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Patching With a Brush - p.218



Making the Death Seat Safer

Reynold Brown



- RAY QUIGLEY -

Gus Earns a Holiday

After a day of fishing, a good meal under his belt, Gus the Good Samaritan hears trouble knock. Since it's engine trouble, he finds a quick solution.

By Martin Bunn

KEN Littlefield moved into our neighborhood about six years ago. He and his wife, Joan, had bought the old Marvin farm 18 miles south of town on the west branch of the river, and had converted it into a comfortable country inn for summer vacationers. Whenever Ken came to town for provisions and supplies he always stopped by the Model Garage to fill up with gas and have a chat with the proprietor, Gus Wilson. He and Gus had built up quite a friendship, and the river beside Ken's little rambling hotel had become one of Gus' favorite fishing spots.

Three weeks ago, on one of those hot days we had early in June, Gus glanced up from an ignition job to see Ken's old but shiny station wagon pull up beside the pumps.

"Hi, Ken," Gus greeted. "Got your place in shape for the summer folks?"

"Just about, Gus," Ken answered, as he

unlocked the cap to his tank so Stan Hicks, Gus's assistant, could fill it up. "And not too soon either. Our first guests arrive in two weeks. But there's my big problem," he added, pointing over his shoulder.

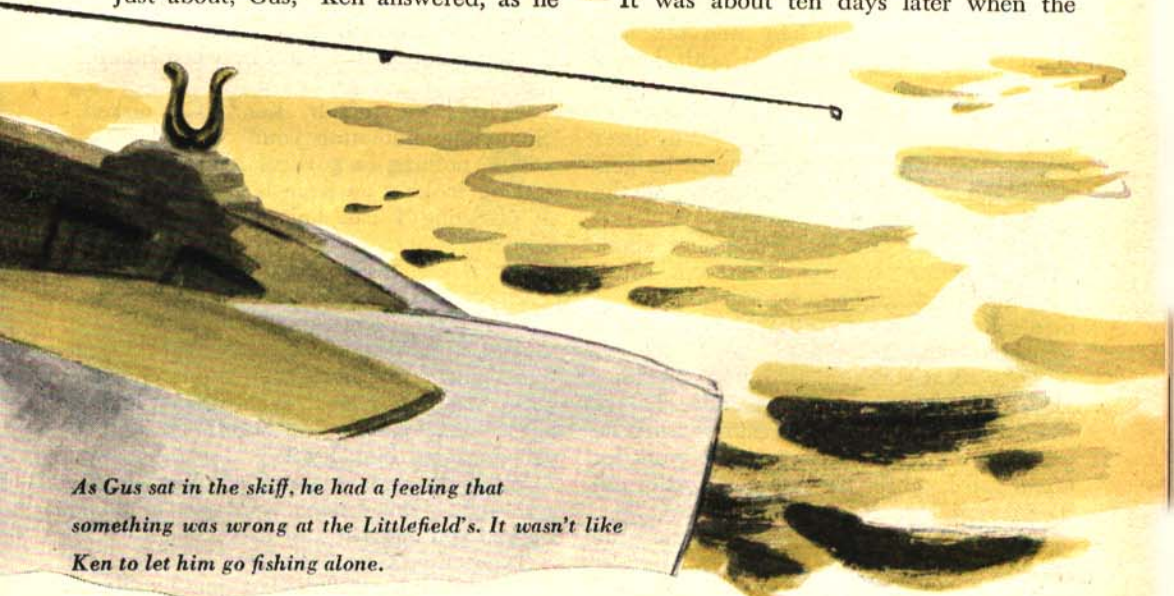
"I was wondering what you were doing with a spare motor in back," Gus said.

"It's a rebored and rebuilt engine for this old buggy. Only cost me \$142, plus shipping charges. Now all I've got to do is install it. I figure that with a block and tackle on the barn tie beam, I ought to be able to handle the job. Not that I'm trying to do you out of business, Gus, but this is a time of year when things are pretty tight with us." Gus's smile told him there was no need to worry on that score.

"By the way, Gus," Ken continued, as he paid Stan for the gas, "you haven't been out to the place since last Fall. How about coming out for some fishing one of these afternoons? Joan'll buy you dinner."

