



**Jim Schmerse**   Tom Davis   Elwood Inch   John Bury

We should have made Jim Schmerse our association historian. This is his personal album. Jim saved some wonderful documents from the Ponchatoula's earliest years. Some of them may now be the only surviving copies. Jim passed away on December 29, 2011, so we are unable to extend a thank you to him personally. Jim's wife of 54 years, Betty Schmerse, has been gracious enough to lend Jim's book to the association so it could be scanned into our website.

We can now all enjoy viewing Jim's rare collection of Ponchatoula memorabilia.

Thank you, Betty !







*USS Ponchatoula*

## USS PONCHATOULA (AO 148)

### QUOTED FROM COMMISSIONING PROGRAM PHILADELPHIA NAVAL SHIPYARD

★ 12 JANUARY 1956 ★

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U.S.S. PONCHATOULA (AO 148) is the sixth of a new class of fleet oilers. She is 655 feet in length with a beam of 86 feet. She is designed primarily for rapid transfer of petroleum products and other cargo to the forces afloat operating at high speed and at long distances from base. U.S.S. PONCHATOULA will carry in addition to her own fuel supply nearly eight million gallons of fuel oil, aviation fuel, and diesel oil for delivery to the fleet at sea.

U.S.S. PONCHATOULA is armed with a powerful battery of automatic-loading, rapid-firing guns, controlled by the most modern directors and radars. Her equipment also includes the latest developments in navigational radar and instruments, modern portable and built-in fire fighting facilities, and numerous high-powered radio receivers and transmitters. U.S.S. PONCHATOULA is one of the first fleet oilers to have air-conditioned working and living spaces for the increased comfort and efficiency of the entire ship's company.

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Oilers of the United States Navy are named after rivers. The Ponchatoula River flows through the southwestern part of the Tongipahoa Parish, Louisiana, and enters the Tickfaw several miles southeast of Springfield in Livingston Parish.

The name Ponchatoula signifies "singing Hair." The Choctaw Indians gave this fanciful name to the stream because of the abundance of Spanish moss on the trees in its vicinity. The Indians, thinking that the moss sang in the wind, named the "Ponchitoawa" which was subsequently corrupted by white settlers of "Ponchatoula."





U. S. S. PONCHATOULA

COMMISSIONING CEREMONIES GUEST

PLEASE SHOW THIS CARD FOR ADMISSION  
TO THE YARD AND TO THE SHIP

NAVY-NPS 4ND-PHILA., PA.



The Prospective Commanding Officer  
the Officers and Crew  
cordially invite you to be present  
at the commissioning of the  
U. S. S. PONCHATOULA  
on Thursday afternoon, January twelfth  
nineteen hundred and fifty-six  
at three-thirty o'clock  
at the  
United States Naval Base  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania



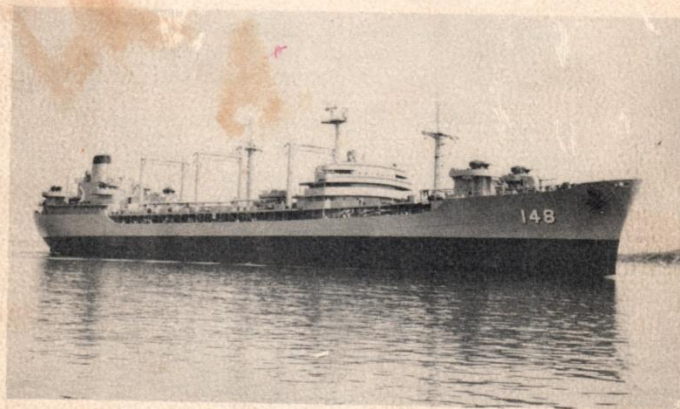
UNITED STATES SHIP



# PONCHATOULA



(AO 148)



## COMMISSIONING PROGRAM



PHILADELPHIA NAVAL SHIPYARD

PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

12 JANUARY 1956



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY  
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

7 December 1955

Dear Captain Wilson:

It gives me great pleasure to extend my sincere best wishes to you, your officers and men on the occasion of the commissioning of the USS PONCHATOULA (AO-148).

The PONCHATOULA is the second naval vessel to bear this name and is one of the most modern naval fleet oilers incorporating many new and advanced design features essential to the mobile logistic support of our fast task forces.

