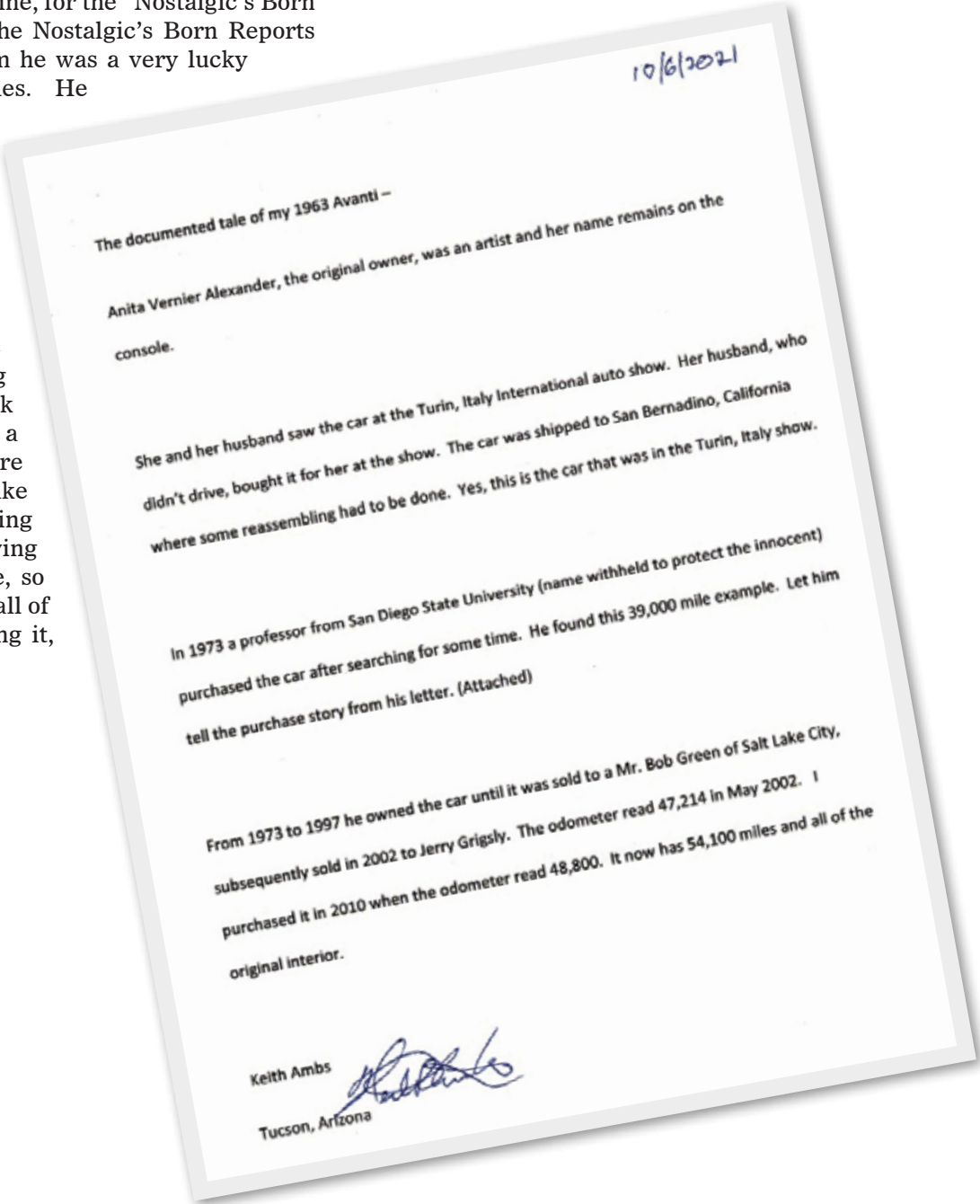


NOSTALGIC MOTOR CARS UNLOCKS THE HISTORY
& MYSTERIES OF THE 1963-1985 AVANTIS

A Bizarre Thanksgiving Day Purchase of an Avanti,
November 1973

By Dan Booth
Nostalgic Motor Cars

In September of 2021, I received a phone call from Keith Ambs. He was a new customer that saw my ads in the Avanti Magazine, for the "Nostalgic's Born Reports". he wanted the Nostalgic's Born Reports for 63R4302. I told him he was a very lucky guy, as I had all 3 for copies. He told me he was the 5th owner of 63R4302, and purchased it in 2010. He also shared a bizarre story of this Avanti with me, that took place on Thanksgiving Day of 1973. Since you will be reading this Avanti Magazine Issue # 196 around Thanksgiving of 2021, 48 years after it took place. I thought it may bring a smile to your faces, If you are a real die hard car guy. I'd like to thank Keith Ambs, for taking the time to type the following pages, and send them to me, so he and I could share it, with all of you. Hope you enjoy reading it, as much as I did.



