



*The Bailey Building, July, 2007, Penny Petersen, photographer*

**A HISTORY OF KFAI 90.3,  
FRESH AIR RADIO  
1808 RIVERSIDE AVENUE SOUTH  
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA**

**PREPARED FOR  
GREATER TWIN CITIES BLUES MUSIC SOCIETY**

**PREPARED BY  
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This report begins with a summary of the evolution of radio technology, early transmissions using that technology, and the growth of noncommercial stations. Historical information on KFAI follows.

### **Radio Revolution: How It Began**

1890s Electrical inventor Nikola Tesla, a native of Croatia who emigrated to the United States, began research on wireless transmission. Among other inventions, he developed a device called the “Tesla coil,” which allowed for the transmission of radio signals.<sup>1</sup>

1896 Italian Guglielmo Marconi, who devised an apparatus that enabled him transmit to a signal a few hundred feet without the use of wires, went to England, where he was granted the first patent for a system of wireless telegraphy.<sup>2</sup>

1897 Tesla filed a basic radio patent application for his inventions with the United States Patent Office.<sup>3</sup>

Meanwhile in England, Marconi formed the Wireless Telegraph and Signal Company Limited, which was later renamed Marconi’s Wireless Telegraph Company Limited.<sup>4</sup>

1900 In January, Canadian Reginald Aubrey Fessenden accepted an invitation from the U. S. Department of Agriculture to set up an experimental wireless telegraph station on Cobb Island, Maryland. By December, Fessenden had successfully transmitted the human voice for one mile.<sup>5</sup>

Tesla’s inventions were granted patents by the United States Patent Office. In the same year, Marconi’s Wireless Telegraph Company started attracting many investors in the British stock market. Marconi would soon apply for United States patents that were based on the Tesla coil.<sup>6</sup>

1901 In December, Marconi established the first cross-Atlantic wireless communication. A signal from Cornwall, England, was received in Saint John’s, Newfoundland, Canada.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *American National Biography* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 21:466-467. In one obituary, Tesla was called the father of radio (“Nikola Tesla Rites to be Held Tuesday,” *New York Times*, January 9, 1943).

<sup>2</sup> “The Inventor of Wireless Telegraphy,” *New York Times*, January 2, 1898; Nobel Foundation Jennifer Edwards Web site ([http://nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/physics/laureates/1909/marconi-bio.html](http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/physics/laureates/1909/marconi-bio.html)). The writer of the *Times* article concluded that Frenchman M. Bourbouze had actually been the first to use wireless telegraphy in 1871.

<sup>3</sup> “Tesla: Life and Legacy,” PBS Web site, [http://www.pbs.org/tesla/11/11\\_whoradio.html](http://www.pbs.org/tesla/11/11_whoradio.html).

<sup>4</sup> Nobel Foundation Web site. ([http://nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/physics/laureates/1909/marconi-bio.html](http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/physics/laureates/1909/marconi-bio.html)).

<sup>5</sup> *American National Biography* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 7:858-859.

<sup>6</sup> “Tesla: Life and Legacy,” PBS Web site, [http://www.pbs.org/tesla/11/11\\_whoradio.html](http://www.pbs.org/tesla/11/11_whoradio.html). Marconi also had British connections as his Irish mother was the granddaughter of the founder of the Jameson Whiskey Distillery.

<sup>7</sup> “Wireless Signals Across the Ocean,” *New York Times*, December, 15, 1901.

- 1906 In December, Fessenden, broadcasting from Brant Rock, Massachusetts, sent the first planned and announced transmission of music and speech. After introducing the program, he played a phonograph recording of Handel's "Largo," performed a violin solo, and sang "O Holy Night." Ships at sea heard this broadcast. On New Year's Eve, the broadcast was repeated and heard as far away as the West Indies.<sup>8</sup>
- 1907 Minneapolis teenager Harold Greenlee built a wireless telegraphy station on the roof of 1915 Hennepin Avenue, the apartment building where he lived. He soon began getting messages from other amateur operators in Minneapolis. The early days of radio in Minneapolis were similar to those in other cities across the nation: wireless stations were largely in the hands of unpaid amateurs, who often made their broadcasts from their residences.<sup>9</sup>
- 1908 South High School, at Twenty-fourth Street and Cedar Avenue South in Minneapolis, established wireless communication with Greenlee's Hennepin Avenue station. This was part of a plan to connect five Minneapolis high schools, allowing science students an opportunity to study the new wireless technology.<sup>10</sup>
- 1909 On January 2, five boys in New York City form the Junior Wireless Club, Ltd., the world's first amateur radio organization. Many other amateur wireless associations were soon formed across the country. Writer Jess Walker states that these "groups were formed for mutual education and aid, not to advance an ideology. As apolitical as any other hobby clubs, they espoused, often inchoately, only one political idea: that the airwaves should open to the public, not monopolized by a powerful few."<sup>11</sup>
- 1910 Fourteen-year-old W. E. D. Stokes Jr., president of the Junior Wireless Club, led a delegation to Washington, D.C., to speak against passage of a bill introduced by Senator Chauncey Depew that would restrict amateur radio activity.<sup>12</sup>

Five Minneapolis high schools offered classes in wireless telegraphy. A local newspaper claimed that these local schools were the first in the country to offer this program. The Minneapolis School Board appropriated \$500 to establish wireless stations at North, West, South, East, and Central High Schools.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> *American National Biography* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 21:466-467.

<sup>9</sup> "Mysterious Wireless Messages Are Received by Youthful Operators," *Minneapolis Journal*, December 29, 1907. In a subsequent article, Greenlee's name is spelled Greenly. Based on 1910 federal census data, Harold was about seventeen years old when he erected the wireless station.

<sup>10</sup> "School Talks thru the Air," *Minneapolis Journal*, May 3, 1908.

<sup>11</sup> Jesse Walker, *Rebels on the Air, an Alternative History of Radio in America* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2001), 13. Walker claims Stokes was the recording secretary of the group, which met at the Hotel Ansonia, owned by Stokes's father, William Earle Dodge Stokes. A year later, a *New York Times* article stated there were thirteen charter members of the Junior Wireless Club and identified Stokes as the president of the club.

<sup>12</sup> "Wireless Wonder Aged 14 Amazes Senate Committee," *New York Times*, May 1, 1910. Depew's bill passed the Senate, but the House of Representatives took no action on it.

<sup>13</sup> "High Schools Study Wireless," *Minneapolis Journal*, October 2, 1910; and "Wireless Is Installed," *Minneapolis Journal*, October 17, 1910.

- 1912 Congress passed the Radio Act of 1912, which, among other things, required that all radio operators be licensed by the Department of Commerce and Labor. Enforcement was lax at first. By 1914, fewer than half the ham radio operators bothered to get a license, “thus becoming America’s first radio pirates.”<sup>14</sup>
- 1913 The Professor G. E. Shepardson of the Electrical Engineering School announced plans for a wireless telegraph station to be built at the University of Minnesota. The proposed station was to be part of chain of government stations across the country that would “carry weather reports and other commercial news.”<sup>15</sup>
- 1914 In February, the University of Minnesota wireless station received its first “message” in the form of the letter “E,” repeated several times. The operators were confident that they had “caught a wave” but were uncertain as to its origin, and speculated that it may have come from Washington or San Francisco.<sup>16</sup>
- 1922 On January 13, the University of Minnesota’s WLB (now KUOM), an educational station, became the first licensed AM radio station in the state.<sup>17</sup>
- 1946 In California, the Pacifica Radio Network (also known as the Pacifica Foundation) was founded by Lewis Hill.<sup>18</sup>
- 1949 Radio station KPFA, an FM station, was launched in Berkley, California. It was owned by Pacifica Radio Network and was the first listener-supported radio station in the United States. KPFA served as a model for other listener-supported radio stations that followed, giving a diverse array of groups a chance to air their views. Historian Jesse Walker observed, “In those days, KPFA would take neither corporate nor government funds, preferring the little-tried notion of turning to its listeners for sponsorship.” Although other stations would later follow KPFA’s example, “in the Truman and Eisenhower eras, the station stood alone.” One critic, John Whiting, wrote: “The culture shock of tuning to KPFA in 1949 was like hearing an atheist sermon preached from the pulpit of Grace Cathedral.”<sup>19</sup>
- 1959 Pacifica Radio acquired the New York City station WBAI-FM. Harold Winkler, president of Pacifica, announced that WBAI-FM, like the other Pacifica-owned stations, would be listener-supported and without commercial advertising.<sup>20</sup>
- 1962 A *New York Times* article noted that “eight male homosexuals discussed their attitudes in an unusual one-hour-and-fifty minute program” on WBAI-FM. “It was believed to be the first time the subject had been presented on the air by homosexuals in this area.”<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Walker, *Rebels on the Air*, 22.

<sup>15</sup> “University to Have Wireless Station,” *Minneapolis Journal*, April 23, 1913.

<sup>16</sup> “University Receives First Wireless,” *Minneapolis Journal*, February 17, 1914.

<sup>17</sup> Radio K Web site, <http://radiok.cce.umn.edu/about/>

<sup>18</sup> Walker, *Rebels on the Air*, 48.

<sup>19</sup> The Pacifica Foundation Web site, <http://www.pacificanetwork.org/radio/content/section/4/40/>; Walker, *Rebels on the Air*, 48-49.

<sup>20</sup> “Coast Foundation Gets WBAI as Gift,” *New York Times*, November 25, 1959.

Lorenzo Milam, a KPFA staffer and follower of Lewis Hill, established KRAB-FM in Seattle, Washington. Milam called his approach “Free Forum.” Later, this became known as Freeform Radio, defined by the *Dictionary of Radio* as: “An approach to radio programming in which a station’s management gives the DJ complete control over program content. Freeform shows are as different as the personalities of DJ’s, but they share a feeling of spontaneity, a tendency to play music that is not usually heard. Their ideology tends to be liberal or radical, though their program content is not usually overtly political. Many DJ’s mix diverse musical styles, engage in monologues between music sets and/or accept callers on the air. The only rules that free-form DJ’s are bound by are FCC regulations such as station identification and restrictions on foul language.”<sup>22</sup>

- 1963 On November 9, Lorenzo Milam’s KRAB held the first fund-raising “marathon” on non-commercial radio. The goal of raising \$1,000 in forty-two hours was met. Later, Milam felt that his concept was misused by other radio stations. Prior to this marathon, KRAB and Pacifica stations had raised money through low-level, year-round membership requests.<sup>23</sup>
- 1967 In January, Minnesota Public Radio (MPR) began operating KSJR, a radio station that had been established by Saint John’s University in Collegeville, Minnesota.<sup>24</sup>

### **The Establishment and Evolution of KFAI**

- 1973 In July, Fresh Air, Inc. filed as a nonprofit corporation with the Minnesota Secretary of State. Several years later, Bryan Peterson, one of the organizers of KFAI recalled, “When the founders of the Fresh Air, Inc. filed with the FCC (Federal Communications Commission) in October of 1973 they hardly suspected that four years of disheartening legal maneuvers would come and go before they received a construction permit. It took several years to unearth an available frequency and then MPR (Minnesota Public Radio) challenged KFAI’s right broadcast on the grounds our signal would interfere with their ‘off the air’ relay station. The FCC duly put a freeze on our license application until the dispute could be settled.”<sup>25</sup>

Jeremy Nichols became interested in the KFAI through a friend, Carrie Juntunen, who asked him to run the sound for a KFAI benefit held at the old firehouse at the corner Fourth Street South and Fifteenth Avenue South. (The building was occupied by Melvin McCosh’s Bookstore at the time; it is now home to the Mixed Blood Theater.) “I jumped at the chance to apply my broadcasting and engineering background to a community

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<sup>21</sup> Milton Bracker, “Homosexual Air Their Views Here,” *New York Times*, July 16, 1962.

