

The
Secret
Mountain

LAB NOTES

*"When work is done
and credit is not taken
people say 'we did it'."*

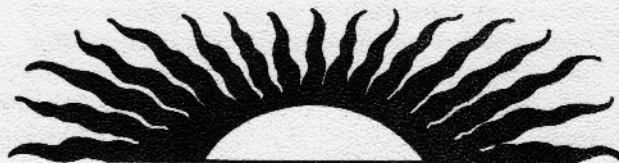
—Lao Tzu

VOL. 1 NO. 1

APRIL 4, 1975 Year of the Hare.

RAW DATA

- NAME OF EXPERIMENTER:** Secret Mountain Laboratory, Inc.;
- NAME OF PROJECT:** Self-managing commercial broadcast facility;
- PURPOSE OF PROJECT:** To determine if commercial broadcasting is necessarily a dehumanizing process;
- APPARATUS:** KSML, 101.7 MHz, one kilowatt FM;
- LOCATION OF STUDIO:** 8401 North Lake Boulevard, Kings Beach, California;
- LOCATION OF TOWER:** Brockway Summit, seven miles SE of Truckee, California;
- ELEVATION OF STUDIO:** 6235 feet above sea level;
- ELEVATION OF TOWER:** 7360 feet above sea level;
- COVERAGE:** Variable due to nature of terrain and FM radio waves; covers entire Tahoe Basin, Truckee, Donner, Sierraville, Blairsden, Quincy, and other Sierra communities; also portions of Carson City and the Comstock; presently on Teleprompter Cable System with more to come;
- MODE OF EXPERIMENTATION:** Continuous free-form broadcasting of music, information, opinion, drama, comedy, commercial announcements and a few other things as yet unclassifiable;
- POTENTIAL:** Distribution of marketable segments of daily and weekly programming to participating radio stations; recreation and experimentation for visiting professionals.



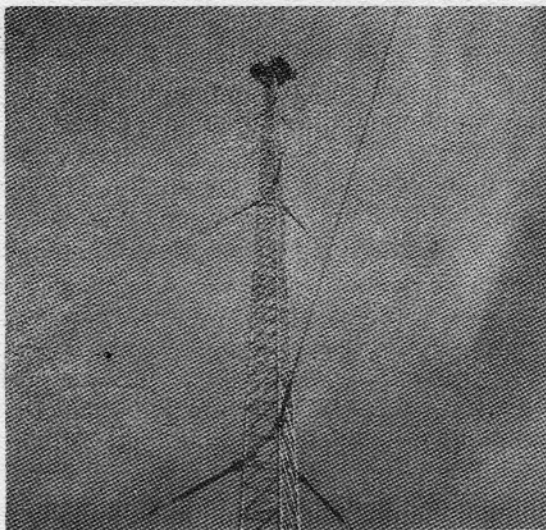
INTRODUCTION

In this first number of the Secret Mountain Lab Notes we're going to acquaint you with a little of what we are. Those readers familiar with KSML should know that the Secret Mountain Laboratory is the group of men and women who run the radio station, as both a service to their community and a means of expressing their own joie de vivre. These two functions are usually complementary. The Sierra Nevadas, with their inspirational backdrop and resources for vigorous relaxation to offset the frenzied pace of electronic communications, came to be the location of the project. As for the purpose of the project, the Secret Mountain Laboratory was originally conceived as an installation free from competitive pressures where the full potential of commercial radio could be investigated. In addition, there were plans for syndication, conferences, and an extensive program of personnel exchange with sister stations; these have thus far been assigned priorities secondary to the task of working out the obvious problems inherent in a policy of virtual consensus management. But the more we work together, the more we have to offer, and if you'd like to fully understand what that is, read on.

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LAB HISTORY

Searching for the source of an idea can be a thankless as well as difficult task — ideas come from everywhere, and it's dangerous to say they belong to this person or to that corporation. On paper, the Secret Mountain Laboratory is a legal entity, and by the shore of Lake Tahoe it is a physical facility; these relationships can be traced without too much trouble. It's relatively easy to figure out where the hardware comes from, and with access to the proper data banks it's even possible to determine the hometowns of every one of the men and women who operate the facility. But the idea that binds them together in a living and working situation goes beyond money or hardware or cities. Nobody really knows where it came from, but we can look briefly at some of the places visited by the idea that became the Secret Mountain Laboratory.



