

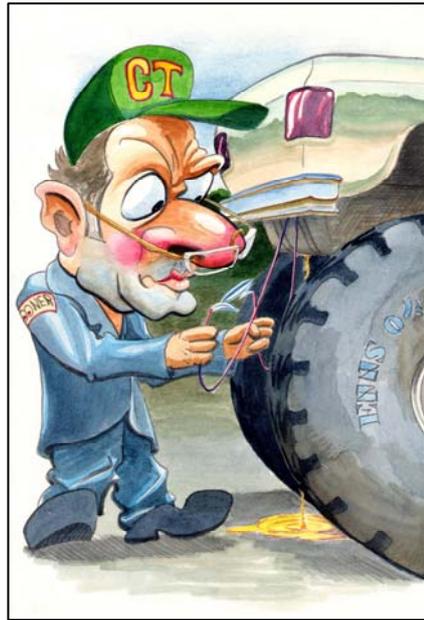
Better than homemade

Some backyard patch jobs cause more problems than they fix

By Rick Cogbill a.k.a. Slim Shambles
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Basil opened his massive lunch box and with great pride produced five flaky croissants. He passed them around. “You’ll have to try one of these,” he announced to everyone in the lunchroom. “There’s nothing like my wife’s fresh homemade baking.”

Tooner looked the bun over suspiciously, giving it a tentative sniff. “If it’s anythin’ like my wife’s cooking, you’ll wanna be using these fer doorstops.”



Basil’s eyes bulged out, obviously deeply offended. “I’ll have you know that local restaurateurs clamor daily for my wife’s creations!” he exclaimed. “Consider yourself fortunate that she allowed me to cast these pearls before such common swine!”

Tooner took a bite and munched noisily. “Hmm, not bad. Ya got any peanut butter t’ go with it?”

“They’re great!” I exclaimed in an effort to ward off fisticuffs. “Here’s one pig who’ll ask for seconds. My congratulations to the chef; homemade is definitely better than store-bought.”

Basil handed me another croissant while glowering at Tooner. “It’s nice to know somebody around here appreciates fine food.”

Tooner took a swig of coffee, belched, and got up to go back to work. “I can appreciate fine food,” he threw over his shoulder. “I’m just tellin’ ya it don’t happen much ‘round my house.”

The debate was put on hold as the boys got back into their repair jobs. Tooner was working on ‘87 Chev 4x4 half-ton that wouldn’t start. There was no fuel getting to the injectors, and although we could hear the fuel pump running, it refused to develop any pressure.

Tooner read over the notes on the work order. “Says here his buddy was tryin’ to get it goin’ over the weekend.” He shook his head in disgust. “I wonder what kinda mess those weekend warriors have created.”

“Cheer up, Toon,” I said. “How bad can it be?”

A short while later Tooner came out to tell me just how bad. “Do you realize that those goons cut away the wiring harness, and then used an old extension cord t’ run new wiring up t’ the engine compartment?”

I followed Tooner into the shop where he had the truck up on the hoist. “And what’s more,” he added, “they’ve wired it directly t’ the ignition coil – there ain’t a fuse in the system!”

“Looks pretty rusty under here,” I commented, poking at the tank with my pen.

“Hey, don’t do that!” Tooner growled. “You’ll make it leak all over the place.”

Once the tank was removed and lowered to the ground, we got a full picture of the homemade repairs. The sending unit had holes drilled in the top of it where the extension cord ran through. Inside, the wires were twisted together with the pump wiring, the loose ends naked to the world. The whole gang crowded around for a look.

“Yikes,” exclaimed Beanie. “What’s this? A homemade bomb?”

Once Tooner removed the sending unit, it was obvious why no fuel was getting through. He let out a long whistle. “I’ve seen some dirty tanks in my time, but nothin’ this bad!” The dirt and rust was so thick we couldn’t even see the bottom of the tank. “This pump’s had it,” declared Tooner. “Better order one up...and find me a new tank while yer at it.”

I was reading the note from the customer. “Says here he’s got another used pump behind the front seat – he bought it two years ago at a yard sale.” I looked up. “I don’t think he’s the type to shell out for a new tank.”

Tooner shook his head. “I ain’t doing no homemade patch job. No tanky, no fixy.”

It took some convincing, but the customer finally agreed to a new tank, pump, and a strainer. I even managed to talk him into a new fuel filter. “But I just replaced that six months ago,” he complained to me over the phone.

“Well, with the crusty brew that was floating around in your old tank, I can guarantee that it’s plugged by now.” I gave him the bottom line. “No filter, no warranty.”

Once the new parts were installed and the original wiring repaired, the truck ran like a dream. Things calmed down around the shop...until the next coffee break arrived. It was Tooner’s turn to provide the goodies.

“Here,” he said, tossing a few hockey pucks around the table. “Have one of my wife’s cookies.”

Basil picked it up disdainfully. “What in the world is this?” he demanded.

Tooner dunked one in his coffee until it finally softened up. “It’s the same thing as that Chevy with the rusty fuel tank – the best argument in the world of why homemade ain’t always the best!”