

POPULAR SCIENCE

Sept. 1948 • 25c

Monthly



**How Dual-Fuels
Pep Up Cars**

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Gus Plugs for Cupid

The curtain of time seemed to be a little frayed the day

Gus got mixed up in the romance of old cars and young people.

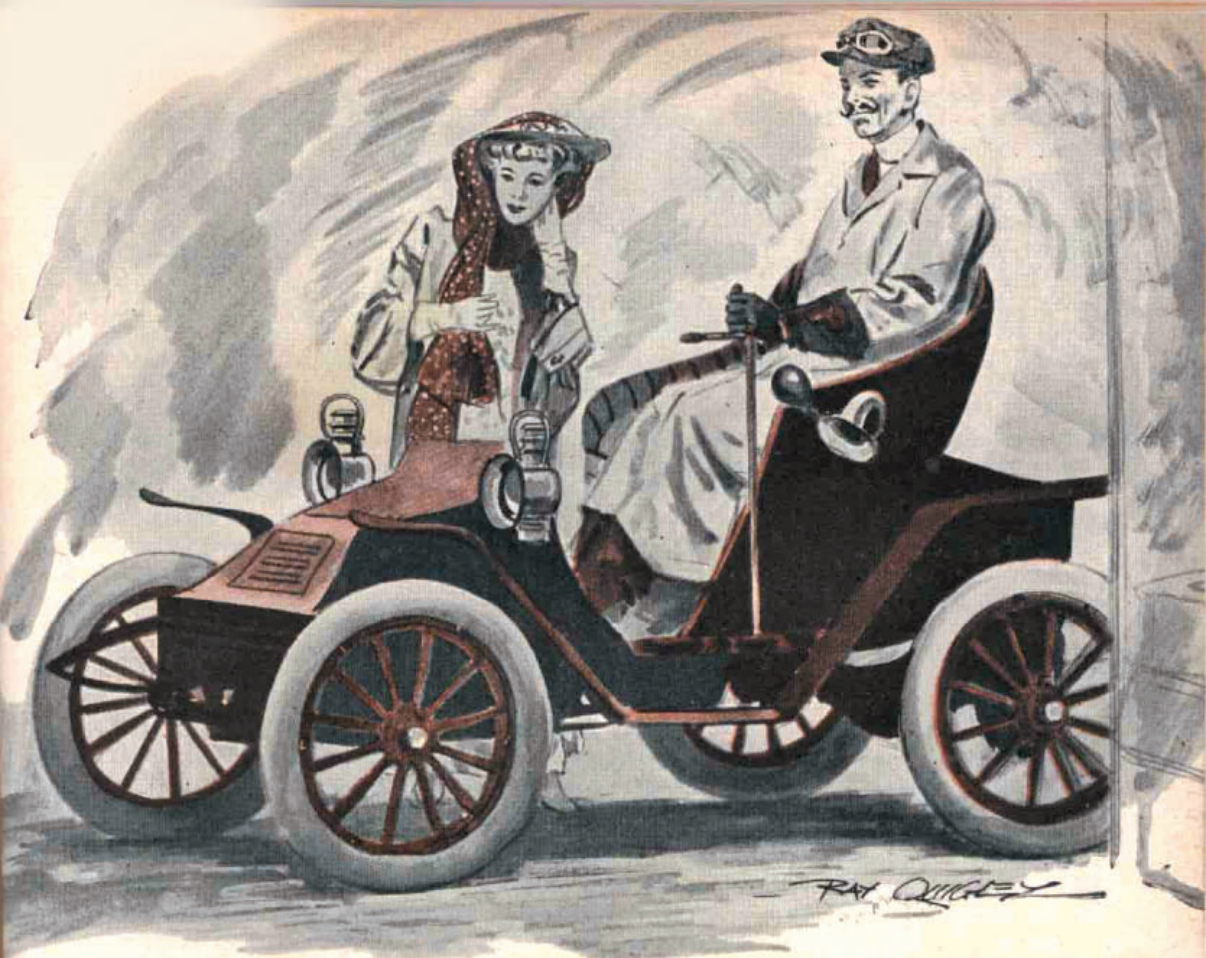
By Martin Bunn

A CHANCE remark of Joe Clark's had set Gus Wilson to thinking about old times in what he still calls "the auto game." Alone in the shop at four o'clock that day, he was

still at it—his chair tilted comfortably, his feet on a parts box, and his gone-out pipe in his mouth. By that time memory had taken him back to the Orient—that long forgotten motor buckboard with a rear-mounted power plant. How many people

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are there still around, he wondered, who ever drove an Orient? How many . . .

His eyes closed, his chin dropped, and his pipe slipped from between his teeth to spill cold ashes down the front of his shirt.

