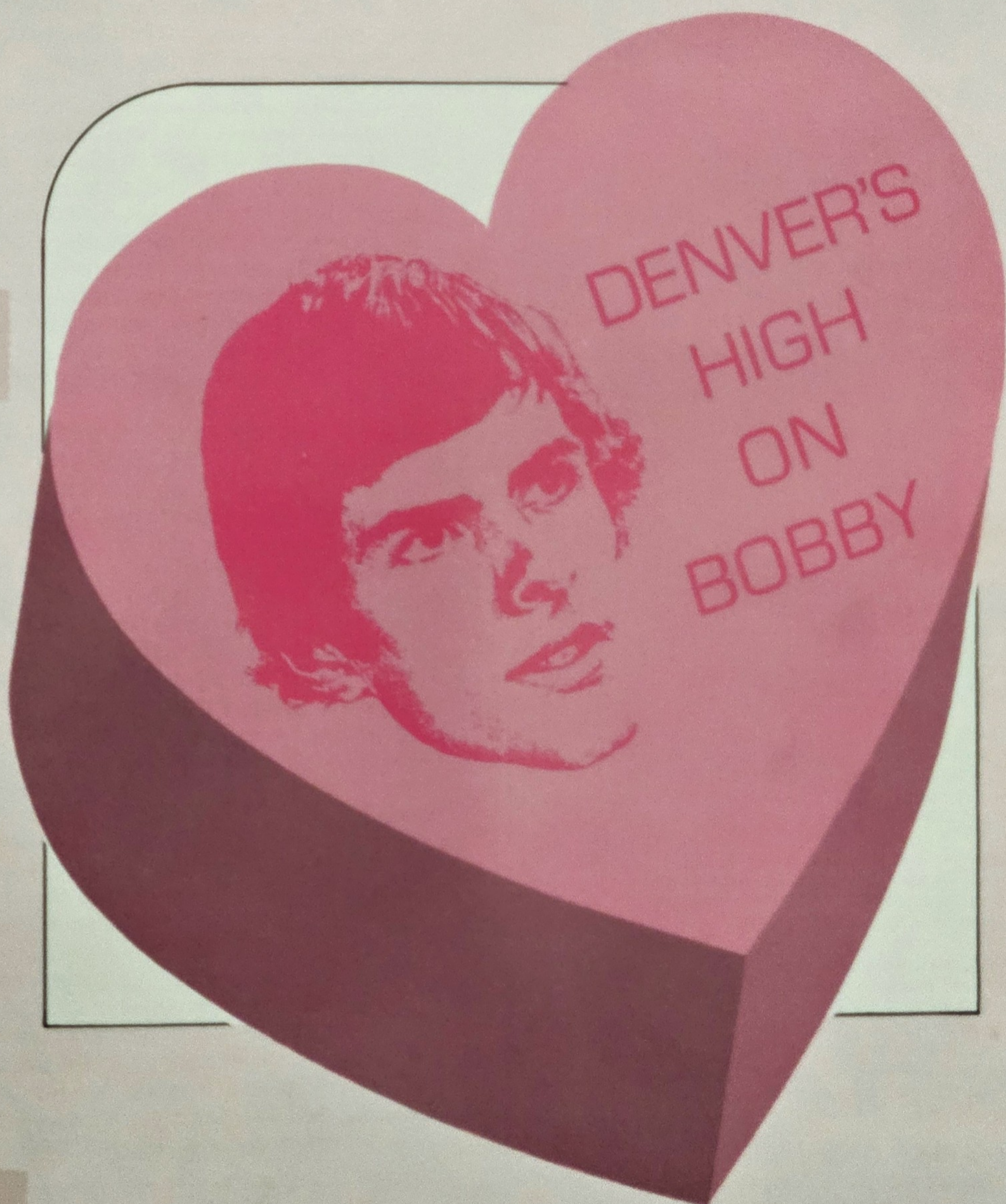


the Christian Athlete

February, 1977



BARON OF THE BONNIES

by Richard Adamonis

On the door of their dormitory room at St. Bonaventure (N.Y.) University is written: Brother Essie "Bee" Hollis—Brother Jim "Bo" Baron.

Walk into their room and it is alive with a bubbling of laughter and sense of personal closeness. Inspirational quotes, posters, and a copy of John Wooden's famous Pyramid of Success adorn the walls.

