



“Dear Radio Friend”: Listener Mail and the *National Barn Dance*, 1931-1941

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Dear Radio Friend:

. . . My father is from Tennessee, in Van Buren County
Wont you please play and sing: “Budded Roses. I will be listening in
every morning to hear it.

The old time music and songs are the only one’s for me . . .

A Radio Friend, Miss Dorothy Cole.¹

As did Dorothy Cole, thousands of radio listeners wrote a favorite performer on WLS Chicago’s *National Barn Dance* during the 1930s, expressing friendly allegiances to their favorite singing stars; hence, the common salutation, “Dear Radio Friend.” Audiences, many of them nostalgic migrants or their children, eagerly welcomed radio performers and often made friends with performers in very specific ways. Using the language provided by broadcasters and advertisers who hoped to entice consumers to tune in and buy products advertised, audiences fashioned new rituals of friendship, which they applied to performers and advertisers. The letters audiences then sent to radio stations documented and defined the diverse and varied terms of these rich, friendly, but ultimately one-sided relationships.

Listener mail is a rare and significant find for those who want to know how audiences responded to radio and its performers in the 1930s, considered radio’s

golden age. Radio, as scholar Catherine Covert argued, had atomized the listening public even as it drew them into an audience of millions in the early and mid 1920s. By the 1930s, listeners had manufactured the means to manage that atomization, which made radio (and the expanded advertisements that now paid for it) a comfortable and meaningful part of their homes. Indeed, tumultuous events like the Depression seemed to fade away as audiences wholeheartedly embraced their new place in a mass media world as radio listeners and ultimately, as consumers.²

Fan mail is also important because it exemplifies pivotal Depression-era trends. Advertisements in that decade became the norm as broadcasters sought sponsors to pay for radio programs. Sponsors, in turn, searched for customers who would spend money on their products. Barn dance radio married its sponsors' needs for consumers to its migrant audience's desire for nostalgic music and comedy of home. Those migrants had moved to industrial cities like Chicago in the 1920s, encouraged by the economic opportunities available. The millions of Southern rural residents who moved tuned into the radio hoping to hear familiar sounds in an alien environment. In the 1930s, mass media, especially the radio, broaden its appeal and its availability to those former Southerners (as well as to long-time urban residents) still searching the airwaves for "old-time" music. As these letters show, the program's ability to act as a mediator between listeners and advertisers, between audience and musicians, and between Southerners in urban areas and Southern culture proved that it would be successful even in times of trouble.³

These letters, sent to WLS Chicago's fan magazine, *Stand By!* to its popular program, the *National Barn Dance*, and to two of its performers, Bradley Kincaid and John Lair,⁴ provide a further opportunity: it allows us to see fans and fandom in their own terms rather than in ones that dismiss these relationships as "artificial" or psychotic as many scholars have. It is also a chance to analyze how thousands of women and men eagerly embraced radio performers as friends and neighbors, carving out a viable and emotionally satisfying place for themselves in this new world.⁵

Beyond what letter writers revealed, it is impossible to give substantial personal information about listeners or to draw broad conclusions about the typical audience. Although letters tended to come from the four-state region around Chicago, the *National Barn Dance* began nation-wide broadcast in 1933, and letters came from all areas, urban and rural alike. It is also difficult to determine a listener's class, race, or migrant status unless specifically mentioned in a letter. It would be inaccurate to assume that all letter writers were white, for example, because barn dance radio highlighted music that Southerners defined as both black and white at least until the early 1940s, when the last black hillbilly performer lost his job at the *Grand Ole Opry*, the *National Barn Dance*'s main competitor.⁶ Not only were the performers and music (at times) black, but so, too, were some of the barn dance's audience. Audience surveys, conducted by

sponsors, found that black women and men tuned in regularly to the barn dance, and performers frequently encountered African Americans listening to stage performances at a theater’s back door.⁷

During World War I and the 1920s, jobs drew rural people, especially Southerners, to urban areas. Black and white migrants, who would eventually number in the millions, traveled to industrial centers like Nashville, Birmingham, Cincinnati, Detroit and Chicago, following family members and friends who had already settled in the cities.⁸

Wherever Southerners moved, barn dance programs appeared on the radio. The most successful of all barn dance programs was WLS Chicago’s *National Barn Dance*. Although WLS broadcast other programs, it was the *National Barn Dance* that made the station a standout among its peers. From the first night WLS broadcast it, listener mail accompanied the *Barn Dance*’s success. The musical variety show aired for the first time in April, 1924, and audience members immediately sent 250 letters and telegrams, applauding the show’s representation of the rural tradition, the Saturday night dance party. Advertisers like Miles Laboratories’ Alka Seltzer and Pinex Cough Syrup flocked to the program, beginning in 1930, at the same time as broadcasters, faced with expensive AT&T wire charges in order to broadcast their shows nationally, eagerly welcomed them. The show’s popularity, counted by the number of letters it received, grew and by 1933, the National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) picked it up for national broadcast, some eight years before the network broadcast the *Grand Ole Opry*.⁹

Clanging cowbells, “hayseed humor,” and old-time string band music signaled the *Barn Dance*’s 7:00 p.m. start every Saturday night, and live audiences and at-home listeners regularly tuned in until the program ended at midnight. During those hours, as surviving scripts show, the *National Barn Dance* performed music and comedy that emphasized its mission to help former Southerners cope with their continuous longing for home. John Lair, who migrated to Chicago in the 1920s, told audiences one night, probably in 1930:

When we wuz goin over [the song, “Back to Old Smoky Mountain,”] while ago back there in a back room gittin ready to come on the air it jest stuck us all in a heap how doggoned homesick we wuz. We got to talkin old times over an we jest decided all at once to throw away the program we’d bin workin on an come out here an kinda relieve our feelins some by tellin everybody about it.

That mission broadened in the mid 1930s to imagining barn dances as a nostalgic refuge for folks faced with modern concerns. New advertisers like Alka Seltzer told listeners those modern concerns included colds, stress, and upset stomachs

and that listening to the barn dance (and buying their product) would soothe them. Barn dance show programs in 1936, for example, told audiences that performers were just “home folks” striving to do whatever they could “to lighten your cares by bringing you wholesome fun and entertainment.”¹⁰

Listener mail was important to the new world of barn dance. Because broadcasters had no systematic way until the advent of audience surveys in the mid 1930s¹¹ to know who listened in, they assessed the letters received. Mail thus began to have consequences for radio programs and for performers who wished to keep their lucrative radio jobs. Large numbers of listener mail impressed potential sponsors because they proved that advertisements could be heard and products sold. The intimacy broadcasters invited quickly had important ramifications for anyone, even politicians, who spoke on the radio. Franklin Delano Roosevelt received thousands of letters in response to his “Fireside Chats.”¹²

Based on the large amount of mail each received, Bradley Kincaid and John Lair were two of the *Barn Dance*’s most popular performers. Like many in its audience, both had migrated to Chicago from Kentucky in the late 1920s and quickly found jobs on the *Barn Dance* by touting their knowledge of “old-time” Southern music. Southern migrants and Chicago natives alike sent mail to both Kincaid and Lair, and according to *Barn Dance* lore, Kincaid received more than 100,000 pieces of mail each year, which proved to broadcasters, fellow performers, and advertisers that he was a star.¹³

