

# I Remember Old Tuscaloosa

By Fred Maxwell

HOW WELL do I remember our first family automobile—a four-cylinder 1910 Cadillac touring car. This car was resplendent with headlights, sidelights, windshield frame and acetylene gas generator, all polished brass, giving it ominous headon appearance.

Having ridden all of the roads on the Tuscaloosa side of the river several times, we decided to try the Crabbe Road in Northport one Sunday afternoon.

It was not long before we discovered that horses and mules that were encountered on this road were, in general, farm animals and unaccustomed to both the looks and sound of an

automobile. All teams had to be passed cautiously and over 15 times that afternoon we had to stop, and sometimes "kill" our motor, before the driver could coax his animals to pass our car, and many would give it a wide berth.

Since this was before the day of electric starters on automobiles, "killing" your motor necessitated starting again by hand-cranking your engine.

The climax of this trip was on returning when we reached the middle of the old river bridge. There we met an inebriated rider of about 60 years of age riding astride a mule.

A mule is the offspring of a horse (mare) and a jackass. I believe it was

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Mark Twain that defined a mule as "an animal without pride of ancestry and without hope of posterity." It is well known how stubborn and ornery a mule can be.

We had reached about the center of the old river bridge when the oncoming rider and mule, about 75 feet away, became cognizant of our presence. The mule did not hesitate but made an abrupt 180 degree turn and ran off the end of the bridge with the rider waving his arms and gesticulating in an effort to retain his seat in the saddle.

Thinking the rider would remain off the bridge until I passed, I proceeded ahead cautiously. But the mule and rider approached to within about 60 feet from us when he executed the first maneuver again.

Perceiving that the rider was determined to pass me on the bridge, I stop-

ped the car and cut off the motor.

With a series of approaches and retreats, each time the mule came a little closer to the car before he retreated. When they were about 10 feet away I called to the rider "why don't you get off and lead him by?"

"That ain't what I bought him for" was the terse reply.

The mule must have gained confidence when he found that we were on speaking terms with each other, for he bolted by the car and continued in a fast gallop to the other end of the bridge.

I anxiously watched them safely clear the end of the bridge and then breathed a sign of relief. Knowing how mules always take care of themselves, I did not feel any anxiety for the mule going over the side of the bridge into the river but I had serious doubts regarding the rider.