Sharing a room, a friendship, and now the responsibilities of co-captaincy of the basketball team, Bee and Bo.

Jim Baron directs St. Bonaventure with a fiery deliberateness and sparkling, unselfish play which characterize his outlook on leadership and life.

"We're not only concerned with the team's performance now," Baron said. "We're trying to give these guys some spirit to be carried on through their careers and their lives. We want them to hold on to something from this experience."

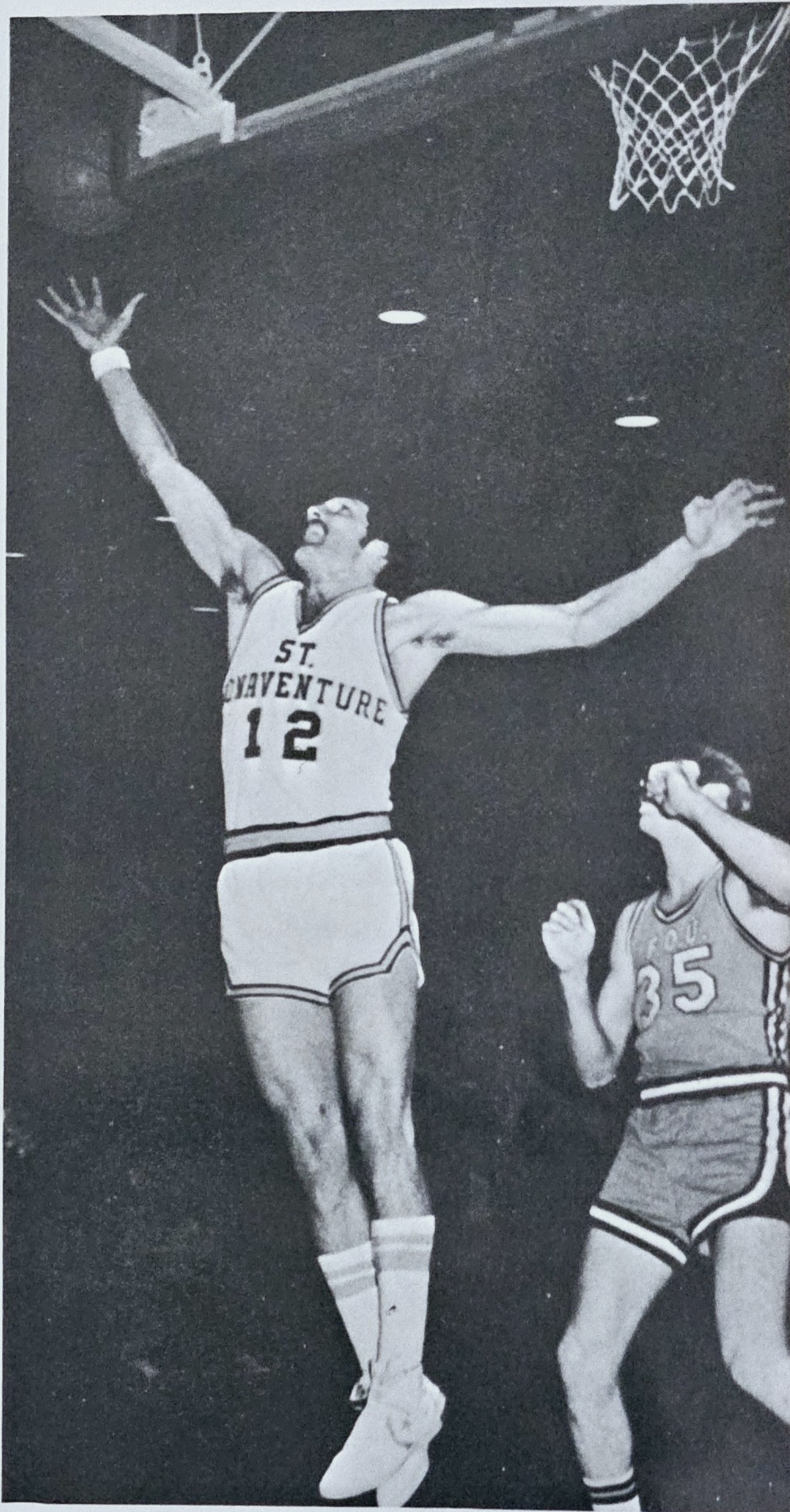
As well as providing mature leadership, Baron has brought three years of basketball excellence to the Bonnie's. On offense, his passing and clutch rebounding have contributed to Bonnie success, but even more intense has been his hard-nosed defensive play. He usually draws the duty of defending the opposition's best guard.