I am confident that you and the officers and men under your command in the PONCHATOULA will perform in a manner that will reflect the highest standards and traditions of the Navy.

Sincerely yours,

C. S. THOMAS

CAPT William R. Wilson, USN  
Commanding Officer  
USS PONCHATOULA (AO-148)  
c/o Commandant, 4th Naval District  
U. S. Naval Base  
Philadelphia 12, Pennsylvania

NAVAL COMMISSIONING



The commissioning ceremony marks the initiation of service of a ship of the Operating Forces of the United States Navy. At the moment of breaking her Commission Pennant, U. S. S. PONCHATOULA becomes the responsibility of her Commanding Officer, who together with the ship's crew, then has the duty of making and keeping her constantly ready for any service demanded by our country in peace or in war.



Commandant  
Fourth Naval District



Rear Admiral E. H. von HEIMBURG, USN



Commanding Officer  
U. S. S. PONCHATOU LA



Captain W. R. WILSON, USN

## U. S. S. PONCHATOU LA

(AO 148)



BUILT BY  
NEW YORK SHIPBUILDING CORPORATION  
CAMDEN, NEW JERSEY



KEEL LAID  
1 MARCH 1954



LAUNCHED  
9 JULY 1955



SPONSOR  
MRS. I. N. KILAND



COMMISSIONING  
12 JANUARY 1956  
PHILADELPHIA NAVAL SHIPYARD  
PHILADELPHIA, PA.





MRS. I. N. KILAND

#### THE SPONSOR

•

Mrs. Ingolf N. Kiland is the sponsor of U. S. S. PONCHATOULA, having officiated at her launching. Mrs. Kiland is the former Isabel Jackson Taylor of Philadelphia, and the wife of Rear Admiral Kiland. They have a son, Ingolf Norman Kiland, Jr.

Rear Admiral Kiland is the Commandant of the Fifth Naval District, with Headquarters at the Naval Base, Norfolk, Virginia. In addition to the Navy Cross, the Distinguished Service Medal and the Legion of Merit with Gold Star and Combat "V", Rear Admiral Kiland has the Navy Unit Commendation Ribbon with two stars; the Victory Medal, Destroyer Clasp; the American Defense Service Medal, Fleet Clasp; the American Campaign Medal; the European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with engagement star; the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with five engagement stars; the World II Victory Medal, the Philippine Liberation Ribbon with star; the Navy Occupation Service Medal, Asia Clasp; and the China Service Medal.



HONORABLE JAMES H. MORRISON, M.C.  
United States Congressman  
from Louisiana

#### PRINCIPAL SPEAKER

•

It is appropriate that the principal speaker at the commissioning ceremony be the Representative in Congress of the district in which the Ponchatoula River flows. Honorable James H. Morrison was born in Hammond, Louisiana in that same district. Mr. Morrison graduated from Tulane University Law School in 1935 and has had a distinguished career of public service at the city, county, state and national levels. He is now serving his 14th year in Congress, having been elected for seven consecutive terms.

Mr. Morrison's uncle was admiral Richmond P. Hobson, a distinguished naval officer, who served brilliantly in the Spanish-American War.

*254 men aboard*

UNITED STATES SHIP  
PONCHATOULA  
(AO 148)

U. S. S. PONCHATOULA (AO 148) is the sixth of a new class of fleet oilers. She is 655 feet in length with a beam of 86 feet. She is designed primarily for rapid transfer of petroleum products and other cargo to the forces afloat operating at high speed and at long distances from base. U. S. S. PONCHATOULA will carry in addition to her own fuel supply nearly eight million gallons of fuel oil, aviation fuel, and diesel oil for delivery to the fleet at sea.

U. S. S. PONCHATOULA is armed with a powerful battery of automatic-loading, rapid-firing guns, controlled by the most modern directors and radars. Her equipment also includes the latest developments in navigational radar and instruments, modern portable and built-in fire fighting facilities, and numerous high powered radio receivers and transmitters. U. S. S. PONCHATOULA is one of the first fleet oilers to have air-conditioned working and living spaces for the increased comfort and efficiency of the entire ship's company.

