

Mysteries of the 1963-1985 Avantis Radio Delete Option "Radio-Dummy"

By Dan Booth,
Nostalgic Motor Cars

Dan Booth has over 45 years of exclusive, hands on Avanti sales, service, collision and parts, not Studebaker cars or trucks, just 1963-1985 Avantis.

find it enlightening, when I go to the Nostalgic's Born Report Files and discover some unknown documented information about the Avantis that I wasn't aware of. Then I find it very rewarding to share this documented information with my customers. If you have questions about something unusual or unique about your 1963-1985 Avantis, just call me, Dan Booth Nostalgic Motor Cars 248-348-4884

On January 27, 2021, I received a phone call to see if I had the "Nostalgic's Born Reports" for the 1963 Studebaker Avanti 63R-4301. In the initial phone call he told me about his 1963 Avanti. He purchased it from an ad in the Chicago paper on March 4, 1973

The lady selling the 63 Avanti was a retired school teacher that had purchased it new and her 26 (about) year old son was also present, when he purchased the car. This gold Avanti/Elk interior had 42,790 original miles and was a supercharged 4-speed. He stated it was a radio delete car. When you stop and think about it, the radio was a cost option, I just never thought about an Avanti as a radio delete car, but it was.

I have seen only 1 picture of a plate that covered up the area where a radio would have been installed, but have never saw any documentation in print of it's existence.

I called him back, to tell him he was very lucky. I had the original build sheet inspection tickets and dealer cost invoice for 63R4301 Very rare to have all 3

When I started to study the 3 Nostalgic's Born Reports, I noticed that the build sheet and dealer invoice didn't have a radio & antenna option. This proved that those pictures he sent me were of a factory, Radio Delete Car. I went to the Studebaker Avanti Parts manual. No part number was listed for a radio delete plate.



Factory Radio Delete Plate 1350916 & 1350917



Back of dash, showing no speaker and the radio plate

"Nostalgic's Born Report", copy of original Build sheet

"Nostalgic's Born Report", copy of original Dealer Invoice.

When I was studying the Nostalgic's Inspection reports on the "Avanti vehicle inspection check off inspection report, "Body" section IV instrument board and electrical function test."

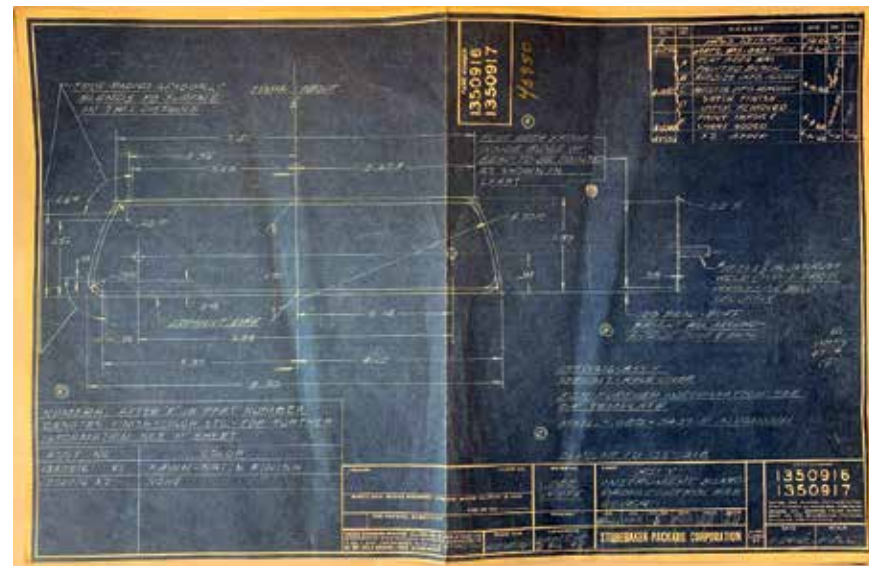
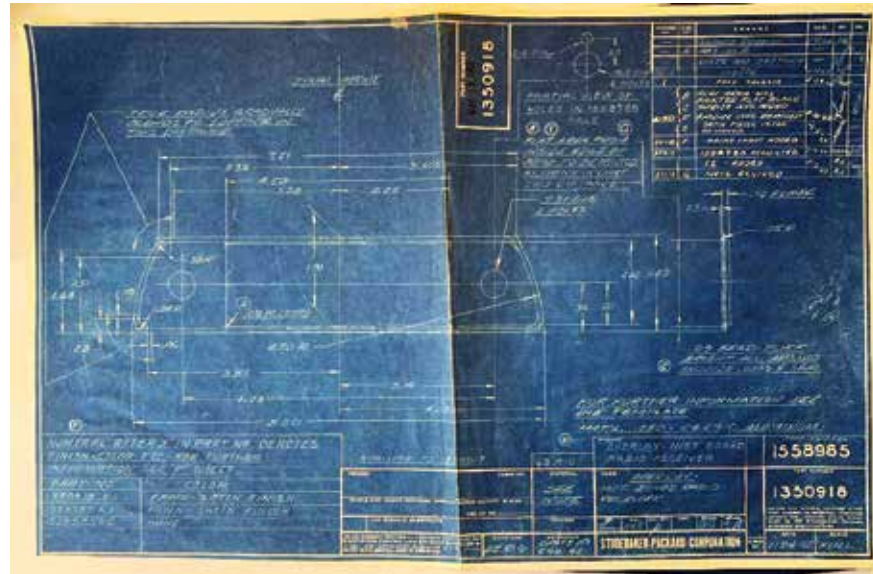
Item #11 "Radio—Dummy" to say I was dumb-founded would be a correct statement, especially at the terminology used, "Radio-Dummy". Upon further conversations with the owner, I found out that the Avanti had the very long antenna cable installed (apparently on all Avantis) but the quarter panel was never drilled for a antenna, which should prove this was a very rare option delete, but now the question comes up, was this a special one of a kind "radio-Dummy" plate made by Studebaker?

