



The Canadian Avanti

Official Newsletter for the Canadian Avanti Owners Association

March – April 2014

Finally Spring!



(Norman and Kristine Searle's 1963 R2)

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The Canadian Avanti

The Canadian Avanti is published quarterly by the Canadian Avanti Owners Association (CAOA), a chapter of the Avanti Owners Association International (AOAI).

The Canadian Avanti Owners Association is a non-profit organization committed to preserving the history of the Avanti automobile. We currently have +40 members located in all provinces across Canada. We are a Chapter of the Avanti Owners Association International Inc. Our group strives to promote the research and study of the Avanti and the companies that have produced it over the years. We wish to share our knowledge with others and encourage the acquisition, preservation, restoration, and maintenance of all Avantis produced by Studebaker and successor companies. Our Canadian Chapter also promotes fellowship and camaraderie by publishing a newsletter quarterly, participating in local CAOAI or Studebaker Drivers Club events and our general meetings held quarterly at various members' homes. Ownership of an Avanti (Studebaker or successor) is not required.

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President's Message...



Well Spring is sprung...it seems. Enjoying the burgeoning growth, slightly warmer days, birdsong and tree frogs at night. Of course the black flies are rampant this year so we all look like chronic acne cases. Later than usual getting our cars out and on the road but just more incentive to get on it ASAP. I will be heading off to the Bracebridge Father's Day show on the 15th. A nice show as they close off the main street downtown and there is a great selection from model T's to rods, customs and classics. Free for both cars and

attendance. This year we will be showing up in our latest, Millar and Gini Young's 89. A real beauty which I (did I say we?) recently purchased. Proud to own and care for such a great car in great condition. I still love my 63, but certainly notice the difference comfort wise that the intervening years produced. When asked if I would now sell my R1404, I thought, well, it would be like selling one bookend. 1404 being one of the first and the 89 one of the last. A little voice has been screaming in my ear "you don't need to put anything in between". It looks like there will be a healthy contingent of CAO members attending Dover this July, and I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible. It is a great location and Delaware is Sales Tax free! Here's wishing any of you a safe trip. In Ontario, Fleetwood is coming up soon which is always a fun time. The annual Badenoch get together was fun and a good first get together for many of us. Roland Vardon had a good presentation on detailing which many seemed to appreciate. I still question though, the ability; mine at least; to wax my Avanti in 20 minutes! Lots going on this summer which unfortunately will seem shorter than ever, so let's get out there and enjoy while it lasts. Welcome to our new members and renewals, and please keep in touch and let us know what you are up to.



All the best! Steve Wohleber

Editor's Message...



Wow, what a year so far. Seems like I have been going non-stop since January. Now that winter is finally over, I think, time to bring out our favourite cars. My plans went to hell and back. No Avanti R&R but I did buy a new house! I wonder if the Avanti will tow it? I wonder if I can get a class IV hitch from Studebaker International? Naw, I will stick with the Silverado for now.

No Avanti made it to Badenoch except for mine; refused to take a picture as it was still dirty from being stored all winter and just came out the day before. Speaking of Avanti, we have a new member with a 1963 R2 (Norman and Kristine Searle) and two new additions for Steve and Barb Wohleber (1989 Avanti) and Ralph and Marguerite Hart's 2002 Avanti. Glad to see Millar and Gini Young's Avanti staying in Ontario – I am sure Steve will take good care of it.

Badenoch is now a memory – Fleetwood Cruizein is just around the corner. Then there is the International Meet in Dover Delaware – do you have your room yet? And these are just events I am going to. Steve Wohleber is heading for Bracebridge on Father's day, usually a big weekend for car shows. Let me know where you are heading off to and take some pictures.

See you on the road!



By Mike Emmerich

Ramblings

CAOA Support Options

Since I was unable to make it to South Bend this year (May 3-4), Stu Chapman was kind enough to contact the Studebaker National Museum for options and this is his report. This will be tabled for discussion at our next meeting.

"I had a lengthy discussion with Drew Van De Wiele, Curator for the Studebaker National Museum, regarding the donation wishes of the Canada Avanti Owners Association. First of all, sponsorship of a brick in the dedication courtyard is available at a cost of \$250.00 on a one-time donation. At the moment there are no Avanti models in the collection that are available for annual sponsorship. The #9 car is on loan and not available as is the Ron Hall car.

However, a very interesting alternative is being proposed. There are two Studebaker Prototypes in the collection that are based on building a series of Studebakers utilizing the Avanti styling themes. One is a Notchback Sedan Prototype and the other is a Fastback Sedan Prototype. Each is available for an annual sponsorship of \$100.00.

I photographed the copy descriptions on my iPad for each, as well as shots for each car, and one for the two together, five in total. I am emailing these to you separately. Because of the clear Avanti connection I am recommending the Club sponsor each of these cars for one year, total cost \$200.00. Should an eligible Avanti come into the collection you could have first refusal after the first year sponsorship is up. Let me know what you think after you've seen the pictures. The Club would receive a photograph and certificate from the Museum for each car. By the way, as prototypes, each car has one door on one side and two doors on the other side."



1963 Lark with Support Plaque.



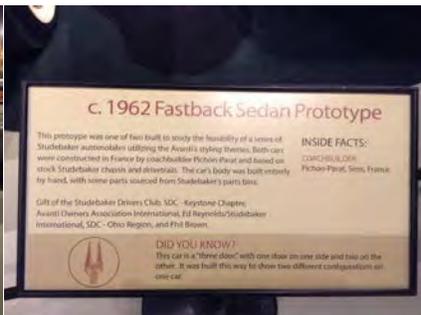
1962 Prototypes.