ORIGIN OF THE NAME PONCHATOULA

Oilers of the United States Navy are named after rivers. The Ponchatoula River flows through the southwestern part of the Tongipahoa Parish, Louisiana, and enters the Tuckfaw several miles southeast of Springfield in Livingston Parish.

The name Ponchatoula signifies "Singing Hair." The Choctaw Indians gave this fanciful name to the stream because of the abundance of Spanish moss on the trees in its vicinity. The Indians, thinking that the moss sang in the wind, named the river "Ponchitoawa" which was subsequently corrupted by white settlers to "Ponchatoula."



U. S. S. PONCHATOULA  
*COMMISSIONING CEREMONY*



The Order of the Navy Department  
to Commission U. S. S. PONCHATOULA .....The Commandant

The Commissioning

\*

The National Anthem

The Hoisting of the National Ensign,  
the Jack and Commission Pennant

The Breaking of the Personal Flag

The Invocation .....The Chaplain

\*\*

Acceptance of Command .....The Commanding Officer

Set the Watch .....The Commanding Officer

Honorable JAMES H. MORRISON, M. C.  
United States Congressman  
from Louisiana

Captain W. R. WILSON, U. S. Navy  
Commanding Officer

The Benediction .....The Chaplain

Pipe Down .....The Commanding Officer

\* Audience rise  
\*\*Audience be seated

All guests are invited to inspect the ship.  
Ushers are available to act as guides  
after the Commissioning Ceremony.

254 men

OFFICERS OF  
U. S. S. PONCHATOU LA

•  
COMMANDING OFFICER  
CAPTAIN W. R. WILSON

•  
EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
LCDR E. V. KNOX

OPERATIONS  
LT J. E. MITCHELL, USN .....Operations Officer and Navigator  
LTJG D. J. NICOL, USNR .....Communications Officer

DECK  
LT W. H. SINGLETARY, USN .....First Lieutenant and Gunnery Officer  
ENS R. T. BODENSTEINER, USNR .....Assistant Gunnery Officer  
ENS G. SCHWERM, USNR .....Assistant Gunnery Officer  
CWO E. L. DEXTER, USN .....Ship's Boatswain

ENGINEERING  
LCDR C. O. MEKKELSON, USN .....Engineering Officer  
LTJG L. B. FOGG, USNR .....Damage Control Assistant  
CWO H. M. DANIELS, USN .....Main Propulsion Assistant

SUPPLY  
LTJG F. C. HEINEMANN, USNR .....Supply Officer  
ENS J. B. LOVELACE, USN .....Disbursing Officer

CHIEF PETTY OFFICERS OF  
U. S. S. PONCHATOU LA

•  
BACON, O. H. ....Chief Radioman  
BELCHER, C. W. ....Chief Quartermaster  
EDMONDS, A. W. ....Chief Gunner's Mate  
GUNNELS, W. T. ....Chief Engineman  
LANCASTER, E. A. ....Chief Boatswain's Mate  
MAY, D. ....Chief Boilerman  
McKNIGHT, E. L. ....Chief Hospital Corpsman  
MONTOYA, L. ....Chief Commissaryman  
PERRY, B. F., Jr. ....Chief Machinist's Mate  
REXROAD, M. "C", Jr. ....Chief Electrician's Mate



PETTY OFFICERS FIRST CLASS OF  
U. S. S. PONCHATOU LA

ANDREU, P. P. ....Machinist's Mate First  
ANDROWSKY, F. G. ....Pipefitter First  
BROWN, E. A. ....Gunner's Mate First  
BROWNELL, R. F. ....Teleman First  
BLACK, R. G. ....Machinist's Mate First  
BOSWELL, W. H. ....Electronic Technician First  
CRAYCRAFT, C. R. ....Damage Controlman First  
CUSHARD, W. N. ....Pipefitter First  
FOGG, S. O. ....Electrician's Mate First  
GRIFFIN, R. J. ....Boilerman First  
HARLESS, "J" "C" ....Storekeeper First  
HARPER, O. R. ....Ship's Serviceman First  
INGERSOLL, J. L. ....Radarmen First  
JACKSON, A. E. ....Radioman First  
KUHN, W. K. ....Boilerman First  
LEITH, W. E. ....Metalsmith First  
McCLARIN, W. F. ....Steward First  
McDONALD, T. L. ....Boilerman First  
MOSS, C. W. ....Machinist's Mate First  
NOLDAN, E. H. ....Machinist's Mate First  
PEVY, J. A. ....Machinist's Mate First  
SMITH, R. C. ....Commissaryman First  
WALDRON, C. V. ....Yeoman First  
WORTHINGTON, J. A. ....Storekeeper First  
YOUNG, D. ....Boatswain's Mate First

