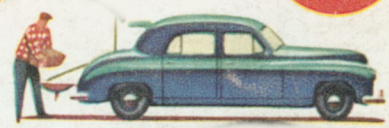


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First Pictures of Kaiser Utility Car

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Gus Runs into Twin Trouble



In the Spring a young man's fancy may turn to thoughts of blondes,
but an extra blonde and a balky engine can complicate matters.



RAY QUIGLEY

By Martin Bunn

"HEY, BOSS!" Stan Hicks shouted as he bounced into the Model Garage. "It's here."

Gus Wilson pulled his head from under the hood of a sedan. "Now what?" he asked.

"My new car," Stan beamed. "It's right outside the door. Ready for me to drive."

"That's fine," said Gus. He pointed to the sedan he'd been working on. "Now these cylinders . . ."

"And just in time, too," Stan cut in. "I'm taking Spick to the city tonight for a movie."

"Spick?" Gus asked. "Who's Spick?"

"Spick Smith—her name's Mary but everybody calls her and Susan—that's her sister—Spick and Span."

"Oh, those twins," Gus remembered. "I can't ever tell 'em apart."

"I can," Stan boasted. "And how."

"Okay," said Gus. "Now these cylinders . . ."

"Spick's a good-natured gal," Stan went on. "But Span—that's Susan—is always throwing a rod about something. She's scrappy."

Gus began again. "Now these cylinders . . ."

"That reminds me," said Stan. "I guess the dealer must have sold my old bus for what I asked. It's a good thing you helped me with that overhaul we gave it." Stan couldn't curb his excitement over the new car.

"Yeah, I guess so," said Gus, "but these cylinders . . ."

Stan looked hurt. "Gee, don't you want to look at my new car?"

"Oh, sure," Gus grinned. "I was just going to suggest that." They walked out of the shop to a gleaming convertible.

"Snappy, hey?" said Stan.

"Looks swell, Stan," Gus told him. "You'll be a real hot shot, driving that."

Enter Two Blondes

Gus and Stan looked up as a horn snarled and a pre-war sedan was braked to an abrupt stop beside the convertible. Out of the front seat hopped two girls. Both were strawberry blondes. They looked exactly alike and they were dressed exactly alike. But there the sameness ended. One smiled sweetly at Stan. The other glared at him.

"Why, Spick," Stan stammered, "what're you doing in my old car?"

Just then there was a wheeze and a roar

from the sedan's rear seat as a man pulled himself out the door. He was middle-aged, stout, pompous, and obviously angry.

"This is an outrage," he thundered. "A dastardly outrage. If I do not obtain satisfaction—complete satisfaction—here and now, I shall take steps. Drastic steps. I shall file a complaint in the proper quarter and I shall press that complaint to a conclusion—a bitter conclusion for the man who has taken advantage of the innocence and trust of an inexperienced young girl."

Gus shot Stan a quick look. "Hey," he whispered, "what you been up to?"

"I ain't been up to anything," Stan yelped.

The girl who had been smiling began to giggle. The one who had been glaring turned the glare up a couple of notches. The man sputtered. Gus looked puzzled.

Mr. Smith Sounds Off

"What—what's the matter, Mr. Smith?" Stan asked weakly.

"Matter! You know full well what's the matter," Smith roared. "I want a definite answer. No evasion. Yes or no." He jabbed a trembling forefinger at Stan's old sedan. "Were you or were you not the owner of this—this wreck?" he demanded.

"What do you mean—wreck?" Stan bristled. "That's a good car—for its age. Yes, I did own it. I told Sniffen and Company to sell it for me so I could buy a new one from them. What's wrong with that?"

"Ha!" Smith almost screamed. "So you admit it. Now did you or did you not tell Sniffen and Company that the car had been thoroughly overhauled at the Model Garage and that it was in first-class operating condition. Yes or no?"

"Of course I told them that," Stan snapped. "And it was true, too."

"True?" Smith howled. "My daughter—poor, deluded girl—trusted you. And it was on the assurance of the salesman that you had placed the car in perfect condition that she purchased it."

"Well, it was true," Stan repeated.

"Perfect mechanical condition," Smith sneered. "Listen." He clambered into the car and pressed the starter button.

The starter ground for some moments and when the engine finally caught it ran so roughly that it shook the car.

"Perfect mechanical condition," Smith continued to snarl. "The engine won't start half the time and if it does it sputters and bucks. And that isn't the worst of it." He turned the

switch, climbed out of the car, and slammed up the hood. "Look," he pointed dramatically.

Stan and Gus looked. The firewall was sticky with oil and a grimy film of it seemed to coat the entire engine compartment.

"Oil—oil all over everything," Smith rumbled. "And the waste of money. It eats up two quarts in a hundred miles."

Papa Smith seemed about to run down. Apparently the blonde with the double-duty glare thought so because she took over.

"All I've got to say," she snapped, "is that I don't think much of people who go around selling other people beat-up old autos."

"Aw, now listen," Stan began.

