

Appliance Repair Show Transcript—July 13, 2008

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Electric Dryer with Red Candle Wax Stain on Cabinet

JOHN MCCULLOCH

We'll start out today with Dorothy, in Monroe, with an [electric dryer](#) here on the Appliance Repair Show. Hi Dorothy, go ahead please.

DOROTHY

Hi. Actually the dryer's working fine, but I made a mistake and some candle wax got on the outside surface and I didn't notice it. It's been on there a couple of weeks. I got the wax off, but there's a stain. Is that forever?

JOHN SOWDEN

Is it on the outer cabinet of the unit?

DOROTHY

Right, yes. It's not hurting the dryer.

JOHN SOWDEN

And what color is the [dryer](#)?

DOROTHY

The dryer is white and the candle was red, so it's sort of a pinkish color that's left.

JOHN SOWDEN

It's basically a painted surface, so you may be able to take some rubbing compound and treat it like you would something on your vehicle. Gently go over the vehicle and see if you can get it out. Being a [dryer](#), it depends on where it is on the cabinet, but it may have been baked into the surface.

DOROTHY

Well, that's what I'm thinking.

JOHN SOWDEN

Yeah, from the heat but I would try a light rubbing compound. Don't be too aggressive with it, and then when you're done put a little car wax on it and try to seal it up again. We also sell polishes and things of that nature but yeah, it depends on the location and how long it was on there.

DOROTHY

It's been on there for a couple of weeks, but I didn't notice it.

JOHN SOWDEN

Yeah, it could have gotten baked into the finish but if you got it off, again I'd try some rubbing compound, or maybe a little bit of car wax, just a mild abrasive and see if you can get it to look better.

DOROTHY

Okay.

JOHN SOWDEN

They also make appliance spray paints in aerosol cans. You probably want to buy the one for your brand; they make a lot of touch-up paints, but just like with cars, they come with different color codes so it may not match. But if that really bothers you, then you may want to look at just spraying the whole panel and doing it that way.

DOROTHY

Well, it doesn't bother me as much as it bothers my husband.

JOHN MCCULLOCH

Well, why don't you have him fix it!

DOROTHY

Well, you know who had the wax problem? Not him.

Broan Range Vent Hood Exhaust Fan and Light Not Working

JOHN MCCULLOCH

Frank, in Riverview, good morning and welcome to NewsTalk 760 WJR! Go ahead.

FRANK

I have an, over my stove, the brand is Broan...

JOHN SOWDEN

A [Broan vent hood](#)? Do you have an island, or is this what you'd call a standard [vent hood](#)?

FRANK

It's not quite a standard vent hood because it has a sliding mechanism that pulls out to cover the burner area. There's a [light](#) and a [fan](#).

JOHN SOWDEN

Okay. So it's one of their higher end units?

FRANK

Right but I'm having difficulty. Right now the automatic mode where you would pull it out and both the light and the fan would come on is not working.

JOHN SOWDEN

Can you get one to work, the fan or the light?

FRANK

No, neither one.

JOHN SOWDEN

Well, most of those have a little [circuit board](#) behind the control panel and then there's normally a [switch](#) in the back of the slide-out unit so that when you push it in, it obviously powers down the control and then when you pull it out, it allows it to work. It could be that the monitoring switch in the back has failed or it could be on the [control board](#) itself, or the [switch assembly](#). On some of those it comes as one piece where you get the board and the decorative inserts.

FRANK

That seems like the case here because I had a service man out, he wasn't from the company, just an independent guy, and he said that normally there's a pigtail to where you can just pull the part out of it, the board, and replace it with a new one. That's not the case on this one.

JOHN SOWDEN

A lot of them, it depends on the unit. What I recommend doing is get the [model number](#) as it reads off of the vent hood, go to [RepairClinic.com](#) and put the model number in the search field, and you'll see a picture of all the common parts, so you know what you're looking for.

FRANK

I just need my model number?

JOHN SOWDEN

Yes, put the [model number](#) in and it will show you, on a lot of those it comes as the [control board](#) and then all the decorative escutcheons that they have in there. So you might get one that's almond/black, or white, and it's kind of like an erector kit that you get to replace that.

