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Cruise

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es, sales manager Guy Theodoro said he did not understand why the Isaacsons were not on board. He said he was not aware of the policy change and admitted the company was at fault, Dan Isaacson said.

South Beach Cruises was not willing to comment about the couple's trip, and Bob Zweig, the company's director of operations, could not be reached for comment.

"It didn't dawn on me, until we were for sure not going on the boat," Dan Isaacson said.

Once reality set in, Dan and Kari Isaacson, who had a small travel budget, realized they were stranded without credit cards or much cash.

"We cried together that day and watched the boat take off," Kari Isaacson said.

Devastation sets in

Dan and Kari Isaacson had no way to get back to the airport, and their pre-arranged flight was not scheduled to leave for a week. They resorted to pan-handling \$40 from people who were still in line, and it was enough to get them back to the airport.

"It wasn't anger. It was just devastation," Dan Isaacson said, explaining his emotions as the couple rode away from the dock. "It was like the whole world had turned upside down."

He said they had been looking forward to finally spending some time together just to relax. But instead, they spent their quality time in the Los Angeles airport. Their flight back to Portland was delayed three hours.

Because the only food they had eaten all day were the peanuts on the plane, the couple made the best of their situation and had dinner at an Italian restaurant in Santa Monica, Calif. with the remaining panhandled money.

"You just deal with the cards you've got," Dan Isaacson said.

Fifteen hours after the whole fiasco had begun, their plane touched down in Portland at about 1 a.m., where Kari Isaacson's parents were waiting. What was supposed to be an incredibly romantic night was instead spent at a Best Western hotel before the couple woke up and went home.

It would have been Kari Isaacson's first opportunity to go on a cruise — something she called a "vacation of a lifetime." She said that for more than a year she had saved up dresses and money for the trip.

"Even if we don't have a honeymoon, we have each other and that is what counts," Kari Isaacson said.

Lesson learned

After two weeks of talking to Zweig's answering machine, Dan Isaacson received a refund from the Carnival Cruise Line, which in turn fined South Beach Cruises \$500 for the agent's commission. The courts dismissed Dan Isaacson's first lawsuit against South Beach Cruises, but he is re-filing the suit in the form of a small claims case.

"I'm not a sue-happy person," Dan Isaacson said. "But if they want to play hardball, I'll play."

He warned other students and honeymooners to make sure they are aware of cruise company rules, to be wary of online travel agencies and to "read the fine print."

Jenny Neiwert is a travel consultant with the EMU location of Council Travel, a nationwide organization that offers travel services. Neiwert recommended meeting with a travel agent in person to prevent situations such as the one faced by Dan and Kari Isaacson.

"There is always a catch," Dan Isaacson said. "If it is too good to be true — it is."

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