Topping the Tower.

In the beginning was Dwight Tindle, owner of and announcer at the fabulously successful KDKB-AM & FM in Phoenix. He'd already spent some time vacationing at Tahoe and perhaps even entertained a fantasy of owning a radio station to serve such an inspiring location, but such notions were no doubt discouraged by the cold morning light of economics and other small-market realities. One hot summer night Dwight was sitting around his Phoenix home with a few friends when who should join the company but Mescalito . . . an old friend, to be sure, but

his presence and the chemistry and backgrounds of the particular people there that night made it inevitable that a marathon discussion of radio should ensue — and no ordinary bull session it was. Historical background was provided by Larry Yurdin, noted media pollinator, who was at the time researching a book surveying the development of alternative media in this country. Other listeners pitched into Larry's narrative, adding to the momentum, until Larry found himself so stoked on the past that he was catapulted into the future, declaring "Those Were the Seventies". Ah yes, the good old future. Instant Communications. The Age of Electronic Community. There was a pause . . . Larry went to Houston to put Pacifica's KPFT back on its feet, Dwight set off in search of capital, and the others went off to think and live their separate lives. And over the next three years what had emerged as an idealistic, never-implemented promotional scheme for KDKB evolved into the Secret Mountain Laboratory.

PART II

Just before Christmas of 1973 an advance party of explorers journeyed from Phoenix to Lake Tahoe. Losing a member here, gaining one there, they moved cautiously over the mountain passes, learning all about tire chains in the process and the unpredictability of the Sierra weather. They had set their eyes



FAMILY

Dwight Tindle, David Fenimore, Melissa Jones, John Apicella, Bill Ashford, Reno X. Nevada, Buffalo Chip, Don Gray, Bob O'Lear, Tom McKoy, Michael Sava, Tom O'Hara, Peter Laufer, Curt Holzer, Jerry Chamkis, Patti Amptman, Pieter Fischer, Barry Everitt, Chan Laughlin, Bob Hayes, Kathy Keely . . .



KSML sales gang divvies up the first month's take.

COMMERCIAL PRODUCTION

At the Lab, we call produced spots Commercial Product . . . for a simple reason: for the most part, commercials are just so much quackery.

The prevailing attitude in the ad industry is that people have to be tricked, cajoled, browbeaten and brainwashed into buying a product or patronizing a club or restaurant. We feel that such a crass attitude is not only inhuman, it is also less successful than a pleasant, straightforward approach.

All production on the Lab's station, KSML, is produced at the Lab. All copy is carefully studied to eliminate subliminal urgings and other psychological attempts to affect the listener's unconscious mind. We direct our commercial messages to the listener's conscious mind and refuse to trick them or frighten them or shame them into supporting our advertisers.

Despite this unaggressive approach, we have been incredibly successful in getting the sponsor's message out to the people . . . Businessmen who advertise on KSML and avail themselves of the services of the Product department have had great success and very positive response from their customers.

KSML's listeners appreciate the soft-sell. We've received many letters and calls thanking us for the quality of our commercials . . . and when was the last time you heard about people going out of their way to complement a commercial?

Of course, we have our occasional clunker, but when we blow it it's usually because of a bad joke or inoperative grammar . . . not because of factual exaggeration or insulting copy.

Our goal is to continue this policy and improve on it, and, as in all aspects of the Secret Mountain Laboratory, we invite your criticisms.

LET'S WORK TOGETHER

The Secret Mountain Laboratory has for some time been kicking around the idea of organizing a series of well conducted media/music conferences here in the Lake Tahoe area. We, as a group, generally feel that most conferences/conventions are aimed toward flash rather than fact.

Our idea would be to invite a select group of industry persons, who would enjoy the intensity of a group idea input, dedicated to advancing whatever it is we're all trying to do. We have at our disposal a beautiful mountain hotel/hot springs, with plenty of acreage, where we could spend our days unwinding and our nights communicating.

At least two major record companies have expressed interest in helping to finance a venture of this type, and we feel that with this kind of assistance, we could make a conference of this kind available to participating persons at no cost, or at least for a very nominal cost.

FM broadcasting seems to be racing toward becoming robot radio at a pace that probably amazes our AM brothers. It is our hope that by getting together here in the mountains for some serious workshops, that we might all be able to re-evaluate our position and influence within the industry. By remembering our roots, we all might find that our best path is the individualism we started with, rather than the mass movement toward tight playlisting and programming that seems to be drowning FM radio. Maybe not, but isn't it worth spending a few days together to find out?