As performers, Lair and Kincaid developed effective methods to solicit mail from listeners. Their most efficient tool, radio’s ability to broadcast effortlessly voices over long distances directly into a listener’s living room, helped performers erase physical barriers between home and stage. Radio thus allowed listeners to enjoy their radio friends in the comfort and privacy of their own home. Speaking familiarly to the audience, as if to a friend or a neighbor, was another way that broadcasters sought letters. *Barn Dance* Master of Ceremonies, Joe Kelly, for example, opened the program every Saturday night asking the audience, “How’s mother and dad and the whole family?” as if he were speaking to a good friend.¹⁴

Script writers also constructed a dialect centered on a seemingly rural language of friendship and used that language as the basis for the show’s “authentic” and sincere characters. This was typical of many advertised programs since genuineness and authenticity were at once, according to one historian, a “moral stance and a tactic of persuasion.” That language of friendship, sincerity and genuineness would be a fundamental tool in personalizing advertising messages and making both ads and performers welcomed in listeners’ homes. Master of Ceremonies, John Lair, introduced performer Lily May Ledford to the *Barn Dance*’s national audience in 1936 with this speech:

An now, Lily May [sic], yore big moment has come . . . all yore
frens an kinfolks are gethered round radios waitin to hera ye,



Figure 1: John Lair and his fan mail. Ca. early 1930's. Lair Papers.

an out there on the air, all over the country thousands of frens
 you aint met are waitin to hear ye, too, so step right up here with
 that old sushaw fiddle an show em what you got.

After Ledford finished her song, Lair reminded listeners that it was their letters that would determine whether or not she stayed on the program.¹⁵

In some instances, performers incorporated their personal lives into their acts to coax friendly feelings. The announcement of a marriage, the birth of a child, or a performer's birthday became essential parts of radio programming. Bradley Kincaid was especially adept at using these methods to invite his listeners on stage with him. He announced in 1929, for example, that he and his wife, Irma, were pregnant and that they had picked out the name Barbara (after his signature song, "Barbara Allen") for their new child. When Irma had twin daughters, the Kincaids used radio friends (many of whom had sent baby gifts) to find a name for their second daughter. One listener suggested Allyne, a feminized version of Allen, which the Kincaids named their child.¹⁶

Both Kincaid and Lair sang old-time songs that catered to their listeners' need for music that sounded like it was from the past. Indeed, broadcasters and performers intended radio music to be almost an aural refuge for those who were frightened or dismayed by a harsh, technically sophisticated, urban world. Lair portrayed himself as the scholarly collector who searched the Kentucky mountains for pure, untarnished folk, or "old-time," music for his band, the Cumberland Ridge Runners, to sing. In the same vein, Kincaid called himself Radio's Kentucky Mountain Boy with His Houn' Dog Guitar, and sang mountain music

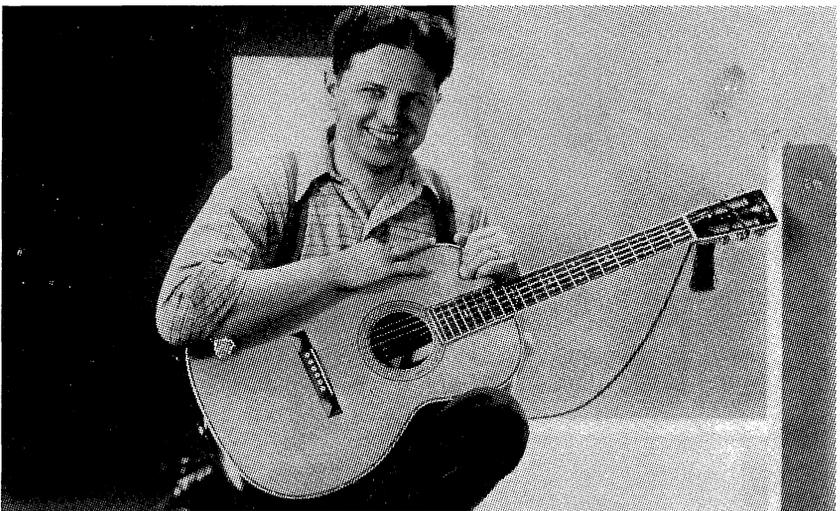


Figure 2: Bradley Kincaid, the Kentucky Mountain Boy and his Houn' Dog Guitar. Ca. early 1930's. Kincaid Papers.

which he published in songbooks advertised on the air. In one of those songbooks, he wrote to his audience:

When I sing for you on the air, I always visualize you, a family group, sitting around the table or the radio, listening and commenting on my program. Some of you have written in and said that I seem to be talking right to you, and I am. If I did not feel your presence, though you be a thousand miles away, the radio would be cold and unresponsive to me, and I in turn would sound the same way to you.¹⁷

After having moved in April, we have had no electricity until just about an hour ago. Of course, although we could not use our radio, the dial has been set all this time at WLS. So when the current was turned on, there was Howard Chamberlain . . . Was there joy in our home this morning! We surely will be listening for every one of you—old pals and new . . . Mr. and Mrs. Archie McCallum, August 29, 1936, to *Stand By!*¹⁸

Radio made it possible to include as friends complete strangers. When the McCallums wrote *Stand By!*, telling fellow listeners how wonderful it was to listen to WLS, they responded to the most significant elements of radio transmission: its ability to eliminate barriers with a distant loved one and to facilitate effortless intimacy between friends, though spatially distant. This thrilled many listeners, but made others uneasy. Those who were apprehensive feared the performer was not the simple, honest person portrayed on the radio, but a modern fake who preyed upon them for the performer’s or advertisers’ own gain. Others, however, welcomed their new friends and rejoiced in their presence every time they turned on the radio or wrote a letter.

The following section focuses on the letters to Kincaid, Lair, and *Stand By!*, documenting their similarities, but also featuring their differences. Paramount to this discussion are the ways the McCallums and thousands of others heard the radio, made it important, and then, incorporated the barn dance, the performers, even fellow listeners into their everyday lives. In doing so, listeners welcomed the new modern world that radio represented into their homes.¹⁹

Letters first documented the audience’s listening rituals, including when and where listeners made friends. “No, we did not hear you three times today,” Mrs. Harry D. Armstrong told Kincaid, in October, 1931, “we only heard you twice, but I assure you we wouldn’t have missed the other time if we had had any idea you were on.” A boy told *Stand By!*’s fan mail page, “The Listeners’ Mike,” that

“radio programs are not only interesting, but they help me in my school work.” Another listener, W.A. Asher wrote Kincaid that “We operate a Service station and store . . . and of course we have a radio. . . . I have a crowd of twenty five to forty people every Sat night they all enjoy your songs and guitar.” “Am late in getting in my word for *Stand By!*,” listener Mrs. A.H. Wahlen stated, “We just completed a week of cornhusking and made the job most enjoyable this year by hitching our radio to the closest light socket. We husked to the tune of our favorite entertainers.”²⁰

Mail documented why people listened to WLS or to particular performers. Mrs. J.W. Fisher, writing to *Stand By!*, loved hearing programs of old-time music and wanted to hear more because “[w]e all grow tired of this modern stuff . . .” she announced. Listeners connected with Kincaid for many different reasons, but especially loved the “authentic” Kentucky mountain boy image he sold on the air. “I am an old Kentuckian,” Mrs. O.D. Applegate wrote Kincaid. “I am sending you a song have had it 24 years and it came from the hills of Ky.”²¹

Not only did Kincaid’s character make identification with him easy, but the music he sang also referred to his listeners as honorable and moral. Homesick Southern migrants were especially moved to hear Kincaid sing what one called “rather sad, homesick sounding songs” that characterized the audience (as another listener wrote) as “brave and true” characters. Though “[f]oreigners” in new areas, Kincaid seemed to give his uprooted friends a sense of dignity and worth even when Northern natives scorned them.²²

