

When John Campbell moved to New York in September of last year to assume the post of president of the ABC Owned Television Stations, the weather was a great deal warmer and the sidewalks considerably firmer under foot. But now that he is well into his first New York winter, the native Southern Californian still walks the near-mile from his upper East Side home to his office at ABC in midtown every morning. He says he doesn't mind the weather, explaining: "I lived in Chicago a few years."

Mr. Campbell is in his office by 8:30 in the morning because he likes to put in an hour of paper work before the phone starts to ring. With two of the five ABC-owned stations in California, Mr. Campbell is guaranteed a few peaceful hours by virtue of the time difference. "It's a great advantage to live on the West Coast—those three hours. If anybody wants to talk to you they really have to plan. It should be considered a fringe benefit," says Mr. Campbell.

Mr. Campbell first joined ABC on the Coast 14 years ago when he went to work in the sales department of KABC-TV Los Angeles. He left for WKB-TV Chicago in March 1964 and served as general sales manager of that station.

"I got there in February," he relates. "It seemed like the worst winter they ever had, but then every winter seems like the worst they ever had."

After two Chicago winters, Mr. Campbell was promoted to vice president and general manager of WXYZ-TV Detroit. It was during the two years in Detroit that he made his reputation for successful programing. He was responsible for revamping the station's schedule and increasing the amount of locally produced, live programing. He replaced a total of 14 different programs. He is particularly pleased with *The Morning Show*, which he describes as bringing in "small numbers," but "successful in terms of community involvement." The numbers as a whole were good by local program standards: "We generally doubled our audience in local programing in all areas."

It was in Detroit, too, that Mr. Campbell established himself as a firm believer in the broadcast editorial. The network and Mr. Campbell both are proud of the mass inoculation campaign carried on by the station in the fall of 1966. That campaign was believed to have staved off a measles epidemic of major proportions in the Detroit area. "End measles Sunday," as the project was called, ended with the inoculation of 175,000 children in one day. Wxyz-TV rallied over 500 volunteers to man 150 clinics.

After the immediate danger passed, the station continued in its fight for a

His interest is local programing in five cities

bill which would provide for the inoculation of public school children. Mr. Campbell ran a heavy saturation of editorials endorsing the bill, and final passage was won after an eight-month hassle in the state legislature.

For its trouble, the station won the National Headliners Award for "outstanding television editorials." Mr. Campbell's editorial series also won awards from the American Medical Association, the Baptist Foundation and the Mary and Albert Lasker Award.

In January 1968, Mr. Campbell returned to KABC-TV as vice president and general manager. In Los Angeles, too, he made full use of editorials: "And we encouraged rebuttals to a point where there were weeks where there were

more rebuttals than editorials."

Mr. Campbell was born in California, about 60 miles north of Bakersfield, in a small town called Porterville in 1920. He graduated from the local high school and briefly attended Bakersfield Junior College.

During World War II, Mr. Campbell served in the Marines, and he was stationed at Pearl Harbor during the Japanese attack. He became a fighter pilot serving in the South Pacific. Mr. Campbell was recalled in 1952 and served as a helicopter pilot during the Korean conflict. Altogether, he has logged over 4,000 hours of flying.

On June 24, 1945, he married Aline Dennison. He has to look up the date and says he forgets his anniversary all the time. Nodding to his secretary, he says, "She's supposed to keep me from forgetting."

That same year Mr. Campbell joined the Rexall Drug Co. where he held various executive positions in merchandising and marketing. When he returned from Korea in 1954, he rejoined Rexall as assistant to the president.

The switch from the drug business to broadcasting took place in 1955. Mr. Campbell attributes the change to a number of acquaintances he had at Metromedia-owned KTTV(TV) Los Angeles. "Most of those friends are now general managers of other Metromedia stations or in other groups," he adds.

Today, in managing five stations instead of just one at a time, Mr. Campbell says he has five times as many problems. But he is still very much interested in local programing. He is busy seeking out programs that can be developed locally by ABC-owned stations and distributed to some or all of the other owned stations. One such project is *Anniversary Game*, due to start Jan. 27 on all five ABC stations. The quiz show is being produced by San Francisco station KGO-TV.

A 90-minute information program called *The Morning Show*, much along the same lines as the show Mr. Campbell had such success with in Detroit, will also be started Jan. 27 on ABC stations in Los Angeles, Chicago and New York. Produced in Los Angeles, *The Morning Show* will not be distributed in San Francisco or Detroit because they already have successful local programing in the morning. Mr. Campbell calls the new morning show "a *Today* show in reverse, coming from the West Coast." It will run 90 minutes and will include 15-minute local news inserts.

Like many successful businessmen, Mr. Campbell spends a lot of his "spare time" at his job. "I play golf infrequently," he says. "I watch television. I wear out dials." His one real hobby is painting: "When I was in Chicago the weather was so bad I took lessons."

Week's Profile



John Edward Campbell—president, ABC-Owned Television Stations; b. Aug. 6, 1920, Porterville, Calif.; joined Rexall Drug Co., 1945, became assistant to president, 1954; joined ABC-owned KABC-TV Los Angeles as account executive, promoted to sales manager; moved to WKB-TV Chicago, 1964, as general sales manager; named VP and general manager, WXYZ-TV Detroit, 1966; returned to KABC-TV as VP-general manager, 1968; named president, ABC-owned TV stations, September, 1968; m. Aline Dennison, June 24, 1945; children—Judith, 22, recently married to dental student at University of Detroit; hobbies—painting, golf, watching TV.