

East Hartford, Conn.  
July 21, 1944

Allen, Raymond J.

I, Raymond J. Allen of #54 Woodbridge Ave. East Hartford, Connecticut do hereby make the following statement of my own free will regarding the fire at the Ringling Brothers Circus in Hartford, Connecticut on July 6, 1944.

I attended the circus in Hartford, Conn. on July 6, 1944 with my wife Rita Allen and my daughter Barbara Allen age 3 yrs, and Carol Ann Gay age 4 also of #54 Woodbridge Ave., East Htfd. We obtained seats in the bleachers to the left of the main entrance, we were seated about 3/4 mi away from the entrance and about 5 rows down from the top.

The first knowledge that I had of the fire was when I heard a scream over to my right and I looked in that direction and saw a flame about 1 foot in diameter burning in the canvas overhead, and which was directly over the bleacher section to the right of the main entrance. I also noticed the people in this section all running down from the seats towards the track and going towards the main entrance, they were all screaming and hollering at that time. The people seated in the same section that I was in started running down and also going towards the main entrance and some of them went down through the bleachers and out under the tent. I stayed there with my wife and children for about 30 to 40 seconds to decide what to do and then I moved the boards on the bleachers and dropped down to the ground with my daughter and my wife handed down my niece and I then assisted my wife. We went along underneath the bleachers and out under the canvas towards the mid-way. After I had them outside I went

R. J. Allen

Statement of Raymond J. Allen

back inside by going underneath the canvas and assisted an old woman that was hanging from the bleachers. Her foot was caught in the boards and she was hanging head down about 8 inches to 1 foot from the ground. We were able to get her down and she was able to make her way out by going underneath the tent. By this time the flames were overhead and burning rapidly. I noticed the people the grandstand on the North-side and near the West animal run-way all crowding towards the exit that was blocked by the runway. The crowd was pushing and I saw the railing break at the end of the grandstand and a woman fell and dropped a child that she was carrying and the child fell on top of the animal runway and there was a panther still in the runway and as the attendant poked the panther due to the child's arm was sticking in between the ribs and the panther turned around and clawed the child pulling part of the clothing off. Another man which was standing on the ribs handed the child to me and I ~~xxx~~ passed it to another man. I think there was one or two more animals still in the runway. I also noticed the people falling and pushing until I was forced out towards the center of the ring. I made my way down through the ring and towards the East end of the tent and I was about 3/4 of the way down and I could see the fire burning overhead and then the tent started to fall and I started to run over towards the grandstand but had not reached it when it fell. I was then able to get out under the seats and went under the tent. While I was inside and just prior to the tent falling I noticed people piling up near the animal runway on the

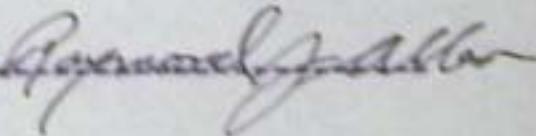
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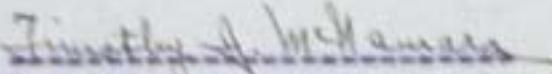
Statement of Raymond J. Allen

East end of the main tent and also women running around with their hair afire.

While I was underneath the bleachers and grandstand at no time did I notice any pails or water and did not see any of the circus help underneath the bleachers assisting the people. I did some inside near the runway directing the people how to go and there was also some near the grandstand.

At no time did I have occasion to use the men's toilet while I was there. On my way into the main tent before the show started I noticed pieces of broken glass which seemed to be Coca Cola bottles due to the dark color of the glass lying on the top of canvas over the bleacher section where I first noticed the fire.

Signed 

  
Detective Sergeant  
East Hartford Police Dept.