

West Virginia Mine Wars Museum:

2019 Red Bandana Awards

Award Name	Award Namesake	Awardee
Rank and File Rebel	<i>In the spirit of Dan Chain</i>	Robin Ellis and Katie Endicott
Matewan History Maker	<i>In the spirit of Sid Hatfield</i>	Donna Paterino
History Keeper	<i>In the spirit of Carter Woodson</i>	David Corbin
Hellraiser	<i>In the spirit of Mother Jones</i>	Julian Martin
Truth Teller	<i>In the spirit of Frank Keeney</i>	Paul Nyden, in memoriam

David Corbin

The History Keeper Award is given to an individual who embodies the spirit of Carter G. Woodson. Born in 1875, the son of former slaves, Carter worked in the mines of Fayette County as a teenager. He later finished high school and earned degrees from Berea College and Harvard, eventually becoming a dean at West Virginia State College. In 1926, he started what would become Black History Month.

Carter was a champion of civil rights history, and it is fitting that David Alan Corbin is year's History Keeper Award recipient because he was the first scholar to find similarities in the civil rights movement and the Mine Wars. In his introduction to the *West Virginia Mine Wars: An Anthology* (later republished as *Gun Thugs, Red Necks, and Radicals*), Corbin wrote:

“The Mine Wars were battles for timeless and universal values and principles.... Like the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, the miners’ organizing effort had good and bad characters. Each story involved brutality, destruction, and death. And both movements are stories of oppressed exploited people fighting for dignity, self respect, human rights, and freedom. Both are stories of courageous men and women under extraordinary circumstances fighting extraordinary foes. Each also carries the reminder that the United States has not always been as fair and egalitarian as we’d like to believe.”

Before there was *Storming Heaven*, before the film, *Matewan*, before the movement to Save Blair Mountain and long before the Mine Wars Museum was even a twinkle in Lou Martin’s eye, there was *Life, Work, and Rebellion in the Coalfields*. First published in 1981, this landmark study influenced

generations of Mine Wars scholars, including myself. As I mentioned earlier, I first read Dr. Corbin's work at the age of fifteen and I distinctly remember becoming so angry when I read about the conditions in the company towns, I had to put the book down and pace around the room before I could calm down and resume reading. In your research for that book, you came to Alum Creek and interviewed my grandfather and my family will always be grateful for how you resurrected the story of Frank Keeney and his contribution to labor history. I still have the copy of your article "Frank Keeney is our Leader and We Shall Not Be Moved," that you gave to my father over thirty-five years ago.

For his groundbreaking work and enormous scholarly legacy, we are thrilled to present the History Keeper Award to David Alan Corbin.

Paul Nyden

2019's Truth Teller Award goes to Paul Nyden, in memoriam, and the award was accepted by his son, Chris Nyden.

The Truth Teller Award goes to an individual who embodies the spirit of Frank Keeney. Frank Keeney served as the president of UMWA District 17 and president of the State Federation of Labor. In 1921 he helped organize the March on Blair Mountain. He often spoke truth to power. In 1913, he refused to abide by the Hatfield Agreement and led the miners back out on wildcat strikes to achieve victory. In later years he started his own union, his own political party, and edited a labor newspaper – never ceasing to tell the stories of hardship and oppression in the coal mines. Truth Tellers educate the public. They are guardians of the truth.

Many agreed that Paul was a towering figure in West Virginia journalism, carrying on the Gazette mission—in the words of Ned Chilton—to "comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable," and Paul set the bar high for all West Virginia journalists, going the extra mile for his stories, mastering the complexities of the issues he reported on, and always speaking truth to power.

The Mine Wars Museum wants to recognize that, by doing his job so well over a lifetime, Paul played

an important role—not just in journalism—but in the state of West Virginia. From his dissertation on the Miners for Democracy movement and its focus on Black Lung benefits, to his in-depth coverage of mine safety, the environmental effects of mountaintop removal, the holes in mining regulations, and the influence of industry over politics in the state, Paul made sure that important choices being made in the state became public.

West Virginia today is blessed with talented journalists that continue this work, and I have no doubt that through them, Paul's influence carries on. At a time when journalism is under attack across the nation, we are grateful that Paul dedicated himself to telling truth in West Virginia.

