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## GUS has a visitor

*And, as usual when one of Gus Wilson's old friends shows up, he brings along a yarn to swap with the Model Garage's mentor*

By MARTIN BUNN

FOR quite a few years before Gus Wilson teamed up with Joe Clark and started the Model Garage in our suburban town he knocked around the country, holding down one automotive job until his feet began to itch, and then moving on to a new job in a new place. Being Gus Wilson, he made a lot of good friends. Every now and then one of them stops off in our town to

visit with him and exchange reminiscences.

The other evening a few of us Model Garage regulars saw the lights burning in Gus's shop and decided we'd drop in for a little fanning session. A man who had a black ten-gallon hat on the back of his head was sprawled out in Joe Clark's private swivel chair and had his feet cocked up on Gus's workbench, and looked too much at home to be an ordinary customer.

"Hi!" Gus hailed when he saw us. "Glad you fellows stopped in. I want you to meet an old friend of mine, Sam Chivers—we were pals out on the Coast, years ago."

Sam Chivers took his feet down off the workbench and got up out of his chair. He was about six foot three and wide in proportion. His fashionably cut, double-breasted, gray suit didn't go with that ten-gallon hat. It didn't go with his tanned face, either nor with his frontier-model mustache. Gus

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introduced us to him, and as he shook hands he said the same thing to each of us: "Glad to meet you. You bet!" Gus sat on his bench and the rest of us made ourselves comfortable.

George Knowles takes pride in being able to guess people's business from their appearance. "Mining man, Mr. Chivers?" he asked.

"No, sir," Chivers told him. "Never had anything to do with mines, outside of buying stock in 'em and losing my money."

"Oh," George said. "Cattle, perhaps?"

"No, sir," Chivers said. "Never had anything to do with cattle. Automobiles is my game. You bet!"

Gus laughed. "In his younger days," he told us, "Sam was one of the best auto mechanics I've ever worked with, even if he always did look like a cow-puncher. Now he runs one of the biggest motor-trucking businesses on the Coast. But don't ask him what kind of loads he's trucking these days—he's working for the U. S. . . . Remember the time we got stalled at that lake up in Nevada, Sam?"

"I sure do," Chivers said. "And I remember how you got us un-stalled. I've heard of women fixing cars with hairpins, but that's the only time I ever saw anyone make one run with a fishline."

"Let's hear it," someone asked.

"Well, Sam and I had been fishing in a lake up in Nevada," Gus said. "After three

days we hadn't caught a fish. We hated to get skunked like that, so the last day we stayed out late hoping to get a strike—but we didn't. By the time we got ashore and paid off our Piute Indian guide it was after seven. The railroad station was 35 miles away and we had to make the evening train for San Francisco. Before we had started fishing that morning we had packed our camp stuff in the old Ford we had borrowed for the trip, so all we had to do was hop in. I stepped on the starter. Nothing happened. Dead. We did a quick job of checking, and found the trouble inside of five minutes. The braided battery strap had corroded right through and broken into two pieces, so there was no ground.

"Well, that seemed easy enough to fix—until we started to fix it. We tried to twist the broken ends of the wire braids together, but that wouldn't work. Then we hunted through the tool box, and then through our camping outfit, to find something that we could use as a substitute for the strap. There wasn't anything that would do the job.

"Our Indian guide had put-putted off in his skiff as soon as we had paid him. We decided that we were stuck until someone came along the road—which might be for a couple of days. We were hungry, and Sam began throwing our cooking stuff out of the car. To get at something under our fishing tackle he picked up our reels. You

have to troll deep for the trout in that lake, and almost everyone used a light copper line. Seeing that copper line on the reels gave me an idea.

"Hold it, Sam," I said. I told him what was on my mind and we cut a yard or two of wire off one of the lines. Then Sam helped me lace the copper wire through the two ends of the broken battery strap. That carried the juice all right, and we made town without a stop and in plenty of time for our train."

"Gettin' stalled out in my country ain't much fun for folks who ain't used to there being so much of it," Chivers said. "Sometimes they get pretty panicky when a car stops runnin' maybe 50 miles from the nearest garage. Drivin' around as much as I have to, I often run into dudes—tourists—who are havin' grief, and I always try to help them out. I did that a while ago and got myself up against one of the toughest car mysteries I've ever tackled—and I've gone up against my share of brain-teasers.

"It was over in western Nevada, not so very far from that lake where Gus and I got ourselves layed out. 'Long about sundown one hot day I was drivin' along a dirt road through a wide valley, headin' for U. S. 30. I ain't a scenery hound, but that valley was somethin', and when I came to a place in the road where you can see a lot of miles of it I stopped and got out to have a good look. Any of you gentlemen know that part of Nevada? Well, she's a big country. And she's dry. The mountains on both sides of that valley were mighty high, and there weren't any trees on them—just sagebrush and greasewood that made 'em sort of gray-green and purple.

"I stood there lookin' for quite a spell. Then I happened to glance back over the way I'd come. There was a car comin' along the road, and it sure was actin' locoed. It'd run for a couple of hundred yards, and then stop, and three people would get out and stand around it for maybe five minutes. Then they'd get in and the car'd start—and they'd do the same thing all over again. After a while they got close enough for me to see that the people in the car were women. I figured they were havin' trouble and that it wouldn't be more than decent for me to go back and try to help them. So I did.

