

# PERSONALITIES

## WROV DJs keep small station big

By DAN SMITH  
Staff writer

It was about halfway through the first rock 'n' roll decade when WROV discovered a young wild man named Jivin' Jackson and turned him loose on the teen-agers of the Roanoke Valley.

Jivin' became the first legitimate rock 'n' roll personality — a genuine celebrity — in the Roanoke Valley. Lendy's on Lee Highway built a booth over its drive-in for Jivin', so the kids could see him while listening to him as they cruised.

Jivin' left in the late '50s, but the standard was set and there came a succession of stars who kept up WROV's image as the station of the personality, people who were likely to say or do anything on the air.

For the first 10 years of its existence, WROV, which was founded in 1946, was one of the bunch. Jivin' helped define the station as the rock 'n' roll place to be.

Though WROV is as small as a commercial station can be in terms of wattage (1,000 during the day, 250 at night), it has been a dominant force in the Roanoke market for nearly 25 years. Bart Prater, who has been at WROV for 13 years and in 1975 was named the International Billboard Disc Jockey of the Year, said, "It is a David and Goliath situation, only we're David even when we're Goliath."

In last year's Arbitron ratings, WROV was an embarrassing fifth among the valley's stations after a near permanent place at or near the



**Voices from the past:** Fred Frelantz (top) and Jack Fisher

top, but rather than die there, WROV has fought back. Its direction has changed because all those baby boom teen-age fans it accumulated over the years have grown up and radio has changed considerably with the advent of FM rock. The quality of AM radio's sound is not the equal of FM stereo, regardless of the personalities.

As "The Station You've Grown Up With" WROV appears to be back in good graces, though the age of its audience has changed considerably. WXLK (K-92) has the teen-agers now, but a survey paid for by WROV shows the station is again No. 2 overall (behind WXLK) and is first among those in the 25-52 age group, its target.

WROV's DJs have changed with the music they play. No longer are they the live-wire, high-velocity crazies the teen-agers love. They are calmer, more informative. Still, they retain the personality approach.

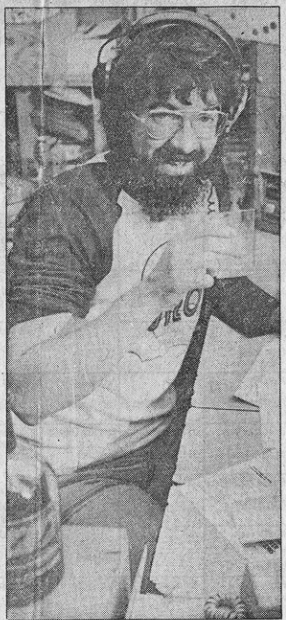
The Big Three at WROV — Prater in the evenings, Barry Michaels during midday and Rob O'Brady in the morning — fit the pattern of the earlier personalities, the only difference being that, like the audience, they are grown-ups with a rock 'n' roll history.

These guys are aware of the tradition at WROV.

They know about people like these:

● Ron Sunshine was immensely popular in the early 1960s, and is now a corporate troubleshooter;

● Jack Fisher and Fred Frelantz



**Rob O'Brady:** He once became progressively drunk on the air (in photo above) to dramatize the danger of drinking and driving during a holiday weekend.