

POPULAR SCIENCE

MONTHLY

MECHANICS - AUTOS - HOMEBUILDING



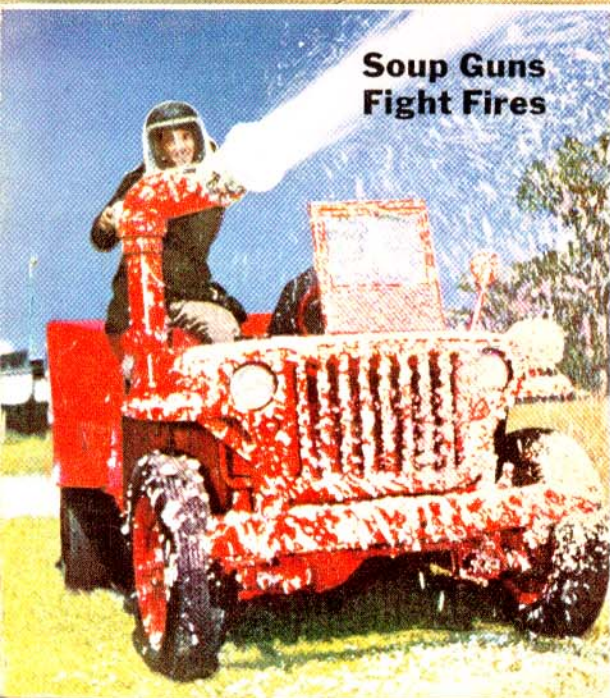
Why Not Put
Engines in Back?
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March

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for Spring PAGE 179



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Gus Answers an Ambulance Call

After one little session as Doc Tandy's helper, Gus was very glad indeed that automobiles never suffer from acute appendicitis.

By Martin Bunn

GUS WILSON watched the smoke from his pipe drift indolently toward the ceiling while Doc Tandy poured another round of coffee.

"You know, Gus," the Doc was saying, "I'm glad you came over. I haven't sat down for a good bull session like this for a long time. A man gets tired of talking and thinking with 60-buck words and medical terms. I couldn't have prescribed a better medicine for this old carcass of mine."

"Well heck, Doc, I'm tickled pink to see you standing still for a change." Gus savored the hot coffee. "When was your last vacation?"

"Long ago." Doc shrugged. "There aren't enough doctors in town as it is. But I'm used to it. I should think you have pretty much the same problem, Gus."

"At least I usually get away for a week or two each year."

No Rest for the Weary

The phone rang softly on Doc Tandy's desk.

"See what I mean? Even on Sunday." The snow-haired man smiled and went to answer it.

Gus stirred his coffee slowly and stared through the window at the budding leaves on the trees outside.

"Looks like I'll have to interrupt this enjoyable session to soothe a pet hypochondriac of mine. Bill Williams, up on Waltham Road. Claims he's dying of appendicitis, and between you and me, he's been dying of it



off and on for several years. Bill's a bachelor, and I'll lay odds he's just got a dose of his own cooking again! Want to go along? It'll be a pleasant drive if nothing else."

"Sure, Doc. Why not?"

"Let me get my bag. I've got some belly-ache medicine in it that makes castor oil taste like maple syrup in comparison! Bill is one of those people who thinks medicine has to taste horrible to be any good."

