

Morning View Kentucky  
29 April 1958

Hello Mr. McCarthy,

Yesterday, like springtime, seemed most laggard of arrival, but was well worth the waiting. Once, again, of a morning, I shall carry my little transistor radio through tree patch and pond-field with me. I have not been taking it along with me for the past several months, as there was nothing to hear.

During the program, when your mocker-being-a-cardinal was coming through so clearly, I snatched up the tiny set and dashed out to find a local Mocking Bird. While practically all birds stake out summer territorial claims in proportion to their size and needs, and defend it vigorously, the mocking Birds are more militant about their property than most. Consequently, I was sure that should I bring the voice of another Mocker through invisible but positive boundaries into the domain of one of the local fellows, the result would be both interesting and audible.

There are four Mocking Bird families in the area, but my quest was not successful. It was a bit too early in the season, with nesting sites no more than under consideration, and by the time I found a Mocker at home, singing lazily to himself atop a scraggly, leafless locust, yours was no longer emerging blithely from the radio. In a few weeks, when nests have been built and occupied, I anticipate a far more tumultuous, one-sided, long-range argument than occurred several years ago when Mr. Wheat strove mightily to drive your quail's voice from the tree patch, as a Mocker is a more furious and officious bird than a Quail.

Of all the peculiarities attendant upon the arrival of spring this year, the most interesting has been the unusual slowness of large trees in responding to warmer weather. They are leafing out rapidly now, but for quite a while the big fellows of the tree patch towered in almost total dormancy above shrub and sapling which had burst into bloom and leaf with the first touches of rising temperature.

I can think of only one possible explanation for this erratic behavior. The ground was bare during much of our coldest weather, and this cold was prolonged late into March, with the result that the earth was chilled to a much greater depth than in ordinary winters. As spring warmed the surface soil, shrubs and little trees of comparatively shallow root systems were stirred into activity. However, the larger trees, rooting far down where warmth had not

page 2. MISSING