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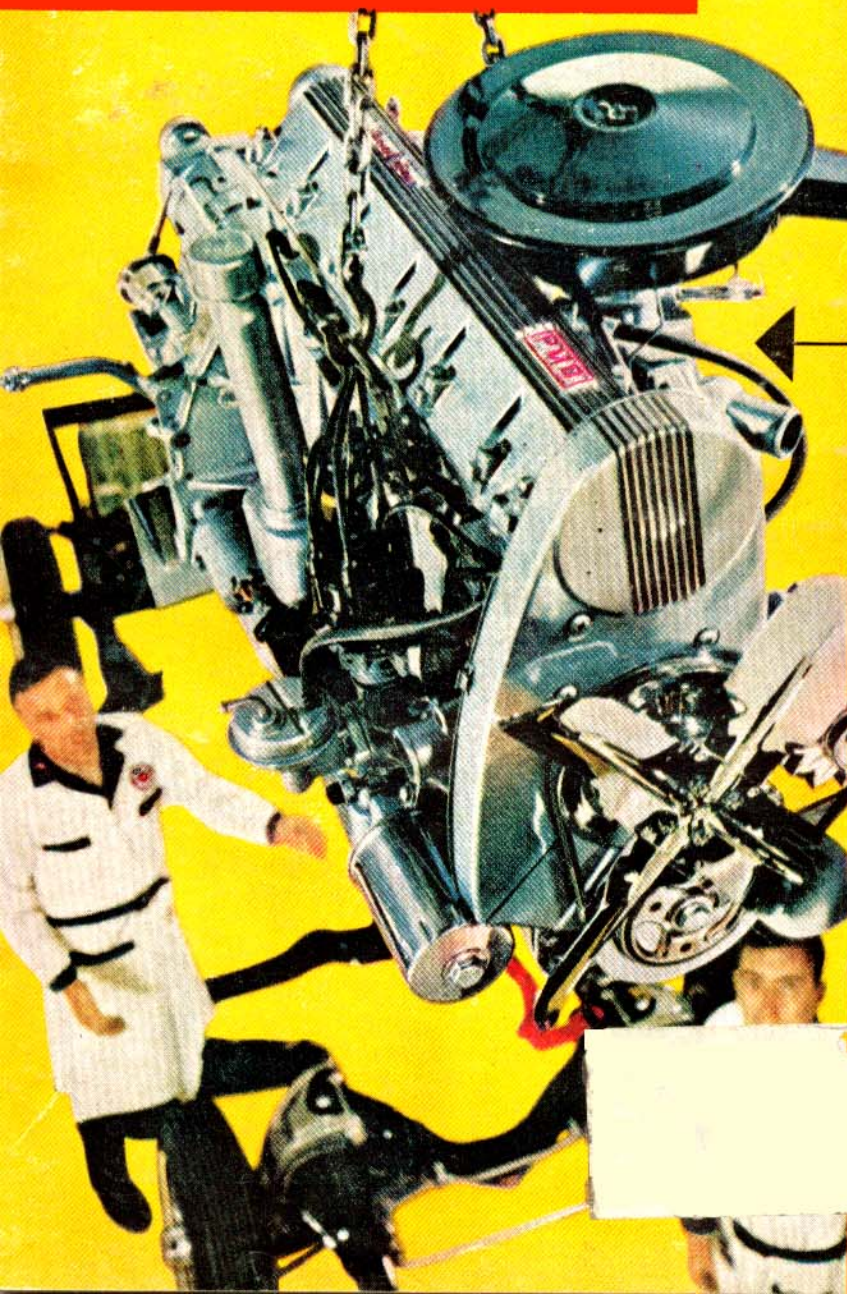
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Gus Gets the Show on the Road

By Martin Bunn

YAWNING as he walked the short distance to the Model Garage, Gus Wilson eyed the bright morning with little enthusiasm. It had been a warm night, and he had slept only in snatches. Today was going to be hot.

He could tell what it was going to be like in the shop. This hot spell would bring flooded carburetors, vapor-locked fuel systems, and overheated engines.

