

# SPOTLIGHT



Abbot Walter Coggin, O.S.B.

## Loved by Students and College

There is no member of the college community better known or more loved than Abbot Walter Coggin, O.S.B. He wears a warm smile for students and colleagues alike and is a great sport about the good-natured ribbing he receives from his many friends and admirers.

Abbot Walter was born in the last capital of the Confederacy, Richmond, Virginia--the Civil War had, of course, been concluded by this time. He attended Benedictine High there for two years but then the family moved to Los Angeles and he completed his schooling at Loyola High. In 1934 he entered Belmont Abbey Junior College and proceeded to distinguish himself in football as a guard -- earning the nickname of "Coal Car" because of his irresistible charges through the opposing line to tackle ballcarriers. He was also a stellar pitcher for the baseball team. In addition to achieving excellence in academics, he participated in dramatics, the chorus, and the "Piedmont Club." A glance at the Spire for that year reveals a snapshot of a slender young student with a great shock of black hair -- Abbot Walter grudgingly admits that since then what

he has lost from on top he has made up for in the midsection!

After receiving the associate of arts degree he decided to become a member of the Benedictine community and was sent to St. Vincent's Archabbey in Latrobe, Pa. to make his novitiate year. Next he travelled to Atchison, Kan. to pursue the bachelor's degree at St. Benedict's College.

Upon his return to Belmont, Walter began his studies for the priesthood at the Abbey seminary. This was to stretch over the next four years during which time he also acted as prefect in the dormitory, taught mathematics, and coached the prep school football team, the "Ramblers." He was ordained by Bishop Peter Ireton in Richmond in 1943. He continued to instruct in the college, at Mercy School of Nursing in Charlotte, and at Sacred Heart College. He also filled the post of Chaplain to the students of the Abbey. Each summer he went up to Washington, D.C. to do graduate work in philosophy at the Catholic University of America. In the fall of 1948 he was awarded the Master's degree.

Eventually he obtained permission from Abbot

Vincent Taylor to attend the University as a full-time student, and in 1954 he completed the Ph.D. in philosophy. It is curious however, that his thesis, St. Thomas' Concept of the Will in Personality Development, has never been in heavy demand by Abbey students. Abbot Walter is a member of the Catholic Philosophical Association and served as president of the North Carolina Philosophical Association.

In 1956 he was chosen by his fellow monks to be the Vicar of Abbot Vincent with full responsibility for the affairs of the monastery and, upon the Abbot's death in 1959, he was elected his successor. He had the rare privilege of attending and voting with the bishops at the Second Vatican Council at all of its sessions between 1962 and 1965. It was during these prolonged stays in the Eternal City that he acquired a discriminating taste for veal parmigian and chicken cacciatore -- to be savored with a glass of Frascati wine! His interest in photography was honed at the Council and he returned to the U.S. with truly remarkable color slides the rich ceremonial of the historic meeting as well as views of the magnificent churches and landscapes of Italy.

From 1964 to 1967 Abbot Walter held the positions of both Chancellor and President of the college. It was during his tenure as superior that the college embarked on an ambitious 'brick and mortar' program which witnessed the construction of the library, the three dormitories, the student dining hall, the science building, and the Wheeler athletic center. Alumni of twenty years ago who return to the campus are astounded to see the transformation which has taken place.

After exercising the Abbatial charge for ten years, he decided that it was now time to turn over the cares and concerns to another and return to the more peaceful business of teaching philosophy. This he has done for the past five years and his courses are always given to an overflow crowd of students, to whom he also offers himself as counsellor and confidant. He has also served as moderator of the Abbey Radio in recent years, and his current avocation is the assembly of quality "hi-fi" stereo systems.

## Bradley Comments On Lay Board

# Expects Major Change By Fall

by Jessie Brackett and Anthony DeCristofaro

"When I became president of Belmont Abbey College, I set four goals which I believed I should try very hard to achieve," explained Father Bradley.

The first of these objectives was to establish as clearly as possible a consensus on the identity, goals, and purposes of the college. Secondly, educational consultants were called in to examine whether or not Belmont Abbey should become co-educational. Third, Fr. Bradley felt that a start should be made on the development of the 500-plus acres owned by the Southern Benedictine Society to provide long-range endowment for the College and funds for other charitable purposes as the Benedictines may decide.

"Fourth and most important, I wanted to see changes implemented in the governing structure from the present structure to a lay-participant board of trustees. A lay-participant board of trustees would bring men and women whose experience and financial resources can benefit the College greatly.

"A college like this, with over a \$2 million budget, is a sophisticated enterprise. We need people who can contribute different kinds of expertise in running the college. The time has come when the college needs this type of Board of Trustees," stated Fr. Bradley.

"However, more important, these men and women could contribute to the policies of the college. Oftentimes inbreeding -- the entire selection of board members from men in the same profession -- poses problems. People who are educated similarly and faced with the same problems tend to draw their knowledge from the same reservoir. A Board, which is comprised of lay persons, would have a wider background of knowledge from which to draw the answers to questions facing the Abbey during these complex times in which we live. The diversity of the Board members is important in establishing a healthy college atmosphere. Some of the trustees should be civic leaders who are capable of relating the College to the local community. It is said that Trustees should provide three 'W's' -- work, wealth, and wisdom. Financial contribution is not one of the most important reasons for the transition. The college needs men and women of expertise who can funnel objective viewpoints into the college policies."

Shall we get the type of board of trustees which is being discussed? "The question of transition to a lay-participant board of trustees is one of the longest running issues ever," explained Fr. Bradley. "It is a topic which has been more thoroughly discussed than any other issue.

"However, when you address the question there is one thing you must realize -- the decision to change can only be made by the Benedictine community.

"My belief is that the Benedictines understand the reasons this change in structure is needed but some feel that there is a danger of losing the Catholic, Benedictine identity of this institution."

For all practical purposes, Fr. Bradley and Abbot Jude have reached a meeting of the minds. "Realistically, I would expect that by fall we will have the lay board. It is not a new issue and no doubt will be settled this semester," said Fr. Bradley.

A new board will not automatically solve all the problems a private college encounters. But it will supply the college with efficient methods of facing them.

## A.P.O. Alumni Brothers!

Alpha Phi Omega, Rho Mu chapter will celebrate its tenth anniversary in February 1977. Preparations are underway for a banquet. All alumni brothers are requested to send their current address:

Alpha Phi Omega, PM Chapter  
Care of P.O. Box 135  
Belmont Abbey College  
Belmont, North Carolina 28012