1962 Fastback.



1962 Notchback.



1962 Fastback Plaque.



1962 Notchback Plaque



CAOA Meeting Minutes

April 27, 2014

Members Present: Welcome to the home of Mike Emmerich and Paulette Martel. Members present include Dave Simonson, Hugh Campbell and Bonny Butler, Ralph and Marguerite Hart, Steve Wohleber, Larry Gibson, Ray Wise, Dave Moxham, Jim and Barb Anderson, Stu and Thelma Chapman, Bill Harris, and Stephanie Browning.

Call to Order: 1:40 pm

Opening Remarks: Steve welcomed all to our first meeting of 2014. Ralph Hart brought his new 2002 Avanti. Thanks to Mike and Paulette for hosting.

Minutes: Minutes of December 1, 2013 as included in the newsletter by Mike Emmerich was reviewed. Motion to accept by Dave Moxham, seconded by Ralph Hart, carried.

Treasurer's Report: Report covering December 2013 to April 2014 was presented by Dave Moxham. Motion to accept by Dave Moxham, seconded by Hugh Campbell, carried.

Membership Report: Bill Harris reported they we currently stand at 36 renewed members. A couple are still outstanding. Bill and Steve Wohleber will follow-up on all members not renewed.

Old Business:

Web Site: No report available as Sue Lusted was unable to attend. Please check out the website to see if your car is pictured. If you are sending in your Avanti and/or story for the first time, please send to Sue Lusted cc Mike Emmerich.

Membership Renewal: All chapter memberships require a membership in the AOAI, which are due on expiry on membership card. Forms were sent with last newsletter. AN attempt will be made to regain lost members.

New Business:

Sponsorship: Mike Emmerich was planning to meet in person to discuss sponsorship options at the Studebaker National Museum. As he is now unable to go, Stu Chapman volunteered to discuss when at the Michiana Swap meet (May 3-4, 2014).

By Mike Emmerich



Calendars: The 2014 Calendars are in! Featuring our own Hugh Campbell on the cover and Roly and Sue Lusted's inside, sure to look great on your wall. Only \$12 at this meeting or \$15 mailed (send your order in along with membership dues) to Dave Moxham.

Int. Meet: Motion made by Steve Wohleber to provide three trophies for the Int. Meet. Seconded by Larry Gibson, all in favour, carried. This motion was made in response to an e-mail from Dale Sexton: "Hello Chapters, In support of the Avanti meet at Dover the Arizona chapter has volunteered to lead the call for sponsorship of the judging awards. Any chapter or individual is welcome to support the judging award program with \$35 for each award. Donors will be acknowledged in a future issue of this magazine. Make your check payable to **AOAI / 2014 Awards** and mail to Denny Lockmon, 9417 West Cedar Hill Circle, Sun City, AZ 85351. Thanks for your support". Several CAO members are attending, staying at the host hotel and Comfort Inn (alternate). Please let Mike Emmerich know if you are planning to go.

Fleetwood Cruizein: Held in London Ont. June 7-8. Please contact Mike Emmerich if you are planning to attend – possible meet at a central location and go in as a group.

Michiana Swap Meet: As Mike Emmerich can no longer attend, would appreciate a report from anyone who was able to attend.

Events:

Fleetwood Cruizein: June 7-8 2014. This is an "unofficial" CAO event.

International Meets: June 28-July 5, 2014 is Dover Delaware
<http://www.delmarvasdc.org/>

Meetings for 2014: July – August hosted by Bill Harris. Detail TBA.
September – Hosted by Wayne Hamilton – may be combined with Hamilton Chapter BBQ – Details TBA
Nov 30 – Hosted by Larry and Barb Gibson – Hamilton Chapter Christmas Party Nov 29.

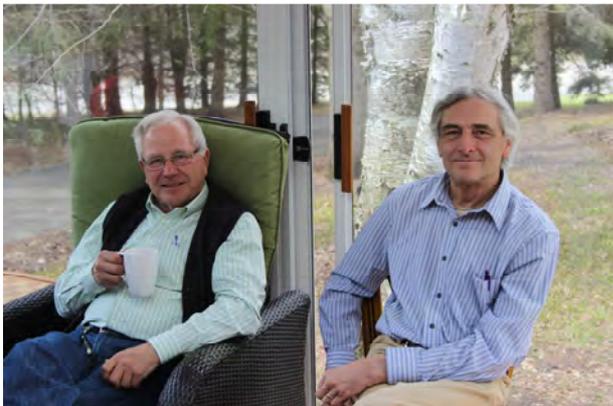
Motion to Adjourn: Motion made by Hugh Campbell @ 2:40 pm.

By Mike Emmerich

CAOA Meeting April 27

This has been a long winter and just where is spring? It was cooler than normal but at least it was dry. Not many brought, their Avanti; actually only one as mine was already home! Ralph and Marguerite made up for it by bringing their new acquisition – a 2002 Avanti. More on this beauty next newsletter. As usual, plenty of food, drink and a good time had by all. There is something about having a meeting in someone's home with a BBQ. Very relaxing and social. If you have not attended one yet – next one is at Bill's!

Here are some pictures of the meeting...



Larry Gibson and Steve Wohleber enjoying a coffee before the meeting.