PETTY OFFICERS SECOND CLASS OF  
U. S. S. PONCHATOU LA

BODENSTAB, O. R. ....Machinist's Mate Second  
BONKOWSKI, E. E. ....Electrician's Mate Second  
BROWN, W. E. ....Yeoman Second  
CURRY, R. ....Personnelman Second  
FLETCHER, T. L. ....Gunner's Mate Second  
HUNTER, E. F. ....Boatswain's Mate Second  
ISSACSON, J. J. ....Machinist's Mate Second  
JACKSON, C. ....Ship's Serviceman Second  
KERLEY, M. L. ....Boatswain's Mate Second  
LONG, C. N. ....Electrician's Mate Second  
MABEN, R. L. ....Fire Control Technician Second  
MACHAMER, C. E. ....I. C. Electrician Second  
McAULIFFE, J. B. ....Radioman Second  
McDANIEL, J. B., Jr. ....Boatswain's Mate Second  
OKERWALL, R. W. ....Quartermaster Second  
PENTZ, R. T. ....I. C. Electrician Second  
RUMRILL, K. E. ....Personnelman Second  
SAKAL, D. M. ....Pipefitter Second  
STEMBRIDGE, J. A. ....Storekeeper Second  
STORRS, D. L. ....Disbursing Clerk Second  
VAN NATTA, R. J. ....Commissaryman Second  
WATERBURY, H. A. ....Boilerman Second  
WHITE, C. E. ....Metalsmith Second

PETTY OFFICERS THIRD CLASS OF  
U. S. S. PONCHATOUA

ADEY, W. F. .....Electrician's Mate Third  
BECKER, A. H. ....Machinist's Mate Third  
BOWEN, J. R. ....Quartermaster Third  
BREWER, R. C. ....Fire Control Technician Third  
BRYAN, R. E. ....Radarmen Third  
BURNETT, J. J. ....Engineman Third  
CARLISLE, A. L. ....Quartermaster Third  
CARTER, J. D., Jr. ....Metalsmith Third  
COLGATE, C. A. ....Boatswain's Mate Third  
COX, O., Jr. ....Machinist's Mate Third  
CUNNINGHAM, A. W. ....Machinist's Mate Third  
CUNNINGHAM, M. W. ....Quartermaster Third  
DELQUAGLIO, S. J. ....Commissaryman Third  
EMMONS, C. M. ....Machinist's Mate Third  
FAITH, R. S. ....Boatswain's Mate Third  
FICKLIN, R. H. ....Gunner's Mate Third  
FORSYTH, J. J. ....Ship's Serviceman Third  
JONES, P. W. ....Fire Control Technician Third  
KILLORAN, R. M. ....Electrician's Mate Third  
LOOMIS, B. R. ....Machinist's Mate Third  
MASON, E. G. ....Boilerman Third  
MASON, L. W. ....Damage Controlman Third  
McKAY, J. B. ....Electrician's Mate Third  
MOORE, J. L. ....Commissaryman Third  
NORRINGTON, C. N. ....Machinist's Mate Third  
PERKINS, M. A. ....Electrician's Mate Third  
PROCTOR, D. R. ....Machinist's Mate Third  
RENNINGER, D. A. ....Boilerman Third  
ROBERTSON, T., Jr. ....Storekeeper Third  
SCHIED, J. P. ....Radarmen Third  
STERNER, F. M. ....Gunner's Mate Third  
WALKER, H. V. ....Gunner's Mate Third  
WASHINGTON, J. R. ....Boatswain's Mate Third  
WISNEWSKI, W. F. ....Electronic Technician Third