FRANK

Is there anybody you could recommend? I've contacted a couple of the Broan dealers and they won't come out to the house.

JOHN SOWDEN

Well, that's interesting.

FRANK

To Riverview, I don't know why.

JOHN SOWDEN

I'd recommend calling the manufacturer and seeing what they have for recognized authorized servicers in your area. If somebody's got a contract to service your area then they're going to be prompted to come out.

FRANK

Okay. Thank you very much.

JOHN MCCULLOCH

It's amazing how a call to the home office can get somebody with a contract who just doesn't want to go quite that far.

JOHN SOWDEN

It's hard on the servicer too because they try to represent the manufacturers well, and they try to take on as much service area as they can. So if you're in the outlying areas, they'll say we only come out on Thursday's or something. They try to schedule their routes accordingly because they're trying to make a living, and with gas being four dollars a gallon it's difficult. In a warranty situation, they have a contract and they have a flat rate that they're paid to repair this. So in other situations they might be able to get a time and travel fee out of it, but for things like this they'll just get a flat rate out of it. It's kind of hard on the servicers as well. It doesn't make them bad guys!

1999 Kenmore Elite Dryer with Circuit Board that needs to be Replaced

JOHN MCCULLOCH

Here's Steve, in Milford, with a question on a [dryer](#) on the Appliance Repair Show. Good morning, Steve. Go ahead, please.

STEVE

We have a [Kenmore washer](#) and [dryer](#). They're Kenmore Elites and they're going to be nine years old in October. They're electronic and we've had a lot of trouble with the dryer and replacing [circuit boards](#). It's been under warranty. Now they're telling me to fix it, it's going to cost over three hundred dollars to put a new circuit board in; it's still going to be a nine year old dryer, so we're thinking that we're just going to replace the dryer. That's probably cheaper. The question becomes, do I replace the [washer](#) even though it's working okay, but it's a nine year old washer? How many years can I expect normally out of a washer?

JOHN SOWDEN

Well, that's a good question, and being a [Kenmore](#) product, it could be made by one of several manufacturers. The Kenmore laundry, the lion's share of it is probably made by [Whirlpool](#), but it also could be a [GE](#), a [Frigidaire](#), and [LG](#), there are a lot of manufacturers that produce products for them and they're sold under the Kenmore name. So as far as what you have, I don't know. If you have the [model number](#) of the unit, it might help me out. Is it a [front loader](#) or a [top loader](#)?

STEVE

It's a top loader. Supposedly it was top of the line at the time. It's called a Kenmore Elite with the catalyst function.

JOHN SOWDEN

Okay. That's probably a [Whirlpool](#) product then. So you're having no problems with the washing machine?

STEVE

Yes, the washer's okay. It's the dryer.

JOHN SOWDEN

The washing machine, the catalyst is kind of an upscale version of what they call their direct drive unit, which has been around since about 1985. It's pretty reliable and fairly easy to work on; it's one of those things that I'd say the washer, if it's not broken I wouldn't replace it and yet, if you did need to do something to it, then you could probably do the repairs yourself and it wouldn't be that bad except with regards to the [electronic controls](#). Now the dryer, was it the thermistor in the circuit board, is that what you're having an issue with?

STEVE

Yeah and we've had it continually. They replaced the dryer once the first year because we had so many problems with the electronics. Sometimes it runs, sometimes it doesn't run. We had a repairman out and he said it's the [circuit board](#), you've got to replace it, and it will be three hundred dollars just for the circuit board.

JOHN SOWDEN

Okay.

STEVE

So I was thinking that maybe it was more cost effective just to replace the dryer.