"I'll be out," Gus promised.

— It was about ten days later when the



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fishing urge and the promise of a home-cooked meal made Gus decide to take up Ken's invitation.

As he drove along the road toward Millstown—that's the little crossroad hamlet a few miles from Ken's inn—Gus got to thinking about the Littlefields, and what nice people they were. They'd bought the Marvin place on a shoestring, and had done most of the remodelling themselves. Ken was a handy man with tools, and Joan was no slouch with pots and pans or needle and thread. Their first two years had been rough, but the place had caught on. Last summer, their ten rooms had been filled all season.

At this point in his reminiscing, Gus spied Ken's freshly painted sign—Settler's Inn—and turned into the private lane that led to the main house.

"Well, if it isn't Mr. Wilson," Joan greeted him as he maneuvered his car into a parking spot. "I'd almost given up hope of seeing you before we opened."

Ken's Not at Home

Joan hadn't changed a bit in the eight or ten months since Gus had seen her last. Hard work seemed to agree with her.

"Ken isn't here right now," Joan apologized as they climbed the steps to the broad veranda that rimmed the house. "Why don't we just sit here on the porch until he gets back, and you can catch me up on all the gossip."

Gus had just finished telling her about old pinchpenny Barnstable's recent brush with the law when he recognized the Littlefield sedan turning into the lane. Ken had someone with him.

"Here's Ken—and that's his young brother Dave with him," Joan explained. "Dave wants to go into the hotel business when he gets out of college. He's going to work for board and keep for the summer—sort of on-the-job training. It's a break for us."

Ken waved a greeting as he opened the porch door and spied Gus.

"Gus, this is Dave—he's my kid brother."

"Glad to know you, Dave." Gus shook the young man's hand. "Well, Ken, I've taken up your invitation."

"Good," said Ken, "but I'm afraid you'll have to fish alone. Dave and I've a job to do. You know where the skiff's tied up, and the bass and pickerel are running strong."

What's Up at Settler's Inn?

As Gus sat in the skiff, rod in hand, he had a feeling that something was wrong at Settler's Inn. Ken had looked worried and tired, and it wasn't like him to let Gus go fishing alone.

Two hours and three small-mouth bass later, Gus decided he'd better head back to the **Littlefields**. He wanted to get back in time to clean his fish, wash up, and be ready for Joan's dinner.

The dinner was one of Joan's usual—chicken and dumplings with lots of thick, creamy gravy, hot homemade bread, strawberry shortcake made with biscuits, and the kind of strong coffee that Gus liked but seldom got in restaurants. Gus was enjoying every mouthful of it when he noticed that neither Ken nor his brother were eating much. He suddenly realized that most of the conversation had been between himself and Joan.

"What's the matter, Ken?" Gus asked. "Something bothering you?"

"Oh, nothing in particular," Ken replied without looking up from his plate.

"Anything I can help you with?" Gus offered.

"No, Gus. It's nothing. It'll work out."

"Now look here, Ken Littlefield," Joan admonished. "You know right well it's something Gus could help you with, and I think you're just being downright childish not to tell him about it. You've been acting like a bump on a log all afternoon, and if you don't tell him, I will."

"Well, there is something," Ken finally admitted. "But I don't want you to think I asked you out here just to—"

"Nonsense, Ken. Let's have it."

"It all goes back to the last time I stopped

by the Model Garage," Ken began. "Remember, that rebuilt engine I had in the back of the station wagon?"

Gus nodded.

"Well, after Dave got here last weekend we spent all our spare time taking out the old engine and getting the re-built job into place. Everything went fine until we stepped on the starter. She ticked right off. But when I idled her back there was a bad knock. After checking everything this afternoon we've decided they shipped us an engine with a bum main bearing. At least that's what it sounds like. About all we can do now is rip it out again, send it back, and wait for a replacement. That means we'll be hamstrung with nothing but the sedan and paying guests due any day."

"Whoa, Ken, maybe things aren't so black," put in Gus. "Mind if I try my ear on this knock of yours?"

Two minutes later, the three men were in the barn.

"There's my headache," Ken indicated, switching on the lights.

