



## Larry Gibson, 1946 – 2012

Posted on August 30, 2012 by Rosemary Feurer



Larry Gibson.

Source:

[Mountaintop  
Removal Road  
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From Brad Wood, Duke University:

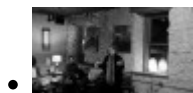
At some point you've probably heard me talk about Larry Gibson. He was literally the last man standing on Kayford Mountain in southern West Virginia. The 500 people who once called the community home left as fast as they could when the coal companies started blowing it up. But not Larry, who put a tiny strip of the land in a trust so that it could never be destroyed. In the early 90s, coal companies began offering him money for it...first fifty thousand, then a few hundred thousand, then a couple million dollars. He refused-not because he couldn't use the money. In fact, he had to leave the mountain for a few decades, like so many others who made the hillbilly great migration, to look for work in Chicago and Detroit. What got him through those grueling years in the factory was the mistaken belief that one day he would get to retire in peace on the mountain where he was born and raised.

Today, Larry's piece of land on Kayford Mountain, which used to sit in a hollow, is now the peak of the hill, and for dozens of miles around there is nothing but destruction. For twenty years, Larry has brought literally thousands of people, including celebrities and a UN delegation, to his home to show first-hand the horrors of mountaintop removal. As a result, he has become the coal industry's enemy number one. He has been the victim of over 100 felonious crimes. His cabins have been burned to the ground, his dogs have been hung, the grave stones of his family have been desecrated, he has been punched, spit on, and shot at.

Larry died today as the result of a heart attack. In his honor, could you take a few seconds to [sign a petition](#)? Petitions like these really do matter. There are actually people in the EPA who despise mountaintop removal, and they ask for signatures to demonstrate public support for their efforts to regulate it-however modest they may be. Please help our efforts and remember Larry Gibson by [signing our End Appalachia's Agony petition](#).

- Mary Anne Hitt, "[The Mountains Weep for Larry Gibson](#)," *Huffington Post*, September 11, 2012
- Pam Kasey, "[Larry Gibson remembered for passion to protect mountains](#)," *WOWKTV.com* (West Virginia), September 10, 2012

## Author



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Rosemary Feurer is Professor of History at Northern Illinois University. She is the author of *Radical Unionism in the Midwest, 1900-1950*, among other books and essays. She is working on *The Illinois Mine Wars, 1860-1940* and a new biography of Mary Harris "Mother" Jones.