

Statement of Helen A. Austin.

Hartford, Conn.
July 21, 1944.

My name is Helen A. Austin, I am 14 years old and I live at 16 Eastview St. Hartford. I attended the circus on Barbour St. on the afternoon of July 6, 1944, I was with Dianna Fivko of 215 Grandview Terrace, Hartford.

We had found seats in the bleachers at the east end of the tent just north of the band stand. We had seats almost to the top, about four rows short of the top and almost at the edge near the end of these bleachers, where the animal run-way was. These bleachers were almost filled with people, mostly children were near where we were. I happened to look up to where the other animal cage was, to the west and saw a fire and told Dianna. This fire was about as big as half a house window, about 3 feet square I guess. It was where the top of the tent meets the side and was near the Main Entrance to the tent, just to the right of that entrance as you would come into the tent.

I could see the side of the tent where the fire was, not all of it, but about half way from the top down. I couldn't see the bottom of it. The fire was mostly on the side wall, it had just started to reach the top when I first saw it.

I thought it would be put out, so I stayed where I was for a minute. When I saw the fire spreading, Dianna and I jumped down through the seats to the ground, under the seats, and got out under the canvas side wall by pulling it up. I did not see or hear any attendant under the seats, directing people. I saw only a lot of empty soda bottles, a lot of them smashed and the ground was all glass, and I saw one pail, half full of water, under the seats where we got out.

We went to the east to some street and got around back to Barbour St. at a corner where there were several stores on the corner, a drug store, a grocery store, and a package store.

When we got out of the tent we came to a place on the lot, where there was a road that seemed to have been just made, cut through a lot of bushes and trees and I saw three men and they each were leading a horse. These men told us to get out of the way, as we might frighten the horses and they had to get them out. There was more horses coming in back of these men and also two water trucks out on the main road, east of the lot I saw one more water wagon. These water wagons were trucks painted red and had Ringling Bros. on them in white paint.

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We waited in the bushes near this road on the lot until the horses and water trucks went by, and then ran to the main road.

I have read this statement and it is the truth.

Signed Helen A. Austin

Witness. P.B. Beckwith.