Lair’s southern drawl, which stood out on the radio, made him popular with rural migrants and long-time urban residents, and made the advertising acceptable. “Would it be possible to have John Lair do just a little more talking—and John, in our native tongue. I sure do like to hear it,” C.O. Stoops requested in *Stand By!*. “We missed John Lair’s drawl. He can give us any kind of ad painlessly,” Mrs. E.V. Fites wrote.²³

Shut-ins particularly enjoyed the radio because, isolated in sick rooms far away from significant human contact, it connected them with the outside world. “I thank you for every minute’s enjoyment you have brought me in this sick room through the last seven years, and I say God bless each and every one of you,” Jack Briggs announced to performers. In another instance, Mrs. Theo. Hasenfager wrote a poem about Kincaid’s ability to sing old time songs and their place in her shut-in husband’s life:

And Mr. Kincade is singing,
We know there’s a smile on his face
Those old fashion ballads we love
Sweet memories cant deface

Those songs we sang so long ago
They’re floating back today

Before he is aware of it,
His sadness has flown away.²⁴

Listeners then used letters to request the material they needed for their rituals of listening and friendship. Many letters to Kincaid, for example, requested the broadcast times or information about the purchase of a songbook. Listeners requested photos of the stars to associate real faces with the voices they heard. "Before I ever saw a picture of Arkie," Ralph Fox wrote the "Listeners' Mike," "I had an imaginary picture of him in my mind. And dogged if it didn't turn out to look like him. He's one swell fellow and I'd like to meet him." Photos could also affirm listeners' attachments to performers that they had made based on sound cues since the visual cues they looked for in their every day lives would be displayed, albeit in a still picture.²⁵

Letters allowed listeners to gather the information (e.g. who was married, who had kids, birth dates, etc.) they needed to make friends with a performer and many letters requested articles in *Stand By!* about a performer's personal life. "Been waiting for that coming feature story about the 15 couples married while at WLS," Berenice Chapman stated. This knowledge then gave listeners their own sense of authority based on the information they had gathered. Audience members used letters to display their authority as listening friends and to correct errors printed in *Stand By!*. Pauline Mickel, for example, questioned why two different names and birth dates were listed for Hoosier Hotshots star, Hezzie. Editors, eager to include the audience, noted that Mickel had caught a significant error.²⁶

Fans also sent gifts to their radio friends. Kincaid received a tie from one listener and baby gifts from others while listeners sent lyrics and music to Lair. Lair, in charge of WLS's music library, received one letter that included an offer to send him a book of "old time music" that the writer, Mrs. F.G. Gates, had found among the personal effects of an 80-year-old friend. She painstakingly handwrote a list of 102 songs with the name of the composer and the date written so that Lair could decide if he wanted the book.²⁷

Listeners sent personal items as gifts to provide connections with performers. Mrs. Harry L. Armstrong, for example, sent Kincaid a picture of her two daughters and their dog in a letter that shared with him how much her daughter enjoyed listening to him. Here we are, she seemed to say. Include us in your world as much as we have included you in ours.²⁸

Other requests to join a listener in his or her life were more explicit. F.W. Arnold, after hearing that Kincaid would be appearing at a theater only eight miles from his home, invited Kincaid and his family to have dinner with the Arnolds. Arnold also invited Kincaid's children to stay with them while Kincaid performed. Arnold told him, "We have a fine place here for kiddies to play, plenty of good milk and a few other things. Could make some pretty good home-made ice-cream."²⁹

Letters themselves could be an act of friendship. For example, listeners sent get-well notes to performers Chick and Salty after a car accident. Audiences also sent letters of sympathy to radio friends who grieved over the death of a loved one. In 1931, for example, John Lair's mother died and listeners sent letters of sympathy to him expressing their sorrow at his loss. Frances Fitzgerald wrote Lair:

Dear Radio Friend:

. . . In my sorrow and darkest hours I found more consolation in my work and prayers than anything else. My mother died when I was a tiny babe and my Daddy was mother and dad both to me and how I do miss him. Every turn I take I miss him. No one can ever take a mother or father's place.

Parents, Fitzgerald said, have a tremendous force and significance in our lives. Fitzgerald empathized with her radio friend, Lair, understood his grief, and sought to assuage him with her letter's kind words.³⁰

Sympathy shown to a friend after the death of a parent or loved one could be extended to all radio friends and fellow listeners alike. The death of 23-year-old Barn Dance performer, Linda Parker, in August, 1935, is a particularly poignant example. The physical embodiment of the sentimental mother, a musical hold-over from the Victorian era, Parker (a.k.a. the "Little Sunbonnet Girl") sang with Lair's band, the Cumberland Ridge Runners, and her death from an appendicitis attack devastated listeners. After Parker's death, letters of sympathy and loss poured into the radio station, to her husband, Art Janes (another performer on the program), and to her mother. Those letters also expressed the writers' own grief at the loss of a close, radio friend. "Our entire household is filled with sorrow, in fact as much as at the passing of a dear friend, because that is the place she always held in our home," Lois Almy wrote. "I cherished Linda as a friend as well as one of the most popular radio entertainers," O.W. said. In a remarkable twist in January, 1936, on Linda's birthday, John Lair told listeners that they could no longer send mail like birthday cards to Parker, but they could send them to her mother, whose address he then recited over the air. Parker's mother later wrote Lair that she received hundreds of cards from Linda's fans.³¹

More ordinary emotional bonds prompted listener correspondence. If a performer sounded down or in need of comfort, some listeners felt compelled to write and comfort their friend. An anonymous writer said to Hugh Cross, another member of John Lair's band, "And I didn't think it was any harm to cheer you up a bit you know your voice always seemed so sweet and sad like. I just thought you were sad and lonesome. I just didn't know that it was because you had left a family in the mountains. Please forgive me."³²

While writers established the terms of these friendships, letters displayed an important tension. Were performers the honest, good people they seemed to be



Figure 3: The Cumberland Ridge Runners, ca. 1933. Back row: Carl Davis, John Lair, Linda Parker, Hartford Connecticut Taylor, "Red" Foley, Hugh Cross. Front row: "Slim" Miller.

on the radio? Did they live a simple life or, as one writer said, did they embrace a “luxurious, pretentious” life indicative of modern times? In a world where Americans used visual cues to determine character, radio left them in an uncomfortable place with only aural cues to use. “Personals” (live concerts) gave listeners the opportunity to verify visually decisions made aurally to include performers as friends and, for some listeners, concerts seemed to be tests of a star’s worthiness of the word “friend.” Letters to *Stand By!* or to a performer after a performance reported that the stars had passed the test; they seemed to be real, honest people. “I have met some of the Barn Dance gang in person and find them as common and friendly as anybody could be,” George Biggs wrote. Mrs. Roy Blosser saw Patsy Montana, the Prairie Ramblers, and Pat Buttram in Coldwater, Michigan, and told fellow *Stand By!* readers that “to say we enjoyed them isn’t half enough. We have listened to them over the air, but seeing them was so much nicer. We felt we were seeing very dear friends.”³³

Letters to Kincaid echoed reports to *Stand By!* Ethel Ater wrote Kincaid, after a personal appearance in Zanesville, Ohio, to tell him how good he was. “We thought you a very fine cultured young man,” she said, “You know what we mean, all real, no false make believes.” Others were similarly reassured. Mrs. Armstrong, for example, told Kincaid that:

