

POPULAR SCIENCE

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Your first look at the

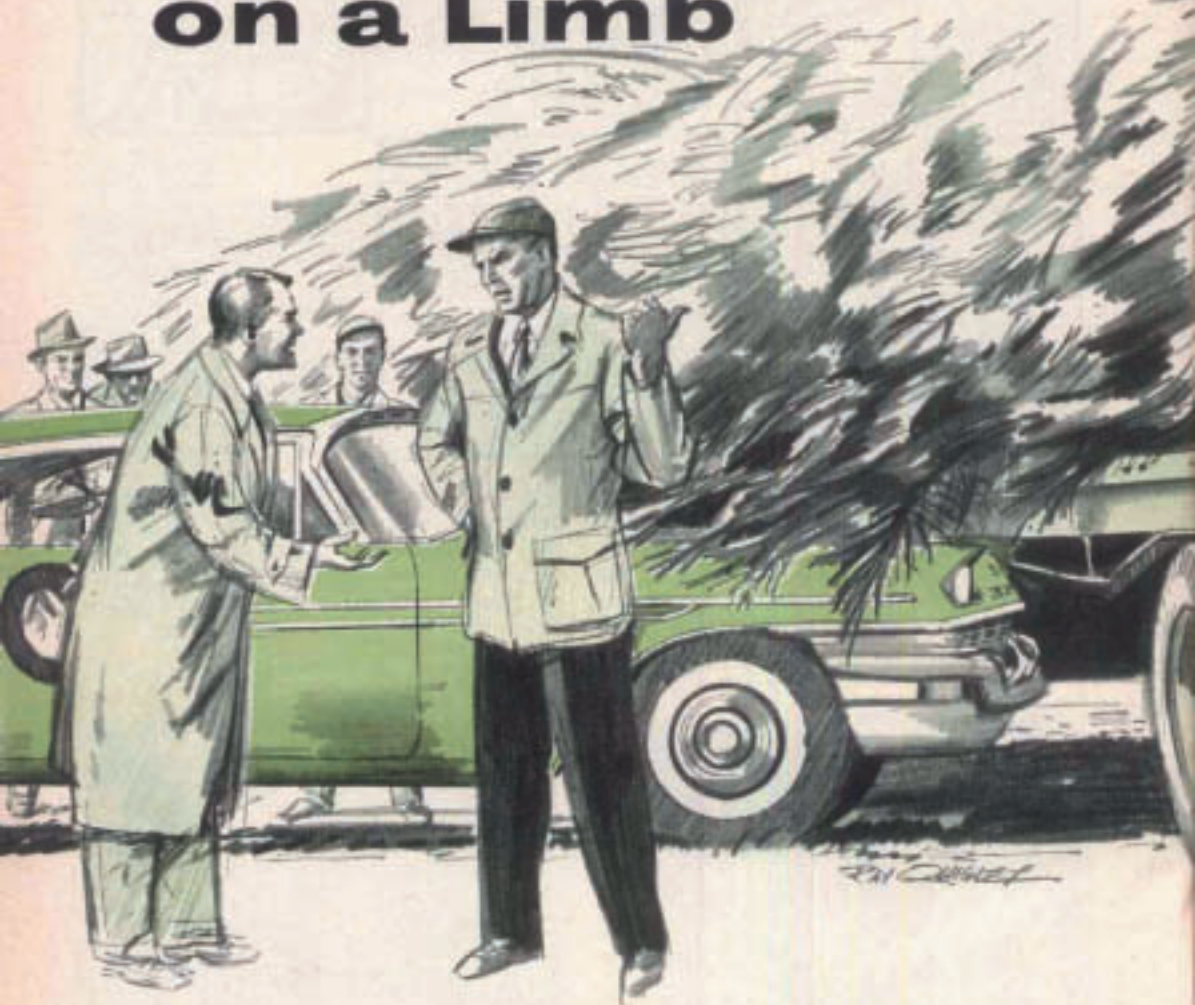
**1958
Chevrolet**



plus: Color Photos

of 14 New Cars

Gus Goes Out on a Limb



In suburban Meadowville any plant bigger than a rose bush was an oddity. How had Bert Hibbard managed to run into a tree?

