

SAVVA technical Tip 133 – brake lining material

Over the years I have been very aware that the brakes on my older cars are marginal and modern cars continue to improve the gap between old and new - with ABS, XYZ, Stability control etc. Incidentally, I recall my Austin 7's handbook referring to the use of the middle pedal to retard your speed! Nothing about stopping the car!

I have owned an early Buick for about 20 years and every year I'm aware of two things.

- 1) Modern car brakes are getting better whilst the Buicks stay the same (or even worse).
- 2) I'm getting older.

Here's a story that may be of use to enthusiasts who have a similar problem:

Over the years I've had the brake cylinders of the Buick resleeved and the linings replaced but with no noticeable improvement, in fact, they seem to have deteriorated. I believe, or in fact know, they should be much better as I recall my old Dad having early 1950's Pontiacs with similar brakes and he pulled caravans all over the country without braking problems.

Reading an early Buick workshop manual I noticed they referred to the necessity of using **woven linings**. I spoke to a few brake shops about woven linings but they weren't very helpful. Most just said their linings were soft enough for the job. In desperation, I took a rear brake drum and its lining and went to one of the very old brake shops in Johannesburg called Wingate and placed them on the owner Issy's desk and asked if he could see anything wrong with them. Incidentally, he's been in the braking business for something like 60 years. Without hesitation he said – you cannot use those linings on that old car as all you are doing is “polishing” the linings. That was so true as they were very shiny.

On his advice I had the linings fitted with woven material. These new linings were noticeably woven and had what appeared to be flecks of brass in them.

Bottom line – I now have brakes, or let's say, much improved braking.

Suggestion – when relining shoes find a shop in your area that can fit woven linings. Many won't know what you're talking about but believe me there are shops out there who do.

p.s. Wingate also suggested the fitting of a vacuum brake booster hidden away where it's not visible. Being a stickler on originality I'm resisting this advice – however, I think they could be right.