Dave Moxham, Stu Chapman, Bill Harris and Dave Simonson sharing tales.



Hugh Campbell and Ralph Hart.



The better halves – Marguerite Hart, Barb Anderson, Thelma Chapman, Paulette Martel, and Bonny Butler.

By Mike Emmerich

CAOA Meeting April 27



My 1983 Avanti – don't care much for cream but I have to admit it looks good...



Ralph and Marguerite took the long drive to my house – I bet it took only 5 minutes but I bet that they were fun.



Gotta have hamburgers and sausages for a BBQ. Thank goodness the weather cooperated.



A happy Stephanie Browning, back in the colonies for the summer, then off to University for the winter and back to England.

Badenoch 2014



I don't know about you, but something always triggers a feeling. Barrett Jackson Auction represents post-Christmas. Daytona 500 is the start of the racing season (and a hope for an early spring). Badenoch? Well it is the start of the "car" season. Time to knock off the cob webs on the Avanti (or coupe), look for some parts to sell and to buy some more parts you don't need to replace them and renew acquaintances with people you don't

normally see. Paul Revell spends a lot of time arranging and setting up plus cooking up some hot dogs. He has done a great job in the past and this year was no different. I just wish the weather was better. The car count was down a little and there were fewer outdoor vendors, but you know, there were just as many attendees. This is an Ontario Chapter SDC event but many make the long trek from Eastern Ontario to attend. There were many members from the Hamilton Chapter and even quite a few CAOAs members. Roland Vardon was there as a guest speaker, discussing the correct way to wax a car and with what products. I didn't buy anything this time, but there were plenty of items to select from. Larry Gibson had his 1965 Commander up for grabs – 383 and a four speed, I bet it is a fun ride.

Now for some pictures...



The ladies got together to visit St Jacobs for some shopping and lunch. Stephanie Browning, Barb Gibson, Barb Anderson, Sue Lusted and Paulette Martel look all smiles!



Paul Revell seems to be saying he is glad it is almost over for the year. He is handing out for \$2 one of his famous boiled Red Hots.

Badenoch 2014



Peter Sant (I only see him at Badenoch!), Roly Lusted and Jim Anderson.



Larry Gibson with his car for sale. Contact him if you would like a fast ride this summer.



Roly Lusted and Ray Martin (sorry, don't know who is on the left)...



Cliff Tattersall and Stu Chapman. Love that jacket Stu, wish I could have been there!



Roland Vardon and Bill Harris. Is that wax on his thumb?



Steve Wohleber and Dave Moxham, after their long drive down. Give me a coke – now! And a dog...

And the Beat Goes On...

My name is Verne and I'm a Studeholic. In my last volume we explored the closing years of the First Century B.S. (Before Studebakers), now we should look at the opening years of the First Century A.D. (Automotive Destiny).

As my sixteenth birthday approached, I began looking forward to relief from my driving deficit. It had been eight years since I last drove Big Bill's clapped out old Chevy truck! Dad decided when I was fifteen that I should learn to drive, so he saddled up the 1956 DeSoto and took me to a back road for that purpose. Much to his surprise I climbed behind the wheel and drove off without waiting for instructions. Fortunately (for me) he knew better than to ask nosey questions and I certainly wasn't volunteering anything. Suffice it to say that I had my licence by the fall of 1960 which gave me access to the DeSoto and Mum's Oldsmobile, at least at times.

By now we had moved to St. Catharine's and I had a part time job downtown which became full time in summer. This involved commuting by bus, definitely uncool and a bit of a pain in the gluteus maximus. Several of my friends had picked up late 1940s and early 1950s Fords or Chevys, all of which had the visual appeal of a box turtle and were mostly beyond my limited budget anyway.

One Saturday a flash of chrome at the back of a used car lot caught my eye, and a closer investigation turned up a 1950 Champion Starlight Coupe. It certainly didn't look like box turtle - it was "Different - by Design..." and at \$75 it would fit the budget. It looked good and the Shyster, pardon me, gentleman who ran that fine business assured me that it ran beautifully.

He let me use his telephone to call Dad who came down, drove the car, looked it over and decided that it was a keeper, even though he had a restrained opinion of the gentleman and his fine business. I was instructed shut up while he found many faults with the car and offered \$50. I drove it off the lot for \$60 right after Dad showed me how to shift a tree-on-the-tree. It actually was a very good car which I drove happily through high school including trips to visit my cousin on her farm at Midland and my buddy who had summer employment at the YMCA camp near Honey Harbour. I still have a colour-correct model of that exact car.

Entering university, though, would require more modern wheels, at least in theory, as it would entail regular trips to Guelph. Besides, I had now been infected by the Studebaker Bug and had seen a nice 1955

And the Beat Goes On...

Champion 2-door sedan. I soon owned the 1955 for \$125 and got \$50 for the Starlight. It was quite serviceable if you were careful to step where there was some floor left and very economical (important for a student) but I really liked the 1950 better even though the 1955 was still "Different by Design..."

Late that fall (1963) came the dreadful news that Studebaker had shut down in South Bend part way through production of the 1964s. The wonderful new Avanti had failed to save it (more on this later). Everyone knew that Studebaker of Canada would carry on but few were surprised when production ended during the 1966 model run. I was crushed. My addiction to Studebakers appeared to be over. Little did I know that it was just beginning!