By Martin Bunn

THE Model Garage had just opened its doors for business when Bert Hibbard telephoned excitedly from Meadowville.

"Get out here fast, Gus," he pleaded. "My car's stuck under a tree, in front of my garage. I'll be late to my office."

"Under a tree?" Gus asked, astonished.

Gus knew there wasn't a shrub in Meadowville bigger than a rose bush or lilac. In fact, every house in Meadowville had exactly three roses and two lilacs—what the contractors had supplied.

"A tree!" Gus repeated. "Are you feeling all right, Bert?"

"How could I feel all right?" Hibbard snapped. "I can't get to my office and neither can Orville Bullow. This tree



When Gus arrived in Meadowville, the place was jumping like a beehive in spring.

has us both cornered. If I'd known that Mike Regan was going to buy a house on the same street I'd never . . ."

Hibbard's voice ceased, to be replaced in the receiver by what seemed to Gus to be several voices raised in heated discussion. Gus hung up and jumped into his service truck. Stan Hicks, Gus's helper, came to the cab.

"What's up, Gus?" he asked.

"Maybe I'm crazy, Stan," Gus said, "but a tree seems to have cornered a couple of fellows in Meadowville."

"Tree!" Stan Hicks said hollowly, as Gus drove out. "In Meadowville?"

MEADOWVILLE, when Gus arrived, was jumping like a beehive in spring. The morning exodus of suburbanites was in progress. Up and down the

long, neat rows of houses, men were gulping morning coffee, rushing to cars to get to work. As Gus pulled up before Bert Hibbard's place an astonishing sight met his eyes. A truck with a long, flat-bed trailer behind it was stalled before the Hibbard home. On the truck and trailer rested an ornamental evergreen tree that appeared to be all of 30 feet in length.

It was about a foot thick at the butt, the roots encased in earth, which was retained about them by a wrapping of burlap sacking, creating a dirt ball that must have weighed easily two tons. Bert Hibbard's late-model sedan had its snout buried under the tree and the trailer bed, just ahead of the rear wheels.

GATHERED about the scene of the collision were Bert Hibbard; his next-door neighbor, Orville Bullow; Mike Regan; Al Roper, the truck driver; and his helper, Tom Clark. Gus pulled up against the opposite curb and walked over.

"Hibbard must have been stone blind, Gus," Al Roper announced. "He came shooting out of his driveway and banged right into my truck."

"Truck!" Hibbard retorted. "I saw the truck all right, when it came around the corner. I didn't expect you to have Sherwood Forest trailing along behind it. This is a residential street, Roper, not a logging camp."

Mike Regan's blue eyes glittered with fury. "Just because I happen to want a bush on my lawn, Hibbard, is no reason that you have to rush out and sabotage the operation."

"Bush?" Orville Bullow protested. "That thing is so long that it blocks my driveway and Hibbard's too. If it's a bush, I'm a beagle."

Mike Regan's eyes moved over Bullow's squat figure. "The resemblance," he remarked, "is quite obvious."

Hibbard said angrily, "How do you propose that Bullow and I get to work?"

"Don't ask me," Regan said, shrugging his shoulders. "After all, Hibbard, you ran into my tree."

"I was late," Hibbard said. "I came down my driveway like I always do. I saw the truck, and then before I knew it I was under this monstrosity you had hauled in here."

"This isn't getting you fellows off to

work," Gus cut in. "Now let's see how we're going to clear this tangle. Maybe you can back your car out, Hibbard, if we get our shoulders under the tree limbs and lift it off the hood."

"Not a chance," Hibbard said. "My motor won't start. That's why I called you."

Gus tried the motor, and got no response. With the hood of the car under the tree, he couldn't get at the motor, either, to discover what was wrong. And, since the car was still in Hibbard's driveway, Gus couldn't get behind it with his tow truck to tow it back. It was wedged too firmly under the trailer to be pushed back by manpower, and the truck could not be moved, either forward or back, without extending the damage to Hibbard's trapped car.

