

Disk Brake Parking Brake Springs: the easy way

by Robert Pelland

I always notice a certain apprehension whenever anybody mentions the fact that work must be done to the parking brake shoes of one's 1965-82 Corvette. When I began this article, my intention was to be of help, not only to those who must do their own work, but also to give an incentive for those of you who would not normally attempt this type of repair.

If you are ready, then let's roll up our sleeves and begin the job at hand. To start off, there have been so many technical articles describing the steps to remove the parking brake shoes and all of their components, that I will refrain from going through the normal disassembly procedure. Like everything else we do on our Corvettes, taking stuff apart is not difficult in the least, it's usually getting the parts back together that turns out to be the hard part.

Once you have completed the disassembly process and made repairs or replaced parts, you are ready to reassemble the parking brake shoes and springs. I will describe in three easy steps the easy way to accomplish it.

Step one:

After lubricating the adjusting screw or what I call the "shoe expander." (No. 10 in Fig. 44) with a good quality anti-seize lubricant, insert the expander between the bottom part of the shoes and hook the adjusting screw retaining spring (No. 9 in Fig. 44) in place. By doing this, it will help keep

the two shoes together.

Step two:

Grab one shoe in each hand, and while spreading the tops away from each other, gently lift them up into place from under the spindle until they are in the proper position on the backing plate. See

that the round section at the top of each shoe rests firmly against the top anchor pin. You may now secure each shoe to the backing plate with its hold down spring and caps. (Nos. 2 & 8 in Fig. 44) Once this is completed, the last thing to do is attach the top retractor spring. (No. 5 in Fig. 44)

This is generally the place where most of the installers (read that as restorers) run into trouble. The retractor spring with its two little coils has a lot of tension and is very difficult to expand in order to be

able to hook each side of the brake shoes together. The fact that this must also be done behind the spindle, where our fingers don't fit, where we can hardly see, and where there is nowhere to even hook the trouble light does not help in the least. In the past, people have resorted to using a multitude of different types of tools to pull or push the spring toward the other shoe in order to reach the hole and hook it in the shoe. All this I might add is done while trying to hold both shoes in their proper places with the other hand. It's not really an enjoyable thing to do.

