

BIOG -
EPA

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Making waves on the air

Channel 5's newest anchor finds it's an easy transition

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"Dan Rather, for 'CBS Evening News,' see you tomorrow ..."

Anna Chavez, born in East Palo Alto, raised in Sunnyvale, graduate of Stanford, steals a last lick of the lips. A little cotton mouth isn't surprising, for though Chavez may be a veteran of a dozen years of Bay Area news, she's a rookie over here at what can be called "Mac's Place."

Floor director Andre Valentine gives the finger count-down, five, four, three, two, one, and ...

"I'm Dave McElhatton."

"And I'm Anna Chavez."

And they are the most talked-about new couple in town.

Have you heard the news? Chavez, that cross between Annie Potts and Holly Hunter, left Channel 7 and co-anchor Richard Brown for Channel 5 and 62-year-old Dave McElhatton. Or, as he is known around the North Beach studio, Mac.

Thursday night's news, Chavez's 12th fling with Mac, goes smoothly, though the two are still getting to know each other. During a break, Chavez turns to McElhatton and wonders if she was supposed to throw in an extra comment during the cholera story.

"I wasn't sure if (the director) was talking to you, or me," she says, with a nervous laugh. "This is like dancing!"

McElhatton in turn apologizes for not giving Chavez the chance to ask a question of Dr. Nancy Snyderman, the station's medical expert. How, Chavez wonders, did Mac know she wanted to ask a question?



ARIANE KADOCH / PENINSULA TIMES TRIBUNE

Ratings have soared at Channel 5 since Anna Chavez switched over from Channel 7. The Peninsula-born news anchor is doing a special series called "Where Women Stand" this week.

"I heard you inhale," McElhatton says.

If McElhatton is all-knowing, he is too modest to say. He does seem quite pleased with his new co-anchor. "She's wonderful to work with, and it's been a seamless transition, which in this business is so rare," McElhatton later says, in a voice as smooth as top-shelf Scotch.

Chavez signed off on Channel 7, her home for a dozen

years, on Jan. 2 — leaving no forwarding address, much to the worry of her fans.

When her contract there expired at the end of January, Chavez announced that she was joining McElhatton and fellow Stanford graduate Kate Kelly. Chavez more or less takes the place of Wendy Tokuda, who left Channel 5 for Los Angeles last fall.

Chavez, who previously was the co-anchor at 6 and 11 on Channel 7, now works one

regular news shift with McElhatton at 6. Kelly is McElhatton's co-anchor at 5 and 10.

After Thursday's 6 p.m. show, Chavez is still pumped with adrenalin — one has to break into a half-jog to keep up as she cuts through the newsroom. Grabbing a seat in news director Harry Fuller's office, Chavez's energy level remains high as she says one of the primary rea-

sons she came to Channel 5 was the opportunity to do special reports.

On this week's "Eyewitness News at 10," for example, Chavez is doing a series called "Where Women Stand." Tonight: "Feminist Backlash?" Tuesday: "Gender Differences." Wednesday: "Women at Work."

Please see **CHAVEZ, C-2**

CHAVEZ/ Channel 5's newest anchor

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Thursday: "The Double Shift."
Friday: "Women in Politics."

True to form, Chavez has hit the Channel 5 carpet running.

Chavez slows down considerably, however, when she is asked about growing up on the Peninsula. This one-time philosophy major explodes the myth of the bub-

ble-head anchorwoman, taking a hard, sometimes painful look at her early years.

Not all of it was bad, though. Chavez smiles warmly, reflecting on being one of six Mexican-American siblings at 1673 Tulane Ave. "At that time, East Palo Alto was a neighborhood that was very integrated. I had friends that were African-American, Jewish, Mexican-American, Chinese-American."

But, after moving with her family to Sunnyvale, Chavez ran face-first into teen-angst at Peterson High (now Peterson Middle School). "I think I was probably conceived as being more confi-

dent and cocky than I really was. I didn't like high school, much," she says. "I didn't think of high school as a major time of growth. I was alienated by the caste system — I didn't quite fit in to the pigeonholes."

She says she started to "find herself" at San Jose State, where she studied philosophy before transferring to Stanford. There, reflecting that all the philosophers she had studied were "old Greek guys," she switched to film communications.

One thing Chavez will always remember Peterson High for is a Spanish class she took as a sophomore, sitting next to a senior

named Richard Fineo. They were just friends, for a couple of years. Twenty years ago, Anna Chavez started dating Fineo, who is now her husband (they live in San Francisco). "He's so intelligent and so sensitive and so funny — I love him so much," Chavez says, emphasizing each "so."

"We go out and people think we just started dating, or we're honeymooning, because we're so affectionate. I feel like the luckiest woman in the world."

Many would say Fineo is no luckless man, himself.

Then there's Mac, envy of many a Bay Area man. "With Wendy

and Kate, I thought I was twice-blessed," says McElhatton. "Now, I'm thrice-blessed."

But aren't three anchors a bit much? Isn't this like the 49ers having three outstanding quarterbacks? Not so, Fuller says, changing sports. "I think I've got the best outfield in town," he says.

Channel 5's ratings have soared since Chavez came on ship, as her arrival coincided with the CBS coverage of the Olympics, a dream lead-in. This first post-Olympics week will tell what, if any, effect Chavez has in the ratings game.

Will the fans who came to know

her at Channel 7 follow her to 5? "I don't know," Chavez says. "I don't think I have that kind of influence."

But, since she was asked, and being a thorough woman of the news, Anna Chavez delivers a stack of fan letters. "We are all very happy to see you back on the air," writes a Menlo Park man.

And another gentleman, from Foster City: "I watched you nightly on Ch. 7 and now Ch. 5. You are the greatest, extremely attractive kind funny and know's (sic) how to keep a viewer's attention ... Don't do anything nor change anything about yourself."