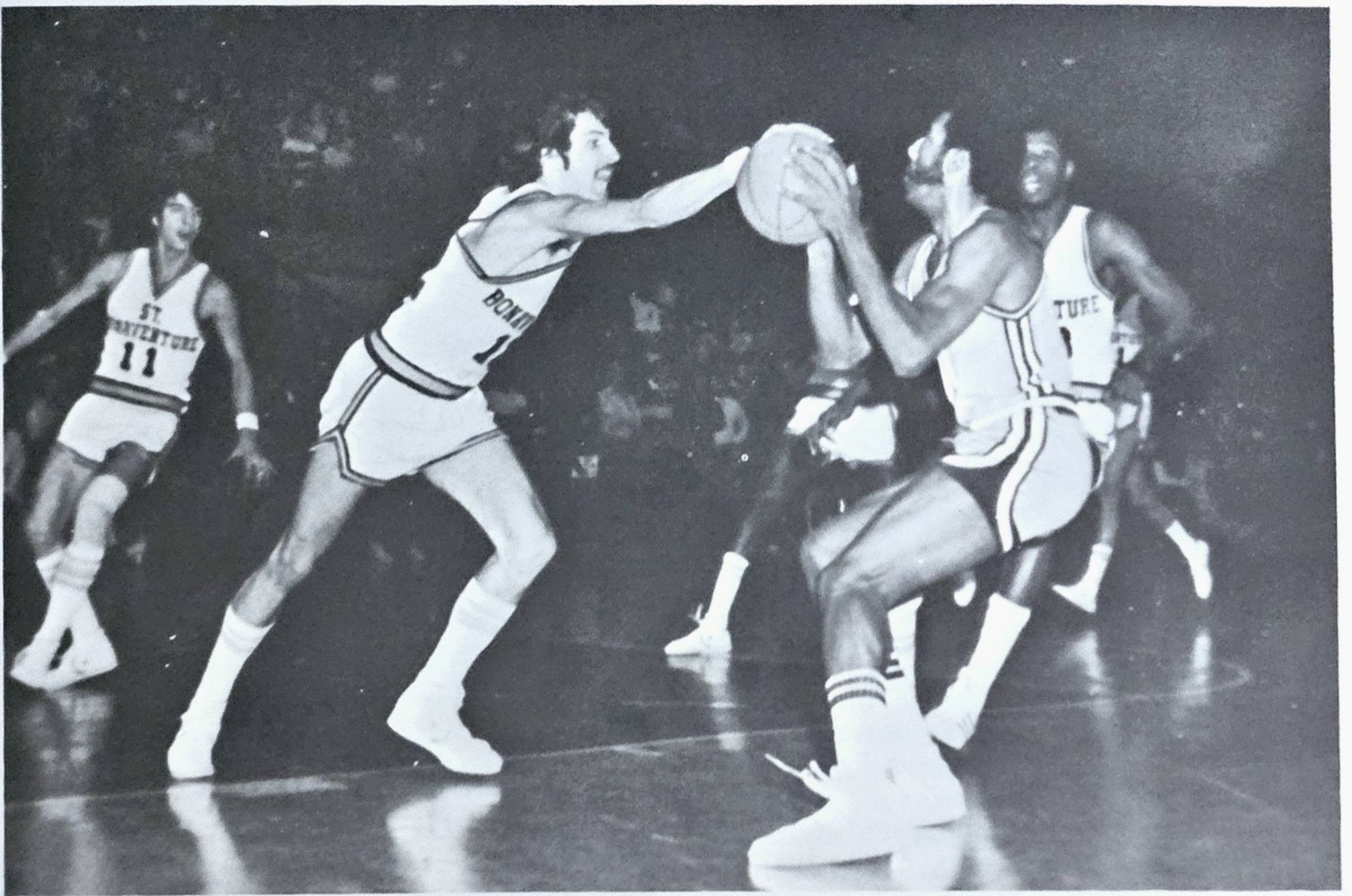
"Jimmy's knowledge, ability, and experience will be a big factor on this season's team," says coach Jim Satalin. "He's our leader on and off the court. I call him the Pete Rose of college basketball because of his never-ending hustle and enthusiasm. He gives all he has to everything he does."