The sensible thing to do on a day like this was to go fishing. There was a place he knew only a few miles north . . .

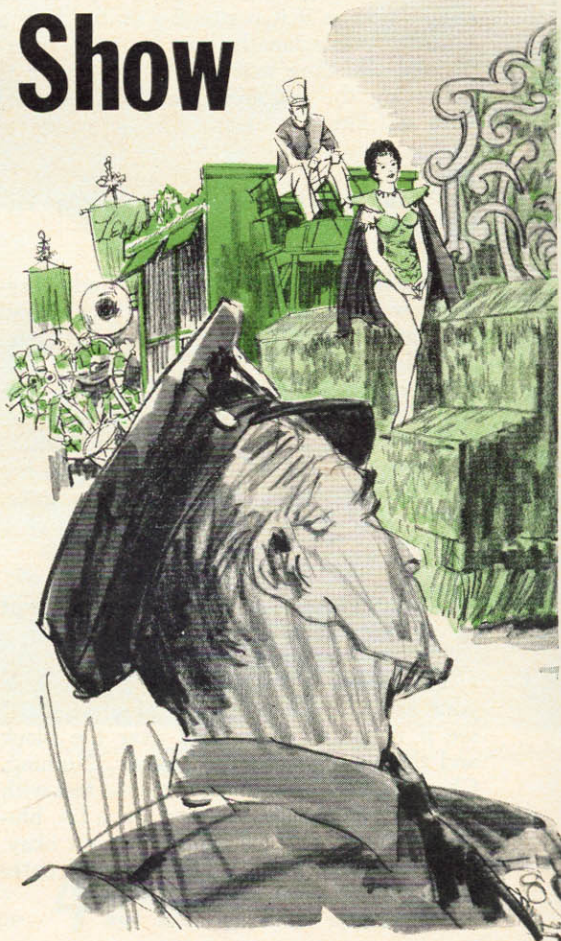
Coming in sight of the Model Garage, Gus was surprised to see the door still shut, the gas pumps locked. Then he remembered he'd ordered Stan to pick up some parts and had intended to open up himself. He was 15 minutes late. As if in rebuke, the phone was ringing.

"This is Clyde Sims," said a familiar voice with a resonant echo in it. "Remember the hard starting I had last year? You said you could do something about it."

Gus fought down another yawn. "Yeah, we've found something that usually helps on that model. The carburetor soaks up too much engine heat in warm weather. Soon as you shut off the engine and fresh gas stops coming into the carburetor, what's in the bowl gets so hot it boils up out of the jet into the manifold. When you try to start, you get such a rich mixture a warm engine can't fire it.

"The fix is to install a thick Bakelite spacer between the manifold and carburetor. That keeps heat from traveling to the bowl so fast. Drive in and we'll put it in." "Be there this afternoon," said Sims.

