

Southern Engineer Retires After 50 Years of Service

Veteran Swift Hooper Pulled the Throttle of Famous "Old 97" for Four Years; Has Been on Winston-Salem-North Wilkesboro Run for 44 Years; Is Well Known Here

(By Clay Thompson in Winston-Salem Journal)

Swift Hooper, the old-timer who pulled the throttle of the famous old Southern 97 for four years and whose train for 44 years was familiar to those who lived along the tracks between Winston-Salem and North Wilkesboro as the very hills themselves, hooted his contempt for the sleek-looking, oil-burning streamlined trains of today.

"I never saw one of them," he said in a tone eloquent with his contempt for the modern and his love of the old. "I never saw one of them," he said again, "but I'll tell you this much: Whenever they outrun one of the high-wheel coal-burning engines like the old 97 they're going to have to get up before day."

Hooper has retired from an engineering job he took on December 25, 1889, with the old Rich-

mond and Danville railroad, which later went into receivership and became the Southern.

He's 68 now, and his heart is a bit weak for throttle pulling, but he can tell you as much about railroading as old Casey Jones himself.

In fact, he is the Casey Jones of the Winston-Salem-North Wilkesboro run.

Hooper was pitching the coal into the engine of Cal Teague, who pulled the throttle of the first train that ever rolled into the hills of North Wilkesboro. That was back in '90. Shortly afterwards, he started pulling his own train there, and with the exception of seven years spent on the Southern main line from Spencer to Monroe, Va., the whistles of his trains No. 13 and 14 have resounded through the mountains.

Hooper rocked in his rocking-

chair in his home on the High Point highway.

"Yes," he said, "four of those years on the main line I was pulling old 97, the fastest train that's ever been in this part of the country or ever will be."

"I was supposed to have been with her the day she wrecked in 1903 and would have been if I hadn't asked for the day off."

"Old Joe Broadie was pulling her at 90 miles an hour when she jumped the track on the curve at Stillhouse trestle near Danville. Old Joe and 11 others were killed that day she left the track. . . . No, Joe didn't know the track. You couldn't take that curve at 90 miles an hour. Joe was new on the run."

And because Joe was new on the run, a ballad was born and placed on thousands of records which in varying forms have spun out the blue story of how old 97 was "going down that grade making 90 miles an hour, and her whistle broke into a scream" . . .

The story spins on to the inevitable conclusion where old Joe was "found in the wreck with his hand on the throttle, all scalded to death by the steam."

Hooper didn't say so himself, but railroad officials are known to have said that if Swift Hooper had been at the engine's throttle that fateful day back in '03 old 97 would have taken that curve at Stillhouse trestle.

"The fastest I ever run 97? . . . Well, the division man was late pulling her into Salisbury from down South one day. He pulled her in late and I had to make up

NEWS FROM THE COUNTY CAPITAL

Mrs. Carl Folger entertained her contract club Saturday evening at her home on Church street. High score prize went to Mrs. C. G. Comer and runner up to Mrs. J. T. Threatte. Mrs. Folger served a salad course with supplemental dainties suggestive of the coming holidays.

The very noted play, "Little Women," was well rendered by the high school juniors in the school auditorium Friday evening, under the efficient direction of Miss Jennie Martin, dramatics teacher of the Dobson school. The characters did credit to themselves in their special role, and showed excellent training. The cast was as follows:

Meg—Betty Folger; Jo—Sadie Draughn; Beth—Carmen Edwards; Amy—Elaine White; Rev. March—Grady Cooper; Mrs. March—Frances Freeman; Aunt March—Eva Kidd; Hannah, the maid—Margaret Sparger; Laurie Lawrence—Ganelle White; John Brooke—Noah Edwards; Prof. Baer—Aubert Snow.

Mrs. J. W. Comer and son, Bob, and Miss Emma Comer spent the week-end in Bluefield, W. Va., with Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Keese.

Mr. Joe Cox and Noah Edwards spent Saturday in Winston-Salem.

