

MECHANICS · AUTOS · HOMEBUILDING

# POPULAR SCIENCE

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*"At least," the Doc had said, "my horse*

## EL GARAGE



# Gus Rescues

**G**US WILSON was standing by the gas pumps before his Model Garage when the commotion began. Down the street at a dead gallop came a rickety, ancient buggy, drawn by an old pot-bellied gray mare. With every leap of the frantic horse the black, tasseled top of the rig threatened to collapse on the driver, who sat on the high seat, a tremendous meerschaum pipe clenched in his bewhiskered jaw, urging the horse to greater effort.

The clattering passage of this outfit effectively shattered the peace. Folks ran from stores and shops to look, and some even leaped into their cars and took up pursuit.

"Doc Stanbury!" Gus Wilson gasped. "Somebody must be sick."

Stan Hicks, Gus's helper, was staring, too. "But Doc hasn't practiced medicine in years," he protested. "And why the horse? Doc owns a car."

"Hanged if I know," Gus said, moving to his car, "but I intend to find out.

Take over for a little while, Stan."

Knowing Doc Stanbury as he did, Gus was inclined to believe that there was some sort of skulduggery involved in this horse-galloping business. Doc was quite a character about town. In the horse-and-buggy days Doc had been the town's only physician, a waspish, irascible man, smelling strongly of tobacco and disinfectant.

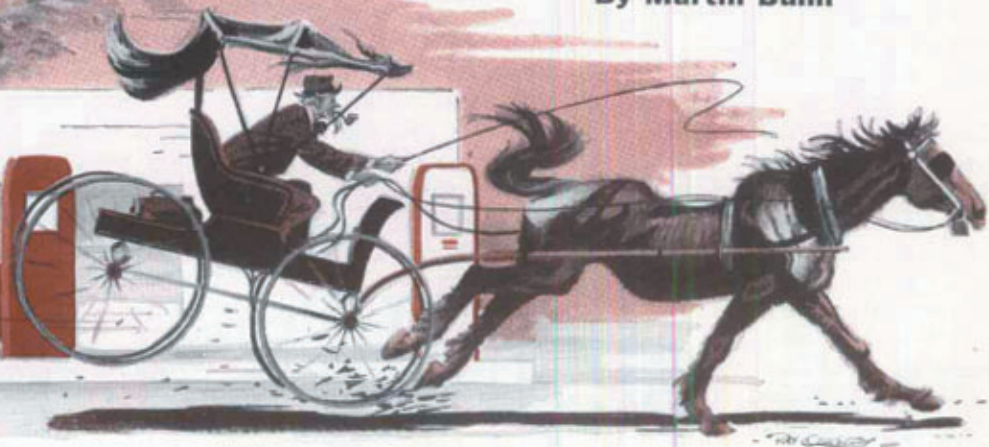
**Y**ET beneath Doc's rugged exterior lurked the warm, impish heart of a Huckleberry Finn. Doc was the person who had in exasperation squirted Mrs. Sam Hepworth in the face with a garden hose, to cure her of the fake heart attacks by which she held her meek husband under her thumb.

Doc had reluctantly pastured his beloved horse in favor of a car during his later years of practice. During the past three years his main activities had been built around hunting and fishing with his old friend, Todd Beacham, and playing



*and buggy don't drop dead every night like that car!"*

**By Martin Bunn**



## **a Competitor**

poker with some of the boys at the club.

Topping the first hill at the edge of town, Gus saw that the fleeing procession before him was streaming into Todd Beacham's farmyard. Perhaps he was wrong, Gus told himself, in thinking that Doc was up to some sort of trick. Maybe Todd Beacham was sick. Todd would surely call on Doc Stanbury rather than any of the younger doctors. But why would Stanbury travel there by horse? Why didn't he use his car?

Gus had a hunch that he knew the answer. For the past few weeks Doc had been complaining loudly about town about the constant failure of a new battery which he had purchased from Roy Williams, who ran a newly established auto-supply house in town. The battery, according to Doc, went stone dead every few days while the car was in the garage overnight. Gus speeded up and joined the group in Beacham's yard.

"Who's sick, Doc?" someone asked. "Is Beacham sick?"

"Of course I'm not sick," Beacham said from the front porch. "My cow's got the heaves."

The onlookers, who knew that Doc Stanbury would be insulted if called upon to treat a sick cow, stood in stunned silence. Then it began to dawn on them what this was all about, as it had long since dawned on Gus. A snicker arose here and there.

"Cow with the heaves!" one man laughed. "Wait till Williams hears this!"

Gus had heard enough. He turned away, his mind full of confused thoughts. Doc, as he had suspected, was up to something. Irritated by his constantly dead battery, he was taking revenge on the man who had sold it to him. With a flair for the spectacular, and with, perhaps, a subconscious yearning to gallop his horse through the streets once more as he had done as a young doctor, Doc had called his plight to the attention of the town and held Roy up to ridicule.

Without uttering one single word, and



with Todd Beacham's cooperation, of course, Doc had managed to intimate that he could get around town faster with his old horse and buggy than with a car equipped with one of Williams' batteries.

It was a brilliant stroke of publicity, and undoubtedly, to Doc, a good joke. But to Gus there was more to it than this. Roy Williams' auto-supply store was a small operation with low overhead. There were businessmen about town who resented Roy's new business, and resented having to compete with him. Gus felt that around the poker table at the club, some of these businessmen might have needled Doc into his horse-and-buggy parade.

