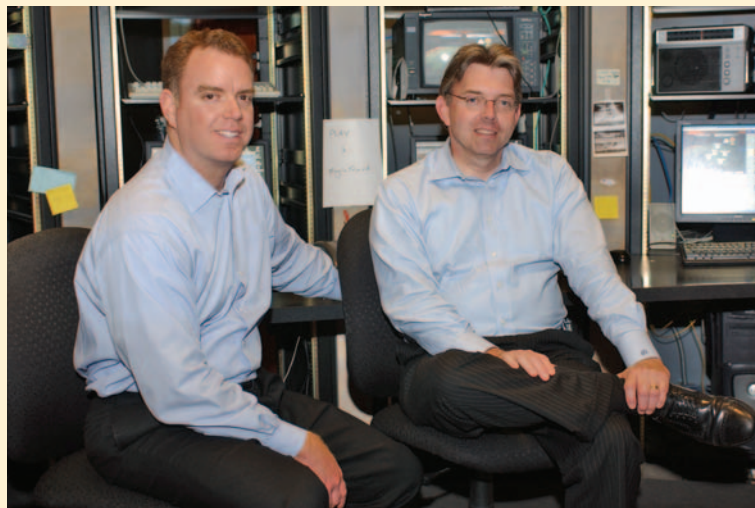




WRAL's Greg Fishel Weather Hound



Top: Although Greg Fishel says he has a face for radio, he enjoys reporting the weather every night on TV and educating the public about meteorology.

Above: Fellow meteorologist Mike Mayes in the WRAL 5 Weather Center with Greg. According to Greg, it takes a good scientist and a good communicator to be a good TV meteorologist.

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There's nothing more talked about in the South than the weather. That's why every evening, thousands of local viewers turn to WRAL's evening newscasts for Greg Fishel's official weather report.

Greg's illustrious position comes with a huge responsibility for accuracy – people need to know if they should wear a coat, rain jacket or snow boots the next day. While meteorology is an evolving science, Greg said the pressure for perfection is an internal drive rather than a company mandate.

"The station is more forgiving than we are to ourselves," he said. "There was a time when I would watch the competition like a hawk, then it got to a point where it's enough work just to keep up with myself, let alone my competition."

Reporting the weather is not like reporting the news. There are no scripts and no teleprompters guiding the forecast, Greg said. All reports are ad-libbed on air in front of a blank green screen. Everything the viewer sees is computer generated, he said.

With virtually no rehearsal time, some on air goofs happen, but Greg said he's learned to take them all in stride.

"If something goes wrong, I've learned its better just to have fun with it," he said.

On and off the air, Greg is known for his sharp wit, earning him the pet name "Fish" around the WRAL studio.

Greg said that every day, he feels fortunate to have a job where he gets paid to do what he loves and work with an incredible staff of good communicators and good scientists.

"Everybody here fits in those categories," he said.



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then it got to a point where it’s enough work just to keep up with myself, let alone my competition.”

Over the years, Greg has learned if something goes wrong on air, it’s best just to laugh and have fun with it. He is known around the studio for his uplifting sense of humor.

WEATHER CELEBRITY

Greg’s on-air presence has given him local celebrity status, which is not always glamorous. When in public with his family, he is often approached by fans. Balancing appreciation of his fans with respecting his family’s privacy has always been a challenge for Greg.

“I was at the station only four months and started getting invitations from viewers to Christmas dinner,” Greg said. “It freaked me out at first, but that’s just how people are in the South.”

Greg also remembers his first viewer letter from a local farmer. Greg was unaware of the seriousness of the drought status and said in the forecast that the weekend would be great with lots of sunshine. The farmer replied with a letter complaining that there was nothing great about the forecast.

That’s when Greg adopted his predecessor’s philosophy, “The weather is going to be great for golfing, but for the farmers, they sure could use the rain.”

“You can get 10 good letters and one attack, and you’ll always remember that one,” he said.

GROWING UP WITH WEATHER

As a child, Greg was petrified of thunderstorms and loved snow. When he was in the eighth grade in Lancaster, Pa., he was channel surfing and ran across a PBS program called “State of the Weather, Shape of the World.” He was immediately amazed.

“They didn’t give just a forecast but an in-depth explanation of the weather,” he said.

That’s when Greg became a weather hound with aspirations to one day work with a firm like AccuWeather. While very much

interested in doing radio weather broadcasts, he never imagined a career in television.

“I thought I had a good face for radio,” he said with a chuckle.

Greg went on to get a bachelor’s degree in meteorology at Penn State University, and took his first job in Chicago for a private forecasting firm. One of his clients was a radio station in Martinsburg, W. Va. They made him aware of a brand new television station going on the air in Salisbury, Md., and that they might need a meteorologist.

“I always thought it would be a public service to stay out of television,” Greg said with a laugh, “but I made an audition tape anyway. I stood in front of a map and gave a fictitious weather report” he said.

He got the job and one year later, moved to North Carolina to join the WRAL weather team. Greg decided to move to Cary from Raleigh in 1993 because of its family-friendly environment.

The low crime rate, great schools and ideal location were a perfect match for the Fishels. Greg and his wife, Kathy, whom he met at a health fair WRAL was sponsoring in 1985, stay busy with ice hockey and roller hockey matches for their 13-year-old son Brandon and 10-year-old son Austin. Both are students at Cary Christian School.

When Greg isn’t in the WRAL weather center, he’s out and about at least once a week visiting schools, churches and civic groups and sharing his passion for meteorology. A self-proclaimed science geek, Greg said he enjoys the opportunity to share the scientific and mathematic applications of weather.

“People don’t think of TV weather as having science in it,” he said.

However, Greg understands that most people just want to know whether they can go fishing, if they have to wear a sweater or if it’ll be a good day to be outdoors. Whatever the forecast, there will be plenty to talk about the next day around the water cooler. **CM**