

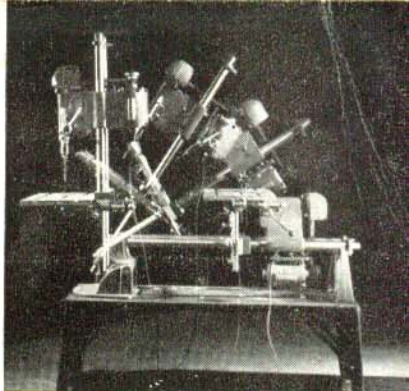
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Motorized Tool Kit—page 164



***How Good Is Our
Anti-Sub Defense?***

Gus and



the Popping Filler Cap

Police Sergeant Corcoran, hunting a thug whose dark sedan left a scarred track in the mud, gets an unexpected lift at the Model Garage. **By Martin Bunn**



"Look out—there's a man under there!" Gus shouted, as the customer started to back out.

GUS WILSON looked up from the dismantled fuel pump on his workbench as Jerry Corcoran strode briskly into the Model Garage, came to a heel-clicking stop, and saluted smartly. "Hello, Jerry," Gus greeted. "Practicing for a pee-rade?"

"Jerry be darned," the state policeman said. He cocked his head down toward the brand-new chevrons on his sleeve and grinned. "Sergeant Corcoran, to you!"

Gus stuck out a cordial hand. "They look swell!" he said. "You had them coming."

"Took me long enough to get 'em," Jerry said. "Now they're apt to have 'em off me before I have a chance to get used to 'em!"

Gus laughed. "What's biting you?"

Jerry pushed his broad-brimmed felt hat back on his head and pawed in the breast pocket of his tunic for cigarettes. There wasn't any smile on his brown face now, nor in his keen gray eyes. "Hear about Jim Zugsmith?" he demanded.

"Fellow who runs the gas station at Four Corners?" Gus asked. "What about him?"

"Fractured skull," Jerry stated. "The docs figure he has a fifty-fifty chance—no better. Stick-up job last night, around ten o'clock. The guy got away with about fifty bucks."

"Not much to risk the chair for," Gus said. "I'm sorry about Zugsmith. Got a line on who did it? Or shouldn't I ask, now you're up there with the big brass?"

Jerry didn't smile. "This is my first case as a sergeant," he said, "and I need to get results. You know how the newspapers will ride us. Probably call it a wave of rural crime . . . No, we haven't got much of a line. Jim was alone, and didn't see the guy who slugged him. He had dozed off in the office. Horn woke him up, and he saw a car standing at the pump—all he noticed was it was a dark sedan. Soon as he stepped out of the door someone conked him. When he came to half an hour later he managed to make it to the phone. Then we got on the job."

"But couldn't get anything?" Gus asked.

"Well," Jerry told him, "we did manage to turn up something—not that it's likely to help much. It rained about eight o'clock last night. Jim figured it would freeze, so he sprinkled sand on the concrete apron around his gas pumps. It didn't freeze, and we found some tire tracks in the wet sand." He extracted a photograph from an inside pocket. "Here's the only one that counts," he said.

"Tread isn't much worn," Gus commented after he had examined the photograph carefully, "but there's quite a cut across it."

Jerry nodded. "You and Stan keep your eyes open for a tire with a cut like that on its tread, will you?" he asked. "If you should spot one, get the license number and give us a quick call . . . Oh, there's one other thing. You know where Zugsmith's station is—where the dirt road to Springvale crosses the hard-surface road? Well, we picked up that tire track in the mud of the dirt road

and followed it. The guy drove about a mile toward Springvale, and then turned around—backed into the ditch doing it—and came back to the hard-top. I figure he lost his way—probably doesn't know much about this part of the world."

Gus handed the print back. "Okay, Jerry," he agreed. "We'll keep an eye out for a tire with a big cut across its tread, on a car driven by someone who is a stranger around here. But it doesn't look very hopeful."

"You're telling me!" Jerry growled.

