

21st  
December 20th, 1934.

DEWITT W. PIERSON, being sworn, by Coroner Gorsline, testified as follows, on being interviewed at room No. 102, Sparrow Hospital.

PRESENT: Coroner Ray Gorsline, Prosecuting Attorney, Dan Mc Cullough and Attorney Chas. Hayden.

MR. PIERSON: The first I knew about it is when called by the bellhop and when I got up I thought I would give them another call but when I opened the door--, the first I thought I'd change my clothes and I got my underwear and began thinking maybe I better give them a call too. I opened up my door and I got one glimpse and that is all. I closed the door immediately, I didn't wait to put on any more clothes, I didn't think I had time. It was quite hot in the hall and I got out the window and I closed the window thinking I could stay there quite a while ~~a-while~~ if necessary but I wasn't there but a few moments I guess probably I wouldn't say minutes, I don't think it was, the fire and smoke started to roll out from underneath me. Everytime I got a whiff of the heavy smoke, it was almost suffocating, that is just about all I know except what I saw of other fellows throwing themselves out and jumping out and calling.

MR. HAYDEN: Did you drop?

A. I dropped.

MR. HAYDEN: What floor?

A. I was on the third.

MR. MC CULLOUGH: What room  
on three were you in?

A. 319. I dropped to the kitchen, on the tile roof  
below.

EXAMINED BY MR. HAYDEN.

Q. Have you any idea what time it was when you woke up?

A. I wouldn't have a bit of an idea.

Q. You said something about the bellboy called and  
awakened you, what was it, hollering or pounding  
on the door?

A. It was a call, sounded as if it came from the other  
end of the hall.

Q. What was it a yell of "Fire"?

A. Just a yell of "Fire".

Q. You don't know who it was?

A. No, I wouldn't know that.

Q. Did he say anything else except to yell "Fire"?

A. Just yelloed once, I didn't hear so very much after.  
I thought I would do a little yelling too. It  
might help somebody else.

Q. Were you able to walk?

A. No, I wasn't able to walk.



Q. You did n't notice whether the fire department was there when you got around--

A. No, no firemen were there when I dropped. I didn't see them . They were just dropping and laying there.

EXAMINED BY MR. MC CULLOUGH.

Q. What time did you retire, do you remember about what time?

A. About a quarter to eleven.

Q. Were you disturbed during the night by any boisterous conduct or hilsarious conduct in the halls?

A. No, I couldn't say I was, except in the next room the telephone bell would ring once in a while.

Q. So far as you know there was nothing to indicate in the particular section you occupied, evidence of drinking or carousing?

A. No, I wouldn't say so.

Q. Other than this cry of "Fire" you heard in the hall you were not aroused by the telephone ringing or knocking on your door?

A. No.

Q. When you looked out in the hall there was smoke and flames?

A. I don't know as I saw much flames but the heat was

intense and the smoke was terrible.

MR. HAYDEN: Where did you  
say your home was?

A. Cadillac.

Q. That will be all.

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TED KLEINDIENST, 103 Sparrow Hospital.

PRESENT: Coroner Ray Gorsline

Prosecuting Attorney, Dan Mc Cullough.

Att'y Chas. Hayden.

MR. MC CULLOUGH: Our purpose here is we understand you made a statement to Mr. Krauss and we have that statement after he wrote it off. If Mr. Gorsline will swear you and then read the statement to you, it will be the same as a sworn statement and if there are any corrections, you can make them.

A. Alright.

MR. GORSLINE: When was Mr. Krause in here?

A. Yesterday morning, I believe.

MR. GORSLINE: If you will raise your right hand, I will swear you.

(Oath administered by Mr. Gorsline)

A. I will affirm it.

MR. GORSLINE: This is a statement relative to Hotel Kerns fire. You are from Blissfield?

A. That is right.

MR. GORSLINE: (Reading statement)

" I registered at the Hotel Kerns, Lansing, Michigan,

at about six P.M., Monday, December the 10th, 1934.

I was assigned to room 325."

A. That is right.

MR. GORSLINE: "At about nine P.M., I tried to put through a long distance call to my wife from a public 'phone booth in the hotel. While in the booth, I observed three young men approach the adjoining booth; two of these men gave strong evidence of having been drinking; If I know the Monroe boys, they were the ones. They all tried to talk into the phone at one time; finally one of them succeeded in talking into the mouthpiece and spoke about the switchboard being out of order; he asked that a man be sent over at once to repair the board, inasmuch as the hotel was very filled, and the board was badly needed. I did not observe where they went from there but do recall that they monkeyed about the 'phone until they got a nickel back."

A. That is right.

MR. GORSLINE: "I retired about nine thirty P.M., at least sometime between nine and ten o'clock. My room faced the east over a court, I was disturbed two or three times during the night by noisy hilarity, particularly by groups passing in the hall talking excessively loud.



I awoke ~~quite~~ suddenly, and my first sensation was that I smelled smoke. I llooked out of my door and saw the whole hall in flames, the same coming especially from the stairway connecting the floors."

A. Before I looked out the door, I was all dressed. I had been to the window and thought there was fumes coming from the kitchen and lay back down, after closing the transome, lay back in bed again to see, saying in my mind, if it gets any stronger, I would leave, although I tried to use the telephone too. I can't remember whether it was then or after I got up the second time, the telephone was out of order, didn't work. You can tell when a telephone is dead because there just isn't any sound from it at all. I laid back down and I got up and turned on the light and see the room was hazy with smoke and put on my clothes in a fasion, hurriedly, and then I opened the door and the fire was <sup>coming</sup> ~~eeing~~ and I left by way of the window.

MR. MC CULLOUGH: Coming down the hall, the fire?

A. My room was next to the stairs, coming up from the lower floor. I knew with this fire coming up

the stairs around here it would be impossible to get out, the lights went out too and I didn't know, I thought possibly I was burned out from underneath and I went out the window.

MR. GORSLINE: "I closed the door, pulled on a few clothes, grabbed my grip--"

A. Just a moment, no, I had my clothes on when I opened and closed the door.

MR. GORSLINE: I think perhaps I had better read this clear through and then you can correct it. "Grabbed my grip and overcoat, and climbed out of the window. I held on to the ledge with my right hand, having my overcoat and grip in the left hand and dropped to the roof below. I fell on my left arm which is broken in many places. Two men were on the roof when I landed. They tore my overcoat into two pieces, tied them together and tied them to my suit coat and thus we were able to reach the ground below in the court. I went out through the tunnel to Ottawa Street. The Fire Department was already at the scene of the fire. I saw a Police Car parked on the corner and was brought in it by an officer to the Sparrow Hospital.



I was the first victim to reach the hospital, arriving at ten minutes of six. I was not aroused at the hotel by 'phone or by rapping at the door."

- A. There is one change in there you can make, one of these fellows going over where he got a ladder and brought it back, and I came down the ladder. He got the ladder from the fire department. It was a fire department ladder. That is how I got down and how the other fellow got down, I don't know, I was the first fellow down the ladder.

EXAMINED BY MR. MC CULLOUGH.

- Q. Did you observe the time at all when you were awakened?
- A. With the exception of one thing, if the town clock strikes the half hour, I heard it strike. If not, I heard a bell, similar to a clock, strike. That would make it, figuring back now, at five-thirty.
- Q. That was while you were in your room?
- A. Yes.
- Q. Before you were dressed?
- A. I would say while I was lying on my bed.

Q. Were the flames evident when you were out on the balcony?

A. On the roof?

Q. Yes.

A. One fellow before I left my room, must have been on the first floor pretty near to the wall, he hollered and said, "Boy, she is all afire down in here".

Q. The smoke was dense?

A. When I got out, I could see some windows and the corner where it was coming from. If this was the hotel, back of the hotel, then it looked like in that corner.

Q. That would be the northeast corner?

A. Be on the west wall, north wall, in that corner. The corner I am speaking of is the inside corner towards my room.

MR. HAYDEN: That would be towards the bridge?

A. Towards the State Journal building.

Q. It would be the northwest?

A. Northwest.

MR. HAYDEN: That is the Grand Avenue and Ottawa Street corner?



A. When I came out of the tunnell a chap there with his car asked me to help him push it away.

I have thought that rather amusing since. I believe a couple of people had jumped out the north side, I am not sure of that, and the fire department were there turning on the hose.

Q. That is all

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HARRY LEVINE, room 104,  
Sparrow Hospital. Sworn by Coroner Ray Gorsline.

MR. GORSLINE: Your name is

Harry Levine?

A. Yes.

EXAMINED BY MR. MC CULLOUGH.

Q. Where is your home, Mr. Levine?

A. Detroit.

Q. What time did you register at the Kerns?

A. During the afternoon.

Q. To what room were you assigned?

A. 236.

Q. What time did you retire that night if you know?

A. Between the hours of eight and nine.

Q. Do you know what time you were awakened by the fire?

A. I couldn't tell the exact time.

Q. How were you awakened if you recall?

A. Well, I had been awakened several times by noise and hollering around.

Q. Which would indicate there was considerable drinking being done in the Hotel?

A. Yes.



Q. That was during the night that you were awakened that way?

A. Yes. When I say I retired at that hour, I didn't jump in bed, to retire, I disrobed and sat around--

Q. You didn't leave your room after that?

A. No. I took the car to the Reo garage around five thirty or six and left it there.

Q. Was this boisterousness quite noticeable?

A. Yes.

Q. Was in on your floor near your room?

A. Over me and under me and the same floor.

Q. Did you make any complaint to the office?

A. No.

Q. Now could you tell us exactly what it was that awakened you?

A. I heard some one snooping around my door. I had already had plenty of rest and I opened the door and said, "What do you want, or words to that effect" and he said, "Is there any smoke around here?" and the smoke was coming out and he said "My God, that's the bosses room, I better get down there and get him out of there."

Q. Apparently, it was some employee?

A. Yes, it was a bellboy in uniform.

Q. Did he come into your room?

A. Yes, he came to the door.

Q. Did he search in your room?

A. Yes.

Q. On the floor?

A. I can't recall just what.

Q. He came inside of your room?

A. Yes.

Q. That is all he said and left?

A. Yes. The minute I seen the smoke was getting denser, I ran and woke up my partner who was asleep elseep in the next room. I had a hard time to get him up.

Q. That was 234 or 238?

A. 238.

Q. At that time the smoke was quite noticeable?

A. Yes. It was.

Q. In your room?

A. Yes. It was coming up from the room below. It wasn't as bad as it got later.

Q. Did you turn on your lights?

A. Yes. I put on my trousers over my pajamas and put on my coat over my pajamas and I was going to run over and put on my shoes and it was getting dense and I couldn't see and I went out



in my house slippers. My sense of direction took me down to the elevator.

Q. Did you get out through that way through the stairs?

A. Yes, finally.

Q. And into the lobby?

A. No.

Q. Fire escape was it?

A. There was fire both ways. I couldn't find-- by time I couldn't find no stairs and I run for the elevator and the smoke was so dense by the time I came back to see to locate the stairs, the smoke was dense and the women were shrieking and so were the men and flames were each side of me by that time and I just happened to notice a staircase leading from the second stairs to the first floor and I covered, and I covered, I don't recall, I covered myself up and I went down to the first floor and it was a mass of flames. I began looking for the entrance to the stairway and throwing my shoulder and body against doors and as luck would have it, my hand went through a fire escape window, went through some window and then unfastened

the door and I run onto the fire escape landing and got to the end of it and I let myself down. I run along, I don't know just where, along that river bank to the bridge and there happened to be standing a ladder that was painted criss cross and I climbed that until I got to the top. I got to the top and I was having great difficulty in getting hold of the iron on the bridge and finally got up and run into the Wentworth Hotel and I pleaded with a man there to get me a taxi cab and bring me to the hospital which he done.

Q. Did you by chance observe the time during the time before you left for the hospital?

A. No.

Q. As you stated you were aroused by someone snooping around in front of the door which you later found to be a bellhop?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you know whether or not he went into any ~~at~~ other rooms on that floor or did he leave immediately and go downstairs?