Fast forward to summer, 1966. I was living in Kitchener and commuting daily to Guelph for classes and my summer job at the University, past the local Mercedes dealer. One day my trip home was interrupted by a Studebaker grille in front of his showroom! Maybe not surprising as many Studebaker dealers also sold Mercedes. It turned out to be a 1964 Daytona convertible painted Golden Sand, matching interior and white top. It was quite plain for a Daytona - six cylinder stick with the only options overdrive and power top but it was very low mileage, looked almost new, was "Different by Design..." and I had to have it. The dealer nervously suggested that I might be better to sell the 1955 myself and the 1964 was mine for \$1,100.

It was a wonderful little car - very economical and never once let me down even on trips to Kentucky and Tennessee and to Cape Cod. It was certainly a cut above the clunkers that most of my friends at school drove. I enjoyed it through University but when the regular paycheques started rolling in I stupidly traded it in on a brand new 1968 Oldsmobile Cutlass S hardtop which was absolute garbage. I have been kicking myself ever since and have never purchased another North American car as a driver.

That fantastic little ragtop was the last Studebaker I used for my daily transportation, but the Studebaker Bug turned out to be a virus which has no cure. And the beat goes on! Be sure to tune in next issue and follow the progression of my illness.

To be continued.....

Norman and Kristine Searle's Avanti



I only have the Avanti left at this time. Over the years I have owned 50+ Studes. I had a project Wagonaire and a nice Cruiser up until a few weeks ago but my partner of 35 years convinced me that if I keep everything nothing will ever get properly finished, and she is right, so it is Avanti only for now.

You might have seen my profile picture on the AOAI site. It was taken at the St. Albert car show 3 days after I got the Avanti home from Nanaimo, BC. I drove it straight off the hiway (I live in a small town south of

Edmonton and St. Albert is north of Edmonton) and onto the exhibition grounds where it won 2nd place in the Studebaker division. No prep or even cleaning off the bugs. You could have knocked me over with a feather that day.

I bought the car basically sight unseen. Just a few pictures. I was assured by the previous owner that the rocker boxes were solid and he did send pictures from under the car. I flew to Nanaimo and paid for the car then started home. On the ferry crossing to Van (picture included) I overheard a number of people commenting about the car. Everything from a kit-car to a Jaguar to a Maserati. It was kind of fun to listen to. I made it to Hope, BC when the alternator cratered. I was already on the Coquahala so I drove with only low beams until I got to Kamloops, my planned stop for the night. The next morning I bump started it and drove to a garage that specializes in old cars. I found an alternator in the trunk and after getting it installed I made it the rest of the way home without incident.



Also, as you may know, we need an out-of-province inspection here in Alberta if you want to import a car. It is a fairly tough inspection. When I had the one done for this car it passed everything but the brake section. The rear seals had leaked so I had to replace them and clean up the brakes. That was the ONLY problem they found with the car...

I was told the car was restored in 1986. The paint may have been redone in the early

Norman and Kristine Searle's Avanti

2000's. It started life as Avanti gold with fawn interior, but you can't find any gold colour remaining. A real nice colour-over job... It is a 4-speed R2 with power windows. It also had the "quite-tone" exhaust as an option which I am working to restore. I expect to be about 3 years before it is done to my full satisfaction. It won't be Concours but it will have a huge "WOW" factor.



I had the car on the hoist the other night and noticed a puddle under it. Upon further investigation I found the water pump was leaking. A friend dropped in last night and we decided to pull the water pump and check it out.

Sure enough a major flow was showing from the bleed hole in the bottom of the standard duty pump. I happened to have ordered a heavy duty Avanti pump as part of my procedure to have quality parts on hand so I decided to install it today. Worked out A-OK.

In the meantime one of the things I normally do is check out all related parts if I pull something apart. In this instance I gave the supercharger a spin by hand and it went "grind-crunch"... This was not good. A quick recheck confirmed the SC was almost at the point of seizing so when I reassembled the car today I left the SC belts off. At least now I can still drive it without causing more damage to the SC.

Further to this story. The last time I had the car out for a long drive I had just replaced the fixed fan (how I got it) with a brand new viscous clutch unit I had ordered from an Avanti parts vendor (actually it was from Russ at Canadian Studebaker). It started howling like some kind of Banshee so I ordered a new Flex-a-lite fan from a local speed shop, thinking that was the problem. I am figuring now that the howling was the supercharger trying to tell me that it was packing up for the duration and not the new fan combo unit.... Talk about coincidence...

I will plan on getting the supercharger rebuilt next year... Budget is getting a bit drawn down. I am getting itchy to get it out of the garage but winter just doesn't want to go away. Maybe by this weekend (April 5-6).

AVANTI

THE AMERICAN ROLLS-ROYCE / BY DANIEL A. JEDLIČKA



Someone should tell Nate Altman that he is doing it all wrong, that it is impossible for anyone to be hand-building sinfully exciting automobiles in this sterile age of mass production, an age that dictates that profitable automakers produce four-wheel sloths by the millions for The Majority Man.

What right does Altman have to be making, with lethal competence, in his very own auto factory, a car that generates the same shock waves of envy and lust as, say, a Gangloff-bodied 1937 Bugatti sport coupe, a Le Baron-bodied 1936 Packard Twin-Six phaeton, or a Cadillac-powered Allard J2X?