They went out to the driveway and

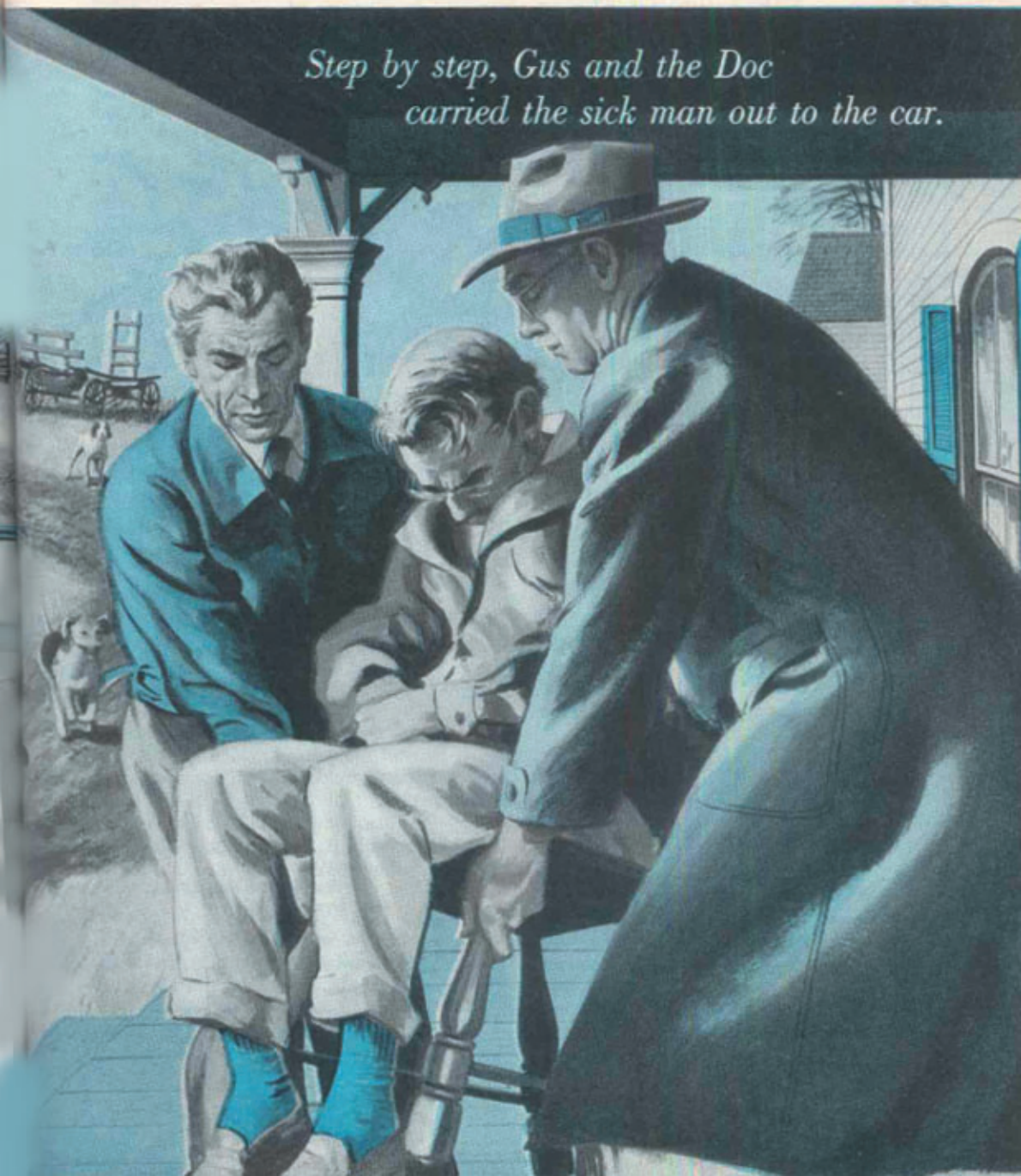
climbed into a battered 1940 sedan. As Doc backed her out, he said, "Glad to have you along, Gus. I don't trust this old heap, but my wife's gone visiting in the new car, the one I usually drive on calls."

After three-quarters of an hour of peaceful driving, Doc eased on the brakes and turned off onto Williams' road. He stopped in front of a porch cluttered with hounds.

"This is it. I'll be out in a minute, Gus."

Doc Tandy fixed a serious expression on

*Step by step, Gus and the Doc
carried the sick man out to the car.*



his face, straightened his coat, picked up his bag, and winked at Gus before walking up the front steps.

Five minutes passed, and then 10 before Doc came out again. When he did, his stern expression wasn't for the benefit of his patient. It was white and real in his face.

Williams Wasn't Fooling This Time

"Gus, can you help me move him to the car? It's not his imagination this time—it's acute appendicitis. Another hour and it'll burst."

Gus scrambled out of the car and followed Doc Tandy inside to a dimly lit bedroom. Bill Williams lay doubled up on an old brass-headed bed.

"Ease him into this chair, Gus. It'll be less rough on him than for us to try to carry him stretched out. Move slowly and gently. Okay, easy now...easy...don't try to straighten him out."

Step by step, they carried the sick man to the car, and Doc made him as comfortable as possible in the back seat.

"You drive, Gus. I'll stay back here and keep an eye on him."

