

POPULAR SCIENCE

Monthly

Gus Tricks a
Trickster

Latest adventures
of famous
auto mechanic
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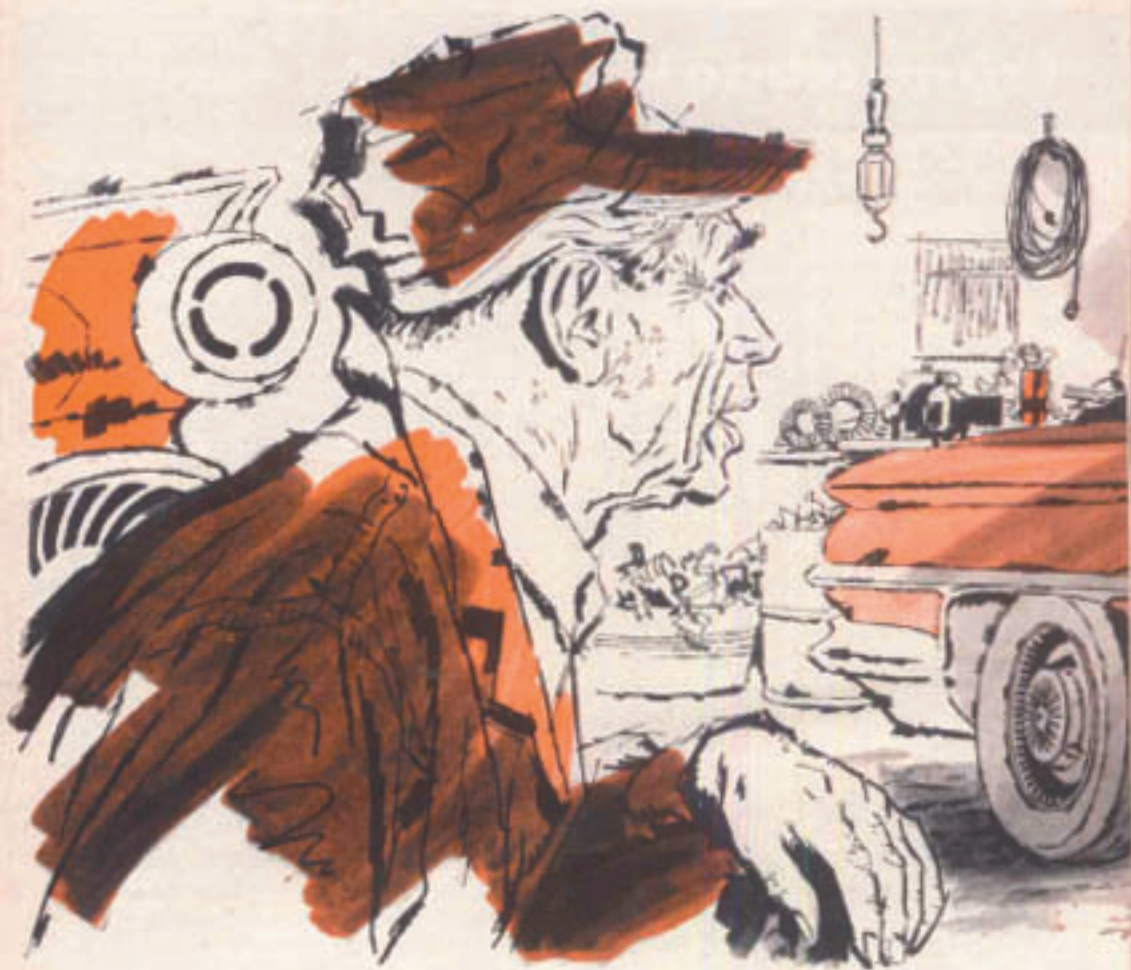
35¢ JULY



Build Your Own

FLYING CART—NO WHEELS

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Gus Tricks a

"TEN minutes? Mind it's no more," grumbled Silas Barnstable. "Time's money."

"So I've heard," agreed Gus wryly. "But working on that old wreck of yours is selling time pretty cheap, Silas."