Hey, Nate! It's 1973. You're not following the American Formula. Hand-building cars went out of style in America at about the time Henry Ford I's Model T wobbled off his first crude assembly line. What right do you have to be sitting down there in, of all places, South Bend, Indiana, and, with a cigar tightly clamped between your teeth, to be president of Avanti Motor Corporation, which is just as real an automobile company as General Motors Corporation—not one of those re-converted garage operations that turns out a handful of nutball cars a year.

Face it, sir! Your automobiles are a bit too... *elitist* for this day and age. Hand built? Your car has not been designed by bean-counting technocrats. It is not the resolutely ordinary kind of committee-think vehicle we've all come to expect, with painfully few exceptions like the Pontiac Firebird Trans Am SD-455, from the Detroit boys. Mr. Altman, sir—you simply can't get away with this nonsense.

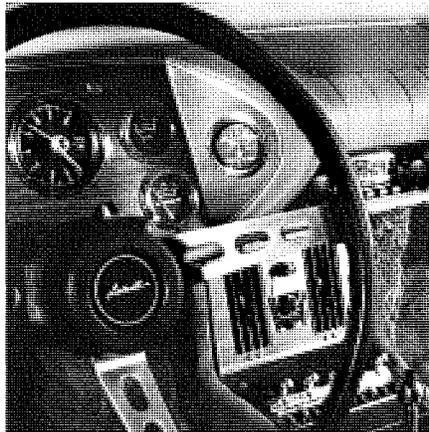
But the fact of the matter is that Nathan D. Altman has been getting away with it since he began selling his car, called the Avanti II, in August 1965, even though it is based on the old Studebaker Avanti. The original Avanti was dropped after about 5,000 were thrown together to help save, by virtue of the car's charisma, the dying Studebaker Corporation. That automaker pulled out of South Bend in 1964 and lingered on building economy models in Canada for a few years.

The Avanti II is powered by a 1973 Chevrolet 400-cubic-inch V-8 engine that delivers gobs of mind-boggling torque and that runs through a slick GM Turbo-Hydramatic (or manual four-speed) transmission. The "base" car, that old Stude Avanti, has undergone so many engineering improvements that all the Avanti II shares with it is the best it had to offer—and that's quite a bit: a startling wedge-shaped body which seems destined always to appear ahead of its time and safety features which include a hefty, built-in roll bar and dovetail door latches that were structural body members.

The story of how Nate Altman, a former South Bend Studebaker dealer, entered the auto-manufacturing business is a peculiar one. Considering how rough the federal government, with all the pollution and safety regulations, is making it for the big Detroit automakers to even build *their* cars, it is a story that never will be told again.

The idea for the Stude Avanti was conceived by the late Sherwood H. Egbert, a bright, dynamic young businessman who early in 1961 became Studebaker's president. Determined to save the dying automaker, Egbert made envelope sketches of a radical new car while flying from California to South Bend. He gave them to Raymond Loewy, the world-famous industrial designer who had styled the rakish 1953 Studebaker coupe, now a collector's item. Loewy, working with a small team in Palm Springs, California, came up with the Avanti's design and the car was rushed into production.

That was a mistake. Any new car thrown on mass-production lines will be full of bugs. The rear windows of some Stude Avantis, for example, pulled out of their brackets at high speeds.



Despite it all, orders poured in for the \$4,500-plus car. Egbert was a flying buff and the car's controls roughly resembled those of an airplane. People just could not resist this bizarre creation that possessed such unique features as aircraft-style rocker switches on the interior roof above the windshield. An aircraft-type quadrant on the floor contained controls and switches that were illuminated by soft red lights similar to aircraft panel lighting.

The late Ian Fleming, author of the James Bond novels, bought one, shipped it to England, and said he considered it the best car he'd ever owned. He bought a supercharged Avanti; the car came with an antiquated 289-cubic-inch Stude V-8 but was available in supercharged form from the factory. A "blown" Avanti would really gobble up the pavement be-

cause it had a light, fiberglass, aerodynamic body. An Avanti, in near stock form, hit 170 miles per hour during a speed run at the Bonneville Salt Flats.

Unfortunately, Studebaker was in such bad shape that even the Avanti couldn't save it. In 1964, when Altman received word that the automaker was moving and that the Avanti was to be dropped, he knew it was dead. But there, on his showroom floor, was this somewhat freaky but fabulous automobile, the Avanti, and surely *it* could be saved. Nobody, he thought, could let a car like this die. He approached American Motors Corporation and strongly suggested that it continue building the car. At that time, AMC was pushing economy models and Altman's suggestion was met with subdued gales of laughter. Ironically, AMC later offered the Javelin model, which fell into the so-called sporty car market. It was a market that the Avanti really had all to itself before the Mustang was introduced in mid-1964 and broke things wide open for the Chevy Camaro and Pontiac Firebird. The Javelin helped save AMC from financial ruin.

Dick Teague, AMC's brilliant head stylist and a classic-car collector, recently told me that he would dearly love to have the Avanti in this automaker's lineup of models.

Altman has always been a tough-minded man, and when AMC didn't bite, he approached Checker Motors Corporation, the taxicab builder. The late Morris Markin, Checker's founder, not only turned down Altman, he called the Avanti ugly. *Ugly?* Altman was infuriated, this remark coming from a man who built the proverbial box on wheels. All right, Altman thought, I'll make the car myself. He would build it the way it should have been built to begin with; it would be an entirely handcrafted automobile. It would be—the American Rolls-Royce.