Gus turned the car around, and began the nerve-racking business of avoiding every bump in the road without losing time.

"You say we've got only an hour, Doc?"

"That's just a guess. It could last another day without breaking. But I have a feeling it won't take that long. Hope I'm wrong."

"What happens if it does break?"

"Peritonitis, Gus." Doc leaned close from the back seat. "Poison spreads through his whole system. Have to act fast or...well, it can be fatal."

Gus concentrated on his driving and tried not to think about it.

They came to a steep hill a short time later, and halfway up, a cow began crossing the road.

"Probably been standing there all day, waiting for a car to come along," Gus said

wryly, and slowed down. "Never have seen it to fail."

When the ambling animal reached the other side, Gus stepped on the gas, but the surge of power wasn't there. The car faltered and stalled. Gus pulled on the brake, and hit the starter button. The starter failed to work.

"Oh no!" Doc groaned. "Not again! Not at a time like this."

"Had starter trouble before?"

"Yes, once, a couple of weeks ago. Then it went away. I should have known better than to trust it! What are we going to do?"

Gus climbed out and lifted the hood with nervous fingers. It was a bad time for this to happen, with a sick man in the car.

Gus knew why the car had stalled. He had felt flat spots even in slow acceleration since they left the farm. The carburetor was set far too lean. But that had nothing to do with the starter. The battery was good and strong, and yet, when the starter button was pressed, nothing happened.

"Doc, your carburetor was set too lean. But I can't adjust it until I find out what's wrong with the starter and get the engine going."

Doc shook his head helplessly. He was busy keeping Williams calmed down. Gus

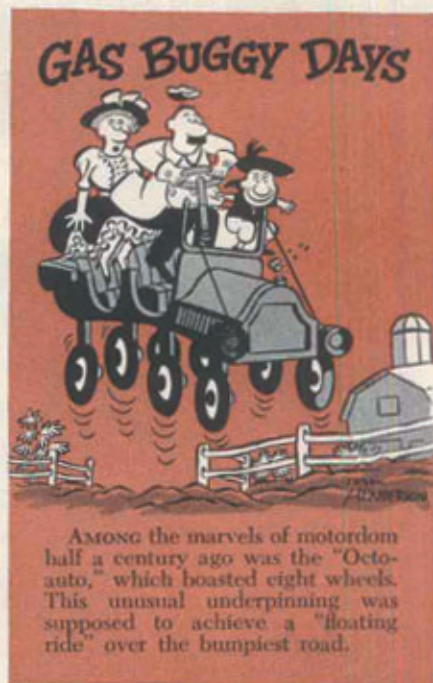
started looking for the trouble.

He examined the starter motor first. No loose connections; no bare wires. Without tools, he couldn't take the motor apart, but from what he could see, and from what he remembered of its sound back in Doc's garage and in the farmyard, there was nothing wrong with it. Starter motors were a pretty durable commodity.

Gus Draws a Blank

He traced the wires to the battery, and still found nothing. From there he went along the maze of wires to the starter button on the dash.

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AMONG the marvels of motordom half a century ago was the "Octo-auto," which boasted eight wheels. This unusual underpinning was supposed to achieve a "floating ride" over the bumpiest road.

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Gus Answers an Ambulance Call

(Continued from page 198)

"Gus, we can't wait much longer. I was too optimistic. This man's condition is getting worse."

"One second more, Doc." He leaned under the dash and looked at the switch. Nothing.

His mind flashed rapidly back over the situation. Press the starter button and nothing happened except the clicking of the solenoid. The starter motor itself had seemed all right before. A bad one always seemed all right before—a looseness, a hesitation, a certain sloppy, grinding edge in the way it turns the engine over. The wiring was in good condition. He had spent possibly five minutes checking it over and there was nothing to be found.

Doc Decides to Go Back

"I'm stumped, Doc. Maybe another car will come along soon."

"Forget about getting to the hospital. We'll have to take him back to the farm. No phone within walking distance, and no time to wait for an ambulance anyway. We've got to get back some way."

"The farm . . . ?"

"I'll have to operate there. There's no other choice."

"Okay. I'll see if I can't push us around and start down the hill. Maybe we can get her going that way."

