

**McMahon**  
**203-838-4801**  
**Your Hometown Dealer**  
 Weekly Specials Visit [www.mcmahonfordllc.com](http://www.mcmahonfordllc.com)



83.0° Complete Forecast

New! E-Edition - "as it appears in print"

Login | Subscribe to Print or Online

# The Hour online



twitter facebook

Home **News** Business Sports Obituaries Entertainment/Features Community Opinion Multimedia Classifieds Services

Norwalk Westport Weston Wilton Stamford State Nation & World Obituaries SchoolClips (blog) AP World

## Norwalk pilot helps veterans

Posted on 09/07/2010

[email](#) | [print](#) | [link to this article](#) | [ShareThis](#)

WHITE PLAINS, N.Y.

By TOM EVANS

Hour Staff Writer

Army Pfc. Christian Tolentino still has a long way to go to recover from shrapnel wounds inflicted by a mortar blast in Afghanistan on July 5.

But his journey was made a little bit easier by the help of Veterans Airlift Command, an organization that connects wounded veterans and their families with pilots for free transportation to and from home and military medical centers.

Norwalk native Andre Bohy is one of those pilots, and on Monday he flew Tolentino and his brother and caretaker Johnny Tolentino from Westchester County Airport back to Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C.

Bohy credited Panorama Flight Service, based at the White Plains, N.Y., airport, with making these compassionate services even easier.

"Panorama has accommodated 'heroes flights' by waiving landing fees and ramp fees, and they provide food for the soldiers and their families while they wait," Bohy said. "Everybody is super accommodating, and when the tower hears 'hero flight 4-9-Poppa, the air-traffic controllers know what's going on and give us shortcuts. They do the best to let us take 'the side road.'"

Tolentino was on the road in Afghanistan, unloading supplies for a small base known as a "cob" when a mortar struck behind him on July 5. The 20-year-old private first-class was part of the 173rd Airborne Infantry when he was injured.

"My job was in transportation, and I was transporting all types of materials to a cob," Tolentino said. "The mortar round was pretty much a lucky shot. The other two guys in my truck were all right. I was the only one outside (the truck) working, I was finishing unloading a couple of port-a-johns, and the round landed behind me. Shrapnel hit me in the side and back of both knees."

Now walking with a cane, and possibly facing more surgery to repair nerve damage in his left knee, Tolentino was matter-of-fact in describing the next phase of his ordeal.

"The left leg is the worst, as shrapnel hit the back and side," Tolentino said. "After going to a hospital in Germany, I came back to Walter Reed, and I have no clue how long I will be there. Nerve damage takes a long time to recover. I'll have another test on the nerves, and if they're not responding, I'll have another surgery."

After seeing his family at Walter Reed, the Labor Day weekend was the next opportunity for a family get-together. Bohy, a pilot for seven years who works with New Rochelle, N.Y.-based Omni Financial -- which

Family healthcare you can trust... seven days a week.

**WESTPORT FAMILY HEALTH**  
 A Norwalk Hospital Physician Practice

### RELATED PHOTOS



[Army Pfc. Christian Tolentino, center stands with his family.](#)



[Army Pfc. Christian Tolentino, left stands with his brother and Norwalk pilot Andre Bohy. Bohy flew Tolentino and his brother and caretaker Johnny Tolentino from Westchester County Airport back . . .](#)



game day  
**FOOTBALL**  
 CHALLENGE

Sponsored by:  
**The Hour**

**WIN A TRIP FOR TWO TO HAWAII**

provides loans to military personnel -- was ready for another excursion.

"Our business does business with the military, and this is our way of giving back," Bohy said. "I was never in the military, but they provide my living, and this is a way to give back. Most people have no idea what military families go through day-in and day-out."

Tolentino, who has been in the Army for about 18 months, and in Afghanistan for seven of those, said the reunion in Yonkers was special. This contrasts to the reaction of his parents Pedro and Eunicia Tolentino - who emigrated from the Dominican Republic -- two months ago.

"They pretty much went crazy, they were upset," Tolentino said of his parent's initial reaction. "Over the weekend we had everyone in the family, aunts and uncles -- a complete family was there. This brought back the old days when the family was united for Christmas or other bog holidays. We made all the best foods, foods we like best, for a barbecue."

Fred Nives, founder of Omni Financial, and his wife Donna were at the airport on Monday for the send-off. Donna said her husband, a World War II veteran, sympathizes with the plight.

Nives has directed Omni to provide free fuel for these missions of mercy.

"We can never do too much for soldiers, and I wish we could do more," Donna Nives said. "I wish I had a magic wand to take away the pain and suffering. This is the least we could do, when you think what these soldiers sacrificed for us."

This was Bohy's second flight for VAC. He and Fred Nives brought an injured Army nurse from Fort Bragg in North Carolina to Enid, Okla., for her niece's wedding.

"(The nurse) had suffered shrapnel wounds to her head, arms and legs," Bohy said.

For Nives, it was a chance to re-live some of his days as a pilot following World War II.

"I encouraged Andre to become a pilot, to be involved in something besides business," Nives said. "We liked the flight, and I hadn't flown in many years. It's nice a young man like Andre got involved with this. His wife supports him."

While Tolentino is hopeful to walk pain-free in the future, he does not regret his dedicated service.

"I believe (our presence in Afghanistan) is important," he said. "However long it takes to get the mission done, we definitely should stick it out."

For more on Veterans Airlift Command, visit [www.veteransairlift.org](http://www.veteransairlift.org).

**COMMENTING RULES:** To encourage an open exchange of ideas in The Hour community, we are pleased to allow readers to post comments following stories appearing on this website. By posting a comment, you are agreeing to our [Terms of Website Use](#). Please be aware that all comments will include the author's full name and town of residency, so comment responsibly. Please email us at [news@thehour.com](mailto:news@thehour.com) if you wish to report any comments that you feel violate the terms of use policy.

**You must be registered and logged in to comment on stories.**  
[Login](#) or [Register now!](#)

© 2010 The Hour Publishing Co.

[Terms of Service](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Subscriber Services](#) | [Customer Services](#) | [Advertise with us](#) | [The Hour History](#)



[Norwalk pilot Andre Bohy flies patients from Westchester County Airport back to Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C.](#)



[Army Pfc. Christian Tolentino, left stands with his brother and Norwalk pilot Andre Bohy. Bohy flew Tolentino and his brother and caretaker Johnny Tolentino from Westchester County Airport back . . .](#)

Most Read    Most Comments    Most Emails

- [Teacher on leave for pot bust](#)
- [Officials advise residents to prepare for Earl](#)
- [New fence disturbs Rowayton residents](#)
- [Man sues landlord over fire that killed his wife and friend](#)
- [On the day he begins his 30-day jail sentence, former commander of Norwalk's Detective Bureau says . . . 'I want to wholeheartedly ask for forgiveness'](#)