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Gus Answers a Hurry Call



Warm engines usually run more smoothly than cold ones, but proving there can be an exception to the rule isn't too easy on a cold night.

By Martin Bunn

A BELL jangled. At first, it seemed miles away, and then much closer. Gus Wilson fumbled on his bedside table, found the telephone, and grunted "hello."

The voice sounded jittery and urgent. "Ed Blanding, Gus. Mr. Slemple's been hurt, and I'm in a jam—a bad one. Could you come out to the yard right away?"

Gus came wide awake. Griscom Slemple, elderly owner of a lumber yard at the edge of town, is an old friend. So is Ed Blanding,

who's Gris Slemple's middle-aged bookkeeper. "What are you doing there this time of night?" Gus demanded.

"I can't tell you anything more now. But for Pete's sake come on out."

Gus grunted an okay and the receiver clicked. Snapping on the light, he hurried into his clothes. The window thermometer read almost zero, and the clock showed midnight.

At Slemple's Lumber Yard, he found lights on and cars parked in the driveway. As Gus stopped, the blinding beam of a flashlight



As Gus stopped, a flashlight was turned into his face.
"Oh, it's you, Gus," said the voice of Trooper Corcoran.

RAY QUIGLEY

was turned in his face. "Oh, it's you, Gus," said State Trooper Jerry Corcoran.

He led Gus into the office. Gris Slemph was tilted back in his swivel chair, white faced and looking sick. Ed Blanding was leaning against the wall, pale as his boss. Police Chief Joe Hurley was staring at the open safe. A young fellow whom Gus didn't know was mooching around the office—like a stage detective, Gus thought. A uniformed cop was at the door.

Slemph made a weak attempt at a grin as he addressed Gus. "Someone conked me with a sandbag. Got away with seven hundred out of the safe."

"Not a sandbag," the young stage detective corrected him officiously. "Crooks don't use sandbags any more."

The cops turned their eyes on the speaker, showing plainly he was no favorite. "You better look around outside," Chief Hurley said. "Maybe you can find some footprints under the snow."

Looking injured, the young man went out. The chief turned to Gus. "I ask for a plain-clothes man and they give me this eager beaver, Swain. Just burnin' to be a deetecative. And he's the mayor's nephew!"

"Ed phoned me—" Gus began.

"Yeah, I told him to," Hurley said. "Ed's sorta in a spot. Swain claims it was him who socked Slemph."

"Bunk!" Gus snorted. "Why, I've—"

"So have I," Hurley broke in. "But it looks like Swain's got somethin' on him."

The chief settled himself in a chair. "It's

like this," he began. "For the last couple weeks Ed's been fussin' because his books don't balance. Been workin' almost every evenin' tryin' to find the mistake.

"Well, tonight, along about eight o'clock Gris Slem্প's drivin' past the yard, sees the lights on, and comes in to give Ed a hand. They work until about half past nine. Then Ed says he's starved. Slem্প tells him to go get a bite and come back."

Hurley consulted a notebook.

"Ed leaves here at 9:40. Slem্প keeps on workin', opens the safe to get some papers—and leaves it open. After a while he looks at the clock. It's 10:15. Slem্প thinks he hears a car outside about this time.

"Then somethin' knocks Gris cold. When he comes to, he crawls over to the phone and calls us."

Ed Gets Back Late

"That's at exactly 10:35. Swain and one of the boys get here at 10:41, along with Jerry, who got the radio flash."

"Ed still not here?" Gus asked.

"Just gettin' back," the chief answered. "Jerry and the others met him outside. He says he's been over to Mike's Lunch. They go into the office and Slem্প tells them."

The chief paused and a look of annoyance

clouded his face. "Now this here Swain gets a bright idea. He slips over to the lunch room and does some checkin'. Sure, Mike says, Mr. Blanding was here. He had a hamburger and coffee, and left a few minutes past ten."

Says Car Acted Up

"Swain comes back here and asks Ed how come it took him half an hour to drive back from the diner.

"Ed claims his motor kept buckin' and cuttin' out. Says it took him fifteen minutes or more to get up here from the railroad crossing.

"Swain claims Ed's lyin'—that he got back in time to slug Mr. Slem্প, hide the money, and meet 'em out front."

Ed raised his head. "This is the worst thing ever happened to me," he quavered.

"Take it easy, Ed," Gus advised him. "We're all friends of yours. . . . About your car. Been having trouble with it?"

"Nothing special until tonight. Thought I was never going to get back here."

"Suppose we give it a test," Gus suggested. "You and Jerry come along, Chief."

