

An Un-Cool Caddy

By Rick Cogbill
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“Is it hot or what?” Tooner dragged himself over to the vending machines in search of cold refreshment. “I gonna start wearing my shorts to work.”

The mental image of Tooner’s boney knees being unleashed on an unsuspecting community was too much for Beanie. “Toon, I think there’s a bylaw against wearing indecent clothing in public...”



He wasn’t impressed. “Well, it can’t be any worse than what just walked through our front door.”

We looked up to see Buck Pincher standing at the front counter, dressed in a flowered Hawaiian shirt that was open to his navel, followed by bright orange baggy shorts and white deck shoes.

“Whoa there, Buck; have you got a permit for that thing?” I gasped, fumbling for my sunglasses.

He looked himself over. “You mean my new outfit? Well, it’s like this. Ever since we moved into our new house, Dolly’s been after me to upgrade our vehicle – she don’t like the rust stains on the garage floor after it rains. So I traded in my old Ford Escort for this beautiful, low-miles Cadillac.” He leaned closer and raised an eyebrow. “Looks good on me, don’t it!”

I glanced at the 1995 Seville parked outside the front door. “I’ll agree the car’s an improvement, but I’m not sure the world is ready for the new you.”

“Well, get used to it; it’s how we Caddy-owners dress.”

Buck was having trouble with his air conditioning, so I had Tooner run a quick check. I returned to the office with a repair estimate. “Knowing you, Buck, you got this car cheap, and here’s the reason why; the A/C compressor is seized solid. You’re looking at some serious dollars here.”

The only thing Buck Pincher fears more than spending money is falling out of his wife's good graces, so he had no choice but to go ahead with the repairs. "Dolly'll hound me to death if that A/C ain't working!"

Tooner gave the system a good flush, and installed a new compressor, accumulator and orifice tube. But when he tried to refill the system, the compressor clutch refused to lock in. We talked the problem over at lunch.

"I tried jumping the low pressure switch, but nothing happened. So I powered up the compressor right from the battery. I managed to get a couple pounds of refrigerant in that way, but it still won't run on its own."

Basil munched on his sandwich for a few minutes, washing it down with some iced tea. "If memory serves me correctly, it's very important to clear out any A/C-related diagnostic trouble codes from the BCM. As long as there's a DTC in memory, the compressor will stay offline." He got up to retrieve an older repair manual from the bookshelf behind him and handed it to Tooner. "Usually unhooking the negative battery cable for ten to thirty seconds will alleviate the problem, but if that doesn't work, use the climate control panel in the dash to clear the codes. You'll find the procedure in here."

Tooner followed Basil's advice, but the compressor still refused to engage. "Better start following the flow of power through the circuit," I suggested. "It's got to be a bad connection, blown fuse, or a burnt relay."

"Before I do that," he growled, "I'm callin' up my old buddy Don at the Cadillac Car Club; him and his boys know these land yachts inside out."

When he got off the phone, Tooner was puzzled. "Don says you can have trouble if you put the orifice tube in backwards. If you don't put the end with the short screen towards the evaporator, it will move when you charge it, and take out the low side temperature switch." He glared at Buck's car. "I know I put that new orifice tube in just like the old one came out; I'd lay money on it."

I clapped him on the back. "Well, I believe you, but you'd better check it out anyway. We're running out of options."

It turns out Tooner did have the tube installed correctly, but it was slightly smaller in diameter than the original. As a result, it slid inside the line and damaged the low side temperature sensor, just like Don had predicted. A new sensor and orifice tube from the dealer put us back in business.

Buck came by to pick up his car, and when he saw the bill he began to overheat. "Hey, enough with the ranting and raving," I said. "I gave you a quote before we started; what are you belly-aching about now?"

Buck glared at me as he pried his wallet out of his hip pocket. “Whether I agreed to the quote or not is immaterial. It’s my constitutional right to complain any time money leaves my bank account, and a bill this large entitles me to more belly-aching than I’ve got time to produce!”

It just goes to show you that cars and clothes don’t make the man; it’s the character that matters. And Cool-Caddy Buck is one heck of a character.