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Articles

# International Cruise Victims – Guest Article from ICV President Mr Ken Carver

On December 10, 2005 a Congressional hearing was held, chaired by Christopher Shays, to look into the cruise line industry, as a result of various concerns regarding missing passengers.

The first hearing centered around two missing passengers and apparent cover-up of the details of their disappearance.

These two passengers included George Smith and my 40-year-old daughter.

It became apparent at this hearing that the cruise lines had covered-up details concerning the circumstances of the disappearance of these two passengers.

In my case, our 40-year-old daughter went missing. It took several weeks for the Cambridge, Massachusetts's Police to determine that she had taken a cruise by tracing credit card transactions.

When contacted, the cruise line admitted that she had been on the cruise but did not use her room. They said that was not unusual and she could have gotten off at the end of the cruse but they kept no records.

It then became necessary for us to hire private detectives, and eventually two law firms, to try and figure out what had happened to her.

After spending over $75,000, over a period of 4½ months, and getting nowhere with the cruise line, court orders in Massachusetts and Florida forced the steward to be deposed.

As a result of the deposition, only at that time in January of 2005, did we realize that she had been reported missing by her steward for 5 days on the cruise, and his supervisor told him to "just do his job" and nothing was done.

At the end of the cruise her personal possessions were disposed of, and her purse, which contained her name and Social Security number, were just put away in storage. In effect, she just disappeared from the face of the earth.

Only after we contacted the cruise line, did they make a very limited report to the FBI, five weeks after she had disappeared, and indicated that nothing had really happened on that cruise.

In the summer of 2005 a book came out called "Devil in the Deep Blue Sea" by Kristoffer Garin. In that book (Pages 247-249) we read that cover-up was the standard operating procedures for crimes on Cruise Ships. As we moved forward we also came across statements by two Maritime Lawyers in Miami.

One Lawyer, James Walker, indicated in several publications, that in 35 years no one had ever successfully been convicted of a crime on a Royal Caribbean Cruse Line (RCCL).

Another, Charles Lipson, indicated that out of 172 sexual assaults he had handled, there had been no successful convictions on a RCCL ship.

Since I determined that I could not individually change the Cruise Line Industry, maybe we could form a group of Victims of such crimes.

Starting at the very end of December of 2005, I decided to form International Cruise Victims (ICV), after consulting with other families of victims, including the Smith family, parents of George Smith.

ICV members and Friends of ICV come from a variety of backgrounds and have a variety of skills. Our varied backgrounds complement each other and provide a strong foundation for the future as we move forward. The tireless efforts of the numerous ICV members and Friends of ICV, reflect their passion for helping crime victims and reforming an under-regulated industry that has for far too long operated in murky waters.

ICV has given cruise crime victims a forum to tell our stories, and inform the public that there is a serious issue here that needs to be addressed by lawmakers.

Media around the world, and lawmakers are finally taking notice of the need for cruise industry reform. Each time we hear another story of how an individual has been victimized on a cruise ship, and the cruise line's inadequate response, the members feel more passionate and dedicated to fighting for changes to cruise industry practices.

The media coverage given to ICV has generated a tremendous response from victims and victims' families and concerned citizens who champion our cause and wish to provide support and assistance with our fight for reform.

These compassionate individuals have become "Friends of ICV."

In addition, The National Association for Victims of Crimes and the Rape, Assault, and Incest National Network (RAINN) have joined ICV in our effort to promote reform to the Cruise Line Industry.

During 2006, ICV accomplished many tasks including the following. Members appeared on March 10, 2006 before a second Congressional Hearing chaired by Congressman Chris Shays. We introduced a 10-point program to improve safety on cruise ships. This was presented at the Congressional hearings. In addition, this material has also been presented in meetings with the U. S. Coast and FBI in Washington, D.C. We have appeared on many TV shows, and various articles have been written in magazines and newspapers around the world.

Members joined the group from nine different countries. A separate group has been formed in Australia, and is headed by Mark Brimble, a Board member.

We were successful in introducing legislation into Congress to require Cruise Lines to report any crime to the Department of Homeland Security within four hours, or subject the Captain to a personal fine of up to $250,000. This bill will soon be reintroduced into the new Congressional Session. We have offered support to other new victims that have joined ICV this past year.

We fully expect that within the next few weeks there will be major disclosure concerning the practice of the cover-up of crimes by Cruise Lines. More information can be found at the website of ICV at www.internationalcruisevictims.org

Together, **we are making a difference**. **We invite you to join in our crusade** for the sake of all future cruise passengers and crewmembers

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www.cruisejunkiewatch.com