If the idea of mountain media conferences appeals to you, we would like very much to have some feedback. We are always available at the secret mountain laboratory.

History Continued

and lawyers upon a recently-defunct broadcasting facility; KNLT had been relating to a rapidly-growing segment of the local population, but mismanagement and ill-conceived location of the operation killed them. The first step of the advance party, therefore, was to find a suitable location, and in a remarkably short time they came upon the King Building on Tahoe's North Shore. It had a

TO OUR LISTENERS

From the day we went on the air, we have been continually amazed at the wit, sensitivity and love expressed by our listeners . . .

When we had troubles in the first few weeks of broadcast, the calls and visits and words of encouragement we received kept our spirits high.

And now that things are getting together, the input of our audience is needed more than ever.

Our two phone numbers are: **546-KSML** and **LINK-424**.

CALL 546-KSML to phone in requests or to register approval of some special bit of programming, or to get on our case when we blow it.

CALL LINK-424 to contact our Human Resources Department, to communicate a local problem, suggest a special news program, or to make arrangements to come on the air yourself to speak your mind.



Feel free to mouth off.

Our mailing address is Post Office Box 88, King's Beach, Calif., 95719. All your letters are posted and read by the whole staff, so if you want to tell us all something, the U. S. Mail's your best bet.

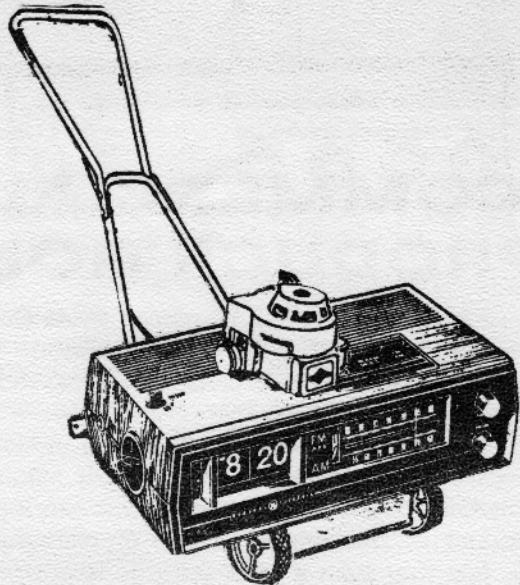
And the Listeners' Personals service has been running smoothly and getting results, thanks to your cooperation.

So how can we tell you how we feel without leaving ourselves wide open for heartbreak and ridicule?

Keep listening - we'll find a way.

SECRET MOUNTAIN PRESS RELEASE
For Immediate Use

BOON TO DAIRY INDUSTRY UNVEILED!



Dairy farmers and zoologists have known for years that cows can produce more and better milk if pleasant music is played in the stalls.

Now the Secret Mountain Laboratory has announced a new breakthrough in Dairy Science: Contented Grass.

"Too long have the Cows of America been fed grass which was brutally slashed blade-to-blade by noisy, offensive mowing machines," explains SML cow expert Curt Holstein. "We say that cows and grass both deserve a better deal."

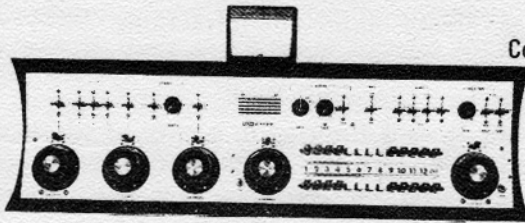
The new mower features an engine which makes a noise in a soothing, refreshing tonal range, and blades which don't slash the grass as much as they coax it into the baling combines.

"Contented grass for Contented cows," soliloquizes Holstein. "Mmmmmboy! I plan to be first in line for sips!"



Some of the gang downing the Daniel's.

Try this way to better receive KSML.



