

Wreck of Old 97

by Henry Whittier, Charles Noell, and Fred Lewey
(1923 court assignment of authorship to song about train wreck of September 27, 1903)

 C C7 F F
On one cloudless morning I stood on the mountain
 C D7 G G
Just watching the smoke from below
 C C7 F F
It was coming from a tall, slim smokestack
 C G7 C C
Way down on the southern railroad

It was 97, the fastest train
Ever ran the southern line
All the freight trains and pass'gers take the side for 97
For she's bound to be at stations on time

 They gave him his orders at Monroe, Virginia
 Saying, "Stevie, you're way behind time
 This is not 38, but it's Old 97
 You must put her into Spencer on time"

He looked 'round and said to his black greasy fireman
"Just shovel in a little more coal
And when I cross that old White Oak Mountain
You can just watch Old 97 roll"

 It's a mighty rough road from Lynchburg to Danville
 And the lie was a three-mile grade
 It was on that grade that he lost his air brakes
 And you see what a jump that she made

He was going down the grade making 90 miles an hour
When his whistle began to scream
He was found in that wreck with his hand on the throttle
He was scalded to death by the steam

 Did she ever pull in? No, she never pulled in
 And at 1:45 he was due
 For hours and hours has the switchman been waiting
 For that fast mail that never pulled through

Did she ever pull in? No, she never pulled in
And that poor boy, he must be dead
Oh, yonder he lays on the railroad track
With the cart wheels over his head

 97, she was the fastest train
 That the south had ever seen
 But she run so fast on that Sunday morning
 That the death score was numbered 14

Now, ladies, you must take warning
From this time now and on
Never speak harsh words to your true loving husband
He may leave you and never return