<sup>22</sup> Kathleen O’Malley, *Dictionary of Radio*, quoted from WFMU Web site (<http://www.wfmu.org/freeform.html>).

<sup>23</sup> WFMU Web site (<http://www.wfmu.org/LCD/21/freeform.html>).

<sup>24</sup> \* Web site ([http://207.150.180.135/Minnesota\\_Public\\_Radio#History](http://207.150.180.135/Minnesota_Public_Radio#History)).

<sup>25</sup> Filing Number L-2, July 27, 1973; Minnesota Secretary of State website, ([http://da.sos.state.mn.us/minnesota/corp\\_inquiry-find.asp?:Norder\\_item\\_type\\_id=10&sm=7](http://da.sos.state.mn.us/minnesota/corp_inquiry-find.asp?:Norder_item_type_id=10&sm=7)); Bryan Peterson, “NFCB, KFAI and You,” *Fresh Air Magazine*, January 1979. Peterson was also pastor of Walker United Methodist Church from 1967 until his death in 1989 (Ted Jones, “Church and Civic Leader Rev. Bryan Peterson Dies,” *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, July 18, 1989).

effort and joined the board in December 1973. I did much of the technical work for the various FCC filings in response to the Minnesota Educational Radio (now Minnesota Public Radio) petition to deny the Fresh Air application. I had been peripherally involved in the co-ops, but did not get seriously involved until 1974 when I was one of the founding members of the Wedge Co-op.”<sup>26</sup>

Nichols recalled that Lorenzo Milam’s book, *Sex and Broadcasting: A Handbook on Starting a Radio Station for the Community*, served as the model for building Fresh Air Radio. In the book, which offering both practical and humorous advice, Milam outlined his vision for radio: “Broadcasting doesn’t have to be so vile and boorish. The Canadians best of all have shown that it is possible to have a superb blending of commercial and non-commercial radio and television.” Describing Canadian broadcasts as alive, alert, funny, and meaningful, he went on to say, “They do not have to bore people to death (as the ‘educational’ broadcasters in this country so obviously need to do); nor do they view the listener as some sort of dumb animal to be fed acres of pap—solely for the purpose of prying money from him. The art of radio can be used for artistic means: the radio-soul does not have to be made into a strumpet for soap and politicians.” Milam also observed that the wait for FCC approval was often long and frustrating.<sup>27</sup>

Although Nichols was not present at the founding of KFAI, he believed that Randy McLaughlin originated the idea of Fresh Air Radio. McLaughlin, an engineer, was one of the founders of KUSP in Santa Cruz, California, which went on the air on April 18, 1972. The facilities for KUSP, much like those for KFAI, were constructed by many volunteers, who “pretty much built the station by hand using spare parts from other stations, and even the occasional dumpster.”<sup>28</sup>

1974 When Nichols joined KFAI, he was an engineering student at the University of Minnesota and working part-time at the student-run radio station, KUOM (now Radio K), as well as WMMR, a closed-circuit student station broadcasting to the dormitories. He explained that after the initial interest in KFAI generated by the FCC application, people drifted away from the nascent community radio station when nothing seemed to be going forward. Between 1974 and 1978, the core group came down a handful of people: Nichols; Bob Hostettler and Randy McLaughlin, both of whom worked at the North Country Coop; Charles Brin; and Debby Schroyer, one of the founders of the People’s Pantry and *100 Flowers* newspaper. Schroyer forged a connection between this group and the Powderhorn Community Council, which got Brian Peterson, Warren Hanson, Bob Albee, Gail Albee, and others involved with KFAI. “These people were instrumental in obtaining the grants that financed the building of the station.”<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Jeremy Nichols, interview with Penny Petersen, July 14, 2007.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. Lorenzo W. Milam, *The Original Sex and Broadcasting, A Handbook on Starting a Radio Station for the Community* (1971; reprint, San Diego: MHO & MHO Works, 1988), 19, 21-34. *Sex and Broadcasting* was first published in 1971. A heavily revised third edition was published in 1975.

<sup>28</sup> Nichols interview; and KUSP Web site (<http://www.kusp.org/kusptech.html>). According to Nichols, Randy McLaughlin left the organization by the time KFAI went on the air.

<sup>29</sup> Nichols interview. Hostettler also worked with Nichols at KUOM and WMMR. Brin still volunteers at KFAI and produces the “Spoken Word” on Wednesdays with Beryl Greenburg. Hostettler and McLaughlin no longer live in the Twin Cities.

The stated goals of Fresh Air, Inc. were “to train community residents in production of broadcast programming; to encourage minorities and others traditionally excluded from mainstream broadcasting to acquire technical expertise in radio; to help residents become aware of local concerns to enable them to better resolve issues affecting their neighborhoods; to promote local cultural activity; and to provide a forum for current issues.”<sup>30</sup>

- 1976 According to Bryan Peterson, “By the summer of 1976 Fresh Air was in very weak financial and psychological shape. What little we understood about our predicament came from our limited correspondence with the FCC. . . . Meanwhile our lawyer in Washington told us to raise more money and have patience.” About the same time, Thomas Kigin, an employee of MPR, publicly disparaged the plan for Fresh Air Radio. He claimed that its proposed frequency would interfere with one of MPR’s network stations and that MPR wanted to use that particular frequency for expansion. Besides, Kigin added, “Fresh Air is not needed because MPR already provides public-access broadcasting.”<sup>31</sup>

Nichols recalled, “I would have to say that it was Randy, Bob, and I who handled the MPR petition to deny work. Our Washington lawyer was the late Bill Byrnes, who was counsel to many other community radio stations. We got some breaks from his firm, but to keep the bills down we did much of the writing of the filings to the FCC, and all of the engineering, ourselves.”<sup>32</sup>

- 1977 In July, the FCC ruled in favor of KFAI and the station received permission to begin construction of its facilities. By December, a newspaper article announced that KFAI would go live the following spring. Station manager Phil Sims observed: “The primary purpose of the station is to provide an outlet for creative talent in the community and a training program to teach skills that can be used outside the community.” He added that there would also be an opportunity for local musicians, poets, and writers to broadcast their work.<sup>33</sup>

- 1978 On April 7, Fresh Air, Inc. took out a \$2,000 building permit to construct a sixty-foot radio antenna on the roof of the Seward Cafe at 2201 East Franklin Avenue.<sup>34</sup>

Just before KFAI, officially started broadcasting, the staff and volunteers had a party and brought in records to play on the air. Nichols remarked that KFAI was always about the music.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Anara Guard, “Building for the Future,” *Fresh Air Magazine*, February 1981.

<sup>31</sup> “NFCB, KFAI and You,” *Fresh Air Magazine*, January 1979; and Steve Johnson, “City Neighborhood Radio Plan Criticized,” *Minneapolis Star*, September 30, 1976.

<sup>32</sup> Nichols interview.

<sup>33</sup> John Carman, “Station’s Fresh on the Air,” *Minneapolis Star*, May 12, 1978; and Debra Stone, “South Neighborhood to Get its Own Radio Station,” *Minneapolis Star*, December 5, 1977.

<sup>34</sup> Minneapolis Building Permit A43179, April 7, 1978.

<sup>35</sup> Nichols interview. Nichols said he met his future wife, Evelyn Turner, at KFAI in October 1978. Turner was one of the producers of the program “We Want You to Know.”

On May 1, KFAI, Fresh Air Radio, went on the air at 90.3 FM with ten watts of power. Organizers assembled everything from the transmitter, tower, tapes, and used tape recorders for about \$16,000. The primary coverage area extended about two miles around the transmitter. The radio's office was located in a loft at Walker United Methodist Church (also known as Walker Community Church) at 3104 Sixteenth Avenue South. Once the station was fully operative, daily broadcasting began at 6:00 a.m. with "Wake-up, Southside" and concluded with various jazz programs that started at 11:00 p.m.<sup>36</sup>

In June, a newspaper reporter remarked that "Minneapolis now had a community radio station that devoted a regular air time to both punk rock and meetings of the Powderhorn Community Council." He continued, "After a shaky start—Sims [Phil Sims] said Fresh Air used to have a 'crisis of the week' contest—that included many 'minor' equipment problems, the station finally settled on regular hours last week when Fresh Air is now on the air from 6 a.m. to 1 a.m. seven days a week." The station had thirteen paid staff members, most of whom have radio or communications experience. News director David McKay attended broadcaster's school at the Brown Institute on East Lake Street, while Sims previously worked for several public radio stations outside of Minnesota. As a community radio station, KFAI had "no commercials—and no sponsors—community radio stations do not have to bow to any pressure groups," according to Sims.<sup>37</sup>

In a newspaper editorial, Bryan Peterson, president Fresh Air, Inc., explained the station's purpose: "KFAI, as a noncommercial radio station, offers an opportunity for community resident participation in broadcasting public affairs for its own community. Supported with funds from listeners, community groups, the private sector, as well as contracts with various public agencies, Fresh Air Community Radio seeks to provide services previously unavailable to the community."<sup>38</sup>

Nichols recalled that a local group called "Blind in Broadcasting" helped make the station accessible to the sight-impaired by having directions, labels, records covers, and other information translated into Braille. KFAI also received a one-year grant to employ several sight-impaired staff members including Randy Rusnak, Max Swanson, and Tom Lijewski.<sup>39</sup>

Shortly after the radio station went live, the staff began publication of *Fresh Air*, with the banner "radio for the rest of us." The first issue noted that "Fresh Air Community Radio became 'airbourne' on the first of May, 1978 after five years of legal entanglements and FCC challenges." The magazine urged readers to participate in a fundraiser the week of October 22 to 28 to help KFAI "set new standards in community broadcasting." "Be in the audience and experience the excitement of LIVE BROADCASTING as the cream of

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<sup>36</sup> John Carman, "Station's Fresh on the Air," *Minneapolis Star*, May 12, 1978; and "Programming Guide," *Fresh Air* [September? 1978]. *Fresh Air* magazine was published more or less monthly during the early years.

<sup>37</sup> Tom Sorensen, "Fresh Air Radio/A Voice in Powderhorn," *Minneapolis Star*, June 3, 1978. The article noted that seven of the station's workers were paid with funds available through the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA).

<sup>38</sup> Bryan R. Peterson, "Subsidized Noncommercial Media Prove Value to Society," *Minneapolis Star*, September 19, 1978.

<sup>39</sup> Nichols interview.



Twin Cities entertainment takes over the stage of the Walker Church. Rub elbows with Fresh Air folks as you enjoy the best in folk, jazz, blues, soul, swing and salsa.” Over the next few years, *Fresh Air* would cover a variety of issues and topics, serving as a community newspaper for the local arts scene.<sup>40</sup>

The magazine offered readers tips for better reception of KFAI such as putting an antenna on their receivers—“these range in price from a \$2.00 plastic dipole to a \$30.00 ‘Yagi’”—and turning off the muting switch on their receivers. If all else failed, “find friend who CAN receive KFAI, and move in.”<sup>41</sup>

1979 The January edition of *Fresh Air* featured an interview with guitarist Billy Cross, who had been a member of Bob Dylan’s band since 1977. Dylan was present for part of the interview but apparently did not contribute to the conversation.<sup>42</sup>

In February, station manager Phil Sims, who had been with KFAI for eighteen months, announced his resignation.<sup>43</sup>

The February program guide included a broad variety of shows including “Indian Country” (Native American perspective), “Spirit Music” (Caribbean music), “Children’s Hour” (“Everything for the Young”), “Whispering Willows” (acoustic music), a morning news show, “All Day Soup” (Midwest music scene), live broadcasts from the Coffehouse Extempore, and “A Wonderful World” (jazz). The “Fresh Fruit Collective,” a KFAI program devoted to reporting by and about the gay community, advertised for help, claiming it was “the Upper-Midwest’s only gay radio show.”<sup>44</sup>

In March, *Fresh Air* carried an article on how the news staff hooked up to the daily feed from Pacifica News Service, based in Washington, D.C., to receive national and international news stories. “KFAI is the only Twin Cities station that carries the Pacifica news station. We have chosen to subscribe to this news service rather than the long established ones used by the other local media outlets because, like KFAI, Pacifica represents an alternative emphasis and viewpoint to more established media.”<sup>45</sup>

In June, *Fresh Air* featured a “Community News” section with stories about the arts scene. Several local businesses, such Palmer’s Bar, Electric Fetus, Positively Fourth Street, and the Riverside Cafe, supported the publication with advertisements.