"You're always talking about what a great mechanic you are," she went on, "but when this car went bad on you the only thing you could think of doing was to stick somebody else with it so they'd have all the trouble and, furthermore, I don't ever want to have anything more to do with you . . . you . . ."

"Amazing," said Gus, "all in one breath."

The girl threw him a sharp look and acted as if she were about to take off again.

"But, listen," Stan said and then broke off with a shrug. "What's the use? You never listen to anything because you always want to do all the talking." He turned to Gus. "What happened? You know there wasn't anything wrong with it when I took it to Sniffen's."

"That's right," Gus agreed. "It was in good condition—a good buy at the price."

Gus Sounds Off

"Ha!" There was a note of triumph in Smith's voice. "So the Model Garage admits its responsibility."

"The Model Garage isn't admitting anything," Gus told him. "We're not in the used-car business. That's why I asked Stan to have Sniffen sell the car for him instead of selling it himself. The Model Garage has no responsibility in this deal."

"We'll see about that," Smith put in.

"But," Gus said, "I helped Stan put the car in first-class condition before he offered it for sale. There wasn't anything wrong with it when it went out of this shop and there's nothing wrong with it now."

Smith held his head with one hand, pointed to the old car with the other, and whispered hoarsely: "Nothing wrong, he says."

"That's what I said," Gus laughed. "Drive the car in the shop, Stan." The Smiths started to follow, but Gus stopped them. "If you'll come back in fifteen minutes, I'll have the car ready for you. There'll be no charge."



Stan watched him take something from a cover-all pocket and quickly slip it under the hood.

"I'll stay right here," Smith shook his head, "and see what you do. Make sure there's no monkey business this time."

"I'm running this shop," Gus said, "and I don't allow visitors during working hours. You can wait in the office if you like. If you don't want to—well, I've other things to do."

"Let's wait," said the twin who had been smiling. "I'm sure Mr. Wilson will make good his promise." Her father grumbled but he and the other twin followed her into the office.

"I got rid of them to save your face," Gus grinned at Stan as the office door closed.

"Huh?" Stan started to object.

Gus Pulls a Fast Switch

"Step on it," Gus said. "Wipe the oil off all the wires and spark plugs and off the distributor and rotor. Clean out the distributor. Then slip in a new set of points. Watch the clearance."

As Stan finished the cleaning job, Gus came over to the car. Stan saw him take something from a coverall pocket and slip it quickly under the hood.

"What're you putting in there?" Stan asked.

"Never mind that now," Gus said. "Call your girl friends and their pa."

Gus looked at the twins with a puzzled frown as the Smiths paraded into the shop. "Who bought Stan's car?" he asked.

"I did," said the one who had glared.

"Okay," Gus said. "Start it, please."

When she pressed the starter button, the engine took hold instantly and ran smoothly.

"That's better," she admitted, "but what about oil? I don't want to be buying a quart every few miles."

"You probably won't need oil for eight hundred or a thousand miles," Gus said.

"I'll believe that when I see it," she sulked. "I'm taking a friend to the city tonight. I'll see how it works then . . . Come on, papa."

Smith got into the car. Stan held the door for the other twin.

"I'll stop by at seven," he said. She looked at him. "Well, you're going to the movies with me, aren't you?" he asked.

She smiled. "Seven, then."

Stan turned to Gus as the car rolled out of the shop. "What's the score? What'd you put under the hood to stop that oil leak?"

"Know what this is?" Gus asked. He held out a cadmium-plated cap.

There Are Caps and Caps

"Sure," said Stan. "It's an oil-filler cap. Where'd it come from?"

"I just took it off your old car. Remember you mislaid the original cap when we worked on the car? Said you'd find it and put it on before driving to Sniffen's? Did you?"

"Gosh, I forgot all about it." Stan's face reddened.

"Apparently Sniffen's men put this one on," Gus said, "and it's the wrong cap for that model. Your car takes a combined filler cap and engine-breather cap. The engine couldn't breathe with this one. It didn't permit any crankcase ventilation. All that oil vapor was forced out around the rear main bearing and under the valve-cover plates."

"Gosh," was all Stan could mumble.

"The vapor even forced its way up the distributor-shaft bushing and fouled the distributor points almost enough to put the engine out of action. I found the cap you mislaid and as soon as I looked at that engine I knew what was wrong. You've been thinking too much about that pair of blondes," Gus joked.

"Only about one of 'em," Stan said.

"Which one?" Gus asked. "I still can't tell 'em apart."

"The nice one," Stan said. "Spick. Not the one that bought the car. That's Span."

That evening Gus was in the city. He was paying a parking-lot attendant when Stan drove up in his new convertible. A twin sat very close beside him.

"Hello," said Gus. "Hello, Miss Spick—like the show?"

"It was wonderful, Mr. Wilson," the girl smiled, "but I'm not Spick. That's Mary. I'm Span—Susan."

"Oh," said Gus. "But I thought Stan said—never mind. I can't tell you two apart."

"I can—now," Stan said, "but this afternoon I thought that Span was Spick and that Spick was—well, boss, you see how it is?"

"No, I don't," Gus grinned, "but anyway, it's your problem, not mine." END