But how? Altman was just a car dealer. He was not the least bit prepared to grapple with the mind-bending logistics of producing and marketing cars. Furthermore, although he had been a successful auto dealer, Altman had been selling losers all his life—Edsels, Studebakers, Packards. When he had an opportunity to obtain a Volkswagen franchise in 1955, before that car became a very hot commodity in America, he told the VW man that there was no way that the frumpy-looking German car could be a hit in this country. Yet there was something within Altman that pushed him on. It was one hell of a gamble and he knew it. He was no high roller, just a conservative Indiana businessman. But he just couldn't let the Avanti die. To hell with the insanely complicated problems. The Avanti would live, it *must* live, he reasoned.



So Altman bought two Studebaker plant buildings. One building was where the old Avanti had been partially built. Then he bought the rights and equipment needed to make the car, plus the parts and equipment for Studebaker's line of trucks. The truck deal was a shrewd one, enabling Altman to keep Avanti Motor Corporation in the black during the first trying year of the new operation. Stude was glad to cooperate, to rid itself at a relatively low price of the whole deal.

Finally, Altman asked Eugene Hardig, Stude's talented vice-president of engineering, to help him get started. The forty-year Stude veteran, who was about to retire and buy the first plane ticket to Florida, nearly threw Altman from his office. Was the man insane? If Stude couldn't make the car successful, how could this car dealer? But Altman would not be rebuffed. He was in too deep. He offered Hardig, who for years had been plagued with orders to trim costs so Stude could save a few nickels, a proposition he would find nearly impossible to refuse: a chance to build a car with nearly no expenses spared. A chance to build the American Rolls-Royce. Hardig had a hard time sleeping that night. He called Altman the following morning. "Count me in," he said. After placing down the phone, Altman took a long tug on his cigar and exhaled. He stared at the phone for a very long time. And then he smiled.

Studebaker was not building engines anymore, so the first Avanti II prototype was powered by a Corvette 327-cubic-inch V-8 pulled from a wrecked car in a Chicago junkyard. Meanwhile, a production line was set up in January 1965. Veteran Stude workers, real craftsmen who had nowhere to go, were recruited. They were told that if it took four hours to hang a door right, they'd have the time. Today, many are still with Avanti Motor and working conditions haven't changed. Avanti Motor sells about 300 cars a year. Altman patently refuses to go above that production figure because

he feels that the car's quality would suffer. He is unflinchingly dedicated to building a quality automobile. Nothing less will do.

To watch the Avanti operation is like taking a quantum jump back in time. The automaker builds its own bodies, seats, frames, and most other components in leisurely, early-twentieth-century fashion. Key mechanical components like engines and disc brakes come from outside suppliers so owners won't have problems getting their cars fixed anywhere, a bonus Ferrari owners would cherish.

Another advantage is that Avanti buyers can order the car right from Altman in his office because he doesn't believe in selling it through dealers. Most do, trading in Porsches, Ferraris, Cadillac Eldorados, Lincoln Continentals, Chrysler Imperials, and Jaguars. They fly in from all over the country, even from Europe. Ordering an Avanti can be an involved process, and usually is, because there are more than 400 interior trim choices available. (Actually, Altman will finish the interior of an Avanti II with anything a customer brings.) Offered are the finest suedes, leathers, Raphael vinyls, and a seemingly endless selection of decorator fabrics including crushed velvets. Would you believe Dunhill Topaz Crushed Velvet seat inserts? The feet of Avanti II owners usually rest on deep-pile plush or shag carpeting created by Bigelow and Lees. The car receives ten coats of the finest automotive lacquer. Each one is *hand sanded* between coats. The final paint job is hand rubbed.

The result is that it takes a terribly long time to build a car. Delivery time is about 12 weeks because each Avanti II is subjected to high-intensity road testing before the customer gets his keys. No car leaves the factory until it is as perfect as man can make it. Unreal.



Altman will sit for hours, smoking his way through a string of Cuban cigars, and tell stories—without mentioning names—about humorous things that

happen when a husband and wife order a car in his Spartan office. (Despite his product's Sybaritic nature, he could care less about impressing people with surroundings.) Generally, the wife picks the interior trims and the husband selects the car's color. Couples have nearly come to blows in the process. In the end, no two Avanti IIs leave the factory looking alike.

Sitting behind his desk while the buyers agonize over the variety of selections, Altman moderates, listens politely, softly makes suggestions. Actually, after a few minutes with customers, he has nailed down in his mind exactly what they'll want two hours later. He's been through the whole thing too many times. A very few interior trim and exterior color choices have been so outlandish that he has refused to build a car. Then, when the potential customers see that he is serious, that here is an auto man who really *won't* sell them a poorly decorated Avanti no matter how much money they have, they sober up and become realistic. Invariably, they thank him later.

"The very worst customers are celebrities; they want everything for nothing, and I don't go for that," Altman remarks. "I don't give a damn *who* they are."

Altman is always available to personally handle any complaints. He's constantly on the phone with potential customers and buyers whose cars have developed minor problems. If he can't arrange to have a car fixed where an Avanti II owner lives, he'll bring the car back to the factory.

Now 62 years of age, Altman looks ten years younger. He thrives on building and selling his cars with the help of his brother, Arnold, who is the company's vice-president. The Avanti II has a base price of \$8,645, but usually, with options, leaves the factory as a \$10,000-plus car. It has a list of options as long as a seven-foot-tall professional basketball player's arm, including Borrani wire wheels. But the car is really a bargain, considering that the few other "specialty" American cars being built go for a lot more. The Stutz Blackhawk, for instance, sells for around \$35,000, and it's got a Pontiac engine and chassis. Altman sells his cars mainly to high-buck professional people with an affinity toward sophistication. He could charge \$15,000 for his car and his sales wouldn't drop.