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<sup>40</sup> Phil Sims, “Winds of Change,” and “The Incredible Mega-Marathon,” *Fresh Air* [September? 1978], 2, 3.

<sup>41</sup> “Tips on Tuning Us In,” *Fresh Air* [September ? 1978], 7. A note in the “Fresh Air Magazine” files at the Minneapolis Public Library’s Minneapolis Collection indicates that the editor was Steve Rosenthal from 1978 to November 1980 and Craig Cox from February to September 1981. (The magazine was not published in December 1980 or January 1981.) Charles Brin served as editor from October 1981 to January 1982. *Fresh Air* was not published from February to April 1982, and on April 13 the staff announced that it was in the process of evaluating the magazine and changing formats.

<sup>42</sup> Stephen Rosenthal, “A Yentah Way of Knowledge,” *Fresh Air*, January 1979. Bob Dylan and his band were visiting the Twin Cities and performed at the Saint Paul Civic Centre on October 31, 1978.

<sup>43</sup> “Station Manager to Resign, KFAI Dagnet Started,” *Fresh Air*, February 1979.

<sup>44</sup> “Fresh Fruit Wants You,” *Fresh Air*, February 1979.

<sup>45</sup> “Getting Wired on Pacifica,” *Fresh Air*, March 1979.

In July, blues guitarist Pat (Auburn) Hare was allowed out of Stillwater prison for one day to perform a concert at Walker Church with Mojo Buford, Lazy Bill Lucas, JoJo Williams, Sunny Rogers, Larry Hayes, Baby Doo Caston, Willie Brown, Keith Boyles, Gene Adams, Steve Hauer, John Lund, and Roger Hurd. Hare was formerly a member of the well-known Muddy Waters band. The concert was recorded and later broadcast on KFAI.<sup>46</sup>

The September issue of *Fresh Air* featured an in-depth interview on the local band Shangoya. The band members were natives Trinidad, Mexico, Jamaica, and the United States and play a blend of reggae and calypso music. Pat Brenna was introduced as the KFAI's new operations manager.<sup>47</sup>

In October, the results of a listener's survey were announced. Most of the reviews were positive. "As one respondent noted, 'Even though all your shows don't appeal to me, I appreciate the fact that they appeal to someone. [Other] stations try to stereotype people's tastes. . . . We're not all the same.'"<sup>48</sup>

American composer John Cage wrote a composition specifically for the "Fresh Air Marathon" fundraiser which began on October 11. In his offer, Cage said, "I will make a composition for you having either a specific time length or of indeterminate length." The marathon raised a total of \$11,500 for KFAI. Although the goal of \$17,000 was not met, station manager Pat Brenna pronounced it a success.<sup>49</sup>

On November 10, Fresh Air Radio held its first annual board meeting. The treasurer, Jeremy Nichols, reported that "the station's budget for the first year was \$56,500, a figure somewhat lower than projections had anticipated." KFAI had three full-time paid staff members, the operations manager (Pat Brenna), news director (David McKay), and volunteer coordinator (Michael Reed). The station also had three employees funded through the federal Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA); two college student interns; Steve Rosenthal, who was responsible for the magazine; and numerous volunteers. Nichols noted that KFAI's application for a power increase, filed with the FCC on January 19, 1978, was still pending. The gathering elected six new members to the station's board of directors, bringing the total to sixteen.<sup>50</sup>

1980 *Fresh Air* explored the issue of why, even though many African American musicians were performing, so little of their music was played on commercial radio. The first

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<sup>46</sup> M. G., "Blues News: All-Star Reunion at KFAI," *Fresh Air*, October 1979. Pat Hare, who was born in Arkansas in 1930, died in prison on September 26, 1980 while serving a life sentence for the double murder of his girlfriend and a Minneapolis policeman, who was responding to the domestic disturbance.

<sup>47</sup> Patrick Darcy, "Shango Music, Shango People," and M. R., "U.F.O.M Identified (Unidentified Flying Operations Manager)," *Fresh Air*, September 1979.

<sup>48</sup> "To Our Readers," *Fresh Air*, October 1979.

<sup>49</sup> M. R., "Cage to Compose and Conduct for Marathon," *Fresh Air*, October 1979; R. H., "New Members, New Friends for KFAI: Marathon," *Fresh Air*, December 1979.

<sup>50</sup> D. S., "Election, Reports and Chili Highlights of the First Annual Meeting of Fresh Air Radio, Inc.," *Fresh Air*, Winter 1980.

installment of the two-part article was entitled “Black Music, White Radio Part I: Why Won’t Anyone Talk to Me?”<sup>51</sup>

In March, KFAI performed and taped the “Nine Oscar Show” before an audience of more than one thousand inmates at Stillwater Penitentiary, Minnesota’s maximum security correctional facility. *Fresh Air* reported: “Eleven musicians, six sound technicians, and a few nervous radio station personnel pushed four carts full of instruments and sound equipment down a long corridor with inmates asking ‘What are you? When do you start?’ and ‘What kind of music do you play?’” Tom Lambertson, the host of “Nine Oscar,” noted he was apprehensive and got off to a late start, but soon the tension eased and people were clapping, stomping their feet, and whistling applause. The same issue of the magazine carried a long feature article on the persistence of science fiction in various mediums.<sup>52</sup>

Artist John A. J. Kane began a series of graphic biographic and musical profiles of such local musicians as Willie Murphy and the Bees, The Suburbs, and Eddie Berger and the Jazz All-Stars.<sup>53</sup>

KFAI faced a financial crisis and reduced its staff. An article on *Fresh Air*’s “Fine Tuning” page reported that during the first five months of 1980, KFAI accumulated nearly \$10,000 of debt, raised less than half of its \$15,000 fundraising goal, and was unsuccessful with many grant requests. News director David McKay and volunteer coordinator Michael Reed were laid off and the Pacifica News Service subscription dropped. One bit of good news was the hiring of Anara Guard as director of development, a position funded in part by a Women’s Training Grant from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.<sup>54</sup>

During the summer, *Fresh Air* articles ranged from an interview with local poet Meridel LeSueur, who first published short stories in the late 1920s, to a feature story on recombinant DNA.<sup>55</sup>

In October, an article in *Fresh Air* recounted the history of KFAI. “The big day the station was to begin broadcasting kept getting pushed back and it was a welcome breather for some us struggling in our first encounter with broadcasting when the FCC tested for a third class radio license. In addition to that test, we had to learn how to flip switches, turn knobs and face that most awesome piece of equipment—the microphone.” The writer recalled that some early announcers filled in dead air with nervous “ums” or “ahs,” but there were plenty of positive memories as well, such as when Dave Moore of WCCO-TV helped out with a children’s program. Still, it was difficult to operate a low-power radio

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<sup>51</sup> Tom Surowicz, “Black Music, White Radio Part I: Why Won’t Anyone Talk to Me?” *Fresh Air*, Winter 1980.

<sup>52</sup> D. M., “Nine Oscar at Stillwater,” and Fritz R. VonYeast, “Science Fiction: An Alternative Way of Identifying with Reality,” *Fresh Air*, March 1980.

<sup>53</sup> John A. J. Kane, “Kane’s Illustrated Musical Profiles,” *Fresh Air*, April, May, and June, 1980.

<sup>54</sup> “Listen Up: Good New and Bad News,” *Fresh Air*, Summer 1980; and “Fresh Air News: Most Things Considered,” *Fresh Air*, May 1981.

<sup>55</sup> Paul Tirell, “Interview with Meridel LeSueur: Repression, Community, Survival,” *Fresh Air*, June 1980; and Fritz R. VonYeast, “Recombinant DNA: Engineering the Triumph of Tomorrow,” *Fresh Air*, Summer, 1980.

station that was dependent on listener subscriptions, especially when many of those listeners could not actually receive the KFAI signal. By this time, the station was struggling financially and was reduced to one paid staff member and three workers whose positions were funded by CETA.<sup>56</sup>

- 1981 The station's developmental director observed that "compared to other non-commercial radio stations, Fresh Air was performing miracles." After visiting a non-commercial Midwestern radio station affiliated with MPR that had greater wattage, new production facilities, and approximately twice the budget, she noted that the station produced only 20 percent of its own programs, buying the rest from outside sources. By contrast, KFAI created 95 percent of its own content.<sup>57</sup>

Two former KFAI reporters, T. J. Western and David McKay (KFAI's first news director), received a nearly \$5,000 grant from National Public Radio's Satellite Development Fund to produce a one-hour program on the International Black Hills Survival Gathering. The program was distributed nationwide on all National Public Radio stations. Western noted that he received valuable experience from his time at KFAI. "That freedom to experiment, to experience, really enhances one's career and one's ability to communicate."<sup>58</sup>

Fresh Air continued to offer air time for local artists to perform, such as the "Lazy Bill Lucas Show," as well as programs for minorities, such as "Gao Hmong," which featured music, news, and interviews in the Hmong language.<sup>59</sup>

*Fresh Air* carried an interview with author Susan Allen Toth who had just written *Blooming*, a memoir of her childhood.<sup>60</sup>

- 1982 *Fresh Air* switched from a monthly, multi-page tabloid to a single-page quarterly format. As the year progressed, its schedule became erratic and publication finally ceased after the summer issue. The summer programming guide revealed a broad range of programs: "Southern Comforts" ("hot Texas swing music, bluegrass, western weepers"); "First Person Radio" (news and cultural affairs from the Native American community); "Radio Antilles" ("island music with Snake and Death"); "We Want You to Know" (news and music for women); "Last Night's Fun" (traditional Irish music); "Morning Jazz" (with Eddie Berger); "Jammin' with Willie" (Willie Murphy and the Bees); as well as radio plays from National Radio Theatre of Chicago.<sup>61</sup>

KFAI was competing for the same frequency with KMOJ, another ten-watt community station broadcasting from the Glenwood-Lyndale housing projects on the North Side.

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<sup>56</sup> Richard Hoops, "90.3 FM: The Big 10-Watt Spot," *Fresh Air*, October 1980. General Manager Pat Brenna held the only staff position that was funded solely by KFAI.

<sup>57</sup> Anara Guard, "Building the Future," *Fresh Air*, February 1981.

<sup>58</sup> Charles Brin, "Western and McKay Go National with Documentary," *Fresh Air*, July 1981.

<sup>59</sup> "November Program Schedule," *Fresh Air*, November 1981.

<sup>60</sup> Jura Amelia Leete, "Susan Allen Toth," *Fresh Air*, September 1981.

<sup>61</sup> "Summer Program Guide," *Fresh Air*, Summer 1982. Apparently, *Fresh Air* was not published during 1983, but publication of the program guide resumed in 1984.