A. I said, "Why don't you wake up the people if there was a fire?" and he said, "Oh hell, I've



got to get the boss up." That is the last I heard of him. I said, "How do you get out of here?" Had I turned seven or eight doors down and could have walked down the fire escape and got out without a scratch.

EXAMINED BY MR. HAYDEN.

Q. The smoke was so thick you couldn't see anything when you got out there?

A. The first time I could see alright.

Q. You couldn't have seen a placard or warning of fire escapes when you got in the hall?

A. No, not by the time when I got my trousers and got on my hat. By that time the smoke was so dense, I couldn't see nothing. I tried to follow my sense of direction.

Q. This boy who came walking or bursting in, did he knock on the door?

A. I heard somebody snooping around and I had had plenty of sleep that night. I went to the door and said a "Who is it?" and he said, "Is there a fire in there?" I heard that and opened the door and turned on the light. I took him to be a bellboy. He had a red coat on.

MR. GORSLINE: You hadn't smelled fire or smoke or fire before that?

A. No.

MR. GORSLINE: Was the smoke quite evident after he came into your room?

A. I could smell smoke but it appeared to me the smoke was coming from down below, some damned fool had thrown away a cigarette or something like that.

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E. A. TELSER, Sparrow Hospital,

Sworn by Coronor Gorsline.

EXAMINED BY MR. MC CULLOUGH.

Q. Where is your home?

A. Detroit.

Q. When did you register at the Kerns?

A. About three thirty Monday afternoon.

Q. What time did you retire that evening?

A. We went to a picture show and we had our dinner later in the cafeteria at the hotel and then we retired to our room.

Q. Were you disturbed?

A. I heard drunken parties, as a matter of fact, disturbed us all night. I am a fairly sound sleeper and I didn't pay attention to it. At four thirty in the morning I was awakened by some one swearing and loud voices in the hallway, outside of my door.

Q. Your room was what?

A. 238. We had adjoining rooms with a bed in between.

Q. How were you awakened?

A. Mr. Levine awakened me.

Q. By coming through the bath--

A. That is rather hazy to me. I think when he awakened me he was standing in the bathroom. I wakened up and

he said to me, "It seems like there is a fire.  
There is a lot of smoke in my room."

Q. Was there any smoke in your room?

A. None, I didn't notice any smoke in my room and when I got up I got up and went in the hallway --

MR. HAYDEN: Was your room

that room that opened up into his room?

A. We had adjoining rooms with a bath in between.

I got up and went into the hallway and looked to my right and the lights were still all on, looked to my right and in the front section of the hallway was a dense cloud of smoke. I said to Mr. Levine, "Yes, it is a fire alright, let's get our things and get to hell out of here". With that, I walked back into my room and fortunately for me I had no unpacked my bag. I just hung up my clothes, opened my bag before I retired, my slippers, bed room slippers and my toilet articles, that's all I took out of the bag, when I got up, I put on my clothes over my pajamas and put on my shoes and after I put on my shoes, closed the bag, and Mr. Levine it shounded from the entrance, presumably from the entrance to his room,



to the hallway, and said, "This way out, Ed".

It couldn't have been any more than three or five seconds that I reached the hall, with my bag in my hand, and I looked around in the hallway and noticed that he wasn't in sight, several people there but he wasn't there and I rushed into the smoke and after then I commenced to choke up and shouted his name to tell him to come back the other way to the fire escape.

Q. Did you know where the fire escape was?

A. Yes, fortunately for me, I noticed when I retired there was a little red sticker over the transome which said Fire Escape at the end of the hall. I noticed that when I retired. Whether this automatically came back to me or whether I just turned around and noticed the fire escape, I don't know. But after I commenced to choke up in the smoke and I couldn't go further, I backed out of it and came back to my room and came back to the end of the hall way where the door to the fire escape is and told the fellows in the hall there was a fire escape here, let's go out this way. I got to the

fire escape first then I remembered I forgot my brief case in the room and I left the bag on the fire escape and I went back in the hallway. Our room was south two or three doors, I can't recall the number of doors towards the front of the building beyond the fire doors and when I came back into the hallway, the fire door was closed and some one was standing at the door. I was considering where my room was and I came to the end of the hall where the fire door shut off further advances. I looked at the door on the right and I believe it was 242 or 244. I knew that wasn't my room and I went to go further and came to the fire door and some one was standing in their shirt sleeves and said, "You can't go in there" and I said, "Why? I left my brief case and I want to go and get it" and he opened the door and the place was just a mass of flames. I returned to the fire escape and walked down and went over into the power building and was apparently one of the first to reach there or one of the first few and shortly after they started coming in, some were being helped in. As a matter of



fact, I went out and helped one fellow in myself, in various phases of injury, undressed and some with pajamas and some had underwear on and some pajamas. One fellow I believe had his leg broken. Some one said, "Get a doctor" and I yelled, "Get the ambulance down here." I said to the operator, "Get every ambulance down, come down to the Kerns fire, people are injured and need medical attention and hospital attention" and she said "Alright, I will do that." A fellow produced a bottle of whiskey and said, "This fellow needs a drink of whiskey" and started to give him a drink of whiskey, then I started to look for Mr. Levine. I didn't know where he was until an extra came out the next morning. I thought he was in the fire.

Q. Do you recall at all that you noticed the time?

A. Five thirty.

Q. When did you notice that?

A. When I got over into the power house, it was five thirty two then.

Q. By your watch?

A. Yes.

Q. How long a time would you say had elapsed?

A. I don't think over five minutes.

Q. From the time Mr. Levine--

A. No, from the time Mr. Levine awakened me, I don't think it was over seven minutes. I wouldn't swear to that, just a haphazard statement.

EXAMINED BY MR. GORSLINE.

Q. At any time, did you see any group of people?

A. Yes, out in the hallway.

Q. Did you see them get out of the building?

A. Two or three walked down the fire escape when I was leaving.

Q. Did any others start in the other direction?

A. Mr. Levine did. I couldn't say if anyone else did, I started in the other direction myself but when it got so smoky and got a couple mouthful, I couldn't see any reason to go further and I said, "Back this way, Harry, is the fire escape".

Q. That is all.



ALBERT B. HANSON, 108 Sparrow Hospital.

Sworn by Coroner Gorsline.

MR. GORSLINE: I will read this over and see if you want it to go on the record, and after I am through reading it, you can make what corrections or additions that you want to it.

A. Yes, sir.

MR. GORSLINE: Your name is Albert B. Hanson?

A. Yes, sir.

MR. GORSLINE: Of Oscodo, Michigan, connected with the State Highway Department?

A. Yes, sir.

MR. GORSLINE: (Reading Statement)

"I arrived in Lansing about one thirty A. M. Monday, December the 10th from the north. I went directly to the Kerns Hotel where I registered and was assigned to room 219. Monday night I retired about nine o'clock. I was disturbed in my sleep to such an extent that I slept very fitfully. There was noise, shouting and singing by men and women. Such noise came from rooms across the hall from me and in the wing north from me and this was particularly annoying. About four A.M. I arose with the

intention of getting out of my room entirely but noticing that the noise was beginning to subside I returned to my bed and finally fell asleep. I was suddenly awakened by a woman's cry for help. It seemed to come from some distance from my room. I jumped up at once and went to my window which was open. I looked out to see if there were any evidences of fire which might occasion a call for help. I saw no flames, but smelled smoke and almost immediately I heard more cries for help coming from every direction. I thought I would have ample time to dress and search for a fire escape. I slipped off my pajamas and put on a rubber stocking which I wear on my right leg, pulled on my underwear, and had the underwear about half buttoned, when I heard a noise in the corridor that sounded like the blast of a mighty wind and at that instant flames came into my room along the carpet under the door and in another instant the whole carpet of my room burst into flames. Not more than two minutes had elapsed from the time I heard the call ~~fr~~ for help that awakened me until the carpet in my room had burst into flames completely. I made for the window, climbed through it and let myself down the outside, holding to ~~it~~ the inside



of the sill with my right hand. The flames were searing my arm and so I had to let go and drop to the roof below me. I hit the roof and knew I had a broken leg when I landed. A man from the floor above my room dropped to the roof beside me, incurring no injury because he knew how to land, turning sort of a somersault, just as he struck the roof, he shouted, "I'll save you" next to us, was a window which he broke, got me through and into what appeared to be a dry cleaning establishment. There he grabbed two overcoats, one for each of us, broke the window in the front door and secured help of several men, among them firemen, to carry me across the street to the lobby of the Detroit Hotel. By that time, I could see that the entire front of the hotel was a mass of flames. I later ascertained that my rescuer was Burt Olcott of Detroit, a fire insurance inspector. In subsequent assistance at rescue work, he froze both feet. I have his name and address. From the time I awakened until I reached the street not more than five minutes elapsed. I never saw anything like it in my life."

EXAMINED BY MR. MC CULLOUGH.

Q. Mr. Hanson, was there any evidence of flames in this, what you thought was an upholster's shop when you went into it?

A. No, I said a dry cleaning--

Q. Dry cleaning and taylor shop, you didn't see flames there?

A. You mean in the shop?

Q. Yes.

A. No, not a bit.

Q. Was there any smoke there?

A. No.

Q. That is on what is termed the ground floor, that enters into the street?

A. Yes.

MR. GORSLINE: (Reading Statement)

"In thinking about the fire since, I recall very distinctly, that when I went to my room Monday morning immediately after I had registered, my sense of smell detected an odor which reminded me of benzine. I figured at the moment that the help had no doubt been doing some general cleaning in preparation for the anticipated rush of the special session of the State Legislature. I noticed at the time that the carpeting on the floor of my room looked uncommonly clean and



bright as if recently cleaned. Since then, I have conjectured that this might be an explanation for the rapids spread of the fire, inasmuch as I had an opportunity to witness how the carpet in my room instantly burst into flames all over and that these flames had come in under the door, evidently following the carpeting. Another observation I made in my brief stay at the hotel was that it made a very disgusting impression morally. As an illustration, when I went to my room Monday evening about eight o'clock, Mr. Main, a friend, was with me. We took the elevator up. The elevator girl made some very suggestive advances to us while we were in the car, by this I mean she actually put her hands on us in various places and remarked, "There'll be a hot time in the old town tonight".

- A. Cut out the quotation marks "in various places" I didn't say that. MR. GORSLINE:

"A little later

I returned to the lobby, using the elevator to descend. Again the elevator made the advances she had made before. Then when I went to my room to retire at about nine o'clock, two other men who had rooms on the same floor as mine happened to be going up in the elevator with me.

The girl made the same suggestive and immoral advances to these two men. When we left the elevator at our floor, I was making the bend in the corridor and noticed that the other two men were not following me. I looked back and saw them in the corridor dancing up and down with the elevator girl and singing, "There'll be a hot time in the old town tonight."

The elevator girl had dark brown hair. I would know her again if I saw her."

A. That is a bit strong on the "immoral advances". That is my conclusion, not my knowledge, I don't know.

Q. Was she apparently intoxicated?

A. No.

Q. She was singing a song?

A. "There would be a hot time in the old town tonight".

MR. HAYDEN: I want to ask you for the purpose of the record, was this young lady actually putting her hands on your private parts?

A. No.

MR. HAYDEN: Or was she just acting in a familiar friendly way in taking hold of you men?

A. That is what I tried to convey.

Q. He said that she was pinching his arm?



A. Yes, just took hold of it and slapped it a little.

Q. Did you by chance observe the time at all during the morning of the fire?

A. Only when I got up at that time, four o'clock.

Q. You don't know other than that?

A. No.

Q. You dropped back to sleep before you again were aroused?

A. Yes.

Q. That's all.

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ALVAH D. CARR; Room 112, Sparrow  
Hospital.

Sworn by Mr. Gorsline.

MR. GORSLINE: I will read this  
statement and if you want to verify it, & give any  
additons or corrections to it.

(Statement of Alvah D. Carr, Reo Sales, Lansing,  
Michigan.)