That was the kind of day it was going to be, thought Gus as he hung up. Changing



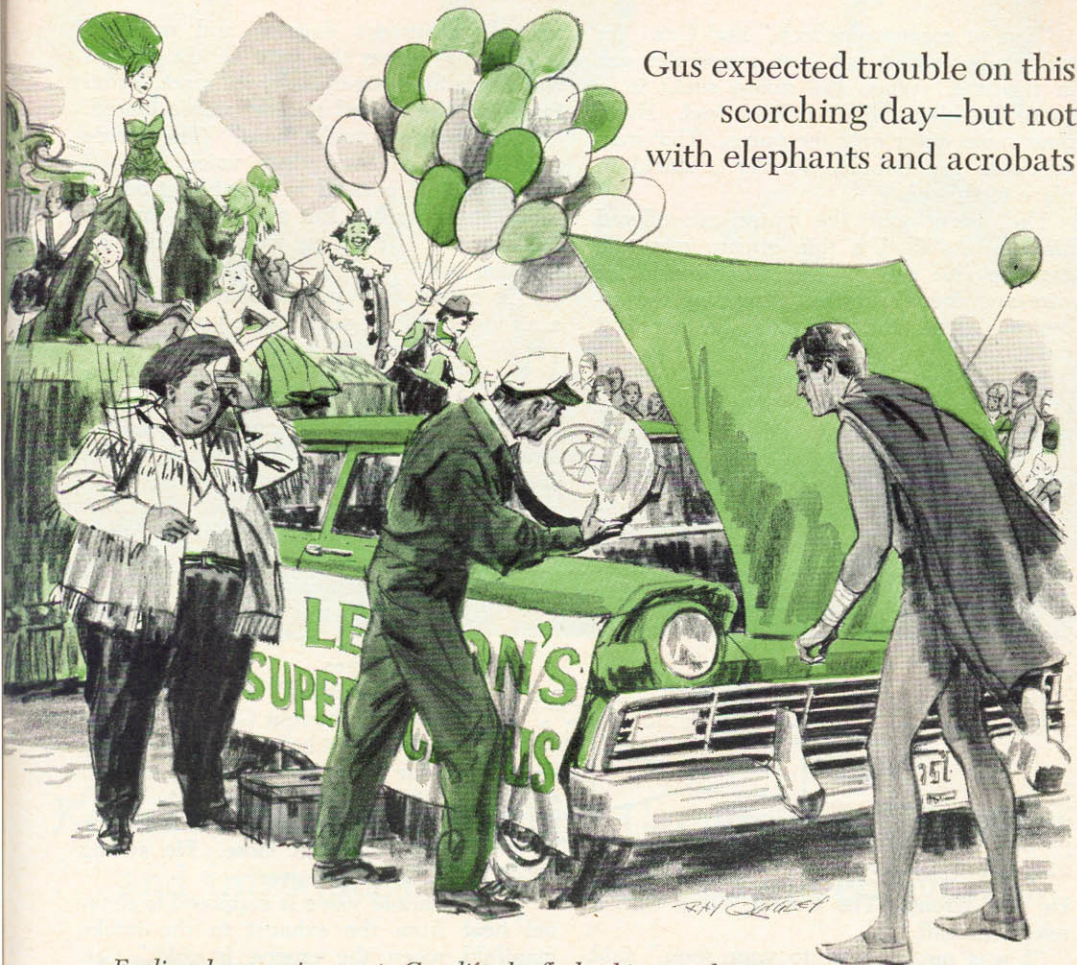
to shop clothes, he doused his face with cold water. Stan Hicks, his assistant, arrived and unlocked the pumps.

The first service call came at 10 a.m. By then, the temperature was in the 90s. Gus sent Stan out and grumpily retired to a bench to overhaul a carburetor.

"There was this woman stalled in the shopping center," reported Stan on his return. "Nothing wrong except she'd flooded the engine. Why won't people learn that pumping the gas pedal shoots in more gas? All I did was hold the throttle wide open and crank the engine to clear it, but she acted like it was magic."

"Just your charm, Stan," said Gus, setting aside the rebuilt carburetor. "Keep it coming. There'll be more calls today. Drivers get panicky when a hot engine

Gus expected trouble on this scorching day—but not with elephants and acrobats



Feeling he was in a rut, Gus lifted off the big air cleaner.

doesn't start, and react by jumping on the throttle. If the engine already has too much gas, that really does it.

"I remember one fellow who knew better. But he was sure the automatic choke cooled off faster than the engine block, and so choked a warm engine. He wrapped the choke thermostat with glass wool and asbestos to keep it warm. Swore it worked."

A horn squawked outside and Gus went out. An old Chrysler had evidently just been pushed in by a hubless two-color Ford, which now drove off.

A lean young man got out of the Chrysler. "She quit down at the corner," he said morosely. "See about it, huh?"

Raising the hood, Gus found no sign or smell of flooding. He loosened and wrung off the air cleaner.

"Try cranking it," he said to the driver.

As the engine churned over, Gus peered down the carburetor throat. The little stream of gas that should have squirted into it when the gas pedal was pumped wasn't there. He waved a hand, and the driver turned off the key.

"Second time it quit this morning," he said. "The first time, it started again after 10 minutes. This time, it stopped right in the intersection and a fellow was good enough to give me a push."