The creak of the shop door made him jerk up his head. As his eyes snapped open his heels thudded down on the cement floor with a jar that should have wakened him. But he knew that he was dreaming, because there in his up-to-the-minute shop stood an antique Autocar looking sparkling and new under a shiny red coat of paint. Its plentiful brass trim gleamed in the wisps of afternoon sunlight that followed the car through the door. At the tiller—for it had no steering wheel—was a tall, thin man whose face was half masked by old-fashioned goggles and a big, black, handlebar mustache.

A short distance behind the prehistoric vehicle and its driver came another—but prettier—vision of the same forgotten era—a young lady in a fawn-colored riding coat with puffed-out sleeves and long skirts that flared from a slender waist.

Gus stared at the two and they stared back at him. Then the girl giggled and the man grinned. "You Gus Wilson?" he asked.

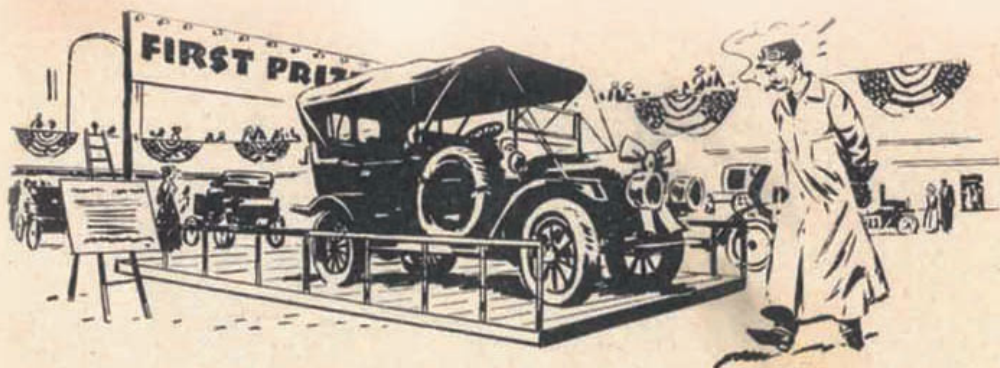
Gus nodded. He couldn't get his tongue working.

"My name's Oldfield. . . . Not Barney—J. Ransome Oldfield. I'm the fellow who owns the world's best collection of early-model automobiles."

Gus laughed. So he *was* awake! He had heard about Oldfield—a rich man who recently bought a big country place outside town. Oldfield was gaining more than a local reputation as a man who would spare no effort in tracking down early cars.

"I should have known you," Gus smiled cordially. "This one of your prizes?"

"Sure is," Oldfield said proudly. "Over forty years old and absolutely perfect. I'm driving it down to the antique car show in the Armory. All entries must arrive under their own power. Costumes count, too. That's why Mary here—she's my daughter—and I are wearing these rigs. They're as authentic as the car. Even my mustache—I



grew it specially for this show. Like it?"

Mary giggled again. "Supersonic!" she said. "Poor Tim Sheridan won't have a chance once the judges spot it!"

Oldfield glared at her. "That young squirt and his patched-up Stanley Steamer won't have a chance!"

Mary's blue eyes sparkled cold fire. "Tim's no squirt and you know it!" she snapped. "You're scared stiff he'll beat you out of that ugly old mug you're so set on winning."

Gus didn't say anything. Lanky Tim Sheridan is a favorite of his—he almost grew up in the Model Garage shop, and Gus was the first to realize that he had the makings of a mechanical genius. Tim's a top-drawer engineer now, but he still sees Gus often.

Oldfield left off scowling at his daughter and turned back to Gus. "We're having a little trouble," he said. "Brakes don't hold the way they should. They tell me you're a pretty good mechanic so I stopped by to ask you to take a look at them."

"Glad to," Gus assented. He started toward the old Autocar and looked it over almost with reverence.

The owner grinned delightedly. "She's a honey—every part original or made from the original shop drawings. Absolutely authentic. Wait a moment till I start her up."

It took more than a moment, but after Oldfield had twisted the crank a dozen times the motor took hold.

Gus nodded his appreciation. "Whatever's wrong with the old gal, it certainly isn't her engine."

Oldfield glared. "There's nothing—absolutely nothing—wrong with this car! She'll do her 30 miles an hour come hell or high water!"

"But," Gus reminded him, "you told me the brakes don't hold right."

"You got me wrong," the older man grinned. "It's my daughter's car, only a few months off the assembly line, that we're having trouble with."

Mary went out of the shop and soon eased an expensive roadster up the drive and brought it to a cautious stop behind the old Autocar. "These brakes," she complained, "are simply terrible. I've got to have them fixed today." She looked defiantly at her father. "I've got a date with Tim in the city tomorrow morning."

Her father grunted disgustedly. "We'll leave Mary's car with you, Mr. Wilson. Do whatever is necessary and bill me."

Mary stuck out a small and determined chin. "How am I going to get my car back so I can use it first thing in the morning?"

"I'd like to see this old-car show," Gus told her. "Suppose I fix up your brakes and drive it down to the Armory this evening?"