"I had lived at the hotel for some time, occupying  
room 133, right across the hall from Dave Monroe's living  
room. I had retired that night, Monday December the 10th  
at about ten forty-five o'clock. I was disturbed consid-  
erably during the night by noise of all sorts. There  
were men and girls, talking, shouting and running up and  
down the corridor. It was very boisterous and hilarious  
in the halls. I heard voices coming from Dave's apartment  
when I went to bed. I cannot say whose voices they were  
because I could not see the people in there. I was  
awakened by the crackling of flames in my room, about a  
a foot and a half from the head of my bed. I scrambled  
to the window and dropped to the roof of the one story  
building below, and from there to the ground and then ran  
out of the tunnel into Ottawa Street. There I stopped and  
looked up at the building and observed flames shooting out  
of the windows of Dave's apartment. I stood in Ottawa  
Street about ten to fifteen minutes, but did not observe



the fire department as being there during this time. I finally obtained transportation to the Sparrow Hospital. I was not awakened by the ringing of the 'phone, heard no rapping at my door, nor did I hear anyone shout "Fire".

A. Yes, sir, that is right.

EXAMINED BY MR. HAYDEN.

Q. Do you know whether the Fire Department was there or whether you just failed to see them?

A. If they were there, I didn't see them. I was wondering why, they were only two blocks away, why they didn't come.

Q. Did you look at any definite time?

A. No.

Q. Were you one of the first ones out?

A. No, others were out on the roof and kept dropping all around me when I got out there.

Q. The fire was confined to the north end of the building when you got out?

A. Sure.

Q. Was it confined or in other parts of the building?

A. No, it was right there, I looked to see.

Q. Did you see people coming down the fire escape?

A. I see more coming out the windows than the fire escape.

Q. Jumping, you mean?

A. Yes.

MR. MC CULLOUGH: Were your lights on  
in the room, did you turn them on?

A. No.

Q. That is all.

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GEORGIA BALL, sworn by Coroner

Gorsline.

PRESENT: Prosecuting Attorney Dan Mc Cullough and  
Attorney Chas. Hayden.

EXAMINED BY MR. MC CULLOUGH.

- Q. Now, what time did you register at the Kernan?
- A. Let's see, late in the afternoon, probably five or six, probably six o'clock.
- Q. On December the 10th?
- A. Was that the night?
- Q. Monday?
- A. Yes.
- Q. You were living with Nancy?
- A. Yes, she was living with me at 409 W. Ottawa.
- Q. That day, just explain about the furnace?
- A. We hadn't had any heat. I had been down to Detroit for the week end and when I came home and found out the boiler hadn't been working and so Nancy thought we ought to go and stay over night instead of staying there with her cold and we went to the hotel. My little girl wasn't with us.
- Q. You and Nancy occupied the same room?
- A. Yes.
- Q. What room was that?

A. The second floor.

Q. You don't know the number?

A. No, we occupied the same bed.

Q. What time did you go to sleep that night, about what time, do you know?

A. I don't know, ten thirty.

Q. Was it before midnight?

A. Yes, wasn't especially early or especially late.

Q. Both of you are employees of the State Building?

A. Yes.

Q. You were in the Fire Marshall's Department?

A. Yes.

Q. And she in the Welfare Department?

A. Yes.

Q. You had planned on going to work the following morning?

A. Yes, we had.

Q. What awakened you in regard to the fire, do you recall?

A. I don't know, seemed like people going by our door all night.

Q. Would you say there was loud talking?

A. Yes, seemed to be considerable noise in the hall.

Q. Was that what awakened you or was there some specific thing that awakened you?



A. I don't know, I can't say. I think we were just attracted by the noise.

Q. Now, when you first discovered there was fire in the building, how did you discover that? What drew it to your attention do you recall?

A. Not unless the people talking?

Q. Did you notice smoke or fire?

A. No, I don't think we did, I think we heard people yelling, yes, that is it, heard people yelling.

Q. Were you awakened first or was Nancy Parker awakened first?

A. I probably was. You can never wake her up.

Q. Did you happen to look at the time at all, do you know what time it was when you started to get out?

A. I don't think so. I lost my watch. It seems as though we looked out the window fronting on Grand Street.

Q. You were in the front part of the hotel?

A. Yes, we had a room on Grand Street.

Q. How did you get out of the hotel, do you know?

A. Seems like I climbed out the front window, I don't know, it seems like when we knew there was fire we got awfully scared.

Q. Do you know whether Nancy Parker came out with you or not?

A. No, I don't know.

EXAMINED BY MR. HAYDEN.

Q. Do you know where you got out, what part of the building you got out of?

A. Well, it seems as I remember standing looking out the front window and went out.

Q. You mean on the Grand Street side?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you jump from the window?

A. I don't know, I hate to have you question me because I really don't know.

Q. Was there the fire department out there when you came out?

A. Yes, I remember the fire department, I remember Paul Lefke, I thought probably he'd see me. I know him from my department.

Q. Didn't any of them put a ladder up or didn't they?

A. Well, I don't know, seems like they would have though doesn't it? I don't remember, when I seen Paul Lefke, he would help me, I really thought.

MR. MC CULLOUGH: Did you know any of the guests there at the hotel at all?



A. No, we just went down there, didn't even go outside of the room, I don't believe. We didn't pay attention to anybody. We were tired and went down and went to bed.

MR. MC CULLOUGH: You both had been away over the week end?

A. Yes, we went into the lobby, we met Doug Monroe. He was always so kind of nice. He came up and spoke to us.

MR. HAYDEN: When you went into the lobby--

A. About six o'clock.

MR. HAYDEN: Doug was apparently alright, normal?

A. Yes.

MR. HAYDEN: He hadn't been drinking?

A. No, Marshall Hungerford from Coldwater was there.

MR. MC CULLOUGH: Did you have trouble getting a room at the hotel, was it crowded?

A. No, because Nancy had called in the afternoon.

MR. MC CULLOUGH: When did you discover the condition of your apartment being cold and the furnace out of repair?

A. I knew that Sunday night when I got home from Detroit, came in on the seven-thirty train. Joan and I stayed

there all night and when Nancy come in she didn't want to stay in the cold house and then we decided to go to the hotel and stay over night.

Q. The only two people that you know were in the hotel is Doug and Mr. Hungerford?

A. Yes, Marshall Hungerford. Doug spoke to us. I think Nancy called and asked him for a reservation for us.

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NORMAN PEARLSTEIN, Room 202,  
Sparrow Hospital.

MR. GORSLINE: We are conducting  
an investigation in regard to the Hotel Kerns  
fire and we would like to get a statement from you.

A. Yes, I will be glad to give it.

MR. GORSLINE: I will swear you.

(Witness sworn by Mr. Gorsline)

EXAMINED BY MR. MC CULLOUGH.

Q. Where is your home, Mr. Pearlstein?

A. My home is in Boston.

Q. You were registered at the Hotel Kerns on the 10th  
of December?

A. Yes. The 10th of December, I had been there about  
five or six weeks.

Q. What was your room?

A. 249.

Q. What time did you retire the evening of the 10th?

A. That same night I left the street, I went up to  
the Lansing Theatre and stayed there about an hour.  
The picture they had up there I had seen before and  
I got tired of it and walked out and went to the  
hotel, must have been about ten o'clock.

Q. Did you go immediately to your room?

A. I went immediately to the room, stopped at the news

stand and bought a paper and took up to the room.

Q. Were you aroused during the night by noise?

A. Every night there they always do have parties so I knew there were parties and I didn't mind it so much. That particular night people were shrieking and hollering "What's the matter with the elevator, what's the matter with the stairs?" I am a light sleeper.

MR. HAYDEN: That was the first time you knew anything was wrong?

A. Yes. Then again I wasn't sure. I thought it was just drunks who had stopped there and just hollering. When I had an idea something was wrong, I immediately got out of bed and I looked in the hallway and people were running up and down, hollering, seemed to be a gale of smoke and fumes. I couldn't keep my head up. I started to close the door. I knew I was in danger. I put my pants over my head, the door blew open after I closed it, blew open again and the flames came toward me in my room and the lights went out. It all happened in about five ~~##~~ minutes. I poked my head ~~an~~ out, come back, the door opened and the lights went out, all you could hear was hollering "What in hell, is the matter with the firemen?" "What in hell is the



matter, it takes so long for the firemen, what in hell kind of firemen are they?" The worst screeching you ever heard. Nothing was left for me to get out at all. I said, "What shall I do, jump?"

MR. HAYDEN: You mean you said that to yourself?

A. Yes, to myself. Run back, a mass of flames here and I took those sheets and tied them together as many as I could, I figured that was the best way, they would kind of kill my fall. I jumped out the window and I slid down those sheets and when I fell, I fell on my back, the sheets in my hand they gave away. I was stunned for a moment. I could hear people hollering, tried to crawl along and had no place to go, it was so dark, all you could hear--, I didn't know where to go after I did fall and finally, as I remember, it must have been about ten minutes later, the firemen arrived and then I saw, several lights got around and I saw where I was. I had to jump down another small embankment.

Q. You didn't observe the time at all when you went around?

A. No.

MR. HAYDEN: Were you notified

by any call?

A. I wasn't even notified or nothing.

Q. By phone or rapping on the door?

A. No, nothing, nobody knocked at the door and no telephone or nothing to say the place was on fire, didn't hear nothing at all. I could hear people hollering, and women, "What the hell is the matter with the firemen. What the hell is the matter with the firemen? What is the matter that it takes them so long?"

A. That's all.



WILLIAM JACOBI, Room 411 St.

Lawrence Hospital.

SWORN BY CORONER GORSLINE.

MR. MC CULLOUGH: Would you care to make a statement in regard to the fire. You are probably familiar with the fact we are making an investigation?

- A. Only one statement I can make, I don't know much about the fire, I didn't get a minute's notice.

EXAMINED BY MR. MC CULLOUGH.

Q. Where do you live?

A. I live at Rutherford, N. J.

Q. Whendidyou register at the Kerns?

A. Monday night.

Q. What room were you assigned?

A. 317.

Q. What time did you retire?

A. About eleven thirty.

Q. When was your attention first drawn to the fire?

A. I heard the crackling of flames and heat in the room.

Q. You did not receive notification either through means of the telephone or a knock on your door?

A. None at all.

Q. Had you been aroused during the night at all by noise or carousing?

- A. No, I was tired and I went right to sleep.
- Q. And when you awakened, the flames were in your room?
- A. They were all over the top of the room.
- Q. Over the transome?
- A. Over the transome and when I opened the window to see where I had to jump the draft drew them afterme and I couldn't wait, I couldn't stop for my money. I had about thirty dollars, I didn't stop for dough, that's all I came out with, those blue pajamas.

MR. HAYDEN: Were you barefooted?

- A. Yes. I went to see how far to jump. I went to the door and opened the door and it was all flames, no chance to get out, I slammed the door shut and when I did, the transome window fell and broke and the draft from the window I opened chased the flames almost to me.

MR. HAYDEN: The flames were right on you and you didn't wait at all?

- A. I didn't wait.

MR. HAYDEN: You didn't try to attract help or anything?

- A. It was too far, the whole building seemed like it



was in motion.

Q. Did you notice the fire department at all?

A. I landed on the back roof where I lay a half hour. Finally another fellow dropped off and he ran out to get help and two firemen came with a ladder and I slid down the ladder.

MR. HAYDEN: You said you layed a half hour, were you unconscious?

A. I was conscious a few minutes after I struck. This knee hit my chin and I probably got knocked out. I crawled to the roof to see how far I had to go to the next drop. I guess I would have dropped that too, no firemen around. All I could hear was people hollering "Help". One woman I heard screaming and she died away. The sounds got weaker and weaker. Men were hollering help above me on the fourth floor. After I dropped, a few men dropped after me, you could hear them thump and holler for them and get no answer. I think the firemen got the rest on the roof.

Q. Did the lights go on in your room?

A. I didn't even try to turn them on. It was light enough. I didn't try to 'phone or anything. I knew it was on fire and that was enough.

Q. You didn't look at your watch to see what time it was?

A. I didn't take time for anything, just left the room, if I kept my window down a few minutes and dressed myself and got some money--but I was anxious to see how far that drop was. As soon as I opened the window, that was the end. I lost all my clothing and grip and samples.

