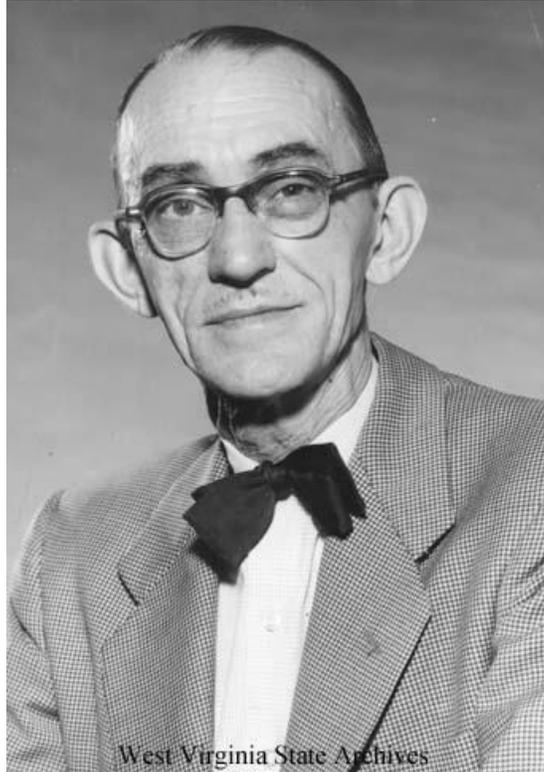


### ON THIS DAY IN WEST VIRGINIA HISTORY OCTOBER 11



On October 11, 1946, Roy Lee Harmon of Raleigh County was appointed West Virginia's poet laureate for the second time.

**CSO:** ELA.8.1, ELA.8.2, ELA.8.18, SS.8.11

**Investigate the Document:** (Ms2011-017)

1. After reading the first two stanzas, what “industrial might” do you think Roy Lee Harmon is demonizing?
2. After reading stanzas four and five, what *form* of mining, often referred to as mountaintop removal, is Harmon vilifying?

**Think Critically:** Why has the practice of mountaintop removal been controversial? What type of rhyme scheme is Harmon using in his poem? Can poets, such as Roy Lee Harmon, have an impact on social commentary and issues that face society? Explain.

Poetry

so Harmon Hubert C. Smith,  
a dedicated West Virginian,  
dedicated Roy Lee Harmon

### WEST VIRGINIA STORY

By Roy Lee Harmon

(Poet Laureate of West Virginia)

This is the land that went for just a song,  
A silly song of great industrial might;  
This is the land which vandals, money-strong,  
Have branded with their most unholy blight.

Our fathers had this land...and had it all,  
Snug cabins, fertile farms...and peaceful dreams,  
The hills adorned with oaks and poplars tall,  
The crystal unpolluted mountain streams.

They had the deer and bear, the grouse and quail,  
Fresh meat to stock the larder any time,  
God-given beauty on each hill and dale,  
A way of life we know was quite sublime.

The vandals didn't say "we buy your coal,  
Your timber, but we'll rip your green hills down,  
Your crystal streams will die as poisons roll  
Where cheap and ugly shanties make a town.

The vandals all grew rich, our people poor,  
The people learned a lesson much too late;  
But they were strong...and so they did endure  
Withing a skinned and gutted Mountain State.

But now hope lives again...a Governor comes  
To say we must and so we shall rebuild;  
With patience, not a fancy roll of drums,  
We shall restore the land the vandals killed.

-----  
The dim gray years will pass but scars will fade,  
The hills will all be green some happy day.  
Clean streams--the kind the God of all has made--  
Shall flow where all our children's children play.

---  
A gutless legislature's out of date,  
We need strong souls to fashion better laws,  
We need the kind to save this land, this state,  
And everyone to rally to the cause.

-----  
Oh yes, our people one time had it all;  
We have the husks a prodigal must eat.  
God help us in a task that isn't small.....  
We must rebuild...we can't accept defeat.



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

MEMORANDUM

TO: Dr. Hupp

FROM: Jack Canfield

DATE: 8/30/66

The attached poem, concerning strip mining in West Virginia, was presented to Governor Smith by West Virginia's Poet Laureate, Roy Lee Harmon, on the evening of August 7, 1966, during a performance of "Honey in the Rock" at Beckley.

The Governor thought you might want to keep this original copy in the Archives Department.

/prc

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jack Canfield", written over a horizontal line.

PLEASE SEND REPLY TO ATTENTION OF:

The vandals all grew rich, our people poor,  
The people learned a lesson much too late;  
But they were strong...and so they did endure  
Withing a skinned and gutted Mountain State.