NON-RATED MEN OF  
U. S. S. PONCHATOUA

BAKER, R. V.  
BANKS, J. J.  
BEAMER, A. G.  
BEAR, L. G.  
BELLOSPRITO, D.  
BERGGEN, J. M.  
BIGORNIA, C. B.  
BELTZ, H. G.  
BOHLING, M. G.  
BONE, R. G.  
BORKOWSKI, R. J.  
BRANNAN, W. H.  
BROOKS, R.E.  
BROWN, C. D.  
BRUMMETT, R. E.  
BRYANT, H. F.  
BRYNE, R. F.  
BULWICZ, D. A.  
BURGESS, H. A.  
CAPUTO, F. A.  
CARR, E. L.  
CASSETT, J.  
CHUNN, C. R.  
COLLINS, R. D.  
COSTELLO, W. F.  
COWAN, T. L.  
COX, J. T.  
CREECH, R. D.  
DELAFTER, W. F.  
DEVERE, C.  
DUDERSTADT, D. R.  
DUNCAN, J. P.  
DYER, J. E.  
DYMKOWSKI, A. A.  
ELLIOT, M. G.  
ENDAYA, A. Y.  
FAZIO, B.  
FININ, J. F.  
FITZWATER, J. W.  
FLANAGAN, J. R.  
FORAN, R. J.  
FOURNIER, T. J.  
FOWLER, P. J.  
FREIDLAND, G. A.  
GAY, H.  
GAMP, H. A.  
GEORGE, J. L.  
GILES, D. D.  
GODLEWSKI, J. T.  
GRANTHAM, I.  
GRAVES, A. J.  
GREAVES, S. F., Jr.  
GREENWOOD, R. W.  
GURNICK, J. J.  
HAGLOCK, G. A.  
HAMMONDS, E. R.  
HARTWIG, J. A.  
HAWKINS, T. W.  
HEIMBACH, S. P.  
HESCH, D. J.  
HEWICKER, J. A., II  
HIDEN, C. B.  
HODGE, J.  
HOSMER, M. E.  
INCH, E. E.  
JACOBY, R. A.



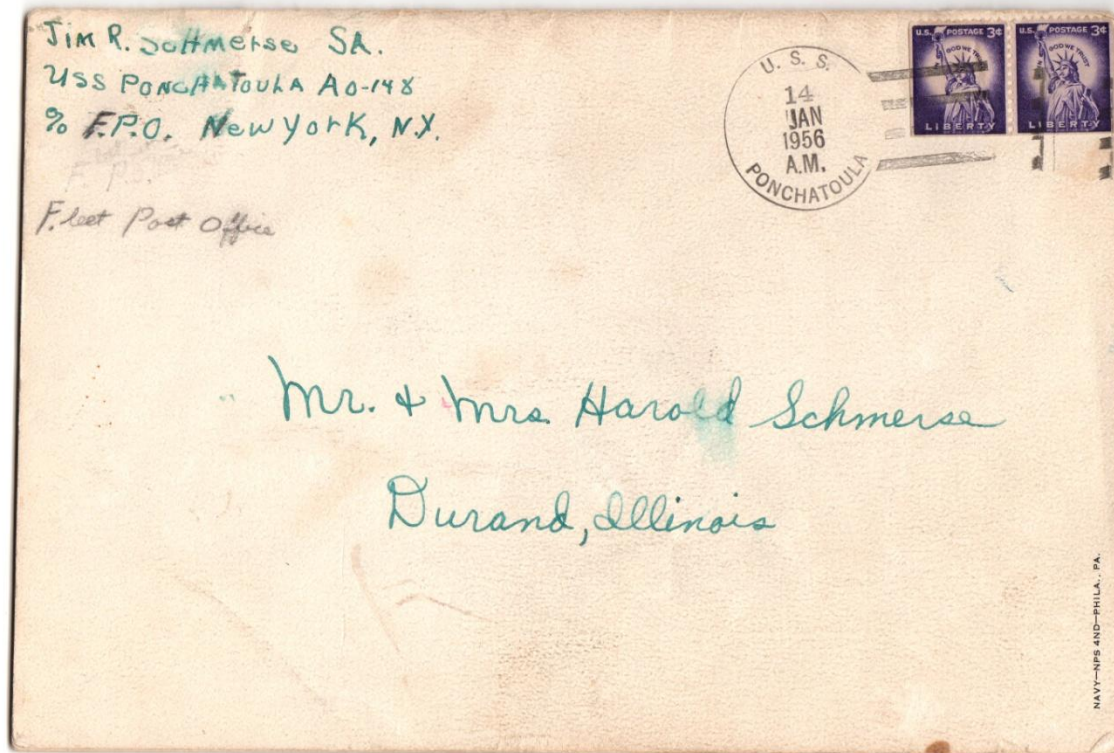
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NON-RATED MEN—(Continued)  
U. S. S. PONCHATOU LA

