

AVANTI- it is an Italian word meaning “forward”. And in 1962 when it was first introduced, it was a very futuristic-looking car. Three of our members own an Avanti, although from very different eras of production. Following is a story in three parts of how they came to be owners.

Part 1- Jim Cox’s 1963 Avanti

Part 2- Ray Bader’s 1978 Avanti

Part 3- My Love Affair with # 68 - John DiPietro

Jim Cox's 1963 Avanti

My interest in the Avanti began with my dad. In the 1950s and 60s, he sold Studebakers at a local dealership in Raleigh, NC, and had a deep passion for everything Studebaker. Over the years, he owned several models, including Golden Hawks, Larks, a President, and three Avantis. Of all of them, the Avanti was his favorite.

He often told me how far ahead of its time the Avanti was, with features that were rare or unheard of in other cars of that era. It was the first American production car to come equipped with front disc brakes. It also had a built-in roll bar, power windows, and a lightweight fiberglass body. The design was equally innovative, featuring no traditional grille, instead opting for an air scoop positioned below a slim bumper for improved cooling. Inside, the car featured aircraft-style instrumentation and controls, a bold departure from typical automotive interiors of the day.

My dad bought his last Studebaker, the 1963 Avanti R1 with factory air conditioning, in 1990 and enjoyed it for many years. After he passed away, I inherited the car. My son and I pulled it out of my dad's barn about two weeks after his passing and began the long restoration process. The vehicle had 60K original miles. We took the interior apart and had it reupholstered. We had the exterior repainted back to the original turquoise color. We had all of the chrome refinished. We pulled the engine out to have all of the gaskets replaced. The machine shop said the engine did not need rebuilding; everything looked fine. It took us six years, but we eventually brought it back to its original, like-new condition.

Today, the car is more than just a vehicle; it's a family heirloom. My son and two grandsons love it just as much as I do, and we plan to keep it in the family for many years to come.



<-the barn find

restored ->



Awards:

- 1st place – 2024 NC Region Spring Meet
- 1st place -- 2023 NC Region spring Meet
- NC Region Preservation
- NC Region Red Bird

Ray Bader's 1978 Avanti

My 1978 Avanti II is number 1 of 148 produced. It was the company's show car, being displayed at shows around the country. I purchased it from the son of the original owner in Dec. 2016. His mother bought the car off the floor at the NY Auto Show on February 27, 1978 for \$22,058, including transportation and taxes. That was approximately twice the price of a comparably equipped '78 Corvette. It had every available option except the woodgrain dash, console and CB Radio. 178 HP 350 cu.in. Corvette V8 Turbo 400, automatic transmission, air-conditioning, and power steering were standard equipment. I had the inoperative, cracked moonroof removed.



(editor's note) Each Avanti II was custom-ordered and hand-built. The body was made of fiberglass and featured a design that had not changed much since the 1960's.

Original Optional Equipment included:

- Reclining Recaro Seats
- Power Moonroof
- Power Window
- Power Door Locks
- Cibie Driving Lights
- Leather Interior
- Power Antenna
- Cruise Control
- Carpeted Trunk
- Intermittent Wipers
- Nardi Wood Steering Wheel
- Passenger Side Mirror

Following Options Were Removed By Original Owner:

- Luggage Rack
- Stereo Cassette Player
- Borrani Wire Wheels
- Cruise Control

Awards:

- None as yet



**Avanti Four Door Luxury Touring Sedan
car # 68 of 90 produced**

My Love Affair with # 68- John DiPietro

I did not grow up a car guy. I grew up in New York City, never having the desire or need to drive. I guess I get that from my grandparents and parents, who never drove a car. Public transportation was good enough for me. My need to drive suddenly changed at the age of 18 (1975) when I needed a car to attend college.