Three years earlier, both stations applied to the FCC for power increases and both insisted on a 95-percent interference-free signal. The FCC ruled that the two applications were mutually exclusive and a power increase would go to only one of them. Both stations took their fight to a preliminary hearing in Washington D.C. Over time, according to Nichols, this fight was resolved by a new staff member at the FCC, who worked out a compromise that benefited both stations.<sup>62</sup>

- 1984 On January 9, KFAI began broadcasting from a 125-watt transmitter atop the Foshay Tower, which provided transmission within an eight-mile radius. To mark the event, the mayors of Minneapolis and Saint Paul proclaimed January 9 as “Fresh Air Day” and the Wallets broadcast their own version of “There’s No Business Like Show Business” from the KFAI studio. Others staged a balloon parade, led by a dancing radio, down Nicollet Mall. In her regular column in *Fresh Air*, Development Director Louise Strasbaugh optimistically predicted that soon KFAI would have a million new listeners.<sup>63</sup>
- 1985 A long feature article on KFAI reported that “the new antenna and power boost tripled the station’s membership from 1,000 to 3,000 almost overnight, and Forte [Everett Forte, station manager] now estimates that the station has about 50,000 listeners who tune in at least once a week.” The reporter stated that “what makes KFAI different from the other radio stations in town, commercial and public, is that it breaks down the barriers between radio consumers and radio producers. The three paid staffers all started as volunteers.”<sup>64</sup>
- KFAI began to broadcast in stereo.<sup>65</sup>
- 1986 Fresh Air Radio moved into offices above the Butler Drug store at 1518 East Lake Street, less than two blocks from its original location at Walker Church. “Reports indicate that air conditioning was everyone’s favorite new amenity.”<sup>66</sup>
- 1987 KFAI and Walker Art Center sponsor a marathon reading of *Swann’s Way*, the first volume of Proust’s *Remembrance of Things Past*, beginning Saturday, April 11, at 8:00 a.m. and ending Sunday, April 12, at 1:00 a.m. The reading was broadcast from the New French Cafe in the warehouse district of Minneapolis. The readers included Minneapolis mayor Don Fraser, newspaper columnist Barbara Flanagan, *Utne Reader* editor Eric Utne, Walker Art Center director Martin Friedman, Minnesota Viking Steve Jordan, comedienne Susan Vass, University of Minnesota professor Peter Robinson, and actors from Theater de la Jeune Lune.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Bill McAuffe, “KFAI, KMOJ Power Bids go to FCC,” *Minneapolis Star and Tribune*, October 7, 1982. KMOJ’s wattage was increased to 1,000 watts in 1984 (Dave Matheny, “KMOJ: Feud pits Station’s Board against Founding Staffers,” *Minneapolis Star and Tribune*, March 9, 1987).

<sup>63</sup> Louise Strasbaugh, “It’s My Column and I’ll Cry If I Want To,” *Fresh Air*, January 1984; and “Outtakes,” *Fresh Air*, April-June, 1987.

<sup>64</sup> Jeremy Iggers, “KFAI, A Community Radio Station That’s Breaking Down Barriers,” *Minneapolis Star and Tribune*, July 28, 1985.

<sup>65</sup> “Outtakes,” *Fresh Air*, April-June, 1987.

<sup>66</sup> KFAI website. Nichols also mentioned that the restrooms in the Butler Drug building were much more accessible than in Walker Church.

<sup>67</sup> KFAI clippings file, Minneapolis Collection, Minneapolis Public Library.

1988 “In celebration of a decade of broadcasting, KFAI featured a day-long tribute to the sounds of 1978 called *Stayin’ Alive*.”<sup>68</sup>

According to the *Minnesota Women’s Press*, KFAI “provides the largest block of air time devoted to women’s programming in the country.” The two-hour program “We Want You to Know” airs weekdays and features music and news produced and announced entirely by women. KFAI programmer Michelle Johnson, who had experience in both commercial and public radio, remarked, “It comes down to who you use as your authority and the message you want to get out. At a commercial station if you wanted to do a story on welfare, for example, you’d call a legislator. At a community station, you’d call the woman who is on welfare. It’s a difference of whose voice gets heard.”<sup>69</sup>

The *Twin Cities Reader* ran a long feature article on a typical day at KFAI. It started with Roger Purdy and the “Ideal Cafe Jukebox” show. Purdy, who had at one time aspired to be professional radio host, realized that even with a diploma from the Brown Institute, he would have been “reading the hog reports in Missoula, Montana, for a long time, so I decided to try this place.” After more than three years on KFAI, Purdy noted, “These are the best three hours of the week for me.” “Ideal Cafe Jukebox” was followed by “Frogucci,” a twice-monthly program of rock and roll from France. Later in morning, barber Helge Lamo hosted the “Scandinavian Cultural Hour” that featured old-fashioned Nordic music, as well as Ole and Lena jokes. By the afternoon, the news director Chip Young (at 29, he was the oldest KFAI staffer) was preparing for the evening’s newscast. Meanwhile at the weekly staff meeting, station manager Tom Ladd joked that for tenth anniversary party the invitations would be sent out with first class postage, “even if it breaks us.” By 1988, KFAI had a yearly budget of \$170,000 and, according to the Arbitron rating service, 30,000 people listened each week, and at any given quarter-hour, 800 people were tuned in.<sup>70</sup>

1989 KFAI began to look for a new home. The station’s five full-time and three part-time employees, plus 200 volunteers, were squeezed into the 1,600-square-foot office space above Butler Drug. The quality of space there was another problem. Bill Palladino said, “We’re living in a dentist’s office and that is not the most efficient for radio. You can even hear the buses on Lake Street when we broadcast.”<sup>71</sup>

“‘Little City in Space,’ first broadcast on KFAI in 1978, went national with its post-modern, inter-galactic, quirky hour of radio theater. Billed as ‘Radio’s Ed Sullivan Show of the Electronic Cottage,’ LCS wows them from New York City to Sitka, Alaska.”<sup>72</sup>

1990 The *Twin Cities Reader* profiled KFAI disc jockey Jon Copeland and his show “Rock of Rages.” By age thirteen Copeland decided that he wanted to become disc jockey after

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<sup>68</sup> KFAI Web site.

<sup>69</sup> Vicki Byrne, “Presenting Strong Images of Women on Radio,” *Minnesota Women’s Press*, April 27-May 10, 1988.

<sup>70</sup> Adam Platt, “A Day in the Life of KFAI,” *Twin Cities Reader*, April 27, 1988.

<sup>71</sup> Van Anderson, “Are We Losing Our Air?” *The Horn*, December 1989.

<sup>72</sup> KFAI Web site.

doing volunteer work at KSTP and KDWB, even though he concluded that DJs did not have much freedom on commercial stations. After hearing the Dead Boys and the Sex Pistols on KFAI, he thought, “*This* is a cool radio station.” In 1980, while listening on a Saturday night, Copeland heard a DJ on KFAI announce his immediate resignation. Copeland raced over to KFAI the following Monday morning, hoping to fill the 5:00-7:00 p.m. Saturday slot, but Marcia Seelhoff was already there. Both were sixteen years old. “In a true KFAI gesture, the kids were told to cooperate and share the show. They got it together with a third host, Viva Connel.” Over the years the program had a number of names: “New Wave Show,” “Going Underground,” “Moods for Moderns,” and finally “Rock of Rages.” Copeland not only played songs by local bands like Hüsker Dü, he brought them into the KFAI studio for interviews and performances. Both Connel and Seelhoff left after several years, but Copeland was still hosting the show more than nine years later and supporting his “DJ habit” with a job at the Minneapolis Public Library.<sup>73</sup>

- 1991 In the fall, KFAI moved into the Bailey Building at 1808 Riverside Avenue South. It was the station’s first custom designed facility, with studios, a newsroom, a record library, staff offices, a kitchen, and a meeting area. On December 12, the station held an open house to celebrate the move.<sup>74</sup>

Denise Mayotte, longtime community activist, was named as the new general manager of KFAI. Commenting on the move to the Bailey Building, she said, “The staff is sad to be leaving this area which has helped the station to grow, but they are also excited about the new and expanded space. We need to maintain our ties with the Phillips and Powderhorn neighborhoods, but one must remember that our community also relies on the air waves which extend beyond these neighborhood boundaries.”<sup>75</sup>

- 1993 KFAI celebrated its fifteenth anniversary with a party at the Fine Line Cafe in downtown Minneapolis. A notice stated that “the station began as a twinkle in [the] eyes of a group of Minneapolis residents who wanted to hear something new and different on the radio. They wanted a noncommercial station that would be for and about the many different cultures and communities in the Twin Cities.”<sup>76</sup>

- 1994 Early in the year, KFAI made its first significant programming changes in its history after an Arbitron survey revealed that most of its listeners were white males, aged twenty-five to forty. Program director Lisa Johnson observed that “tuning to KFAI has always been a surprise for listeners,” given the broad range of shows broadcast in French, Hmong, and Spanish, as well as programs that covered gay/lesbian issues and the arts scene.” However, there was a disadvantage to this array. Mayotte noted, “While the appeal of KFAI’s eclectic format intrigued some, the majority of listeners just switched off when a program that interested them finished.” Former news director Euan Kerr remarked, “The audience would change completely within a matter of seconds. The quality of programs

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<sup>73</sup> Theo Casserly, “Rock of Rages Never Ages,” *Twin Cities Reader*, August 22, 1990.

<sup>74</sup> Minneapolis Building Permits B579112, April 4, 1991; and B581954, July 18, 1991; KFAI Web site; and “Open House for New Studio in Bailey Building,” flyer, Minneapolis Public Library Minneapolis Collection files.

<sup>75</sup> Mark Hendrix, “KFAI Welcomes New General Manager,” *The Alley (Minneapolis)*, September 1991.

<sup>76</sup> “KFAI 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Party,” 87, November 12, 1993.

varied drastically throughout the day, too. There are programs of national caliber, but some are a complete embarrassment.” The new lineup was the outcome of a ten-person committee which examined the previous shows and began working toward a smooth flow of programs, emphasizing consistency over chaos. The changes resulted in more programming about women’s issues and gay/lesbian shows. Ironically, the women’s collective that had produced “We Want You to Know” disbanded as a result of disputes over the proposed changes. “Fresh Fruit,” the show aimed at gays and lesbians, was replaced by “Forbidden Fruit.” At this point, KFAI’s annual budget was \$300,000.<sup>77</sup>

KFAI announced that it would install a translator in West Saint Paul to simulcast its signal on another frequency, 106.7 FM. “KFAI officials say reception will improve dramatically in St. Paul and its southern and eastern suburbs and in eastern Minneapolis.”<sup>78</sup>

When John Kass, owner of Prospective Records, hosted his last episode of “Can You Dig It?” *City Pages* called the move “symbolic of a generational and cultural shift at Fresh Air Radio.” Kass was “seen by many as the soul of the station’s unparalleled rock programming. But Kass, like the station’s other rock jocks who’ve seen Twin Cities’ radio catch up with KFAI, is feeling a little redundant these days.”<sup>79</sup>

1998 KFAI celebrated its twentieth birthday. One article observed, “KFAI’s popularity is hard to gauge. The station is included in the same Arbitron ratings measurements as major broadcasters, but typically earns a share no larger than the survey’s margin of error. And as [Program Director Michael] Wassenaar pointed out, ‘they don’t send out [ratings] books in Somali or Hmong.’ Perhaps a better reading of KFAI’s audience was seen in the results of its most recent fund drive which met the goal of \$55,000 ahead of schedule. Even after the on-air pitches ceased, many thousand of dollars kept coming in.”<sup>80</sup>

Media critic Noel Holston noted that KFAI was more important than ever. “On a mainstream commercial station such as WCCO (830 AM), diversity means a white male host who’s 30-something rather than 50. On KFAI, it means a patchwork schedule that, over the course of a week, includes programs by and for Hmong listeners, Latinos, Ethiopians, Eritreans, American Indians, gays and lesbians, the disabled—even heritage-conscious Scandinavians.”<sup>81</sup>

2003 KFAI turned twenty-five years old and a newspaper reporter noted, “The KFAI 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration features a lineup half as diverse as the station itself—which is saying something. Blues-rock veteran Willie Murphy heads a main-room lineup with his

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<sup>77</sup> David Southgate, “KFAI’s New Programming Schedule Means more Queer, Women’s Voices,” *Equal Time*, January 6-13, 1994.

