

Tara Vreeland

Well, it happened.

It happened sooner than many of us expected - but expect it we did.

Tara Vreeland is one of those young talents that you knew wouldn't stay in this small market for very long. Unless she wanted to because of her roots to this community. We hoped she'd want to.

A tip was recently called to the Cheyenne Herald that Tara was leaving Channel 5 for a job in Oklahoma. That was quickly confirmed with the station. Knowing that her departure was imminent, I watched the news until the end the next two nights to see how Channel 5 would send off this special young anchor talent.

It was a disappointing end for the best anchor they've had at the local station for quite a long time. Although very young for a job even in this small market, Tara Vreeland immediately won over the audience and rarely was criticism directed her way. She handled the job very well.

After seeing that Channel 5 did not provide much of a send-off and knowing that the daily newspaper won't know she's gone until they read this story, I decided she deserved better than she was going to get from either of them. I contacted Tara and asked if she had time and would be willing to talk with me before she left town. She accepted my invitation and I interviewed the news anchor for the purpose of being able to tell Herald readers where this young lady was going and why.

One thing you notice about Tara Vreeland right away is that she is just as personable and friendly off set as she comes across over the airwaves. She is attractive and that doesn't come by way of heavy makeup - she is a genuinely attractive young woman. Poised beyond her years. She's got it together.

I did not expect any revelations about her leaving. I was seeking any dirt. As the article at the right states, I didn't think she'd remain in this market very long. She tell me that she was leaving Channel 5 of her own volition - that she was offered another contract and had initially planned to stay here. But she had applied to the Tulsa, Oklahoma, CBS affiliate and they came through with an offer before a new contract was completed here.

She told me that when she came here, she planned to move onward and upward. Someday. It was never her intention, even though she has family here and in Denver, to remain in Cheyenne indefinitely.

Because viewers don't get to know much more about the people they see every day on television news - nothing more about the people than is in the station's brief website bio - let me tell you a little about Tara Vreeland.

While most think of Tara as a native to Cheyenne, she is not. That probably is because of her well-known father, who long owned the local Burger King stores.

Tara's father does live here, as do her paternal grandmother and cousins. Her maternal grandmother lives in Fort Collins and her mother is in Denver. Her parents split when she was five and Tara grew up in Cheyenne and Denver.

Tara was born in Casper and her parents moved to Cheyenne when she was two months old. She lived in Cheyenne and attended school here through the eighth grade - then moved to Denver, where she attended and graduated from high school. She then attended CSU, where she earned her bachelor's degree in technical journalism (broadcast journalism). She worked through her college years as a nanny and a house sitter.

A common theme comes from Tara in most of the recounting of her young life and interests. Her horse. Her dad gave Tara her first horse when she was 11. She has had a few, including one while at CSU and her current horse, Echo, will make the move with her to Tulsa. When I asked her if she had found a place to live down there yet, she said she had found "a barn." She had found a home for her horse before looking for one for herself.

In her final semester at CSU, she was fortunate enough to be able to anchor at the CTV campus television station. She commented that she didn't appreciate that valuable training and education at CSU until after she had begun work at KGWN. She said she'd like to go back and take some of those classes again - with this experience behind her.

She entered college with plans to get into broadcasting. Her dad had taken her with him to New York City for a Burger King convention and while there, a good friend of her dad's from high school, John Scott, who worked at FOX News, invited them to tour the FOX station and Tara was invited to sit in the broadcaster's chair and read off the "prompter." A junior in high school, Tara was hooked. She went along with her main "goal" finding a prom dress. She was not even considering college yet.

Back home, she spoke with her dad, whom she obviously adores, and told him that broadcasting looked like an interesting career. She said she'd long had an interest in current events, what was going on, and that "it wasn't for the glamour of TV," but the "thrill," the excitement of all that seemed to be going on. Always.

Tara graduated from CSU in December of 2006 and already had landed the job at KGWN. On her Thanksgiving break prior to graduation, she interviewed with Jon Martin and "got the job." It was an advantage to come into a market where she knew people, could pronounce the names and not move away from her roots right out of college.

It is obvious that she thinks and looks ahead with a purpose. She is no "dumb blonde." Tara's career will go where she wants it to - she's well-grounded and receives good counsel. She is unmarried and will relocate to Tulsa with just her horse.