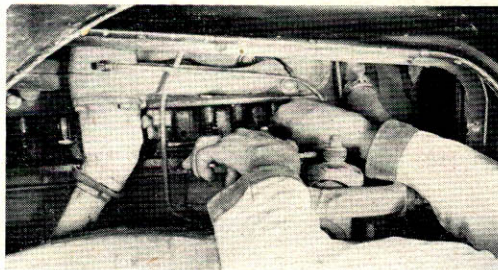
Most of a week went by without Jerry showing up again at the Model Garage. Gus could guess why—the new sergeant was too busy. Jim Zugsmith had turned a sharp corner, was on the road back, and had been pretty well forgotten by the newspapers, which were playing up later exploits of the same thug. Never seen by his victims, he'd already slugged and robbed the operators of three other isolated filling stations within a ten-mile radius of town.

Wilson & Hicks, Private Eyes

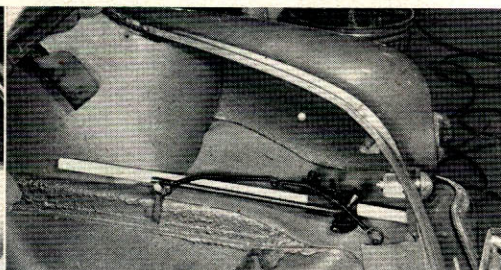
Gus and Stan Hicks between them managed to get a close look at the tires of every car driven by a stranger that had been brought into the shop or even had stopped at the pump for gas. But not one of the tires they'd seen had carried a scar anything like the one in the photograph.

Late one morning, while Gus was in the office talking to his partner, Joe, Stan rushed in. "This one's sort of funny, boss," Stan said, indicating a car that had just entered the shop. "The feller claims the cap on his

Pontiac Eases Tappet Repair, Stops Tool Rattle



MECHANICS who have had to feel blindly for the tappets of an L-head engine with their wrenches while adjusting for lash will welcome an innovation by Pontiac. Remove the right front wheel, open an access door on the inside of the fender, and tappets can be fixed in plain sight and more accurately.



Pontiac also has done something about that noise in the luggage compartment of the family car as the jack, lug wrench, and assorted other tools bounce around with each bump on the road. This year's models have coil-spring tool holders that help stop the clatter of all such accessories.



oil-filler tube keeps poppin' off. I never ran into that one before. You better take a look."

"Did you sleuth his tires?" Joe Clark demanded. He'd been kidding Stan and Gus about their futile detective work.

Stan grinned. "Yes—but this time I didn't need to," he said. "The feller's a minister."

In the shop Gus found a stubby man, wearing a dark-gray suit, a soft black hat, and a clerical collar, frowning at a middle-aged sedan.

"The reverend says—" Stan began.

He was stopped by the customer's upraised hand. "I'm not a clergyman," he said deprecatingly. "Just a humble worker in the vineyard. But my duties demand a considerable degree of mobility, so any trouble with my car is of serious moment to me." He looked at Gus with smouldering dark eyes. "I want it fixed—quick!"

"Oh?" Gus said. Then he smiled. "We'll have to find out what's causing the popping off, before we can stop it." He removed the filler cap and examined it carefully.

"Ever have this thing cleaned?" Gus asked. The customer shook his head. "I thought not," Gus continued. "The job should be done regularly—during a tune-up is a good time. It's pretty nearly as important as cleaning the carburetor air filter."

Gus pointed to the wire mesh visible through the side of the cap. "See, here's what I mean. This filter is so choked up with dust, dirt, and other gōok that I doubt if *any* air can get through. Let's see what happens." He replaced the cap, got into the car, and started up the engine. "Sing out if she pops off," he told Stan.

While Stan watched, Gus ran the engine at varying speeds for a few minutes. Then Stan suddenly raised his voice above the engine's noise. "Thar she blows!" he yelled.

Shutting off the engine, Gus got out and picked up the cap. "That's part of the trouble, anyway," he said, handing the cap to Stan. "Wash it out, will you?"

The sedan's owner had been growing increasingly fidgety. "I'm in a hurry!" he snapped. "If you can't find out what's the matter with my car I'll take it—"

Gus didn't hear him. He had slid under the sedan and was examining the back-pointing crankcase ventilator tube that extended down under the car. After a moment he fished a screwdriver out of his coverall pocket, dug something from the mouth of the tube, and rolled it between forefinger and thumb. He whistled softly as he lay on his back for a moment, doing some fast thinking. Then he wriggled out and straightened up.

"I think I've found the cause of your trouble," he told the owner. He stooped down again. "Look here, Stan, will you?" Stan got down beside him. "Get under the car and make a noise as if you were working on the crankcase," Gus whispered. "Don't ask questions—do as I say! Stall until I come back!" He got up again. "It's the crankcase," he told the car's fidgety owner. "I'll have to get a couple of odd-size machine screws out of the stockroom."

