

Portland, Maine

May 31, 1950.

8-15 PM-DST

Statement of Francis Domenick Romagno

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I, Francis Domenick Romagno, do hereby make the following statement of my own free will and accord to Captain Paul Lavin of the Connecticut State Police Dept. and Capt. Paul Beckwith of the Hartford, Connecticut Police Dept.

I was born in Portland Maine on June 29, 1929, I will be twenty-one years old next month. I live with my parents at 45 Hancock St., Portland, Maine. I am single.

I attended the public schools of Portland, Maine, I graduated from the Jack Junior High School which completed the eighth grade of Grammar School. I graduated in 1945.

After graduation I went into the Merchant Marine for awhile, returned home and joined the Army in about June of 1946. I served Fort Dix, New Jersey, Fort Belvo, Va., and Camp Stoneham, California. I then went to Fort Lewis, Washington where I was discharged honorably, I had served my eighteen months enlistment.

I then returned to my home in Portland, Maine and I have been there ever since. I have had four or five jobs since I came home from the Army and I just started a job to-day at Scarboro Downs Race Track, doing labor work.

Before I had finished going to school, in 1944 I went to the Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey Circus sometime in May or June of 1944, I dont remember just when it was. I went to the Circus Grounds at Bayside Park that day with Earl Hackett a boy that I knew and hung around with. Earl and I went there in the afternoon and we just intended to hang around the grounds.

About 11-00 PM after the Circus was over, Earl Hackett asked me if I wanted to help pull down the bleachers and earn a Buck or a Buck and a half and I said "Sure". So Earl and I worked pulling down the bleachers and when we were through some foreman, I think, paid us off, a dollar and a half each. So Earl said to me, "Lets go with the Circus, they pay good dough". I said OK, I'll go with you. So we asked the foreman and he said "OK" and he took our name down and hired us. The foreman gave us a ride to the cars Earl and I went off with the Circus.

I dont know if Earl told his Mother he was going, I did not tell my parents, if I did I could'nt go anyway, so I just took off. I think we went to Rhode Island, I aint sure. I think we stayed in Rhode Island for one night and then went to Connecticut, I think to Hartford. Earl and I were put to work in the Mess Hall and sometimes we would make a little extra dough for ourselves by working putting up the bleachers and taking them down. That was the only jobs that I had with the Circus and Earl worked with me all the while I was with the Circus.

I think it was some Boss with the Circus asked me where I lived after I was with the Circus two or three days, he said it was for the Payroll. No one ever asked me my age and I never told them. I was about fifteen years old when I was with the Circus. Earl, I think is a little older than I am.

As far as I know no other boys joined the Circus when I did at Portland, Maine in 1944, just Earl and I, if any others joined I did not know it.

I was working for the Circus in Hartford, Conn. in 1944 on the day of the big fire in the big top. I was off from about 2-00 to 4-00 PM that day and Earl and I went to a place where they rented horses to ride, it was about a half a block away from the Circus Grounds. We had just put the horses up were started back to the Circus Grounds when I saw the flames and I could see the big top was on fire. I ran to the Big Top and when I got there the place was all burned down, after I started to run I dont know where

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Earl went, I didn't see him again until after all the people were taken out of the tent. When I got to the tent, I went in the tent and helped take people that were burned out of the tent. The tent was gone, I was helping out where the tent had been before the fire.

I got burned a little near my mouth while I was helping take people out, it was hot there even after the fire was out. I stayed on in Hartford after the fire for a few days. I wanted to go home but I was a little afraid to go home because I had left without telling my parents. While I stayed on in Hartford I slept in the Circus Cars and kept working in the Mess Hall. Earl also stayed on as long as I did.

Earl asked me to go down to the Train Station with him to see if we could get home, We didn't have any money as our pay was held up because of the fire. I got my pay by check later at my home. At the Train Station in Hartford Earl and I talked with a lady at the Travelers Aid Station and she fixed it up for us to home. I think it was the next day, or the same day the same lady gave Earl and I Train Tickets to Portland Maine and a check so that we could eat on the train.

The same lady put Earl and I on a train in Hartford and we came home to Portland, Maine.

While I was with the Circus, I did not become friendly with any other boy from Portland, Maine that was with the Circus working in the Mess Hall or the Cook Tent. I just hung around with Earl. I remember that there was one other boy that was with Earl and I when we ate in a Lunch Room near the Train Station just before we got on the train in Hartford. I think this boy was from the Circus too, I aint sure though. I do remember that the Travelers Aid sent the three of us to the Lunch Room to eat. I couldn't tell if this other boy got on the same train with Earl and I or not, but I know that Earl and I joined up in Portland, Maine with the Circus and that we came home together from Hartford. I dont think that Earl knew any other boy from Portland Maine with the Circus because I think that if he did he would have told me and he never told me so.

When Earl and I got home to Portland, Maine on the train, we took the same Bus from the station and he got off first near his home and I went home.

I have read the above two pages and they are true and correct. - F R

Signed Francis A. Romagno

This statement typed by Capt. P.B. Beckwith at Portland, Maine Police Headquarters, May 31, 1950—9-00 PM, DST.

Signed

Capt. P.B. Beckwith

Witness

Capt. Paul Lewis