

Memories of Flight 255 easier for widow to bear



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Allison Maus (seated) talks about Northwest flight 255, with Patty and Steve Cramer of Birmingham. Maus, widow of John Maus who commanded the flight, was in Detroit for memorial services this week.

By Janice Brunson
staff writer

Allison Maus' annual August trek to Michigan is a painful journey, one filled with sadness and memories of loss.

Captain John Maus, Allison's husband of 18 years, was the pilot in command of Northwest flight 255 when it crashed shortly after takeoff from Detroit Metropolitan Airport two years ago this week, killing 156 people.

Maus, 44, of Seattle was in town for memorial services yesterday.

"I don't think you're ever, ever, ever the same again" after an unexpected tragedy, she said during an interview in the home of close friends Patty and Steve Cramer of Birmingham.

Steve Cramer wears a golden medallion about his neck, a man and woman contained in the circle of life, that John Maus was wearing at the time of the crash. Cramer and Allison discovered it weeks later, in a box of unclaimed debris from the accident that had been gathered by Wayne County Sheriff's deputies.

"You just go through life day by day. I think it takes forever to recover."

"I go places, I do things, I have

friends. But there's that loneliness you feel. You know, the loss of that comforting feeling when your husband puts his arms around you? That kind of thing," Maus said.

THIS TRIP, however, is easier than last year's. "I've been through it once. I know what to expect."

She spent most of Tuesday and Wednesday at the grassy knoll alongside Middlebelt and I-94 where flight 255 came to a final rest. She had delivered to it a huge floral spray in the shape of a rainbow.

"Sitting and visiting with the others, I feel peaceful. I also feel John's presence on the hill," she said. "Why spend the day alone when you can spend it with people who are feeling the same way you do?"

From time to time, Maus was approached on the knoll by others who have also lost loved ones. They are aware she is the widow of the pilot in command. There has never been words of reproach or blame. "I am seen as another grieving widow."

Maus maintains contact with the support group formed for friends and relatives of those who died in the crash. She also maintains contact with Jeanette Dodds, whose husband was co-pilot of the flight, and Jan

Cook, whose husband, a Northwest captain, was a passenger on the flight.

Today, Maus and the Cramers leave for Florida, spending time in a condominium the two couples bought together some years back. The condo borders a small secluded lake where John Maus' ashes were scattered.

Maus will return to Detroit in October, to attend court hearings on lawsuits filed in connection with the crash. The suits are expected to establish liability, and Maus welcomes them.

"I THINK JOHN will finally have his day in court. There has been a lot of press the past two years, a result of McDonnell Douglas, and there are points that have never been covered."

Northwest Airlines sued last week in Wayne County Circuit Court, charging McDonnell Douglas Corp., the manufacturer of the MD80 DC-9 involved in flight 255, and Texas Instruments Inc./Kilson, maker of an allegedly defective circuit breaker aboard, with primary liability in the crash.

"McDonnell Douglas has been fined \$180,000 for a defective anti-collision light on the MD80, not for the defect but for knowing it was de-

fective and then proceeding to use it on another 100 planes," Maus said.

"So what do they know about flight 255, that they are trying to cover up by blaming the pilot, which I happen to take exception to," Maus said.

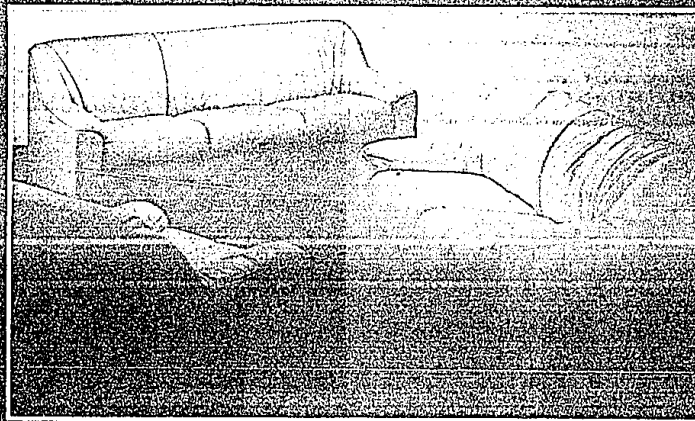
In an effort to rebuild her life, Maus recently sold the Las Vegas house she and John shared for most of their marriage and moved back to Seattle, where both grew up.

"I thought the hard part would be selling the (Las Vegas) place. But the hard part was signing the papers for the new place. I realized I was going into this alone, and it made me feel so sad. The first week I cried and cried."

A FORMER FLIGHT attendant for 12 years, Maus returned to college last school year, majoring in anthropology and maintaining a 4.0 average.

And for the first time this year, Foster High School in Seattle offered the John Maus Memorial Scholarship to a graduating student interested in continuing education, either in college or a trade school. John Maus graduated from Foster in 1947. Had he lived, he would have retired from flying next January.

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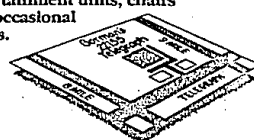
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