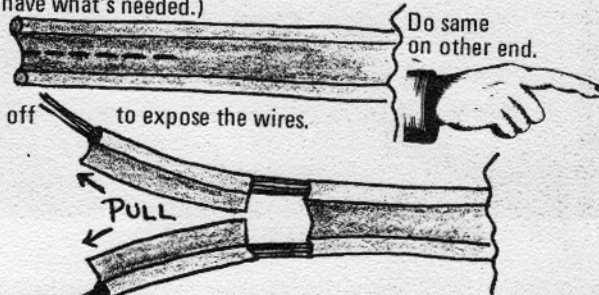
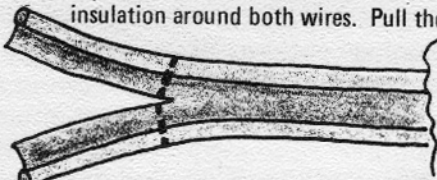
Typical home radio or FM Tuner.

Here's how to make the antenna:

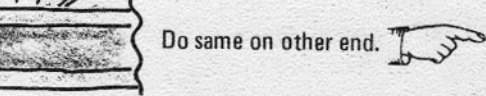
1. Cut a piece of ordinary (non-shielded) 300 ohm TV twin lead to a length of 56½ inches. (Any electronics store, TV shop and most hardware stores have what's needed.)

2. At each end, cut a one inch slit with scissors.

3. Separate the two sides and carefully cut the insulation around both wires. Pull the insulation off



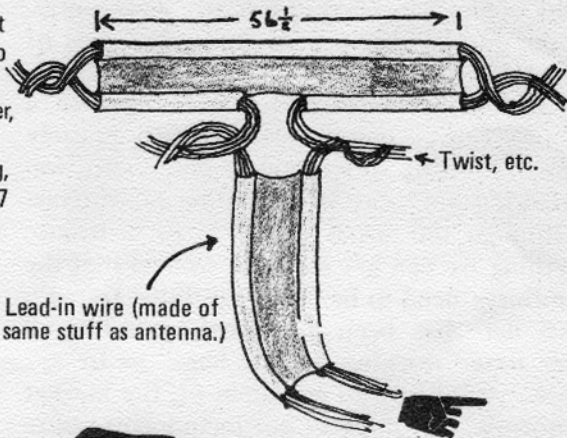
4. Twist the two wires tightly together and solder, tape, if possible.



5. Fold the antenna in half to find the middle. Cut through one wire only, at the middle.
6. Slit the insulation back for an inch both sides of center. Bare the wires as before, and connect them to the lead-in wire to your radio.

Make the lead-in wire long enough to experiment with the placement of the antenna, but don't have so much extra that it coils up on the floor. Orient the antenna for best reception. Remember . . . the higher, the better.

Because you made your antenna 56½ inches long, you made an electromagnetic cavity in space at 101.7 MHz. News and good vibrations will now pour forth from this cavity.



Lead-in wire (made of same stuff as antenna.)

To antenna terminals on radio.



At work on another routine miracle.

Folded Dipole Antenna

Connect to antenna terminals on the back of set.

(Drawings not to scale; use your imagination.)

SECRET MOUNTAIN PRESS RELEASE:
For Immediate Use



200th UNIT SOLD

Secret Mountain Laboratory official Morton "Tex" Salinas gives a firm hand to SML Cyborg Unit No. 200 upon it's final O.K. for distribution.

The Lab has been turning out these amazing examples of Spaced-Age Technology for the past five months. Since the announcement of the self-maintaining, affable Cyborgs, production has been satisfying only a part of demand.

The many requests for Cyborgs with a Female Chassis have thus far been politely denied. Asked why, New Products Division Director John "The Rock" Apicella explains: "Although our usual policy is to distribute anything we can get to work, we feel that the FemBorgs need to be more carefully tested". Staff here has been just great, spending all their time "working out the bugs" so to speak. We'd love to get them on the market tomorrow, but most of our technicians assure me that we need all the female units we can turn out just for testing. I dunno, maybe next year . . ."

Disappointing as Apicella's comments might be to prospective FemBorg purchasers, the SML Marketing Bureau is more than satisfied with the heavy demand for male units. "They're selling like Hot-Cross-Buns in the Bay Area," claims "Tex" Salinas, although he

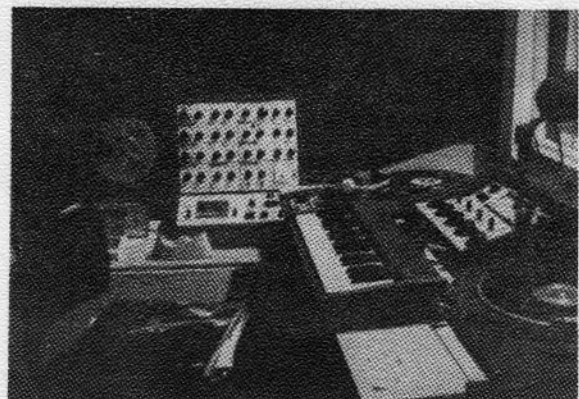
admits, "This is the only product we get orders for on perflu med stationery, but what the Hell, sales is sales!"