Born in Brooklyn, the 6-2 senior guard was a member of the last graduating class of St. John's Prep. At St. John's, Baron led the Indians with a 21-point career average and outstanding play which attracted a host of college scouts.

Deciding to sit out one year to organize his thoughts and direct his future, Baron busied himself with basketball and teaching.

"I instructed students in physical education at Brooklyn's St. Cecilia's Grammar School,"





Baron snuffs attempted shot of a Fairleigh Dickinson University player; rates performance of an aspiring cager during a clinic session of the Great Valley Social Action Program he coordinates

Baron said. "After teaching for a year I decided that I would like to make a career out of helping kids in this way.

"I chose Bonaventure because it had what I'd never had before—beautifully peaceful surroundings and lots of clean, open land.

"In Brooklyn, I hung out with bad crowds, and we kept ourselves busy by looking for trouble. It was a rough experience growing up in the projects with gangs, drugs, and crime nearly everywhere, but I found an escape from all this in basketball.

"I guess I wanted a new start in life, with new people and a new location. I found what I was looking for—and much more—at Bonaventure."

Besides academics, basketball, and a full social life, Baron coordinates the Great Valley Social Action Program, which is a delinquent youth development activity for boys from 13 to 16 years old. Jim takes volunteers from St. Bonaventure to the camp in Great Valley, N.Y.

"I enjoy being with young kids who have problems because I know what it's like to be lost, to be somewhere and nowhere at the same time," Baron said. "Many of the kids are from New York City where they were involved with all kinds of wrong scenes.

"My escape was basketball and a few great people, like my family, who believed in me.

Most of these kids have no escape and no one to believe in them."

"The fact that Jimmy came from an inner-city environment gives him an insight into what it takes to understand the kids here," says Donald Kurth, camp director. "He knows their problems, can read their thoughts, anticipate their actions and, most of all, he can communicate with kids who make it a rule not to trust or be responsive to many people.

"This program with the Bonaventure students could easily have fallen through, but Jimmy's durability as the coordinator and his desire to make the program a success keeps it going.

"Perhaps more than anything else, he's a symbol for the kids. They respect him because he is an informed, concerned city-born person who has done well with his life. And the fact that he plays basketball really helps. The kids respect good athletes, especially those from the city."

Basketball, travel, people, and more basketball constitute Baron's summers. On the road as a basketball camp counselor, Baron has frequented Notre Dame, Providence, Poncono Invitational, and Jack Curran's Camp, meeting Digger Phelps, Dave Gavitt, Adrian Dantley, and other popular coaches and players.

Among Jim's interests has been the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. And Jim's faith



is an important part of his life and the basketball team's corporate life.

"I like to be by myself before a game so that I can meditate and pray," he said. "I go into myself very deeply. At times when you're excited about playing ball you can lose touch with the things and people that are really important.

"When you're playing ball or dealing with any kind of pressure, it's good that you have someone else to support you. I know that I am not alone. If God is with you, then you have it all—strength, security, faith, and peace of mind. By the time I get out on the court I'm toned up to take on whatever comes at me. And my mind can push my body to its highest potential."

"Before each game Essie and I give out papers to the team. The papers contain inspirational sayings. Each player reads his to himself, then we turn out the lights and let each

individual think for a few minutes about what those words mean to him.

"This lets us know what we have to do. It puts our minds in a peaceful, ready state. We call it 'the word'. It's good for what our team goal is: unity. And this is what religion is talking about. It's unity, it's love, it's being one. One together in ourselves and, in the long run, one with God."

After graduation, Baron would like to teach and coach.

"I know basketball well and I enjoy working with people," said Baron. "Most of all, I believe there is a purpose in athletics. Many people can find themselves through sports.

"A number of coaches have helped me through the years. If I can help some young kids as other coaches have helped me, then I'll feel that my life is worthwhile and I'm serving a real purpose."