<sup>78</sup> Noel Holston, “KFAI to Clear the Air with New Equipment,” *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, September 19, 1994

<sup>79</sup> Jim Meyer, “Changing of the Vanguard,” *City Pages*, November 2, 1994.

<sup>80</sup> Scott Briggs, “Making Waves,” *Skyway News*, May 7-13, 1998.

<sup>81</sup> Noel Holston, “KFAI Never More Important as News, Music Alternative,” *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, May 8, 1998.



Angel-Headed Hipsters, plus Spider John Koerner, the Front Porch Swingin' Liquor Pigs and Yawo.”<sup>82</sup>

A profile of KFAI observed the commonalities between two seemingly different individuals. While Trinidad native Tony Paul, who had played African music on the station for twenty-three years, worked in the on-air studio, American Indian activist Chris Spotted Eagle was practicing for his program, “Indian Uprising,” which was scheduled to start broadcasting in a month. “Although they came to KFAI decades apart and worlds away from each other, Paul and Spotted Eagle unknowingly tell similar stories about what attracted them to the station, which has the most diverse format on Twin Cities radio.” Paul remarked, “No other stations offer this kind of mix of education and entertainment.” Spotted Eagle noted, “It’s a great place to learn and listen,” and described the KFAI offices as “somewhere where the doors are always open.” At age twenty-five, KFAI had an annual budget of \$689,000 and two transmitters, one atop the Foshay Tower with 125 watts and another in West Saint Paul with 175 watts. The biggest change over the years, though, was in the demographic makeup of its volunteers and programming. “Older shows that cater to Hispanic, Hmong and gay and lesbian listeners now share time with programs geared toward Filipino, Eritrean, Ethiopian and Khmer immigrants.”<sup>83</sup>

2007 The KFAI Web site stated: “KFAI is a non-commercial FM radio station operating on 90.3 MHz in Minneapolis and 106.7 MHz in St. Paul. KFAI is governed by a volunteer community board of directors, managed by a small paid full time and part time staff, and operated by a volunteer staff of over 400. KFAI’s annual budget for 2007 is approximately \$1,200,000.

“KFAI is listener-supported, with over 3,400 members contributing nearly half of its income. Additional support has come from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the National Endowment for the Arts, the State of Minnesota, the McKnight Foundation, the Bush Foundation, the Otto Bremer Foundation, area corporations and program underwriters.”<sup>84</sup>

The transmitter was moved to the top of the nearby IDS building to accommodate the historic rehabilitation of the Foshay Tower.<sup>85</sup>

Nichols said he was proud of KFAI because “it never stiffed its creditors, stayed on the air for all these years, served the immigrant community, and its volunteers still do almost all the programming, although it is more professional now.”<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Jon Bream, Chris Riemenschneider, and Tom Surowicz, “The Week in Music,” *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, January 24, 2003.

<sup>83</sup> Chris Riemenschneider, “Radio Station Keeps Diversity on the Dial,” *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, January 25, 2003.

<sup>84</sup> KFAI Web site.

<sup>85</sup> Nichols interview.

<sup>86</sup> Nichols interview.

ILLUSTRATIONS

**Mysterious Wireless Messages Are  
Received by Youthful Operators**

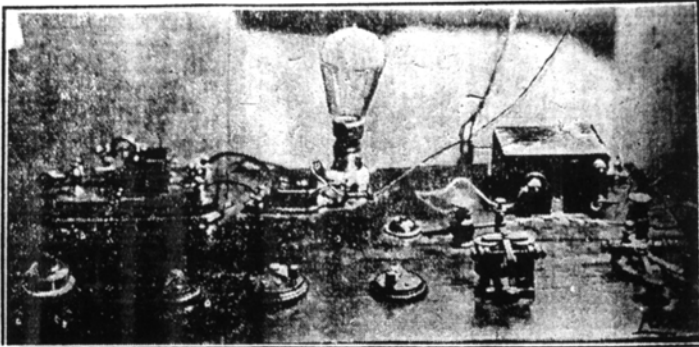
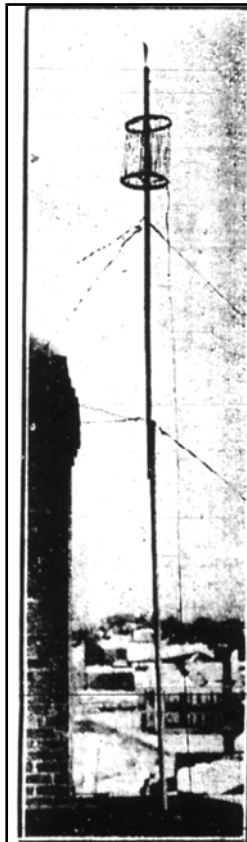


TABLE SHOWING HAROLD GREENLEE'S LAYOUT OF APPARATUS.

Photographs (above and right) of Harold Greenlee's wireless equipment located at 1915 Hennepin Avenue.

*Minneapolis Journal, December 29, 1907*



"TARGET" FOR INTERCEPTING WAVES.

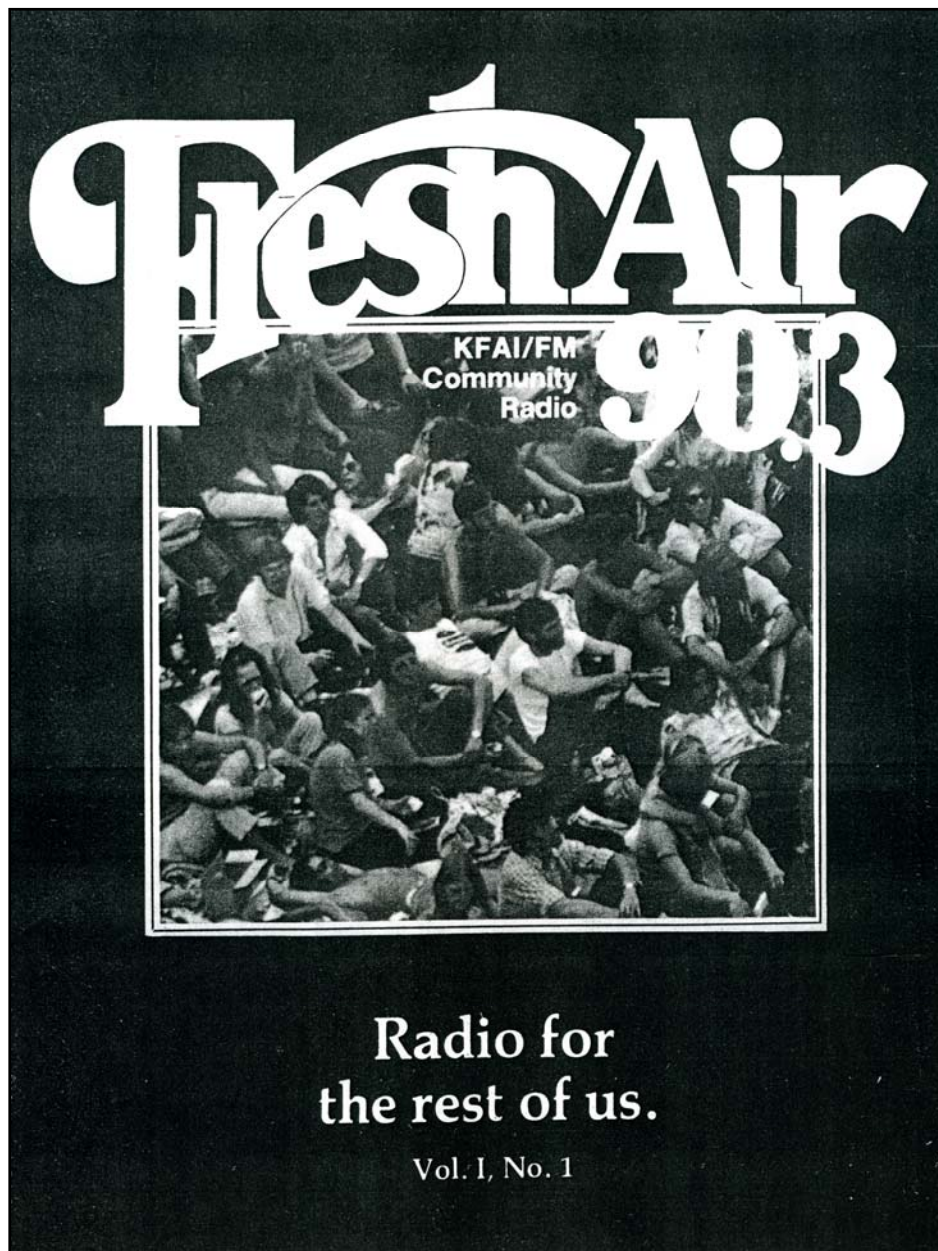


James A. Coles at his broadcasting station located in his house at 3537 Twelfth Avenue South, ca. 1914.

*Minnesota Historical Society Collection*



Walker United Methodist Church, 3104 Sixteenth Avenue South, where KFAI opened its first studio in 1978.  
*Penny Petersen, photographer*



The cover of the first issue of *Fresh Air* magazine, 1978.

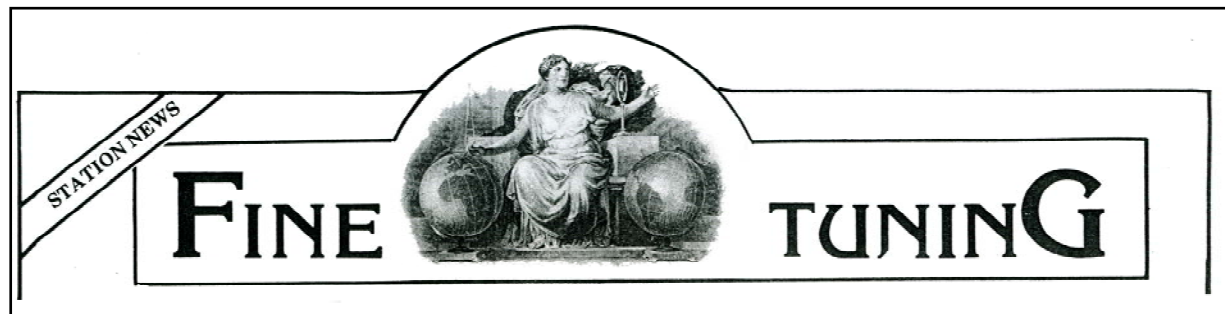
## Part of Our Gang



Photo: Greg Helgeson

The Coordinating Staff of KFAI (left to right from bottom): Randy Rusnak and Max Swanson (Blind in Broadcasting); Roger Pautz (Publications); Lane Kirchner (Programming); Maggie Pohlen (Volunteers); Tom Lijewski (Blind in Broadcasting); Janice Command (Staff Producer); Phil Sims (Station Manager); Michael Wasser (Technical); Michael Brady (Cultural Affairs); and David McKay (Public Affairs).