This was driving me nuts! I spent countless hours going through my original Studebaker Avanti Documents. Finding nothing about the "Radio Dummy" plate. I knew as a journeyman tool maker that they most likely had drawn up a blue print. After countless hours of reading blue print, after blue print on the bottom right corner where they state in a box for the name of the subject drawn

I found the unknown "assy Instrument board radio control hole cover" with the part number 1350916 and 1350917 The print shows the Dummy Plate drawn to full scale with the date of 1-24-62, so this was planned from the beginning. The dummy plate looks exactly like the original radio overlay plate. All the holes were deleted and the print calls for a .040 thick plate with "10-24x5/8 aluminum welded stud-2 required "percussion weld securely" to the backside for attachment. The raised area all around the outer edge was to be buffed.

"Nostalgic's Born Report", copy of 1 page of the original Inspection Sheets (most inspection sheets are usually 2-5 pages)

The blue print specifications for Part No. 1350918 Radio overlay had the same changes of color and etc. as the “Dummy-Plate” #1350917, also on the date drawn 1-24-62.



Now to make this article a little more interesting, the Avanti 63R-4301 seemed to be a budget minded build. This Avanti only had 2 accessories, over the window sticker base pricing of \$4,445.00 (about) Item #1 Super-charger at about \$220.00 and Item #20 4-speed at about \$188.00. It also on the original dealer invoice shows item #92 which is “service for retail del.” at a cost of \$36.00 I assumed in a previous article for the Avanti Magazine, that Item #92 service for retail delivery was for a factory millage car, but there is no paper work to show that

was the case. So I could assume this might have been an option where the purchaser could pick up their new Avanti at the factory or a factory store. Pontiac Motors offered this option and you didn't have to pay distribution and delivery charges.

This Might have been some of the input that Mom had received:

As Built 63R-4301:

- No power steering, save horsepower and weight and about \$80;
- Radio Delete saves weight and about \$100;
- 4-speed extra cost about \$188 over standard 3-speed standard floor shift transmission (that was not synchronized in 1st gear) That's why a 4-speed is needed;
- Supercharger cost about \$220 over the standard 289 CID V-8 with a 4-barrel carburetor. As the supercharger may be needed to pass somebody or climb a hill if you have four other teachers in the car.
- Absolutely no other extra cost items

She probably saved a few dollars on distribution and delivery charges of \$47.54 if she indeed picked up the car at the factory.

Now for the final thought, this Avanti was not ordered with true fuel economy on ones mind, as it had, and has a 3:73 rear axle ratio, which was the normal axle ration on a supercharger 4-speed, but Studebaker offered other axle ratios at no cost for a budget minded person.

Maybe you are coming to the same conclusion, that Jim and I did. That the mother purchased a car that was drop dead gorgeous, wouldn't rust out because it was fiberglass. It would seat five adults and didn't break the bank as it only had two needed options; 4-speed and a super-charger.

The son probably saw a fast as hell, drop dead gorgeous car that wouldn't rust out. That didn't break mom's bank and would seat four other teenagers. What's your conclusion?

I would like to thank Jim and Shirley Zimmerman for the photos, letter and numerous phone conversations to make this article possible. This just may be one of the only documented radio delete Studebaker Avantis ever produced, without the original “Nostalgic's Born Reports” this could have not been documented and I still love the phrase on original, second style, preprinted inspection tickets “Radio-Dummy”

The first approximately 700 Avantis built used a totally different style, pre printed, inspection ticket and the “Radio-Dummy” is nowhere to be found. More on the two totally different style inspection tickets for a future article from “Nostalgic Motor Cars unlocks the History and Mysteries of the 1963-1985 Avantis.”

Soon after Jim Zimmerman purchased 63R-4301 Avanti he installed a clutch. The retired lady school teacher must have rode the clutch pedal. Or maybe this was one very lucky 16 year old boy with stop light to stop light driving. A couple month after the purchase Jim and his wife to be, were driving when the water pump let go and then went through the radiator. In a apartment parking lot with limited tools he changed out the radiator and and water pump.

He found that the bolts that hold the water pump to the water manifold were stripped out. Jim went on to tell me that with the radiator out he noticed that some time in the life of this car, it was in a nasty accident. All the bolts that hold the water pump to the water manifold were stripped that's why the fan went through the radiator. All the fiberglass in the front had been mudded over to make it look good. The radiator frame (core support) was actually still broken, he contracted the original owner the retired school teacher he purchased the Avanti from. She knew nothing about it.

Jim and I both came to the same conclusion, in our phone conversation, maybe the 26 year old son, that was present when Jim purchased and took delivery of 63R4310. He would have been about 16 years old when his mother took delivery in 1963. Just maybe the mother was relying on her 16-year-old son to help with what accessories would be need on this budget minded Avanti Purchased. I know that my parents relied on my input in matters like this as my brain has always been jambed with car facts. But I don't think I could have talked my mother into this particular car, maybe close but no cigar with the supercharger and 4-speed trans.

This was a lady school teacher that was driving this as her daily driver. Not Shirley Muldoney, who beat the best men and took NHRA top fuel championship in 1977, 1980 and 1982 she won a total of 18 national top fuel events.