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JOHNSON, J. A.	RALLISON, B. G.
JONES, H.	REED, G. D.
KELLY, E.	REGER, P. C.
KEMP, L. B.	REINER, R. L.
KINNEY, F. E.	REYES, T.
KZINOWEK, W. J.	ROBERTSON, D. W.
LAFELLA, A. P.	ROGILLIO, H. A.
LAYNE, H. T.	ROY, N. L.
LAW, W. H.	SANDERS, R. L.
LIBBY, S. M.	SCHMIEDER, R. L.
MARCUM, A. W.	SCHMERSE, J. R.
MARLIN, G.	SLOAN, A., Jr.
MARTIN, G. A.	SMITH, F. G.
MASKE, J. N.	SMITH, M. T., Jr.
McDONALD, A. P.	STARKS, R. J.
McGOVERN, J. H.	STEINER, P. J.
McLEOD, D. K.	STURGIS, T. P.
MERRITT, J. H.	SUGGS, C. F.
MERRITT, J. R.	SWEARINGER, J. A.
MOORE, C. F., II	TALBOT, M. E.
MYERS, E. S., Jr.	TEDESCO, W. W.
NICHERSON, K. A.	THOMAS, P. C.
NIX, J. D.	VAN SAMBEEK, T. A.
O'DONNELL, F. J.	WAGNER, J. I.
PARKER, E. A.	WAKER, R. D.
PRICE, L. D.	WALCHBURGER, F.
PLUFF, A. J.	WEILER, F. W.
POTOCHNIK, J. W.	WHITFIELD, A.
POWELL, J. H.	WILBER, R. N.
PUCILLIO, P. A.	WILLIAMS, J.
POWERS, J. T.	WILSON, J. W.
	WOBOSL, W. L.

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Back cover of program, note the postmark.



# Ponchatoula Joins Active Navy Fleet

The last of five new \$10,000,000 oil tankers joined the Navy's fleet here yesterday as the USS Ponchatoula (AO-148) was commissioned in shipboard exercises at Pier 2.

More than 500 military and civilian guests boarded the towering ship to witness the commissioning rites in which Capt. William R. Wilson, USN, accepted command of the new oiler in traditional Navy ceremonies.

The Ponchatoula, built in New York Shipbuilding Corporation's Camden yard, is the fifth oiler to be commissioned here within a year. The first of the five oilers, USS Mississinewa, was placed in commission last Jan. 18. Other tankers since commissioned included the USS Hassayampa, USS Kawishiwi and USS Truckee.

Guest speaker at yesterday's ceremonies was the Honorable James H. Morrison, Louisiana congressman and nephew of Admiral Richmond P. Hobson, who, with a volunteer crew, bottled up a Spanish fleet in the Battle of Santiago Harbor during the Spanish-American war.

The Ponchatoula was launched July 9, 1955, and sponsored by Mrs. Ingolf N. Kiland, wife of Rear Adm. Kiland, commandant of the Fifth Naval District.

The fleet's newest addition has a displacement of more than 40,000 tons when loaded. She will carry a complement of 300 officers and enlisted men.

The 655-foot-long ship is named for the Ponchatoula River which rises near Hammond, La., and flows to the Natalbany River. Of Indian origin, the name means "falling hair" or "long hair."



Capt. William R. Wilson, USN, yesterday assumed command of the USS Ponchatoula, new \$10,000,000 Navy oiler, in shipboard commissioning ceremonies here. A Navy Academy graduate ('32), Capt. Wilson has served aboard the USS Nevada, USS Lamberton, USS Pope and formerly commanded the oiler Pawcatuck and minelayer T. E. Fraser. He was captured by the Japanese following the sinking of the destroyer Pope in March, 1942, and spent 42 months in Japanese prison camps. Prior to being chosen to command the Ponchatoula, he was with the Far East Command as deputy and acting Assistant Chief of Staff (Intelligence).