The KFAI Coordinating Staff as they appeared when the station first went on the air.  
*Fresh Air*, 1978



The “Fine Tuning” section of *Fresh Air* offered news about KFAI, staff changes, and upcoming events.

*Fresh Air*, October 1979 and February 1981

Fresh Air  
PRESENTS

# EDDIE BERGER & THE JAZZ ALL-STARS

KANE'S ILLUSTRATED MUSICAL PROFILES No. 4



CHARLIE PARKER

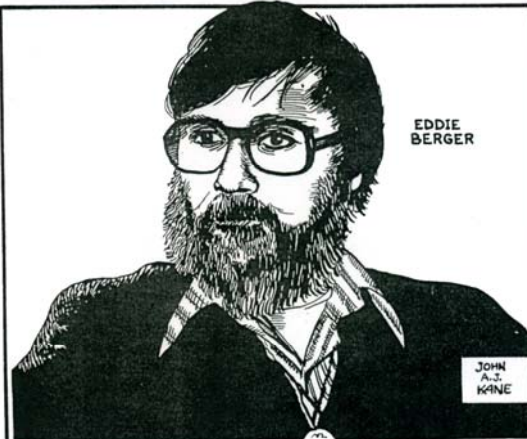
EDDIE BERGER WAS ON THE ROAD AT AGE 18 WITH A BAND CALLED THE CONTINENTALS. TOURING HIS NATIVE PHILADELPHIA AND NEARBY NEW YORK GAVE HIM A CHANCE TO HEAR MANY JAZZ ARTISTS LIKE CHARLIE PARKER, STAN GETZ, ZOOT SIMS, AND DEXTER GORDON. EVENTUALLY THE CONTINENTALS EXPANDED THEIR TOURS TO JAZZ CLUBS IN CHICAGO AND LAS VEGAS, BUT THEN BROKE UP IN THE LATE 1950'S. BERGER RETURNED TO PHILADELPHIA FOR A SHORT WHILE.



BERGER THEN CAME TO MINNEAPOLIS TO STUDY RADIO BROADCASTING AT BROWN INSTITUTE, AND RECEIVED HIS DEGREE IN 1959. FOR THE FOLLOWING YEAR HE WORKED AS AN ANNOUNCER FOR COMMERCIAL STATION KDUZ IN HUTCHINSON. AFTER LEAVING KDUZ, HE THEN SETTLED PERMANENTLY IN MINNEAPOLIS AND SPENT THE YEARS 1963 TO 1970 PLAYING SAXOPHONE IN VARIOUS HENNEPIN AVENUE STRIP JOINTS. DURING THESE YEARS MANY PEOPLE SUGGESTED TO BERGER THAT HE FORM SOME KIND OF JAZZ GROUP, SO IN 1970, WHEN THE STRIP JOINTS WERE DISCONTINUING LIVE MUSIC, BERGER ASSEMBLED THE JAZZ ALL-STARS.



THE ALL-STARS BIG BREAK CAME IN THE EARLY 1970'S WHEN SOME VIDEO PRODUCTION STUDENTS TAPED A LIVE PERFORMANCE AT THE NEW RIVERSIDE CAFE, WHICH WAS AIRED ON CHANNEL 2. THE JAZZ ALL-STARS HAVE VARIED IN SIZE FROM A TRIO TO A NINE-PIECE GROUP TO THE PRESENT QUARTET, CONSISTING NOW OF EDDIE BERGER ON SAX, MIKKEL ROMSTAD ON PIANO, TOM HUBBARD ON BASS, AND PHIL HEY ON DRUMS. THEY PERFORM JAZZ STANDARDS OF THE 1940'S TO THE 1960'S, SOME BE-BOP NUMBERS, PLUS BROADWAY SHOW TUNES DONE IN A JAZZ STYLE. SOME FAVORITE COMPOSERS ARE COLE PORTER, JEROME KERN, RICHARD ROGERS, AND GEORGE GERSHWIN. BERGER LIKES TO APPROACH PERFORMANCES IN A FREE-FLOWING MANNER. HE FEELS ONE MUST HAVE THE INITIAL TRAINING AND DISCIPLINE, BUT ONCE THE INSTRUMENT HAS BEEN MASTERED, ONE SHOULD BE ABLE TO LET GO AND "PLAY WHAT COMES TO YOU".



EDDIE BERGER

JOHN A. J. KANE

EDDIE BERGER AND THE JAZZ ALL STARS CAN BE SEEN ON A REGULAR BASIS AT LOCAL CLUBS LIKE THE ARTIST'S QUARTER AND WILLIAM'S PUB. A YEAR AGO THEY DID AN UPPER MIDWEST UNIVERSITY TOUR AND HAVE RELEASED ONE ALBUM CALLED *LIVE AT WILLIAM'S PUB*. BESIDES HIS REGULAR GIGS, BERGER DOES THE KFAI MORNING JAZZ SHOW, TEACHES NIGHT CLASSES AND GIVES PRIVATE INSTRUCTION IN THE SAXOPHONE, AS WELL AS HOLDING JAZZ CLINICS AT VARIOUS UNIVERSITIES. HE HAS ALSO FOUND TIME TO PLAY ON OTHER ARTISTS' ALBUMS (THE SAX PARTS ON RIO NIDO'S LAST ALBUM ARE BERGER'S). BERGER WOULD LIKE TO CUT A SECOND ALBUM AS SOON AS HE CAN GET THE NECESSARY FINANCIAL BACKING AND EVENTUALLY TOUR EUROPE WITH HIS BAND.

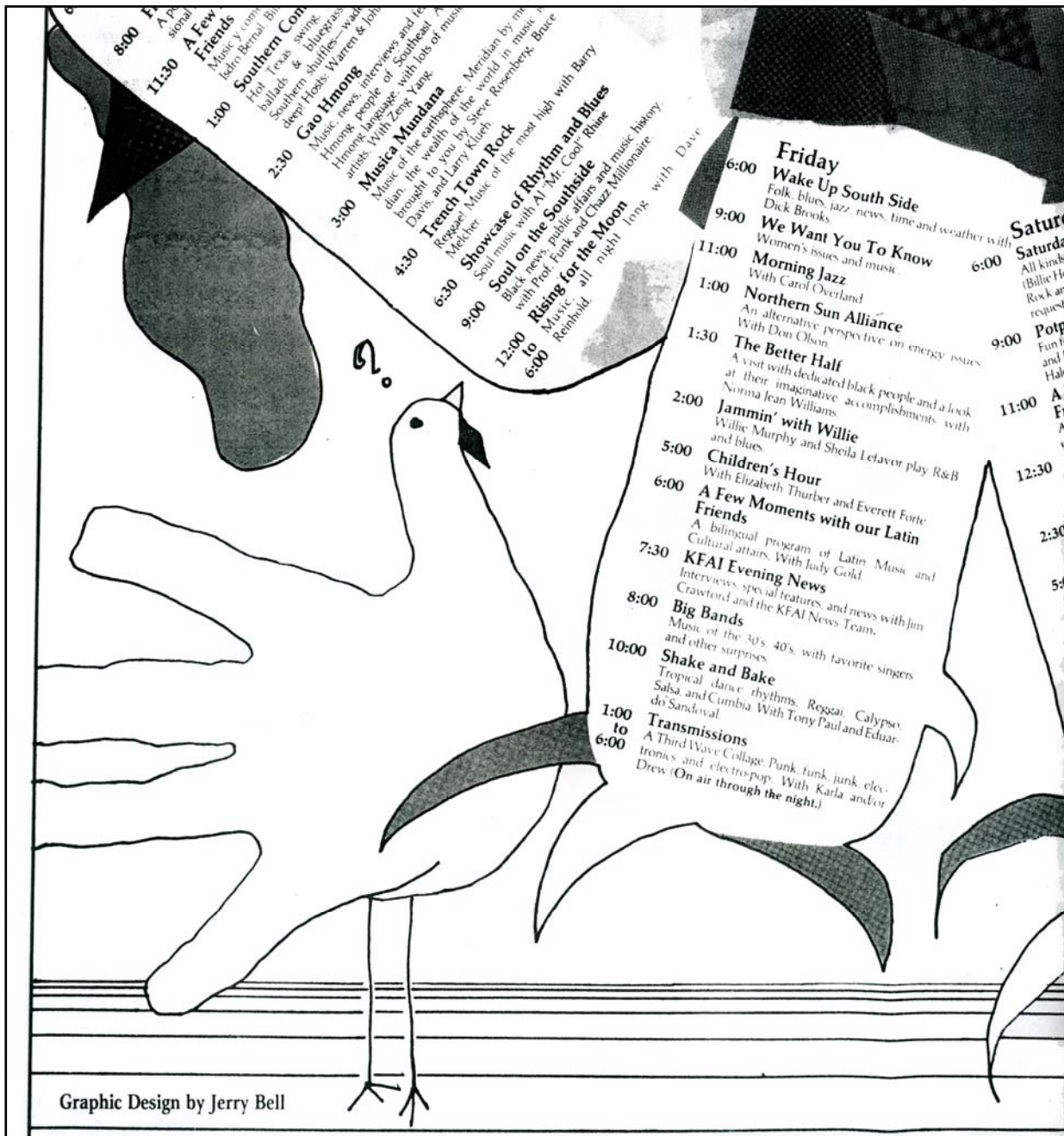
Copyright 1980 by John A.J. Kane

Fresh Air/ June 1980

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John A. J. Kane spotlighted local musicians in his "Illustrated Musical Profiles" series that appeared in *Fresh Air Magazine*.

