



By ED BARK

Troy Dungan, dean of Dallas' weathercasters, is forecasting his own future, too. He'll be hanging up his trademark bow ties on July 18, leaving WFAA-TV (Channel 8) after 31 years of taking our temperatures.

"I've done this enough," he said in a telephone interview Wednesday. "I'll miss the people. You know how it is. It's a soap opera every day. There's always stuff going on."

Dungan also has been teaching Bible study classes on Wednesdays in the station's conference room. He'll miss that, too, he said.

Although he doesn't look it, he'll have a momentous birthday on November 17. But being 70 years old isn't a death sentence for those with sunny dispositions.

"My parents were looking for a casket to crawl into," Dungan said. "They got old before their time. I think it's a state of mind."

His wife, Janet, will be throwing him a black tie party at Dallas' Mercury Grill, where they have brunch on most Sundays. They're also fresh from a two-week vacation in Italy, where Dungan said he wore a tie just once -- a long tie -- on their last night before returning to Dallas Sunday.

Dungan already has lightened his workload, doing just the 6 p.m. newscasts since July 19, his 30th anniversary at Channel 8. His successor, meteorologist and former Minnesota Twins pitching prospect Pete Delkus, joined the station in June 2005, with Dungan playing a key role in recruiting him. He came from WCPO-TV in Cincinnati, which offered Delkus a lifetime contract in a last ditch effort to keep him.

"So we had at least a year for what we call the anointing process," Dungan said. "This market does not take to newcomers very well."

For five months they tried a two-headed weatherman gambit, cross-talking throughout their 10 p.m. segments in an effort to accustom viewers to ringing out the old, ringing in the new.

"That was not our favorite thing," Dungan said. "We didn't mind working together, but every night at 6:30 we said, 'What the heck are we going to do tonight?' It was a bit awkward."

Delkus now is fully in charge of the latenight newscasts, with "Delkus Delivers" promos getting heavy play on Channel 8. Dungan is content to fade into the background and get home early. In retirement, he'll still have a 25-days-a-year deal with Channel 8 to "do whatever we decide," he said. That might include weather specials, filling in for Delkus on occasion and a return to the "Santa's Helpers" charity drive that he's spearheaded for much of his tenure at Channel 8. "Just something to kind of keep me in the mix," he said.

Dungan said he'll also be free to do "commercials, voiceovers and other projects they wouldn't let us do at Channel 8." He might try writing a book, too.

"It'll just be nice to have that freedom," he said, after weathering a career that began in 1958 at KWTX-TV in Waco.

"I think I've worked about enough. I've worked in parts of six decades. I must be pretty old."