

# POPULAR SCIENCE

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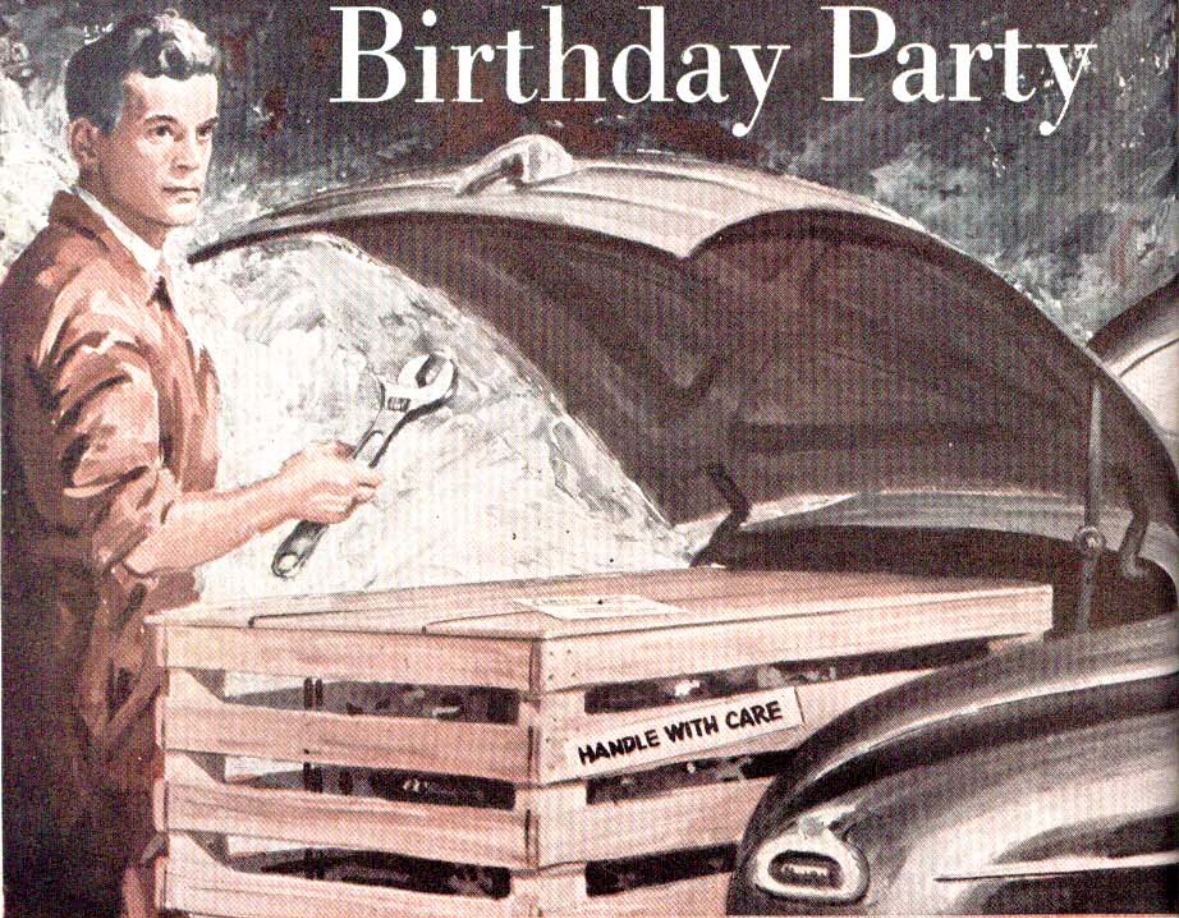


Shaw Reports Studebaker V-8—p.110



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# Gus Saves a Birthday Party



When a pixilated gas gauge threatens to bust up a marriage,  
Gus and Stan hit on the hex and make everybody happy.

**By Martin Bunn**

**I**T WAS early on a recent Monday morning when a blue business coupe eased to a stop alongside the pumps in front of the Model Garage. If anyone had ever been curious enough to watch, they would have known that this same car pulled up at Gus Wilson's place at about the same time every Monday morning. Ted Dorman, the car's driver and an old resident of our town, was usually Gus' first cash customer every week.

"How many, Ted?" Gus asked after the usual greetings.

"Darned if I know," Ted answered. "My fuel gauge has gone sour. Reads empty no matter how much gas is in the tank. Just fill 'er up, Gus, and I'll have to watch my driving this week."

"Off on the usual trip?" Gus inquired as he unlimbered the gas hose.