We all enjoyed your personal appearance here so much, the children all went twice and I would have if the necessary quarters weren’t so scarce. I would like to have met you and visited with you, for I’m quite sure you are “just folks” and like simple pleasures—like wandering in the woods—eating corn bread and such more than you do luxurious pretentious things.³⁴

Just as some reaffirmed their relationships with performers, others became angry at the difference between a performer’s radio persona and her/his “real life” personality. One example was Emma Riley Akeman’s typed, three-page, irate letter to Kincaid in April, 1931, in which she complained of a recent personal appearance in Hamilton, Ohio. Akeman reprimanded Kincaid for wearing clothing (probably blue denim overalls) that depicted Kentuckians as hillbillies, a negative stereotype. Not only did Kincaid’s performance trample on “the very thing we stand for aristocracy, dignity, honesty,” but his performance caused problems with native “Hamiltonians [who] hate Kentuckians the worse.” Her anger at him reflected not only his clothing choice (she wanted him to wear a tuxedo or a nice suit), but also that he was different from the person she had imagined, hence her opening salutation, “Our Dear Bradley?”³⁵

Letters to individual performers and *Stand By!* shared similar themes, for example, similar approaches to personal appearances. Still, there were crucial differences between each group of letters. Let me first focus on letters sent to Lair and Kincaid. Historian Mary Murphy has argued that radio reinforced gendered

divisions within the household via its programming. These letters suggest that making radio an important part of one's world and corresponding also reinforced those divisions. Because Americans integrated the radio into their homes which they defined as feminine space, women, in particular, incorporated these new friends into their domestic lives. The intimate and emotional attachments women made with each other also defined the nature and meaning of their listening habits and letter writing. Men also used definitions of friendship to give meaning to what they heard, but because their friendships tended to be oriented toward their economic roles in the family, they asked performers for help getting started in the music business.³⁶

Women wrote distant social intimates differently than men did, beginning with (usually) handwritten salutations. Several letters to Kincaid, for example, Mrs. Millard Tape's and Mrs. Opal Meadows', began "Our Dear Bradley." The body of the letter continued the theme of writing a cherished friend. Mrs. Tape wrote Kincaid in September, 1939, to assure him that, even though she had not heard him since 1935, she had not forgotten him:

I am very thankful for having known you, because, I have learned many a beautiful lesson from you. And may I say here, that merely because I do not hear you on the radio, I have not forgotten you.³⁷

Other women wrote letters asking to visit Kincaid because what they wanted to say was too important, too intimate for a letter. Mrs. Harry Bazios wrote Kincaid this appeal sometime in the 1930s:

Dear Sir,

... will you please ans. and let me know just where you live and when I can call and see you I am an old lady past 50 so your wife wont mind if I come to see you would like to meet her also I have something very important to see you about so please let an old lady come and see you and your family it will mean a lot to me.³⁸

Women tread carefully when appealing in such intimate terms. Their letters share a tension that reflected the discordance between the intimate place that performers had in a listener's imaginary life and the reality that they had never met the performer. Mrs. Bazios opened her letter with the salutation, "Dear Sir," and she and Mrs. Tape signed each letter with their formal, public names rather than with their first names. This could have been a function of appropriate letter-writing etiquette which required (among other things) a salutation and closing statement. Of course, this could also be the way that social intimates addressed each other in the 1930s.³⁹

These women were also aware of the potential transgression of writing to another woman's husband (they, of course, knew who was and was not married) and excused their writing to each married man in different ways. Mrs. Bazios told Kincaid that, if she visited, his wife had nothing to worry about since Bazios was an "old lady past 50." Anonymity was another way to excuse crossing these boundaries. An anonymous writer wondered, for example, if she owed Hugh Cross, another *Barn Dance* performer, "an apology—for writing to you because you have a family."⁴⁰

The different ways men approached friendships led to expressing themselves in letters in other ways. Men used personal letters to ask radio friends for help in entering the entertainment business. Male writers typically requested that Kincaid write music for lyrics they had composed, offer original compositions to music publishers, or cooperate in the publication of a songbook. In some cases, these men had been injured on the job and were looking for non-physical work. D.W. Alderman, for example, was a disabled railroad inspector who had been out of work for five years. He found that his monthly disability check of \$10 did not cover his expenses and wrote four songs that he hoped to sell to Kincaid.⁴¹

D.W. ALDERMAN.
INGALTON, ILL.

Box 21
Ingaltton Illinois
March 4-1932

Mr Bradley Kincaid
c/o Martha Hammer, Inc
Chicago Ill

Dear Sir,

I often hear you sing over the radio
and I feel as though I am acquainted
with you. So I thought I would write
you for a little information. I
am a disabled rail road car inspector
I haven't been able to work for over five
years, and during this period of time
I have tried to think of something I might
do to earn a living. I own my home and
only have ten dollars per month income.
So I have written the words for four songs
and I am writing on some others. Now I am
not able to pay for having these songs set to
music and I thought you might help me
in getting one or two of these songs ready for
the market. or tell me where I can have it
done, and pay for the work out of the sale.
I was raised in West Virginia and you are
from and Kentucky. So please let me hear from you
yours truly D.W. Alderman

Figure 4: D. W. Alderman to Kincaid, March 4, 1932. Men wrote their radio friend, Bradley Kincaid, asking for business advice.

In all cases, men used the friendly connections they had made to Kincaid in the first place to sell their ideas. Because Kincaid sang "old time" songs which presented values he shared, John Arahood thought he could trust Kincaid in a business venture. Other men shared a Southern background with Kincaid. "I was raised in West Virginia and you are from Old Kentucky so please let me hear from you," D.W. Alderman asked. Continued listening to Kincaid convinced Michael Adams that he could trust Kincaid with his songs.⁴²

Performers had a responsibility in the listener/performer relationship even though the burden of the relationship rested on the listener who initiated it. There is no information how Lair or other performers perceived their part in this relationship, but it is possible to examine Kincaid's perceptions, especially his sense of responsibility to his listeners, because the letters saved in his papers have copies of his responses attached to them.

It seems that radio's ability to broadcast Kincaid's voice over long distances created problems for him, especially when he had to write a specific listener. The listener might know everything about him, but for Kincaid, the letters he received were from complete strangers. As described earlier, Kincaid had an image of listeners in his mind when singing for two reasons. First, so many listeners heard him that Kincaid had to construct for himself a typical listener so he would have some idea to whom he sang during a performance and, later, to whom he wrote.

They are from Bradley Kincaid. Ohio. A Fresh Creek man had Mrs Bradley Kincaid. July 27, 1931.

Dear Bradley,

Haven't written you for quite a long time. Hope you are all fine as you were in Zanesville. For you could not have been better. I did want to talk to you before your first performance, as I wanted you to sing a very pretty request. Bradley do you remember when you come out of the theater, and started getting in wrong cars, well we were the party that took hands and were teaching to you, and just as well tell you, we thought you a very fine cultured young gentleman, you know what we mean, all real, no fake. make believe - or what and etc.

Bradley I suppose you will

think me silly, but I have a bet with a certain young man, who hails from Chicago. He's fine sport, about your teeth. He says they are false and I say they are not. He offered an extra dollar if I would write you. So that is why I am sending such a silly letter, am enclosing address envelope, and would you please take just a few moments and tell me about your teeth, although I know they are nature's gift, also would like for you to sing, "Mamma's Precious Baby", and yoddl. Hope the family in C.V. including new son!

Well I will be looking for an answer, and also to hear request.

Sincerely,
"A friend of the Mountain Boy".
Ethel Ater.