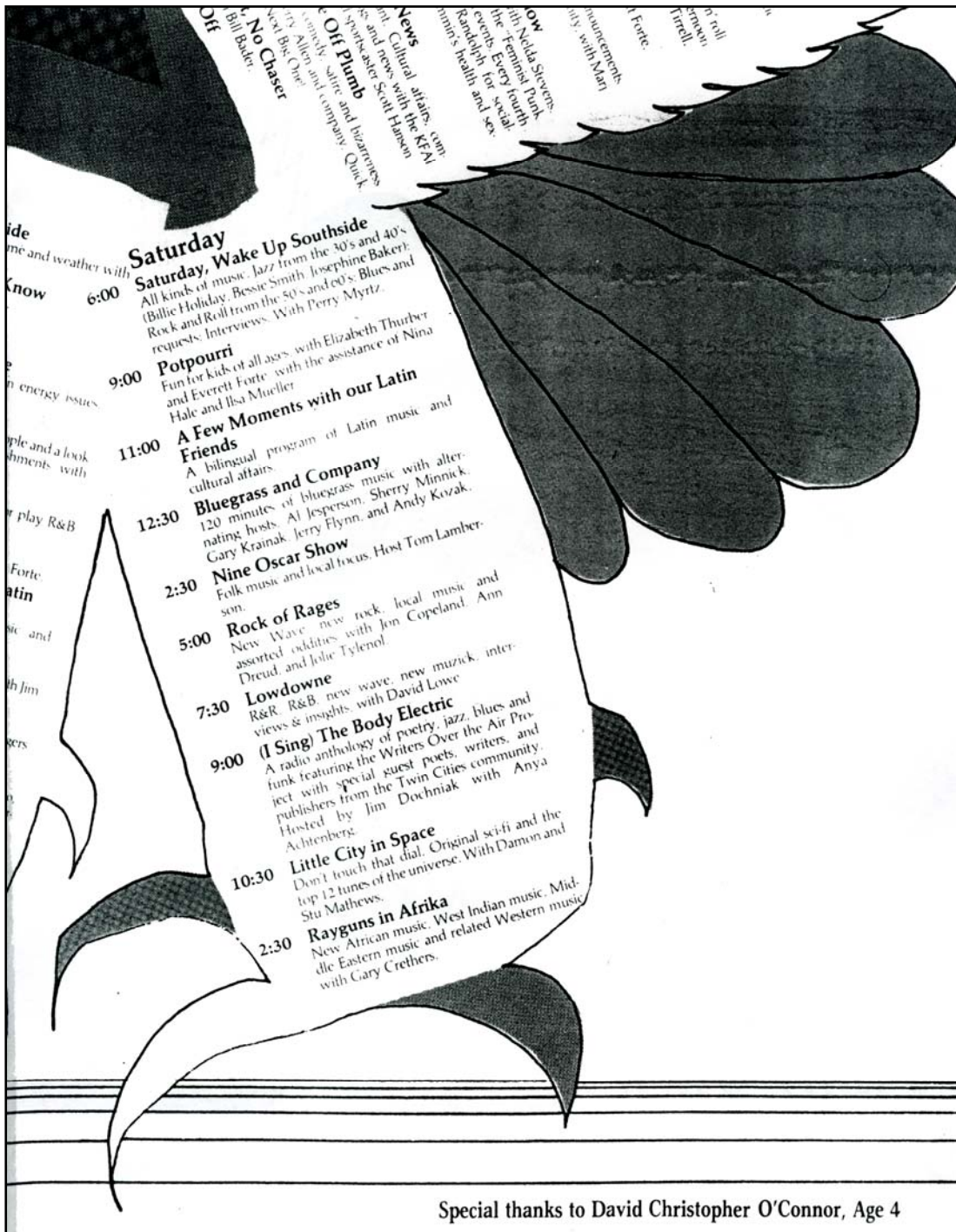
Fresh Air, June 1980



Graphic Design by Jerry Bell

In the early years, the program guide in *Fresh Air* was sometimes artistically designed as seen on this page and the following two pages, where the guide was incorporated into a whimsical drawing of a turkey—a theme appropriate for the November issue.

*Fresh Air*, November 1981



*Fresh Air, November 1981*



**Tuesday**

6:00 **Wake Up South Side**  
"Wake Up America" edition. Robbie Robinson takes you all through American alternatives.

9:00 **Our Minstrels: Medieval to Modern**  
A program of music by singing poets and players through the ages with Jane Berry.

11:00 **Morning Jazz**  
With Pam Johnson.

1:00 **Inside Pages**  
Featuring *Unsub Country* every 2nd Tuesday, *M.P.R.C. Saturday* and *The Future Now* every 3rd Tuesday, *High on Health* every 4th Tuesday. *Prime Time* and KFAI news are regular features.

2:00 **Scandinavian Cultural Hour**

3:00 **You Never Can Tell**  
A musical mixture of R&B, Soul, and Jazz. With Diane Anderson.

5:00 **Children's Hour**  
With Elizabeth Thurber and Everett Forte.

6:00 **Shockwave**  
Original Science Fiction in a lighter vein.

7:00 **Tuesday's Spoken Word**  
Readings of prose, poetry, short stories and drama with Charles Brin and Beryl Greenberg, featuring "The Odyssey of Homer" by the National Radio Theatre of Chicago.

8:30 **KFAI Evening News**  
Tuesday's affairs with Glen McCluskey. Sports with Scott Hanson, and interviews and local news with the KFAI News Team.

9:00 **What's the Word**  
Presentation of contemporary issues of interest and importance to people in a changing society. With Barry Kleider.

9:30 **We Want You To Know**  
Tuesday's edition with Fury. Jazz, Soul, Moon Signs for the coming week, occasional poetry.

11:30 **Greven with the Blues**  
Brother Hound Dog recommends a spoonful of this tonic for every care and worry.

3:00 **Sign Off.**

**Wednesday**

6:00 **Wake Up South Side**  
Midweek meanderings through lots of styles with Bill Siebert.

9:00 **We Want You To Know**  
Wednesday's edition is with Lisa Hoff. Intellectual repartee and eccentric music.

11:00 **Morning Jazz**  
Essentially Be-Bop. With Pat Marentic.

1:00 **Centro Cultural Chicano**  
Latin music and public affairs.

1:30 **Family Day Care Show**  
Training and support for day care providers and parents plus occasional special entertainment for children. With Michael Kaupet.

2:00 **River Cities Review**  
Live from the New Riverside Cafe and also records! local and regional artists. With Tom Lamberson.

5:00 **Children's Hour**  
Elizabeth Thurber and Everett Forte.

6:00 **First Person Radio**  
Cultural affairs of the Native American Community.

6:30 **Last Night's Fun**  
Traditional Irish music with Mary MacFadhon.

7:00 **The National Radio Theatre of Chicago**  
Features "The Odyssey of Homer".

8:00 **Last Night's Fun (continued)**  
Interviews and news with the KFAI News Team, and sportscaster Scott Hanson.

8:30 **KFAI Evening News**  
with Doug Cain.

9:00 **The World's Music**  
Music of many peoples and different lands.

10:00 **Eles/Reed Project**  
A collage of jazz, Rock and Reggae. With Geza.

12:00 **Sign Off**

12:00 **Sign Off**

**Thursday**

6:00 **Wake Up South Side**  
Miscellaneous music to get yourself up by with Bruce Kennedy, Paul O'Donnell, and Scott Kennedy, teamed after Arthur Lakow, developer of the Primal Scream.

9:00 **Dog House Riley**  
A blend of review, music, with Nico Cheston.

1:00 **Morning Jazz**  
With Eddie Allstar, Berger, and an outfit with Bill Lucas and Tom Burns.

1:30 **The Lazy Bill Lucas Show**  
The real thing. Blues, electric, and acoustic with Lazy Bill Lucas and Tom Burns.

3:00 **Bosapopolis Shakes**  
With a dash of jazz, a pinch of BeBop, a roll with a spin of poetry. You have an attention and a spin for the customer! Paul Terrell.

5:00 **Children's Hour**  
With Elizabeth Thurber and Everett Forte.

6:00 **Fresh Fruit**  
New music and community announcements. With Elizabeth Thurber and Everett Forte.

7:00 **We Want You To Know**  
In the city and Claude Rock. The first three Thursdays with Nelda Stevens. Women, Rock, and soul. The Fremont Park. Another week-end extravaganza. Every fourth Thursday with Road, Randolph for, Scott Hanson, and a woman's health and sex.

8:30 **KFAI Evening News**  
With Doreen Cain. Cultural affairs community, jazz, and sportscaster Scott Hanson.

9:00 **One Bubble Of Plumb**  
New Year and sportscaster Scott Hanson.

9:30 **Straight No Chaser**  
Featuring Jerry Allen and company. Quiz with Bill Baker.

12:00 **Sign Off**

**Friday**

6:00 **Wake Up South Side**  
Blues

*Fresh Air, November 1981*



# Program Guide Summer 1982

## Thursday

**Wake Up Southside.** Music to get up, get down with Bruce Kennedy or Hugh Montana.

Every other Thursday enjoy "The Lakov Experience" with Bruce and Scott Kennedy and Phil O'Donnell (named after Arthur Lakov, developer of the Primal Sneeze).

**Doghouse Riley.** Connoisseur's choice, often by request, with Nico Cheston and Jay Christman.

**Morning Jazz.** with Eddie "All Star" Berger.

**The Lazy Bill Lucas Show.** The real blues, acoustic and electric.

**Bossapolis Shakes.** Jazz, R&B, rock 'n' roll, and poetry with Paul Tirrell.

**The Children's Hour.** Cozy up for an "imagination break" with Elizabeth Thurber and Everett Forte.

**Fresh Fruit.** Music, news and announcements from the gay and lesbian community with Marj Schneider and Claude Peck.

**We Want You to Know.** News, information, music by and about women.

**KFAI Evening News.** News from the KFAI News Team, sports with Scott Hanson.

**Straight, No Chaser.** Jazz with Bill Bader.

**Final Vinyl.** All night with Spot.

## Friday

**Wake Up Southside: Fabars on Friday.** New sounds for the weekend.

**We Want You to Know.** New rock, new music with Diane Rackowski.

**Morning Jazz.** Mainstream with Carol Overland.

**Northern Sun Alliance.** Alternative perspectives on energy issues.

**The Better Half.** Interviews from the black community with Norma Jean Williams.

**Jammin' with Willie.** Sweet honey from the bees.

5:00 **The Children's Hour.** Sweet songs and tall tales from Elizabeth Thurber and Everett Forte.

6:00 **A Few Moments with Our Latin Friends.** A bilingual program of Latino music and cultural affairs, with Santiago Lopez.

7:30 **KFAI Evening News.** News, interviews, special features from the News Team, sports with Scott Hanson.

8:00 **Big Bands.** Music and singers of the 30's and 40's with Elizabeth Thurber.

10:00 **Shake and Bake.** Reggae, calypso, salsa and cumbia, with Tony Paul and Eduardo Sandoval.

1:00 **Adrenalin Solution.** Rock with And Miller.

## Saturday

6:00 **Wake Up Southside.** A musical mix to snooze by. It's Saturday.

9:00 **Potpouri.** Radio fun with Elizabeth Thurber and Everett Forte, Nina Hale, Ilze Mueller, and Anne Ness. Featuring Jeff Cashdollar and friends every 4th Saturday.

11:00 **A Few Moments with our Latin Friends.** Latino music and cultural affairs with Judy Gold.

12:30 **Bluegrass and Company.** with Al Jesperson, Sherry Minnick, Gary Krainak, Jerry Flynn, and Andy Kozak.

2:30 **Walk Right In.** Folk music with Scott Lowery, Al Haug, John Stepka, Bill Hinckley, and Laura Cripps.

5:00 **Rock of Ages.** New rock with Jon Copeland, Ann Dreud and Jolie Tylenol.

7:30 **Lowdown.** R&B, R&B, new muzick, interviews and job searches with David Lowe.

9:00 **(I Sing) The Body Electric.** Anthology of poetry, jazz, blues, and funk with Jim Dochniak and David Brown.

10:30 **Little City in Space.** Original sf and the top 12 tunes in the universe with Damon and Stu Mathews.

2:30 **Random Access.** New music through the night with Dave Reinhold.

