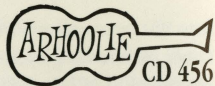


J.E. MAINER'S MOUNTAINEERS

"Run Mountain"



1. MISSISSIPPI SAWYER (2:58)
2. RAMSHACKLE SHACK (3:06)
3. RUN MOUNTAIN (2:54)
4. SHORT LIFE OF TROUBLE (3:47)
5. IF I LOSE LET ME LOSE (4:14)
6. GREENBACK DOLLAR (3:20)
7. SEVEN AND A HALF (2:54)
8. DON'T GO OUT LITTLE DARLING (2:51) (*)
9. OVER IN THE GLORYLAND (4:12) (*)
10. THE COUNTRY BLUES (3:04) (*)
11. HOP ALONG PETER (2:36) (*)
12. HE'S COMING TO US DEAD (3:15) (*)
13. CRYING HOLY (2:34) (*)
14. OH THOSE TOMBS (3:39) (*)
15. RHYTHM BLUES (2:37) (*)
16. TWO LITTLE ROSEBUDS (3:20) (*)
17. SALLY GOODIN' (3:27)
18. MAPLE ON THE HILL (4:01)
19. MY HOME'S IN LOUISIANA (2:33)
20. WILD BILL JONES (3:04)

21. SHAKE MY MOTHER'S HAND FOR ME (2:46)
22. I'M JUST HERE TO GET
MY BABY OUT OF JAIL (3:12)
23. MAMA DON'T ALLOW (3:20)

Total time: 73:44

J.E. Mainer – fiddle, banjo, vocals, and
introductions

J.E. Mainer Jr. – guitar & vocals

Glenn Mainer – banjo

Carolyn Mainer – guitar & vocals

Earl Cheeks – bass & vocals

Otis Overcash – mandolin

(*) = previously unissued – all other selections
originally released on Arhoolie LP 5002

Recorded by Chris Strachwitz in Concord, N.C. on
April 7, 1963 with one mono Caps condenser
microphone and a Magnecord recorder.

Produced by Chris Strachwitz

Cover photo © by Chris Strachwitz

Cover by Beth Weil

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J. E. Mainer's Mountaineers

"RUN MOUNTAIN"



J.E. MAINER'S MOUNTAINEERS

"Run Mountain"

During the mid-1930s, J.E. Mainer's Mountaineers could be heard over several radio stations in the Carolinas, Tennessee, and Georgia, sometimes twice a day, where the Crazy Water Crystal Company sponsored a total of 147 weekly broadcasts over fourteen radio stations. Among the various musical groups used by this and other advertisers, the "Crazy Mountaineers" were one of the most popular and successful ones to advertise these crystals of rather questionable effectiveness. Those were the days when most radio programs were aired "live." Throughout the south, country music groups like the Mainers, the Carter Family, the Blue Sky Boys, the Light Crust Doughboys, Cliff Carlisle, and many others made a living working for a sponsor who hired them to open the ears of the listeners and advertise the sponsor's products. In the course of the program, the musicians could

announce their upcoming "in person" appearances.

Many artists would also sell song books and photographs and ask listeners to write in to let the station know how many people were tuned in. Among Mainer's Mountaineers listeners were a couple of young boys named Ralph and Carter Stanley who were greatly impressed by J.E. Mainer's often ram-bunctious performances of old time music, long before this mountain music became highly stylized and world famous as Bluegrass. Live radio programs were also frequently heard by talent scouts for record companies and helped boost personal appearances, which in the case of the very popular Mainer's Mountaineers, were often more than they could handle.

J.E. Mainer's original Mountaineers consisted of J.E. on fiddle, his brother, Wade, on five-string banjo, while Daddy John Love and

Zeke Morris played guitars. By 1934, during the great Depression, J.E. Mainer's Mountaineers were working full time for the Crazy Water Crystal Co. headquartered in Mineral Wells, Texas, but with big offices in Charlotte, N.C., and Atlanta, Ga. Every Saturday night J.E.'s band performed for the "Crazy Barn Dance" over powerful WBT in Charlotte, N.C. This program must have given the Grand Ole Opry some stiff competition. J.E. gave me a copy of the souvenir program for this barn dance program (2nd edition) which sold for 50 cents. It had beautiful clear photographs not only of the Crazy Mountaineers, but a group photo of all the "Barn Dance" acts on the cover and individual photos of each act inside the glossy 36 page, 8 by 10 inch booklet. There were Dick Hartman's Crazy Tennessee Ramblers, Fisher Hendley (a banjo player), the Crazy Tobacco Tags, the Crazy Cut-ups, Charles Hunter (who did barnyard sound effects), Bob Philips, Shell Allen's W.O.W. String Band, Fred Russell's Hillbillies, Broome Brothers String Band, Jenkins String Band, the Majestic Quartette, Homer Sherrill's Crazy Hickory Nuts, Dr. Bennett's Smoky Mountain Boomers, J.A. Farrington's

