



PROJECT MUSE®

---

## Last Words

Sandra Fabert Vrana

Appalachian Heritage, Volume 38, Number 1, Winter 2010, p. 49 (Article)

Published by The University of North Carolina Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/aph.0.0215>



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/369145>

# LAST WORDS

---

Sandra Fabert Vrana

But the story must start earlier  
before radiation burned through his stomach  
or three years before that when he, at forty-eight, returned  
from hunting on a bright fall afternoon  
to slide, wordless, to the floor from a kitchen chair.

Or perhaps back to when he was twelve and already  
fatherless and his mother died. His world fell like stars  
and he followed the glittering remnants even underground  
where he blew rock with dynamite, dug with pick and shovel  
and piled years and gleaming coal on rows of cars.  
Then he was twenty-five, thirty, forty,  
with two, four, seven children.  
In a blur of beer joints, coal dust, and willing women,  
he raised his voice, his fists.

And always the blow-up in the kitchen, curses, black-  
encircled eyes, the next shift coming, wild sidelong glances.

But, ahh! Rare moods of quiet, moments of grace,  
when bucket in hand at the kitchen door, he'd turn his head  
to look at us and with a half-smile say,  
*Toodle-oo, kids. Toodle-oo.*