Mrs. Sallie Somers and Mrs. Hugh Holcomb and children were Saturday visitors with Mrs. Emma Hampton.

Miss Kathryn Huddleston, of Mt. Airy, visited her sister, Mrs. W. B. White, Friday, and attended the "Little Women" play.

Rev. Mr. Parker preached at the Methodist church Sunday evening.

Mrs. W. L. Reece, Mrs. Emma Hampton, Mrs. Emma Mock, Miss Edith Reece and Marianne Mock were Sunday guests of Mr. and Mrs. Fletcher Harris in Elkin.

some time . . . Old 97 didn't carry anything but mail, and the mail had to go.

"Well, we steamed her up, and I took the throttle, and we headed for the hills."

Hooper stopped rocking his chair for a moment, and then he snapped:

"I gained 25 minutes from Salisbury to Monroe, Va. That's the fastest I ever pulled her."

The other three years Hooper spent on the main line he had trains No. 34 and 35, but they couldn't "stay in sight" of old 97. Hooper was born in Kernersville, and ever since he can remember a railroad engine has been his passion and glory.

"I had to have a job on one," he said, "so I went down to company shops (now Burlington) and got me one firing for Cal Teague from Winston-Salem to Donaha. I fired for him seven months, and for Ned Harris a while. Then I got an engine for myself, and I pulled her until last October."

For 44 years he has pulled passenger train No. 13 into North Wilkesboro and brought passenger train No. 14 back to Winston-Salem. That counts up to around a million and a half miles.

"Did I ever have any wrecks! Why I was killed out here at White street one day and was dead for several days. I guess they'd have buried me if Dr. Valk hadn't brought me out of it."

Hooper's engine jumped the track and fell on him at White street as he was pulling into Winston-Salem.

Another time his engine fell over on the turntable at North Wilkesboro, and still another occurred when his train plowed into a couple of box cars left on the main line in Lynchburg.

"It was a cold, foggy morning in Lynchburg, and you couldn't see farther than the end of your nose," he reminisced. "I was pulling into the yard at a good clip and broke into the cars. I had a couple of carloads of young steers on my train, and when it wrecked the steers that weren't killed really took the town."

Is Swift Hooper lonesome for the railroad?

"Thunder no!" he'll tell you. "Fifty-one years is long enough for a man to stay on any one job, and it's plenty long for a man to pull a throttle."

Certainly the depot officials at the dozen or so stops between here and North Wilkesboro know that Swift Hooper is not pulling 13 and 14 these days.

And it may be, too, that those who live along the tracks know that it is not Swift Hooper who sits up there with his hand on the throttle and his eyes on the rails and pulls her whistle as she thunders through the hills.

Swift Hooper, the Casey Jones of the Southern who has pulled them with the best of them, has finished his railroading.

LETTERS TO SANTA

Elkin, N. C., Dec. 6, 1940

Dear Santa Claus,
This is what I want for Christmas. I want a tea set, and a game of Bingo, and a pair of gloves. Peggy wants a doll, a pair of bedroom slippers, a pair of gloves. Sarah wants a wagon, and a tricycle. Bring my little brother a rattler.
With lots of fun,
From Cella Hyatt

Elkin, N. C., Dec. 4, 1940

Dear Santa,
Will you write me a line to let you know that I have been a real good little boy, and drop a hint about what I want for Christmas. I would like a dump truck, a little train, and a catapult. You can put a few oranges, apples, nuts and things like that in my stocking if you want too. Sincerely yours,
Mr. Carol Conrad Harris

The ringtail is a small catlike animal found in the southwestern part of the U. S. and Mexico. So called because of the dark rings around its tail.

Office:
The Bank of Elkin Building
DR. P. W. GREEN
OPTOMETRIST
Offices open daily for optical repairs and adjustments of all kinds. Examinations on Tuesdays and Fridays from 1 to 5 p.m. By Appointment! Phone 140

SNOOPS: "Why do you rinse the bottle before you put medicine in it?"



Rx

No matter how clean it looks, we rinse every bottle thoroughly. Pharmacy is a recognized Public Health profession which means that we conduct ourselves in keeping with Public Health procedures.

