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Rather-Chung anchor team ends at CBS

NEW YORK (AP) — As Dan Rather began a new chapter as solo anchor of *The CBS Evening News* on Monday, his deposed deskmate, Connie Chung, awaited her exit from the network where she spent 18 years.

Chung said she had no idea where she would land next and refused to speculate. She said she planned to watch Monday's newscast, which the network announced would end with a reference to her departure by Rather.

"Everything that has occurred has been disappointing," said Chung, from her Manhattan apartment Monday afternoon. "But I have made my life in the news business, and all the time I was co-anchoring, my primary goal was to keep our partnership intact. I wanted to continue that partnership."

Chung did not appear on the broadcast Friday, the day after she received word she would no longer be co-anchor. On Saturday, the network made it official: The two-year Rather-Chung duo was deemed a failure, a judgment borne out by their third-place ranking.

There was no progress Monday as negotiations continued between Chung's agent, Alfred Geller, and CBS executives, for what Chung characterized as "a mutually agreeable separation."

Although she has a little less than a year remaining on her contract, viewers are unlikely to see

her on CBS News programming again, including her magazine show, *Eye to Eye with Connie Chung*, which returns Thursday after several weeks' hiatus.

Although Chung said this week's edition had already been taped, she won't be seen anchoring, according to CBS News President Eric Ober. "It would be confusing for the audience," he said.

Things had been increasingly confusing at *The Evening News*, plagued by low ratings and reports of rivalry between the two anchors almost since its premiere June 1, 1993.

"We gave it two years," Ober said.

"There was no single event that happened that forced us to make this decision and I never believed that it was Connie's fault or Dan's fault. We just decided to go back to a format that we think works better, and we felt Dan was the stronger choice."

Hours before he returned to the solo format he inherited from Walter Cronkite in 1981, said Rather, "We took a shot. It didn't work."

Still professing his support for Chung, he reiterated his hope she would somehow remain at CBS News.

But that looked more than doubtful. She has rejected alternative assignments as demotions and compared her plight to that of Barbara Walters, the only other woman to be paired with a

man on a network evening newscast. Walters' short-lived partnership with Harry Reasoner on ABC News was a flop in the mid-1970s.

Chung's downfall comes during a difficult time in CBS history. The network's prime time schedule, including Chung's magazine, has languished in the ratings' cellar this season, thanks in part to the defection last fall of long-standing affiliates.

Meanwhile, *The Evening News*, a strong contender for second place when she joined the broadcast, has been mired in last place.

"CBS is like the other major networks, in that the people in the ranking positions are older white males," said Valerie Hyman, a faculty member at the Poynter Institute journalism center in St. Petersburg, Fla.

"That doesn't necessarily ... limit opportunities for women, but it certainly doesn't lead you to predict that those opportunities will be there."

"It's not a cabal; it's what people feel comfortable with," she said.

Like his CBS News associates, Rather has strenuously denied Chung's departure was a gender issue.

"Barbara Walters is a friend of mine," Rather said, "and I would like to think we could leave Barbara out of this. She's earned it."

He again voiced his support of

the co-anchor concept — unlike Reasoner, who loudly and publicly objected.

"I thought we had a great chance when we went to the double anchor to make it better. Maybe it didn't turn out that way," he said.

"It took my approval for Connie to come to the co-anchoring, and I not only did it willingly, I did it enthusiastically."

David Brinkley and the late Chet Huntley have been the Big Three networks' only successful dual anchor team — although PBS' Robert MacNeil and Jim Lehrer collaborated for more than a quarter-century before MacNeil announced he will retire in the fall.

"Huntley did one thing and Brinkley did another," former NBC News President Reuven Frank explained. "It was a total division of labor. Brinkley covered Washington, and Huntley covered everything else."

Frank said the Rather-Chung combination was doomed from the start.

"You may not present the intelligent viewer with a situation that makes no sense. At least subconsciously, he's going to resent it," he said.

"With two people sitting side by side, alternately reading items off the same TelePrompTer, if you take any detached, philosophical look at it, it's absurd."

High waters hit Missouri River, push downstream

STE. GENEVIEVE, Mo. (AP) — High water that swamped towns along the Missouri River pushed downstream Monday into the Mississippi, threatening this historic French settlement for the second time in two years.

A 50-foot levee raised against the devastating 1993 flood held firm between the river and the heart of 260-year-old Ste. Genevieve's historic district, filled with quaint bed-and-breakfasts, cafes and gift shops.

"It's all very disheartening, very depressing, because we were coming along just fine in recuperating — until now. We just can't believe this," said Betty Geraghty, sitting on her porch about 100 yards from the levee.

Upstream, the Missouri crested Sunday at 36.5 feet — or 11.5 feet above flood stage — at St. Charles, near the point where it joins the Mississippi. By Monday morning, the Missouri had dropped 1.2 feet there.

By the time the crest reached St. Charles, 20 miles northwest of St. Louis, the Missouri had flooded communities and cropland along 200 miles of the river. Two deaths were blamed on high water in the state.

At Ste. Genevieve, about 60 miles south of St. Louis, the Mississippi stood at 43.2 feet Monday, or 16.2 feet over flood stage, and was expected to crest Tuesday at more than 43 feet.

The sky cleared over parts of the region Monday, but more storms were forecast.

Vern Baumann, president of the Ste. Genevieve levee district, took a daybreak walk along the gravel surface of the barricade. Layered below the crushed rock were sandbags first stacked in 1993.

"I think we can win this time, if the weather holds," said Baumann, who was nearly swept away during the 1993 flood in an earth mover atop a faltering levee. "We're somewhat wiser now. We know how much river we can take, and we know how much we can accomplish quickly."

Outside the First Presbyterian Church, the Rev. Kelly Allen — another 1993 flood survivor — kept watch over a steadily chugging pump, which spewed water from the building's basement over an arm of the levee.

What's important, said Allen, is preserving not only the community but its mem-

bers' faith the waters will be beaten.

"There's always the looming question of whether God is the cause of floods and disasters. That's an unanswerable question. I prefer to stick with the perspective that God accompanies us in these times, especially to overcome the human problems of river management," she said.

Busloads of regularly scheduled tour groups kept arriving to see the historic town, with the levee and the muddy river beyond as an added attraction.

"This upsets me," said Bernice Lingoni, part of a 37-member tour group from New Orleans. "We've had flooding in New Orleans this year, but this is worse. We feel terrible seeing it."

In 1993, parts of Ste. Genevieve outside the historic district were swamped by 10 feet of water, which filled homes and businesses and chased away thousands of tourists.

Across the Mississippi in southern Illinois, extensive flooding of low-lying areas continued near Murphysboro. Some roads were closed, but most of the flooding affected open farmland.

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