

LOCAL

LOCAL | CHERYL RING HAD HEART, VALUABLES STOLEN

Investigator rings bell on fiance

BY VIRGINIA BARNHOLTER
ST. LOUIS BURNING LIGHT

For private investigator Cheryl Ring, daily life is filled with intrigue and drama. Whether she's chasing down leads or following up on tips, she knows that her days will be action-packed. However, when she leaves the office and comes home to her cocker spaniel and her quiet little home, she knows that the drama will stop. Or, she used to think it would.

In 1999, after working as a detective for 10 years (five as the head of her own agency), Ring stepped into the most dangerous waters yet — in the most unexpected of places. While attending J.Singles (the former JCC singles group) in the mid-'90s, Ring felt safe and secure knowing that she was socializing with people she could trust. When bachelor Greg Bernin came on the scene in 1999, she fell hard and fast. And Bernin was anything but a stranger to Ring.

"I've known Greg all of my life," Ring explained. "Our parents knew each other. My brother played softball with him years before. I had no reason to suspect that he was anything but a great guy."

Ring's family fell in love with Bernin almost as quickly as she did. It was obvious to all that Ring had found a true soulmate. In the midst of the wedding plans, the glass on the perfect mirror started to crack.



DETECTIVE Cheryl Ring stands in her office. Ring, a private investigator, helped put her own fiance behind bars in a sting operation. PHOTO: Michael Reigner

"My grandmother called me and told me that some jewelry was missing," she said. She then ran a background check on her grandmother's nurses and discovered that one of them had a history of stealing. Both were fired on the spot.

When more jewelry disappeared from her grandparents' home, Ring started to suspect that there was more to Bernin than met the eye. Secretly investigating him, Ring discovered that he had a criminal record a mile long, including 15 years of jail time prior to meeting her. It was time he'd told everyone at the J.Singles group he'd been in Israel. He'd been incarcerated for

everything from impersonating a police officer to stealing firearms.

In the days that followed, more of her family's belongings went missing. After she met with her parents to explain her theory on Bernin and the missing items, Ring contacted Officer Robert Tabers with the St. Louis County Police Department. She discovered that Bernin was wanted by the police for a past crime.

The next day, at his birthday party at the Rings' home, Bernin wore a piece of jewelry he had stolen from Ring's grandparents. Officer Tabers came to the home, arrested him and discovered more of the family's posses-

sions in his car. When the police took him away, Ring searched his house and recovered more than \$6,000 in cash, jewelry and valuable baseball cards stolen from her brother's home. The family only recovered 15 percent of the items he stole. Later, while being transferred from one police department to another, he had escaped.

After a four-week investigation and many dead-ends, Ring discovered that he had left a *Riverfront Times* singles ad mailbox number in his apartment. Ring set up her own RFT mailbox with a fictitious name and responded to Bernin's ad.

"We started corresponding (via e-mail) and he told me that he was in Michigan," she said. "I convinced him to come to St. Louis to meet me. He thought that he was coming back to meet 'Carrie.'"

A detective agreed to meet her at The Sports Page restaurant to arrest Bernin.

While Bernin has been sentenced to 15 years and must serve 80 percent of this, he is up for his first parole hearing in 2009.

"He's used to living his life behind bars," Ring said. "It's like a vacation being out."

Today, Ring is working on a book, *Bouquet of Lies*, which is based on her story. All of the names have been changed to protect the other victims. Her story was televised on *Lifetime Real Women* (Charter Cable channel 123) on June 7.

local woman

Cheryl Ring uses her experience to educate others

By Kamron Dearborn
Staff writer

Cheryl Ring thought she had finally met her Prince Charming.

He wooed her, bought her gifts, slipped a ring on her finger and swept her off her feet. But after following a gut instinct and checking his criminal background, Ring realized she had fallen victim to a criminal sociopath — \$30,000 worth of family valuables and a broken heart too late.

As it turned out, Ring said, "This one person affected 25 people in two years. I thought I had known who I was dealing with."

A private investigator for Consumer Detective Corp. in Maryland Heights, Ring said she was blinded by the promise of love whispered in her ear by no ordinary criminal. He exhibited an antisocial personality disorder, making him a person better known as a sociopath or psychopath.

Ring grew up around the corner from this man, whom she met again through a credible dating service in 1999 and had no reason to suspect him of past or present criminal conduct. Ring knew other women he had dated and their mothers.

The relationship took off with fury and within three weeks, they were engaged. However, she began to feel uneasy. Her suspicion of him was sparked by "little sick jokes" he began playing on her family. When she noticed items missing from her home and her family's home, her suspicions heightened.

Ring estimated he stole about \$30,000 from her and her parents, grandparents, brother, aunt and other family members.

After intense background research, which revealed a background file full of past crimes and victims, Ring staged an undercover operation with local police and captured him. He was sentenced to 15 years in prison after pleading guilty to five felonies.

The harsh experience gave Ring a new love for the world around her.

"I really learned how to appreciate life," Ring said. "It makes me sad to know that these people will never know what it is like to love and to be loved."

