By Nancy Whitaker

THE CRUISE FROM HELL

Sometimes a couple saves their money all their lives and wait until the kids are grown to take that perfect vacation. Perhaps, they want to go on a cruise to relax and enjoy the warm sun. Everyone dreams of sitting on a lounge chair on the deck soaking up rays and drinking cool drinks.

The food is promised to be the best you have ever eaten and luxurious surroundings will be right at your fingertips.

Personally, I have never had the desire to go on a cruise. First of all I don't care for the sea or the ocean and getting my feet off of dry land scares me half to death.

Not only that, but we have been hearing horror stories about ill-fated cruise ships with some even causing death.

On Feb. 7, 3,142 passengers were waiting and expecting to have a glorious four-day cruise on a state-of-the-art ship, The Triumph. First of all, the Carnival Triumph was 893 feet 4 inches (272.3 m) long and had a beam of 116 feet 6 inches (35.5 m).

Carnival Triumph also had a "Great Cities of the World" theme. Her amenities include the Paris Dining Room, the London Dining Room, the Rome Lounge, Club Rio featuring music, a workout center and a Spa Carnival.

The ship left from Galveston and in, addition to all those passengers, had 1,086 crew members aboard. I am sure there were a lot of people planning on making this trip memorable and having a good time. And, that it was, memorable that is!

Disaster struck the Triumph early Sunday morning, Feb. 10, when the ship suffered a fire in the engine room. Although the fire was automatically extinguished, it resulted in a loss of power and propulsion. While the emergency generator was providing some power, the ship was left adrift about 150 miles off the coast of the Yucatan Peninsula in the Gulf of Mexico.

With no lights, power, air conditioning, refrigeration or restroom facilities, conditions worsened in a hurry. Plus, there was a limited food supply.

Some family members were sleeping together in a hallway near a customer service office trying to get enough food to feed their group and using red plastic bags set into garbage cans as restrooms. They were setting the waste in the halls.

The crew was doing their best to clean up passengers' waste and to keep clean the few toilets that were working. People had taken to urinating in showers.

By Tuesday, fruit, water and sandwiches were distributed, supplied by other Carnival ships that passed by and sent provisions.

Reports said, however, that people were waiting in line for up to 4 hours just to get 1/2 of a hamburger.

An emergency generator and provisions, including food and water was delivered finally on Wednesday. The emergency generators allowed partial restoration of some shipboard functions, including the fresh water system.

Still, with free liquor, little food and conditions so poor, passengers had been reportedly getting

ill from the stress and the stench. Anxiety was high among family members who were waiting to hear how their loved ones fared.

“It is just squalor and disgusting,” said Steven Peery of Sacramento, whose wife was on the ship.

The goal was to reach port in Mobile, Ala. by early afternoon Feb. 14. The cause of the fire is still not known and is being investigated.

Now, it is being reported that passengers will get a refund back for their ill-fated trip and maybe an opportunity to take another cruise.

Well, if I had been on that cruise, I sure would not want to take another one. Watching the movie “Titanic” was good enough for me. I don’t want to go on a cruise because with my luck, the boat would probably sink just like the Titanic. Ship Ahoy! Dry land for me!

Have you ever been on a cruise ship? Did you have fun? Do you feel that these ships are safe? Let me know and I’ll give you a Penny for Your Thoughts.