

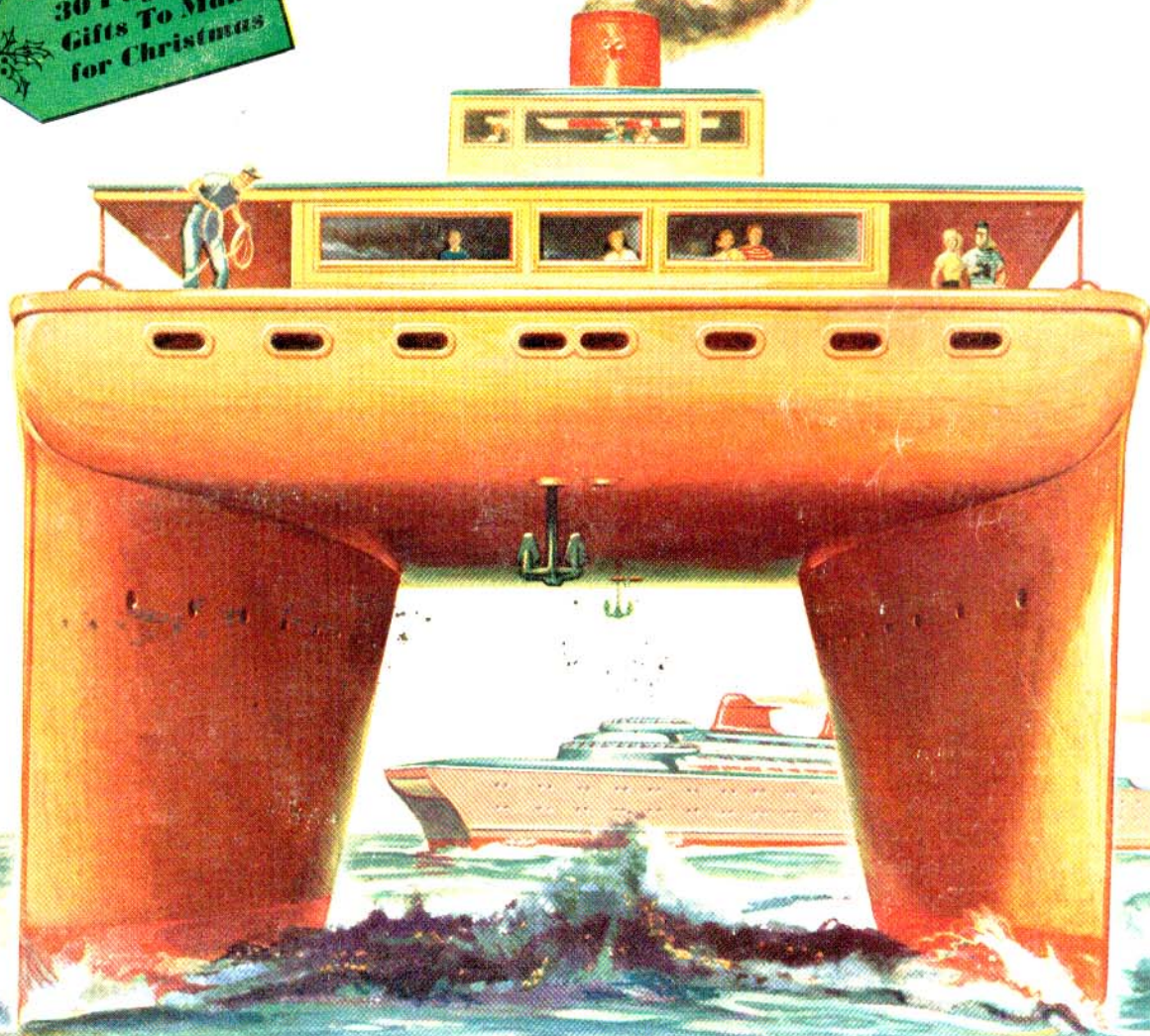
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*The Inside Story of
Gar Wood's Sea Speeder*

PAGE 106

Raymond Brown

Even a lawyer can be a wise guy when he wins too often. This case never went to trial, but Gus won a unanimous decision for Stan.



Gus Wins a Bet

By Martin Bunn

LEMUEL GASKINS, lawyer and solid citizen, stood in his garage and stared at the engine of his car.

"Hello," called a voice from the doorway. It was Bill Witte, Lem's neighbor.

