



Gus Wilson

GUS drives a bargain

Trooper Corcoran May Know His Cars. But the Model Garage Proprietor Knows His Cars and His Salesmen, Too. It's Important Sometimes!

By MARTIN BUNN

"HEY, Jerry, what the heck's the matter with you today, anyhow?" Gus Wilson demanded. "You've been sitting there on the end of that workbench for the better part of half an hour without saying ten words."

Trooper Jerry Corcoran, of the State Police, slowly lit a cigarette. "I'm thinking," he said at last.

Gus laughed. "Don't take it so hard," he advised. "Even cops have to think sometimes."

Jerry grinned and pushed his wide-brimmed felt hat onto the back of his head. Then he looked serious again.

"I'm thinking about buying a car," he said. "My old bus is just about done for. I've been sort of hanging on to it with the idea that next year I could afford to buy a new one—but now every one says that maybe next year new cars will be scarcer than hens' teeth. So I've decided that I'd better buy a pretty good used car—and it's got me worried."

"No need to worry," said Gus, "if you go to a reputable used-car dealer and buy a car with a new-car guarantee on it."

"That outfit down near the library is trying to sell me a bus I noticed on their lot yesterday," Jerry said. "It looked to me like a swell buy."

"Paint's cheap," Gus said disparagingly. "And you

know their reputation. They're pirates."

"Yeah, I know that those guys are gyps. But I've been wondering if they'd dare to try to pull anything on me—me being on the cops."

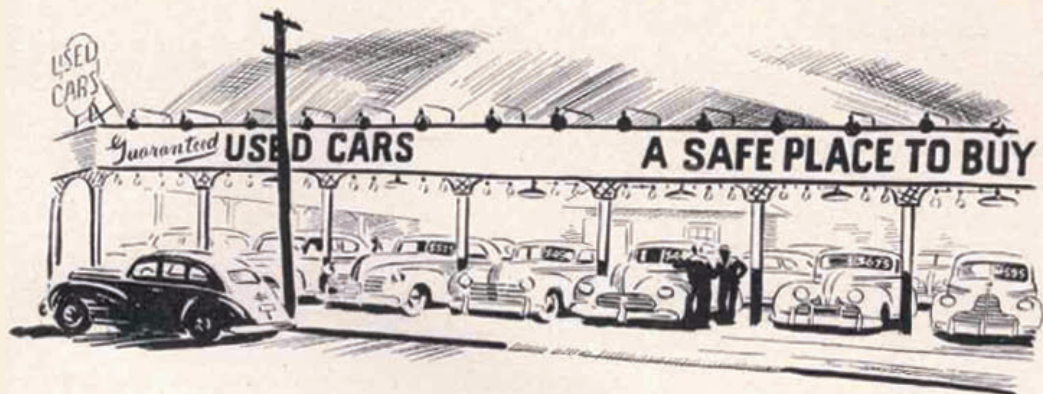
"If J. Edgar Hoover bought a car from them," Gus said, "they'd try to skin him."

Jerry blew another cloud of smoke. "I guess you're right, Gus," he agreed. "I guess maybe I'd better not try to do business with them."

"Oh, I wouldn't say that," Gus objected.



"That outfit down near the library is trying to sell me a bus I noticed on their lot. It looked like a swell buy."



"I was just warning you to watch your step if you do deal with them. Naturally, every car they sell isn't a cluck. You might even get a bargain from them, if you're smarter than they are. Tell you what to do—you go down there to their lot and ask them to let you give that car you're interested in a tryout. Then drive it up here and I'll check on it."

"Say, Gus, that's white of you," Jerry said. "I don't like to make you go to all that trouble, but—"

"No trouble at all," Gus assured him. "I'm aiming to get mine out of the deal. I'll pick out a bum car for you, and then overcharge you for all the repair work you have to have done on it!"

Jerry grinned and got off the workbench. "I'll be back in an hour," he said, "if they'll let me take the car out for a tryout."

"Don't tell them I'm going to check on it for you, and whatever you do, don't let that high-pressure salesman named Benny come with you. He does most of the selling for them, and he talks so much and so loud while he's doing it that he drowns out all the knocks and rattles."

In about an hour Jerry was back in the shop of the Model Garage. "I've got the bus outside," he told Gus, "but I've got Benny with it. I just couldn't get rid of him."

