

I Remember Old Tuscaloosa

By Fred Maxwell

SOME wag said "Marriage is a great institution—but who wants to be an institution?"

Tuscaloosa has many fine "institutions" such as the University of Alabama, schools, hospitals and the like. Not the least of its institutions was the "call" and "bus" service supplied by the old McLester Hotel (located on corner of 6th St. and 24th Ave.)

The McLester maintained a bus service to meet all trains to ferry passengers between the hotel and the depots. The bus was drawn by a pair of fine horses. It had a rear entrance and would accommodate about 12 passengers.

The McLester supplied all the services for eating and lodging that a fine hotel should. However, there was an additional service that I do not believe any other hotel furnished. The night room clerk of the hotel, out of the kindness of his heart, instituted a special service to all the residents who lived on 24th Ave. The clerk would accept the responsibility to act as an alarm clock and give a telephone

call when requested just the same as he did for occupants of the hotel. Furthermore, if requested, the night clerk would have the bus stop at your residence to insure that you did not miss your night train.

I would like to pay tribute to the driver of the bus on the occasion of one night trip after a storm when a 2,300 volt live wire dropped into a large pool of water in the street at about 10th St. and 24th Ave. The street was not paved. Immediately the two horses were electrocuted when they stepped into the pool of water.

The passengers jumped up from their seats and started to leave the bus. The driver, on hearing the rear door latch click, ordered all passengers to remain seated on the bus until the electrical power was cut off. This small group waited in the bus until a passerby was warned and asked to notify the power company to send relief.

The bus passengers were unharmed but I do not recall whether they missed their night train.