Car's Rattles
FOUND BY TOUCH SYSTEM

By MARTIN BUNN

CONFOUND that noise," exclaimed the elderly Dr. Pearson as he thumped the steering wheel with his fist. His wife, seated beside him, touched his arm soothingly. "Now don't get so excited, Frank," she said. "A few rattles aren't hurting anything. Most of it's your imagination anyway."

"Imagination be hanged," grumbled the doctor. "Sounds like the car is falling to pieces every time we hit a pebble, and that eternal popping noise in this door is driving me crazy." Just then Mrs. Pearson noticed a squat building further on down the street. Above it hung a large sign that read: "Model Garage—Auto Service and Repair."

"There's a nice-looking garage," she said. "Why don't you stop? Maybe they can locate the trouble. I'll do some shopping while you wait."

A few minutes later, Dr. Pearson was telling his tale of woe to a gray-haired mechanic who had introduced himself as Gus Wilson.

"Doesn't look like a rattle box," remarked Gus, eyeing the car. "But if it has 'em, we'll get rid of 'em. Start the motor for a minute."

"The motor's all right," protested Pearson, reaching for the ignition switch. "It's the body that's making the noise." When the motor settled to an even purr, Gus lifted the hood and moved his hand from one part to another. He seemed particularly interested in the cowl wall at the back of the engine block and ran the palm of his hand over the flat surface several times before he finally refastened the hood."

"O.K. Now if you've no objections, suppose we go for a little ride," he said, climbing into the seat beside the physician. "Let's go up the street for a few blocks and drive out the old station road. That'll be a good test."

As the car gained speed, a series of sharp raps or pops occurred each time the wheels hit any unevenness in the pavement. They were neither rattles nor squeaks, but more like cracks.

"There's that popping noise I told you about," the old man sputtered. "That racket keeps up indefinitely. Sounds as though it came from this side of the car, but I'll be hanged if I can find it."

Without answering, Gus moved his hand over the instrument panel, along the base of the driver's seat, and finally over the floor boards."

"It isn't the floor boards," said Dr. Pearson positively. "I've got them so tight now I'll need a crowbar to pry them loose."

By this time, the car was jouncing along the poorly paved road that led to the railroad station. Bouncing from bump to bump, it gave forth a new assortment of clattering noises that all but drowned out the doctor's booming voice.

Just three things are making an anvil chorus out of this car," explained Gus after a thorough inspection of the car back at the Model Garage. "A loose radiator stay rod, tight floor boards combined with loose body bolts, and loose spring shackles."

Dr. Pearson looked at him blankly. "Now how in the world can a floor board make a noise when it's tight," he asked. "Simple enough," answered Gus. "In the first place, the frame on any car weaves a bit when it's driven over an uneven road. If the body bolts are loose the body twists even more, pushing the floor boards with it. Naturally, if the boards are fastened tightly at both ends, they can't move, so they strain and twist. The result is that pop you've been hearing. Loosening one end of the floor-board section will fix it."

"But won't they rattle if they're loose?" asked the doctor.

"I won't loosen them that much," replied Gus. "Just enough to allow a little play at one end. Then I'll give the ledges they rest on a good dose of heavy oil and finish up by tightening the body bolts."

"Certainly sounded like a door rattle," Dr. Pearson insisted. "That just proves you can do a sight more with touch than you can with your ears when it comes to tracing rattles and squeaks in a car," smiled Gus. "Car noises are funny things. They have a way of scooting through the frame or the body till they reach a broad surface that acts as a sounding board. Your ears will place the noise at the sounding board but your finger tips will trace it to the source. Just as an example, start up your motor and listen. Do you hear anything?"

"Yeah," the doctor agreed. "Sort of a rapid-fire rattle."

"Where does it sound like it's coming from?" asked Gus.

The elderly physician scratched his head. "Sounds like the instrument panel to me," he ventured. (Continued on page 103)

GUS SAYS:

If you hate the hard work of polishing or waxing your car, at least take the trouble to keep the hood in shape. Remember, it gets the harshest weather and a continuous baking from the heat of the motor. It doesn't take long for dirt and tar to bake on so hard that it takes more than just a good rubbing to remove them. The sap that drops from trees also is particularly hard to remove once it is baked in place.

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