Carolina Melody Boys, James B. Grady's Huckleberry Pickers, James Hinson & His Palmetto Four, the Dixon Brothers, the Hilo Hawaiians, Carolina Vagabonds, Leroy Smith's Moonlight Serenaders, Raymond Lindsey's Combinators, the Rambling Trio, Carolina Serenaders, The Crazy Cavalier, M.P. Medford (harmonica), Fiddling Jim Robinson, and Adrian Raley (lap guitar soloist)! Of course there were also photos of the head man of the Charlotte office, J.W. Fincher, who hired J.E. Mainer and started the WBT programs in August of 1933 along with photos of his entire staff and their office facilities.

During the week the Crazy Mountaineers worked over WPTF in Riley, N.C., and WSPA in Spartanburg, S.C. In 1935 the newly formed and depression priced (35 cents a record) Blue Bird label contacted the band to record and they produced about 160 sides over the next few years.

In 1938 the Crazy Water Crystal Co. was apparently forced to shut down its operation, as J.E. put it: "the doctors got behind 'em and drove them off the air!" In 1938 J.E. "quit Wade and them" and got Snuffy Jenkins to

join him on banjo along with George Morris on guitar, Leonard Stokes on guitar and mandolin, and they went to work on WSOC in Charlotte.

By 1939 Mainer's Mountaineers were broadcasting opposite the famous Carter Family over XET from Monterrey, N.L. Mexico, helping to promote other strange products which were generally not allowed on American stations. Unfortunately none of those transcriptions seemed to have survived except perhaps as roofing material on some shacks in Monterrey! Fortunately, however, Ed Kahn asked his parents to rescue a number of XET radio transcriptions by the Carter family (note Arhoolie CD 411: "The Carter Family on Border Radio - Vol.1") when they were on a vacation trip in northern Mexico.

From the mid-1930s on, J.E. Mainer always made a living playing his fiddle, singing, and entertaining. However, his life was a constant struggle and he never saw the kind of financial rewards which so many contemporary country music stars seem to enjoy.

Joseph Emmet Mainer was born in a one-room country shack near Weaversville, in the hills of North Carolina, not far from Asheville,

in Buncombe County, on July 20, 1898 (he died in 1971). J.E. learned to play the banjo when he was about nine years old from his father. The family tried to eke out a living farming in the hills but it was hard and in 1906 he and his father moved to Union, S.C., to work in the cotton mill. They were soon joined by brother Wade, working like slaves, trying to pay off the homestead the father had bought in Weaverville. J.E. was paid 30 cents per week and only remembers that "them people were so mean" and they soon left for Glendale, S.C., where they worked with their father until he was able to pay off his home.

Off and on J.E. and his brother ran away and went back home into the mountains, trying to escape the Dickens-like working conditions. They obviously had a difficult time trying to survive. In 1913 J.E. went home again, this time to play banjo with left handed fiddler Roscoe Banks, his brother-in-law, who had married one of J.E.'s older sisters and from whom he actually learned most of his music. From time to time he would go back to work in the mills but would soon return home because as he put it: "I didn't make

much, only about \$5.50 a week, and my board was \$1.75 a week." Finally he left home for good in 1922 and caught a freight train to Concord. "Guess I had rambling on my mind—got me a job in the mill and went to work here at the Gibson cotton mill, got married here and been living here ever since." J.E. had left his banjo with his brother Wade and in Concord he took up the fiddle. In 1923 Wade joined J.E. in Concord and the two of them began to play together for dances and shows.

Their big break came in 1932 when J. W. Fincher, president of the Crazy Water Crystal Company heard about the group and sent for J.E. to come to Charlotte. J.E. was concerned about leaving his job because he didn't know if they were good enough to make it on the radio. His boss at the mill liked him and told him: "J.E., you go on ahead and if you can't make it you come back and your job will be waiting for you." J.E. remembered. "I asked about Wade—he was working in the cord room—and he said: 'Take him with you.'"

They made it all right and went to work for the Crazy Water Crystal Company. The

Mountaineers travelled throughout the South making personal appearances, and playing on the radio. They even went west and played over WWL in New Orleans for awhile, then they were sent as far as Monterrey, Mexico, where they broadcast over XERF at the same time the Carter Family was also working there. "All in all I have played over about 190 different radio stations throughout Virginia, the Carolinas, Georgia, Alabama, Louisiana, Texas, Illinois, Tennessee, Kentucky, Ohio, and Mexico," said J.E. as he pointed with pride at the many ribbons and other prizes he had won at fiddler's conventions and contests all over the South and stated: "I bought this place with this fiddle of mine!"