Gus put a shoulder to the car, turned the wheel and began pushing. It was hard, working against the pull of the hill, but the car began to move slowly, to turn, and then to roll.

Gus hopped in and pointed her down the road. He put the car in gear, heard a loud click and then the beautiful sound of the engine catching hold.

Gus Makes Haste Slowly

"Okay, Doc. I think we're all right now!"

"Thank heaven! Now get us to that farm as quickly as you can. We've got only a few minutes at most."

If Gus had ever experienced a nightmare in broad daylight, this was it. He gripped the wheel hard, trying to make time and yet avoid every bump in the road—and prayed that they would make it.

When they came at last to Williams' place, Gus swung the car gently off the road into the farmyard full of barking hounds. This

[Continued on page 254]

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Gus Answers an Ambulance Call

[Continued from page 252]

time they carried Bill Williams into the kitchen, to the broad, enameled table.

"Now, put some water on to boil, while I get things ready. Then I'm going to ask you to administer the anesthetic."

"Golly, I don't know, Doc . . ."

"You can do it. Hurry now."

After the water was on, Gus found himself, at Doc's directions, slowly dripping ether into a wad of cotton around Bill's nose. The fumes rose heavily, sickeningly sweet. Gus felt the room begin to spin when he saw the first quick incision, but he closed his eyes and stuck it out.

Gus Nearly Passes Out

"Gus, more ether. You okay?"

"Sure . . . I'll make it." He avoided looking toward Doc. His knees were shaking.

Gus didn't know how long he had been standing there, fighting off the ether, with his eyes closed or turned to the blank wall. Then he heard Doc talking to someone far away, and felt a firm hand under his arm as he was led stumbling to the wonderful fresh air of the front porch.

"Thanks, Doc. Thought I was going to pass out."

"You'll be okay. Tough business for someone who isn't used to it. You should have seen me in medical school when I watched my first major operation. Carried me out like a pile of faded laundry! You did fine, Gus."

"How's Williams?"

"He'll be okay. Up and around in a few days. We made it just in time. I called an ambulance. They'll be here soon to take him to the hospital."

Fresh Air Does the Trick

"Well, I sure had a fright when that car stalled. Maybe I'd better set that carburetor before we try to leave here."

"You up to it?"

"I think so. This air is all I needed."

"Fixing the carburetor won't help with that other business, will it?"

"No. But tell me, how did you get the car started last time the starter wouldn't work?"

"Somebody was kind enough to give me a push. Why?"

"You remember hearing a loud click?"

"Not offhand."

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Gus Answers an Ambulance Call

[Continued from page 254]

"Well, I heard one when we started rolling down that hill. I didn't have much time to think about it until now. Know what it means?"

Doc grinned. "I know nothing about a car's anatomy, Gus."

Russian Roulette with a Flywheel

"It means your car is playing Russian roulette! You need some work done on your flywheel. It has a worn tooth, and if that tooth comes in contact with the starter gear when you turn the motor off, it jams it up. All you get is the solenoid clicking when you push the button. Usually a little push or a bit of jouncing back and forth will free it."

"I'm confused, but I'll take your word for it."

"It might not give you any more trouble for a long time, but there's no point to risking it. I'll pick up a new flywheel for you first thing in the morning."

Gus started the engine, and richened the mixture until it was satisfactory. Then he sat down and stoked up his pipe.

Doc's Offer Is Turned Down Cold

"I'd better go look at my patient. He'll be coming out of dreamland pretty soon. While I do, why don't you think over my offer?"

"What offer, Doc?"

"Joining me in the medical profession. You wield a pretty mean ether bottle!"

Gus winced. "Next time you decide to pay one of your so-called hypochondriacs a visit, you do it by yourself. I've had enough. Give me a garage full of broken-down cars any day, and the good old smell of gasoline!"

Doc was laughing when he went inside, and Gus sat down and tried to remember how quiet the morning had been. **END**

Next month: Gus finds a golden thread.

Busman's Riddle

Let's say you are the driver going on a bus from New York to Pittsburgh. Twenty people get on at the New York terminal. In Newark, 14 more people are taken on. At the third stop, six passengers leave. No more passengers get on but several leave. The bus arrives at the Pittsburgh terminal with 19 passengers. Is the bus driver married or single?

ANSWER: You ought to know—you're the driver of the bus.—*The Franklin News*