Secret Mountain also plans TotBorgs, LambBorgs, and LiverBorgs, pending legal opinion on possible Hatch Act or Federal Bogus Meat Commission infractions.

Hist. Cont.

vacant second floor, with plenty of windows overlooking the lake; it didn't look much like a radio station, but look at it now. It isn't much like the old King Building any more.

One chilly April evening, a U-Haul truck pulled up beside the oddly-shaped structure on North Lake Boulevard in Kings Beach. A small group of men began unloading a heterogeneous collection of crates, tubes, plates, sheets, buckets, bags and girders; all of it pretty mysterious to most of them, but at that point nobody really understood the developing pattern of co-operation which would result. During the following months the hammers and saws, cement mixers and vacuum tube voltmeters buzzed and banged as the unsuspecting King Building was transformed into the skeleton of the Secret Mountain Laboratory-to-be. Apparatus was bought and modified, or else designed and built from scratch. Meanwhile on another level Dwight and others were negotiating the license transfer, and all of them were getting to know their new neighbors in Truckee/Tahoe. Work continued with varying intensity throughout that summer, reinforcements trickled in with new ideas and energies, until by the fall a kind of race was going on — who would be ready first, the Secret Mountain Laboratory or the F. C. C.? Time was fast running out when we decided to move the antenna from KNLT's stunted pole to a taller tower on a higher piece of ground, with a better shot at the



The Production Stall.

SECRET MT. LAB. PLAYERS

There's a lot of pride in the energy and creativity of the entire family up here. No where is there more pride than in the zany brilliance of the Secret Mountain Players.

Take, for example, their Ides of March special, aired live — as are all their performances — on March 15. This 30-minute program was improvised from a prepared scenario, and concerned Senators Sam Bourbon & Teddy Calamity and their plot to aid disgruntled Veep Ralston Rottenfeller in his attempt to "prematurely retire" the blundering Chief Executive Gerry Floored.

Improvisation — though a definite creative tool — is only a part of the Players' repertoire. *Fortitude*, a one-act play by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. was aired a couple of weeks ago. And George S. Kaufman's *If Men Played Cards as Women Do* was the troupe's first effort.

"Our goal, whether improvised or rehearsed for weeks, is the LIVE performance," explains Players' director John Apicella. "There's something about a live radio show you can't get in a production studio."

Every Full Moon at Midnight features them in the midst of a horror show — *Count Dukela* (which found the Count sounding suspiciously like John Wayne) being their most recent.

The Players are responsible for at least six hours a week of original entertainment programming. Twice a week, hosts Ed Hamilton and Rose Waters (really Apicella and Kathy Keeley) present the Secret Morning Laboratory, a sunny mid-morning visit with, among other things, cooking tips by Monsieur Liver Page (really Player Bob Hayes), remote broadcasts from veteran journalist Walter Walter Walter (again Hayes, only this time from across the studio), and the usual morning-type interviews (though not so usual).

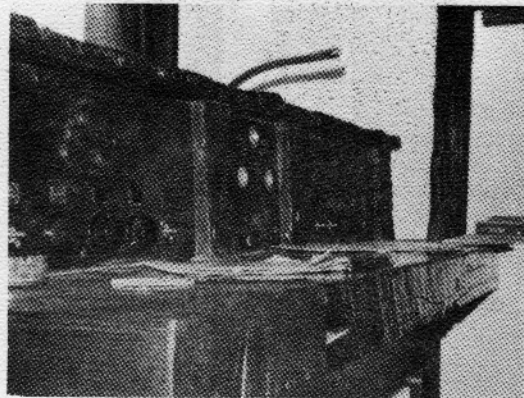
Other programs include the Pumpkin Bill Playhouse, a music and comedy show for the younger listeners, presented every Saturday morning; and a weekly session of TV dubbing, in which the listener is instructed to turn his TV on to a particular channel and turn the sound down as the Players provide the sound track.

"Though we're all young, it's surprising — as we discovered the other day," says Apicella, "that between the three of us, we have 25 years of theatrical experience."

