



ATTORNEYS AT LAW



Robert Rossi
Partner

Robert Rossi is a partner with the law firm of Homan & Stone. His practice includes the areas of general liability and casualty defense, products liability, workers compensation, premises liability, professional malpractice, automobile, wrongful death and employment law. He has tried extensive, high exposure cases involving general liability issues, wrongful death and product liability. He has also successfully tried cases involving construction site accidents, employment disputes, and general personal injury litigation. Within his first year of practice, he argued before the California Court of Appeals on two occasions. He has argued before the Court of Appeal, three times in his career, and has a perfect record. One of the appellate decisions resulted in a published opinion. Mr. Rossi has also tried dozens of cases before a jury.

EVENTS



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MAN STRANDED ON DISNEY'S 'IT'S A SMALL WORLD' RIDE WINS PAIN AND SUFFERING DAMAGES

Written by BY MOLLY MCDONOUGH, AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION



(Thomas Hawk / Flickr.com)

A disabled man trapped on a ride at Disneyland as music blared overhead has won an \$8,000 damages award in federal court.

The nightmare for Jose Martinez began the day after Thanksgiving in 2009 when his and his wife's ride on "It's a Small World" was coming to an end. The couple and other amusement park visitors were in the "Goodbye Room" when the ride broke down. Other riders were evacuated, but Martinez, who is paralyzed and needs a wheelchair, was reportedly left in the car while "It's a Small World" music played in a loop.

David Geffen, who represented Martinez, told the papers that his client suffers from panic attacks and high blood pressure, both of which were aggravated as he sat in the boat. Geffen said rather than call firefighters to evacuate Martinez, park officials waited for the ride to be fixed. Martinez was trapped for about 30 minutes, then treated at a Disneyland first aid station.

Disneyland issued a statement that it believes it provided appropriate assistance and was disappointed the court didn't fully agree. Martinez was awarded \$4,000 for pain and suffering and \$4,000 for other disability access violations, according to the LA Times.

Featured Fraud: Down and Out In L.A., Sacramento

BY CHRISTINA BRAMLET, PROPERTYCASUALTY360.COM

What began as a seemingly unremarkable vandalism claim involving a luxury sedan has spawned felony charges alleging insurance fraud and at least two staged auto accidents. Now each of the eight people arrested in connection will face hard time—up to 5 years in jail—and individual fines of \$50,000, if convicted of the charges before them.

Suren Grigorian, 45, reported that his 2007 Mercedes Benz had been vandalized while parked in the garage of his Burbank, Calif. residence. Grigorian then filed a claim for which his insurer paid \$20,000. Suspicion was later aroused in Dec. 2010 when an informant told investigators at the California Division of Insurance (CDI) that it was Grigorian who inflicted the damage, rather than an anonymous perpetrator.

According to the CDI, further investigation implicated seven others: Aida Akopian, 36; Seda Markarian, 62; Mamikon Hakobyan, 74; Masis Galstan, 49; Rosa Galstyan, 42; Roza Issayan, 41; and Setik Patatanian, 49. Authorities arrested Grigorian along with those mentioned above. All family members or close associates of Grigorian, these suspects must now appear in court to either refute or confirm their respective involvement in two purportedly staged auto collisions (both in 2008) for which multiple insurers doled out \$62,000. The Los Angeles County District Attorney's Auto Insurance Fraud Division is prosecuting cases against all of them. Farther north, Sacramento, Calif., authorities arrested five suspected auto fraudsters that same day: James Adkins, 44, Justin Highsmith, 33, James Peacock, 38, Kori Feinstein, 33, and Kevin Johnson, 37, each face one felony count of insurance fraud, including providing false statements in support of an insurance claim. Feinstein and Johnson were also charged with one felony count of possession of stolen property and vehicle theft.

According to CDI investigators, in May 2010, Adkins filed a claim with his insurer and credit union alleging that his 2002 Cadillac Escalade had been stolen. Adkins told both the insurer and law enforcement that his ride was taken from his Sacramento, Calif. residence.

However, investigators contend that 6 weeks prior to filing the claim, Adkins, Highsmith and Peacock staged the theft. Investigators further allege that in April 2010, Johnson purchased Adkins' Cadillac. After becoming aware the car was reported stolen in July 2010, Johnson attempted to hide the vehicle from the law enforcement officials who had contacted him to inspect it.

According to investigators, Johnson purchased parts from other salvaged vehicles and swapped the parts onto the Cadillac in an attempt to conceal its true identity. Johnson and Feinstein then allegedly went to the California Department of Motor Vehicles and re-registered the Cadillac as a 2004 GMC Yukon.

After interviewing witnesses and conducting an investigation, CDI's Auto Fraud Task Force reportedly discovered that Highsmith and Peacock assisted Adkins in this owner give-up insurance fraud scheme. It was also discovered that Johnson used a local auto repair facility to assist him in switching out stolen parts on the vehicle.

Although the insurance company ultimately denied Adkins' claim, it would have paid approximately \$26,000, had the fraud not been discovered. Adkins, Highsmith, Feinstein and Johnson were all arrested and then booked at Sacramento County Jail. Peacock is currently in custody serving time at Lancaster State Prison in Los Angeles County on an unrelated matter. Bail for Johnson has been set at \$100,000; bail for the other suspects is \$40,000.



Photos courtesy of Google.

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