The town penny-pincher grunted.

"Look," Gus went on, "you're headed for big repair bills with this antique of yours, and I don't want to hear you squeal when one comes. Turn loose enough cash to get a good car. You'll be doing yourself—and me—a favor."

Silas turned sharp little eyes on Gus. "And you just happen to know of a car

for sale, hey? With a bit for Gus Wilson and the Model Garage, no doubt."

Gus snorted in disgust. "You would figure it that way. Just sit and wait."

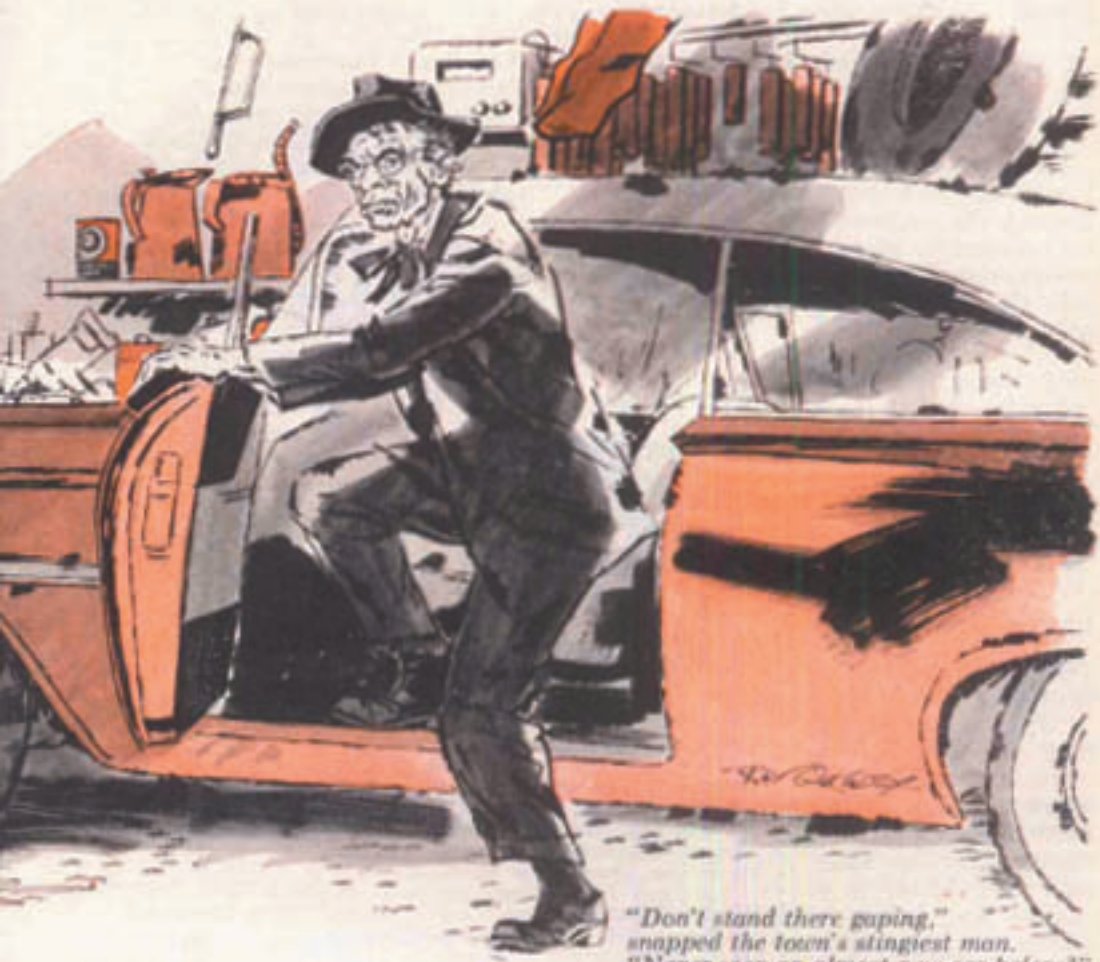
Ignoring Barnstable, Gus was busy at a bench job when the shop door slammed.

