

Run the Ridges

Words & Music by John Stewart © all rights reserved

Em *D* *C* *D*
Well, I hope to tell you, Johnny, that I lay that rifle down;
Em *D* *C* *D*
But leave the noose and the calaboose and headed for another town.
Em *D* *C* *D*
Well, I've got your name in San Jose, and your picture's there to see;
Em *D* *C* *D*
And they're shootin' men in Texas just because they look like me.

CHORUS

D *G* *Bm* *Em* *D* *G*
And we will run the ridges of our green land Tennessee;
G *Bm* *Em* *C* *D*
And we will hide for forty years if that's what's meant to be;
D *C* *D*
Meant to be, meant to be,
D *C* *D* *Em*
Meant to be, meant to be, meant to be.

Em *D* *C* *D*
Hey we could try Mexico and cross the desert sand;
Em *D* *C* *D*
But they're guardin' 'cross the border 'case we swim the Rio Grande.

CHORUS

Em *D* *C* *D*
Well, they'll rope and tie you, Johnny, and they'll throw you to the ground;
Em *D* *C* *D*
And they'll let you hang a week or two 'fore they cut your body down.

CHORUS x 2

History

“Run the Ridges” is a young man song. If you are not now, nor have ever been a young man, you will probably have a hard time grasping the essence of this tune. There is a longing that begins to grow in a boy and that typically becomes irresistible as he becomes a young adult, to be loosed from all of the bonds that he imagines are holding him down, holding him back from what he conceptualizes as freedom. It is a romantic notion. Pursuing that notion can be a positive experience, but as often as not can go awry as described with acuity in Luke 15:11-32.

Dave Guard died in 1991, Bob Shane continued to perform until 2004 when a heart attack sidelined him from the road. Nick Reynolds died in 2008 as did John Stewart.



Forgottenhits60s.blogspot.com/

John Stewart is one of the great folk synthesizers of the 60s and early 70s. He like Tom Springfield, Randy Sparks, Paul Simon, Gene Clark, Barry McGuire, and others wove mythic folk themes into new songs that evoke the most basic and perennial memories, dreams and longings of the human race.

As for the lyrics of *Run the Ridges* that carry this underlying longing, a semi-anonymous researcher left these notes on Yahoo Answers in 2007.

Rick Larson

*“Ridge” is the crest of a large hill; ridge runner is a backwoods hunter who knows the game trails so well that he could run them blindfolded and never stumble or hit a tree; the term came to be used for hillbillies and moonshiners who drove the ridges

hiding their activities from the police; Runin’ the ridges” meant haulin’ moonshine “

- * “Lay a rifle down” is a term for unloading a gun and putting it back in its case or whatever . . . here it means I'm finished with shooting.
- * “Noose and calaboose” a noose is a hangman's rope, a calaboose a prison or jail; sounds like a prison break with a shooting involved.
- * 40 years: it used to be for some crimes, if you could evade capture and arrest for a certain number of years then you could not be arrested at all for the crime.
- * “I’ve got your name in San Jose” means I'm using your name as an alias and I'm in San Jose. Texas would be the quickest route to Mexico from Tennessee. San Jose is a town in Texas.
- * “Your pictures there to see” means there’s a wanted poster of Johnny in the post office and elsewhere.
- * “Maybe we could try Mexico, but they're guarding cross the border” means the Mexican police are also now looking for us.
- * ”Rope and tie you Johnny” means that if they find you they will kill you.

Yahoo Answers: coachelarose 2007