Gus had been checking. Fuel-line connections were tight, the flexible fuel hose seemed in good shape. Memory clicked to frame a question in his mind.

"What happened to that sheet-metal plate that used to be here, between the fuel line and the exhaust pipe?" he demanded.

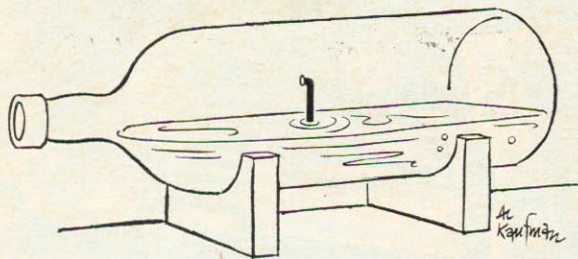
"It was rattling. I took it off."

"You've got a vapor lock," said Gus. "In today's heat, that hot pipe evaporates gas in the line. When the pump sucks in a vapor bubble, it can't deliver fuel. Here, pour some water over the pump. That may condense the bubble. I'll rig a shield in place of that plate."

The driver took the water can offered him and trickled a thin stream over the gas line and pump. Gus went inside for wire and sheet asbestos. Wrapping the asbestos around the fuel line, he wired it tight.

He nodded at the driver. The starter cranked for a few seconds. Then the engine fired. The young man paid and raced off.

Noontime came and went without further emergencies, and Gus began to think the day might turn out better than expected.



He was wrong. The trouble came with a telephone call.

"I was on my way to your shop," said the voice of Clyde Sims, "when the engine quit at Burroughs and Main. I'm making an awful traffic jam. Can you get here fast?"

Gus got into the wrecker and drove out. Two blocks from Burroughs Street, traffic slowed to a creep. At the next corner he spotted a parking place and continued on foot, taking his toolbox.

What he hadn't noticed before now grew louder—a calliope and brass band, sprightly tunes that sang of summer and peanuts, of elephants and acrobats. Even before he saw it, he knew the circus had come to town.

The parade had funneled into the other end of Burroughs Street, a narrow thoroughfare between the truck route and Main Street. But it hadn't come out. The stopper in the bottleneck was a 1957 Ford station wagon, flaunting circus posters as long as itself. It was towing a big float carrying

several performers dancing and waving."

Standing across the path of the wagon was Clyde Sims' six-cylinder compact. From far down the stalled parade, music blared.

"Gosham I glad you're here!" The words tumbled out in Sims' deep voice. "When my car quit, I coasted in here to get out of Main Street traffic. But this circus car was halfway out. Together, we're blocking all but one lane."

Gus raised the compact's hood and got a strong smell of gas. "Been pumping the pedal?" he asked.

Sims shook his head. Gus got in the car and tried the starter, throttle wide open. After several turns, the engine fired, galloped irregularly, and died. Gus got out and removed the air cleaner. The automatic choke was properly open, but raw gas was dribbling into the carburetor throat,

its odor mingling with the smell of circus wagons and animals.

"The engine was kind of knocking before it quit," rumbled Sims.

"Knocking?" He must be half asleep, thought Gus, not to have checked it before. Now he found the heat-riser valve and nudged its counterweight. It didn't budge. He tried harder. The shaft grated loose. He swung the weight over.

"This manifold valve is supposed to channel heat from the exhaust to the intake manifold when the engine is cold," Gus told Sims. "But it should open once the engine is warm. Instead, it was stuck in the 'heat-on' position. The hot intake thinned out air going through it, while extra gas boiling out of the carburetor made the mixture even richer. Try it."

Sims floored the throttle and turned the key. The engine caught on the fifth turn.

"Come to the shop," shouted Gus over the blare of horns. "I'll put special solvent on that stuck valve, check the float level, and put in the spacer."

Sims nodded, inched forward, and disappeared into traffic. From somewhere appeared Patrolman Ed Larkin, an ex-Marine whom Gus knew. After speeding on cars in both lanes for a time, he stopped traffic and waved the Ford out.

The wagon's engine revved furiously. It jerked the float forward, but as a boy scampered in front, it came to an equally jarring stop. Its engine stalled.