Fast forward to 1989, Helen and I are thinking about buying a new car, so we attended the New York Auto Show. That is when I saw the 1990 **Avanti**, four-door Luxury Touring Sedan and fell in love for the second time. The design was one of a kind, inside and out. I did not know the history of the **Avanti** at the time. I not only wanted this car, I needed this car, until I got more than sticker shock, I got sticker heart attack. The base price of the car was over \$48,000. To put this into perspective, Helen and I purchased our house for \$50,000 in 1982. There was no way I could afford this car. I walked away disappointed but optimistic that someday I would own this car.

You know the old saying, “when all the stars have aligned....”. Fast forward again to October of 2017, all the stars aligned for me. Before this, I had passed on a couple of Avanti four-door sedans that were for sale for various reasons. But that year, everything came together. First, I turned 60 years old and needed a special birthday present for myself. Second, my brother sent me a Hagerty magazine that had an article about the history of the **Avanti**, which triggered my need for the car once again. Third, and possibly the most important, I had the INTERNET, that would help me find a four-door for sale that was in good to excellent condition. The internet was especially helpful as there were only 90 four-door Avanti cars produced, and it was now 27 years past its birth. I began my search, and immediately found car #68 for sale in San Diego, California. It was advertised

in a classic car showroom. After negotiating the price, I purchased the car, and it was delivered to my house in November 2017

I always believe that God has a hand in everything I do and don't do. God had his hand in this one. If I were able to purchase the car in 1990, most likely I would not own it today. He had me wait 27 years, and because of that, I appreciate the car even more. I now understand how rare it is and want to maintain and preserve the car while enjoying it at the same time. Oh, by the way, the previous owner of car #68 is a very well-known Baptist Minister in San Diego. Who says God doesn't have a hand in our lives?

The car has allowed me to get involved with the AACA and meet some wonderful people. The AACA has taught me that we are just the caretakers of beautiful pieces of art.

STANDARD EQUIPMENT:

1990 Avanti Touring Sedan VIN: 12AAV44A3L1001068, number 68 of 90. The MSRP price new was approximately \$50,000 in 1990. Current mileage: 90,000, Engine: 5.0L V8, with throttle-body fuel injection, turbo 400 four-speed transmission with overdrive. Hand-built fiberglass body reinforced with Kevlar on a Chevrolet Caprice platform.

The interior mimics the features of a Rolls-Royce. Burlwood trim decorated with gold leaf, rear burlwood tray tables, and complete leather interior.

STANDARD EQUIPMENT:

- Electronic Ignition,
- Power Front Disk Brakes,
- Power Steering,
- Power Windows,
- Power Door locks,
- Power Remote Outside Rear View Mirrors,
- Power Trunk Release with Key-Lock Trunk,
- Power Fuel Filler Door,
- Tilt Steering Wheel,
- Electronic Cruise Control,
- Interior Light Group,
- Front Seat Automatic Restraint System,
- Six-Way Power Seats,
- Air Conditioning,
- Full Instrumentation
- Intermitted Washer-Wipers,
- Cornering Lamps,
- Electronic Climate Control,
- AM/FM Stereo Cassette
- Graphic Equalizer,
- Digital/Tuning,
- Automatic Antenna,
- Front Bucket Seats,
- Extra Quiet Insulation,
- Body Side Moldings,
- 15" Cast Aluminum Wheels,
- Passenger Assist Handles,
- Ground Effect Bumpers with Driving Lights,
- Keyless Remote Entry
- Alarm System
- Tinted Glass,
- Radial T/A Tires,
- Blackwall Rectangular Halogen Headlights,
- Under-Hood and Trunk Lights,
- Burlwood Dash & Console
- Burlwood Door Trim,
- 18-Gallon Fuel Tank,

STANDARD EQUIPMENT (cont.)

- Integrated Steel Roll Cage,
- Wood Steering Wheel,
- Twin-Lighted Vanity Mirror,

- Time Delay Headlights,
- Rear Seat Shoulder Harness,
- Rear Window Defogger

OPTIONAL EQUIPMENT: Television, car phone

AACA awards in class 35C:

- First Junior
- Second Generation Collector Vehicle
- NC Region Red Bird



I hope you enjoyed my story and my love affair with # 68
(Please don't mention this to Helen)

The End