Q. That's all.

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FRANK SOCHIA, Room 418, Sparrow

Hospital.

SWORN BY CORONER GORSLINE.

EXAMINED BY MR. MC CULLOUGH.

Q. Where do you live?

A. 122½ Ottawa Street.

Q. That is the Volunteers of America?

A. Yes.

Q. When did you first receive notice of the fire?

A. Half past five in the morning.

Q. Did you look at the clock or watch to determine that?

A. No.

Q. How were you notified?

A. A fellow came running up from the kitchen and said the Kerns Hotel was burning?

Q. Do you know who it was?

A. I don't know his name, I know he worked in the kitchen, I believe his name is Smith.

Q. Did you look at your watch to determine that time or the clock?

A. No.

Q. That is just an estimate?

A. Yes.

Q. You were aiding the fire department in the rescue work they were doing?

A. Yes.

Q. They were there, the fire department when you got there?

A. Yes.

Q. You were injured as a result of your work?

A. Yes.

Q. You were not in the hotel?

A. I was in the lobby before I went on the hose line.

Q. When you first got word of the fire what part of the building was burning?

A. All parts of it.

Q. It was all over the building was it?

A. Sure.

Q. You were injured when a wall caved in?

A. When a wall caved in on Grand Avenue.

MR. HAYDEN: Was the fire department there when you first went there?

A. Yes, sir.

MR. HAYDEN: Quite a lot of people, a bunch of people around there at that time?

A. No, there wasn't such an awful mob around there at that time. They kept coming after I got there. At the time I was hurt there was quite a few people.

Q. That's all.



THOMAS SKEDGELL, Room 213, St.

Lawrence Hospital.

PRESENT: Coroner Ray Gorsline,  
Prosecuting Attorney Dan Mc Cullough  
Attorney Chas. H. Hayden.

SWORN BY CORONER GORSLINE:

EXAMINED BY MR. MC CULLOUGH.

Q. Where do you live?

A. My home is in Coral, Michigan.

Q. What is the nature of your business?

A. I work for the Federal Land Bank, field representative.

Q. You were registered at the Kerns on December the 10th?

A. Yes.

Q. To what room were you assigned?

A. 209.

Q. Do you recall what time you retired that night?

A. About eleven o'clock.

Q. Were you bothered or aroused during the night by  
boisterous conduct, loud talk?

A. Yes.

Q. As a conclusion of yours would you say as a result  
of drinking?

A. That would be my opinion.

Q. How many times during the night or how late do you  
recall?

A. The last I remember was, of course, I was sound--

I had been woke up several times but they had quite a loud conversation to the effect, "We are going to drive home, yes, tonight or this morning because it is three o'clock right now, come on, let's get the hell out of here."

Q. You don't know who they were?

A. No.

Q. Did you make complaint to the management about this conduct at all?

A. No.

Q. When were you first notified of the fire ~~or~~ or what awakened you?

A. Why, someone running down the hall hollering "Fire", whether on that floor or someother floor, I do not know.

Q. You were not awakened by a telephone call from the office or any rapping on your door?

A. No, somebody running down one of the halls and yelling "Fire".

Q. What did you do when you heard the call?

A. I jumped up and set on the side of the bed, I was half dazed, I was ound asleep that time of night, my first thought was, here in a town like this, the fire department would be here in a few minutes



and probably be able to handle it even if there is a little fire, but I thought better get dressed anyway, that was just my thoughts. I got up from where I was sitting on the edge of the bed and walked to the foot of the bed where my trousers were hanging over the back of the chair. I remember picking up my underwear and just at that instant, flames came right in the transoms, the hall side of the transoms. I thought I wouldn't have time to get dressed. I grabbed my pants and opened the door thinking I would run down the hall. No living man could run down the hall, the flames came right in. What happened, I don't know. I run over to the window and the flames followed me from my door to the window.

Q. Was the window open or closed do you remember?

A. I think I had it up a little bit before I went to bed, but, I remember opening her clear to the top the first thing.

Q. How did you get out to the window?

A. I just crawled out there, three stories high and after I got out the window, I was holding my head, the thought came to me, if I can only get hold of a telephone wire or anything, my thought was just

to get hold of a telephone wire. I was raised in a small town where we fight fires by hand. I had been on the fire department up there, a little jerkwater town. I was hanging there to the window feeling all around to see if I could get hold of anything and I found an inch ~~pie~~ pipe off about three feet the side of the window. I could just reach it with my left hand. I had my oxfords on, I got a toe hold in the brick, getting a foot hold. The pipe was awfully loose, I don't know whether it was stuck up there for an insulation wire, I said, "Here goes, if it bends a little, at least it will help a little" and it held me. I grabbed it and it held me and I shinnied down that and then I was on the roof of a two story building.

Q. That iron pipe apparently went down to the roof?

A. Yes, just an inch pipe.

MR. GORSLINE: That was free

from the building so you could get a good hand hold?

A. Out from the building, I could get hold of it. I know it was an inch pipe, probably electric conduit covering a wire.

Q. How did you get off the roof you dropped on?

A. When I got down there, of course, I thought I am lucky to be on the roof, if I could only get off



the roof. I evidently had grabbed my coat, my overcoat and threw it out the window when I opened the window and I had my portfolio with all the bank records in it ~~to~~ which I was trying hard to save, really nothing but what could be duplicated. I think I got burned by reaching back to get it. I couldn't get that but I got my bag and threw that down. When I got down one story, I thought of picking up my coat and bag and looking for a place to get off and just reached down to pick up my bag and coat and this fellow over in the second room kicked out a window light and it came down and hit me on the head and just about dazed me but didn't cut me. I picked up my coat, my overcoat, I hadn't moved out of my tracks yet when Silverberg jumped out and just struck the side of me. Then just at the time a fellow by the name of Johnson from Grand Rapids came running up to me with just his pajamas on and said, "I have broken my heel and I am freezing to death, how are we going to get off?" I got the overcoat and ~~it~~ put it on this man, Johnson. Just about that time, I had been staying there a couple of years and this part runs this way,

the main front side and another "L" back the other way. This room 209 was in that corner of the back court here on the north side of the south building, and up here, my room was up there and when I got down on the roof and got the overcoat on Johnson, a woman opened a window and got out on the sill yelled deathly scream, "Somebody save me". I said, "If you will jump, I will catch you." She said, "How far?" I said, "You jump and I will catch you" and she jumped and I caught her. In doing that with this hand burned, I knocked the whole top of my hand off, down to the ear cords, and I caught her. I was wondering if it was Nancy Parker or --

Q Georgia Ball?

A Georgia Ball, that is right.

Q Was she conscious or unconscious?

A She was conscious, I am not sure it was her. I caught her and she had her night clothes on. The flames were following her right there at the window, she would have to jump and I caught her. My thought was, we will get off the north side and at that time the smoke was rolling over our heads thick and dark, you couldn't see a darn thing. I said, "Come on" and



took them to the east end and tried to get a place, had each by the hand and I walked right off the roof of that building and landed on three electric light wires, three wires that came in from a telephone pole that were hooked onto a eave trough at the north east corner of that two story building. I fell off a whole two feet from where they were fastened on and fell right into those three wires. She jerked back, jerked away from me and she didn't fall. I went hand over hand on the wires and got on the roof, got on again. I said, "We can't go down here." About that time, flames were coming out of the windows and began to light it up and I could see a little one story building on the north side of the two story building and it got a lot lighter for a few minutes then. At first it was just a dirty dark out there where the black smoke rolled over our head, "I said, "Turn around here and slide down on your belly, I will help you over this ledge to the one story building" and we got on our bellies and slid off onto the one story building and this man Johnson followed us too. We got on the one story building. We could see whole barrels or tanks on the north side of that. This woman didn't need any help

then, she could see the ground was close enough and she was going like a scared--, she got on the barrels and run. I never see her since. I got on the barrels and got off without getting hurt at all. But Johnson when I turned around he got on the barrels and he fell into one and hurt his side. This man's name is C. H. Thompson, 1417 Sigsbell Street, Grand Rapids.

Q. That is all.

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HARRY SILVERBERG, Rom 216,

St. Lawrence Hospital, sworn by Coroner Gorsline.

EXAMINED BY MR. MC CULLOUGH.

Q. Where do you live, Mr. Silverberg?

A. I live in Detroit.

Q. When did you register at the Kerns?

A. I would say about ten o'clock Monday night.

Q. To what room were you assigned?

A. 309.

Q. What time did you retire if you know?

A. Shortly after three o'clock.

Q. Now was there considerable gaiety and hilarity in the hotel?

A. I wasn't around the hotel from the time I registered until I came back. I was out spending the evening with a friend of mine.

Q. You noticed the boisterous conduct and hilarity when you came back?

A. When I came back at three o'clock.

Q. Where was your attention first drawn to a fire, by what means?

A. That, I can't answer the question, what woke me, I don't know. All I know, I woke up and found smoke and fire in my room. That was a nice thing

to greet a fellow with.

Q. What did you do then?

A. I tried to open the door and in my excitement the door wouldn't open easily and smoke and flames were coming in around the door. I didn't try to turn on any lights. I could get a reflection coming in through the window and I went back to the window, the smoke was so thick I was almost suffocated. I kicked the glass pane out with my foot, my window had been up a little. I kicked that out and I sat there astraddle of that, keeping my nose to the lower corner where I could get fresh air to keep from suffocating.

Q. Your room was filled then with flames?

A. My room was filled with smoke.

Q. There were some flames there?

A. That is right.

Q. What did you do then?

A. The last I remember was hanging on the outside and the next I recall, I came to lying in this bed. That makes it short and snappy and without any flourishes.

Q. You were in your room after you awakened but a short time before you were outside hanging on the



sill there?

A. No, it couldn't have been very long because I recall my idea that flashed, instead of jumping out, was to try and drop, I could see the ledge of the room below, the window ledge and what I would do was drop rather than jump. I e thought I could drop and hit the ledge with my feet, I knew I was on the third floor. I had hung there, I was over the cafeteria or dining room, and knowing the layout of the hotel, rather than jump, if I hit that and bounced, I would be better off. I hung there and when I let go I was unconscious because I don't recall dropping.

Q. So far as you recall or know you were not notified by either the telephone or a rap on your door?

A. No.

MR. HAYDEN: You heard no alarm whatever?

A. No, sir, to be frank with you I have just a faint recollection, a recollection, I woke up coughing or suffocating and the first thing that stared me in the face was flames coming through the window. I had seen fire enough to know what was going on.

MR. HAYDEN: You have no definite knowledge or way of fixing the time at which you were

first awakened?

- A. No. All I know, approximately, when I went to the hotel, I left a friend of mine and they said it was around three o'clock. I called a cab and went to bed.

MR. HAYDEN: After you left the window you were "out" until you got here?

- A. That is right. The last I recall I was astraddle of the window and getting air to keep from suffocating and hanging on there, and, from the time I fell until I landed here, I don't recall a thing.

- Q. That is all.



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Capital Area District Libraries - Forest Parke Library and Archives

December <sup>21st</sup> ~~20th~~, 1934.

*Dewitt*

DEWITT W. PIERSON, being sworn, by Coroner Gorsline, testified as follows, on being interviewed at room No. 102, Sparrow Hospital.

PRESENT: Coroner Ray Gorsline, Prosecuting Attorney, Dan Mc Cullough and Attorney Chas. Hayden.

MR. PIERSON: The first I knew about it is when called by the bellhop and when I got up I thought I would give them another call but when I opened the door--, the first I thought I'd change my clothes and I got my underwear and began thinking maybe I better give them a call too. I opened up my door and I got one glimpse and that is all. I closed the door immediately, I didn't wait to put on any more clothes, I didn't think I had time. It was quite hot in the hall and I got out the window and I closed the window thinking I could stay there quite a while ~~a-quit~~ if necessary but I wasn't there but a few moments, I guess probably I wouldn't say minutes, I don't think it was, the fire and smoke started to roll out from underneath me. Everytime I got a whiff of the heavy smoke, it was almost suffocating, that is just about all I know except what I saw of other fellows throwing themselves out and jumping out and calling.

