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MONTHLY

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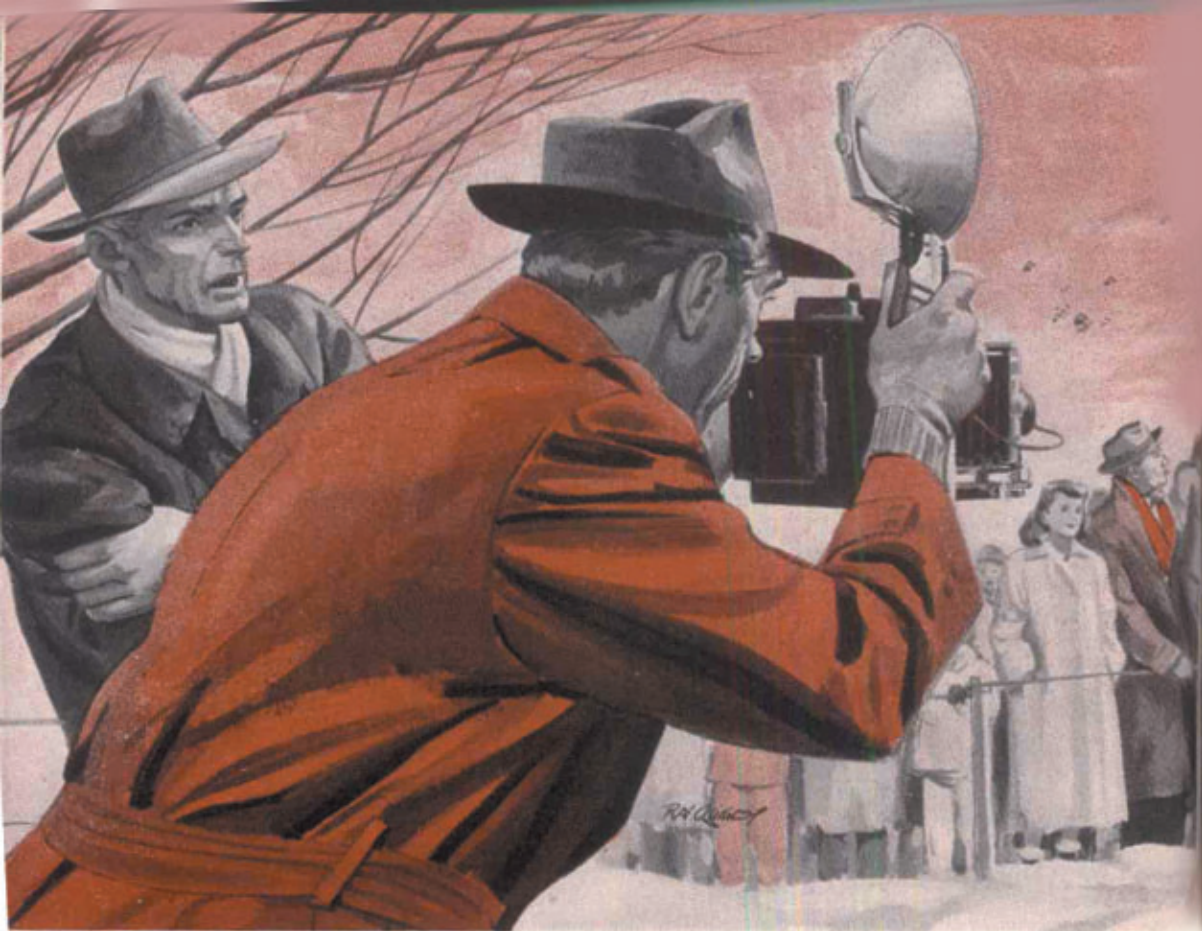
25¢
February



**What You'll Find
Under the Hood of the**

New Chevrolet

PAGE 100



Gus Meets a Deadline

Shooting the mayor—even with a news camera—was a little out of Gus's line. No wonder there were unexpected developments.



