

# THE FOOL PUMP

by Rick Cogbill

According to our philosophical technician, Basil, “To err is human, to forgive is divine. Work on an Escort, and it’s comeback time!”

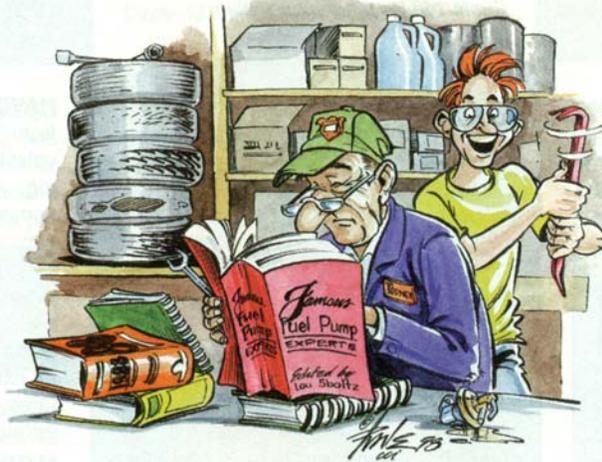


Illustration by Ben Crane

The 1988 Ford Escort came in with the complaint of surging and stalling. Sometimes it wouldn't start at all. The car was towed in over the weekend, and though it started on Monday morning, the fuel pump was noisy.

Tooner ran a fuel pressure test, pronounced it sick, and handed the car over to Beanie for a new fuel pump. The Bean didn't appreciate having to remove a full fuel tank, and said so. However, we assured him that it was because of his great skill (and not because he was the apprentice) that we had entrusted him with such an important responsibility involving flammable liquids. I think he almost bought it.

Later, with the car running smoothly and quietly, I turned the keys over to the owner, in exchange for the appropriate monetary compensation.

The next morning, he handed the keys back to me, along with some appropriate words that I wouldn't want my kids to hear.

"Tooner," I hollered appropriately, "that Escort fuel pump is noisy again - it wouldn't start three times last night! Now fix it right this time."

"Beanie!" hollered Tooner. "Put another fuel pump in that Escort, and do it right this time!"

Now Beanie was hollering. “Yeah, well, get me a part that isn’t a piece of junk this time!”

To the Bean’s credit, we *had* seen a batch of noisy pumps lately from our supplier, and we thought this was just one more. But that didn’t make the sun shine any brighter on Beanie’s day, as once again he had to drop the fuel tank and install another pump.

Unfortunately, that little car was beginning to think Slim Shambles Auto Repair was home, for two days later he was back, arriving on the hind end of a tow truck one more time. This time the owner chose not to accompany the car in person, which we all agreed was a wise decision.

A new round of accusations flew around the shop, and it wasn’t long before the battle lines were drawn. Tooner crouched on one side of the car brandishing a crescent wrench, while Beanie held him off with a pry bar. Both of them were inventing new ways to describe the looks and intelligence level of the other.

At that moment Basil intervened. “Gentlemen, control yourselves. Stop acting like children!”

“Exactly what I was saying,” I agreed, hiding a ball peen hammer behind my back.

Tooner and Beanie growled menacingly in my direction.

Basil thought for a moment and then quoted a piece of poetry:

“If you can keep your head when all about you  
Are losing theirs, and blaming it on you...”

Tooner stared at him blankly.

Basil sighed. “Rudyard Kipling? It’s the opening lines of the immortal poem, ‘IF’.”

Now we all stared at him blankly.

Basil moaned. “Why must I suffer to be cast adrift amongst such heathen? What I’m saying is, direct your anger to where it belongs. The problem is with the car, not with each other!”

“Oh,” said Beanie, dropping the pry bar. “Why didn’t you say so? The way I figure, it can’t be the pump – it must be in the control system.”

“Exactly,” continued Tooner, tossing aside the crescent wrench. “Let’s grab the electrical diagram and trace the power source.”

My jaw dropped as the crew worked smoothly together, and in no time discovered that a faulty fuel pump relay was causing all the trouble. Sometimes it worked fine, and other times it would create a voltage drop, causing the pump to run slow and noisy. Sometimes it just wouldn't work at all.

A new relay and everyone was happy.

Except Tooner. He's been going through old trade magazines trying to figure out who Rudyard Kipling was. He's convinced that he must have been some famous mechanic from years gone by.

I allowed myself a knowing smile. *You heathen*, I thought smugly. *Even I know that Kipling used to play first base for the Blue Jays.*

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