Figure 5: Ethel Ater to Bradley Kincaid, July 27, 1931. Kincaid would read a letter, write a short note on it and then, his secretary would write the actual letter. Notice the top left corner with his handwriting.

Second, though Kincaid loved performing, singing was his job and the intimacy he invited contributed to his success, personally and financially, as a performer.⁴³

Kincaid's responses to his listeners suggest, foremost, that he thought he had a responsibility to those who wrote him. When writers, like Mrs. Millard Tape, requested that Kincaid "write us a letter personally in your own hand writing," he responded, although not in the manner they requested. His answers were mediated through a secretary who helped him handle his multitudes of mail. In some cases, he read the letter, wrote a short comment on top, and gave the letter to his secretary to reply from a list of standard responses. His replies were business-like, typed in formal business prose with a formal business structure, e.g., with the recipient's name and address on top and an indented closing statement that had the same margin placement as the letter's date. Most importantly, his responses did not reciprocate the emotional attachments listeners sought. Though he was kind and gentle, Kincaid saw listener mail solely as business communication that furthered his career.⁴⁴

THE CROSLY RADIO CORPORATION
CINCINNATI, OHIO

April 14, 1931

Miss Emma Riley Akeman
206 Webster Ave.
Hamilton, Ohio

My dear Miss Akeman:

I have just received your letter commenting upon my theatre appearance at Hamilton, and hasten to tell you how very, very sorry I am that I have made the wrong impression on my Kentucky friends. I assure you that it was not my intention to do so at all. I can explain to you very easily and simply the reason why I wore the type of costume that I did. The theatre people everywhere demand that you wear the costume in keeping with the type of program you give. The costume that I wore is their conception of what the average mountain boy would look like. Personally, I would have preferred to come out on the stage in a nice new suit, but they would not let me. Again I will say that I am very sorry that I have given the wrong impression. I certainly would not wish to do anything to reflect upon the people of the mountains for I am very proud of the fact that I am a mountaineer and that my father and grandfather have been for many years respected members of the hill Kentucky tribe.

Hoping that this explanation will cause you to feel better about the matter, and with very best wishes, I am,

Cordially yours,

Bradley Kincaid
Radio Station WLW

BR:AG

Figure 6: Kincaid's response to Emma Riley Akeman, April 14, 1931. Kincaid worked at WLW during the week and sang on WLS on Saturday nights, hence, the Crosley stationery.

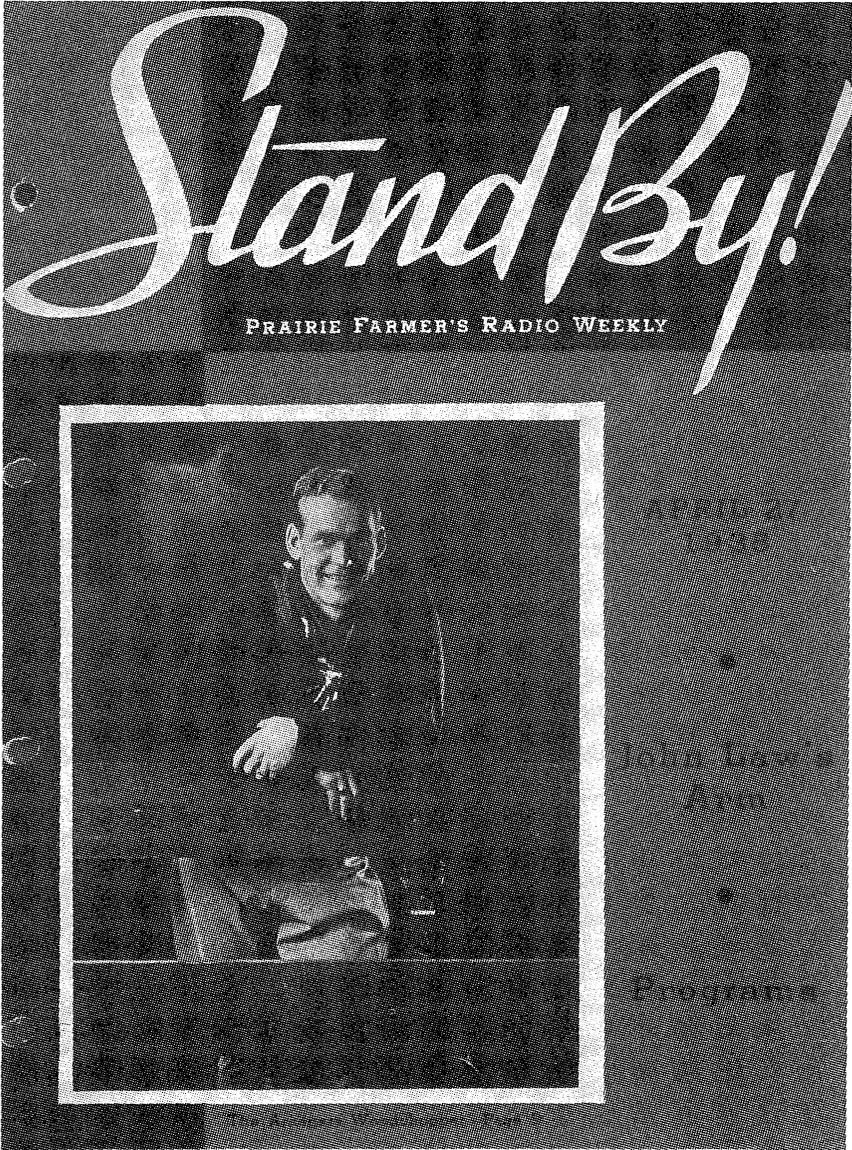


Figure 7: Cover of *Stand By!* magazine with Arkie the Arkansas Wood-chopper on the cover. April 27, 1935. Lair Papers.

To those who wrote for information, especially those who asked him for the times he appeared on the radio or for songbook prices, Kincaid gladly replied since those letters meant someone was listening. Listeners would also ask Kincaid, the expert on old time music, for information on songs they had heard. Charles J. Addcox, for example, asked Kincaid if he had heard a song entitled "I Remember, I Remember." Kincaid replied that he did not know the song and could not help Addcox.⁴⁵

Kincaid's perception that listener mail was business communication is apparent in the language of friendship he used to respond to specific listeners. "Dear Friends," he wrote Mr. and Mrs. O.D. Applegate, "Many many thanks for your lovely letter and your thoughtfulness in sending me the song. I certainly appreciate hearing from my radio friends and knowing that *they* enjoy my programs." Unlike the Applegates who heard him over the radio and who knew about his life, Kincaid did not have any information except that which Mrs. Applegate had provided. His response—one that could have been written to almost any listener—was vague because he did not know the Applegates personally.⁴⁶

Kincaid also had to write and soothe angry listeners who wrote when he did not fulfill his part in the performer/listener relationship. A prompt response to a letter was one of those responsibilities. Mrs. H.A. Atherton, for example, wrote Kincaid that "[t]he note I wrote to you addressed to Station WLW Cin. remains unanswered." Kincaid hastily replied and was apologetic in his response.⁴⁷

While personal letters to Kincaid and Lair expressed intimate sentiments that reflected the gendered divisions within the household, *Stand By!* letters addressed a broader, more public audience. They included not only the performer, the editors of *Stand By!* and station broadcasters, but also fellow readers and subscribers. Writing, in this case, connected listeners to like-minded people and created an imagined community among readers/listeners, though they did not know each other. The original intent of letters differed, of course. Some writers wrote to announce their favorite artists, others to criticize a program, but their primary goal was to announce themselves as listeners.⁴⁸

