



SEGEE IS UNRUFFLED AFTER HIS CONFESSIONS

THE STRANGE CASE OF THE CIRCUS ARSONIST

Dream drawings confirm confession of youth who started Hartford fire

For six weeks Ohio police and medical authorities listened at first with disbelief and then with increasing horror as a stoop-shouldered 20-year-old youth named Robert Dale Segee unfolded a grisly tale of arson and murder. Accustomed to fake confessions of unstable, publicity-seeking people, officials came to believe Segee's story through a mass of corroborative evidence, particularly a series of crayon drawings he made. With them Segee told of a life of crime which began with a murder when he was 8 years old and reached a terrible climax in 1944 when he set a match to the big top of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus at Hartford, Conn. and started the holocaust which in six minutes killed 169 spectators.

This crime might never have been solved had it not been for a tip given by a friend of Segee's, who himself had been picked up for setting a small fire at Circleville, Ohio. Arrested, Segee seemed to welcome the attentions of psychiatrists. He told them he had never got beyond the second grade, that his father had never held a steady job, that he had killed one little girl by hitting her with a rock, had strangled three other people, had set scores of fires. He also told them that as far back as he could remember he had been haunted by strange, fiery dreams which sometimes drove him to crime and later tortured his conscience. After the Hartford circus fire it was the glowering face of a woman that came up out of the flames to condemn him. Segee remembered the dream so vividly he was able to draw his impressions of it (*above right*) for the doctors. Then he made the crude drawings on the following pages to explain his other crimes.



DREAM OF CIRCUS FIRE that followed Hartford disaster was drawn by Segee in red crayon. It

shows grim woman rising from flames that swept big top. "You caused that," Segee heard her say.



THE CIRCUS FIRE Segee set, from which spectators above are fleeing, was worst in circus history.

It was third blaze during two-week period Segee was roustabout for show. He admits setting all of them.