By JIM McDOUGAL
Sports Writer

Bill Ellenbogen is like today's typical professional athlete. The 6-6, 250-pound offensive guard for the New York Giants prefers the small town atmosphere of Blacksburg to the glitter and glamour of the Big Apple.

Ellenbogen a fourth-year pro out of Virginia Tech, is a native of the New York City area. Playing in the National Football League has given him a chance to get a glimpse of the almost make believe world of the jet set. And there is no doubt about it, Ellenbogen says, Southwest Virginia is a better place to live.

The gregarious, 36-year-old man backs up those feelings with action. Besides planning to resume his studies this spring quarter at Virginia Tech toward a masters degree in physiology and anatomy (not exactly your typical jock curriculum), he recently bought a house on Roanoke Street in Blacksburg.

"I'm thinking of making Blacksburg my home," Ellenbogen says. "I enjoy the area. I think it's a fantastic place. A lot of people have ambitions of being successful and living in a place like New York someday. Well, after having seen enough different locales to be able to make a judgment I think I can say that Blacksburg is the place for me."

Ellenbogen, who lives with his parents in New Rochelle while in New York, enjoyed his best professional season last year, despite a not too promising start. After going through the entire training camp he was released with the promise from Giants' Coach Bill Arnberg that if the need for an offensive lineman arose he would be recalled.

Receiving a special five-day tryout from the Winnipeg Blue Bombers of the Canadian Football League, Ellenbogen was on the verge of signing a contract when the Giants beckoned. Starting guard Al Simpson had been injured in the second week of the campaign and Amsbarger needed to keep his promise.

Playing on specialty teams for two weeks, Ellenbogen started the fifth game against the Dallas Cowboys. Simpson, now recovered, was back in the lineup the next week and the two were splitting time by the end of the season.

"In our offense the guards brought the plays in from the bench. I ended up with substantial playing time and felt like I had a pretty good season," Ellenbogen says.

Whenever asked what it's like playing for a team with a 2-12 record, which the Giants compiled, the optimistic man admits, "I'd like to be a winner, but I just enjoy the chance to compete. The main difference between the victors and the losers in the NFL is attitude. The good teams are motivated and ready to play, and the bad teams aren't."

Although he hasn't yet signed a contract for next year Ellenbogen is confident about the future. "We're still negotiating, but I expect to sign any time now," he says.

"It's difficult to predict how I'll do from one year to the next. The only thing I can reasonably be sure of is that the new league is a bad rap."

Washington Redskins because the Bells had breeched his contract by failing to pay some of the money owed him.

He was released by Washington on the next to the last cut because Redskins Coach George Allen said he was too young and didn't have enough experience. "I was going to quit football, finish my masters and teach after that," he remembers.

Fate disrupted those plans, though. A call came from the NFL's Shreveport Steamers, where former Tech Assistant Coach Marshall Taylor was the head man and Brascher the defensive coordinator, and Ellenbogen signed with his sixth pro team. He started nine games there until the league folded.

In Ellenbogen's opinion the press had a lot to do with the demise of the WFL. "The press is everything in sports," he insists. "The WFL folded because the press failed to give it adequate coverage. The press acts as a mouth piece for the NFL owners and it gave the new league a bad rap."

Why did Ellenbogen keep going through all that adversity long after most people would have given up?

"I'm a sports addict," he says. "I enjoy physical competition. I get high on sports; I really do. Everyday I'm down at the gym playing basketball and lifting weights. "When you get down to it, what life is all about is doing what you enjoy. I enjoy sports, and the best way for me to remain active in them is to be a professional athlete. I'll get as much money as I can; I'm no fool. But I don't look at what I do as a job. If I did I wouldn't have played semi-pro that one year. I could have made more money doing something else," he says.

It's been a tough road in the NFL for Bill Ellenbogen. He's a success now, and fairly secure in his role with the Giants, at least until the competition starts up again this summer when training camp opens.