MR. HAYDEN: Did you drop?



A. I dropped.

MR. HAYDEN: What floor?

A. I was on the third.

MR. MC CULLOUGH: What room  
on three were you in?

A. 319. I dropped to the kitchen, on the tile roof  
below.

EXAMINED BY MR. HAYDEN.

Q. Have you any idea what time it was when you woke up?

A. I wouldn't have a bit of an idea.

Q. You said something about the bellboy called and  
awakened you, what was it, hollering or pounding  
on the door?

A. It was a call, sounded as if it came from the other  
end of the hall.

Q. What was it a yell of "Fire"?

A. Just a yell of "Fire".

Q. You don't know who it was?

A. No, I wouldn't know that.

Q. Did he say anything else except to yell "Fire"?

A. Just yelled once, I didn't hear so very much after.

I thought I would do a little yelling too. It  
might help somebody else.

Q. Were you able to walk?

A. No, I wasn't able to walk.

Q. You did n't notice whether the fire department was there when you got around--

A. No, no firemen were there when I dropped. I didn't see them. They were just dropping and laying there.

EXAMINED BY MR. MC CULLOUGH.

Q. What time did you retire, do you remember about what time?

A. About a quarter to eleven.

Q. Were you disturbed during the night by any boisterous conduct or hilsarious conduct in the halls?

A. No, I couldn't say I was, except in the next room the telephone bell would ring once in a while.

Q. So far as you know there was nothing to indicate in the particular section you occupied, evidence of drinking or carousing?

A. No, I wouldn't say so.

Q. Other than this cry of "Fire" you heard in the hall you were not aroused by the telephone ringing or knocking on your door?

A. No.

Q. When you looked out in the hall ~~there was~~ smoke and flames?

A. I don't know as I saw much flames but the heat was



intense and the smoke was terrible.

MR. HAYDEN: Where did you  
say your home was?

A. Cadillac.

Q. That will be all.

Capital Area District Libraries - Forest Parke Library and Archives

TED KLEINDIENST, 103 Sparrow Hospital.

PRESENT: Coroner Ray Gorsline

Prosecuting Attorney, Dan Mc Cullough.

Att'y Chas. Hayden.

MR. MC GULLOUGH: Our purpose

here is we understand you made a statement to Mr. Krauss and we have that statement after he wrote it off. If Mr. Gorsline will swear you and then read the statement to you, it will be the same as a sworn statement and if there are any corrections, you can make them.

A. Alright.

MR. GORSLINE: When was Mr.

Krause in here?

A. Yesterday morning, I believe.

MR. GORSLINE: If you will

raise your right hand, I will swear you.

(Oath administered by Mr. Gorsline)

A. I will affirm it.

MR. GORSLINE: This is a statement

relative to Hotel Kerns fire. You are from Blissfield?

A. That is right.

MR. GORSLINE: (Reading statement)

" I registered at the Hotel Kerns, Lansing, Michigan,



at about six P.M., Monday, December the 10th, 1934.

I was assigned to room 325."

A. That is right.

MR. GORSLINE: "At about nine P.M., I tried to put through a long distance call to my wife from a public 'phone booth in the hotel. While in the booth, I observed three young men approach the adjoining booth; two of these men gave strong evidence of having been drinking; If I know the Monroe boys, they were the ones. They all tried to talk into the phone at one time; finally one of them succeeded in talking into the mouthpiece and spoke about the switchboard being out of order; he asked that a man be sent over at once to repair the board, inasmuch as the hotel was very filled, and the board was badly needed. I did not observe where they went from there but do recall that they monkeyed about the 'phone until they got a nickel back."

A. That is right.

MR. GORSLINE: "I retired about nine thirty P.M., at least sometime between nine and ten o'clock. My room faced the east over a court, I was disturbed two or three times during the night by noisy hilarity, particularly by groups passing in the hall talking excessively loud.

I awoke quite suddenly, and my first sensation  
was that I smelled smoke. I loked out of my  
door and saw the whole hall in flames, the same  
coming especially from the stairway connecting  
the floors."

- A. Before I looked out the door, I was all dressed.  
I had been to the window and thought ~~that~~ was  
fumes coming from the kitchen and lay back down,  
after closing the transome, lay back in bed again  
to see, saying in my mind if it gets any stronger,  
I would leave, although I tried to use the telephone  
too. I can't remember whether it was then or  
after I got up the second time, the telephone was  
out of order, didn't work. You can tell when  
a telephone is dead because there just isn't  
any sound from it at all. I laid back down  
and I got up and turned on the light and see  
the room was hazy with smoke and put on my  
clothes in a fasion, hurriedly, and then I  
opened the door and the fire was <sup>coming</sup> ~~eeing~~ and  
I left by way of the window.

MR. MC CULLOUGH: Coming down  
the hall, the fire?

- A. My room was next to the stairs, coming up from  
the lower floor. I knew with this fire coming up



the stairs around here it would be impossible to get out, the lights went out too and I didn't know, I thought possibly I was burned out from underneath and I went out the window.

MR. GORSLINE: "I closed the door, pulled on a few clothes, grabbed my grip—"  
A. Just a moment, no, I had my clothes on when I opened and closed the door.

MR. GORSLINE: I think perhaps I had better read this clear through and then you can correct it. "Grabbed my grip and overcoat, and climbed out of the window. I held on to the ledge with my right hand, having my overcoat and grip in the left hand and dropped to the roof below. I fell on my left arm which is broken in many places. Two men were on the roof when I landed. They tore my overcoat into two pieces, tied them together and tied them to my suit coat and thus we were able to reach the ground below in the b court. I went out through the tunnel to Ottawa Street. The Fire Department was already at the scene of the fire. I saw a Police Car parked on the corner and was brought in it by an officer to the Sparrow Hospital.

I was the first victim to reach the hospital, arriving at ten minutes of six. I was not aroused at the hotel by 'phone or by rapping at the door."

- A. There is one change in there you can make, one of these fellows going over where he got a ladder and brought it back, and I came down the ladder. He got the ladder from the fire department. It was a fire department ladder. That is how I got down and how the other fellow got down, I don't know, I was the first fellow down the ladder.

EXAMINED BY MR. MC CULLOUGH.

- Q. Did you observe the time at all when you were awakened?
- A. With the exception of one thing, if the town clock strikes the half hour, I heard it strike. If not, I heard a bell, similar to a clock, strike. That would make it, figuring back now, at five-thirty.
- Q. That was while you were in your room?
- A. Yes.
- Q. Before you were dressed?
- A. I would say while I was lying on my bed.



Q. Were the flames evident when you were out on the balcony?

A. On the roof?

Q. Yes.

A. One fellow before I left my room, must have been on the first floor pretty near to the wall, he hollered and said, "Boy, she is all afire down in here".

Q. The smoke was dense?

A. When I got out, I could see some windows and the corner where it was coming from. If this was the hotel, back of the hotel, then it looked like in that corner.

Q. That would be the northwest corner?

A. Be on the west wall, north wall, in that corner. The corner I am speaking of is the inside corner towards my room.

MR. HAYDEN: That would be

towards the bridge?

A. Towards the State Journal building.

Q. It would be the northwest?

A. Northwest.

MR. HAYDEN: That is the Grand

Avenue and Ottawa Street corner?

A. When I came out of the tunnell a chap there with his car asked me to help him push it away.

I have thought that rather amusing since. I believe a couple of people had jumped out the north side, I am not sure of that, and the fire department were there turning on the hose.

Q. That is all

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HARRY LEVINE, room 104,  
Sparrow Hospital. Sworn by Coroner Ray Gorsline.

MR. GORSLINE: Your name is  
Harry Levine?

A. Yes.

EXAMINED BY MR. MC CULLOUGH.

Q. Where is your home, Mr. Levine?

A. Detroit.

Q. What time did you register at the Kerns?

A. During the afternoon.

Q. To what room were you assigned?

A. 236.

Q. What time did you retire that night if you know?

A. Between the hours of eight and nine.

Q. Do you know what time you were awakened by the  
fire?

A. I couldn't tell the exact time.

Q. How were you awakened if you recall?

A. Well, I had been awakened several times by noise  
and hollering around.

Q. Which would indicate there was considerable drinking  
being done in the Hotel?

A. Yes.

Q. That was during the night that you were awakened that way?

A. Yes. When I say I retired at that hour, I didn't jump in bed, to retire, I disrobed and sat around.

Q. You didn't leave your room after that?

A. No. I took the car to the Reo garage around five thirty or six and left it there.

Q. Was this boisterousness quite noticeable?

A. Yes.

Q. Was in on your floor near your room?

A. Over me and under me and the same floor.

Q. Did you make any complaint to the office?

A. No.

Q. Now could you tell us exactly what it was that awakened you?

A. I heard some one snooping around my door. I had already had plenty of rest and I opened the door and said, "What do you want, or words to that effect" and he said, "Is there any smoke around here?" and the smoke was coming out and he said "My God, that's the bosses room, I better get down there and get him out of there."

Q. Apparently, it was some employee?

A. Yes, it was a bellboy in uniform.

Q. Did he come into your room?



A. Yes, he came to the door.

Q. Did he search in your room?

A. Yes.

Q. On the floor?

A. I can't recall just what.

Q. He came inside of your room?

A. Yes.

Q. That is all he said and left?

A. Yes. The minute I seen the smoke was getting denser, I ran and woke up my partner who was asleep in the next room. I had a hard time to get him up.

Q. That was 234 or 238?

A. 238.

Q. At that time the smoke was quite noticeable?

A. Yes. It was.

Q. In your room?

A. Yes. It was coming up from the room below. It wasn't as bad as it got later.

Q. Did you turn on your lights?

A. Yes. I put on my trousers over my pajamas and put on my coat over my pajamas and I was going to run over and put on my shoes and it was getting dense and I couldn't see and I went out

in my house slippers. My sense of direction took me down to the elevator.

Q. Did you get out through that way through the stairs?

A. Yes, finally.

Q. And into the lobby?

A. No.

Q. Fire escape was it?

A. There was fire both ways. I couldn't find-- , by time I couldn't find no stairs and I run for the elevator and the smoke was so dense by the time I came back to see, to locate the stairs, the smoke was dense and the women were shrieking and so were the men and flames were each side of meby that time and I just happened to notice a staircase leading from the second stairs to the first floor and I covered, and I covered, I don't recall, I covered myself up and I went down to the first floor and it was a mass of flames. I began looking for the entrance to the stairway and throwing my shoulder and body against doors and as luck would have it, my hand went through a fire escape window, went through some window and then unfastened

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*more than just a page  
burned*



the door and I run onto the fire escape landing and got to the end of it and I let myself down. I run along, I don't know just where, along that river bank to the bridge and there happened to be standing a ladder that was painted criss cross and I climbed that until I got to the top. I got to the top and I was having great difficulty in getting hold of the iron on the bridge and finally got up and run into the Wentworth Hotel and I pleaded with a man there to get me a taxi cab and bring me to the hospital which he done.

Q. Did you by chance observe the time during the time before you left for the hospital?

A. No.

Q. As you stated you were aroused by someone snooping around in front of the door which you later found to be a bellhop?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you know whether or not he went into any ~~or~~ other rooms on that floor or did he leave immediately and go downstairs?

A. I said, "Why don't you wake up the people if there was a fire?" and he said, "Oh hell, I've

got to get the boss up." That is the last I heard of him. I said, "How do you get out of here?" Had I turned seven or eight doors down and could have walked down the fire escape and got out without a scratch.

EXAMINED BY MR. HAYDEN.

Q. The smoke was so thick you couldn't see anything when you got out there?

A. The first time I could see alright.

Q. You couldn't have seen a placard or warning of fire escapes when you got in the hall?

A. No, not by the time when I got my trousers and got on my hat. By that time the smoke was so dense, I couldn't see nothing. I tried to follow my sense of direction.

Q. This boy who came walking or bursting in, did he knock on the door?

A. I heard somebody snooping around and I had had plenty of sleep that night. I went to the door and said "Who is it?" and he said, "Is there a fire in there?" I heard that and opened the door and turned on the light. I took him to be a bellboy. He had a red coat on.