Certainly, the editors of *Stand By!* were the mediators of this community, choosing specific letters to publish and correcting each letter's spelling and grammar mistakes. In another instance of editor mediation, a significant number of letters from women appeared in the "Listeners' Mike" because editors needed to show sponsors (and other women who might write a letter) that women, who were the family's primary purchaser, listened to the program. However, even though only a select group of letters made it into *Stand By!*, listeners did make themselves heard. The many similarities between these letters and the ones written to Kincaid and Lair indicate that editors may have selected among the correspondence they received, but they did not alter the writer's original intent.⁴⁹

As part of that community, writers to *Stand By!* used other readers' knowledge to get the material they needed to complete their personal rituals of listening. Mrs. L.L. Paden wrote, for example, asking readers for help locating a poem that

had particularly touched her. Personal contact with each other was more explicit in other letters especially with people who wanted to start fan clubs honoring popular *Barn Dance* performers. Violet Ceranek asked if other readers wanted to form a Patsy Montana fan club while Mrs. Louise Conrad announced her national Lulu Belle and Scotty Fan Club.⁵⁰

Within that community, writers established an etiquette of friendship and radio listening that differed somewhat from the private letters to performers. Their basic assumption was that a radio friend should be regarded with the same respect as they would a friend or guest in their own homes. Speaking up to protect a friend from other listeners when they stepped outside the lines of appropriate friendship was another common assumption. “Can’t figure out why you western listeners are finding so much fault with the artists,” Louis Crisman admonished, “Every doggone one of them is always a welcome friend to our home.” Mrs. Myra Bowers advised fellow readers to “praise loudly and criticize softly. If he or she is doing his or her best, there’s no harm in patting them on the back.” Other writers stated they loved everything about *Stand By!* and the Barn Dance except the “grumpy people [who] were always complaining.” Mrs. Maretta Terrill echoed these sentiments, saying:

When I read letters such as the criticism of Lily May’s playing and of Lulu Belle, I wonder if those people would walk up to a guest in their home and speak to them in the same way they do about the guests who visit their home via radio. One is just as rude as the other. If you don’t like a visitor, you don’t invite him back. If you don’t like the radio guests, learn the hour he or she is on and leave the radio off. . . .⁵¹

At times, critical comments about a star created controversy on the pages of *Stand By!*, particularly when listeners overstepped the boundaries of appropriate friendship. “Fed Up” wrote, for example, to complain about Lulu Belle’s singing; the next issue included eleven responses to Fed Up, telling him/her to change the station if s/he did not like Lulu Belle. The outraged letters supporting Lulu Belle, which, editors commented, far outnumbered letters in support of Fed Up, wanted her kind of simple, “sweet mountain girl” persona on the radio. “If Fed Up doesn’t like Lulu Belle’s type of music, why in the heck don’t they tune in on some grand opera program and leave us simple folks to enjoy the type of program we appreciate?” C.L. Finley asked. Letters supporting Lulu Belle carried an air of outrage because critical comments on the music Lulu Belle sang and the values those songs preserved seemed also a critique of the way listeners made friends with her and, ultimately, of the listeners themselves.⁵²

At times, listeners also could be very protective of their favorites when the “fuss” over one performer left another out. Mrs. Marge Mathews, for example, did not like the attention given to Lulu Belle and wanted other performers to be given a chance. Her choice? “Now a girl like Patsy Montana, she is a great little

singer. She has a very good voice and what a personality!" When listeners thought their favorite star did not get enough time to perform, they also wrote *Stand By!* to complain. "'Stand By' would be a good name for Patsy Montana and Arkie, as it seems you have them standing back as far as possible. Why not have them sing and yodel more?" Mrs. C.E. wrote.⁵³

Listeners also asked other performers to behave correctly toward a radio friend. They were particularly worried that some performers took jokes too far and hurt one of their favorites' feelings. Letters in this case served to protect a friend from potential harm. For example, Arkie, continually teased on stage, received many letters from listeners warning other performers to leave him alone. A Milwaukeean cautioned *Barn Dancers* that Arkie, too, was a human being and might be hurt by their supposedly good natured teasing:

We all know Arkie endures lots of teasing with natural good grace, but something the boys did yesterday seemed to me would try Arkie's patience to the breaking point. They whitened his black shoes. How can we expect the Chipper Chopper to endure that with a smile? . . . Teasing is O.K., but don't go beyond the limit. . . .⁵⁴

It may seem odd to consider the defense of a comedian's black shoes from the ravages of shoe whitener significant behavior. But, in an era of migration, mass communication, and advertising, listeners used these new rituals of friendship (in this case, protecting a radio friend from potential harm) to manage radio's place in their homes. Enacted via a letter to WLS or a performer, the audience used these new rituals to carve out a vital place for itself in its new mass media world, a place far more important than scholars have given them credit. Some listeners may have questioned a performer's sincerity or found advertisements "painful" to listen to, but, in the bargain, found new friends and neighbors who filled their lives with music, laughter, and warmth. Letters to the *National Barn Dance* during the Depression thus provide a text for understanding how the program's audience viewed the show, the performers, themselves, and, ultimately, the world around them.

NOTES

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1. Miss Dorothy Cole to Radio Friend [Hugh Cross], October 7, 1932, John Lair Papers, Special Collections, Hutchins Library, Berea College, Berea, KY. I have made no attempt to correct spelling or grammar mistakes nor have I used [sic] when there are mistakes. These are the writers' words as they meant the reader to read them.

2. Catherine Covert, "'We May Hear Too Much': American Sensibility and the Response to the Radio, 1919-1924," *Mass Media Between the Wars: Perceptions of Cultural Tension, 1918-1941*, ed. by Catherine L. Covert and John D. Stevens, (Syracuse, 1984), 199-220; Roland Marchand,

Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940 (Berkeley, 1988), 352-359, especially 358-359.

3. Mary Murphy, *Mining Cultures: Men, Women, and Leisure in Butte, 1914-1941* (Urbana, 1997), 169-199; Jane Gurkin Altman, *Epistolarity: Approaches to a Form* (Columbus, 1982), chapter three; Susan Smulyan, *Selling Radio: The Commercialization of American Broadcasting, 1920-1934* (Washington D.C., 1994); Chad C. Berry, "Social Highways: Southern White Migrants to the Midwest, 1910-1990," Unpublished diss., Indiana University, 1995; James N. Gregory, *American Exodus: The Dust Bowl Migration and Okie Culture in California* (New York, 1989); Bill C. Malone, *Singing Cowboys and Musical Mountaineers: Southern Culture and the Roots of Country Music* (Athens, 1993); Leila A. Sussmann, *Dear FDR: A Study in Political Letter-Writing* (Totowa, NJ, 1963); Lizabeth Cohen, *Making A New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (New York, 1990).

4. Kincaid's papers are also housed in Special Collections, Hutchins Library, Berea College. Lair included in his papers mail for a third performer, Hugh Cross, probably because Cross was a member of Lair's band, the Cumberland Ridge Runners. Several letters addressed to Cross will be included in this paper.

