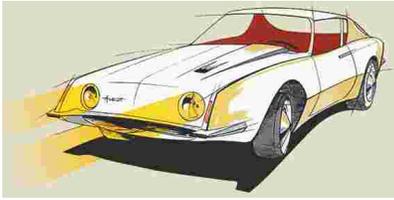


## ***What is an Avanti?***



The Avanti was originally a sport coupe designed by the **Raymond Loewy** Design Studios for the **Studebaker** Corporation. Dynamic Studebaker President, **Sherwood Egbert**, conceived the sportster and engaged Raymond Loewy to finish the design. Studebaker produced the mighty Avanti for only twenty months in 1962-3 before closing its doors in America [Studebaker produced “family type” cars in Canada for a couple of years, but no Avanti’s]. In those twenty months, 4647 Avanti’s were built and they were the media and racer’s magnet. Famous racecar driver Andy Granatelli powered a stock Avanti to the world speed record for production cars – 171+mph at Bonneville Salt Flats in 1962. Thirty years later, Ron Hall of Clarkson, MI, broke 200mph in a 1963 Studebaker powered Avanti. Studebaker still holds more records at Bonneville than any other make.



Studebaker and Loewy were a long time team, dating back to the 1930’s. Together they built a reputation for advanced design. The fiberglass bodied Avanti offered a racy 2+2 alternative to the Chevrolet Corvette and Ford Thunderbird. In addition to the powerful Studebaker 289 engine (available with single and dual superchargers), the car had an integral roll bar and America’s first standard equipment disc brakes.

When Studebaker ceased Avanti production, **Leo Newman and Nate Altman**, wealthy Studebaker dealers, bought the rights, tooling and stock to continue manufacturing the car in one of the Studebaker buildings in South Bend, Indiana. They called it the **Avanti II** to differentiate it from the Studebaker produced cars. When they ran out of Studebaker engines, they used a Chevrolet 327. When they ran out of Studebaker frames, they adapted the body to Chevy frames. For 18 years Newman and Altman produced a small number of cars, hand built to order. Avanti became the only car in history to continue in production for 25 years after the demise of its parent company.

## ***Studebaker, Egbert and Loewy***



The Stutenbecker family immigrated to America in the 1700’s and adopted the name Studebaker. Two sons of the immigrant, Clement and Henry, started a blacksmith shop in 1852 that would eventually become the Studebaker Corporation. Joined by their brother John Mohler Studebaker, flush with money from building wheelbarrows for gold miners during the 1850’s gold rush, the company developed a reputation for quality wagons. The Civil War brought contracts to produce war wagons and westward expansion quickly adopted the Conestoga wagons from Studebaker. At the turn of the century, Studebaker was the largest vehicle producer in the world and turned their attentions to experimenting with the newly conceived “automobile.” Their first self-powered vehicle was an electric car built with partner Thomas Edison in 1902. As internal combustion engines became dominant, Studebaker was again an early leader, producing its first gasoline powered car in 1905. Sturdy, practical and economical cars by Studebaker made it the leading independent, surviving and buying other independents like Pierce-Arrow and Packard. Labor costs and competition by the “Big Three” eventually led to Studebaker’s demise, the only car company to “get out the business” while still making a profit. That was due to diversification. Other Studebaker companies included Onan Generators, Otis Elevators, Gravelly Tractors, Clarke Floor Machines, McCullough Industries and, of course, STP.

Sherwood Egbert came to Studebaker through the McCullough Corporation. The 41 year old Egbert was the brilliant Vice-President of that 70 million dollar company. Studebaker thought he was just the man to boost its sagging automobile sales. With a keen eye for design, Egbert first got Blake Stevens to restyle the Hawk series with minimal money and maximum impact. Then Egbert’s own pencil doodled a sports car he hoped would rescue Studebaker. He wisely turned to the renowned Raymond Loewy to finish and model the rough idea.

## ***Raymond Loewy - "Father of Industrial Design"***



Loewy was born in Paris in 1893. Early on he showed exceptional promise in design and marketing with his own airplane, the Ayrel. In World War I Loewy won the Croix de Guerre and afterward immigrated to America with only forty dollars in his army uniform pocket. He quickly established himself as a promising fashion illustrator and designer before changing his focus to industrial design. His philosophy - to develop leading edge products that were still acceptable by the buying public - led to worldwide desire for his services. He designed common products from logos (Shell, Exxon, U.S. Postal Service) to space ships (Saturn-Apollo and Skylab) and everything in between (locomotives, the famous Coca-Cola bottle, the Greyhound bus and logo, and lots of refrigerators, ranges, and freezers). And then there were the automobiles. Graced not only stunning styling,, but lighter, more economical cars that were streamline. The cars Loewy designed for Studebaker were always exceptionally beautiful and "years ahead in design." The most famous were the Pre-War Champion, the Post-War Starliner and the Avanti.

When Egbert handed the sports car project over to Loewy with short time lines, Loewy gathered a highly skilled team (John Ebstein, Robert Andrews and Tom Kellogg) and cloistered them in his desert home for two weeks without telephone or television. In that brief time, a remarkably refined two-seater fiberglass car emerged. Loewy bragged that it "didn't have a straight line on it." Egbert loved the car, declared that it must seat four, and approved the design. It was rushed into production. Despite its appeal, sales were not good enough to rescue Studebaker, but Newman and Altman saved the Avanti.

## ***Avanti over the years***

When Newman and Altman died, Washington Real estate mogul **Stephen Blake** bought the company and took over production of the Avanti in 1982. Blake (the Avanti Motor Corporation) revised company operations and updated the car. He replaced the chrome bumpers with modern color coordinated and contoured resin bumpers and produced the limited edition 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition. Blake was also responsible for the Limited Edition Touring Coupe and a prototype convertible. Financial problems forced him to sell the company in 1986.

South Bend businessman, **Michael Kelly**, (the New Avanti Motor Corporation) moved production to Youngstown, Ohio. He introduced the lengthened Luxury Sport Coupe (LSC) and the first production convertible in 1987.

Kelly sold the company to his partner, **John J. Cafaro** in 1989. Cafaro (Avanti Automobile Corp.) debuted a 4 door Luxury Touring Sedan for the 1989 New York Automobile Show. The advanced product used carbon fiber and Kevlar. Big bucks were invested in development of a proprietary chassis for the Avanti. Well intentioned advancements broke the company. In 1991, after 29 years, Avanti production ceased on Cafaro's watch.



There was no Avanti Motors or Avanti production for the remainder of the 1990's. Well, that's not quite true. **Tom Kellogg**, one of the original designers was asked to do a "one off" version of what an Avanti would look like if produced today. That car, on a Pontiac Firebird platform, was as spectacular an update as Detroit could ever produce. Not having the rights to the Avanti, Kellogg's group produced about 10 cars in the Avanti tradition, calling them the AVX.

In 2000, **John Seaton** and **John Hull** re-formed Avanti Motor Corporation with former Avanti owner **Michael Kelly** and moved production to Villa Rica, Georgia. They were producing new cars by 2001, updated similar to the AVX. Kelly, in his second time as Captain, quickly rebuilt the business through wheeling and dealing. He decided to build a multi-million dollar factory in Cancun, Mexico. He no sooner got the factory built and began producing cars when he was arrested in 2006 for hotel time-share scamming in Mexico. Today, more than two years later, he has not gone to trial, but remains in federal custody. New charges are still being filed as recently as May 2008.



**No new Avanti's are being produced. Will the Phoenix rise again?**