MR. GORSLINE: You hadn't smelled fire or smoke or fire before that?



A. No.

MR. GORSLINE: Was the smoke quite evident after he came into your room?

A. I could smell smoke but it appeared to me the smoke was coming from down below, some damned fool had thrown away a cigarette or something like that.

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E. A. TELSER, Sparrow Hospital,

Sworn by Coronor Gorsline.

EXAMINED BY MR. MC CULLOUGH.

Q. Where is your home?

A. Detroit.

Q. When did you register at the Kerns?

A. About three thirty Monday afternoon.

Q. What time did you retire that evening?

A. We went to a picture show and we had our dinner later in the cafeteria at the hotel and then we retired to our room.

Q. Were you disturbed?

A. I heard drunken parties, as a matter of fact,  
disturbed us all night. I am a fairly sound sleeper and I didn't pay attention to it. At four thirty in the morning I was awakened by some one swearing and loud voices in the hallway, outside of my door.

Q. Your room was what?

A. 238. We had adjoining rooms with a bed in between.

Q. How were you awakened?

A. Mr. Levine awakened me.

Q. By coming through the bath--

A. That is rather hazy to me. I think when he awakened me he was standing in the bathroom. I wakened up and



he said to me, "It seems like there is a fire. There is a lot of smoke in my room."

Q. Was there any smoke in your room?

A. None, I didn't notice any smoke in my room and when I got up I got up and went in the hallway --

MR. HAYDEN: Was your room

that room that opened up into his room?

A. We had adjoining rooms with a bath in between. I got up and went into the hallway and looked to my right and the lights were still all on, looked to my right and in the front section of the hallway was a dense cloud of smoke. I said to Mr. Levine, "Yes, it is a fire alright, let's get our things and get to hell out of here". With that, I walked back into my room and fortunately for me I had not unpacked my bag, I just hung up my clothes, opened my bag before I retired, my slippers, bed room slippers and my toilet articles, that's all I took out of the bag, when I got up, I put on my clothes over my pajamas and put on my shoes and after I put on my shoes, closed the bag, and Mr. Levine it shounded from the entrance, presumably from the entrance to his room,

to the hallway, and said, "This way out, Ed".

It couldn't have been any more than three or five seconds that I reached the hall, with my bag in my hand, and I looked around in the hallway and noticed that he wasn't in sight, several people there but he wasn't there and I rushed into the smoke and after then I commenced to choke up and shouted his name to tell him to come back the other way to the fire escape.

Q. Did you know where the fire escape was?

A. Yes, fortunately for me, I noticed when I retired there was a little red sticker over the transome which said Fire Escape at the end of the hall. I noticed that when I retired. Whether this automatically came back to me or whether I just turned around and noticed the fire escape, I don't know. But after I commenced to choke up in the smoke and I couldn't go further, I backed out of it and came back to my room and came back to the end of the hall way where the door to the fire escape is and told the fellows in the hall there was a fire escape here, let's go out this way. I got to the



fire escape first then I remembered I forgot my brief case in the room and I left the bag on the fire escape and I went back in the hallway. Our room was south two or three doors, I can't recall the number of doors towards the front of the building beyond the fire doors and when I came back into the hallway, the fire door was closed and some one was standing at the door. I was considering where my room was and I came to the end of the hall where the fire door shut off further advances. I looked at the door on the right and I believe it was 242 or 244. I knew that wasn't my room and I went to go further and came to the fire door and some one was standing in their shirt sleeves and said, "You can't go in there" and I said, "Why? I left my brief case and I want to go and get it" and he opened the door and the place was just a mass of flames. I returned to the fire escape and walked down and went over into the power building and was apparently one of the first to reach there or one of the first few and shortly after they started coming in, some were being helped in. As a matter of

fact, I went out and helped one fellow in myself, in various phases of injury, undressed and some with pajamas and some had underwear on and some pajamas. One fellow I believe had his leg broken. Some one said, "Get a doctor" and I yelled, "Get the ambulance down here." I said to the operator, "Get every ambulance down, come down to the Kerns fire, people are injured and need medical attention and hospital attention" and she said "Alright, I will do that." A fellow produced a bottle of whiskey and said, "This fellow needs a drink of whiskey" and started to give him a drink of whiskey, then I started to look for Mr. Levine. I didn't know where he was until an extra came out the next morning. I thought he was in the fire.

Q. Do you recall at all that you noticed the time?

A. Five thirty.

Q. When did you notice that?

A. When I got over into the power house, it was five thirty two then.

Q. By your watch?

A. Yes.

Q. How long a time would you say had elapsed?

A. I don't think over five minutes.

Q. From the time Mr. Levine—



A. No, from the time Mr. Levine awakened me, I don't think it was over seven minutes. I wouldn't swear to that, just a haphazard statement.

EXAMINED BY MR. GORSLINE.

Q. At any time, did you see any group of people?

A. Yes, out in the hallway.

Q. Did you see them get out of the building?

A. Two or three walked down the fire escape when I was leaving.

Q. Did any others start in the other direction?

A. Mr. Levine did. I couldn't say if anyone else did, I started in the other direction myself but when it got so smoky and got a couple mouthful, I couldn't see any reason to go further and I said, "Back this way, Harry, is the fire escape".

Q. That is all.

ALBERT B. HANSON, 108 Sparrow Hospital.

Sworn by Coroner Gorsline.

MR. GORSLINE: I will read this over and see if you want it to go on the record, and after I am through reading it, you can make what corrections or additions that you want to it.

A. Yes, sir.

MR. GORSLINE: Your name is

Albert B. Hanson?

A. Yes, sir.

MR. GORSLINE: Of Oscodo, Michigan, connected with the State Highway Department?

A. Yes, sir.

MR. GORSLINE: (Reading Statement)

"I arrived in Lansing about one thirty A. M. Monday, December the 10th from the north. I went directly to the Kerns Hotel where I registered and was assigned to room 219. Monday night I retired about nine o'clock. I was disturbed in my sleep to such an extent that I slept very fitfully. There was noise, shouting and singing by men and women. Such noise came from rooms across the hall from me and in the wing north from me and this was particularly annoying. About four A.M. I arose with the



intention of getting out of my room entirely but noticing that the noise was beginning to subside I returned to my bed and finally fell asleep. I was suddenly awakened by a woman's cry for help. It seemed to come from some distance from my room. I jumped up at once and went to my window which was open. I looked out to see if there were any evidences of fire which might occasion a call for help. I saw no flames, but smelled smoke and almost immediately I heard more cries for help coming from every direction. I thought I would have ample time to dress and search for a fire escape. I slipped off my pajamas and put on a rubber stocking which I wear on my right leg, pulled on my underwear, and had the underwear about half buttoned, when I heard a noise in the corridor that sounded like the blast of a mighty wind and at that instant flames came into my room along the carpet under the door and in another instant the whole carpet of my room burst into flames. Not more than two minutes had elapsed from the time I heard the call for help that awakened me until the carpet in my room had burst into flames completely. I made for the window, climbed through it and let myself down the outside, holding to it the inside

of the sill with my right hand. The flames were searing my arm and so I had to let go and drop to the roof below me. I hit the roof and knew I had a broken leg when I landed. A man from the floor above my room dropped to the roof beside me, incurring no injury because he knew how to land, turning sort of a somersault just as he struck the roof, he shouted, "I'll save you" next to us, was a window which he broke, got me through and into what appeared to be a dry cleaning establishment. There he grabbed two overcoats, one for each of us, broke the window in the front door and secured help of several men, among them firemen, to carry me across the street to the lobby of the Detroit Hotel. By that time, I could see that the entire front of the hotel was a mass of flames. I later ascertained that my rescuer was Burt Olcott of Detroit, a fire insurance inspector. In subsequent assistance at rescue work, he froze both feet. I have his name and address. From the time I awakened until I reached the street not more than five minutes elapsed. I never saw anything like it in my life."



w. R-319

Delvitt Pierson - hosp. - from Cadillac

Ted Klendienet - Blissfield R-325 (Room faced E over a court)  
(next to stairs - inside)

Harry Levine - Detroit - 236  
Partner { 238

EA Telsner - Detroit - 238

Albert Hanson - Oscoda - 219

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EXAMINED BY MR. MC CULLOUGH.

- Q. Mr. Hanson, was there any evidence of flames in this, what you thought was an upholster's shop when you went into it?
- A. No, I said a dry cleaning—
- Q. Dry cleaning and taylor shop, you didn't see flames there?
- A. You mean in the shop?
- Q. Yes.
- A. No, not a bit.
- Q. Was there any smoke there?
- A. No.
- Q. That is on what is termed the ground floor, that enters into the street?
- A. Yes.

MR. GORSLINE: (Reading Statement)

In thinking about the fire since, I recall very distinctly, that when I went to my room Monday morning immediately after I had registered, my sense of smell detected an odor which reminded me of benzine. I figured at the moment that the help had no doubt been doing some general cleaning in preparation for the anticipated rush of the special session of the State Legislature. I noticed at the time that the carpeting on the floor of my room looked uncommonly clean and



bright as if recently cleaned. Since then, I have conjectured that this might be an explanation for the rapids spread of the fire, inasmuch as I had an opportunity to witness how the carpet in my room instantly burst into flames all over and that these flames had come in under the door, evidently following the carpeting. Another observation I made in my brief stay at the hotel was that it made a very disgusting impression morally. As an illustration, when I went to my room Monday evening about eight o'clock, Mr. Main, a friend, was with me. We took the elevator up. The elevator girl made some very suggestive advances to us while we were in the car, by this I mean she actually put her hands on us in various places and remarked, "There'll be a hot time in the old town tonight".

- A. ~~Cut out~~ the quotation marks "in various places" I didn't say that. MR. GORSLINE:

"A little later I returned to the lobby, using the elevator to descend. Again the elevator made the advances she had made before. Then when I went to my room to retire at about nine o'clock, two other men who had rooms on the same floor as mine happened to be going up in the elevator with me.

The girl made the same suggestive and immoral advances to these two men. When we left the elevator at our floor, I was making the bend in the corridor and noticed that the other two men were not following me. I looked back and saw them in the corridor dancing up and down with the elevator girl and singing, "There'll be a hot time in the old town tonight."

The elevator girl had dark brown hair. I would know her again if I saw her."

A. That is a bit strong on the "immoral advances". That is my conclusion, not my knowledge, I don't know.

Q. Was she apparently intoxicated?

A. No.

Q. She was singing a song?

A. "There would be a hot time in the old town tonight".

MR. HAYDEN: I want to ask you for the purpose of the record, was this young lady actually putting her hands on your private parts?

A. No.

MR. HAYDEN: Or was she just acting in a familiar friendly way in taking hold of you men?

A. That is what I tried to convey.

Q. He said that she was pinching his arm?



A. Yes, just took hold of it and slapped it a little.

Q. Did you by chance observe the time at all during the morning of the fire?

A. Only when I got up at that time, four o'clock.

Q. You don't know other than that?

A. No.

Q. You dropped back to sleep before you again were aroused?

A. Yes.

Q. That's all.

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ALVAH D. CARR; Room 112, Sparrow  
Hospital.

Sworn by Mr. Gorsline.

MR. GORSLINE: I will read this  
statement and if you want to verify it, # give any  
additons or corrections to it.

(Statement of Alvah D. Carr, Reo Sales, Lansing,  
Michigan.)

"I had lived at the hotel for some time, occupying  
room 133, right across the hall from Dave Monroe's living  
room. I had retired that night, Monday December the 10th  
at about ten forty-five o'clock. I was disturbed consid-  
erably during the night by noise of all sorts. There  
were men and girls, talking, shouting and running up and  
down the corridor. It was very boisterous and hilarious  
in the halls. I heard voices coming from Dave's apartment  
when I went to bed. I cannot say whose voices they were  
because I could not see the people in there. I was  
awakened by the crackling of flames in my room, about a  
a foot and a half from the head of my bed. I scrambled  
to the window and dropped to the roof of the one story  
building below, and from there to the ground and then ran  
out of the tunnel into Ottawa Street. There I stopped and  
looked up at the building and observed flames shooting out  
of the windows of Dave's apartment. I stood in Ottawa  
Street about ten to fifteen minutes, but did not observe



the fire department as being there during this time. I finally obtained transportation to the Sparrow Hospital. I was not awakened by the ringing of the 'phone, heard no rapping at my door, nor did I hear anyone shout "Fire".

