

I Remember Old Tuscaloosa

By Fred Maxwell

THERE HAVE been several steamboats and steamships that were named "Tuscaloosa." Included in this list are:

1. A river steamboat built in Tuscaloosa by Capt. James H. Dearing and used to ply between Tuscaloosa and Mobile during the 1820s.

2. The Confederate bark CSS Tuscaloosa was originally the Conrad and after capture June 19, 1863, by Admiral Raphael Semmes (skipper of the famous CSS Alabama) was fitted out with brass cannon captured from a French ship. This ship, converted to a raider, was commanded by Fourth Lt. John Law.

3. A large diesel-electric towboat was placed in operation by the Black Warrior-Tombigbee Waterway System in the 1930s and it bore the name of Tuscaloosa. Three similar sister ships were also built, commissioned and suitably named.

4. The USS Tuscaloosa CA-37 was one of the seven heavy cruisers of the Astoria class of 1929-1933. It was built by the New York Shipbuilding Co. of Camden, N.J., and commissioned Aug. 17, 1934. It was an elegant ship and had an illustrious career. President Franklin Roosevelt used the Tuscaloosa on his visits to Yalta and other official occasions. During World War II the Tuscaloosa

served as flagship for a cruiser scouting squadron which included the Wichita, Quincy and Vincennes. The Tuscaloosa served as a flagship at the Normandy invasion and its battle flag was presented to the University of Alabama and is now in the custody of the University Library.

The following is taken from the official history of the ship:

"In the three years, eight months and nine days of war, the Tuscaloosa fought in four of the most crucial engagements of the long war, Casablanca, Normandy, Iwo Jima and Okinawa. Her losses in Combat were only two senior aviation officers.

5. A new Navy ship (LST 1187) was named Tuscaloosa and commissioned in San Diego, Cal., on Sept. 6, 1969.

It is therefore apropos for this article to quote from the "Retired Naval Personnel Newsletter" as follows:

"Second joint reunion of USS Tuscaloosa (CA-37) and USS Wichita (CA-45) will be held 30 July-1 August 1971 in Tuscaloosa. Tuscaloosa men contact Bernard J. Wolters, 510 Elizabeth, Kansas City, Kan. 66101. Wichita men contact Joe Glass, III Dupre Ave., Norfolk, Va., 23503."

Let's help make this reunion a memorable occasion.