

What's Meredith up to Today?

The Providence Journal

"It's a very awkward period for me," said Meredith Vieira.

On one hand, Vieira is busy working on ABC's morning talk show, "The View." On the other, she is preparing to take over one of the most visible jobs in television, co-host of NBC's morning powerhouse "Today" show, replacing Katie Couric.

She's scheduled to start sometime in September.

Vieira, 52, began saying goodbye to "The View" Tuesday, and will finish with a celebrity roast on Friday. After nine years, she said it will be very tough to leave.

"I've been sick all weekend," Vieira said in a phone interview Monday. "I'm not sure if it's psychosomatic or what ... my voice has always been my Achilles' heel." (She sounded fine over the phone.)

"The View" is a talk show created by Barbara Walters that centers on the interaction among its hosts — Walters on occasion, plus Vieira, Star Jones Reynolds, Joy Behar and Elisabeth Filarski Hasselbeck.

"What I'll remember most is not a particular guest or a special moment," said Vieira. "It's all about the chemistry we had together. We believed in the show at a time when we couldn't get arrested."

"The View" has announced that Rosie O'Donnell will take Vieira's place this fall. Vieira said she didn't have any input into that decision, but she thinks it's a good idea.

"A long time ago, I thought that either Rosie or Whoopi (Goldberg) would be really good for the show," Vieira said. "I think it's a bold move; it's going to create a lot of excitement. The show is called 'The View' for a reason, because it's about having a lot of opinions."

Vieira pooh-poohed speculation that O'Donnell and Jones Reynolds will battle it out on the set.

"People are going to be disappointed if that's what they think," Vieira said. "If there were any problems between us, we always sat down and talked them out. The show is all about the chemistry. No one wants to see bloodshed, no matter what you read."

Soon, though, "The View" will be history for Vieira. Shortly after she was named successor to Couric, who is moving on to anchor the CBS evening news, the two women had a phone conversation:

"Katie called me after the announcement, and we laughed about how everyone is asking us the same thing: 'The pressure, the pressure, how are you going to handle the pressure?' I think it's worse for her than it's been for me."

But Vieira said that, yes, she's a little nervous about going to "Today."

"It's been nine years since I've done news. At 'The View,' we look at the New York Post and The Daily News, not The New York Times ... but they keep saying they're looking for me to be me. I keep thinking 'Why do they want me?' But if that's really what they want, OK."

Vieira said she was offered a job co-hosting the CBS morning show five years ago, and turned it down. But "Today" is the longtime ratings king, a far cry from the perennially struggling "Early Show" on CBS.

Vieira joined CBS News after stints at stations in Worcester, Mass., and Rhode Island. In 1985 she moved to the CBS news magazine "West 57th," and in 1989 she became a correspondent for "60 Minutes." Two years later, pregnant with her second child, she left that plum job in a dispute with producer Don Hewitt over her workload.

After "60 Minutes," Vieira became an anchor for the "CBS Morning News" and then left for ABC's news magazine "Turning Point."

She met her husband, Richard Cohen, while she was working in Chicago. A former CBS reporter and producer,



AP file

Meredith Vieira is greeted by her son Gabriel Cohen at an April 6 news conference announcing her new job as co-host of the NBC "Today" show. After nine years as the traffic cop at "The View," she's leaving today, and will be replaced by Rosie O'Donnell in September.

Cohen was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis when he was 25, and has since battled colon cancer.

He wrote about coping with chronic illness in a 2004 book, "Blindsided: Lifting a Life Above Illness: A Reluctant Memoir."

Vieira said her husband is working on a new book that follows six people with chronic illnesses.

Over the summer, Vieira said, she'll do some work prepping for her new role on "Today" — the network has built a new set for the show — but said she is also looking forward to a little downtime with her family in suburban New York.

"I just want to stay home and be with my family. I don't want to go anywhere," she said.

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Scripps Howard News Service

Angela Lansbury in a food fight? Heavens!

LOS ANGELES (AP)— Could it be? Angela Lansbury in a food fight, getting hit with a pie and having wedding cake plastered on her face? The same Angela Lansbury who solved all those murders as the very proper Jessica Fletcher?

This is not "Murder, She Wrote" gone wild. It's the stylish English comedy "Nanny McPhee," which is now available on DVD for kids and their parents. In truth, Lansbury, who is far from stuffy, had a ball in the frantic food tossing. With one exception.

"I got hit in the eye with a very hard dinner roll which had been sitting out in the sun all day," she recalls. "I stopped the shot — 'Stop! Stop! You can't throw rolls that are hard as rocks!'"

Emma Thompson wrote the "Nanny McPhee" script and plays the title role, affording Lansbury a rare chance at a villainous part.

Throughout her long career, Lansbury generally has been the soul of virtue, though she was chillingly convincing as the plotting mother in 1962's "The Manchurian Candidate" and on-stage as the baker of delectables containing suspicious meat in "Sweeney Todd."

With a prominent mole, a towering gray wig and "the biggest proboscis anybody ever had," she plays "Nanny's" Aunt

Adelaide, who threatens to evict her nephew (Colin Firth) and his seven boisterous young children from the house she owns.

Lansbury, 80, had been packing at her Brentwood home, planning an extended trip with her customary cool precision. She was going to Washington for a show at the Kennedy Center, then to New York where she has a new apartment to furnish, then to her other home in western Ireland. The trip obviously requires a varied wardrobe.

The move to New York is part of the pattern for her new life.

Lansbury said she told her business manager, "I've got to have a piece of New York in my life again." She first lived there when she arrived from war-bombed London in 1940. She studied acting and worked as a salesgirl before coming to Hollywood at 17 and becoming a contract player at MGM.

She won an Oscar nomination with her very first movie, "Gaslight." During the 1960s and 1970s, she appeared on Broadway in such hits as "Mame" and "Gypsy," which provided two of her four Tonys.

"I'm not busy here; I haven't made a movie in Hollywood since 1971," she commented. "In New York, I have so many friends, so many interests."

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