Gus laughed. "I had an idea that you wouldn't be able to," he said. "It doesn't matter, after all—I know how we can stall him off. Well, let's have a look at this job."

Instead of going out through the open shop door, Gus led the way through the office. He stopped there and spoke briefly to his partner Joe Clark, and Joe grinned and nodded. Then Gus and Jerry went out to where the car was standing—a 1939-model light sedan of a well-known make.

Benny, a beefy fellow who has a wide and engaging grin and a habit of looking the victims of his guile straight in the eye while he's telling them his biggest lies, jumped out of the car when he saw Gus and came

over to him with his hand extended. "This is swell!" he boomed. "What we want most is for our customers to be thoroughly satisfied, so we're always glad when they get a real expert to help them pick out a car. Now, this—here little bus . . ."

"Joe Clark wants to talk to you, Benny," Gus interrupted. "He's waiting for you in the office. He's got to go out in a few minutes. He knows some one who's in the market for a good . . ."

"Sure—sure!" Benny said. "Glad to oblige him! Wait a minute before you start looking her over, Mr. Corcoran. I'll be right back."

Benny dashed into the office. Gus grinned after him. "I told Joe to buttonhole him and keep him in there for fifteen minutes if he had to use force," he said. "Now we'll be able to look over this job in peace."

They went over to the car, and Gus gave its finish and upholstery a quick inspection. "Looks as if it had been given good care," he said, "but finish isn't everything."

"There's only about 15,000 on the speedometer," Jerry remarked. "That's not so bad for two years of driving, is it?"

"It's a little under average," Gus said. "But I don't pay much attention to the mileage figures that speedometers show—it's too darned easy to make them show anything you want them to." He got into the driver's seat. "The feel of the brake and clutch pedals gives you a much safer idea of how far a car has been driven—if they are worn away down the mileage usually is high. These seem to be all right. Let's see about the frame. A car with a sprung frame is a first-class pain in the neck—it drives hard, and it keeps you poor buying tires and gasoline."

He got out of the car, and examined the tires carefully. "Original rubber, I guess," he said. "Their treads are worn some, but you've got to expect that, and they are worn evenly. When they are worn more on one side than on the other it's usually an

indication of a sprung frame, or at least a bent axle or loose wheels."

He looked over the wheels, the hood, the fenders and the running boards. "None of 'em new," he said. "A new wheel or hood or fender on a used car is a danger signal—it may be a tip-off that the car has been pretty seriously wrecked." He checked the springs. "No broken leaves." Then he stepped up on the front bumper, jounced up and down, and repeated his performance on the rear bumper. "Both bumpers are good and tight," he said. "She's O.K. so far, Jerry—but I'll have to drive her a way to really find out about her."

Benny came out of the office. He looked suspiciously at Gus. Then he grinned. Gus grinned back at him.

"I see you've been giving the bus a going over," Benny said. "That's O.K. with me. There ain't a thing wrong with her."

"How does she ride?" Gus asked.

"How does she ride!" Benny repeated. "Why, when you ride in her you feel like you do when you walk on a plush carpet. But don't ask me—I'm trying to sell the job. Try her for yourself."

"I will," Gus said. "After I've blown the tires up to somewhere near their correct pressure. That one's got whiskers, Benny—soft tires to make easy riding."

"Are they soft?" Benny said innocently. "By gum, they are down a little! Put as much air as you want to in 'em."

Gus inflated the tires to normal. Then he got into the car and took the wheel. "You sit up here with me, Jerry," he directed. "You'll be more comfortable in the back seat, Benny."

Benny pushed his way into the front seat. "There's lots of room for three," he said. "I want to show Mr. Corcoran what a big, comfortable car this is."

"Have it your way," Gus told him good-humoredly. He drove down the garage driveway, and then turned north on the road. Then, slowing to a crawl, he drove the right front wheel up on the low curb, and brought the car to a standstill.

"Hey!" Benny yelled. "What you doing—?"

"You know what I'm doing as well as I do," Gus said. He got out and again opened and closed each of the car's four doors. "If the doors stick when one wheel of a car is higher than the others," he told Jerry, "a loose frame is allowing the body to

twist. As you see, these doors don't stick. But there's one more check I'd like to make. Hey, Benny, climb over behind the wheel, will you, and drive down the road slowly for a block. Then come back into the shop."

