

By John Hartford ©1989
Minor lyric changes by Charlie Ipcar
Key: F (5/C)

Where's an Old Time Riverman Go

C-----F---C---G-----F-----G-C
Where's an old time riverman go, after he's passed a-way?
-----F---G-----F-----G
Does his soul still keep watch on the deep, till the end of the river days?
-----F-----G-----Am-----F
Does he then come back as a channel cat, or the wasps that light on the wheel,
-----C-----F---C-----G-----F-----G---C
Or the birds that fly through a summer sky, or fish swimming 'neath the keel?

Where's an old time pilot go, after his final watch?
Does he catch the ear of the man who steers sayin' "Hold er' on that notch!"
Hear the drawn out sigh as the breezes cry: "Son, I'm goin' to bed."?
Then he lights his pipe, goes off in the night; was that fireflies instead?

Where's an old time engineer go, after he's cooled 'er down?
Gone up the hill to never come back, from the quiet side of town;
Does his soul sing 'long with the engine's song, while the striker checks the gear?
Is his ghost afloat on that old steamboat, after he's gone from here?

Where's an old time riverman go, after he's passed away?
Does his soul still keep watch on the deep, till the end of the river days?
Does he then come back as a channel cat, or the wasps that light on the wheel?
Or the birds that fly through a summer sky, or fish swimming 'neath the keel.

Notes:

To hear John Hartford sing this song:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HHhnGMJRu20>