JOHN SOWDEN

Well, yeah, at that point. What I would do is get the [model number](#) as it reads off the model tag off the dryer itself and go to [RepairClinic.com](#) and put the model number in there and see what the [control board](#) costs for that. It's something that you might want to put a new one in if it's cheaper than that and replace it yourself and save some money on

the labor. You might be able to shave a hundred bucks off that and kind of get you by. I'm assuming if it's been worked on several times you probably have a pretty good idea of what to do and how to get into it. I always recommend that people watch but don't help the repairman! As far as replacing both of them go, if you went to a [front loader](#) and the matching dryer now, you'd save money on the water and energy, and they actually do a little bit better of a job on the clothes. The problem with the washing machine being almost ten years old, if you need a [circuit board](#) for that then you're still probably in the two or three hundred dollar range to repair that, and again cost of new versus replacement, you might end up having to put in a new washer anyway. So if you're looking to replace the dryer with a high end unit, you might want to see what kind of deal you can get by buying a pair and base your decision on that but first I'd make sure that the amount to repair the [dryer](#) is correct, that you know what it takes for sure to replace the circuit board.

STEVE

Okay. Thank you very much.

JOHN MCCULLOCH

And remember to get the [model number](#) off of the dryer, not the [manual](#)!

JOHN SOWDEN.

Yes! Well, the only problem with the manual is, they'll print one manual to cover all the different models which is good because it saves on trees but the [model number](#) normally on the brochure is incomplete. You end up with half a model and we will show you all the different parts for that group, but to get the right [circuit board](#) then you certainly want to get the complete model number as it reads off the appliance.

Sharp Microwave has Pervasive Odor from Burnt Popcorn

JOHN MCCULLOCH

Dorothy from Saline, here has a question on a [Sharp microwave](#) on the Appliance Repair Show. Hi Dorothy, go ahead!

DOROTHY

Good morning! I burned some popcorn in my [microwave](#), and I can't get the odor out of it.

JOHN SOWDEN

Okay. Are there any burn spots or anything in the interior?

DOROTHY

No.

JOHN SOWDEN

Okay and there's also what they call a [wave guide cover](#), which looks like a cardboard piece on a lot of them that's normally on the side. It depends on the unit.

DOROTHY

Over by where the [light](#) is?

JOHN SOWDEN

Yeah. Now, it's possible that what you might want to do, the first thing is, you can take a cup of water and put a little lemon juice in there and set it on high, boil the water for a couple minutes, and normally the circulating fan inside the cavity will take that vapor and hopefully kind of kill the smell inside the interior portion of the microwave.

DOROTHY

Okay.

JOHN SOWDEN

You may want to replace that [stirrer cover](#) as well. If it's got any burn spots in it or that could be a place where it's retaining the smell. So I'd start out with a small bowl and put a few teaspoons of lemon juice in there and run it a couple of times and see if that doesn't help. You might have to do that a few times to help clean it out. At times, depending on how bad it was, it may be something that you have to live with because short of tearing the machine completely apart and cleaning out all the interior ductwork or the [wave guide](#), there's not much you can do. So that's the quick and easy way.

JOHN MCCULLOCH

On the cover that you're saying may need to be replaced, would there be any danger even though it's unplugged of getting a shock from that?

JOHN SOWDEN

Not for that particular portion of the [microwave](#). Normally those kind of snap into place or there are a few little plastic rivets that retain it.

DOROTHY

Right I see it. Can I take it somewhere and get a new one?

JOHN SOWDEN

You could do that, or you could get the [model number](#) as it reads off of your microwave and go to [RepairClinic.com](#) where we should have a picture of what you're looking at. If for some reason you don't, you could call our 800 line, 1-888-343-4948, and we're there until midnight today. They can tell you how much it costs and you can have it shipped to your door.

DOROTHY

Okay.

JOHN SOWDEN

But before you start replacing stuff, try the lemon juice and water first and try that for two or three times.

DOROTHY

Well, I tried some vinegar in there and it didn't make a difference.

JOHN SOWDEN

Okay. Well, try the lemon juice and see how that works out for you.

DOROTHY

Thank you so very much. I really enjoy your show.

1998 Top Mount Refrigerator Not Cooling Well

JOHN MCCULLOCH

Here's Derrick, in Detroit, on the Appliance Repair Show. Hi Derrick, go ahead please.

