Captain Kochian, in our presence, interrogated them, and we learned that Smith had gone to the former home of the Segee family at 20 Brackett Street, and checked off from his list, which was obtained from the Fire Department's fires that had been reported as incendiary fires within a 1,500 or 2,000 foot radius of the Segee home. That he did not question any of the neighbors, with the exception of one H. M. Brown, at 21 Brackett Street, who is an Antique Dealer in that location and who knew the Segee family, but secured no information from him relative to the Accused now being held, Robert Segee. He only remained with the Inspectors a very short while but did tell them that he flew in from Columbus on the 30th to Boston, Mass., where due to fog, his flight was grounded, and proceeded from Boston to Portland by taxicab, arriving early in the morning of the 31st, and was registered at the Eastland Hotel in Portland, Maine.

That Smith further admitted to them that he was going to spend most of his time that day and evening at the offices of the Portland Telegram newspaper and there search the files in their morgue for information relative to these fires. He further advised that he was to be in Portland where he was to make his base for at least two weeks and would cover Old Town, Maine, Dover, New Hampshire, and Portsmouth, New Hampshire, while he was in this immediate vicinity. That it was also learned, through the Captain's contact at the Portland Telegram, that the City Editor of this paper received a telephone call from the Fire Marshal in Columbus, Ohio, soliciting the assistance of the Editor for R. Russell Smith, identified to them as being the investigator on the Segee matter from Columbus.

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While we were interrogating and securing statements from Frank Romangno and Earl Hackett, at about 11:30 P.M., date, R. Russell Smith appeared at the Police Station with a reporter of the Portland Telegram and told Chief Kochian that he had secured a "world of information" from the newspaper morgue.

On May 31, in company with Inspectors MacDougal and Keaney, both Captain Beckwith and I went to the immediate vicinity of 20 Brackett Street, the former home of Segee, and covered all the area and locations that R. Russell Smith had covered the date previous and secured the information contained in the report that is filed on this matter, and secured in addition, the names of Norman Driscoll, of 212 York Street, Portland, age 17, who was a friend of Robert Segee while he was in Portland, also the name of George R. Lavangee, Cumberland Street, Portland, Dave Redmond of Ting Street, Portland, and Edward Ridge of 28 Summer Street, Portland.

All these boys were picked up and questioned with the exception of Lavangee, who, we learned, is now a resident of R.F.D. 1, East Nassau, New York, and is employed as a roofer and sidewaller, and to the best of our knowledge and information was in Nassau, New York, within the past seven days.

Captain Kochian, as well as Captain Douglas W. Steele and Captain Hinds, cooperated with us 100% in this investigation and did everything in their power to make our stay in their city a successful one. We were afforded every courtesy throughout the entire investigation. We were assured by Captain Kochian that they would make it a point, that the Portland Department and the officers assigned to assist in this matter, for us to secure any and all information that R. Russell Smith might secure during his stay in Portland and to submit it to you as received.

Chief Oliver Sandborn, Chief of the Fire Department in Portland, Maine, was interviewed, and he stated that R. Russell Smith of Columbus, had been in his office and secured a list of fires located in and around Brackett Street, Portland, over a period of several years. He was somewhat interested in the procedures R. Russell Smith was using but knew nothing of the background of the case that he was interested in, other than it was his opinion that Smith was trying to break the fire cases in and around Portland. He, too, stated that he would furnish your office with all information relative to Mr. Smith and what information he might dig up relative to the Segee matter in question. Chief Sandborn stated that he had an appointment with Mr. Smith and State Fire Marshal Flynn of Augusta in his office sometime before noon on this date, and to the best of our knowledge, Mr. Smith, nor Mr. Flynn, did not keep this engagement but proceeded to Dover, New Hampshire, where they would conduct a further investigation into the Segee matter.

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During our stay in Portland, Maine, both Captain Beckwith and I received the very best cooperation from both agencies, and we did not have the opportunity of seeing Mr. Smith while we were there, and our presence there was kept 100% confidential. No member of the press or radio were advised and we were asked no pertinent questions from either of these agencies.