"Come in," Lem answered.

"Just returning the soldering iron I borrowed," Bill said, stepping into the garage.

Gus led the way to the bench where he'd been working. One wire from a battery was bolted to the starter motor.



"Having a little trouble with the old bus?"

"Carburetor trouble. Engine coughs, spits, and misses when I accelerate."

"Could be the fuel pump," Bill suggested.

"No," Lem said with finality, "it's the carburetor."

"What makes you so sure it's the carburetor?"

"I know it is, that's all," Lem said flatly.

"Want to bet?"

There's one in every town—a know-it-all guy who's always right, or at least thinks he's always right. That's the big difference between most of them and Lem. He's got the right answer 99 percent of the time.

"No," Bill replied, "I don't want to bet."

Lem's a notorious sure-thing bettor. Bill, as well as a lot of other people, knows it from experience. Lem likes to think of himself as well-informed. He uses that legal-eagle brain of his to dig up all facts on a particular subject and then he goes looking for a victim to bet with. The average guy, who picks up his misinformation from something he thinks he read or heard, doesn't stand a chance with Lem.

"I'm willing to bet anybody that it's the carburetor," Lem went on.

"Maybe so," Bill said. "As a matter of fact, I don't much care but I still think it could be the fuel pump."

"You want to bet on that?"

"No, no bets."

"I've already checked the pump. It works perfectly," Lem admitted. He picked up a screwdriver and began removing the plate over the float.

"Carburetors are pretty tricky things to take apart," Bill said. "I tried it once and wound up lugging the whole thing to the Model Garage."

"I know what I'm doing," Lem said.

"Well, good luck," Bill grinned. "I think you're going to need it. I got to go."

Lem was glad Bill left. It took him only a few minutes to discover that he didn't know what he was doing, and he didn't want anyone to find that out. He pictured himself walking over to Bill's house with a pan full

of carburetor parts and asking Bill to drive him to the Model Garage. He shuddered and put the thought out of his mind.

After he had replaced the cover plate, he tried the engine. It caught and idled smoothly but still spluttered and missed when he raced the engine. Probably something wrong with the high-speed jet, he thought. He decided he'd have to go to a repair shop after all.

By handling the accelerator very gently, he managed to make it to the Model Garage. On the way, though, he tried speeding up in hopes that the trouble would have cleared up. But each time he stepped on the gas the engine coughed and bucked.

It's the Carburetor, He Says

When he drove into the shop, Stan Hicks looked up and scowled.

"Clip anybody lately?" Stan asked. A couple of weeks before, Lem had stopped for gas and managed to maneuver Stan into a half-dollar bet that Stan lost.

"Never mind that," Lem grinned. "Something's wrong with my car. It runs all right at low speeds but when I speed up it splutters and misses. Some minor carburetor trouble. Dirt, probably. Check it but don't go trying to blow it up into a big job."

"Here's the boss," Stan said. "Tell him your troubles."

Lem repeated his story to Gus.

"Why do you think it's the carburetor?" Gus asked. "A fuel pump that wasn't working right could make an engine act like that."

Funny, Lem thought, how everyone wanted to blame the fuel pump. He was dead certain there was nothing wrong with the pump. He couldn't resist the opportunity to work up a small, sure-thing bet.

"Well," he told Gus hesitantly, "I guess you're right. It *could* be the fuel pump. But I still think it's the carburetor. What say we have a little fun out of this? I'll bet you two bucks it isn't the pump."

"Nothing doing," Gus grinned. "Knowing you, I'd say you just had the pump checked or else had a new one installed."

"No, I didn't," Lem protested. "That's the same old pump and I didn't have it checked." He realized he was skating pretty close to the line between a lie and the truth. But after all, he told himself, it wasn't a new pump and he hadn't had anyone check it. He'd just checked it himself.

"Take a seat in the office," Gus said. "Stan and I'll take the car out for a little run."

On the highway, the car ran smoothly

enough at low speeds, just as Lem had said. But when Gus accelerated, the engine began to miss. He pulled off on the shoulder and stopped. Gus raised the hood and took a screwdriver from his pocket. He held the screwdriver with the blade near one of the plug terminals. When he pulled the throttle linkage, the engine started to pick up, and then spluttered. Gus got back in the car.

"Find out what's wrong?" Stan asked.

