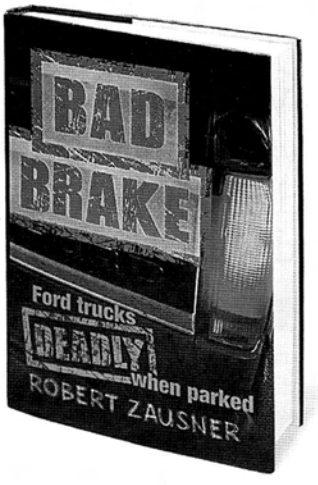
The following book review appeared in the August 2012 issue of *Trial*, the magazine of the American Association for Justice.

books]

Runaway Tragedies



Robert Zausner, a former *Philadelphia Inquirer* reporter, writes a riveting real-life story of trial lawyers taking on a major corporation in *Bad Brake*. The innocent victims of corporate neglect are central to his story: Derick Bobb, an 11-month-old, and his parents of rural south central Pennsylvania; Walter White, almost four years old, and his parents of Spring Creek, Nev.; and Joe Blumer, who lived with his family in Pittsburgh. They all had something in common: they suffered either serious injury or death because of defects in the parking brake of the Ford F-150 pickup truck, and all were represented by Shanin Specter of Philadelphia, along with others in his firm.

The victims were joined not only by tragedy but also by the arduous path of litigation to redress the harm done to them. Zausner details the prosecution of each family's case. The Bobb family settled their case before trial. The White family had to press on for more than 13 years that included a trial, an appeal reversing a punitive damages verdict, and finally a settlement. The Blumer family endured a similar ordeal, prevailing in a trial that resulted in a verdict against Ford. Zausner delves deeply into the effect the tragedies had on the families, as well as the emotional pain they endured in seeking justice for Ford's actions.

He also recounts the "scorched earth" defense that Ford's national counsel and team of professional witnesses presented. Any trial lawyer who has taken on a major corporation—whether it is an auto manufacturer, a pharmaceutical company, big tobacco, or a major financial firm—knows the drill. The time and financial commitments are large, as are the risks. Zausner explains how the plaintiff lawyers used expert witnesses and the pretrial testimony of Ford engineers to present the parking brake design defect to the jury. Zausner shows how Specter made complex design issues understandable to jurors. Opening statements, closing arguments, and key segments of testimony are excerpted, along with pretrial depositions and discovery, allowing the reader to comprehend the issues and the resulting verdicts or settlements.

Much of the book deals with the injuries and damages the families suffered. Specter was able to convey the grief the plaintiffs suffered in a way that lawyers can use in both large and small damages cases.

I rarely have the time or initiative to read through a book quickly or completely, but I swept through Zausner's real-life story of these three families' tragedies in two sittings. It is a well-written tale, and it has the advantage of providing an account of what trial lawyers do every day in the pursuit of justice. T

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Bad Brake: Ford Trucks—Deadly When Parked
Robert Zausner
Camino Books
www.caminobooks.com
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Reviewed by
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