During her stint at Channel 5, she also produced the 5:30 news at times and anchored a show that aired in northern Colorado. Because of her tasks at KGWN, running the teleprompter, updating their website, anchoring, etc, Tara said she didn't get to report as much as she would have liked. In Tulsa, she will be weekend anchor (solo) and field reporter for KOTV, Tulsa's CBS affiliate. Tara said they are No. 1 in the market.

Tara especially relished assignments at Frontier Days. Having been with the Dandies and as Frontier Days Lady in Waiting and 2004 Miss Frontier, she felt she had the right background to report on Frontier Days activities. She was still in high school in Denver when she became a member of the Dandies. There was concern whether she could make the practices and fulfill the responsibilities of being with the Dandies, but Tara found a way. She credits her experience with the Dandies as helping to prepare her for what she does today.

While she has only good things to say about Channel 5 and her experience there, she looks forward to the challenge of something new. Tulsa is a city of about 393,000 and is the No. 61 media market in the country, compared to Cheyenne at No. 198 of 210. She commented that she welcomed the challenge of knowing how to pronounce the names of people and places down there. She might have quite a challenge - difficult to pronounce Indian names will be commonplace.

Tara begins work in Tulsa on January 19, with a schedule of Saturday through Wednesday. She looks forward to "covering" the news but is also excited about "saying behind the desk" as the weekend anchor. It's obvious that the Tulsa station saw the same thing in Tara Vreeland that was apparent to viewers in Cheyenne from Tara's first day at Channel 5 in January of 2007.

About KOTV, Channel 6 in Tulsa:

KOTV continues to dominate the Nielsen ratings 24 hours a day, and its news broadcasts continue to win all time periods by comfortable margins. In November 2007, KOTV's 10 pm newscast was the 8th highest-ranked late newscast in the United States. Channel 6 also won in the Local Access time period (6:30 pm weeknights).

KOTV also airs local news from 5 am to 8 am and shows CBS's "Early Show" from 8 am to 10 am. In Fall 2008, KOTV expanded its late newscast on Saturday nights to a full hour. The first half hour is branded as "The News on 6 at 10:00." The second is called "The News on 6 Late Edition."

Someday, Cheyenne viewers may see Tara Vreeland on regional television. Adele Arakawa will be ready to hang up the teleprompter at about the same time Tara Vreeland has the necessary experience to sit behind the Channel 9 news desk in Denver. Don't bet against it.

This brief story about Tara Vreeland appeared in the July 30, 2007 issue of the Cheyenne Herald. Sometimes, I just have to remind readers how prophetic my words were.

Tara Vreeland

When I chastised the newest anchorwoman for Channel 5 in the last issue of the Herald, some thought I was unduly critical and one reader came to her defense.

I generally agree with that reader's portrayal of Ms. Vreeland as a capable news reader and one who has added professionalism to a newscast sorely in need of it. My remarks referred to one story and I thought her infraction serious enough to make it an issue.

Unless her roots around here hold her near home, it is highly likely that Tara Vreeland will soon depart for greener pastures. Others before have left but seldom does the station share with its viewers what will become of the departed.

I don't think those who regularly watch Channel 5 will have to wonder what this young lady is going to do if, and when, she leaves.

She has proven to be an exceptional addition to the otherwise ordinary, and sometimes agonizing, news/weather/sports team at Channel 5. She will be discovered. If Cheyenne had multiple television stations, competitors would have sent her tapes around the country by now. As it is, we have but one station and she will

have to be "discovered" by a Denver station or one from another larger market.

Until I just read her bio on the Channel 5 website, I did not know she had been Miss Frontier. That is not an accomplishment to which I pay much attention.

But I don't think the facts that she can ride a horse or comes from a well-connected family have anything to do with her unique ability to read news stories. She does that well.

My criticism for her utterance in a recent broadcast stands but I do want to go on record that I think she is a very capable news anchor for Channel 5 and my hope is that they can retain her for a year or so.

I try to watch KGWN at 10:00 pm for 5-7 minutes - to see what that outlet thinks is the important story of the day. I seldom watch the news at 5:30 but am told that the very same newscast is repeated at 10:00. It is a brutal assignment to watch the weather on the local station so I leave the room or switch the channel after that brief news. And because the weather comes between news and sports, I seldom see what the sports kid has to offer.

Tara Vreeland makes few mistakes and will be a great loss when she leaves.

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