"Ted Griswold!" he said in surprise.

"What brings you back, young fellow?"

The tall, dark young man grinned. "More luck than merit, Gus. The insurance company promoted me to district manager of our branch office here."

"Wonderful! Didn't take them long to find out how good you are, did it? You even look like an executive now."



*"Don't stand there gaping,"
snapped the town's stingiest man.
"Never seen an almost-new car before!"*

Trickster By Martin Bunn

"Come off it, Gus," laughed Griswold. "I'm the kid whose jalopy you used to patch up free."

"No more. I'll charge you double for all jobs on your Highbrow V-8."

"No kidding," Griswold said. "I do need a good car in this job. Fact is, that's something I want to ask you about."

"I don't sell cars, Ted. But we have some honest dealers in town."

"Don't mean that. The man I'm replacing is moving up to a big company job on the West Coast, flying out tomorrow, and can't take his car. He'll sell his \$1,500 equity for only \$600 if I finish

the payments. It's an almost-new hard-top with only 6,000 miles on it."

Gus nodded. "I think I know it—that'll be Ben Derringer's car."

"Right, and Derringer's sort of a quick, impatient chap. He said he'd hold the car until noon today, then sell it to the first comer."

Gus looked at the shop clock. "Past one now. Have you seen him?"

Griswold shook his head glumly. "Train was late. I reached his house at half past. The family's gone and neighbors told me he had just left to drive up to his summer cottage for some clothing.

But nobody knows where his cottage is."

A SHOP chair squeaked as Barnstable shuffled to his feet. "Time's up, Gus. Can't wait while you stand jawing."

Seeing Stan Hicks, his young assistant, drop the hood on Barnstable's car, Gus knew the oil-fouled plugs had been cleaned. He scribbled a bill and gave it to Barnstable, who counted the exact amount out of a cracked wallet. Thoughtfully Gus watched his crankiest customer drive out.

"... thought you might know, from working on his car," Griswold was saying.

Gus snapped out of a reverie. "No, Ted. I think only the dealer has serviced that car. Did you check the Hall of Records to find where Derringer's place is?"

"Can't. It's closed Saturdays. I've asked all the realtors in town."

"Then see if you can find the gas station where Derringer deals," suggested Gus. "They might know. Cheer up—chances are he forgot he'd need the car to go upstate and counts on selling it to you when he gets back tonight."

"Thanks, Gus. I'll try the stations."

THE following Monday, just as Gus was thinking of lunch, an imperious horn sounded outside the big shop door, and a moment later a sleek hardtop sedan swept into the garage. But as it crested the concrete apron, Gus's sharp ears caught a dry *chunk* from beneath the car.

"I see you got it, Ted—and it sure is—" Congratulations froze on Gus's tongue as the car door opened and Silas Barnstable stepped out.

"Well, don't stand there gaping," snapped the town's stingiest man. "Never seen an almost-new car before?"

"Yes, but never you in one," admitted Gus. "Who did you rob, Silas?"

"I did make a good deal," said Silas,

rubbing his hands together. "Only 6,000 miles on it."

"Then this is Derringer's car."

"Was, Gus. I bought it legal."

A sense of outrage engulfed Gus. "Legal! You heard Griswold talking to me. You practically stole it from him!"

"Now that's pretty harsh language, Gus," whined Barnstable. "I took your advice, got me a good car. I knew where to find Derringer—his summer place is next to one I have a mortgage on."

"Well, you can take your car—and your business—somewhere else."

The old man finched. "Now wait, Gus. I ain't set against selling Griswold the car—if I can make a profit on it. But I already had it back to the dealer, same as Derringer did, 'count of that *scree-chunk* underneath. They said they put new shocks in for Derringer. Today they tightened the spring shackles—made me pay for it, too."

"Still clunks, doesn't it? Maybe you'll find this an expensive bargain."

A fine rivulet of sweat rolled down Barnstable's bony nose. "Give it a road test at least, Gus."

