

## A Bum Rap

*Don't blame the parts – these brakes have been 'pampered' with!*

By Rick Cogbill  
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**Quigley was visibly shaken** when he returned from driving one of our customers home.

“What’s the matter, Quig?” asked Beanie, as he pulled the bay door closed. “Is the brake pulsation really that bad?”



Quigley staggered out of the 1987 Colt Vista, holding onto the door like a drunken sailor looking for his sea legs.

“Th-that kid!” he stammered, his left cheek twitching wildly. “I’ve never heard a baby scream so long and so loud. And we had to drive 10 miles out into the country!”

“There, there,” I said, patting his shoulder. “Just be glad you aren’t his mother. Angie’s got her hands full with that one.”

Angie Bates was the proud but beleaguered mother of nine-month-old Baby Brian (or Cryin’ Brian, as Tooner dubbed him). I don’t know if it was colic or diaper rash, but we could always hear them coming from three blocks away.

Quigley took a deep breath. “Well, all I can say is, if I had to listen to Brian scream and try to keep that car on the road while braking, I’d be a nut case!”

“Can’t be that bad,” said Tooner. “We just put new pads and rotors on a couple of months ago.”

I checked my clipboard. “Six weeks, to be exact. And the original problem was pulsating brakes, too.” I handed the papers to Quigley. “Looks like a pair of bum rotors. Give Herkle’s Auto Parts a call, and tell Herk to send up another set.”

Quigley went to find some black coffee and a telephone. I knew Herk would stand behind his parts, since we were very consistent with our installation practices. But he wasn’t too thrilled when we called again two months later for a third set of rotors on the same car.

“What’s goin’ on up there!” he thundered loud enough for everyone to hear. Quigley winced and held the receiver away from his ear. “Do I have to come up there and install those rotors myself?”

But Quig was in a fighting mood, having just endured Cryin' Brian one more time. "It's your sub-standard parts!" he yelled back. "What are you doing – putting white-box trash in a brand-name wrapper?"

I leapt across the room and grabbed the phone before it could explode. "Easy now, let's not get excited!" I put the receiver to my ear. "Listen, Herk, just send us up a new set, maybe another brand if you have them, and we'll cover the cost. Great, thanks." I hung up and turned to our service advisor. "A little testy, aren't we?"

Quigley sank into a chair and closed his eyes. "Sorry, Slim. It's just that kid! If I have to listen to him scream one more time, I'll...I'll..."

For the rest of the day the whole crew descended on the little Colt, checking the master cylinder, calipers, and hoses, searching for service bulletins, and even phoning other shops. But by 5 o'clock, we were no further ahead than when we started.

Tooner wiped his hands with a rag. "Unless Angie's ridin' the brake pedal with her foot, I still say we got bum parts."

Basil raised his eyebrows. "Has anyone checked to see if the pushrod from the brake pedal to the master cylinder is adjusted properly? Maybe it's too tight."

Beanie crawled under the steering wheel. "I'll take a look...hey, what's going on here? This pedal's not connected to anything!"

Basil pointed to the other side of the car. "The master cylinder is on the passenger side, Beanie. It's connected to the pedal by a transverse control rod. Remember, these cars were originally right-hand drive."

Our apprentice slid under the glove box for a look, and a minute later gave a muffled yell. "You're not gonna believe this!" Beanie emerged holding – of all things – an unused disposable diaper. He opened the glove box and a dozen more popped out. He held up the first one with a grin. "This fell out the back and was wedged between the control rod and the glove box. It was keeping the master cylinder slightly pressurized the whole time!"

"I told you Cryin' Brian was a menace to society!" groaned Quigley, smacking his forehead. "Now I have to apologize to Herk for knocking his parts."

When Angie arrived later, Baby Brian was in a great mood. Quigley was astonished. "Gee, he's not so bad when he's quiet."

Angie laughed. "Actually, he's really pretty good. He's just had a bad run of gas pains." She thrust Brian into Quigley's unsuspecting arms. "Here, why don't you hold him? He seems to like you."

I picked up the offending pamper and handed it to Angie. "Here's the cause of your braking problems. You really shouldn't stuff the glove box so full..." At that moment I noticed a dark stain spreading down the front of Quigley's jacket, with a matching puddle forming on the floor below.

I reached under the counter for another shop coat. “Tell you what,” I whispered to Angie. “You take Brian into the washroom, and I’ll deal with Quig. We’d better get both these babies changed before they start to cry!”