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CAT TALES

FANS SHARE TAILGATING
TRADITIONS; GAME-DAY
CHANGES CONSIDERED



David Joy '07 MA '09 is equally at home in a Cullowhee trout stream (above) or behind the writer's desk.

HOOKED ON WRITING

David Joy credits WCU's English department with energizing his literary career

By RANDALL HOLCOMBE

Writing and fishing are the two dominant currents that flow through the life of **David Joy '07 MA '09**, and the young author has put those passions together in his first book.

"Growing Gills: A Fly Fisherman's Journey" was completed when Joy was a WCU graduate student, and in the book he uses his lifelong obsession with fishing to investigate his own psyche while delving into subjects such as family and friends, environmentalism and fly-tying. Sylva artist **Michael Polomik MFA '10** created the cover painting and 17 chapter illustrations for the work, scheduled for release in early September by Bright Mountain Books of Fairview.

A Charlotte native, Joy was born into a fishing family and was handed a rod and reel as a toddler. "I still have a photo of me trying to hold up a stringer of fish – the weight of them so heavy that it had my tiny frame bent sideways," he said. The writing obsession goes back a long way, too. "When I was little, my father had an old typewriter and I used to type stories on it for hours, even before I knew how to spell the words."

Joy brought his loves of fishing and writing to WCU in 2003 as an undergraduate majoring in literature. He abandoned an interest in studying marine biology on the coast when he "fell in love with the passion and communal spirit" of WCU's Department of English. "There is a familial bond within that department – one that I felt even from

professors whom I never had for class, and one that I still feel to this day," he said.

In particular, Joy said he benefited from having Deidre Elliott, director of the Professional Writing Program, as a mentor during his undergraduate days and while working on his graduate degree in professional writing. "Our friendship is one that has continued to grow since I left the university and one that I will cherish for the rest of my life," he said.

For her part, Elliott said she found Joy to be "just the sort of student a writing teacher appreciates. David already possessed a body of knowledge to draw upon for his writings – his love of fly fishing and all things fish," she said. "Also, he was ready to work hard and be persistent as he learned the craft of writing."

Now a staff reporter for the Crossroads Chronicle newspaper in Cashiers, Joy has completed a second book, "Ruth," a family memoir focusing on his grandmother. Two other books are in the works, including a nonfiction work about carp that will be "an in-depth look into one of America's most misunderstood game fish." The other book in progress is a collection of short stories, his first venture into fiction. "So far, the stories appear to have a common thread of older-generational traditions being lost within a modern technological world," Joy said. "That dichotomy seems to be something that is driving a lot of my work."