However not all those excursions westward were successful. J.E. said the money was real good but he couldn't get the right musicians to go with him and he was glad to get back home where he felt his old time music was more fully appreciated. Eventually, as his own children grew up, they became part of their father's Mountaineers. After World War II the Mountaineers recorded for the King label with J.E. Jr., Glenn, Ernest Harwood, and Billy Watson. The first session was done at

WNOX in Knoxville, Tenn.

The recordings heard on this CD came about after I had heard the wonderful sides Alan Lomax had taped for the Atlantic label. I wrote to Alan and he told me that J.E. Mainer lived in Concord, N.C., where I simply looked up his name in the telephone book. Shortly after we met, J.E. hit on me for a bottle of moonshine and when I wanted to take his picture he charged me \$5! Nevertheless we got along just fine and he soon agreed to record for me. However, J.E. said he needed time to rehearse the band. When I finally returned about six months later to make the recordings during a trip with German documentary film maker, Dietrich Wawzyn, J.E. had gathered his family group with two sons and one daughter who usually accompanied him when making personal appearances. In those years they had played for high schools, variety shows and fairs, and even churches: "they really get happy when we play them Christian numbers in the Free Wheel Baptist churches!" J.E. told me. For the recording J.E. augmented the Mainer's Mountaineers by adding a couple of neighbors on string bass and mandolin to give it a fuller sound.

THE MOUNTAINEERS

J.E. usually played fiddle and sang in his unique and rowdy fashion but on occasion he picked the banjo as on "Wild Bill Jones." His oldest son, J.E. Jr., played mostly guitar and sang many of the lead vocals ("Ramshackle Shack," "Greenback Dollar," "Shake My Mother's Hand for Me," "Mama Don't Allow," etc., while a second son, Glenn, played the five-string banjo. Daughter Carolyn Mainer Wilson also played guitar and sang. On the day of this recording the group was augmented by Earl Cheeks on bass fiddle and Otis Overcash on mandolin.

J.E., Jr., was born January 22, 1924, and started out playing the banjo but later switched to guitar. He learned most of his songs from his father and Uncle Wade, but he has also written many of his own. He enlisted in the Army when World War II started and played for many USO shows. After his discharge in 1946 he joined his father's Mountaineers and played with the group for radio stations and personal appearances, mostly around Johnson City, Tenn., where he made his first records as part of his father's band for the King Record Co. During the Ko-

rean War he re-enlisted and was sent to Seoul, Korea, where he played over short-wave radio billed as "Curley Mainer and his Mountaineers." When he returned from Korea, he became a regular member of J.E. Mainer's Mountaineers.

Glenn Thedford Mainer started out in music by beating time on a gallon bucket when his father used to bring his group home to play a few tunes for the family. Born November 20, 1927, Glenn won his first prize at a convention doing a talking blues when he was nine years old. After high school he joined his father's band and recorded with them for King. During his service in the Army, Glenn was sent to Germany where he organized a band and played over the American Forces Radio Network (AFN). When he got out of the Army in 1952, he went to Flint, Mich., where he learned to play the banjo. A year later he

returned to Concord where he worked for a heating and air conditioning company but still found time to play with his family and with his own group for shows and clubs.

Carolyn Mainer Wilson was born on January 6, 1930, and has been playing the guitar since she was sixteen years old. In addition to playing with her father's Mountaineers, she also sang with her sister, Mary, who now lives in Stockton, Calif., and they went under the name of the Mainer Sisters.

Earl Cheeks had played bass with various groups around Concord and Kannapolis. Born in 1926, he had been playing music professionally since around 1950.

The last member of the group was the mandolin player, Otis Overcash, from neighboring Kannapolis, N. C., who was one of the older members of the group, adding a great deal of the traditional sound of the Mountaineers.

(Chris Strachwitz - notes revised in 1996)

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Total time: 70:00

J.E. Mainer – *fiddle, banjo, vocals, and introductions*

J.E. Mainer Jr. – *guitar & vocals*

Glenn Mainer – *banjo*

Carolyn Mainer – *guitar & vocals*

Earl Cheeks – *bass & vocals*

Otis Overcash – *mandolin*

(*) = *previously unissued – all other selections originally released on Arhoolie LP 5002*

Recorded by Chris Strachwitz in Concord, N.C. on April 7, 1963 with one mono Caps condenser microphone and a Magnecord recorder.

Produced by Chris Strachwitz

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File under: BLUEGRASS/COUNTRY



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