

GUS BLOWS THE OTHER

By MARTIN BUNN

IT WAS two o'clock in the afternoon of the third and most torrid day of a hot spell. Sprawled comfortably in a chair just inside the shop doorway, where he was out of the sun but in the path of any stray breeze that might stir, Gus Wilson closed his eyes. For the first time in months he had no rush jobs.

The unaccustomed quietness in the Model Garage got the better of him. His chin slumped, and his pipe slipped gently out of his mouth. He was at his favorite lake casting for bass. A large-mouth grabbed his River Runt, he worked it to the boat, and fumbled for his landing net. It wasn't there. He reached for the prize with his left hand, and it closed around something cool and wet.

Gus woke with a start. A shaggy dog, its tail swishing, was pushing its cold nose into his hand.

"Why," Gus said, "it's Dodger! Hello, old boy! Where's your boss?"

"Right here, Gus," a voice from the door-

way said. A tall young man limped over, his hand extended. "Gee, it's good to see you and the old shop again!"

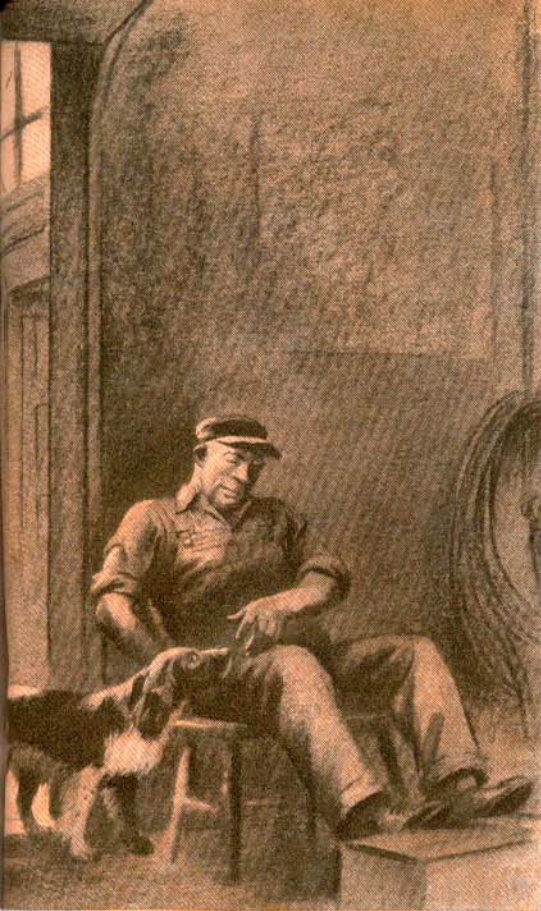
Gus shook hands. "I'm glad you're back, Tim," he said. "I'm sorry about your leg."

Tim Sheridan grinned. "Getting out of Italy with nothing worse than a bum knee was a break," he said, "although I'd rather have stayed for the finish. But I'm back, and you'll find me as big a nuisance as ever."

In spite of 25 years' difference in their ages, Gus and Tim are close friends. While still in knee pants, Tim spent much of his time in the Model Garage shop. Gus insists he has more than a touch of mechanical genius. Tim worships Gus as a master mechanic.

Gus assumed a wry expression. "That reminds me—someone down in the city phoned to know if I'd recommend you for maintenance super for a truck fleet. I told him I guessed you wouldn't do any more damage than anyone else."

Tim laughed. "Thanks for the unqualified endorsement. It got me the job. I'm on



FELLOW'S HORN

trial to see if I can do the work all right."

"Well," Gus said, "you can, can't you?"

Tim's face tightened. "I *thought* I could," he replied. "Now I'm not so sure—and neither is Swinton, the general manager. That's one reason I'm here."

Gus jerked a thumb at the chair he'd vacated, and pulled up a box for himself. "Take the weight off that knee," he suggested, "and tell me about it."

Tim sat down, produced tobacco and papers, and rolled a cigarette.

"This company is operating a fleet of 20 trucks," he explained. "The first week 19 were working, and I didn't have any trouble. Then No. 20 came back from the repair shop after a ring, bearing, and valve job. I road-tested it, and it ran swell. Then one night the driver reported trouble—on his way in, the engine skipped and then stopped. After a quarter of an hour, he stepped on the starter, and the engine took off and brought him in.

"I checked the gas line first. It was O.K.; so was the fuel pump. Next I went over the

ignition wiring and the connections. Then I took the carburetor off and disassembled it. I noticed the float had been rubbing the side of the bowl because the float pin was worn, and figured a sticking carburetor float would cause the trouble, so I put in a new float and float pin and took the truck out on a five-mile road test. She ran smooth as silk.

