



## Artist Profile

### Hazel Dickens (Dickens)

The biography of Hazel Dickens would appear to follow the typical trajectory of many young Appalachian women from rural West Virginia raised in coal-mining communities in the 1950s. She grew up near Montcalm, West Virginia, one of 11 children, and moved away in her teens to work in the factories of Baltimore. What is different about Hazel Dickens is that she transformed this experience into the inspiration and material for a life-long musical career that has spoken of hard work, hard times, and hardy souls. Songs she has penned such as "Working Girl Blues," "Black Lung," "Don't Put Her Down, You Helped Put Her There," and "West Virginia, My Home," have provided the narrative storyline and emotional insight for many who have found themselves in similar circumstances. Marrying the songwriting abilities of Woody Guthrie with the straight-ahead singing skills of Kitty Wells, she has been an inspiration for a whole new generation of women singers in the bluegrass and country music fields. Her music became more widely known through the use of her songs in the movie *Harlan County, U.S.A.* and as a result of her live performance of songs in *Matewan*, the movie. Hazel Dickens' life and music are inextricably intertwined.

### **"West Virginia My Home"** by Hazel Dickens

Chorus:

West Virginia, oh my home.  
West Virginia, where I belong.  
In the dead of the night, in the still  
and the quiet I slip away like a bird  
in flight  
Back to those hills, the place that I  
call home.

It's been years now since I left there  
And this city life's about got the best  
of me.

I can't remember why I left so free, what  
I wanted to do, what I wanted to see,  
But I can sure remember where I  
come from.

Chorus-----

Well I paid the price for the leavin'  
And this life I have is not one I thought  
I'd find.

Just let me live, love, let me cry, but when  
I go just let me die  
Among the friends who'll remember when  
I'm gone.

Chorus-----

Home, home, home. I can see it so clear  
in my mind.

Home, home, home. I can almost smell  
the honeysuckle vines.

[Repeat last two lines of chorus.]