DERRICK

I just had a question about my [refrigerator](#). As of about a week ago, I noticed that the [refrigerator and freezer weren't as cold as they used to be](#). I have a recommended setting on both of them. It says recommended setting is three.

JOHN SOWDEN

Is this a [top mount freezer](#), a [side by side](#), a [bottom mount freezer](#)?

DERRICK

It's a top mount freezer and I normally have them set at three. Sometimes the freezer would get so cold that I'd have to turn it down to two but normally if I put them all the way up to five, it's not reacting. So what I did was pull it away from the wall, unplugged it, cleaned the back and took the [bottom panel](#) off the front and I was trying to clean that as much as I could and I plugged it back in. That was a couple of days ago, and it's still doing the same thing. [Nothing in the refrigerator is getting cold anymore](#).

JOHN SOWDEN

All right. Both sections are being affected by it, so you're losing cooling in the refrigerator and freezer sections?

DERRICK

Yes.

JOHN SOWDEN

How long did you unplug it?

DERRICK

As long as it took me to clean it. Half an hour, I think.

JOHN SOWDEN

Okay and when you plugged it back in; did you hear the compressor start? Did it turn back on?

DERRICK

Yes, it started right back up.

JOHN SOWDEN

Okay. So the compressor is running but it's not cooling.

DERRICK

Yes.

JOHN SOWDEN

One thing you might want to look for is, look at the back wall of the freezer section and see if you can find any frost buildup. If you do, then what's happened is you have a defrost system failure. The unit basically works on airflow and you have the cold air from the freezer section being pushed into the refrigerator section, and also being circulated through the freezer section. If you have a defrost system failure, that cooling coil becomes restricted or iced over, and you have no airflow. So at that point you kind of have an ice box, which will give you around thirty or forty degrees in the freezer and fifty or sixty, on a good day, in the [refrigerator](#). So if it's kind of limping in both sections, I would say you might have a problem with a defrost system failure. The other thing you want to make sure of is that the [freezer fan](#) is running. There's a fan in the freezer section that circulates that air. If that fails, you end up with the same condition.

DERRICK

Okay. So with those conditions, the refrigerator is ten years old, would it be worth it for me to try to fix it?

JOHN SOWDEN

Sure. Most of those, the back panel is just retained by three or four [screws](#) around the perimeter, and you have to unhook the wiring harness to the [fan motor](#). Obviously, I'd recommend unplugging the unit before you get into it but if you remove that back wall and see a frost buildup, that's your problem. That's why I asked how long you left it unplugged because a lot of times if you leave it unplugged, let's say twenty-four or forty-eight hours, you'll find that you get water on the floor because the [pan](#) will overflow because there's too much water from all that ice and then the unit will work fine for a week or so, because you have a nice clear evaporator, but then it will gradually lose its capacity for cooling. That's the easy way to do it is just unplug it. The other way is, again, unplug the machine, pull it out and remove the back wall there. Be careful, because those coils are sharp. If you've got an ice or frost buildup across that, then you've got a defrost system failure and normally the components for that are either a [circuit board](#) or a [timer](#) that periodically puts the unit in defrost and it sends power to a [heater](#) which melts that ice. Then there's also a [thermostat](#) involved: most of the time the unit will go into defrost for between twenty and thirty minutes, and if you haven't had the door open a lot and it doesn't need all that time to de-ice those coils, rather than heat your

freezer section up, there's another [thermostat](#) in there that will cut out and keep you from doing that. So the three failing components could be the [timer](#) and/or [circuit board](#), depending on your [model](#), the [heater](#) itself could have failed, or the [defrost thermostat](#). If it's all iced up like that and you're not sure what to do and if you don't have a [meter](#) (part # DM10T) to check the components, just replace all three components in your defrost system and away you go. You're probably looking at seventy to one hundred dollars for the parts and it's well worth doing that on a machine that's only nine or ten years old.

DERRICK

All right. Thanks a lot, I appreciate your time.

JOHN MCCULLOCH

Yeah, the price of [refrigerators](#) these days, for a hundred bucks in parts and a couple of hours of work, I know which deal I would choose.