Dealing with the past took time for Ring as she worked through phases of shock, acceptance and regret. She has now somewhat made peace with the experience and is working to better educate and inform past and potential victims.

She is working to start a business offering Missouri criminal background checks to local St. Louis-area small businesses at lower rates. She said she wanted to start with businesses because they touch a larger

number of people. The man who victimized her, she said, had stolen from every one of his employers.

Many owners of small businesses she has contacted said they do not do criminal checks due to high expense. Those that do run criminal checks do not run fingerprint criminal checks, so many crimes remain unknown.

She said studies show one in every seven employees has an unreported crime background.

"He didn't always steal from all his victims," Ring said. "But they tend to always leave broken hearts and messed-up lives in their trail."

She also plans to take a dollar from the fee for every criminal check to begin the Nelson N. Berger Family Foundation for Crime Victims in Need. The foundation, she said, would offer many forms of support for those whose lives were left in upheaval.

In addition to these business endeavors, she recently finished writing a book, called "Bouquet of Lies," about her experience. She said she hoped the book would inform others about sociopaths.

To write her book, Ring did extensive research into the traits of people with antisocial personality disorders.

According to Ring, traits of a sociopath include self-confidence, a lack of fear, high intelligence, a love of manipulative mind games, a lack of guilt or remorse for their actions, disloyal relationships and promiscuity.

"They are thrill seekers" who use the ordinary people they meet, viewing them as pawns to manipulate, Ring said.

A psychopath would be an example of the most dangerous sociopath. However, Ring said unlike the Hollywood stereotype, most do not commit violent crimes.

Statistics show one in every 25 people is a high-risk sociopath and everyone will have at least one encounter with a sociopath in his or her lifetime.

Ring said most contact victims through dating services, clubs or private social gatherings.

The best thing to do when you come into contact with a sociopath is stay away, she said. The problem is, you may not spot the person until it's too late.

"I'm not trying to scare people," Ring said. "I'm just trying to bring public awareness to the table. The only thing we can do is educate people."

She recently joined the Maryland Heights Chamber of Commerce to get the word out.

She encourages those interested in finding out more about her services to call her at (314) 653-0106 or (800) 708-0101.

Monthly Membership Meetings

Wednesday, October 11

11:30a.m. - 1:00p.m.

Sheraton Chalet Hotel

\$20 Members & \$25 Future-
Members



Speaker: Cheryl Ring

Chief Investigator of Consumer Detective Corporation
Radio talk show host of "CrimeTime Live" - Heard on
radio across the country Private Investigator of 17
years seen on Lifetime Television "Final Justice" Public
Speaker - presents on current crime related issues
and ways to protect yourself in today's society, in the
home and in the workplace.

**Sponsored by: The Maryland Heights
Convention and Visitors Bureau**

Sociopath uses charm to lure woman

Sadder, but wiser victim takes experience to educate others

By Kamren Dearborn
Staff writer

Cheryl Ring thought she had finally met her Prince Charming.

He wooed her, bought her gifts, slipped a ring on her finger and swept her off her feet. But after following a gut instinct and checking his criminal background Ring realized she had fallen victim to a criminal sociopath - \$20,000 worth of family valuables and a broken heart too late.

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Alum Gets Her Own 'Final Justice'

Cheryl Ring (Central, '81) recently helped police apprehend a criminal who was guilty of stealing her heart and then much more.

Cheryl met the man at a party and they began dating. They eventually got engaged, with Cheryl knowing nothing of the man's 15 years in prison for breaking and entering and stealing arms.

During their relationship, the man interacted with Cheryl and her family on a number of occasions, but he was not their first suspect when family members began finding items and money stolen.

In just over a month, the man stole more than \$8,000 cash and at least seven diamond rings, four necklaces, bracelets and baseball cards, all worth more than \$20,000 from Cheryl, her parents, brother, aunt and grandmother. After they ruled out their first suspect, they turned their attention to Cheryl's fiancée.

He was arrested, but not long after was accidentally released by the police. He got in touch with Cheryl, and she knew that she could help in

apprehending her ex-fiancee for good.

Cheryl, who owns her own private investigation firm, worked with local police to set up the capture. She arranged to meet the man at a St. Louis restaurant, and when he arrived, he was greeted by two detectives. He tried to escape out a back door, but was quickly apprehended.

Cheryl's ex-fiancee was convicted of five felonies and a misdemeanor and was sentenced to 15 years in the Mo. Dept. of Corrections. Cheryl, who is writing a book about her experience, was featured in 2004 on the Lifetime Network's "Final Justice" series, hosted by Erin Brockovich.



Private investigator Cheryl Ring found out her boyfriend was a thief and worked with police to capture him. She was featured on "Final Justice."

Celebrity Speaker



CHERYL RING



Private Investigator

- President of Consumer Detective Corporation
- Website address: www.consumerpi.com
- Featured on channel 4 & 5 news/top news story in 2000 & 2004
- Featured on talk radio 97.1 in 2000
- Featured in local newspapers 1999-present
- Featured on National Television Lifetime for Women on "Final Justice" with Erin Brochovich from 2004 to present

see page 3 for details...



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