

Alumnus Profile

JIM BABB -



Television Executive

Photos by Hank Warren

James G. Babb, the handsome forty year old Vice-President For Television of the Jefferson Standard Broadcasting Company and General Manager of WBTV, came to Belmont Abbey College through a circuitous route of experiences.

Born in New York City, Jim came to live in Charlotte when he was still quite young. His mother wrote for the NEW YORK TIMES and his father for the Associated Press. However, this vibrant background in journalism did not initially direct his ambitions toward the same vocation. Instead he dreamed of entering the highly competitive world of professional football. To pursue that dream, he accepted a football scholarship at Newberry College, a Presbyterian School in South Carolina.

Fate had other plans. While there he seriously injured his back and thus abruptly destroyed his potential for a career in sports. He then entered UNC at Chapel Hill. His education was interrupted by the United States Army. Following his discharge in 1955, he returned to Charlotte and entered Charlotte College.

He joined WBT in 1956 as Publicity Supervisor. At that time several employees of WBT were attending classes at the Abbey. It was Julian Massey, his long-time friend, who persuaded him to enroll at Belmont Abbey College. He had started school in the first grade with Massey and, though they went their individual ways for several years, they ironically completed college together.

While working for WBT, Babb attended Belmont Abbey as a full-time student from 1957 through 1959 when he earned a

degree in Business and Economics. Jim commented: "The Abbey had a lot of veterans attending then and, since most of them worked, they were very serious about their education. We had a lot of fun, but there wasn't a lot of time for play. Father Cuthbert was the President then and also taught theology. He always tried to impress on the guys the importance of being a total man."

He really set a good tone for life."

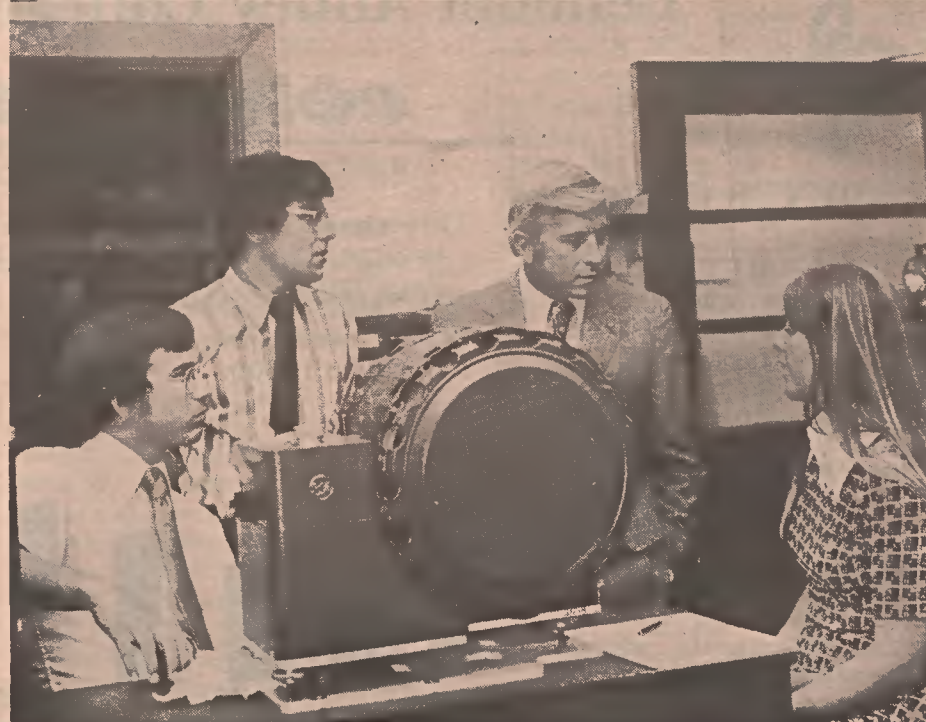
When questioned about college demonstrations, he said: "Again there wasn't a lot of time for demonstrations, but I do remember a mild protest over the food."

Babb reported he was quite impressed with the quality of the faculty and the Benedictines. He named three men at the Abbey who helped to shape his life. These were: Father Cuthbert, Father Matthew, and Jack Hanahan. He also remembered it was the time when Al McGuire was the Basketball Coach and the Crusaders achieved a great record.

After leaving the Abbey, Babb was appointed to the position of Sales Representative for WBT Radio. In 1963, he was advanced to General Sales Manager of Radio and in 1965 was named Assistant Vice-President. General Sales Manager of WBT. In 1970 he was transferred to Richmond, Va. where he became Vice-President and Managing Director of WWBT, a Jefferson Standard Affiliate.

In the spring of this year he was elevated to the position of Vice-President of the Jefferson Standard Broadcasting Company and General Manager of WBTV.