JOHN SOWDEN

Yeah. Well, the other thing is you have to make sure that you do defrost that coil. So if you're going to do it, you're not just going to unplug it for a couple of days. You need to get in there with a hair dryer sometimes and speed it up a little bit, but you want to take care that you don't melt all the plastic liners. You mentioned the popcorn thing: I've heard of people getting in there with a hair dryer and they leave it running, the phone rings, and when they come back they've got a nice hole burned in the liner. You've got to be there.

2003 Kenmore Dryer Doesn't Run Unless Start Button is Held Down

JOHN MCCULLOCH

Deanne, in Bloomfield Hills, is next with a question on a [Kenmore dryer](#), here on the Appliance Repair Show. Hi Deanne, go ahead please.

DEANNE

Good morning! My [dryer](#) is about five years old, and [it doesn't stay running](#). If I push the start button it pops out and the load doesn't go. If I put a brick on it, it holds it and it runs the whole cycle but the thing is popping out, and I was wondering if I should have somebody come out and service it, or can my husband do something to fix it?

JOHN SOWDEN

You push the start button, and as long as you continually hold the start button, then the unit will go and otherwise it does not?

DEANNE

That's correct.

JOHN SOWDEN

Okay. Well, it sounds to me as if the [push to start button](#) could be the culprit. Normally when you push the start button, you're just momentarily sending electricity to the start

winding of the [dryer](#), and as it gets up to speed it will cut out that circuit and run on the run winding. So it sounds like it could be a fault in the [switch](#), and it depends on how it's wired because sometimes if that switch opens during the cycle, it will also drop out current to the circuit. So there's normally a wiring diagram that's either going to be on the back panel and/or the [control panel](#) that will show you how that unit is wired. Now, this has a [circuit board](#) on it?

DEANNE

I assume so. This just happened yesterday.

JOHN SOWDEN

As long as you force it to run, then it will continue on?

DEANNE

Yes.

JOHN SOWDEN

From what you're telling me, it sounds like you might have a problem in the [start switch](#) there. You can check that with an [ohmmeter](#) (part # DM10T) and make sure that when you turn it to start that it's doing what it's supposed to be doing as far as closing the contacts and sending them to the appropriate components within the machine. It's something that's worth repairing if that's the case. You could have other weird wiring issues, but from what you're describing, I would start with the [start switch](#) and investigate that.

DEANNE

Okay. I will do that, thank you.

Maytag Dishwasher Racks are Rusting and Tines are Falling Off

JOHN MCCULLOCH

Here's Bill, in Howell, with a [dishwasher](#) question on the Appliance Repair Show. Hi Bill, go ahead please.

BILL

Hi John! I've got this [dishwasher](#); we moved into this house about six months ago, it's a Maytag. I gave your screener there the [model number](#) on it. It seems to work pretty well but the problem that I have with it is the [racks](#) are falling apart and it could probably use a [spring](#) or two in the door there. I don't know if it's worth spending the two hundred and fifty dollars to resurrect this thing. I don't know how old it is. Should I just go shopping for a new one?

JOHN SOWDEN

Well, it depends on how bad the [racks](#) are. If they're just rusty in places, just the tops of the tines are rusty, they actually make a product to solve that problem, and it takes a little work on your behalf, but it's a lot cheaper.

BILL

The tines are actually rusting off and falling off the thing.

JOHN SOWDEN

Okay, so it's terminal. Yeah, even then if it's not too bad, you can use this liquid rubber stuff and these caps you can put over the tines and get some more miles out of it but otherwise, you're looking at the [lower racks](#) are a hundred and sixty five bucks and the [upper rack](#) is seventy five. Which is unusual; normally it goes the other way around so that's at least half the cost of a new [dishwasher](#), just for the new racks. The [door springs](#) aren't that big of a deal, but the racks are one of the big-ticket components. This is not that old of a unit but it's not a super high end machine, so it really depends on what you want. You can buy something now with the stainless steel tub and all that good stuff, you're going to probably spend six or seven hundred dollars to get something like that, but you'd be starting fresh with a warranty, probably a better wash ability and reduced water consumption. So now's the time to make your investment if you're going to do it.

