ChicagoPride.com News
March 23, 2012

Gay men arrested on cruise ship humiliated, put in cell with roaches

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March 23, 2012
http://chicago.gopride.com/news/article.cfm/articleid/27789169

PALM SPRINGS, CALIF. -- John Robert Hart, 41 and Dennis Jay Mayer, 43, said that after they were arrested for "buggery" on board a gay cruise in Dominica, they were interrogated, humiliated and tossed into a jail cell with roaches.

The Palm Springs men were on a gay-friendly Atlantis Cruise when they were hauled off the boat in Dominica this week after someone on the dock said they saw them having sex.

Mayer, who is a retired police officer, admitted to the Associated Press he was "was less partially clothed than I should have been," but the charge that they were having sex on the balcony is preposterous.

Mayer said that he and Hart, his partner of 17 years, were summoned to the captain's cabin and then hauled off the boat by police. They were put into jail cells on charges of "buggery" while the cruise ship left for St. Barts without them.

"The treatment was inhumane," Mayer told the Associated Press. "We were detained for approximately 26 hours, and 19 of those locked in a cement cell, which had no running water, no toilet, no lights. It stunk of feces and urine. It was infested with cockroaches, ants and bugs."

On Thursday morning, Hart and Mayer pleaded guilty to indecent exposure and were fined $900 and released by a judge who called them "rogues and vagabonds."

The couple said they would never go back to Dominica.

"I would not spend my money in a country that does not support gay behavior," Mayer said. "Shame on us for not doing our research."