Robin Ellis and Katie Endicott

2019's Rank and File Rebel Award, given in the spirit of Dan Chain, also known as "Few Clothes Johnson," was given to Robin Ellis and Katie Endicott.

Chain was known for his courage in the face of long odds. He overcame fear and transcended the racism of his time, and although he was not a union official, Chain helped lead miners during the Paint Creek-Cabin Creek Strike.

Rank and File Rebels have played a critical role in the labor movement, and this year's Rank and File Rebel Award goes to Katie Endicott and Robin Ellis, two Mingo County schoolteachers who helped organize and provide leadership to the 2018 and 2019 teacher strikes, events that are already earning it's rightful place in history books. In fact, teachers in other states and cities, such as Chicago, Oklahoma, Arizona, Kentucky, Los Angeles, Denver, and Oakland, have followed their example.

Katie and Robin contributed to a book published only five months after the successful strike in 2018. Their stories are told in *55 Strong: Inside the West Virginia Teachers' Strike*, and by capturing their voices, it prevented the story of #55STRONG from being distorted. Beyond organizing the strike, Katie and Robin worked to ensure that their kids had meals during the time that teachers would be in Charleston rallying against charter schools and education saving accounts.

In *55 Strong*, Robin states “Our ancestors would be proud,” and we think so too. In giving Robin and Katie this award, we are recognizing the work of many, many rank and file rebels across the state and country.

Julian Martin

The Hell Raiser Award is given in the spirit of Mother Jones, who famously said, “I’m not a humanitarian, I’m a Hell raiser.” I know of few people more deserving of this award than Julian Martin. When I was fifteen, the same year Chuck first read David Alan Corbin’s *Life, Work, and Rebellion in the Coalfields*, Chuck became a student of Julian’s, who taught science and chemistry at Duval High School, in Lincoln County. Chuck vividly remembers Julian telling the class about his job building sidewinder missiles during the height of the Cold War. Julian told the class, “One day I just stopped and realized that if they ever use what I’m building, people are going to die.” So Julian quit making missiles and became West Virginia’s first volunteer in the Peace Corps, serving as a teacher in Nigeria.

Julian could have had a successful career in a huge metropolis but he bucked the tradition of outmigration so familiar to the story of Appalachia and returned home to teach high school chemistry and physics. We consider his teaching to be part of his hellraising, because he taught his students the value of standing for your beliefs, asking questions that would make our hillbilly parents uncomfortable, and expanding our vision of the world beyond our mountains and hollers.

Speaking of mountains, Julian has raised a lot of Hell in their defense as well. For many years, he has served on the Board of Directors of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy and the West Virginia Environmental Education Association. Julian joined forces with the likes of Larry Gibson and Judy Bonds to be among the first locals to stand up against King Coal in opposition to mountaintop removal. Julian was no outsider, as the coal industry tried to portray activists, but son and grandson of West Virginia miners. Julian’s grandfather even fought at the Battle of Blair Mountain and he carries on this legacy as a Board Member of the West Virginia Labor History Association – an organization very dear to the hearts of us here at the Mine Wars Museum.

For lifetime of giving, teaching, protesting, and Hell raising, it was our pleasure to present Julian Martin with this year's award.

Donna Paterino

The Matewan History Maker Award goes to an individual who, like Sid Hatfield, will be remembered for their dedication to Matewan and contribution to the town's rich history. By standing up to the Baldwin-Felts agents in 1920, Sid Hatfield inspired miners and their families across the state, and his death the following year sparked an uprising of 10,000 miners who stood up for their rights. He will forever be known as the miners' hero.

This year's Matewan History Maker Award goes to Donna Paterino, the director of the Matewan Drama Group. 2001 was the first year that the Group recreated the Battle of Matewan, and they have performed every year since then. Donna has brought together community volunteers to play the roles of many different participants of the Battle of Matewan, emphasizing the different points of views held by miners, their wives, the mine guards, the mayor, Sid Hatfield, and others. Donna has also raised funds to buy a sound system, props, and sets. The Matewan Drama has attracted attention from far and wide and brought many new visitors to Matewan, and in 2013, the Coal Heritage Area presented the group with an award for their work. All-volunteer efforts are difficult to sustain, but Donna's passion for this project has kept it going.

2020—the centennial of the battle—will mark two decades that Donna has led this unique and important project. For her efforts, Donna is truly deserving of the Matewan History Maker Award.