By Martin Bunn

GUS stopped at the *Times-Chronicle* office on his way home one bright, cold Saturday afternoon—his paper hadn't been delivered for several days. Zelda Haworth, society columnist, was noisily pounding a typewriter, and Gus stood for a long moment before he caught her eye.

"Hello, Zelda. Anybody around to hear a small complaint?"

Just as she opened her mouth to speak, Will Gagan, reporter and photographer for the *Times-Chronicle*, came hurrying through the back door from the print shop.

"No, no, no," Gagan whispered as Gus took aim. "Get something dignified!"



"Just the guy I want to see," Will said. "Come out to the alley."

"Sure. What's back there, a little game in the old shed?"

"No," Gagan almost whispered. "You know me better than that!"

Gus grinned and followed Will. It was true. He did know him better than that.

Will Gagan, who comprised a fourth of the staff, was a quiet man. If a newsman was expected to cut a dashing figure, Gagan would have been a disappointment. He didn't drink, gamble, strangle telephones or shout "gimme the city desk" out of the side of his mouth.

"It's my car. I have to cover the ground-breaking for the new munitions plant outside of town this afternoon. Big thing, mayor and Army brass. I don't trust the old bus to get me there, and if it did, there's the matter of getting back in time to get the story and pictures under the deadline. It's okay as long as the engine is turning over fast. Slow down and it dies. I can't go speeding around on this icy pavement. As a matter of fact, the only way I can drive at a slow, safe

speed in this slush and not stall, is to slip the clutch slightly and let the engine race. I know the clutch will take only so much of that treatment . . ."

"Now look, Will. I just left the garage. I've had a busy week and I'm taking the rest of the day off. Can't you borrow a car?"

"Nobody else in the shop has one. Even the delivery truck is out. Of course, I could get another mechanic . . ." Gagan made a long face and waited.

Gus Makes a Try

"Okay. Okay. Give me the key and I'll see if I can start her."

"No, not that way. That battery is too weak from me standing on the starter so much. I'll crank it by hand while you work the gas."

Gus opened the hood and worked the throttle while Gagan turned the crank. The engine sputtered and died. He tried again, hard.

"Ow!" Gagan stepped back, wincing and holding his shoulder.

"What happened?"

"I think . . . I pulled a muscle."

"I might have known. You newspaper boys get too soft sitting behind a desk! Why don't you run over to Doc Tandy while I work on this?"

"There isn't time. It'll be okay, but you'll have to crank."

Engine Acts as if It Needs Tuning

Gus locked the throttle at a point which would give the engine plenty of gas. A few turns of the crank had the engine running. It wasn't as smooth as it should be, but it acted like tuning was all that it needed.

"Slow it down, Gus, and watch what happens."

Gus closed the throttle and waited. The engine ran for a while, hesitated, then died. He puzzled over it for a moment.

"Got some tools?"

"A few, here in the trunk compartment."

Gus found what he wanted, removed a plug, and examined the electrode and its inside surfaces. It was wet and dark, gas-fouled.

Gus went around to check the carburetor. He saw then what he hadn't noticed before. The choke arm lever was bent, not much, but enough to shorten the linkage and hold the choke open a fraction. It wasn't flooding the carburetor, but it provided a much richer mixture than was needed.

He straightened it out with pliers and cranked the engine. It started easier this time.

"I think that's all it was." He slowed it down. "See? Even idles now. Let's go for a ride and test it. It'll run the battery up, too."

"We're getting short on time. Less than an hour until the ceremony."

"We'll make it. We can head out in that direction. You can't drive with that shoulder, anyway."

Gagan agreed, and they drove out of the

alley. Gus began racing the engine a little to clean out the fouled plugs.

Before long, as they got out into the country, the traveling became more difficult. The road was covered with icy slush.

Gus had gradually slowed the engine, and now began to let it lug. It rumbled huskily for a quarter of a mile. The car wouldn't run that slowly before. But just as he was congratulating himself, the engine died. He pulled to the side of the road.

"Now we *are* in a spot," Gagan moaned. "Can't you do something?"

"Well, we know it isn't your carburetor mixture any more. Now it acts like your engine isn't getting gas. Maybe you need a new fuel pump."