One recent Avanti II buyer was Raymond Loewy, stylist for the original Avanti. He had tenaciously clung to his old Stude Avanti but finally broke down and ordered an Avanti II in South Bend. Silver Pewter with a tweed interior. He took the car to Paris, then

drove it throughout France, where, he wrote Altman, people in the villages "cheered when I drove through town."

Loewy may have his car for quite some time because it is almost impossible to wear out an Avanti II. I've driven a few with more than 100,000 miles on them and they cruise without breathing hard at 80 miles per hour.

The hot-setup Avanti II is the very early one with the Corvette 327 engine and a Hurst four-speed shifter. They're hard to find now, but with no anti-pollution equipment on the engine, they *really* fly.

The peculiar thing is that although the Avanti II has a 1962 body and old Stude Lark chassis, it is becoming increasingly popular. It is a rather compact car, though its hood appears to be ten miles long. Altman points out that many of his customers are looking for a compact, fast, posh, sporty car. They're tired of hauling around bulky Cadillacs. This is precisely why the relatively compact-sized Mercedes-Benz is stealing away potential Cadillac buyers—and the reason that Cadillac has for some time been building prototype "mini-Cadillac" models.

"Consider that roll bar," notes Altman. "With future government requirements for roll-over protection in cars, every auto eventually must have something like it." Considering all its features, the Avanti II is becoming more and more desirable as the years slide by, and there is no way that a Detroit automaker could afford to tool up for a sleek, limited-production car like the Avanti II because it would have to sell too many—far more than 300 units a year—to justify the tooling expenditures. Even the limited-production Corvette (about 30,000 are sold annually) is rumored to be on the way out in

its present form.

When the time comes to put alternate power plants in cars, like the Wankel engine, Nate Altman and Eugene Hardig are ready. They can hardly wait until GM is able to supply them with a Wankel so they can stuff it under an Avanti II's hood.

Driving an Avanti II is a unique experience. The original Avanti's controls and instruments are still present, including a vacuum pressure gauge—which was put in the original car because of the supercharger but which still is an excellent indicator of the engine's state of tune. The very first thing one notices is that the car feels as if it was hewn out of a piece of rock—no ill-fitting parts, no rattles despite its fiberglass body. It feels as strong as a frontiersman's anvil.

It'll hit 60 miles per hour in about eight seconds. With its heavy-duty suspension, which features front and rear anti-roll bars, it holds the road like a paint stripe, though traveling fast over bumpy surfaces will cause the "live" (not independently sprung) rear axle to jump around. Its aerodynamic body easily knives its way through the air as the road lunges under its nose. One must keep an eye on the speedometer because the car reaches escape velocities pretty fast. The brakes haul it down like a giant chain. Most Avanti IIs aren't driven hard, and that's a shame because the car can handle it and is "forgiving" if you do something stupid. And if you do, the chances are that you won't get a scratch.

Altman is rebuilding an Avanti II that rolled over five times. The insurance company wanted to write it off as a total wreck, but its lady driver, who was unhurt in the accident, insisted that it be rebuilt. Altman received a

call from a state trooper who was at the scene of the accident. "He just couldn't believe it," Altman says. "He couldn't understand how anybody could have walked out of that crash."

If Altman had not always possessed the unshakable conviction that the Avanti II is the best car in the world for the money, he never would have carried on. It has always been something to *believe in*. Near the entrance to the huge Avanti Motor factory sits a 1955 Packard Caribbean, a collector's item that was mechanically advanced for its day. Altman has had a multitude of offers for the car, but he won't sell it. Like the Avanti, he regards it as more than a mere car. Like the Avanti, it has *integrity*.

So what sort of Lewis Carroll situation do we have here? Certainly an automaker that the pinstriped *Wall Street Journal* and a lot of people wouldn't understand. Certainly a car definitely not aimed at the Ozzies and Harriets of the world. And most certainly the type of auto man who, when he retires, will never be replaced. An original.

"There were some people at the beginning who gave us a few months before we went under," Altman says, chewing on his cigar. "We haven't heard from them for quite some time now." He leans across his desk, planting his elbows on the small mountain of papers that are always there. "I really think that no matter what happens, we'll always be a few years ahead of everyone else," he says. Then, almost whispering, he adds, "As long as I'm around, I'm going to make sure of that."

Nate Altman quite definitely would never have been happy selling Volkswagens. □

Upcoming Events...

Chapter Events

June 7-8, 2014: Fleetwood Cruizein, London ON. Can we break nine Avanti? For more information, contact Mike Emmerich or <http://www.fleetwoodcountrycruizein.com/>.

Meetings for 2014: July-August – Meeting hosted by Bill Harris, TBA.
September – Meeting hosted by Wayne Hamilton and Sharon Pearce, TBA.
November 29 – Hamilton Chapter Christmas Party.
November 30 – Meeting hosted by Larry and Barb Gibson.

AOAI Events

See SDC Events below.

SDC Events

June 28-July 5, 2014: 50th (Golden Anniversary) INTERNATIONAL MEET, at Dover Downs Hotel & Casino/Dover International Speedway in Dover Delaware. Hosted by the DelMarVa Peninsula Chapter. See www.DelMarVaSDC.org for more information.