"We'll bring you home," Oldfield boomed. "I hope you have better luck with the brakes than the other fellow who worked on 'em. The real trouble started after he had fixed a small leak and added brake fluid. . . . Look us up in Box A-20."

Gus watched the old Autocar chug stolidly out. Then he got into Mary's car and gingerly tried out the brakes. A few stops told him most of what he wanted to know. He drove it onto the hoist.

Stan Hicks was returning from a tow job as Gus emerged from under the car rubbing a bit of black gummy substance between his thumb and forefinger. "The hose connections look like Swiss cheese," Gus muttered. "Whoever the darned fool was who worked on these brakes, he added some of that war-surplus aircraft hydraulic fluid that garagemen have been warned not to use on cars. It's rotted all the rubber parts of the brake system. We'll have to clean out the line thoroughly and install new brake hose and cylinder cups. Give me a hand, Stan—I promised it for this evening."

IT PROVED to be a long job. By the time Gus had showered and changed, eaten his dinner and driven down to the Armory, the judging had been completed.

Tim Sheridan's steam car stood in the place of honor. A large blue ribbon dangled from its front. Pacing the floor before it, Oldfield chewed savagely at a battered cigar.

"Where've you been?" he challenged Gus. "Never mind. Got the car? Where is it?"

"Down the street," Gus said mildly, falling into step alongside Oldfield as the other headed for the door. "What's up? I see Tim won the show."

"Pigheaded judges! Gross discrimination! He won the performance test and five minutes later his old teakettle ran out of steam right in front of the judges' stand!"

"Well, he *did* win the performance test," Gus remonstrated gently.

"He had no right to," Oldfield snapped. "My Autocar stood up right through the tests and it could go through them all over again. Besides I got hold of a note he sent to Mary right after the judging. Those two are up to something and I don't like it!"

As the two men threaded their way toward the door, Oldfield stormed on about Tim and Mary and swore that he had sure proofs that an elopement was in the making. "Let's get to the car before she finds it," he urged. "Mary has a duplicate key. Sheridan stole the cup from me, but I'll be danged if I let him steal my daughter!"

They had reached the main door. An attendant saluted Oldfield.

"Good night, sir. Your daughter said not to worry, she'd drive the Autocar back real slow."

"Drive my Autocar? When? Where? How?"

"Half an hour ago. I think you were argu—talking with the judges, sir. Mr. Sheridan who won the cup was with her."

Oldfield swore. "I wasn't sure till now that they meant to elope tonight. Mary's got a cousin who's a judge up in Glenn Hills. That's where they'll be heading. Come on, man! We can still get there in time to stop that marriage!"

Gus, grinning inwardly, managed to waste a full five minutes in looking for the car, but eventually they found it.

"You drive!" gasped Oldfield. "I'm winded—and besides I'm too mad."

They started uptown. The city traffic was sticky, and Gus, who can snake a car through a jam as fast as any taxi driver, managed to make it slow going. But out in the suburbs he had to quit stalling. "Step on it!" Oldfield urged. "We can get there first. That Autocar won't go over thirty. I'll

take the tickets and pay any fines you get."

Gus stepped on it, goaded on by the irate father. He was thinking hard as he drove, remembering a place where the road forked.

The Y in the road showed in the headlights a few miles before Glenn Hills. The left fork led to Oldfield's destination, the right to Gus's. Gus swung to the right.

"Stop!" Oldfield yelled. "You're on the wrong road!"

Gus jammed on the brakes and brought the car to a neck-snapping stop. A glance over his shoulder showed him a dark roadside bank, and he backed into it—hard. Then he shot into the Glenn Hills road. But before they had gone a hundred feet, the engine missed, sputtered, and died.

"What's the matter now?"

"Dunno," Gus replied. "I'll have to check."

He got out, raised the hood, and began slowly—very slowly—to examine the engine.

THEY were in the same spot a short time later when headlights flared weakly from the direction of Glenn Hills. A car approached slowly and drew into range of the roadster's bright lights. It was Oldfield's Autocar—with Tim driving and Mary sitting beside him singing "My Merry Oldsmobile."

"What's the meaning of this?" Oldfield roared.

The Autocar stopped. "Why, it's Dad!" Mary said. "We're married, Dad. There's nothing you can do about it, so you might as well make friends with Tim. And, Dad—he knows about an old Ford that's simply out of this world!"

"Humph!" Oldfield grunted, but anger didn't show up very strongly in his frown. "I don't like this sneaking off with my car—I mean my daughter—to get married. But I've never been able to get a really good early Ford. Where is it—Tim?"

Seeing everyone busy, Gus walked quietly around to the rear end of the roadster and began digging sticky red clay out of its exhaust pipe. Just as he was finishing the job Tim came looking for him. He stared at the pipe, and then at Gus. "Dirty work, eh?"

Gus grinned. "Well," he said, "I knew that you and Mary needed a little time—and I don't know anything that'll stop a car quicker and deader than a nice plug of clay in its exhaust pipe. The bank I backed into right on the other side of this fork was made to order for the job."

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