"That's a new one. Look, I'll give you the whole story. The trouble started yesterday when I drove to Long Island to pinch-hit for the boss at an editors' convention. I took it to a garage, and the mechanic put a new pump in. Ran fine for six blocks! During my second visit, he blew the fuel line out. And it ran until I hit some traffic." Gagan lit a cigarette. "After being very late to the convention, I found, like I said before, that by slipping the clutch just enough to race the engine and still creep along, the thing wouldn't stall on

me. The boss is up a tree about my being late yesterday—it wouldn't help to repeat that performance today!"

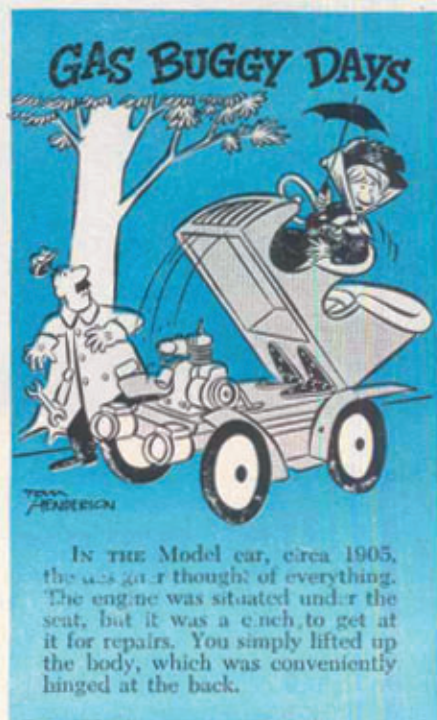
"Don't give up yet." Gus stepped out of the car and went to work.

The fuel pump and carburetor were okay. That much had been established. A quick look showed that the filter unit was clean. Next suspect was the copper fuel line. Gus disconnected it at both ends, at the tank and at the fuel pump. He turned to Gagan.

"Hold your finger over that end, while I put pressure on the line."

Gus wiped off the other end and blew

[Continued on page 252]



In this Model car, circa 1905, the carburetor thought of everything. The engine was situated under the seat, but it was a cinch to get at it for repairs. You simply lifted up the body, which was conveniently hinged at the back.

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Gus Meets a Deadline

[Continued from page 198]

hard. When the line wouldn't accept any more air, he held the pressure, waiting to see if it would drop. But there was no leak. Gagan took his finger away and Gus blew through it again. No obstruction.

"Look, can you remember any other peculiar symptoms?"

"No." Gagan looked at his watch.

"Well, tell me exactly what was going on when it first happened."

"I was on a detour, lots of rocks and stuff worrying me, you know how they fly up. So I wasn't paying attention to the engine. It just quit."

Gus sighed.

"Ahh, don't worry about it, Gus! It's just the breaks. I can always get a fill-in from one of the mayor's assistants. It was the pictures that worried me most. And I think this wing of mine will be okay in a couple of days. Let's get going—if we can."

The Rocky Road to Trouble

The battery had received enough of a boost in the short running for Gus to start the car again without resorting to the crank. They rolled along for a while. Rather than ride the clutch, Gus stayed in second to keep the engine racing.

Suddenly, Gus lifted his foot from the gas, slowed to a stop and cut the ignition. "Your episode with the rocky detour . . . I just thought of a new angle."

Gus slid under the car and began tracing the fuel line from front to back where it hugged the frame. He had covered three-quarters of it and was ready to throw his hunch away when he found the trouble concealed in muck and grime. Gus tried repairing it with his pliers, but the untempered copper only cracked and tore. Painfully aware of the time left, Gus cut the offending section out, robbed the windshield wiper of its rubber hose, and joined the two ends of the fuel line.

Engine Was on a Starvation Diet

He got back in the car, where Gagan sat nursing his shoulder, and told him the story while he plugged the remainder of the wiper hose with a matchstick.

"I wish you had mentioned those rocks before." He started the car and drove off at a normal speed.

"Didn't seem important."