5. Joli Jensen discusses the ways that fandom has been regarded as socially marginal behavior in "Fandom as Pathology: The Consequences of Characterization," *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, ed. by Lisa Lewis, (London, 1992), 9-29. Fans, especially after the assassination of former Beatle John Lennon and the attempted assassination of Ronald Reagan by a fan of movie actress, Jody Foster, have been treated as fanatic, borderline crazy characters. Even those scholars who profess some sympathy for fans call their relationships with performers "artificial" or "para-social." Some scholars also examine these relationships solely as part of an imagined love or sexual relationship. Most importantly, fans are predominately referred to as women while men's fandom does not carry nearly the taint that women's fandom does. See John L. Caughey, "Artificial Social Relations in Modern America," *American Quarterly* 30 (Spring 1978), 70-89; Donald Horton and R. Richard Wohl, "Mass Communication and Para-Social Interaction: Observations on Intimacy at a Distance," *Inter/Media: Interpersonal Communication in a Media World*, ed. by Gary Gumpert and Robert Cathcart, (New York, 1986), 185-206 [originally published in *Psychiatry* 19 (August 1956)]; Fred and Jody Vermorel, *Starlust: The Secret Fantasies of Fans* (London, 1985).

6. Deford K. Baily was a black harmonica player who played in the hillbilly or "string band" tradition on the *Opry* for fifteen years. David C. Morton and Charles Wolfe, *Deford Baily* (Knoxville, 1991).

7. Lisa Yarger, "Banjo Pickin' Girl: Representing Lily May Ledford," Unpublished M.A. thesis, University of North Carolina, 1997, 87-88. Mary Murphy in *Mining Cultures* had a similar problem finding detailed information about listeners of Butte's KGIR, although her case was easier because most KGIR listeners were Butte residents. See Murphy, *Mining Cultures*, 176, 185.

8. Berry, "Social Highways"; Jack Temple Kirby, "The Southern Exodus, 1910-1960," *Journal of Southern History* 49 (November 1983), 585-600.

9. James F. Evans, *Prairie Farmer and WLS: The Burrige D. Butler Years* (Urbana, 1969), 158-162; Smulyan, *Selling Radio*; Loyal Jones, *Radio's 'Kentucky Mountain Boy' Bradley Kincaid* (Berea, KY., 1980), Part I.

10. Evans, *Prairie Farmer and WLS*; Yarger, "Banjo Pickin' Girl"; WLS National Barn Dance Program, ca. 1936, Miles Laboratories Corporate Papers, 3, (now Bayer Corporation), Elkhart, Indiana; Undated script, [ca. early 1930s], 1, Lair Papers. All quotes from script material appear with typos and cross outs.

11. Radio surveys were very important, but as a diagnostic tool, surveys were (and are) very problematic since broadcasters could manipulate the information in order to sell on-air advertising. If an advertiser wanted to sell a product to a rural audience, the surveys tended to reflect those wishes. Smulyan, *Selling Radio*; Susan Douglas, "The Birth of Audience Research in the 1930s: A Reconsideration," paper presented at the Organization of American Historians Conference, March 31, 1996, Chicago.

12. Evans, *Prairie Farmer and WLS*, 158-162; [Bradley Kincaid] to Mr. John Royal, May 30, 1933; Paul F. Peter, Chief Statistician, to Mr. Phillips Carlin, August 4, 1933. These letters are in the National Broadcasting Corporation's Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, WI. Sussmann, *Dear FDR*, 14, 112-116.

13. This number has not been confirmed, but has been repeated throughout the literature. See, for example, Jones, *Radio's 'Kentucky Mountain Boy' Bradley Kincaid*, Part II; Evans, *Prairie Farmer and WLS*, chapters 7 and 9.

14. Horton and Wohl, "Mass Communication and Para-Social Interaction," 187-188, 191-192. These authors were particularly interested in the ways television stars blurred the line between audience and home, but these same kinds of behaviors began on the radio with sound and ways of speaking as the means to stimulate this interpretation. For Kelly's comments, see the December 5, 1942, *Barn Dance* Program, taped copy at the Museum of Broadcast Communications, Chicago Cultural Center, Chicago.

15. T. J. Jackson Lears, "The Rise of American Advertising," *Wilson Quarterly* 7 (Winter 1983), 157, quoted in Smulyan, *Selling Radio*, 78; Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream*, 356-357; Commercial Broadcast Script, 4, Radio Station WLS, Chicago, September 19, 1936, Lair Papers.

16. Evans, *Prairie Farmer and WLS*; Jones, *Radio's 'Kentucky Mountain Boy'*, 39; Malone, *Singing Cowboys and Musical Mountaineers*. See Mrs. Harry L. Armstrong to Bradley, October 26, 1931, Kincaid Papers, which includes congratulations on the birth of the Kincaid's son.

17. Bradley Kincaid, "My Favorite Mountain Ballads and Old Time Songs," Book No. 5, Pittsburgh, KDKA, 1932, listed in Jones, *Radio's 'Kentucky Mountain Boy' Bradley Kincaid*. The quote is on 34, but also see 74, 166, and 168 for information on the songbook itself. For Lair's portrayal of himself as a music expert, see his regular *Stand By!* column, "Notes from the Music Library." *Stand By!* magazines are in both the Lair Papers and the Southern Folklife Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

18. Mr. and Mrs. Archie McCallum, *Stand By!*, 2 (August 29, 1936), 2.

19. William Jensen Smith, "Traditional Humor on Knoxville Country Radio Entertainment Shows," Unpublished dissertation, UCLA, 1987, 13; Lynn Spigel, *Make Room For TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America*, (Chicago, 1992), 27. See also Carolyn Marvin, *When Old Technologies Were New: Thinking About Communication Technologies in the Late 19th Century* (New York, 1988), 87-89; Smulyan, *Selling Radio*, 20-35.

20. Mrs. Harry L. Armstrong to Bradley Kincaid, October 26, 1931, Kincaid Papers; Raymond Fox, Champaign, Illinois, to *Stand By!* 1 (October 12, 1935), 2; W.A. Asher to Bradley Kincaid, March 2, 1932, Kincaid Papers; Mrs. A.H. Wahlen to *Stand By!*, 1 (October 12, 1935), 2.

21. Mrs. J.W. Fisher to *Stand By!*, 1 (October 5, 1935), 2; Mr. and Mrs. O.D. Applegate and Girls to Bradley, [no date, his reply is dated May, 1932], Kincaid Papers.

22. Mrs. Harry D. Armstrong to Bradley, October 26, 1931, Emma Riley Akeman to Our Dear Bradley?, April 9, 1931, Kincaid Papers. See below for further discussion of both letters; Jensen, "Traditional Humor on Knoxville Country Radio Entertainment Shows," 30.

23. C.O. Stoops, Sr., Kalamazoo, to *Stand By!* 1 (April 13, 1935), 2; Mrs. E.V. Fites to Sirs, October 6, 1935, Lair Papers.

24. Jack Briggs, Sherburne, N.Y., *Stand By!*, 1 (April 13, 1935), 2; Mrs. Theo. Hasenfager to Mr. Kincaid, November 3, 1940, Kincaid Papers.

25. There are at least ten requests for the times Kincaid appeared on the radio in Kincaid's papers. See, for example, Lola Mae Anderson to Sir, December 10, 1931, and Bradley Kincaid to Anderson, December 12, 1931. For a request concerning information for Kincaid's records, see Lincoln Angel to Bradley, April 8, 1932, and Kincaid to Lincoln, April 18, 1932. These letters are in the Kincaid Papers. June Symonds, Chicago, *Stand By!*, 1 (August 10, 1935), 2; Ralph Fox, Chicago, Ill. to *Stand By!*, 3 (August 7, 1937), 2.