"Yeah, off for another weary week on the road, peddling," Ted sighed. "You know, Gus, by the time Friday night rolls around



*"What's the latest headache, boss?" asked Stan Hicks. "The kind that drives mechanics nuts," said Gus, eyeing Ted's crated birthday present. "I'm looking for pixies."*

I'm so blamed tired of hauling my sample cases in and out of that trunk that I can't even face unpacking the car until Saturday. Wouldn't do it then," he added, "except Myrtle likes to use the car."

Gus had often wondered how Ted Dorman stood the week in, week out grind of traveling for a hardware jobbing concern down in the city. He has a big territory, which means driving at least 200 miles a day besides making at least a half-dozen calls between breakfast and supper. After close to 20 years of doing it, Ted is so fed up with driving that he seldom touches the car over week ends. If it needs an oil change or any repairs, Myrtle Dorman, Ted's wife, brings

it in to the Model Garage on Saturdays.

"Better have your wife stop around with it when you get back," Gus suggested. "I'll check that gauge for you. Probably nothing more than a loose connection, but there's no sense touring around the country not knowing how much gas you've got."

Gus thought no more about the incident until the following Monday morning when Ted made his stop on the way out of town.

"Just fill 'er up again," Ted grumbled in answer to Gus' usual query.

"Thought Mrs. Dorman was going to bring the car in so I could fix that gauge for you," Gus chided.

"Bah," Ted grunted. "Deliver me from



females and cars. They'd drive them till they fell apart. I asked her to bring it over, but she swore up and down that the gauge was okay when she drove the car on Saturday. I've a hunch some hen canasta party in the neighborhood was more important to her than my car."

Ted obviously was burned up. "Here, take a look," he added when Gus had finished filling the tank.

Gus poked his head through the open window on Ted's side of the car. When Ted switched on the ignition, the needle on the gas gauge stayed right where it was—on the empty mark.

"Sure shows empty," Gus agreed. Then he opened the car door and reached in under the dash. "I thought it might be a loose connection," he explained after he had pulled his hand out, "but those at the back of the gauge seem tight. I'll have to go over the whole line when you've got the time."

#### **Fuel Gauge vs. Canasta**

"Well, one thing you can bank on," Ted growled, "Myrtle will be here with the car next Saturday. She's not going to talk me out of it this time—canasta or no canasta."

The following Saturday morning Gus was busy with a routine ignition job when he heard a female voice: "Gus Wilson, if you want to save a marriage you'd better do something about this gas gauge."

Gus looked up to see Myrtle Dorman standing in the doorway of the shop. Beyond her, just outside the shop door, was Ted Dorman's blue coupe.

"Ted's been raising the roof because I didn't bring the car around for you to check the gas gauge last Saturday," Mrs. Dorman explained, "but it worked for me last Saturday and it's working now. Take a look."

For the second time in five days, Gus poked his head into the Dorman's car and peered at the gas gauge. This time it showed better than half full.

"Well, I'll be . . .," but the old mechanic didn't finish the sentence. Instead he wedged his big frame down between the seat and the pedals for a good look at the back of the dash. A moment later, he emerged, shaking his head.

"Can you leave the car here for awhile, Mrs. Dorman?" he asked. "About the only thing I can do is go over all the wiring as well as the gauge. That might take the best part of an hour."

#### **Troubles of a Traveling Salesman's Wife**

"Gracious, no," Mrs. Dorman replied. "I can't leave it here that long right now. I'm out to do my shopping for the week. That's the bother of having only one car and a husband who's a traveling salesman. Saturday is the only time I can stock up on foods and things. Besides, today I've got to stop by the railroad station."

"Well, can you spare 15 minutes?" Gus compromised.

Mrs. Dorman looked at her wrist watch.

"Fifteen minutes then, but no more," she agreed. "The express office down at the station closes at noon on Saturdays and I have to pick up a present we ordered for Ted's birthday tomorrow. He's been wanting a power saw for his workshop, so the boys and I pooled our pennies and got him one. Lord knows, though, with the fuss he's raising about this gas gauge I'm not so sure he deserves it. Hasn't been fit to live with since he got home last night."

#### **Pixies Rear Their Heads**

At the end of a quarter hour of concentrated trouble shooting, Gus was more puzzled than ever. There was no doubt that the gauge was working at the moment. Yet, he knew it hadn't been working the two times Ted had stopped by. The gauge seemed perfectly okay and what wire connections he could see were tight.

"No luck, Mrs. Dorman," Gus finally admitted. "Can you bring the car back sometime later this afternoon and let me have a real check?"

"I suppose so," Mrs. Dorman replied, "if it's absolutely necessary." Then she added sarcastically, "Maybe some of those pixies people talk about play tricks on Ted every time he drives the car."