A Good Drug Store
ABERNETHY'S PHARMACY
ELKIN, N.C. The Retail Store



CHRISTMAS

Gifts of JEWELRY

AT EXTRA SAVINGS During Our ANNIVERSARY SALE

Jewelry is the perfect gift, whether for "Him" or for "Her." Come in today and select Jewelry gifts from our large stock. Better yet, take advantage of our Anniversary Prices to save more! Use our convenient budget plan, too, to make paying easy.



Ladies' Watches
7 Jewels—Tiny as a Dime - Yellow Gold. Regular \$19.50 value.
SPECIAL— \$14.75

Bulova - Elgin and Hamilton WATCHES
Bulova and Elgin \$14.75 up
Hamilton \$37.50 up



Wide Selection of Beautiful DIAMONDS
\$7.50 to \$600.00

Diamond Ring and Wedding Band (with 3 diamonds) to Match. \$14.95 Up

LOCKETS
\$2.75 Up
Beautiful Locket and Bracelet Sets \$12.50 Value
\$9.50

PAY AS LITTLE AS 50¢ PER WEEK

LEONARD'S

JEWELERS SINCE 1893
Next to Postoffice Elkin, N. C.

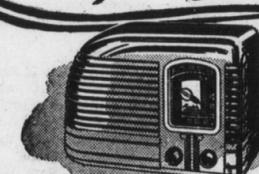


DON'T SAY BREAD—
Say
HOLSUM

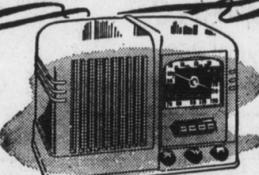
ECONOMY AUTO SUPPLY

THRIFTY Gift Tips

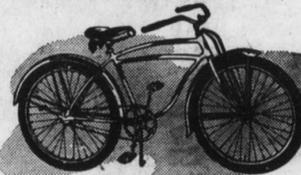
on Easy Terms To Fit Your Pocketbook



5 TUBE MANTOLA RADIO
Presenting a bit of real Christmas cheer in the way of a smartly styled, compact room radio. Streamlined modern plastic cabinet. Equipped with Magna Beam magic beam antenna. Automatic volume control. No ground or aerial needed. A big package for your money.
25¢ Per Week



IVORY CABINET RADIO
If you want your present to make a "hit," you can't go wrong with this Ivory finished beauty. Feather-touch push button tuning, 5-inch, electro dynamic speaker, Magna Beam built-in antenna, 5 tubes. Automatic volume control.
50¢ Per Week



POPULAR GOODRICH BIKE
Watch the gleam in his eye when he catches sight of this on Christmas morning. Double bar chrome truss rods. Doubly reinforced throughout for extra ruggedness. Coaster brake. Finished in choice of harmonizing colors. A remarkable value at this price.
100¢ Per Week



STREAMLINED SCOOTER
Any red-blooded youngster will let out a "whoop" when he spies this speedy scooter under the tree. Sturdily built, finished in sparkling colors, it's a great value.
25¢ Per Week

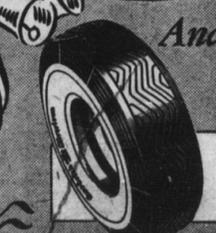


AUTOMATIC TOASTER
They'll think of you every morning when that golden brown toast pops out of this smartly streamlined toaster. Toasts 2 large slices. Lustrous chromium and black satin finish.
75¢ Per Week



STURDY TRICYCLE
Just the thing to make a grand Christmas for any little boy or girl. Ruggedly built to stand hard knocks and finished in gay color combinations. You'll go far to match this value.
25¢ Per Week

And for the Car



GOODRICH SILVERTOWN TIRE
100¢ Per Week



NEW SUPER-SPEED GOODRICH HEATER
75¢ Per Week

LOW, EASY TERMS

ECONOMY AUTO SUPPLY

Opposite F. A. Brendle & Son Elkin, N. C.