After having the opportunity to



Babb talks with a new employee, Sue Fisher. Frank Alloto, (Abbey '70) and David Lowe join the conversation.

be in his company for a brief time it isn't surprising that Jim Babb moved quickly through the ranks to the top position while still a young man. He is totally unpretentious and communicates easily with anyone. He has the ability to establish warm relationships quickly. A man who is vitally interested in the goodness of life, he believes one should work actively toward achieving a better goal for humanity.

Among his varied interests is politics. Babb remembered that when John Kennedy was running for the Presidency, Jim's immediate superior was supporting Nixon. He requested a leave of absence to work for Kennedy and received it. He said in some countries this would appear to be a strange dichotomy, but in this country it epitomizes our democratic process.

Believing in open discussion, Babb thinks the questions of drugs need to be resolved. He fears the danger of marijuana and the introduction it gives the user into a vague, non-disciplined world. Babb thinks any nation is flirting with disaster when there is a great breakdown of discipline.

Television is his forte and on the subject he is quite vocal. "Television has been an easy whipping boy, but I cannot accept the idea that it is responsible for some of the difficulties in this country. The medium has made it one world. I have five children, and they have grown up in a dominant television atmosphere. These children are a great deal more informed than I was at their time in life. Television has been given too little credit for helping to correct some of the social ills of this nation. The beauty of the medium is that we give an opportunity for all sides to be heard."

In the Charlotte area alone, WBTV has presented some 1,800 interviews to the general public on a wide variety of subjects. We have also presented 500-600 in depth interviews on various

subjects important to the public. Consequently, we feel we have caused the general public to be more aware of particular problems affecting their lives. We also attempt to formulate local programs that will be in the best interest of the community."

Ending the interview, Babb said the Abbey is extremely fortunate to have a man like Father John Bradley serving as President.

"Too bad we can't punch a mold and print a 100 more like him" Babb said moving away from his desk: "My only regret is not having an opportunity to contribute more to the Abbey. I feel I took away more than I gave."

James G. Babb is married to the former Mary Lou Davis. They are the parents of four daughters and one son.

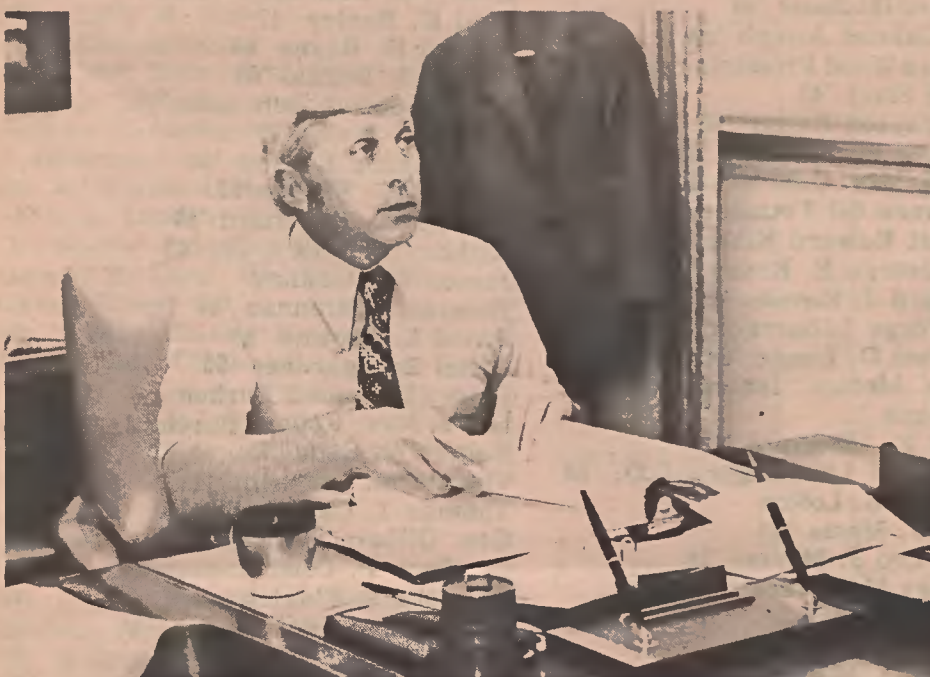
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Research Triangle near Raleigh.

He received a grant to develop computer programs for instruction in mathematics from this Center. Since his return to the college, he has agitated for an up-grading of the computer capability on campus and has been seeking financial aid to obtain a more sophisticated terminal. He has introduced special courses for students in the various disciplines to become familiar with the role of computers in today's automated society.

Apart from his monastic life of prayer and weekend parochial duties, the many demands upon him as a resident priest in Raphael Arthur dormitory, he has become involved in work with the Association for Retarded Children in Gaston County. He now serves as a member of its governing Board. He is presently engaged in organizing the churches of the county to become active in the Association's efforts to respond to the needs of retarded children.

To all of this Father Peter brings a quiet charm and the dedication of a man who sees God's work as truly his own.



Jim explains the large volume of information required by the FCC for a license renewal.