Chief Hurley led Gus, Ed, and Jerry out to Ed's prewar sedan. Pulling out of the yard, Gus drove down the highway a quarter of a mile, made a U turn, and returned to the

Pump Motor Drives Scooter



THIS three-wheeled vehicle combines a surplus airplane wing tank, a 1½-hp. gasoline water-pump engine, scooter wheels, and an airplane stick for steering. Robert Ferreira built it as a high-school shop project in Danville, Calif. A chain drive from the engine to the single rear wheel propels the scooter at speeds up to 30 m.p.h. The steering stick turns the vehicle in the direction that it's leaned. Vertical is straight ahead.

Tire Shield Protects Mechanic



ADDING air to a big truck tire may seem perfectly safe, but accident records show otherwise. If lock rings are not properly set, the inrushing air may cause them to fly off with considerable force. Mechanics have suffered broken bones in this way. Some have been killed. For protection, Sgt. Isaac Guthrie, an Army motor mechanic, designed and built this shield. It's welded up from light angle steel, and can be slipped in place quickly.

lumber yard. For a moment everyone remained silent. Then Ed Blanding spoke, a little uncertainly. "She runs fine now."

The Chief agreed. Gus looked thoughtful. "Maybe so—but I wouldn't want to say until I do a little trouble-shooting."

"Why not take the bus to your shop?" Hurley asked. "And take Ed with you—Swain will get him flustered again if he gets at him."

Ed Blanding drove. Gus wanted to make sure he didn't have some strange driving quirk. Again the car ran smoothly, until they were just about at the shop. Then it began to cough and buck.

Too Cold to Drive

"Been using the car much lately?" Gus asked as he raised the hood.

"Not much. Too cold the past week. Just back and forth between home and the plant—about half a mile each way."

"What happened tonight?"

"Well, I was in a hurry to get back, so I pushed up that steep hill below the crossing pretty hard. Just as I got to the crossing the lights flashed, and I ain't fool enough to try beating a train. There was another car, going the other way, that just did manage to stop in time."

"And your engine quit then?"

"Not right away. It ran ragged, stalled a couple of times, started again, stalled again. Time the freight was by, I thought she wouldn't get me to the plant, so I tried to flag down the car that had stopped the other side, but he was in such an all-fired hurry he near run me down."

Gus walked around and peered at the instrument panel. The ammeter registered charge and the heat indicator showed the engine was at operating temperature.

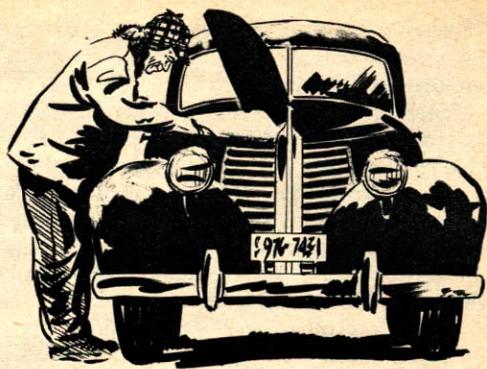
"Takes the engine quite a while to warm up in this weather," Gus observed. "It didn't really until just before we got here."

What Might Be Wrong?

What *could* cause a cold engine to run perfectly—and cut up when hot? Gus scratched his ear the way he always does when he's thinking. Vapor lock? Not likely. An obstruction in the fuel tank? That would cause trouble at *any* engine temperature. The automatic choke? That *would* bear checking. The air cleaner?

"Washed the air cleaner lately?" Gus asked.

"Yep. Couldn't be anything wrong there. Had it off only ten days ago, washed out the



element and re-oiled it—just like the book says."

"Put back the cleaner good and tight?"

"You bet!" Ed stated emphatically.

Gus looked at Ed. "I guess you did," he said, picking up a screwdriver. "Keep the engine going—and listen."

He put the screwdriver on the clamp holding the air-cleaner body to the carburetor air horn. Slowly, he backed off the screw a little.

The engine, sputtering only a moment before, now settled down and never missed a lick. Gus straightened up. "That's it," he said, grinning.

Ed started to speak. "But what—"

"You turned that screw so hard you warped the carburetor air horn enough to bind the automatic choke." Gus put a match to his pipe. "That's something else in the instruction books. Don't put on the air-cleaner clamp too tight."

Needed: Proof

"The engine was cold and the choke valve closed when you did your cleaning job. After you started the engine, the valve tried to open, did part way, but couldn't open all the way—as it should when the engine's warm.

