

Wreck Of The Old 97

authorship in dispute

C C C C
 //// //// //// ///...

C F
 They gave him his orders in Monroe Virginia
 C G G
 Sayin' "Steve you're way behind time.
 C F
 "This is not Thirty-Eight, this is Ol' Ninety-Seven,"
 C G⁷ C C
 "You must put her into Spencer on time".

C F
 He turned around and said to his black greasy fireman,
 C G G
 "Better shovel on a little more coal."
 C F
 "And when we cross that White Oak Mountain,"
 C G⁷ C C
 "You can watch Ol' Ninety-Seven roll

C C F F C G⁷ C C
 //// //// //// //// //// //// //// ///...

C F
 It's a mighty rough road from Lynchburg to Danville
 C G G
 With the line on a three-mile grade
 C F
 It was on that grade that he lost his airbrakes
 C G⁷ C C
 You can see what a jump he made

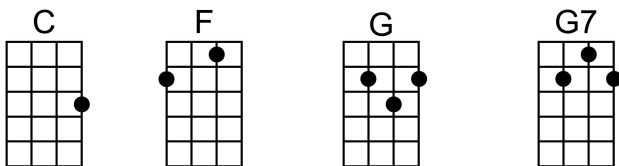
C F
 He was goin' down the hill makin' ninety miles an hour
 C G G
 When the whistle began to scream

C
F
 They found him in the wreck with his hand on the throttle
C
G⁷
C
C
 He'd been scalded to death by the steam.

C
F
 A Telegram came from Washington station
C
G
G
 And this is how it read,
C
F
 'The brave engineer who ran Ninety-Seven
C
G⁷
C
C
 Is lying down in Danville dead'.

C
G⁷
C
C
 //// //// //// ///...

C
F
 So come all you ladies, you must take warnin'
C
G
G
 From this time on and learn
C
F
 Never speak harsh words to your true lovin' husbands
C
G⁷
C
C
 They may leave you and never return
C
G⁷
C
C
 They may leave you and never return ///



Even though authorship of the song, written to the tune of "The Ship That Never Returned", might be in dispute, there is no doubt it was written about a real tragedy. The wreck of the 'Fast Mail' train on its run between Monroe and Spencer, just outside of Danville Virginia, occurred Sept. 27, 1903. The accident killed eleven and injured nine others. Vernon Dalhart's recording of the song in 1924, though not the first, went on to become the 1st million-selling record in the U.S.