Gus glared at him, then shrugged. "Wait till I give Stan some orders."

Where'd it come from?



THE WEEK: Dividing time into seven-day intervals was a scheme many ancient civilizations used. The days get their names from the seven heavenly bodies—each associated with a god—that were thought to revolve around the earth.

Sunday: Sun; Monday: Moon; Tuesday: Mars (Anglo-Saxon "Tiw"); Wednesday: Mercury (Woden); Thursday: Jupiter (Thor); Friday: Venus (Frigg); Saturday: Saturn.

FAR back in the shop, Gus gave Stan low-voiced instructions, then returned.

"When does it make that racket?" he asked Barnstable, getting in.

"Any time I go up a driveway or hit a dip in the road."

Gus put the automatic drive in reverse and backed out. As the rear wheels climbed the apron slope, an unnerving clunk came from under the car. It was briefly repeated when the car climbed down the outside. Gus shook his head thoughtfully.

"Bad, hey?" asked Barnstable.

Grim-lipped, Gus said nothing. He drove slowly a block or two. When he coasted up a driveway slope to make a

U turn, there was no noise. But it occurred again on the Model Garage apron.

"What'll it cost?" asked Barnstable.

Gus shook his head. "The way you feel about repair bills, Silas, I don't want to take on this job."

As he and Barnstable stepped from the car, Ted Griswold sauntered up. "Hello, Gus. Came to tell you I still need a car. This one for sale?"

Gus grunted. "If so, don't buy it."

Barnstable drew Gus away. "What is it, Gus? A bum rear end, or is the automatic transmission shot?" he whispered.

"I'd rather the dealer told you, Silas. No charge for the road test."

Gus walked off. Barnstable hastily looked about for Griswold. "Hey, young fellow. Want to buy this car?"

"Hold it, Ted," warned Gus. "I'll

"Okay by me," said Griswold. "It's a swell car—whatever's wrong with it. Is it the clunk I heard when you drove in that scared him into selling?"

"Right. Sounds loudest in cars having automatic transmissions, because even slight seepage of transmission fluid at the rear seal can wash the lubricant out of the drive-shaft yoke."

"The what?"

"The splined-and-grooved coupling on the front end of the drive shaft. When the car rides over a bump, those splines slide in and out of matching grooves in the transmission. Look."

Gus jounced the back of the car up and down on its springs. "Not a whisper now, or when you coast over a rise or dip. But when the engine's pulling and drive torque loads the splines, they bind and then break free with that noise you heard."

"So that's what outfoxed Barnstable. And why Stan phoned me to come buy the car, no matter what you said about it."

"Sure. All I have to do is drop the shaft and pack the splines with viscous grease." Gus chewed his lips. "I didn't tell Silas it was an expensive job; he just naturally thought so. And after what he'd done, it seemed only fair to let him. At that, it was a dirty trick, and I'm going to tell him. Since he made a few bucks, he can't complain much."

"Nor can I, and he's welcome to the profit. You have my thanks, Gus."

"Save them, Ted. He overheard you in my shop, and I missed the tip-off."

"To what he was going to try?"

"Sure. Silas gave me cast-iron proof when he was in such a big rush to get out. I should've guessed what he was up to and warned you."

"But how could you know?"

"Because," said Gus, "that was the first time Silas ever paid a bill of mine without an argument."



... and it's got a two-car garage."

charge you just as much to repair it as I would Silas."

Griswold nodded, withdrew into muttered conversation with Barnstable.

TEN minutes later, Barnstable shuffled out. Griswold approached Gus, smiling.

"I saw Derringer that night; he'd already sold it—for \$550. I paid Barnstable \$600."

Gus chuckled. "Leave it to Silas to turn a profit somehow, every time!"

NEXT MONTH: How to Buy a Car... in the Soviet Union

How many months' wages does it cost the average Russian? How long must he wait? How about service, trade-in, resale? Harry Walton, back from car-hungry Russia, tells you—in August PS—about the Red red tape Ivan goes through to get a car.