Red Clay Gives Clue

He hurried into the office, closed the door behind him, and dialed the State Police substation. "Sergeant Corcoran there?" he asked, his eyes on the office door. "Put him on quick, will you? . . . Hello, Jerry. What color is the mud on the Springvale dirt road—do you know? . . . No, I'm not kidding! . . . Red clay, hey! About the only red clay right around here, isn't it? . . . Thought so! Come over here—fast! I think the guy who slugged Jim is in the shop—he's dressed up like a minister. I'm faking a repair job, but he's getting impatient. Step on it!"

He went back into the shop. The clerically dressed customer scowled at him. "Get a move on!" he rasped.

"Okay," Gus said meekly. "I'll have you fixed up in a few minutes." He

reached a hand under the car. "Here are those screws, Stan. Hurry it up, will you?"

Gus started to tell the impatient customer a trumped-up story about what was the matter with his car. He hadn't got far when a siren wailed briefly down the highway. The stubby man started, then jumped into the sedan and stepped on the starter. "Look out—there's a man under there!" Gus shouted.

The driver paid no attention. As Stan scuttled crablike to safety, the customer started to back the car out of the shop.

But he was too late. The door opened and Jerry Corcoran and another state trooper hurried in. The instant Jerry saw the cleric-

ally dressed driver he went for his gun. "Reach 'em up, Parson!" he said. "Quick!"

The sedan's owner hesitated for a split second; then he got out with his hands held shoulder high. "Look him over, Frank," Jerry said, not lowering his gun. "It's Parson Strauss—he's a bad one. No more a parson than I am."

The trooper's practiced hands ran over the man's coat. Then he held up an automatic and a lead-loaded blackjack. "Put the bracelets on him," Jerry ordered. He turned to Gus. "What goes on?"

Gus told him about the popping filler cap. "When I found the screen stopped up, it was plain what was wrong. Normally, air enters through the cap screen, picks up the vapor in the crankcase, and is sucked out through the ventilator tube underneath the car. Since the cap was being kicked off, I figured a lot of back pressure must be building up, probably from blow-by because of bad rings. But back pressure that strong could only build up if the ventilator tube was stopped up, too. So I looked."

Mud Plug Traps Mug

Gus held out a chunk of red clay. "Here's what I found. Still plenty in there. The mouth of the tube slants to the rear of the car, so the only way I could figure it could have got plugged that way was by the car being backed into a bank of clay, or along a dirt road that had deep ruts in it. Then I remembered what you had said about the guy who had slugged Jim driving toward Springvale and then backing into a ditch. That would account for the clay plug in the ventilator tube—and the Springvale road is the only red-clay one around here."

The prisoner laughed. "That hooley will get you a long way with a jury!"

"Take him out to the car, Frank," Jerry directed. Then he turned to Gus. "He's right," he conceded, "but with that scar on the tire tread to back it up—"

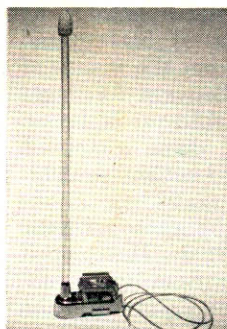
"There isn't any scar on any of his treads," Stan cut in.

Jerry looked blank for a second. "He got wise and changed tires," he guessed. "Hope he didn't get rid of the old one. Let's have his keys." He opened the luggage compartment, and they got out the spare tire. Its tread had a wide cut on the tread.

"That'll do it," he said. He looked down contentedly at his new sergeant's stripes. "Guess they'll leave 'em on me, after all—thanks to you, Gus!"

END

Fender Guide Lights Up



A NEW type of marker, which glows at night, for that invisible right fender is announced by the Santay Corp., Chicago. Called the Flame Tip Fender Guide®, it uses a light-piping Lucite® shaft. A bulb in the base lights up a flamelike upper end.

Auto Oven Cooks Hot Dogs



WANT a hot dog on the road? Just plug this heater into your car's electrical system. It cooks two wieners in three to five minutes. Priced at \$3.95, it also comes in a 115-volt version for the home. It is called the Hot Dog Sizzler® and is made by the Thomas Manufacturing Co., of Chicago.