"After I'd been drivin' for a couple of minutes I saw the car comin' toward me. It was a '42 sedan of a real good make. All of a sudden it slowed down and pulled off to the side of the road, and the women got out and stood

starin' at it. They were sort of elderly. Two of them looked tired and sort of discouraged. The other one was what my old man always called a right upstandin' lady. She was big and husky, and she looked like she'd been used to bein' boss. She'd been cryin', and the tears had made muddy streaks down the dust on her face. But she'd been cryin' with rage—there was static cracklin' out of her eyes.

"I got out and asked them if there was anything I could do to help them.

"The two discouraged-lookin' ladies began talking at once, but they stopped when the big one looked at them. Then she looked me over and said she'd graduated from a Civilian Defense motor-mechanics school and she didn't guess any cow-puncher would know any more about cars than she did.

"So I said easy like that I'd picked up a little about cars, and what seemed to be the matter? That sort of smoothed her down, and she told me that they were from Bawston, and they were touring, and they'd driven up that way to have a look at some real desert country. Their car had been running fine until a couple of hours ago. Then the engine had started missing, and then it had gone dead. They'd fooled with it for a few minutes, and had been able to start it. But it wouldn't run more than a couple of city blocks at a stretch, and they'd been two hours comin' the last five miles. And then the two other ladies managed to get a word in, and say they were scared.

"I told them I reckoned I could find out what was wrong with their car and fix it, and started checking. There was plenty of gas in the tank. The condenser was good. So was the coil. The points were O.K. And the wiring was perfect.

"Must be carburetor trouble," I told them. "Ten to one your carburetor screen is choked up. That often happens—little bits of rubber slough off gas-pump hoses and work through the tank and fuel line to the carburetor screen.

"I took out the screen, and held it up. And did my face get red! That screen was as clean as a whistle!

"That big woman sort of grunted, and I went back to work without saying anything more. I was pretty certain that the trouble was somewhere in the carburetor—but where? I checked the float, and found it O.K. Then I decided to check the fuel line back from the carburetor toward the tank. I disconnected the copper tube, and something dropped out of it. I picked it  
(Continued on page 214)



## Gus Has a Visitor

(Continued from page 135)

up. It was a little piece of solder—not round, but sort of lopsided.

"I showed it to the ladies. 'There she is,' I told them. 'That little piece of solder is what's been causin' all your grief. Don't ask me how it got there. Must have been there when the pipe was installed. It's started to cut off the gas, anyhow.'

"'Nonsense!' the big woman sort of snarled at me. 'If it cuts off the gasoline supply, how can the motor run at all?'

"I showed her how the piece of solder was lopsided. 'Being that shape,' I told her, 'it let a little gasoline into the carburetor. But the float bowl drained faster than the gas flowed into it. When the accumulated gas was used up, your engine would stop. But when the engine idled, a little more gas would accumulate in the carburetor. Savvy, lady?'

"She still wouldn't believe me, but after I'd connected up the carburetor again, and the engine had run for five minutes without a miss, she had to admit that I'd fixed whatever was wrong. Then all of a sudden she smiled real pleasant like, and said if I was bound for the town where they were goin' to stay the night, would I have dinner with them!'

"Did you?" Gus asked him.

Sam Chivers rolled himself another cigarette. Then he shook his head. "No, sir, I didn't," he said. "When I find trouble on the desert, I leave it there. You bet!"

## Tropics Hold Timber Reserve

FORESTED areas in the Amazon Valley as large as the whole United States are typical of the immense quantities of timber that stand unused in Central and South American forests, according to a report by Prof. Samuel J. Record, of the Yale School of Forestry, before a meeting of the Society of American Foresters. At the same time, there are acute shortages of lumber in Latin America, partly because of imperfect handling and partly because of ignorance of the properties of tropical woods. The average North American's knowledge of South American woods ends with mahogany and cigar-box cedar, Professor Record says. Yet there are dozens of kinds of timber of all weights, densities, and adaptabilities. These might advantageously supplement our own diminished supplies of native woods. Research on tropical woods is being urged as a means of utilizing this vast source of supply.

## Motorcycles for Combat Troops

(Continued from page 212)

inches, is the same as on the conventional Army models.

Fundamentally the motorcycle is the result of attempts by early inventors and manufacturers to adapt oil or gasoline engines to the propulsion of bicycles. An English machinist named Lawson built a tricycle in 1880 which was driven by the explosion of gasoline carried in a container strapped to the vehicle, but this machine is said to have been a failure. Most historians agree that the first practicable motorcycle was built by Edward Butler, an Englishman, in 1883, although another two years elapsed before he was able to exhibit it in public.

Butler used an ordinary bicycle frame to which he had attached a third wheel, making a tricycle. His machine was propelled by a small motor with double-acting cylinders coupled to a power wheel, and the fuel used was vapor of benzoline, exploded by an electric spark. Machines somewhat similar to Butler's contraption appeared in France and Germany during the middle and late 1880's, but few improvements were made for more than a decade. Perhaps the most important forward step was the general adaptation of the engines to burn kerosene or gasoline.

The development of the modern motorcycle really began about 1906, when the first of a series of famous races was held in the Isle of Man. The advantages to be gained by winning one of these races caused manufacturers to make many improvements in design and to increase the power of their engines. The punishment which the motorcycles were compelled to undergo in these contests also caused the manufacturers to abandon the twisted leather belt hitherto used for a drive, and to substitute the new two-speed chain drive which had been first introduced about 1902. A few years later the engine was moved from just beneath the seat to a position near the front wheel and low in the frame.

The earliest motorcycles, even the speedy machines of the early part of this century, were started by pushing. A few years before the First World War a clutch was added and the motor started by pedaling. Such improvements as the variable-speed transmission and the kick starter followed soon, and since that time virtually every year has seen a considerable advance in both design and performance.