A. Yes, sir, that is right.

EXAMINED BY MR. HAYDEN.

Q. Do you know whether the Fire Department was there or whether you just failed to see them?

A. If they were there, I didn't see them. I was wondering why, they were only two blocks away, why they didn't come.

Q. Did you look at any definite time?

A. No.

Q. Were you one of the first ones out?

A. No, others were out on the roof and kept dropping all around me when I got out there.

Q. The fire was confined to the north end of the building when you got out?

A. Sure.

Q. Was it confined or in other parts of the building?

A. No, it was right there, I looked to see.

Q. Did you see people coming down the fire escape?

A. I see more coming out the windows than the fire escape.

Q. Jumping, you mean?

A. Yes.

MR. MC CULLOUGH: Were your lights on  
in the room, did you turn them on?

A. No.

Q. That is all.

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GEORGIA BALL, sworn by Coroner

Gorsline.

PRESENT: Prosecuting Attorney Dan Mc Cullough and  
Attorney Chas. Hayden.

EXAMINED BY MR. MC CULLOUGH.

- Q. Now, what time did you register at the Kerns?
- A. Let's see, late in the afternoon, probably five or six, probably six o'clock.
- Q. On December the 10th?
- A. Was that the night?
- Q. Monday?
- A. Yes.
- Q. You were living with Nancy?
- A. Yes, she was living with me at 409 W. Ottawa.
- Q. That day, just explain about the furnace?
- A. We hadn't had any heat. I had been down to Detroit for the week end and when I came home and found out the boiler hadn't been working and so Nancy thought we ought to go and stay over night instead of staying there with her cold and we went to the hotel. My little girl wasn't with us.
- Q. You and Nancy occupied the same room?
- A. Yes.
- Q. What room was that?

A. The second floor.

Q. You don't know the number?

A. No, we occupied the same bed.

Q. What time did you go to sleep that night, about what time, do you know?

A. I don't know, ten thirty.

Q. Was it before midnight?

A. Yes, wasn't especially early or especially late.

Q. Both of you are employees of the State Building?

A. Yes.

Q. You were in the Fire Marshall's Department?

A. Yes.

Q. And she in the Welfare Department?

A. Yes.

Q. You had planned on going to work the following morning?

A. Yes, we had.

Q. What awakened you in regard to the fire, do you recall?

A. I don't know, seemed like people going by our door all night.

Q. Would you say there was loud talking?

A. Yes, seemed to be considerable noise in the hall.

Q. Was that what awakened you or was there some specific thing that awakened you?



21st  
December 20th, 1934.

DEWITT W. PIERSON, being sworn, by Coroner Gorsline, testified as follows, on being interviewed at room No. 102, Sparrow Hospital.

PRESENT: Coroner Ray Gorsline, Prosecuting Attorney, Dan Mc Cullough and Attorney Chas. Hayden.

MR. PIERSON: The first I knew about it is when called by the bellhop and when I got up I thought I would give them another call but when I opened the door--, the first I thought I'd change my clothes and I got my underwear and began thinking maybe I better give them a call too. I opened up my door and I got one glimpse and that is all. I closed the door immediately, I didn't wait to put on any more clothes, I didn't think I had time. It was quite hot in the hall and I got out the window and I closed the window thinking I could stay there quite a while ~~a-while~~ if necessary but I wasn't there but a few moments, I guess probably I wouldn't say minutes, I don't think it was, the fire and smoke started to roll out from underneath me. Everytime I got a whiff of the heavy smoke, it was almost suffocating, that is just about all I know except what I saw of other fellows throwing theirselves out and jumping out and calling.

MR. HAYDEN: Did you drop?

A. I don't know, I can't say. I think we were just attracted by the noise.

Q. Now, when you first discovered there was fire in the building, how did you discover that? What drew it to your attention do you recall?

A. Not unless the people talking?

Q. Did you notice smoke or fire?

A. No, I don't think we did, I think we heard people yelling, yes, that is it, heard people yelling.

Q. Were you awakened first or was Nancy Parker awakened first?

A. I probably was. You can never wake her up.

Q. Did you happen to look at the time at all, do you know what time it was when you started to get out?

A. I don't think so. I lost my watch. It seems as though we looked out the window fronting on Grand Street.

Q. You were in the front part of the hotel?

A. Yes, we had a room on Grand Street.

Q. How did you get out of the hotel, do you know?

A. Seems like I climbed out the front window, I don't know, it seems like when we knew there was fire we got awfully scared.



Q. Do you know whether Nancy Parker came out with you or not?

A. No, I don't know.

EXAMINED BY MR. HAYDEN.

Q. Do you know where you got out, what part of the building you got out of?

A. Well, it seems as I remember standing looking out the front window and went out.

Q. You mean on the Grand Street side?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you jump from the window?

A. I don't know, I hate to have you question me because I really don't know.

Q. Was there the fire department out there when you came out?

A. Yes, I remember the fire department, I remember Paul Lefke, I thought probably he'd see me. I know him from my department.

Q. Didn't any of them put a ladder up or didn't they?

A. Well, I don't know, seems like they would have though doesn't it? I don't remember, when I seen Paul Lefke, he would help me, I really thought.

MR. MC CULLOUGH: Did you know any of the guests there at the hotel at all?

A. No, we just went down there, didn't even go outside of the room, I don't believe. We didn't pay attention to anybody. We were tired and went down and went to bed.

MR. MC CULLOUGH: You both had been away over the week end?

A. Yes, we went into the lobby, we met Doug Monroe. He was always so kind of nice. He came up and spoke to us.

MR. HAYDEN: When you went into the lobby--

A. About six o'clock.

MR. HAYDEN: Doug was apparently alright, normal.

A. Yes.

MR. HAYDEN: He hadn't been drinking?

A. No, Marshall Hungerford from Coldwater was there.

MR. MC CULLOUGH: Did you have trouble getting a room at the hotel, was it crowded?

A. No, because Nancy had called in the afternoon.

MR. MC CULLOUGH: When did you discover the condition of your apartment being cold and the furnace out of repair?

A. I knew that Sunday night when I got home from Detroit, came in on the seven-thirty train. Joan and I stayed



there all night and when Nancy come in she didn't want to stay in the cold house and then we decided to go to the hotel and stay over night.

Q. The only two people that you know were in the hotel is Doug and Mr. Hungerford?

A. Yes, Marshall Hungerford. Doug spoke to us, I think Nancy called and asked him for a reservation for us.

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NORMAN PEARLSTEIN, Room 202,  
Sparrow Hospital.

MR. GORSLINE: We are conducting  
an investigation in regard to the Hotel Kerns  
fire and we would like to get a statement from you.

A. Yes, I will be glad to give it.

MR. GORSLINE: I will swear you.

(Witness sworn by Mr. Gorsline)

EXAMINED BY MR. MC CULLOUGH.

Q. Where is your home, Mr. Pearlstein?

A. My home is in Boston.

Q. You were registered at the Hotel Kerns on the 10th  
of December?

A. Yes. The 10th of December, I had been there about  
five or six weeks.

Q. What was your room?

A. 249.

Q. What time did you retire the evening of the 10th?

A. That same night I left the street, I went up to  
the Lansing Theatre and stayed there about an hour.  
The picture they had up there I had seen before and  
I got tired of it and walked out and went to the  
hotel, must have been about ten o'clock.

Q. Did you go immediately to your room?

A. I went immediately to the room, stopped at the news



stand and bought a paper and took up to the room.

Q. Were you aroused during the night by noise?

A. Every night there they always do have parties so I knew there were parties and I didn't mind it so much. That particular night people were shrieking and hollering "What's the matter with the elevator, what's the matter with the stairs?" I am a light sleeper.

MR. HAYDEN: That was the first time you knew anything was wrong?

A. Yes. Then again I wasn't sure. I thought it was just drunks who had stopped there and just hollering. When I had an idea something was wrong, I immediately got out of bed and I looked in the hallway and people were running up and down, hollering, seemed to be a gale of smoke and fumes. I couldn't keep my head up. I started to close the door. I knew I was in danger. I put my pants over my head, the door blew open after I closed it, blew open again and the flames came toward me in my room and the lights went out. It all happened in about five ~~mm~~ minutes. I poked my head ~~an~~ out, come back, the door opened and the lights went out, all you could hear was hollering "What in hell, is the matter with the firemen?" "What in hell is the

matter, it takes so long for the firemen, what in hell kind of firemen are they?" The worst screeching you ever heard. Nothing was left for me to get out at all. I said, "What shall I do, jump?"

MR. HAYDEN: You mean you said that to yourself?

A. Yes, to myself. Run back, a mass of flames here and I took those sheets and tied them together as many as I could, I figured that was the best way, they would kind of kill my fall. I jumped out the window and I slid down those sheets and when I fell, I fell on my back, the sheets in my hand they gave away. I was stunned for a moment. I could hear people hollering, tried to crawl along and had no place to go, it was so dark, all you could hear-- , I didn't know where to go after I did fall and finally, as I remember, it must have been about ten minutes later, the firemen arrived and then I saw, several lights got around and I saw where I was. I had to jump down another small embankment.

Q. You didn't observe the time at all when you went around?

A. No.



MR. HAYDEN: Were you notified

by any call?

A. I wasn't even notified or nothing.

Q. By phone or rapping on the door?

A. No, nothing, nobody knocked at the door and no telephone or nothing to say the place was on fire, didn't hear nothing at all. I could hear people hollering, and women, "What the hell is the matter with the firemen. What the hell is the matter with the firemen? What is the matter that it takes them so long?"

A. That's all.

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WILLIAM JACOBI, Room 411 St.  
Lawrence Hospital.

SWORN BY CORONER GORSLINE.

MR. MC CULLOUGH: Would you care to make a statement in regard to the fire. You are probably familiar with the fact we are making an investigation?

A. Only one statement I can make, I don't know much about the fire, I didn't get a minute's notice.

EXAMINED BY MR. MC CULLOUGH.

Q. Where do you live?

A. I live at Rutherford, N. J.

Q. Whendidyou register at the Kerns?

A. Monday night.

Q. What room were you assigned?

A. 317.

Q. What time did you retire?

A. About eleven thirty.

Q. When was your attention first drawn to the fire?

A. I heard the crackling of flames and heat in the room.

Q. You did not receive notification either through means of the telephone or a knock on your door?

A. None at all.

Q. Had you been aroused during the night at all by noise or carousing?



A. No, I was tired and I went right to sleep.

Q. And when you awakened, the flames were in your room?

A. They were all over the top of the room.

Q. Over the transome?

A. Over the transome and when I opened the window to see where I had to jump the draft drew them after me and I couldn't wait, I couldn't stop for my money. I had about thirty dollars, I didn't stop for dough, that's all I came out with, those blue pajamas.

MR. HAYDEN: Were you barefooted?

A. Yes. I went to see how far to jump. I went to the door and opened the door and it was all flames, no chance to get out, I slammed the door shut and when I did the transome window fell and broke and the draft from the window I opened chased the flames almost to me.

MR. HAYDEN: The flames were right on you and you didn't wait at all?

A. I didn't wait.

MR. HAYDEN: You didn't try to attract help or anything?

A. It was too far, the whole building seemed like it

was in motion.

Q. Did you notice the fire department at all?

A. I landed on the back roof where I lay a half hour. Finally another fellow dropped off and he run out to get help and two firemen came with a ladder and I slid down the ladder.

MR. HAYDEN: You said you layed a half hour, were you unconscious?

