

# Witness: Wrong-way driver shifted lanes

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Motorists driving west into the fog early one December morning testified Thursday about seeing a car come at them on their side of Sunrise Highway before hitting another car head-on.

Andrea Barile, then of Mastic, said he was going to work in Hauppauge when he saw the oncoming car hit the vehicle that Barile was following.

"It seemed like he was aiming for that car," Barile said, describing how the wrong-way car moved from the right west-

bound lane to hit the car in the left westbound lane.

Barile's assessment could be important in the trial of Christopher O'Brien, 55, of Sound Beach, who is accused of driving drunk and high on cocaine when he killed Thomas D'Eletto, 57, a project manager going from his home in Aquebogue to work in Nassau County on Dec. 23, 2015.

O'Brien is charged with second-degree murder, a rare charge in vehicular cases. To convict, prosecutors must convince state Supreme Court Justice Fernando Camacho, who is hearing the case in Central

Islip without a jury, that O'Brien had the state of mind necessary to prove he had a depraved indifference to human life.

During cross-examination by defense attorney Scott Gross of Hauppauge, Barile acknowledged that he never described O'Brien targeting D'Eletto's car in the statement he gave to police or his grand jury testimony. Barile told Gross he considered the statement and the testimony "accurate and complete."

After the crash in Yaphank, Barile said he ran to O'Brien's Audi and banged on the windows. O'Brien seemed uncon-

scious at first, but then raised his head and opened his door. Barile said he asked him if he was OK.

"He responded with, 'Why is everybody bothering me?'" Barile said during questioning by Assistant District Attorney Marc Lindemann.

Then Barile went to D'Eletto's Toyota, and heard a firefighter say he could find no pulse.

Earlier, Renee Bye, then of Amagansett, testified that her husband was driving her that morning to Kennedy Airport so she could catch a flight to Florida. Their car was in the right

lane with D'Eletto's behind, she said.

As they came to Exit 57, she said D'Eletto's car moved to the left lane and pulled alongside to pass their car. That's when she saw the oncoming car. Unlike Barile, she and others have all testified that O'Brien was only in the left lane.

"The cars went together," she said. "Debris showered our car. There was a big explosion, and the man died."

She called 911 as she continued to Kennedy.

"I cried, and I cried on the plane," she said. "It's affected my life."

## CRIME & courts



Man sought in connection with eight bank robberies in Nassau.

### ELMONT

#### 'Brazen' bank robber has hit 8 of them, police say

A "brazen" and "dangerous" bank robber — who tells victims he is armed and willing to shoot if the teller doesn't turn over cash — has robbed eight banks in Nassau County since November, police said Thursday.

No one has been injured in any of the robberies, which included holdups at seven Chase Banks in Elmont and Hempstead and a Bank of America in Westbury. The thief has worn hats — and in at least one instance sunglasses — but hasn't covered his face with a mask, police said.

"It's difficult to say what his motives are at this point," Nassau Police Det. Lt. George Darienzo, commanding officer of the Robbery Squad, said during a news briefing at police headquarters in Mineola. "I would agree that he's brazen to walk in, as we like to say, 'face up,' so we'll look to get those answers real soon."

The latest two heists occurred Tuesday, when the suspect — described as a man in his late 20s to early 30s, standing about 6-foot to 6-foot-2 and about 175 to 190

pounds — entered a Bank of America about 3:09 p.m. on Post Avenue in Westbury.

As in all the robberies, the thief enters the bank alone, sometimes waiting in line, and produces a demand note "stating that he was armed and shoot people if he didn't get the money," according to a police department "wanted" poster which includes surveillance images of the suspect.

Almost two hours later at 4:45 p.m., the suspect robbed the Chase Bank on Linden Boulevard in Elmont, police said.

"There are threats in the note . . . we consider him dangerous," Darienzo said. "However, it's unknown if he's actually carrying a weapon."

He takes off on foot, police said, and they're unsure if he has an accomplice waiting in a getaway car.

The spree began with the Nov. 7 holdup of a Chase Bank on Linden Boulevard in Elmont. He took a seven-month break before he struck again on June 5 — holding up that same Elmont Chase Bank. He then struck the Chase Bank on Fulton Avenue in Hempstead twice — on July 3 and Aug. 22 — before hitting a



**TWO-VEHICLE CRASH.** A collision between a pickup truck and a car a resulted in the car overturning in the parking lot of the post office on Eastport Manor Road about 5:05 p.m. Thursday. The road was closed in both directions. Officials on the scene said the injured person in the overturned car was in critical condition.

different Chase on Franklin Avenue in Hempstead on Sept. 7, police said.

The suspect then went back to the Fulton Avenue Chase in Hempstead on Oct. 7, police said.

Police say they don't know why there was a long break between the first and second heists. They said it doesn't appear that the suspect is connected to any other unsolved bank robberies in Suffolk or nearby Nassau or New York City.

— NICOLE FULLER

### LONG BEACH

#### Summons for party where minors could drink alcohol

An 18-year-old woman was issued a summons for hosting a Long Beach house party where minors were allowed to drink alcohol, local police said

Thursday.

She told two officers responding to a noise complaint Saturday that she and her friends were having a party at her West Park Avenue home, police said.

But the officers saw open alcoholic beverages in her home and about 15 people around her age, police said.

She was issued a summons for violating the city's social host ordinance, which allows police to cite any host over the age of 16. Her name was not released due to the Long Beach police policy of withholding names of teenagers who have not been charged with felonies.

According to the city's website, Long Beach was the first municipality in the state to pass a social host law, in 2006.

— ELLEN YAN

### RIDGE

#### Cops: Motorist on drugs in crash on LIE service road

A Patchogue man was under the influence of drugs Wednesday night when he crashed his work van into the woods along the South Service Road of the Long Island Expressway in Ridge, Suffolk County police said.

Frank Gallina, 37, was placed under arrest about midnight near Exit 68, police said.

He was awaiting arraignment in First District Court in Central Islip on a charge of driving while ability impaired by drugs, police said.

Gallina was not injured in the crash, police said.

Police did not provide other details.

— WILLIAM MURPHY