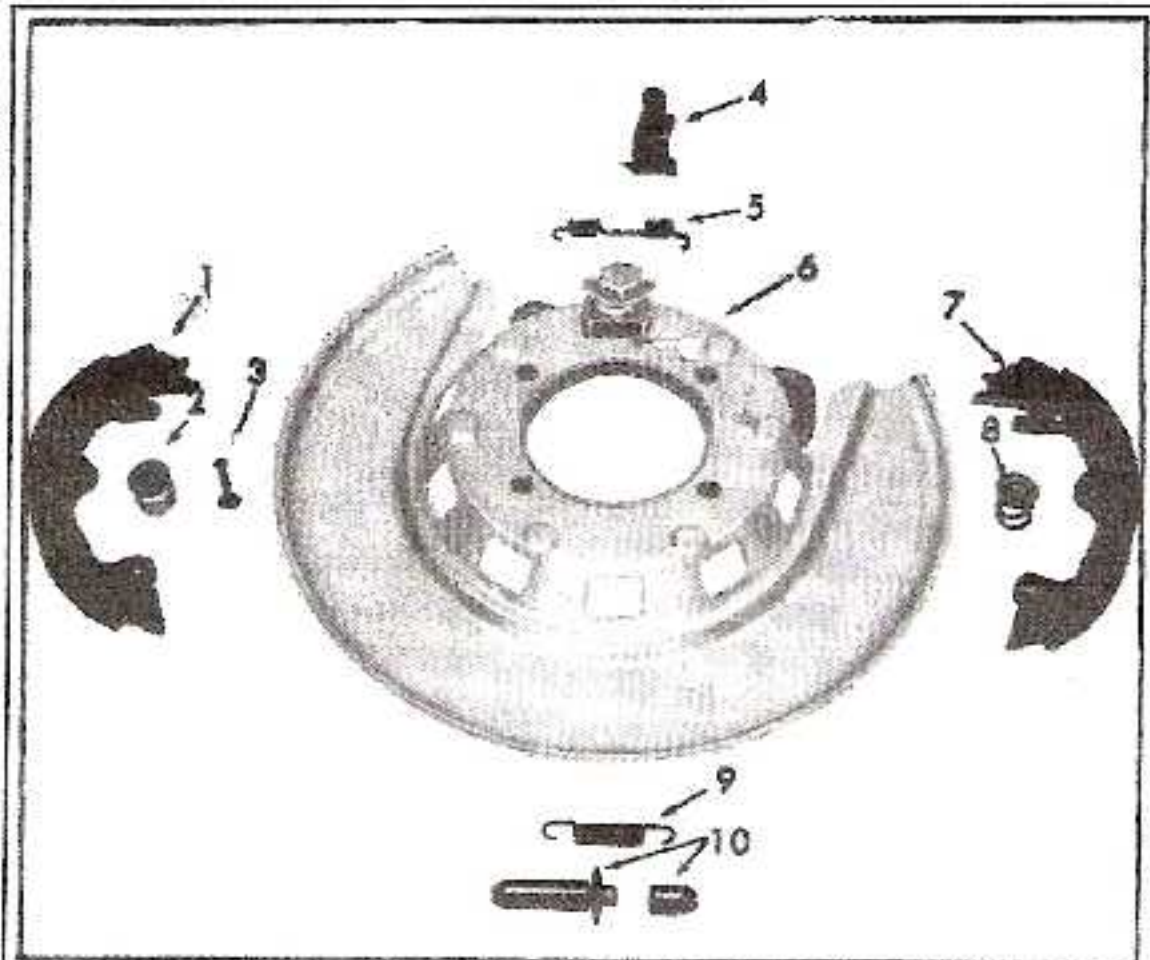


Fig. 44—Exploded View of Parking Brake Shoes

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|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Parking Brake Shoe | 6. Backing Plate |
| 2. Hold Down Spring and Cap | 7. Parking Plate |
| 3. Hold Down Pin | 8. Hold Down Spring and Cap |
| 4. Actuating Lever | 9. Adjusting Screw Spring |
| 5. Retractor Spring | 10. Adjusting Screw Assembly |

To make this job easier, you may purchase from most suppliers a special spring installation tool. It looks like a screwdriver with a small notch cut in the end of it that is supposed to make the task simple. Do you want to know a secret? I bought one and it's still really not that easy to accomplish, even with the special tool.

Having had to do this type of repair more times than I would like to remember, I thought to myself, there really must be an easier way to do this! Well I found one that works for me, so here's how it's done. First you must make what we will call Bob's special-retractor spring-installation tool. This is done using an eight to ten-inch plastic cable tie. Take the cable tie and join it together making the largest size loop that you can. Then slowly turn the spindle until the access hole in the spindle lines up with the hole in the brake shoe into which you must hook the spring. You are now ready to make this a one-try, one-time-only, no-hassle spring installation.

Step three:

Hook one end of the spring (with no tension as yet) into the brake shoe that is toward the front of the car. Insert the

cable tie from the other side between the edge of the brake shoe and the rear surface of the spindle and hook it to the opposite end of the spring. Then gently pull the spring toward the opposite shoe until the hook on the end of the spring lines up with the hole in the parking brake shoe. Once it's in line with the hole, all that is left to do is insert a small regular screwdriver through the hole in the spindle and push on the spring end until it hooks in the shoe. Then you may release the tension on your cable tie.

Believe it or not, you have just completed the installation without doing any damage to the spring or to yourself for that matter. Cut the cable tie, and the spring will stay firmly in place. This ends my spring installation lesson. Try it; it really is as easy as it sounds. Good luck and let me know how you make out.

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