"Next morning—that was yesterday—Swinton phoned about a load that had to be delivered by 10 o'clock to a plant 30 miles away. I found it being put on '20.' I suppose I should have switched it, but '20' had run perfectly for me and was almost loaded.

"At half past 10 Swinton called again, and was he mad! The shipment hadn't arrived and was holding up the whole plant. Swinton called just after noon and was even madder. Our truck had showed up two hours late. The driver told him he'd been stopped five times by the same trouble he'd reported the night before. All I could say was that I'd get busy the minute the truck got in. Swinton snapped, 'You'd better get hot on it!' I knew that unless I did get hot, my job was gone."

"Well," Gus said comfortingl'y, "there are plenty of jobs."

"I don't want to lose this one—especially for incompetence," Tim protested. "But what Swinton said about getting 'hot' gave me an idea. We'd had our first trouble with '20' on the first day of this hot spell.

Yesterday was even hotter—and we were having worse trouble. Vapor lock, I figured, must be the cause.

"The truck got back late, and the driver said it had stalled every few miles but that, after waiting about half an hour each time, he'd been able to start it again. I spent all evening trying to find some place where heat could cause vapor lock. The fuel pump and gas lines were well shielded—no doubt about that. But there was a hot-spot manifold that might heat up the down-draft carburetor, so I made a shield and heat deflector and installed it on the manifold. Then I rechecked the ignition and everything else I could think of, but couldn't find anything wrong. Finally I road-tested her—and she ran fine. That heat deflector I had made, I figured, had done the trick.

"This morning I sent No. 20 out with a load, but I told the driver to phone me right away if he had any more trouble. He called me before he'd been gone half an hour. I hurried right down. When I stepped on the starter, the engine took off without any trouble. We delivered the load and got back with the engine stalling every few blocks. The fact that she runs swell at night, but stalls in the daytime when it is hotter, makes me surer than ever that vapor lock

is the trouble. But I've worked my head off trying to find *where*."

"Where's the truck?" Gus asked.

"Right outside," Tim told him. "Shall I drive her in?"

"Don't bother," Gus said. "It's too hot. We can take a look at her where she is."

They went out and Tim raised the hood. Gus didn't touch anything, but his experienced eyes didn't miss anything. The horn, mounted on a cylinder-head bolt, seemed to interest him. He opened his mouth to say something; then changed his mind. Instead he took an old-fashioned wooden match from his pocket, snapped its head off with his thumb, and began to chew the matchstick.

"Well," Tim asked, "how about it?"

Gus, the match still in his mouth, climbed into the driver's seat. "Let's take a ride."

"O.K.," Tim agreed. He whistled to Dodger, and boosted him into the truck. Gus stepped on the starter. The engine took off promptly, and they headed up the highway. Then after a mile, the engine missed a few times and stopped.

Tim cut loose with a few choice expressions he had learned in the motorized artillery. Gus listened patiently until he had run down, and then nodded approvingly.

"That's real good language," he said. "Now suppose you hop out and see if the fan belt is tight."

"I know it's all right," Tim said, "but I'll look." He got out, and just as he raised the hood a blast of the horn made him jump. The horn kept blowing.

"There must be a short or a ground!" Gus yelled above the noise. "Look at the horn!"

Tim's head disappeared under the hood. Gus grinned and removed the match from where he had jammed it against the horn

button. Tim's head reappeared. "I've got it!" he yelled. "Come down here!"

Gus climbed out. "The horn button jammed," he said.

"I don't mean that," Tim exclaimed. "I've found what's causing the vapor lock. See where that horn's mounted—practically in front of the carburetor! It shields the gas line from cool air coming through the radiator. When the motor gets hot, that heated line causes vapor lock. And look there!"

He pointed to a cylinder-head bolt two inches to the left of the one on which the horn was mounted. "See those marks? That's where the horn was before the truck went to the repair shop. The darn fools put it back in the wrong place."

Gus got back into the truck and was joined in a moment by Dodger. He scratched the dog's shaggy ears. "Your boss isn't going to lose his job," he said, "but he was losing confidence in himself, and that's worse. Finding that horn mounted in the wrong place will build Tim Sheridan up with Tim Sheridan—that's why I didn't tell him when I spotted it!"

Sometime later Joe Clark heard his partner talking to Swinton about young Sheridan. "Run into trouble, has he?" he heard Gus say. "We all do that in this business. Being able to get out of it is what counts . . . Vapor lock? That's often hard to locate, but I'll bet you a dinner Tim finds it before morning. . . . You've got a good man in him—one of the best I've known, and believe me I've known a lot of 'em in my time."

Joe grinned. "You're pretty good at blowing the other fellow's horn," he said when Gus hung up.

"I guess I am," Gus laughed. "That's twice I've done it today—and I got results both times!"

Tim's head reappeared from under the hood. "I've got it, Gus!" he yelled. "Come down here and see!"

