

Real Men Don't Need Brakes



By Dave Millhouser

It was dark as we cruised through Salina, Russell, and Hays, Kansas on US 40. In the days before interstates, my boss would make us transit these towns without using the clutch or brakes on the Brill.

Life's not easy if you're partially color blind, and it was hard to tell the difference between a street lamp... and a green traffic signal, till that sucker jumped red. Since the key to avoiding braking is anticipation, I was always a tad nervous.

On the occasions where we were successful, our sleeping passengers got a really smooth ride, but that wasn't the reason for this exercise. On an "IC 41" Brill, the clutch was considered a part-time worker. All the big stuff was fine, but the hydraulic linkage was famous for vacationing just when you needed it. Learning to double-clutch without the clutch was an important skill back then.

The throttle linkage was hydraulic too... but you could keep going using a piece of rope... so, in an un-requested prequel to a recent column on lane changes... it might be fun to discuss stopping.

Back in the day, there was no need for ABS, because brakes were incapable of locking. You could stomp as hard as you wish, and they'd just mock you. Maintaining safe spacing in a four-coach convoy stretched that sucker out to about

20 miles. Back then, every bus driver was good about looking far down the road (because Darwin had snatched those who weren't).

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