## Program Highlights

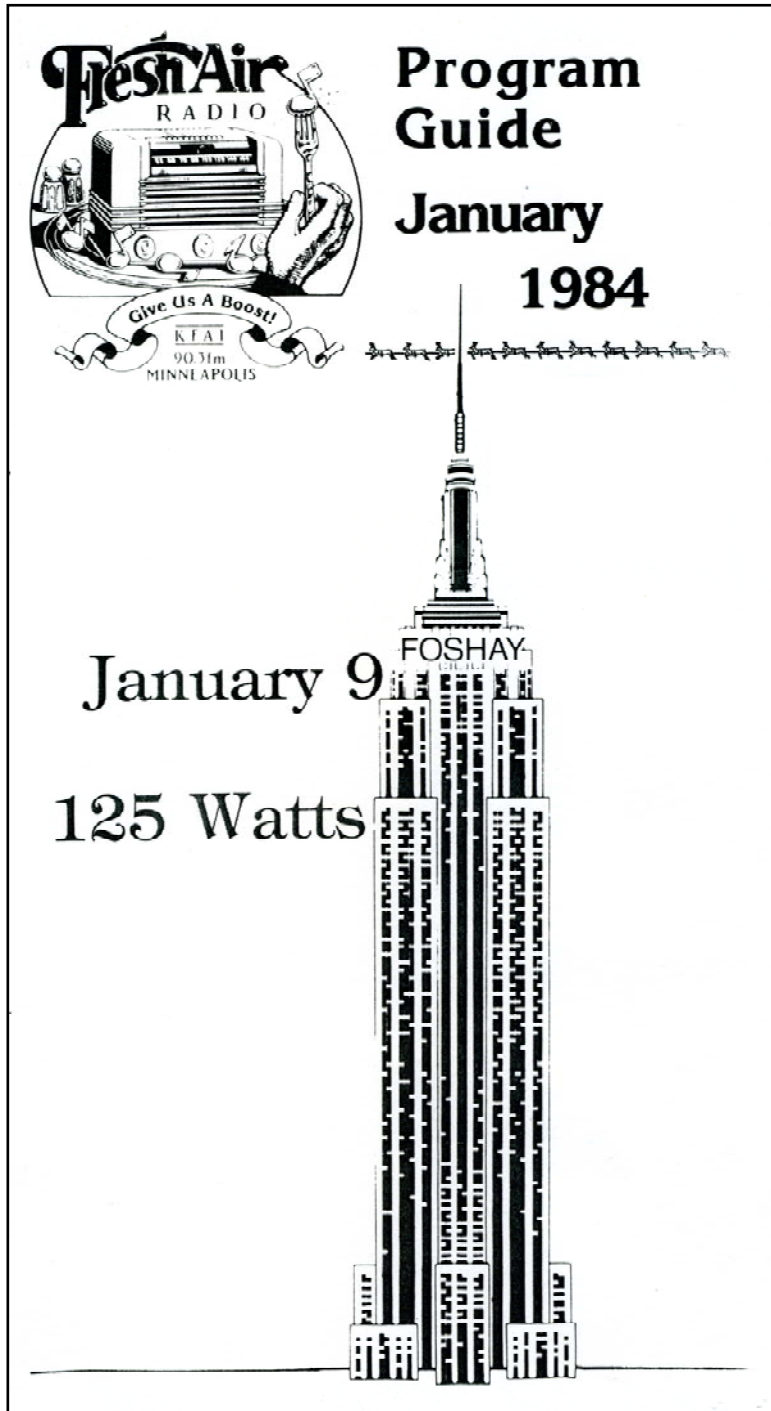
The National Radio Theatre of Chicago.

Tuesdays at 7 p.m.

- July** 6 "The Dark Tower" by Louis MacNeice and Benjamin Britten, with Michael York
- 12 **MOTOWN MONDAY.** All your fave hits and then some. Monday **Wake Up Southside: Shake Up Edition** with Larry Englund, 6-9 a.m.
- 13 "La Ronde" by Arthur Schnitzler
- 14 "A Woody Guthrie Tribute" performed live by local musicians on **River Cities Revue**, 2-5 p.m.
- 20 "Who'll Save the Playboy?" by Frank Gilroy
- 27 "MATHRY BEACON" by Giles Cooper and Marty Green
- Aug.** 3 "The Adding Machine" by Elmer Rice
- 10 "The Ugly Duckling" by A.A. Milne and "George Washington Crossing the Delaware" by Kenneth Koch
- 14 "Festival of the American Musical Spirit" returns by request. With Odetta, Si Kahn, Bernice Reagon, Guy Carawan, Claudia Schmitt, Larry Long, and Peter Yarrow, 1-5:30 p.m. "Fresh Air Birthday Bash" Recorded May 1 at the Whole, our 4th birthday party features 21, the Warheads, Equal Blues Amendment, and Silver Slug, 5:30-9 p.m.
- 17 "A Tale of Two Cities, Part I" by Charles Dickens, with Brian Murray
- 24 "A Tale of Two Cities, Part II"
- 31 "The Baccæ" by Euripides "Plant Closures, Shuttered Factories, Shuttered Lives." An examination of the ripple effect of factory shut-downs on town economies and on individuals, and the importance of multi-national corporations and their lack of allegiance to local communities, 1-2 p.m.

By 1982, the KFAI program guide was in a more conventional format.

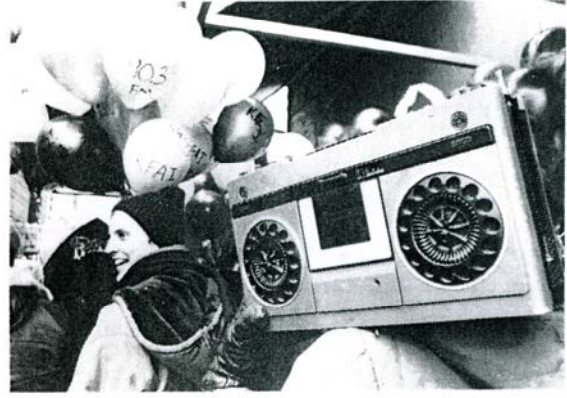
*Fresh Air, Summer 1982*



Fresh Air Radio celebrated a power increase with the  
move of its transmitter to the Foshay Tower.

*Fresh Air, January 1984*

## The Joy of Our Power Increase



Where were you when the power went up? Some were at the Walker Church where The Wallets saluted the **Fresh Air** power increase with their version of *There's No Business Like Show Business*. Others were marching downtown Minneapolis to the site of the new transmitter at the Foshay Tower, and *everyone* was listening.



Some paraded on Nicollet Mall while others listened to the Wallets to celebrate the new, more powerful transmitter on the Foshay Tower.

*Fresh Air, May 1984*



Panaderia San Miguel, formerly the Butler Drug store, at 1518 East Lake Street. KFAI relocated its studios to this building in 1986.

*Penny Petersen, photographer*

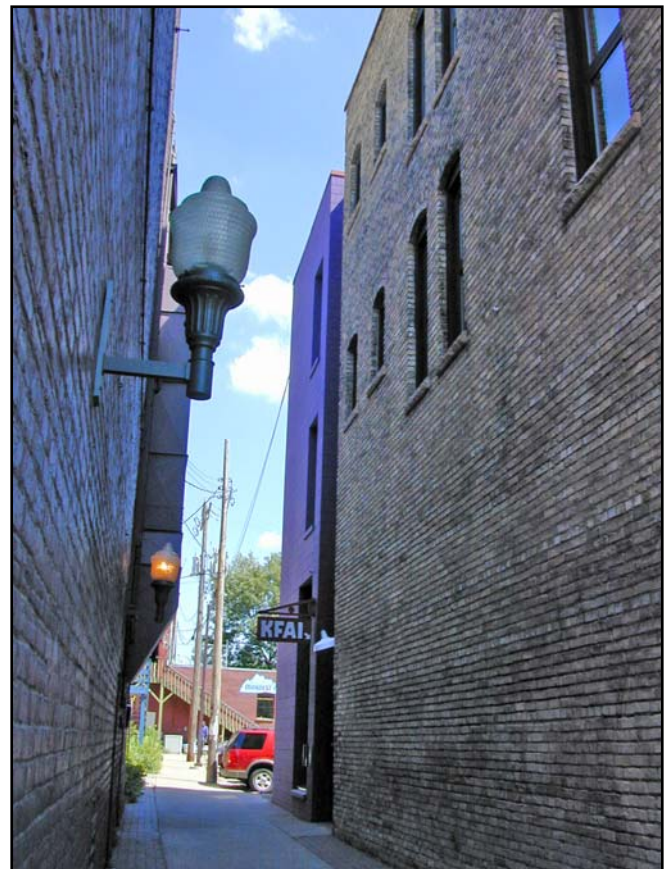


The Bailey Building at 1808 Riverside Avenue South, the current home of KFAI, Fresh Air Radio, since 1991.

*Penny Petersen, photographer*



The KFAI sign on the third floor of the Bailey Building.  
*Penny Petersen, photographer*



The alley adjacent to the Bailey Building leading to KFAI's entrance.  
*Penny Petersen, photographer*

# Fresh Air

FRESH AIR RADIO • KFAI • 90.3 FM  
1808 RIVERSIDE AVENUE  
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA 55454

*Fresh Air Program Guide, July-September 1992*

## 5 p.m.

**Fresh Air Presents!** Showcasing the full spectrum of independent radio from coast to coast and in your own back yard. The minds that brought you "Gray Matters" now bring you **Alternating Current** the first Saturday of every month. Hosted by Amy Summer and Dan St. Martin.

**Trenchtown International.** Cool runnings of the most high with Wally and The Dan



**AZTEC CHARACTERS**  
TRANSLATED AS "KFAI".  
ALL FRESH AIR VOLUNTEERS  
AND STAFF ARE REQUIRED  
BY LAW TO LEARN AND USE  
THIS ANCIENT MEXICAN  
PICTURE LANGUAGE

## 6 p.m.

**Hmong-American Reachout.** A variety of Hmong traditional songs and modern music. Community affairs plus national and international news briefs.

**Desde Y Sobre America Latina.** A bilingual approach to Latin America: its music, culture and current events. With Rafael Varela, Katherine Malaga and Joe Grengs.

## 8 p.m.

**Mittaphatp Lao.** Laotian culture, entertainment and arts. Community announcements, news and education.



ON THE HORSE'S OTHER  
SIDE, MARKINGS SPELL "90.3"

## 9 p.m.

**Sabados Alegres.** Latino music and cultural affairs with Willie Dominguez.

**Urban Folk.** Contemporary folk and acoustic music from around the planet, with host Bob Feldman and special guests.



NATURAL MARKINGS ON  
HORSE SPELL "KFAI"

**Bluegrass and Company.** With Sherry Minnick, Andy Kozak, George Rothenberger, Art Blackburn and Jerry Flynn.

**Bootsey's Rhythm and Blues and Blues.** War has come. War has gone. Time to kick up your feet with rhythm, blues and Bootsey.

Details from a 1992 KFAI program guide, which offered several tongue-in-cheek examples of KFAI spelled out in ancient Aztec symbols or as markings on a horse.

*Fresh Air Program Guide, July-September 1992*

## **KFAI 15th Anniversary Party**

**K**FAI (90.3 FM) will celebrate 15 years on the air with a 15th Anniversary Party on Sunday, November 14 at the Fine Line Music Cafe, Minneapolis. The evening will include hors d'œuvres buffet and raffles. The event will be broadcast LIVE on KFAI.

KFAI's own DJs will be providing the high-class entertainment. Here's the lineup:

- 6:00 Dee and Bonnie V from *Watercolors*
- 7:00 Lolly Obeda and Joel Johnson from *Sugar Shop* and the *Lazy Bill Lucas Show*
- 8:00 Pete Lee and Mike Elias from *Bop Street*
- 9:00 Willie Dominguez from *Sabados Alegres*
- 10:00 Wallace Hill from *Equinox Jazz*
- 11:00 Babs and Mary Ellen from the *Homemakers from Heck*

Tickets are \$7.00 in advance or \$9.00 at the door. Call 371-0611 for ticket information. All proceeds benefit KFAI.

KFAI (also known lovingly as Fresh Air Radio) has been broadcasting since 1978. The station began as a twinkle in eyes of a group of Minneapolis residents who wanted to hear something new and different on the radio. They wanted a noncommercial station that would be for and about the many different cultures and communities in the Twin Cities. After much deliberation and discussions with the FCC, KFAI was born!

The station began broadcasting from the steeple of Walker Church in the Powderhorn neighborhood of South Minneapolis. From there, it moved to renovated dentist's office above Butler Drug Store on Bloomington and Lake Streets. Now, the station has a home of its own in the West Bank neighborhood. The station offers radio broadcast training, community access, and the most eclectic schedule you'll find anywhere with programs in seven different languages, and music ranging from Hmong Rock, to Gospel, to Heavy Metal.

Announcement of KFAI's fifteenth anniversary celebration at the Fine Line Cafe.

*Gaze Magazine, November 12, 1993*