"Not definitely," Gus admitted, "but I found out what isn't wrong. It's not the fuel pump and it's not the carburetor. The trouble is somewhere in the ignition. If you want to get your half dollar back from Lem..."

"I sure do," Stan said quickly, "and with something added, too."

Lem popped out of the office as soon as Gus drove the sedan into the shop.

"What's the matter with it?" the lawyer asked.

"I haven't checked thoroughly yet," Gus answered, "so I can't say exactly."

"It's the carburetor," Lem snapped. "I'll bet it is."

"Okay," Stan cut in, "I'll take that bet. I say it's not the carburetor. Five bucks."

Lem shot Stan a sharp glance, hesitated, and then agreed to the bet.

"It's a bet you're going to pay—for a change," Gus laughed.

"We'll see about that," Lem told him.

"There's nothing the matter with the carburetor," Gus said. "The trouble is somewhere in the ignition system."

"Says you," Lem scoffed. "Prove it."

What the Meter Shows

"That's just what I'm going to do right now. Get the low-reading voltmeter, Stan."

After switching on the ignition, Gus raised the hood and made sure the distributor points were closed. When Stan brought the voltmeter, Gus held one prod on the battery-cable terminal of the starter and the other one on the battery connection of the coil. The instrument registered a drop of only a tenth of a volt. A check of the distributor-ground connection showed the same slight drop.

"Primary circuit seems okay," Gus said.

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"Why the heck don't you check the carburetor?" Lem yelped. "That's where the trouble is. You're just running up a big bill. Even when I win the bet, I'll still lose when I've paid you. I won't stand for it."

Gus grinned at Lem and went right on checking. He examined the terminals of the high-tension cable from the coil to the distributor, and then the spark-plug cables.

"Hey, boss," Stan whispered nervously, "don't forget I've got a bet on you."

"The money's as good as in your pocket," Gus answered in a low voice. "On the highway, I checked the spark with a screwdriver. When the engine is speeded up, the spark cuts out. That's what causes the missing."

"What are you two whispering about?" Lem demanded. He came around the car to where Gus and Stan stood. "Trying to cook up a deal so I'll lose that bet?"

Gus didn't answer. He just grinned and started going over the wiring again. After another minute or so, he laughed.

A Little Bare Spot

"Here it is. Take a look, Lem."

Gus bent up one of the primary wires running to the ignition coil and pointed to a tiny bare spot where the insulation had worn off. Lem looked.

"Sure," he conceded, "there's a little bare spot. But what of it? It's a quarter inch away from the engine block, so how could it cause a ground? Besides, the car runs fine at slow speeds. It's just when I accelerate that it acts up. If that bare spot caused a short, why wouldn't it do it at low speeds as well as at high speeds?"

Gus wrapped a few turns of tape around the worn spot.

"Satisfy yourself," he told Lem. "Drive up the highway. Then come back and I'll install a new wire."

The lawyer was gone almost 15 minutes.

"Well?" Gus asked him when he returned.

"No trouble," Lem admitted grumpily, "but you haven't proved anything yet and until you do, I'm not paying off."

"Leave the engine running," Gus said, "and take a look."

Lem hopped out of the car as Gus raised the hood and peeled the tape from the wire. He pushed the wire back to its original position. Then he took hold of the throttle linkage and abruptly opened her up. As the engine picked up speed, it shifted slightly on its rubber mounts and the engine block swung into contact with the wire. The engine instantly spluttered and coughed.

Payoff

"So what?" Lem demanded.

"The answer," Gus said, "is torque. That bare spot does no harm as long as the engine runs slowly. When the torque is increased by acceleration, it moves the engine on its mounts. The move is only a slight one, but it's enough to bring the block into contact with the bare spot. That causes a short. The short ends the torque. The engine shifts back. That ends the short and the engine picks up again. Watch this."

Gus led the way to the bench where he'd been working on a starter. One wire from a battery was hooked to the starter.

"Now," Gus said, "you'll see torque in action when I touch this other wire to the starter case. The force of the motor turning will roll the case in the opposite direction."

He touched the wire to the case. The motor whirred and the case twisted as it tried to roll across the bench top.

"Catch on?" Gus grinned.

"Oh, all right," Lem agreed. "You win." He was counting out five one-dollar bills into Stan's palm when a car drove into the shop. It was Bill Witte. "That makes five," Lem whispered, "and here's an extra one. In case he asks, I'd just as soon Bill thought I had carburetor trouble."

END