[Continued on page 254]

What d'ya mean replacement rings?



● Of course you know oil-pumping usually means worn-out piston rings—but maybe you don't realize all that ring *replacement* means.

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Gus Meets a Deadline

[Continued from page 252]

"Evidently a rock flew up and partially collapsed the line. I say partially, because you'll remember we found no sign of restriction before. Simply, your engine had to run fast in order to pull the fuel past the pinch in sufficient quantity. Slow running made your pump work too slow, and the restriction overpowered it. Your engine starved.

"The reason it didn't stall back in the alley was that I had leaned the mixture out and the fuel above the pinch lasted a little longer. When I get it back to the garage I'll install a new line for you."

"Well, that's one problem eliminated. But my shoulder . . . Did you ever try to take a one-arm shot with a heavy press camera? Gus. . ."

Gus Refuses to Play Photographer

"No!" Gus saw it coming. "Impossible! I won't do it!"

"But it's simple. I'll show you how."

"Look, you typewriter jockey, the only camera I ever used was a box Brownie. It takes a genius to run that one of yours!"

"Okay. So no photos of the mayor. Big stuff in a town like ours. It may mean my job. But you're a mechanic, not a newsman."

Gagan was still pulling the long-face routine when they drove into the area marked off for the ceremonies. The crowd was there already, and the mayor launched into the long-winded first paragraph of his speech. Gagan jumped out of the car and began struggling with some one-handed note taking, while Gus nervously cradled the expensive camera in his arms.

Then, in a popping of flash bulbs, somebody handed the mayor a shovel.

Everything Goes Wrong

"Gus, please. The camera is all set. You don't have to do anything but aim it and push the button! Everybody else is getting shots. Look, you want the paper to be scooped by these out-of-towners?"

"Okay, but don't say I didn't tell you!"

Gus stiffened his lip and aimed the camera. He snapped the shutter just as the mayor bent and marked his spot to dig.

"No, no, no," Gagan whispered. "Get something dignified, not the seat of his pants!"

The second shot went off in Gus's face before he could aim it. Gagan groaned.

[Continued on page 256]

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Gus Meets a Deadline

[Continued from page 254]

"Take it easy, will ya! Flaming curses on this shoulder. . . Look, I only brought six plates. Try to get one decent shot!"

No matter how he tried, and how Gagan directed him, nothing seemed to turn out right. Gus stewed about it all during the hurried trip back to town. He dropped Gagan at the *Times-Chronicle* office and took the car back to the Model Garage.

Gagan Calls Gus

Gus was home that evening when the phone rang. It was Gagan.

"I developed the pictures, Gus."

"You don't have to rub it in, Will."

"Three of them were absolutely useless, and the others gave the boss quite a surprise."

"I'm sorry. Why don't you tell him?"

"And lose my \$100 bonus? Heck no!"

"Bonus—I don't get you. Bonus for what?"

"I wish I had dared to try something like this on the boss before. But he's always seemed so old-fashioned—"

"Wait a minute, Gagan! You didn't answer my question. Why a bonus?"

"For the pix."

"What pix? I thought they were all bad."

"Well, naturally, we couldn't use the one of your left nostril or the two double exposures. But the boss was crazy about the one of the mayor bending over to mark the spot to dig—his face *does* show—and the one of dirt flying at the lens with the mayor looking like he's standing in a grenade burst! What could be better, he says. None of the usual folderol of dignitary shaking hands with dignitary, waving magnanimously at the crowd, the delicate jabs with the shovel. Instead, Gagan, he says, you have shown our beloved mayor as a hard-working, industrious man, close to the soil, close to the pulse of humanity. . . That's what he said, Gus. How much of this bonus can I cut you in for?"

"Not one tarnished copper! Just never bring that camera around me again. I'm a box Brownie boy myself, pure and simple!"

END

Next Month: Gus becomes a short-term nurse.

Keep Moving

Mechanic: "My advice is to keep that car of yours moving."

Owner: "Why?"

Mechanic: "Well, if you ever stop, the cops will think it's an accident."—*Lone Star Scanner*.