

Their lives take flight, again

They received the rare gift of a second chance.

The 155 passengers and crew of US Airways Flight 1549 survived a hero pilot's ditching of their plane into the Hudson River one year ago today.

A 20-something Mattituck man is spending more quality time with his family. A North Carolina man has given nearly 100 motivational talks. So "full of joy," a woman who lives in a Charlotte, N.C., suburb decided to take a chance on a business venture.

Here are their stories.

— SOPHIA CHANG



Spreading her own wings

BY SOPHIA CHANG

sophia.chang@newsday.com

Almost immediately after she was plucked from a wing of US Airways Flight 1549 after it ditched in the Hudson River, Beverly Mills' new life began.

Mills, 60, said she has since felt a renewed sense of exuberance and adventure.

"After that event, I was euphoric for weeks," Mills said earlier this week by phone from her home in the Charlotte, N.C., suburbs.

A year ago, her good spirits were evident when, smiling and joking all the way, she flew back to Charlotte the next day on a US Airways flight that departed at the same time as Flight 1549.

"You couldn't tie me down. I was just full of joy," she said.

That sense of happiness is now "mellowed" and reflected internally, since much of her day-to-day living hasn't changed, she said.

"From the outside looking in, my life looks the same," she said. "I'm living in the same little house by the woods. I'm working for the same company. I'm married to the same man."

"But my perspective has changed."

Mills made the bold decision to launch her own business this past year. She and her husband, Michael, 60, have started a company buying and rehabbing distressed houses. Mills continues

to work full-time as a regional sales manager for a litigation services company and take weekly flights around her territory in the Southeast.

"I've got this willingness to step out and try things," she said, and later added, "Are we doing things that I would have never conceived of? Absolutely."

Mills said she was happy to receive a \$10,000 settlement from US Airways, and she has taken full advantage of a yearlong free automatic upgrade on domestic flights.

Michael and Beverly aren't going to the big reunion with passengers and Capt. Chesley "Sully" Sullenberger in Manhattan today because Michael Mills still gets stressed thinking about the crash landing.

"It's a day that he almost lost me. It's the day I almost died," she said.

Her husband told her she should attend the reunion while he stayed home, but she wants to be with him today.

"It's not about my life with the passengers, or the first responders, or Captain Sullenberger, although I will be forever grateful to them," Mills said. "It's about my life with him."

But that doesn't mean they're not commemorating the day.

"It will become an anniversary even more important than our wedding anniversary — an affirmation of what was lost is now found," Michael Mills said.

Now, words to live by

BY MARK HARRINGTON

mark.harrington@newsday.com

Dave Sanderson had just finished speaking when an older woman caught his eye from the back of a church hall and made her way through the crowd. When she reached him, she grabbed his left arm and held his gaze.

"I'd been questioning whether there was a God, and I didn't believe in miracles," he recalled her saying. "But you are physical evidence of both."

She thanked him and left, he said, and while he's never heard from or seen her again, her words left an indelible mark.

In the wake of his unlikely survival of US Airways Flight 1549 a year ago today, Sanderson, 48, of Charlotte, N.C., said his life has taken a sharp turn: He is determined to share his experience and touch the lives of as many people as he can.



Since the day he gave that talk, he has kept a regular schedule of speaking engagements. "That was the moment I realized how I could touch people with my story," he said Tuesday.

The father of four, an Oracle Corp. sales manager, said he has given his inspirational talk 97 times, to church groups and Red Cross gatherings across the country. He is listed as an inspirational speaker with Keppler Speakers, an Arlington, Va., booking agency for public speakers. "My goal is to be a public speaker full time and share this" with even more people, he said. "I'm not quite there yet."

Same path, but new view

BY MARK HARRINGTON

mark.harrington@newsday.com

It takes some people a lifetime to glean the outlook and appreciation for life that Bill Zuhoski of Mattituck gained in an afternoon.

After surviving US Airways Flight 1549 one year ago today, Zuhoski, 24, the only Long Island passenger aboard, had his perspective permanently altered — for the better.

"I find myself appreciating the small things more," he said Wednesday. "Things that used to bother me seem insignificant. And I don't let the things I can't control bother me."

Zuhoski, among the last to leave the plane that afternoon, said the experience comes to mind in what might otherwise be high-tension situations. "Being stuck in traffic, I used to bang my fists on the steering wheel," he said. "Now, I don't let it bother me."

His mother, Geraldine Zuhoski, a



teacher in Cutchogue, said she has seen a subtle change in him. "He has a greater appreciation for life and his family," she said. "Now he goes out of his way to attend family events."

Zuhoski's career path has remained on its preflight trajectory. For nine months of the year, he works with swimming pool builder Chituk Pools in Cutchogue. In the off-season, Zuhoski, a Suffolk County Community College graduate, works in construction with his father, William Zuhoski.

"I enjoy what I'm doing," he said.

Survivors to reunite

Today's one-year anniversary reunion of pilots, crew and passengers of US Airways Flight 1549 and rescuers will feature a "toast to life" at 3:31 p.m., the time the Airbus A320 crash-landed in the Hudson. The group is to gather at 2 p.m. at the NY Waterway Ferry Terminal, then board the Thomas Jefferson, the first responding ferry.

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