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Jim Justice  
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Department of Arts,  
Culture and History

**Stan Bumgardner**  
Editor

**Joseph Aluise**  
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Publication Design

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Correspondence to:  
The Editor  
GOLDENSEAL  
The Culture Center  
1900 Kanawha Blvd. East  
Charleston, WV 25305-0300

Phone 304-558-0220  
e-mail [chgoldenseal@wv.gov](mailto:chgoldenseal@wv.gov)  
[www.wvculture.org/goldenseal](http://www.wvculture.org/goldenseal)

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## From the Editor

In 1985, I watched the new documentary *Even the Heavens Weep* and was struck by a couple things. First, it was narrated by Mannix himself, Mike Connors, my favorite childhood P.I. Second, like most West Virginians, I'd never heard of Matewan or the Mine Wars despite being a history buff. Since then, many books, films, and plays about the Mine Wars have been produced. But, for anyone who hasn't seen the 1985 film, I highly recommend it. Watchable in segments on YouTube, it features interviews with participants in the Mine Wars and some of the finest historians on the subject, including Fred Barkey, Lon Savage, and David Corbin.

Now, 35 years later, I'm well-aware of the topic but still perplexed by many things. It's said that history can be boiled down to Who? What? When? Where? and Why? With "big events," such as the Civil War, we were taught the first four, but the *why?* was always hazier. The problem is that the *why* is the most important part of history. With the Mine Wars, here's my big *why*: Why did our government(s) let southern West Virginia descend into guerilla warfare? Further, why did law enforcement continually pour gas on the fire by siding with coal operators?

As with most history, there's no one answer. Both sides committed egregious acts of violence, each of which was a bit different. But the one factor tying them together? The institutions charged with keeping the peace and protecting the people were owned from top to bottom, some more legally than others. In this issue, we look at the Matewan Massacre (1920) and the murders of Sid Hatfield and Ed Chambers in Welch (1921). Both occurred in broad daylight with plenty of witnesses; yet, nobody was ever convicted or served more than a symbolic time in jail.

I recently spoke with former Kanawha County Public Defender Diana Panucci about how this could happen. She pointed to two factors: government corruption and/or frustrated prosecutors who gave up trying to win convictions from bought-off juries. In essence, there was no Law with a capital L. To paraphrase the old labor song, it was generally clear "which side everybody was on," such as Sheriff Bill Hatfield, who got a sudden hankering for a vacation on the eve of the most high-profile trial ever held in McDowell County.

During the Mine Wars, scores of people, some more innocent than others, were killed. The common thread? A government pattern of representing some people more equally than others. In the words of the eulogist as rain fell at Sid Hatfield's funeral, "Is it a wonder that even the heavens weep?" —Stan Bumgardner