

## Plane Crash, Coma Doesn't Deter Pilot

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After a 2007 plane crash, nine days in a coma and 28 surgeries, retired Capt. David Berling, now 56th Contracting Squadron contract specialist, understands what it means to overcome adversity.

On April 29, 2007, Berling was approximately 20 seconds from landing his private plane at Hawthorne Municipal Airport near Los Angeles, Calif., when he hit a power line. The plane crashed violently into a dark vacant dirt field and flipped onto its top, bending into a twisted and mangled heap of debris. The plane's engine was pushed into the cockpit, crushing Berling's legs.

"When I heard what happened to my husband I was in shock," said Melissa Berling, David's wife. "I kept thinking to myself this wasn't happening. I was on autopilot. I remember being told he was in an accident and that he had lost both legs. So what I did was focus on getting to him and freaking out later."

David was already in surgery when his wife arrived at the hospital.

"I don't remember any part of the accident," David said. "I listened to the tapes from the crash and I sounded pretty calm but I just don't remember. I don't even remember the week before."

David's wife was with him throughout the recovery process.

"It was inspiring to me," Melissa said. "He was so motivated to get back to what he loved and it directly reflected in how I felt."

With help from family and friends and sheer determination, David Berling recovered from his nearly fatal accident and even wrote a book titled "Just Living the Dream: No Way Out but Through" about the experiences he went through.

"The book is written from both my perspective and my family's perspective," David said. "It starts in the hospital immediately after my accident."

After multiple surgeries and double above-knee amputations, the book has given meaning to what some would view as a tragic event.

"I want people to know they are not alone when going through tragedies like mine," he said. "I hope people can see that there is light at the end of the tunnel because there can be positive outcomes."

Since the accident, David got a job as a civilian in the 56th Contracting Squadron, and his wife has a newfound appreciation for the simple things in life.

“People stress about the little everyday things in life and that’s how I was,” Melissa said. “The accident made me realize what’s really important in life, which is my family and my marriage.”

His love of flying was not deterred by the accident, as David still flies his personal Cessna for fun.

“No matter what you try in life, you will have failures,” he said. “The goal is to learn from those failures and not dwell on them. Instead, keep pressing forward.”

David’s book can be found on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).