



FAMILY TRAGEDY: The O'Brien family, left, have hired top US lawyer Brett Rivkind, above, to fight their case against Carnival Cruise Lines after their daughter Lynsey, extreme right of family picture, fell overboard from cruise ship 'Costa Magica', top

Lynsey's parents hire top lawyer to sue cruise line for millions

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THE family of the teenager who fell to her death on a cruise ship has hired the world's leading maritime lawyer to take a multimillion-dollar lawsuit against the cruise company.

Lynsey O'Brien, 15, died when she fell overboard from a balcony, after downing a cocktail of alcohol she had been served on the ship's bar.

Now her parents, Paul and Sandra O'Brien, have hired internationally renowned lawyer Brett Rivkind to handle their compensation case against Carnival Cruise Lines and say that, if their case is successful, a significant amount of any damages received will be given to charity.

Mr Rivkind is regarded as the world's leading legal authority on maritime law and has been working successfully

in the area for close to 25 years. He regularly obtains rulings in excess of \$1m.

Spokeswoman for the O'Brien family Jenny McCarthy said the family were satisfied to be represented by such a highly regarded lawyer.

She stressed that Paul O'Brien, a multimillionaire property developer, was not out for money but felt a compensation case was the only way someone will be held accountable for Lynsey's death.

She said: "The O'Briens never wanted money for Lynsey's death. They don't need the money. All they want to do is highlight the lack of safety on board cruise ships. Paul O'Brien has indicated that he would like to donate any monies from the case to the ISPPC.

"The fact is that their daughter would be alive today if she had not been served alcohol on board.

"A case like this is the only way to go about it. They want the ship to be held accountable — and Paul is prepared to go all the way in his search for justice for Lynsey."

Rivkind is based in Miami, Florida, the cruise-ship capital of the world, and is also the legal counsel for the International Cruise Victims (ICV) organisation, which represents families who have lost loved ones on board cruises.

Lynsey, from Terenure, Dublin, went missing from the ship on a family holiday cruise in January. The tragic accident happened 20 miles off the Mexican coast, but her body has not been recovered.

The exact circumstances of Lynsey's death are still unclear. What is known is that she drowned at least six cocktails and shots in the bar of the cruise ship in the space of just over an hour.

Her parents discovered her in a drunken state and put her to bed, saying they would deal with her drinking in the morning. But they had no sooner entered their bedroom next door when they heard Lynsey's little sister screaming for help.

They maintain that Lynsey had been getting sick over the bedroom balcony when she fell from the ship. She had apparently climbed up on a chair and leaned over the balcony to do so.

Her father Paul wants to see stricter laws enforced to ensure that children cannot be served alcohol, especially on board such cruises.

His appeal is to be heard at the end of this month on the Oprah Winfrey TV chat show, which commands a syndicated worldwide audience that runs into billions. Oprah will interview those who have

lost family members on board cruise ships and Paul will tell Lynsey's story. He hopes his appearance will help in the campaign for the industry to be regulated.

The O'Brien family, father Paul, mother Sandra and sisters and brother Imelda, Kelly and Dean did not have the opportunity to bury Lynsey, who simply vanished overboard.

Last month, they offered a reward of more than €200,000 for the recovery of her body, although they realise it is a vain hope.

As yet, there has been no open investigation into the death of Lynsey. The FBI says it has no role because Lynsey was not a US citizen. And because there is no body, there can be no inquest.

However, the Taoiseach has ordered a Department of Foreign Affairs investigation into her death.