I am also happy to report that we received the whole-hearted cooperation of Chief MacDaniel and Chief Knott in Dover, New Hampshire, who also will keep your office posted as to the movements and information that the Columbus, Ohio Authorities may secure while he is in the vicinity of Dover, New Hampshire. This information will be sent to your office immediately upon receipt, either by phone or letter.

The consensus of opinion of all police officers that we have come in contact with on this mission and fire officials, all of whom have been more than courteous to us, is that the representative of Ohio is endeavoring to break the fires in the New England States in preference to taking care of the cases at hand in Columbus, Ohio, and that Mr. Smith is more interested in the Circus Fire at the present time than anything else.

On Friday, June 2, I returned to the Office of Chief Andrew MacDaniel at Dover and was told by him that he had communicated with your office relative to the presence of Mr. R. Russell Smith, and that he, Smith, appeared at his office with one George Morse, Assistant Fire Marshal of Portland, Maine, and one Louis Pendleton, a member of the Fire Underwriters, whose office is at Concord, New Hampshire. That they were at his office not over five minutes asking about the Segee family and about where they lived. That they interviewed no one in Dover to the best of his knowledge and that while in his office, Smith was very much interested in a sex murder which happened in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, as he remembers it in 1940, where an eight year old girl's body was found under the railroad platform adjacent to the B & M Railroad, and that an itinerant barber had been apprehended and charged with this crime. That the itinerant barber was brought before the court and plead Guilty to the Charge of Murder and was later released by the court.

That Smith and Morse were also interested to tie in with Segee a fire at the University of Maine where several students were killed some years ago, and that Smith divulged the information to the Chief that Segee had admitted two fires that he had set in his own home on Middle Road in Dover while a resident there, at the age of 7. That this information had been corroborated by Segee's sister, Dorothy, who had given Smith the information previously. That these two fires were set in clothes closets

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in their home on Middle Road, Dover, previous to the fire that destroyed their barn. That both these closet fires had not been reported to the fire department inasmuch as the sister, Dorothy, extinguished them herself.

Chief MacDaniel further stated that these three gentlemen stated they were to go to Portsmouth, New Hampshire, where they were to ask the assistance of Chief Lynche of the Police Department to investigate further the Segee matter. Further, the Chief advised me that he had already communicated with Lynche and advised as to the presence of R. Russell Smith, and that he would consider it a favor if he, too, would cooperate with the State of Connecticut officials who were very much interested in this case. Chief Lynche advised the Dover Chief that he would submit any and all information that he could secure from Smith, to make a part of the Connecticut record.

Leaving the Dover Police Department, I called upon Chief Knott at Fire Headquarters on Broadway, and he advised also that R. Russell Smith, along with two other gentlemen, one of whom he did not know, Louis Pendleton of Concord, the State representative of the Fire Underwriters was present, and he, too, was asked several questions relative to fires up to the year 1941. They were also interested in the Horan Warehouse fire which had been reported under H-25-Z, but did not go into any detail whatsoever. However, he was notified by Chief MacDaniel that the men were to pay him a visit, and he prepared himself accordingly. He, too, will advise your office of all future contacts and information secured from the said R. Russell Smith.

It is indeed a pleasure to report to you, Sir, that all the contacts we have made, the officials in New Hampshire and Maine, which are incorporated in this letter, we could not ask for better service or cooperation. Time meant nothing, as long as they were securing information, no matter how small, and they remained with us well into the night and gave us every possible assistance that could be given, and through these contacts, we have the promise of all officials, that your office will be advised as to the entire set of movements of this R. Russell Smith, and a copy of all information that he might secure while in their jurisdiction.

This is also to advise you, Sir, that it was a pleasure to work with these officials on the matter at hand.

Respectfully Submitted,

Paul Lavin
Paul Lavin
Captain, Western District
Base Station, Bethany

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