But would other people see this as clearly as Gus did? He'd be hanged, Gus told himself, if he'd have any part of it. The thought sent the Model Garage owner to Roy Williams' shop, where he entered, looked Williams in the eye, and told him flatly that he had had no hand in the farce.

"I DIDN'T think you would, Gus," Williams said evenly. "My brands of merchandise are new to folks and they don't trust them until they prove themselves out. Doc Stanbury bought my first battery, and since he's been complaining about it, I can't get anyone else to try one out. The worst part of it is that the more I try to straighten things out with Doc, the worse they get. I've exchanged batteries with him three times, and they all went dead at one time or another, while the car was parked overnight in his garage. This gives him a chance to claim that all my merchandise is phony. I'm sure there's a short in his car. If there is, I can't find it, and there's the rub. What can I do, Gus?"

"There's only one thing to do," Gus

told him grimly. "Hire a competent mechanic to get the facts. Either your batteries are no good, as Doc claims, or his car has a short. It's as simple as that."

"You're right, Gus," Williams conceded. "I'll get Doc to bring the car in to your garage."

THE next day, Doc Stanbury drove his big sedan in. He waved aside Gus's offer to drive him home. "Don't bother," he told the Model Garageman. "I've got

my rig around the corner. It's slow, but at least the horse and buggy don't drop dead every night like that car of mine!"

Working on the car later, Gus scratched his head in bewilderment. He was stuck. He could find no short in the car, and there seemed to be nothing

wrong with the battery.

The battery took and held a charge. It stood up under 300-ampere breakdown tests. Snapping the battery ground wire against the frame yielded not even the sign of a spark to indicate a short. Nor would any instrument in Gus's possession show a short. Gus checked out every wire for breaks or bare spots. He tightened all wiring terminals. The fuse in the electric clock was the right size, so the clock could not be suspected. Nevertheless, to make sure, for here was the only known drain on the battery overnight, Gus disconnected the clock.

Hoping that he had in some way overcome the trouble, he turned the car over to Doc. Two nights later the battery went stone dead.

This brought a new suspicion to Gus's mind. Was Doc leaving a switch on at night, to keep the farce alive? Gus began to feel like a fool.

"This deal," he told Stan Hicks, "has about got me stumped. It would be use-



"I guess it's all right to get out... He seems friendly enough."

[Continued on page 252]



### Gus Rescues a Competitor

[Continued from page 170]

less for me to install one of my batteries in the car. Doc might just be cunning enough *not* to leave a switch on at night—it wouldn't prove a thing. I've been over this car with a fine-tooth comb. There just isn't a short in it."

"It's got to be the battery then," Stan declared.

"I just can't believe that," Gus said. "Nct when Williams has tried three different batteries."

**G**OING over the problem again, Gus could see no other alternatives: There was either a slow juice leak or Doc was deliberately killing the battery.

To get around this latter possibility, Gus arranged to have the car left at the Model Garage for several nights. Strangely enough, the battery held full charge now. This pointed a finger of suspicion squarely at Doc. Still, Gus couldn't believe it. Doc, he told himself, would be one to gallop a horse in the streets in protest, but he wouldn't stoop to take unfair advantage. With this thought firmly in mind, Gus went to work again on the big sedan.

He crawled under it like a badger, going over and checking everything he had done before. He polished and tightened terminal nuts, cleaned and tightened battery leads, spread and taped wires.

There seemed to be little to gain from road-testing the car, since it always went dead while parked at night. It had to be something, Gus thought, that Doc did to the car on one night, that he didn't do on another.

In desperation Gus disconnected the field lead wire from the voltage regulator and hooked an ammeter, which he knew he could trust for accuracy, between the hot terminal of the starter relay and the car's circuit. He'd drive the car now, Gus thought, and if the slightest short developed under road stress, he'd know it.

As Gus started out, the car interior was cold, so he snapped on the heater and defroster fans. Everything seemed

to be working right, the generator doing its job, ammeter reading steady.

It was morning, and the sun soon began to work on the car's windows. Shortly the interior became too warm for comfort. His mind occupied, Gus leaned over and opened the cowl ventilator. Immediately the ammeter showed an extra six-ampere draw. That was queer, Gus thought. He closed the ventilator and the six-ampere draw went away. A gleam of satisfaction came to Gus's eyes.

"Maybe," he said aloud, "I've located something."

**A**T FIRST glance there seemed to be no way that the opening of the ventilator could produce juice drag on the circuit. The opened cowl ventilator shoved the defroster air hose against a hot lead on the firewall. But, Gus reasoned, what of it? That hose was made of rubber. It couldn't cause a short.

But minute inspection showed that there were stiffening wire windings in the air hose. A tiny spot of wear exposed a mere pinpoint of wire. This, when against the hot terminal, carried juice in the manner of a resistor, while limiting it to six volts. It wasn't enough to get the wire hot, but it *was* enough to kill a battery overnight.

If Doc left the ventilator open at night he got a dead battery. Closed, the battery stayed up.

"Just goes to show you," Gus told Doc, "how tough things can get in this business. A man might have missed that fouled-up ventilator forever. And you, Doc, at your age, should be ashamed of yourself, galloping around town like a mad hatter."

Doc puffed reflectively on his pipe. "The old mare," he said, with a twinkle in his eye, "had more sense than this old fool. She didn't want to make that run. I'll go around and apologize to her—and to Roy Williams, too."

"That," Gus told him, smiling, "would be a darn good move, Doc." **END**

**NEXT MONTH: Gus and the balky jeep.**