26. Berenice Chapman, Trimountain, Mich., *Stand By!*, 1 (July 13, 1935), 2; Olivana and Roxie M. Hoffman, Frankfort, Ind. to *Stand By!*, 1 (August 24, 1935), 2; Pauline Mickel, La Fontaine, Ind. to *Stand By!*, 1 (July 20, 1935), 2; A Peoria Listener pointed out the same error in *Stand By!*.

27. Bradley Kincaid to Mrs. H. M. Argabright, March 30, 1931; Jones, *Radio's 'Kentucky Mountain Boy'*; Mrs. F.G. Gates to John Lair, April 6, 1936, Lair Papers.

28. Armstrong to Kincaid, October 26, 1931, Kincaid to Armstrong, November 6, 1931, Kincaid Papers.

29. F.W. Arnold to Mr. Bradley Kincaid, June 24, 1931, in the Kincaid Papers. Arnold made a similar request of Kincaid the month before. He invited Kincaid to spend the night and enjoy the comforts of the Arnold home which included "natural gas, electricity and hot and cold running water." See Arnold to Kincaid, May 12, 1931. Kincaid's reply to both letters was no. See Kincaid to Arnold, May 14, 1931, and June 25, 1931, Kincaid Papers.

30. Miss Viola Turner, Payson, Ill. sent the get-well note. See *Stand By!*, 3 (January 29, 1938), 2; Fitzgerald to Lair, May 8, 1931, Lair Papers.

31. Lois Almy, Rockford, Ill., O.W., Lombard, Ill, to *Stand By!* 1 (August 24, 1935), 2; Violet Morris to John Lair, [no date], Lair to Morris, December 10, 1941, Radio Script, "Bunk House and Cabin Songs," January 18, 1936, Linda's Mom to John Lair, February 18, 1936, Mr. and Mrs. E.E. Muenich (but written by Mrs. Muenich) to Mr. Lair, December 28, 1935, Lair Papers. Editors also published tributes and letters to Parker in the August 29, 1936, (volume 2) issue of *Stand By!*. Lair was still receiving requests for information about Parker as late as 1941. See the above letter from Violet Morris as an example.

32. Anonymous to Hugh Cross, no date, Lair Papers.

33. Armstrong to Kincaid; George Biggs, Vincennes, Ind., *Stand By!*, 3 (August 7, 1937), 2; Mrs. Frank Brown, Hammond, Ind. to *Stand By!*, 1 (August 10, 1935), 2.

34. Ethel Ater to Bradley, July 27, 1931, Armstrong to Kincaid, Kincaid Papers.

35. Emma Riley Akeman to Our Dear Bradley?, April 9, 1931, and Bradley Kincaid to Akeman, April 14, 1931, Kincaid Papers.

36. Murphy, *Mining Cultures*, 169-170, 185; Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream*, 353.

37. Mrs. Opal Meadows to Mr. Kincaid, September 19, 1939, Mrs. Millard Tape to Our Dear Bradley, September 3, 1937, Kincaid Papers.
38. Mrs. Harry Bazios to Mr. Bradley Kin [sic], September 12, [ca. 1930s], Kincaid Papers.
39. Ibid.; Tape to Kincaid.
40. Bazios to Kin; Anonymous to Hugh Cross. The anonymous writer is probably a woman because, first, she wrote similar intimate things to Cross that other women did. The tone of the letter is of abject loneliness, a deep emotion I did not find in men's writing. Secondly, a drawing on the top of the letter pictures a bird, crying, with the words "poor Polly" written next to it. Polly could have been the bird's name, but could also relate to the writer.
41. D.W. Alderman to Mr. Bradley Kincaid, March 4, 1932. Examples of men requesting business help from Kincaid include Jack Adams to Mr. Bradly Kinkaid, August 21, 1932; Mr. H.G. Aliff [a.k.a. "Big Slim Lone Cowboy"] to Mr. Bradley Kincaid, [no date, Kincaid's reply is dated March 23, 1932]; Michael Adams to Mr. Kinkaid, September 14, 1931; John Arahood to Mr. Kinkaid, January 16, 1932, Kincaid Papers. See also Adams to Kinkaid for Adams' references to his recent operation and doctor bills he owes in his business request. Only one woman, Belle Cogans, wrote Kincaid for help in publishing her songs. Cogans to Bradley Kincaid, August 1, 1937.
42. Arahood to Kincaid, January 16, 1932; Alderman to Kincaid, March 4, 1932; Aliff to Kincaid, [no date]; Adams to Kincaid, September 14, 1931. In most cases, Kincaid said he could not help these men. As with Arahood, he based his denial on either job and family commitments or his inability to write music. See Kincaid to Adams, September 30, 1931, for Kincaid's reply which included publishing house information; Kincaid to D.W. Alderman, March 23, 1932, for his inability to write music; Kincaid to Arahood, February 16, 1932, for his heavy performance schedule and family commitments.
43. Kincaid, "My Favorite Mountain Ballads and Old Time Songs," Book No. 5.
44. Mrs. Millard Tape to Our Dear Bradley, September 3, 1937, Kincaid Papers. Kincaid's response (dated September 10, 1937) tells her that "[i]t was certainly nice of you to write me as you did."
45. See Bradley Kincaid to Kathryn Aubrieton, November 19, 1931, in Kincaid Papers. Aubrieton wondered what his on-air schedule for the week of Thanksgiving was. Kincaid replied with the days and times. See also Charles J. Addcox to Mr. R. Kinkade, February 9, 1932, and Kincaid to Addcox, February 29, 1932.
46. Mr. and Mrs. O.D. Applegate to Bradley, no date, Kincaid to Mr. and Mrs. O.D. Applegate, May 12, 1932, Kincaid Papers.
47. Mrs. H.A. Atherton to Mr. Kincaid, no date; Kincaid to Atherton, April 21, 1931, Kincaid Papers.
48. See C.L., Galveston, Ind.'s announcement that Lily May Ledford was a genius while A.B.W., Indianapolis, Ind., said s/he did not think Lily May was so hot and "her singing is worse yet than her fiddling." See *Stand By!*, 2 (January 9, 1937), 2, for both of these letters.
49. Smulyan, *Selling Radio*.
50. Mrs. L.L. Paden, Hillsboro, Ill. to *Stand By!*, 1 (July 20, 1935), 2; Violet Ceranek, Downers Grove, Ill., to *Stand By!*, 3 (March 13, 1937), 2; Mrs. Louise Conrad, Gary, Ind., to *Stand By!*, 3 (January 8, 1938), 2.
51. Louis Crisman, Montrose, PA., *Stand By!*, 1 (April 27, 1935), 2; Mrs. Myra Bowers, Covington, Ind. to *Stand By!*, 3 (January 1, 1938), 2; LaVerne Stuck, Beloit, Wis. to *Stand By!*, 4 (February 12, 1938), 2; Mrs. B.E.R., Decatur, Ill., to *Stand By!*, 4 (February 19, 1938), 2. John Lair also received support in these letters to *Stand By!* See, for example, Miss I.F., Bloomington, Ill. to *Stand By!*, 2 (December 26, 1936), 2; Mrs. Mareta Terrill, *Stand By!*, 2 (February 2, 1937), 2.
52. For these letters, see *Stand By!*, 2 (January 2, 1937), 2. Besides those mentioned specifically, see also Edna D. Raisee, Robertson, MO.,'s letter for the "sweet, mountain girl" quote.
53. Mrs. Marge Mathews, Chicago, to *Stand By!*, 2 (December 26, 1936), 2; Mrs. C.E., Otterbern, Ind. to *Stand By!*, 3 (January 29, 1938), 2.
54. A Milwaukeean to *Stand By!*, 1 (August 10, 1935), 2.