As Gus got back to work he kept wondering about the fuel gauge. Mrs. Dorman had jokingly blamed pixies, and, at times, Gus

[Continued on page 242]

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### **Gus Saves a Birthday Party**

[Continued from page 192]

wasn't always so sure there weren't some mean little men who spent their mysterious lives plugging garagemen.

About a half hour later, the sound of a car rolling up to the repair-shop door brought Gus' head out from under the open hood of the car he was working on. It was the Dorman's coupe again.

"Now I'm hexed too," Myrtle Dorman exclaimed as she slid out from behind the wheel. "That silly little gauge was working perfectly when I left here for the station, but now it's not. It's acting just like Ted said."

"It's those pixies," Gus reminded her with a grin. "They probably heard you talking about Ted and decided to play a few tricks on you for a change. Well, at least everyone agrees that something's wrong, so maybe now we can spend a little time and go to work."

"Please do," Mrs. Dorman pleaded, "so the Dorman household can get back to normal and enjoy the birthday party the youngsters have planned for Ted tomorrow. Meanwhile I'll go on down to town on foot and get some of my ordering done."

When Mrs. Dorman had departed, Gus wheeled the car into the shop. He rechecked the gauge, the connections to the gauge, and the wire lead. Since he couldn't find anything wrong at those points, he decided the next step was to check the tank unit.

As he walked around to the rear of the car he saw Ted's crated saw protruding from the half-open trunk.

"Hey, Stan," he called to his helper, who, at the moment, was busy at the greasing rack. "How about giving me a hand?"

### **Gus Shares His Troubles**

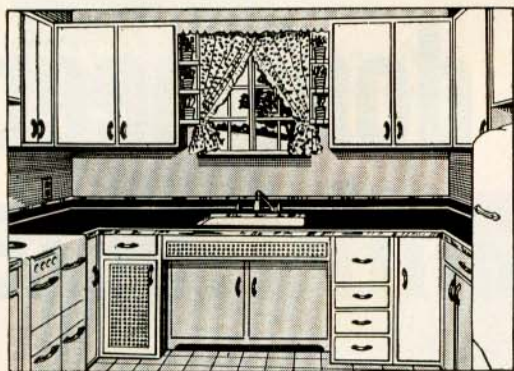
"What's the latest headache, boss?" Stan Hicks asked as he walked back to the car.

"The kind that drives mechanics nuts," Gus complained. "It's the gas gauge—sometimes it works and sometimes it don't. Right now it's in a nonworking mood. Besides that, it's become a major issue in the Dorman family's affairs."

Together they lifted the crate out of the trunk and placed it on the floor alongside the repair bench.

Gus was just about to begin prying the inspection plate loose from the trunk floor to get at the tank unit when Stan, who had walked around to the front of the car,

[Continued on page 244]



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## Gus Saves a Birthday Party

[Continued from page 242]

shouted, "Whaduya mean the gas gauge doesn't work? Shows better'n half full right now."

Gus shoved his screwdriver back into a coverall pocket and joined Stan. Sure enough, the gauge was past the half-way mark.

"You've smoked them out, Stan, . . . the pixies, I mean," Gus added with a smile. "I think you've hit on something. Let's have a look at that tank connection."

Together they worked on the inspection plate that was badly rusted in place.

### A "Weighty" Problem Solved

"There's at least one-third of our trouble," Gus pointed out, poking the tip of his screwdriver at a well-worn rubber cap that originally was intended to insulate the electrical connection on top of the fuel tank from contact with the body of the car.

"What's the other two-thirds?" put in Stan.

"Two things," said Gus. "First of all, any heavy object, like that crate or Ted's sample bags. Second, this loose metal plate in the floor of the trunk." He pointed to the floor's center section.

As Gus talked, Stan could see that the weld at the rear of the metal sheet forming a part of the trunk floor had broken loose. Any heavy weight placed on it would force it down until it made contact with the bare terminal on the top of the gas tank, shorting out the line and the gauge.

It took Gus about 35 minutes to drill holes and bolt the loose section in place and to tape up the terminal on the top of the tank.

After he and Stan lifted the crated power saw back into the trunk, Gus turned to Stan and said, "I'm going to lunch. When Mrs. Dorman comes to pick up the car, tell her to have a nice birthday party for Ted tomorrow. And tell her I'll expect Ted to have a piece of his birthday cake for me when he stops in for gas Monday morning." END

## Leaks Waste Lots of Gasoline

AFTER several thousand miles of service, your car is likely to develop one or more leaks somewhere in the fuel system. You can lose considerable gasoline in this way. You can avoid this trouble by making a practice of regularly inspecting the fuel line, gasoline tank, and the various other connections.