

LONG ISLAND

He's grateful for his survival

BY KRISTEN CALVANO

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Being so close to death last October when the plane he was a passenger in crashed on an East Farmingdale street gave Charles Bianculli a new respect for life.

The Lindenhurst resident was seriously injured in the crash, as were fellow passenger William Mancusi and pilot Gus Halouvas. A third passenger, Ed Cerverizzo, 75, of Garden City wasn't so lucky.

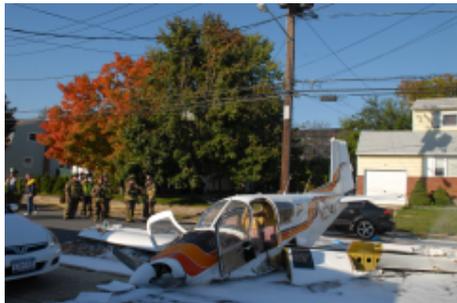


PHOTO BY PAUL MAZZA

Charles Bianculli was a passenger in Farmingdale crash last year.

He was pronounced dead at St. Joseph's Hospital in Bethpage after the crash. After the crash, investigators said that Halouvas had reported the plane was experiencing engine trouble.

Yesterday, at a news conference at Stony Brook University Medical Center where much of the medical treatment was done, Bianculli thanked the doctors who pieced him back together.

Bianculli, 61, sustained a fractured pelvis, a broken disc in his back, a punctured lung and two broken ribs in the crash and remained on his back, uncertain about his future. That was until the doctors — David Levy, an emergency room physician at Good Samaritan Hospital in West Islip, Robert Galler, a neurosurgeon at Stony Brook, and Stephen Kottmeier, a trauma surgeon at Stony Brook — mended him.

"They enabled me to walk again," he said. "I don't know any other way to thank these people."

Right after the Oct. 17 crash, Bianculli was rushed to Good Samaritan, where Levy literally got down to the nuts and bolts of putting him back together.

Bianculli stayed at Good Samaritan for just a few hours. But before he was transported to Stony Brook, Levy tried to save him from paralysis and further spinal injury by placing metal clips on



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Charles Bianculli, left, listens as surgeon Stephen Kottmeier explains how doctors repaired a fractured pelvis Bianculli suffered in the crash.

four of his vertebrae to maintain its position.

Kottmeier was amazed at Bianculli's impressive recovery.

"He took the bull by the horns," Kottmeier said. "He was unlike anyone I have ever seen."

With cane in hand, Bianculli smiled as if he never sustained the debilitating injuries.

"I kept my sense of humor," he said. "I didn't lose it."