"Because it's been such cold weather the past week, the engine never had a chance to warm up and you got by without trouble. But coming up that steep hill from the diner tonight and waiting for the freight, the engine finally got warmed up. With the valve stuck, the engine was over-choked. Get it?"

"Guess so," Ed said. The shop door blew open, admitting Chief Hurley in a cloud of snow.

Gus told him what he'd discovered.

"Fine job, Gus. But it won't clear Ed with Swain. He'll want proof."

The shop phone rang imperatively. ▶

"Probably for me," Hurley said. "Told the boys I was coming here." He listened for a moment and hung up.

"State trooper six miles out collared a reckless driver, but that's no help to you, Ed. Can't you *prove* you stopped for that freight?"

"How can I? The trainmen couldn't tell one car from another in that snow. Only guy who got near enough to see me almost killed me getting away." Ed explained again about the car he'd tried to flag.

"Meet any other car?" Gus asked.

"Not a one."

"Notice anything about that car?"

"Too dark," Ed said despairingly. "Just a sedan in a blur of snow. Went off so fast he almost skidded into the ditch. Hey, wait—it seems to me his taillights were flickering."

Hurley stood up. "Say, it might be the guy the trooper just picked up. The trooper noticed his taillights flicker and took after to tell him they'd have to be checked. Instead of stopping for the siren, this bird gave him a race. So now he's booked for speeding and reckless driving."

Gus pulled on his pipe. "I'd check that car thoroughly, Chief. Remember the time. Ed left the lunch room about 10:10, got to the crossing at 10:25, just about the time whoever hit Slemple would reach the railroad from the other side. Add it up."

Hurley dashed for the phone, and gave some crisp orders. They all jumped as the phone shrilled ten minutes later.

"Yeah?" said Hurley. "Oh, just a hunch . . . Good."

He hung up, beaming. "Ed, you're clear. Gus, you're a whiz. Do you want a job on the force?"

"All I want," Gus said, "is sleep."

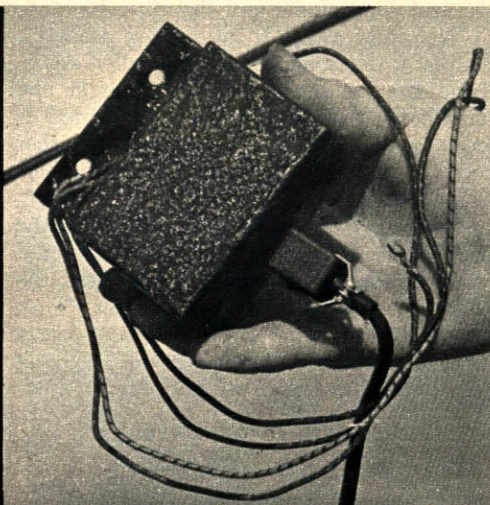
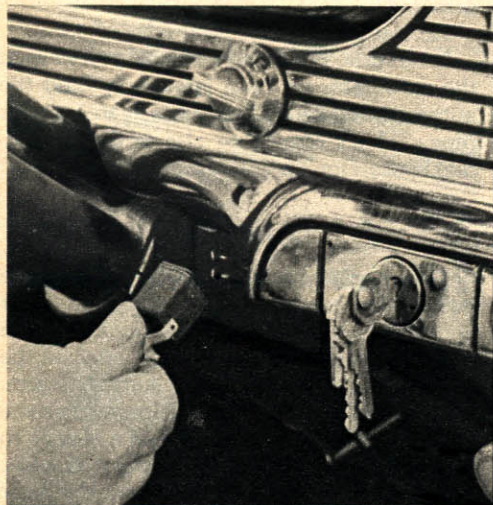
"They searched him and found nothing on him, so they took the car apart. The dough was stashed back of the lining in the trunk compartment. After that he confessed. How come you saw it, Gus?"

Gus pulled something from his pocket and held it up.

"Study does it," he said.

In his hand the others could see a book—a paperback whodunit. END

Remote Switch Starts and Warms Up Car Engine



UNLESS you warm up your car engine to operating temperature before pulling out of the garage, water and gasoline will condense in the oil system. Sludge will form and lubrication will be impaired. Warm-up is especially important in winter.

A remote-control device developed by J. W. Schaeffer, Youngstown, O., enables you to start the engine without leaving the house. The unit is installed under the dash or in

some other convenient place and connected to the starter and ignition. On leaving the car at night, you plug in a 115-volt line that runs to the house. In the morning, you throw a switch and the car starts.

Called Re-Moto-Start®, the unit will sell for about \$15. It can be used only with cars having starter solenoids. The inventor recommends that you provide a means of ventilating the garage to remove exhaust gases.