

**WEST VIRGINIA  
MUSIC  
HALL OF FAME**



*Hazel Dickens' brother  
Thurman and two of her  
brothers-in-law died of  
black lung at a time when  
the coal industry still said  
there was no such thing as  
black lung.*

# Hazel Dickens



## **Black Lung**

by Hazel Dickens

He's had more hard luck than most men could stand.  
The mines were his first love, but never his friend.  
He's lived a hard life, and hard he'll die.  
Black lung's done got him. His time is nigh.

Black lung, black lung, you're just biding your time.  
Soon all this suffering, I'll leave behind.  
But I can't help but wonder what God had in mind  
To send such a devil to claim this soul of mine.

He went to the boss man, but he closed the door.  
It seems you're not wanted when you're sick and you're poor.  
You're not even covered in their medical plans,  
And your life depends on the favors of man.

Down in the poorhouse on starvation's plan,  
Where pride is a stranger and doomed is a man,  
His soul full of coal dust 'till his body's decayed.  
Everyone but black lung's done turned him away.

Black lung, black lung, your hand's icy cold.  
As you reach for my life, you torture my soul.  
Cold as that waterhole down in the dark cave  
Where I spent my life's blood, digging my grave.

Down at the graveyard, the boss man came  
With his little bunch of flowers. Dear God! What a shame.  
Take back those flowers. Don't sing no sad songs.  
The die has been cast now. A good man is gone.