Some of that experience includes John's time spent with the experimental Southwest Ensemble Theatre in Phoenix where he appeared in *Luv*, *Happy Birthday Wanda June* — to name a couple — and the world premier of William Inge's final play, *The Last Pad*. Bob & Kathy were members of Denver's legendary improvisational troupe, High Street. The fourth member of the nucleus (though most of the family are pressed into service from time to time), Don Gray, worked with the Gestalt Fool Theatre at KMPX in San Francisco.

And of the future? Who can say where the Muse leads? But there are some definite plans, among them: A weekly radio series, done in 15-minute segments, of H. G. Wells' *When the Sleeper Awakes*, the story of a 20th Century man who falls asleep and awakens 200 years later as the most important man on earth. Also coming soon, the long-awaited 15-minute weekly segments of the adventures of *The Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers*, with the personal blessings of Gilbert Shelton.

Concluding, the Players would like to pay homage to their spiritual fathers, Stan Freberg, Ken Nordine, the Firesign Theatre, Nichols & May and, of course, Mr. Orson Wells.



Our thanks to local computer experts for this beautiful Cyborg control panel.

Hist. Cont.

Tahoe Basin, Truckee, Donner and beyond. With the help of a couple of local lumberjacks, the Secret Mountain boys managed to erect a 160 foot tower and relocate the fragile antenna bays thereon. After that feat nothing could stand in the way, not even the telephone company. When Pacific T & T said that they couldn't run lines 500 feet through the trees to the new location, a leased Mosely STL (Microwave studio-transmitter link) did the trick at the last minute. Fact is, the Secret Mountain Laboratory beat the F. C. C., albeit

In Memoriam.



Peaches 1974-1975.

Hist. Cont.

not by much, and when the telegram arrived from Washington, KSML went on the air. Official time: 11:48 a.m. on November 11th, 1974. And it's been on ever since, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, getting newer all the time.

A lot has happened since then. The Secret Mountain Laboratory is a working family which coalesced gradually over several years and continues to do so right now. Some have joined us in the months since KSML went on the air, and some have gone on to other laboratories. The experimentation goes on too, as we explore the frontiers of radio and our own personalities. But the important thing is that whoever's here fits into a dynamic organization, giving and taking and sharing the responsibilities, the hassles and the love of freewheeling creation. When we lose a member, it hurts; when we gain one, we all feel good. Our group's been serving the Tahoe/Truckee area for five months now, and it's clear to us that what we're doing is bigger than any one of us or even all of us. We're ready to expand.



THANK YOU

For all kinds of good reasons, the Secret Mountain Laboratory would like to thank: Larry Yurdin, Dave the Welder, Boz Scaggs, Sutro Sympathy Orchestra, Jim Fox, Link Wray, Grahame Ross, Michael Priest, Jack Ellis, Sunny, Augie & Nancy Blume, Ron Middag, Tony Berardini, Steve & Bill & the Campbell Hot Springs gang, Joshua, Jeri Powers, Roger the Dodger, Dave McQueen, Diane Bateman, John Spilner, Nancy Stephenson, Niki Mosberg, Kay Beckwith, Judy Kehneman, Bill Bartel, Roz Works, Hoyt Axton, Firesign Theatre, Frank Zappa, Ron Reinberg, Monty & his old man, Joe Garcia, Dave Frieberg, Andy Romanoff & Darcy, Terry Holmes, Kathy & David Anderson, Rutabaga Mike, Roza, Bobby Applegate, George Furness, Bob Gaiters, Cliff Burnstein, John Carter, Paul Ahern, Hal Murray, Chris Strachwitz, the Asches, Mark Hartley, Fred Mancuso, Allan Mason, Mark Gangl, Michael Turner, Lydia Moreno, Bill Groves, Bob Oxborne, Bob Rogers, Tim Buckley, Joe Fields, the Big M, Stoneground, David Newmark, the Sons of Champlin, Todd Tolces, Sweet Jan, Gary Davis, Terry & the Pirates, Dave Mercer, KPFT, Lenny Bronstein, KDKB, Kathy, Kathy Kenyon, Judy Roderick, Mary, Nina Joy, Joel, Jim Murray, Linka, Kathy Chip, Tepi, the Count, Kenny, Bud, Andy & Flatcar, and all those whose names we don't know, and all those who don't have names yet.