In the late fifties, Lorenzo Milam, a product of the Pacifica group, yielded to an impulse to create radio in another way and after several years in Spain found himself with a station in Seattle which he named KRAB, and which he built himself, keeping costs to a minimum. Milam also had a hand in the creating of KBOO in Portland, KDNA in St. Louis, and KTAO in Los Gatos. KDNA in St. Louis is notable for my purposes in that it is currently the only station in the country which has taken the idea of community to its logical conclusion. KDNA started out as a commercial station, but after several months of struggle gained enough listener support so that it was possible to eliminate all commercial contracts. The station staff operates as a community, all living in a house in the ghetto of St. Louis. The community living aspect of the station instills some conflicts on the people who are involved in it, but it does build an interaction between living and communications. For the staff the radio is not a special thing, an idol. Instead, it is a responsibility, at times a chore, and a time obligation. Listeners provide the $4,000 a month it takes to operate the station and support the staff. Perhaps the most important aspect of the station is its open mike. A drunk who hangs out around the station came in and introduced a few of his favorite records in a slurred voice that was barely understandable, and two young black girls who were walking along in front of the station were invited to speak on the air when they asked if they really could. They spoke about Angela Davis and left. The element of ego involvement is reduced to a minimum in that spoken programs are scheduled randomly throughout the day as are any of the programs which are received from the Krab Nebula, a loose association of the stations Milam started, and WYSO, in Yellow Springs, Ohio. If someone wants to go on the air, they may phone up in advance, or they may just show up and knock on the door. The radio station is the voice of whoever cares to speak, which is about as far as you can go.

KTAO in Los Gatos is a commercial station which is supplemented by listener support to a program guide. The station is operated primarily by volunteers which keeps operating costs down to about $3,500 per month for 24 hour operation. KTAO is unique in that the management has sold 25% ownership for $2500 to an association of volunteers who operate the station. In addition, Milam, who formerly managed the station 24 hours a day, has turned over the responsibility for programming from 6pm to 6am to the Volunteer Association. This sets up a schizoid situation similar to the early days of a Philadelphia station, WDAS, which programmed classical music during the day and rock at night.

An interview program on the station which dealt with educational experiments has attempted to receive funds from the Los Gatos city government for the establishment of a community resource network which would make available the volunteer talents of anyone in the community who cared to share his talents with another individual. This is significant in that city tax funds would be supporting an independent educational resource, and for the first time a commercial station would be in the position of serving the community with a resource exchange beyond lost-dog announcements and ride-requests.

Jeff Smith

For those of us who grew up before the great grey eye of television came to watch over us all — AM radio was the be-all and end-all of our lives. Late at night, with the tiny speaker under the pillow, listening to the music of Chicago, or the jazz of New Orleans, or the naked brothel sex voices out of Miami, Two or three in the morning — and there, transformed into a wandering wave into our ear — the sounds of a dozen cities; flooding into us through cwes and trees and bushes, distorted (slightly) by the Sporadic-E Layer, which did nothing to harm (by its distortion) the power of distance. Radio was an early (and faithful) lover to those of us in the prime period of our lives.

L. Milam