"All you have to do, Gus," Hibbard said, "is to hook on to the back end of the trailer and pull it sideways off my car."

"Not that easy," Gus said. "I haven't got enough traction or power to slide the four rear tires of that trailer around on this rough cement with my truck—not with the load they're carrying."

Bullow inquired gloomily, "Well, what are we going to do then—call in a couple of Army tanks?"

LIGHTING his pipe thoughtfully, Gus walked around the car and truck, studying the situation. Passing the open door of Hibbard's garage he noticed a piece of sheet-metal on the floor, placed there, no doubt, to keep grease drippings from the cement. The sheet was about four feet long by three wide.

"You wouldn't have another piece of this around, would you, Bert?" he inquired.

"Why ask foolish questions?" Mike Regan said disgustedly. "On this street what one man has, so has the other—three roses, two lilacs, one drip pan in his garage. You'll find one of those, Gus, in every garage down the street."

"Fine," Gus said. "In that case, Regan, how about borrowing yours?"

GUS got a can of heavy grease from his truck and smeared it over the two sheets of galvanized steel. Using heavy hydraulic jacks that he always carried in the service truck, he managed to get

the sheets under the rear tires of the trailer. He then hooked on to the rear of the trailer and maneuvered the service truck around so he could get a side pull by nosing up into the driveway of the house across the street. With the tow car in compound low the trailer end was skidded sideways quite easily, sliding on the greased steel. Hibbard's car was free. The truck, which was undamaged by the collision, pulled up the street and began backing into Regan's yard, where a huge

same street with that crazy Regan. Imagine a man having a tree of that size hauled into this community."

Gus moved his eyes over the long rows of almost identical houses, a contractor's delight. Here every man was master of the destiny of his home—perhaps for the first time. Most of these people had come here from rented apartments, with landlords to limit their freedom of expression. Each house here, then, was the beginning of the fulfillment of a dream,

but only the beginning. Gus wondered how long Mike Regan had been dreaming of his own lawn with a big shade tree to sit under.

"You know, Hibbard," Gus said reflectively, "with Mike it was a tree. With you and the others it might be a glass hothouse, flowers, a hurricane fence, maybe nothing more than a dog kennel. These homes only look the same now because each family hasn't had time yet to work out its own ideas. Regan, with his tree, just started

what you'll all be doing in time."

Hibbard paused. "I never looked at it that way, Gus," he said. "Maybe you're right. My wife and I have ordered bricks and stuff to build a barbecue pit . . . Well, I'd better get to the office. Sliding that trailer around on greased skids was a neat trick. Thanks."

Driving back, Gus pondered. His solution had worked fine. Still he had a nagging question—couldn't he have managed it some other, simpler way?

AT THE Model Garage, he told Stan how he'd untangled Hibbard's car.

"Gee, Gus," Stan said, "that was a neat trick."

Stan was silent a moment. Then he added innocently, "But Gus, why didn't you take some air out of Hibbard's front tires? Wouldn't that have lowered the car enough to push it back?"

Gus clapped his hand to his forehead and let out a low groan. END

Next Month: Gus bails out a teenager.



"Is this the one that's stuck, Helen?"

hole had been dug to receive the tree.

"Now we can get your hood up, Hibbard," Gus said, "and see why your engine won't start."

The low hood of the car had been punched down in the middle by the collision, but Gus was able to get it open. He found that the huge air cleaner on the carburetor, which barely cleared the hood when it was closed, had been jammed down on the carburetor air horn to such an extent that it had bent the throttle rod, locking it in such a tightly closed position that the motor could not get even idling gas.

Gus straightened the rod, set up the idling screw a bit. The motor started immediately now. Gus adjusted the idle and managed to push up the downward bend in the hood enough so that it would close properly.

"My insurance company will settle the bill, Gus," Hibbard said as he got into the car. "But probably they'll cancel my policy if they find out I'm living on the