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**Happy Thanksgiving**



# JUSTICE COALITION'S VICTIMS' ADVOCATE

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## Protecting our children

### Safety Tips from the Founder of NCMEC

By Atty. Jay C Howell



Everyone in Northeast Florida is aware of the horrible tragedy that befell 7-year-old Somer Thompson when she disappeared on her way home from school on Monday afternoon,

October 19. The crimes committed against Somer have shaken our community. In the days following the discovery of her body in a Georgia landfill, the atmosphere here in Northeast Florida was permeated by a sense of violation. A crime of this magnitude is indeed a crime against humanity.

As we deal with the shock and horror of the act itself, every parent in our community is left with a fundamental fear - how do we best protect our children and keep them safe from the predators who certainly exist in our neighborhoods. As you may have learned during the coverage of the investigation of Somer's disappearance, there were 90 sex offenders who resided within five miles of her residence. We can take a constructive step forward by alerting children and their parents to the fundamental rules of child safety.

Tragically, in the aftermath of Somer's disappearance, our airways were filled with warnings to tell children to "stay away from strangers." When I started the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children 25 years ago, we initiated a nationwide campaign to provide more effective information on child protection than "stay away from strangers." This is a popular warning to children, but certainly not the best advice and information we can give to kids.

The term "stranger" suggests a concept children do not often understand and is one that ignores what we do know about the people who commit crimes against children. To a child a stranger is an individual with an unusual or slovenly appearance. In fact, 80 percent of crimes committed against children are perpetrated by people who know them. Instead, it is **more appropriate to teach children to be on the lookout for certain kinds of situations, actions, and behavior, rather than certain types of individuals.**

SOMER... CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

## "I want my wife back"

Entire family suffers after woman's sexual assault

By Shirley Shaw

Jerry reached his destination late that night in September 2007, exited his vehicle, stood up and stretched his muscles. A cup of coffee would be good, he thought, as he headed for the all-night diner. Suddenly his phone rang and he was surprised to see his wife's number reflected on the display panel. Before he could give his usual response - "Hey, honey, what's up?" - her hysterical voice stopped him cold.

"I've been raped...hospital... my mother...he took the car..." The incoherent words were chilling and Jerry tried to calm her down to learn what happened. He told her to call 911 (which she had already done), made sure she was safe with police and headed for home.

"I don't remember that four-hour drive," he says. "I'm always extremely safety conscious - it's part of my job - but all I thought about was that I had to get home to my wife. I don't remember checking in my mirrors for surrounding traffic, or whether I stayed within the speed limit, I just knew I had to get home."  
 \*(Names have been changed)

## Justice Derailed

The Release of the Pan Am 103 Terrorist

By FBI SAC James Casey



On August 20, most Americans were shocked to learn the only man convicted of killing 270 people in the downing of the Pan Am 103 airliner in Lockerbie was being released from a life sentence in Scotland on "compassionate grounds." Abdel Baset al-Megrahi, who was allegedly suffering from terminal prostate cancer, was released by the Scottish Justice Minister in what we are now finding out was a widely discussed issue in the U.K and Scotland long before his release. This is deeply troubling for most Americans on a number of fronts.

I have had the great fortune to travel widely across the globe and spent some of my youth living



He had no way of knowing that from this night forward, his life would never be the same.

### "Don't scream; start driving"

Joyce\* and her mother Mary had spent the entire day at the hospital with her terminally ill father, and they left after 11:00 p.m. to go home. Walking to their car in the hospital parking garage, Joyce opened the doors and Mary started to get in the passenger side.

Without warning, from out of the

shadows, a young black man grabbed Mary, shoved her into the truck and shouted for Joyce to get in and do as she was told or he would kill her mother with a knife. When Mary tried to fight back, he grabbed her arms and sat on her legs to keep her from moving. He warned Joyce not to scream and told her to start driving.

Trembling uncontrollably, Joyce tearfully related in disjointed sentences her terrifying ordeal. "He told me to turn this way, then that. I saw a JSO patrol car and thought

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overseas. The experience taught me that, among other things, there are no more compassionate people in the world than Americans. I have seen food pallets stamped "USA" stacked many stories high in the poorest countries.

I have watched in awe as people in third world countries started lining up long before sunrise, standing in blistering heat in lines that stretched a mile long outside the most popular building in their own country marked "Embassy of the United States of America." Most would never make it to the front door and fewer yet would ever get a visa to visit the United States, much less live here. Most of them would have traded everything in their meager existence for that which most of us take for granted every day - the gift of having being born an American.

America is the land of second chances. Compassion, redemption,

and atonement are as valued here as the First Amendment, but Americans like compassion and second chances served with large doses of justice. And many Americans are having a hard time finding any compassion being shown for the 270 victims of Pan Am 103, most of them fellow Americans, by the early release of Megrahi from a life in prison sentence. Neither Megrahi, the Libyan Intelligence Service he worked for, nor the 40-year leader of Libya showed any compassion on the evening of December 19, 1988, when they arranged for that plane to be exploded over Lockerbie.

Recently, the victim-families were subjected to the sight of Megrahi given a hero's welcome as the plane carrying him back to Libya arrived at the airport. Libyan leader Gadaffi's own son accompanied

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