As Dave started the engine, Gus stood beside the open hood and listened. The knock was there all right. No doubt about it. Gus reached in and moved the throttle rod to the carburetor back and forth. The noise was just as noticeable at all speeds.

"Doesn't sound so good," Gus admitted. "Got a screwdriver handy?"

Ken handed him a long screwdriver from a nearby bench and Gus used the metal shank to short out one spark plug after another. It had little effect on the noise.

The rebuilt installation didn't include a new head or manifolds, but Gus had worked

Car Gets Station-Wagon Look



OLD cars get a new look with these wood body panels designed to give the appearance of one of those special body jobs. Easily attached by screws over the existing body, the panels are made of mahogany and hardwood veneers and come to fit all makes of cars since 1927. The Bellbod Co., of Brooklyn, N. Y., sells 2-door kits for \$175.

on Ken's station wagon before and didn't think anything was wrong there. Then he had an idea.

"Have you had that old head off since you first installed it?" Gus asked.

Ken shook his head.

"Let's take it off and have a look at the rebore job," Gus suggested. "You'll have to take it off anyway if you decide to send the motor back."

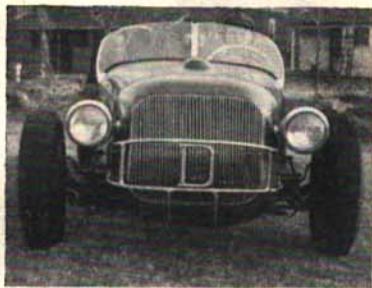
Ken agreed, and he and Gus set to work. When they had the head off, Gus ran a finger around the inner walls of a cylinder.

"A nice job," he said. "New valves as well as new pistons."

For a moment Gus studied the top of the

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Father-and-Son Team Builds Homemade Roadster



THIS snappy homemade roadster, built by R. E. Daniels and his father, of Wichita, Kans., boasts a distinctive body formed entirely of new sheet steel. Grille, windshield bracket, and front bumper were fabricated

in the father-and-son machine shop and then chrome-plated. Engine is a stock '48 Mercury, except for an Edelbrock Super manifold. Transmission is Ford with '48 Lincoln gears and a two-speed rear axle.

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Gus Earns a Holiday

[Continued from page 173]

motor. "That gasket come with the block?" he asked.

"No, we bought that. Dave got it down at the crossroad service station."

"Mr. Littlefield," said Gus, "I think we've stumbled on your bum main bearing." He grinned as he picked up the gasket. "Got a sharp knife and a file?"

Puzzled, Ken and Dave watched the old garageman go to work on the gasket, as he carefully enlarged each hole that fits over the cylinders about a quarter inch. Then, putting the gasket back into place on the motor block, he said, "Now let's get that head back on and see what happens."

Still puzzled, Dave and Ken did as directed.

"Now start her up," said Gus when they had pulled the last bolt up tight.

Ken stepped on the starter and all three cocked their ears toward the hood. There wasn't a sour note. The engine purred. Ken raced it, still no noise. He idled her down, not even a tiny knock.

"Well, I'll be darned," exclaimed Ken as he switched off the ignition and slid from under the wheel. "Purrs as purty as a kitten. But I still don't get it."

"Frankly, I didn't get it either," admitted Gus, "until I saw that gasket. Then I knew you'd made the understandable mistake of not realizing that a regular size gasket doesn't always go well with rebored cylinders and over-size pistons. That gasket had just enough of a lip extending over the rims of the rebored cylinders to be hit by the pistons everytime they came to the top of their stroke. The result—a noise that sounded like a knock."

As Gus drove back to town late that night, he was pleasantly happy and pleasantly tired. He'd had good fishing, he'd had an extra-special dinner, and he'd been able to help the Littlefields out of a spot. What more, thought Gus, could he want? **END**

Ever Count Your Car Springs?

SOME modern cars contain more than 400 wire springs. One maker lists 265 in the seats, 16 on the engine valves, 11 in the carburetor, 8 in the clutch, and others in the door locks and handles, master cylinder, horn button, and other parts. The tiniest is in the carburetor. It's so small it takes 125 of them to weigh an ounce.