"Sure," Benny said. "You're just wasting time, though." Then he drove slowly down the road.

Gus watched the car closely. The springs obviously did not sag, and the wheels tracked perfectly. "That's fine, he told himself. "Now we'll see about the engine."

When Benny drove into the shop, Gus raised the hood and began taking out the spark plugs and examining them. "That's a new one on me," the salesman said. "What's the big idea?"

"On a six-cylinder engine," Gus explained politely, "the No. 1 and No. 6 plugs normally show a little more carbon than the other ones do. If one of the other plugs shows more carbon than No. 1 and No. 6, the chances are that its cylinder is scored, or that it has bad rings, or maybe a bad valve. This engine seems O.K., but I'll just check it with my vacuum tester—if you don't mind."

"Oh, I don't mind," Benny said. "I'm enjoying all this. Maybe I'll learn something useful. You never can tell!"

Gus laughed, and carefully checked the manifold vacuum. "Readings are O.K.," he reported when he had finished. "Now let's take a ride."

He took the wheel again, and drove toward the business section of town. Traffic soon became sticky, and he did a lot of stopping and starting. Presently he drew into the curb, got out, moistened his forefinger, and touched it to each brake drum of the car. "Brakes are all right," he told Jerry, "because each one is just as warm as the others."

He drove on, and turned down a side street on which there was almost no traffic. With the engine running at little more than idling speed he shifted into low gear, and for a few seconds held a finger on the gear-

shift lever. Then he shifted into the other speeds, including reverse, and did the same thing. "No vibration at any speed," he said. "That means that the gears aren't badly worn, and that their teeth aren't burred. The clutch is all right, too—doesn't slip or grab. I can hardly believe it, Benny, but I'm be- (Continued on page 218)

GUS SAYS:

It's patriotic to save gasoline by slower driving just now, but it is smart—always! Because driving at 35 instead of 55 will save almost enough money every five years to pay for a brand-new automobile!

TOUGH

But oh so Gentle



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Stop Oil-Pumping

IN CARS, TRUCKS AND TRACTORS

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ginning to think this car may be a good one!" "Sure it's a good one!" the salesman proclaimed. "I wouldn't try to put anything over on fellers like you and Mr. Corcoran. Well how about closing up this deal?"

Jerry looked at Gus. Gus shook his head. "Wait a while," he advised. "Let's take a little ride out in the country."

Benny glanced at his wrist watch, and for the first time looked worried.

Out on the open road Gus speeded up to forty. Then he suddenly took his foot off the accelerator. The car slowed abruptly, but there were no knocks or raps. "That tells the whole story, don't it?" Benny demanded. "If there's a bad bearing, or anything like that, doing that to a car shows it up. Say, gents, I've got to get back—"

Ahead of them there was a long, easy up-grade. When they got to the bottom of it Benny began telling a funny story. He talked loud, and he laughed louder all the way up the hill. He did his best, but he didn't make enough noise to keep Gus from hearing a dull thudding in the engine.

When they got to the crest of the hill he again suggested that they turn back. "Just a little farther," Gus said. Another hill loomed ahead of them. Benny started another story. "No use," Gus told him. "You're wasting your breath. Listen, Jerry." The dull thudding seemed louder.

Gus turned the car and headed for home. For a while the salesman didn't say anything. Then he looked at Jerry. "First time I've heard that noise," he said. "Sounds to me like the crankshaft."

"It does sound as if it was somewhere near the crankshaft," Gus said. "Maybe..."

"I tell you what I'll do," Benny broke in hastily. "I'll knock fifty bucks off that price. How about it?"

"I dunno," Jerry said, looking at Gus.

"Take it," said Gus.

Back at the shop, Jerry got Gus aside a minute and asked: "How about that crankshaft Gus? won't it cost more—"

Gus laughed. "Benny's a sharp guy, but he isn't much of a mechanic," he said. "He probably thinks that the crankshaft is shot. What is wrong is that there is a little too much end play in it. It isn't bad, and probably it'll never give you any trouble. I can fix it, but it won't cost any fifty dollars. Benny's outsmarting himself. Here he comes."

"You've got a bargain," Benny smiled.

"Well," Gus said, "a bargain's a bargain—wherever and however you get it!"