Aug 8-9: Crossroads Zone Meet, New Dundee MI. See <http://wlecsdc.com/> for more information.

October 3-4, 2014: Ontario Chapter SDC Maple Leaf Tour. Verne Brinsmead is the contact for more information.

Have an event you would like to add? Please contact Mike Emmerich with the details and I will include.



Lexophile

'Lexophile' is a word used to describe those who love using words in rather unique ways, such as "you can tune a piano, but you can't tuna fish", or "to write with a broken pencil is pointless." A competition to see who can come up with the best one is held every year. See some entertaining entries below. This year's winning submission is posted at the very end.

Police were called to a day care where a 3-year-old was resisting a rest.

When fish are in schools, they sometimes take debate.

A thief who stole a calendar got twelve months.

A thief fell and broke his leg in wet cement. He became a hardened criminal.

Thieves who steal corn from a garden could be charged with stalking.

We'll never run out of math teachers because they always multiply.

The math professor went crazy with the blackboard. He did a number on it.

The dead batteries were given out free of charge.

A dentist and a manicurist fought tooth and nail.

A bicycle can't stand alone; it is 2 tired.

A will is a dead giveaway.

With her marriage she got a new name and a dress.

When a clock is hungry, it goes back four seconds.

The guy who fell onto an upholstery machine was fully recovered.

You are stuck with your debt if you can't budge it.

He broke into song because he couldn't find the key.

A calendar's days are numbered.

A boiled egg is hard to beat.

He had a photographic memory which was never developed.

A plateau is a high form of flattery.

When she saw her first strands of gray hair, she thought she'd dye.

Bakers trade bread recipes on a knead-to-know basis.

No matter how much you push the envelope, it'll still be stationery.

A dog gave birth to puppies near the road and was cited for littering.

Two silk worms had a race. They ended up in a tie.

A hole has been found in the nudist camp wall. The police are looking into it.

And the cream of the wretched crop: Those who get too big for their pants will be exposed in the end.

CANADIAN AVANTI OWNERS ASSOCIATION

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FOR 2014



The Canadian Avanti Owners Association (CAOA) is a non-profit organization committed to preserving the history of the Avanti automobile. We currently have +45 members located in all provinces across Canada. We are a Chapter of the Avanti Owners Association International Inc (<http://www.aoai.org/>). Our group strives to promote the research and study of the Avanti and the companies that have produced it over the years. We wish to share our knowledge with others and encourage the acquisition, preservation, restoration, and maintenance of all Avantis produced by Studebaker and successor companies. Our Canadian Chapter also promotes fellowship and camaraderie by publishing a newsletter quarterly, participating in local CAOAs or Studebaker Drivers Club events and our general meetings held quarterly at various members' homes. Ownership of an Avanti (Studebaker or successor) is not required.

Ownership of an Avanti (Studebaker or successor) is not required.

Renewal fee \$ 15.00 per year
 Make Cheque Payable to: Canadian Avanti Owners

Mail cheque to: C. A. O. A.
 David Moxham
 P.O. Box 341
 Noelville, Ontario
 P0M 2N0

Any questions? Please Contact:

President	Steve Wohleber	705-383-2432	sbwohleber@gmail.com
Membership	Bill Harris	905-628-6370	billharris@rogers.com
Treasurer	David Moxham	705-898-1326	davemoxham@live.com
Secretary/Editor	Mike Emmerich	519-740-6118	studeemike@yahoo.ca

CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION & ANNUAL RENEWAL FORM for 2014 PLEASE FILL OUT THE FORM BELOW AND INCLUDE WITH MEMBERSHIP PAYMENT

Name(s) Yours: _____ Spouse: _____
Last Name First Name

Local Address: _____
Street City Province postal code

Alt. Address: _____
Street City Province postal code

Local Phone: _____ Alt. Phone: _____

A.O.A.I Membership No. _____ E-Mail: _____
(Avanti Owners Association Int.)

Fill below your car information if new/changed:

Year	Serial #	Engine Cubic In.	Car Model	Exterior / Interior Color	Cond. Code*

*Condition Code: 1 Excellent; 2 Fine; 3 Very Good; 4 Driver; 5 Restorable

FOR SALE - 1963 STUDEBAKER AVANTI R1.

It has been appraised at \$24,000.00, and I am asking #19,900.

63-R1-2640

ORIGINAL 289 cu.in. Rebuilt about 12k miles ago

New Edelbrock/Webber carb. and Intake manifold.

Mopar Alternator and Electronic ignition.

Dual Power Brake system.

Reconditioned Front Callipers, c/w new pads.

Reconditioned rear drums c/w new shoes.

New H/D Front Coil Springs. (New Shocks but not installed)

Reconditioned A-arms. (Left Upper may require bushing)

Reconditioned King Pins and bushings

Forced air Rad Fan

Custom Made Torque Boxes (“Hog-Troughs”).

Avanti II Alum. Mags.

New Cooper Radial Tires. Original spare in trunk.

Re-Arched Custom Rear Leaf Springs.

New Rear Shocks Installed.

New ignition switch.

Auto Meter Gauges

Many parts included with sale. (Stainless engine compartment covers, Original A-arms and King Pins etc)

Contact; Ellwood in Calgary Ab. @ 587-351-2720, or Cell. 403-604-0151 ellwood-s-phillips@shaw.ca

FOR SALE - 1963 STUDEBAKER AVANTI R1.