A. I was conscious a few minutes after I struck. This knee hit my chin and I probably got knocked out. I crawled to the roof to see how far I had to go to the next drop. I guess I would have dropped that too, no firemen around. All I could hear was people hollering "Help". One woman I heard screaming and she died away. The sounds got weaker and weaker. Men were hollering help above me on the fourth floor. After I dropped, a few men dropped after me, you could hear them thump and holler for them and get no answer. I think the firemen got the rest on the roof.

Q. Did the lights go on in your room?

A. I didn't even try to turn them on. It was light enough. I didn't try to 'phone or anything. I knew it was on fire and that was enough.

Q. You didn't look at your watch to see what time it was?



A. I didn't take time for anything, just left the room, if I kept my window down a few minutes and dressed myself and got some money--but I was anxious to see how far that drop was. As soon as I opened the window, that was the end. I lost all my clothing and grip and samples.

Q. That's all.

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FRANK SOCH IA, Room 418, Sparrow

Hospital.

SWORN BY CORONER GORSLINE.

EXAMINED BY MR. MC CULLOUGH.

Q. Where do you live?

A. 122 $\frac{1}{2}$  Ottawa Street.

Q. That is the Volunteers of America?

A. Yes.

Q. When did you first receive notice of the fire?

A. Half past five in the morning.

Q. Did you look at the clock or watch to determine that?

A. No.

Q. How were you notified?

A. A fellow came running up from the kitchen and said the Kerns Hotel was burning?

Q. Do you know who it was?

A. I don't know his name, I know he worked in the kitchen. I believe his name is Smith.

Q. Did you look at your watch to determine that time or the clock?

A. No.

Q. That is just an estimate?

A. Yes.

Q. You were aiding the fire department in the rescue work they were doing?



A. Yes.

Q. They were there, the fire department when you got there?

A. Yes.

Q. You were injured as a result of your work?

A. Yes.

Q. You were not in the hotel?

A. I was in the lobby before I went on the hose line.

Q. When you first got word of the fire, what part of the building was burning?

A. All parts of it.

Q. It was all over the building was it?

A. Sure.

Q. You were injured when a wall caved in?

A. When a wall caved in on Grand Avenue.

MR. HAYDEN: Was the fire department there when you first went there?

A. Yes, sir.

MR. HAYDEN: Quite a lot of people, a bunch of people around there at that time?

A. No, there wasn't such an awful mob around there at that time. They kept coming after I got there. At the time I was hurt there was quite a few people.

Q. That's all.

THOMAS SKEDGELL, Room 213, St.

Lawrence Hospital.

PRESENT: Coroner Ray Gorsline,  
Prosecuting Attorney Dan Mc Cullough  
Attorney Chas. H. Hayden.

SWORN BY CORONER GORSLINE:

EXAMINED BY MR. MC CULLOUGH.

Q. Where do you live?

A. My home is in Coral, Michigan.

Q. What is the nature of your business?

A. I work for the Federal Land Bank, field representative.

Q. You were registered at the Kerns on December the 10th?

A. Yes.

Q. To what room were you assigned?

A. 209.

Q. Do you recall what time you retired that night?

A. About eleven o'clock.

Q. Were you bothered or aroused during the night by  
boisterous conduct, loud talk?

A. Yes.

Q. As a conclusion of yours would you say as a result  
of drinking?

A. That would be my opinion.

Q. How many times during the night or how late do you  
recall?

A. The last I remember was, of course, I was sound--



I had been woke up several times but they had quite a loud conversation to the effect, "We are goigg to drive home, yes, tonight or this morning because it is three o'clock right now, come one, let's get the hell out of here."

Q. You don't know who they were?

A. No.

Q. Did you make complaint to the management about this conduct at all?

A. No.

Q. When were you first notified of the fire ~~or~~ or what awakened you?

A. Why, someone running down the hall hollering "Fire", whether on that floor or someother floor, I do not know.

Q. You were not awakened by a telephone call from the office or any rapping on your door?

A. No, somebody running down one of the halls and yelling "Fire".

Q. What did you do when you heard the call?

A. I jumped up and set on the side of the bed, I was half dazed, I was ound asleep that time of night, my first thought was, here in a town like this, the fire department would be here in a few minutes

and probably be able to handle it even if there is a little fire, but I thought better get dressed anyway, that was just my thoughts. I got up from where I was sitting on the edge of the bed and walked to the foot of the bed where my trousers were hanging over the back of the chair. I remember picking up my underwear and just at that instant, flames came right in the transome, the hall side of the transome. I thought I wouldn't have time to get dressed. I grabbed my pants and opened the door thinking I would run down the hall. No living man could run down the hall, the flames came right in. What happened, I don't know. I run over to the window and the flames followed me from my door to the window.

Q. Was the window open or closed do you remember?

A. I think I had it up a little bit before I went to bed, but, I remember opening her clear to the top the first thing.

Q. How did you get out to the window?

A. I just crawled out there, three stories high and after I got out the window, I was holding my head, the thought came to me, if I can only get hold of a telephone wire or anything, my thought was just



to get hold of a telephone wire. I was raised in a small town where we fight fires by hand. I had been on the fire department up there, a little jerkwater town. I was hanging there to the window feeling all around to see if I could get hold of anything and I found an inch pipe off about three feet the side of the window. I could just reach it with my left hand. I had my oxfords on, I got a toe hold in the brick, getting a foot hold. The pipe was awfully loose, I don't know whether it was stuck up there for an insulation wire, I said, "Here goes, if it bends a little, at least it will help a little" and it held me. I grabbed it and it held me and I shinnied down that and then I was on the roof of a two story building.

Q. That iron pipe apparently went down to the roof?

A. Yes, just an inch pipe.

MR. GORSLINE: That was free from the building so you could get a good hand hold?

A. Not from the building, I could get hold of it. I know it was an inch pipe, probably electric conduit covering a wire.

Q. How did you get off the roof you dropped on?

A. When I got down there, of course, I thought I am lucky to be on the roof, if I could only get off

the roof. I evidently had grabbed my coat, my overcoat and threw it out the window when I opened the window and I had my portfolio with all the bank records in it ~~to~~ which I was trying hard to save, really nothing but what could be duplicated. I think I got burned by reaching back to get it. I couldn't get that but I got my bag and throwed that down. When I got down one story, I thought of picking up my coat and bad and looking for a place to get off and just reached down to pick up my bag and coat and this fellow over in the second room kicked out a window light and it came down and hit me, on the head and just about dazed me but didn't cut me. I picked up my coat, my overcoat, I hadn't moved out of my tracks yet when Silverberg jumped out and just struck the side of me. Then just at the time a fellow by the name of Johnson from Grand Rapids came running up to me with just his pajamas on and said, "I have broken my heel and I am freezing to death, how are we going to get off?" I got the overcoat and ~~it~~ put it on this man, Johnson, Just about that time, I had been staying there a couple of years and this part runs this way,



the main front side and another "L" back the other way. This room 209 was in that corner of the back court here on the north side of the south building, and up here, my room was up there and when I got down on the roof and got the overcoat on Johnson a woman opened a window and got out on the sill yelled deathly scream, "Somebody save me". I said, "If you will jump, I will catch you." She said, "How far?" I said, "You jump and I will catch you" and she jumped and I caught her. In doing that with this hand burned, I knocked the whole top of my hand off, down to the ear cords, and I caught her. I was wondering if it was Nancy Parker or --

Q Georgia Ball?

A Georgia Ball that is right.

Q Was she conscious or unconscious?

A She was conscious, I am not sure it was her. I caught her and she had her night clothes on. The flames were following her right there at the window, she would have to jump and I caught her. My thought was, we will get off the north side and at that time the smoke was rolling over our heads thick and dark, you couldn't see a darn thing. I said, "Come on" and

took them to the east end and tried to get a place, had each by the hand and I walked right off the roof of that building and landed on three electric light wires, three wires that came in from a telephone pole that were hooked onto a eave trough at the north east corner of that two story building. I fell off a whole two feet from where they were fastened on and fell right into those three wires. She jerked back, jerked away from me and she didn't fall. I went hand over hand on the wires and got on the roof, got on again. I said, "We can't go down here." About that time, flames were coming out of the windows and began to light it up and I could see a little one story building on the north side of the two story building and it got a lot lighter for a few minutes then. At first it was just a dirty dark out there where the black smoke rolled over our head, "I said, "Turn around here and slide down on your belly, I will help you over this ledge to the one story building" and we got on our bellies and slid off onto the one story building and this man Johnson followed us too. We got on the one story building. We could see whole barrels or tanks on the north side of that. This woman didn't need any help



then, she could see the ground was close enough and she was going like a scared--, she got on the barrels and run. I never see her since. I got on the barrels and got off without getting hurt at all. But Johnson when I turned around he got on the barrels and he fell into one and hurt his side. This man's name is C. H. Thompson, 1417 Sigsbell Street, Grand Rapids.

Q. That is all.

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Dr. Cameron.  
Punctured lung  
Broken rib  
Crushed foot.

HARRY SILVERBERG, Rom 216,

St. Lawrence Hospital, sworn by Coroner Gorsline.

EXAMINED BY MR. MC CULLOUGH.

Q. Where do you live, Mr. Silverberg?

A. I live in Detroit.

Q. When did you register at the Kerns?

A. I would say about ten o'clock Monday night.

Q. To what room were you assigned?

A. 309.

Q. What time did you retire if you know?

A. Shortly after three o'clock.

Q. Now was there considerable gaiety and hilarity in the hotel?

A. I wasn't around the hotel from the time I registered until I came back. I was out spending the evening with a friend of mine.

Q. You noticed the boisterous conduct and hilarity when you came back?

A. When I came back at three o'clock.

Where was your attention first drawn to a fire, by what means?

A. That, I can't answer the question, what woke me, I don't know. All I know, I woke up and found smoke and fire in my room. That was a nice thing



to greet a fellow with.

Q. What did you do then?

A. I tried to open the door and in my excitement the door wouldn't open easily and smoke and flames were coming in around the door. I didn't try to turn on any lights. I could get a reflection coming in through the window and I went back to the window, the smoke was so thick I was almost suffocated. I kicked the glass pane out with my foot, my window had been up a little. I kicked that out and I sat there astraddle of that, keeping my nose to the lower corner where I could get fresh air to keep from suffocating.

Q. Your room was filled then with flames?

A. My room was filled with smoke.

Q. There were some flames there?

A. That is right.

Q. What did you do then?

A. The last I remember was hanging on the outside and the next I recall, I came to lying in this bed. That makes it short and snappy and without any flourishes.

Q. You were in your room after you awakened but a short time before you were outside hanging on the

sill there?

A. No, it couldn't have been very long because I recall my idea that flashed, instead of jumping out, was to try and drop, I could see the ledge of the room below, the window ledge and what I would do was drop rather than jump. I e thought I could drop and hit the ledge with my feet, I knew I was on the third floor. I had hung there, I was over the cafeteria or dining room, and knowing the layout of the hotel, rather than jump, if I hit that and bounced, I would be better off. I hung there and when I let go I was unconscious because I don't recall dropping.

Q. So far as you recall or know you were not notified by either the telephone or a rap on your door?

A. No.

MR. HAYDEN: You heard no alarm whatever?

A. No, sir, to be frank with you I have just a faint recollection, a recollection, I woke up coughing or suffocating and the first thing that stared me in the face was flames coming through the window. I had seen fire enough to know what was going on.

MR. HAYDEN: You have no definite knowledge or way of fixing the time at which you were



first awakened?

- A. No. All I know, approximately, when I went to the hotel, I left a friend of mine and they said it was around three o'clock. I called a cab and went to bed.

MR. HAYDEN: After you left the window you were "out" until you got here?

- A. That is right. The last I recall I was astraddle of the window and getting air to keep from suffocating and hanging on there, and, from the time I fell until I landed here, I don't recall a thing.

- Q. That is all.



Transcript by Roy Smith

VI

Kelley

Dec ~~24~~ <sup>21</sup> 34

Statements at Hospitals

Checked

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Sept 12  
Tiger 19

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~~RUDOLPH LOOMIS~~  
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 CITY HALL  
 LANSING, MICHIGAN  
 PHONE 3781



Hayden Kelley IV

Dec ~~29~~<sup>21</sup> '34

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