Larkin yelled at the boy, frantically beckoned the circus car on. Its starter ground, slowing ominously. The policeman strode over, face red and collar wilted.

"Your permit's for a parade, not for living statues," he roared. "Move it!"

The starter wheezed to a halt, and the music with it. From Burroughs Street came feline roars and monkeylike chittering. A florid man beside the uniformed driver of the wagon got out and looked back.

"Play! Keep playing!" he bellowed.

The band obediently started up again.

"The cats get restless in this heat," remarked the florid man to Gus.

"So do I!" roared Larkin. "Unless you're on the way in five minutes, you get a ticket *and* your parade permit revoked."

Taking off his Stetson, the florid man wiped his three chins and smiled weakly at Gus. "She stalls every time we stop—soon's we slow down from high speed. Always does, but it seems worse now. The heat, I guess. Some of the boys are right handy around engines, but nothing they've tried seems to do any good."

Two men hopped off the float. One, carrying a whip, went toward the animal cages. The other, a tall man in tights, a cape floating around him, came to the car.

"Break down and ask the man to give a look, Lendon," he growled.

"Sure!" bellowed Lendon. "I'd give every cent I have on me to get moving."

On the float, girl performers looked wilted under heavy make-up. The calliope and brass band finished a march separately. Somewhere a tiger snarled defiance.

Gus raised the hood of the Ford and, feeling he was in a rut, once more lifted off the big air cleaner. The choke of the two-barrel Holley carburetor was open, but

again Gus saw gas trickling from the jets.

A right-angled rod, mounted in a boss on a side of the carburetor, extended across the flat top of the float chamber. Its vertical leg, encircled by a spring, stopped short of a lever linked to the throttle. Gus pulled the throttle open and let it snap shut. The rod did not move.

Using pliers cautiously, Gus bent up the flat lever until it lifted the rod, exposing a vent hole in the bowl cover. He opened the throttle and signaled to the driver. Slightly recovered, the battery spun the engine over a few turns.

It caught with a roar. As Gus released the throttle, it settled to a fast idle. He backed it off slightly, gunned the engine once more, dropped it to idle again.

As Gus closed the hood, Lendon yanked out his wallet. "Every cent on me, I said, sir, and that you'll get." He opened the wallet wide, stared into it, and shrugged.

"Cleaned out! But wait—"

With a flourish he produced two tickets.

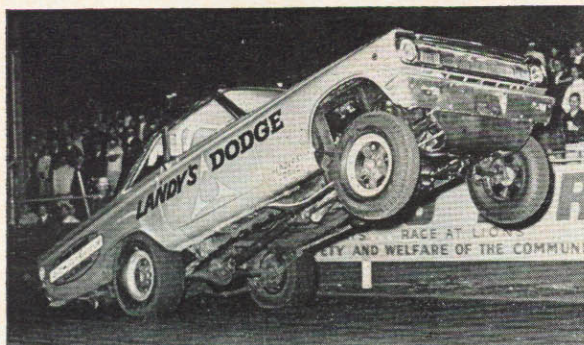
"You're overacting, Lendon," rumbled the tall man. He folded a bill around the tickets and gave them to Gus. "That's only a loan, Lendon," he added, and swung himself back onto the float.

"It was the anti-percolating vent, of course," finished Gus as he told Stan of the incident at closing time. "The throttle linkage normally opens it at idling speed to release vapor pressure in the carburetor bowl and prevent flooding. The linkage was bent, so the vent stayed shut. Same trouble, different cause."

Stan pulled the big shop door shut.

"Too hot to go to bed early," he said.

With a grin, Gus produced two pasteboards. "I'm just waking up, myself. Let's go to the circus!" ■ ■



Bronco dragster starts on its "hind legs"

Dick Landy's 1965 Dodge Coronet Hemi-Charger generates so much torque that it rears up on back wheels at the start of a race at the Lion's Drag Strip, Long Beach, Calif. Earlier Landy won the Top Stock Eliminator title at the Smokers Drag Meet in Bakersfield with a speed of 138 m.p.h.