BILL

It seems like there's more space in those new units, too.

JOHN SOWDEN

Yeah, everything's gone to the "tall tub" design, where what they've done is they've raised the tub a little bit but they've actually lowered it so that all the components are really sandwiched in on the underside of the machine. On a lot of the newer ones, you have to pull the machine out to do just about any repair to it. So if you do replace it, make sure when you plumb in the new one, that you use some of those flexible lines and stuff so you can slide it out easily because if you have to get at it, you do have to pull the machine out. That also adds to the cost of repair because you're going to have a service person spend more time in your home because they will have to slide it out and disconnect it to fix it. But yes, you can get more plates and stuff in there—everybody's got a better mousetrap. They're quieter too.

BILL

Okay. Thanks a lot that helped.

1992 Central Air Conditioner Not Sufficiently Cooling Upper Level

JOHN MCCULLOCH

Here's Linda, in Warren, with a central air conditioning question on the Appliance Repair Show. Hi Linda, go ahead please.

LINDA

My second floor has a bedroom and a bathroom. My lower level, the main floor, cools very well but the second floor does not. The bathroom is fine but I've got two vents in that master bedroom, and I can hardly feel the air coming out and it's really hot.

JOHN SOWDEN

Okay. Well the first thing you want to do is make sure that your furnace filter is clean, that there's no restriction in the airflow to hinder that.

LINDA

I just replaced that.

JOHN SOWDEN

Okay, good. Now, the thing is that most homes, especially older homes, the ductwork is designed to help heat the house and heat rises, so a lot of the ducts going upstairs are not very big, basically.

LINDA

This house was built in 1992.

JOHN SOWDEN

Okay. I'm assuming in the winter it heats fine, you don't have any problems?

LINDA

Right.

JOHN SOWDEN

One way to cheat this design is to go downstairs and start off by closing half of the registers downstairs. If you've got two in every room, close one of them. That will cause it to force more air to the upstairs. If it gets a little better, then you might want to look at closing a few more because this is a fairly common problem in a two story house, where obviously heat rises and that's where it's going to accumulate. There are other factors, like how well that part of the house is insulated, how the sun shines on it, windows, making sure you've got the shades pulled, and things of that nature. One quick and easy way is to start out by reducing how much air can get into the lower area and force more upstairs. You'll probably find out that works pretty well. Sometimes you'll have to close most of them off downstairs, but you'll still find that it will do a pretty good job on the lower level. It's just going to push everything to the upper level.

LINDA

Even if I turn those off, I'll still get some cooling downstairs?

JOHN SOWDEN

Yes. It will push more through the ones that are open, but it will definitely force a redirect to force more cool air upstairs.

LINDA

Because I didn't know if I needed a bigger unit, if that would make a difference? Again, it's from 1992. I just bought the place but I figured I had about five more years on the air conditioner and furnace.

JOHN SOWDEN

I'm assuming it's probably sized correctly. It's just the second story: even in apartment complexes, if you go downstairs the unit will be running fine, everything is cool but you go up to the third story and the machine runs all the time, the head pressure is high, it's just got a lot more work to do because heat rises. Those are the ones that conk out, because they have more work to do and the repair person has to schlep all the equipment upstairs to fix them!

LINDA

Yeah.

JOHN SOWDEN

I would recommend starting with that. Just close off every other vent in the rooms downstairs and you'll probably notice a difference. You might want to then close it off a little bit more if that doesn't completely satisfy you. You'll probably find that the downstairs will still be all right.

LINDA

What if it doesn't, if it's still not cooling?

JOHN SOWDEN

If that doesn't work for you then I would call out a contractor or a heating and cooling guy and have them look at it. You may be able to put a booster fan or something like that in there to satisfy this problem but this is the quick and easy way to fix the problem.

LINDA

Well, thank you! I closed one of the bathroom vents, but that didn't help, so I'll try closing more.