Hey Mike, What’s the Weather Like Today?

One of Salisbury University’s most distinguished alumni returned to campus for an informal talk with students in November.

Mike Seidel ’79, a field reporter and on-camera meteorologist with the Weather Channel for more than two decades, spoke with Dr. Brent Skeeter’s Weather Analysis and Forecasting class in the Henson Science Hall. The group also toured the TV studios in the Teacher Education and Technology Center.

Seidel held an informal Q-and-A about the life of a broadcast meteorologist and his time at The Weather Channel. For nearly an hour, he spoke candidly about subjects ranging from job prospects and suggestions for graduate schools, to his own experiences on the air and in the field. It was Seidel’s first trip back to Salisbury since last year’s Homecoming ceremonies.

“What I do for a living is basically travel around the country getting out ahead of snowstorms and hurricanes,” he said. “It keeps me pretty busy. A lot of days are 18-20 hours – I had a time recently when I worked 65 hours in three days. The challenge with the long days is to come on for a half an hour and make it sound interesting and keep the energy up.”

When not in the field, Seidel works out of The Weather Channel’s home office in Atlanta.

“When I’m in Atlanta, I go in at 6 a.m. and stand in the studio and talk basically nonstop for two hours,” he said. “We’ll do about 55-60 segments, including seven-day forecasts, 25 cities, the nation divided by nine, the nation divided by quarters, travel forecasts and airport forecasts.”

Seidel developed an interest in weather at an early age.

“Weather has been a hobby of mine since I was 6 years old on the Eastern Shore. In the ’70s I used to practice in my bedroom with a paper map. We didn’t have anything like this,” he said of the technology available to students today.

Newspapers, TV and radio, he said, were the main sources of weather news when he was growing up.

“By the time you got the newspaper, it was already 12 hours old. The quality of information this day and age is really amazing with the Internet and smartphones.”

A Salisbury native, Seidel began his professional broadcast career as a junior in high school, eventually working for four local radio stations through high school and college. Seidel earned a B.S. in mathematics and geography and graduated magna cum laude in 1979 at what was then Salisbury State College. He also holds an M.A. in meteorology from Pennsylvania State University. Seidel began his television-broadcasting career at WMDT-TV in Salisbury in 1980, the first year the station was on the air. He later worked at WBOC in Salisbury as well.

Seidel noted that his 22-year tenure at the network was longer than most students attending the Q-and-A had been alive.

“We used magnetic maps when I did my first job here in 1980,” he said. “The graphics continue to get better and better. We’re in HD now instead of standard definition and you can see the difference at home. It’s light years better. It’s hard to imagine what it’s going to be like 10 or 15 years from now with the flow of information.”

The SU-Seidel Connection

Mike Seidel’s parents, Salisbury businessman and civic leader the late Samuel Seidel and his wife Marilyn Seidel, gave $1 million to endow the Seidel School of Education and Professional Studies at SU in 1997. Samuel Seidel was an active member of the Salisbury University Foundation, Inc., serving on several key committees and eventually becoming president of the Foundation Board. During his tenure, the Foundation grew from $200,000 to $17 million, making SU’s comprehensive endowment the largest among all schools in the University System of Maryland. Marilyn Seidel, also a former SU Foundation Board member and a retired operating room nurse, maintains an active interest in nursing education and endowed a nursing scholarship at the University.