Copy

HOW I FOUND THIS CAR

It was Thanksgiving 1973, I had a new PhD from Oregon, a new professorship at San Diego State University, and my first child was due in March, 1974. I had a BJ7 Austin Healey and an SPL311 Datsun Roadster. I knew I'd need another seat with a baby, but 4 door cars were definitely out. I had looked for over a year for a four seater Avanti, had bought a Chevy powered 63 Avanti for \$1900 and learned the lesson of not buying a nice one. I really wanted a good one, but had given up on finding a nice Avanti. I advertised for one extensively, written to everybody, and seen enough. I began to look and advertise for Chevrolet Nomads. A two door, some room, and an OK ride.

While waiting for my wife before leaving for a Thanksgiving dinner at her parents home in Los Angeles, I opened up the San Diego Union and saw an ad for a one owner Avanti. However, the car was \$5000, which was really, really high for an Avanti then.

I called, and got a Texaco gas station in La Jolla, California. Well, what kind of cars are sold at gas stations? But as I was traveling to Los Angeles for Thanksgiving and the station was directly off the Via de la Valle exit I was passing, I decided to see it. My wife was quite upset but I stopped anyway. It would get alot worse.

Two other guys were there for the car. The station operator was busy and I asked where the car was. Ms. Vanier (Anita Vanier Alexander) had paid for a service stall and had ordered the car raised on the lift so no one could touch it. The other guys were waiting for a test drive, but nothing could be done before Ms. Vanier, at her main house in Pacific Palasades could be contacted. Only her summer house was in La Jolla.

After some time, she was reached, the car was lowered from the hoist and I said I would take it. An nasty argument ensued: The other guys first there didn't have money with them, but I did, and they wanted a test drive, I didn't need one. I didn't care if the car ran or whatever. Mechanical fixes are easy, but completeness and condition are something else. I had seen too many Avanti's and I knew immediately what I was looking at.

Ms. Vanier was recontacted, and but she insisted on a personal interview. NOW my wife was really upset when I dropped her off at her parents in Los Angeles and drove to Pacific Palasades for the interview with Ms. Vanier. Duly impressed, she agreed to sell it to me. However: There was a catch.

I would have to drive to Santee California, over 125 miles away ...and find her mechanic Fred Chavez and give \$2000 in cash in thanks for his help over the last 10 years. With no title in hand, I was off to find this guy.

She felt Mexicans were oppressed and this had to be done.

See THANKSGIVING, page 28

Further, I would have to get a paper signed by Mr. Chavez and have him call her to say everything was alright. I actually found this man, after two long hours, in this then small town.

I offered him \$2000 cash in hand, telling him he must sign a paper and make a phone call for the money. Hard to believe, but that is exactly what happened. It was dark by this time, and I had yet another trip to Pacific Palisades.

Meeting again with Ms. Vanier, I had dessert, gave her the paper from Mr. Chavez, and she showed me her paintings and sculptures. After many hours, she unpacked a trunk and showed me a folder of photographs at the Turin Auto Show, the Studebaker documents, and the import sheets, and alot of facinating other things. On the folder was a picture of Franz Alexander and a poem she penned to him. She was 75 then, an Italian artist, and quite odd. She said her husband, Dr. Franz Alexander, bought the car for her as a gift at the Turin Auto Show while vacationing in Turin, Italy. She wouldn't give me the documents. She had no idea why Studebaker Corporation sold the car to her husband for her, but she really liked it at the show and apparently he was well to do.

However, they were responsible for re-assembling the car (putting on the hood, doors, trunk, wheels, you name it) after it was removed from the Studebaker display. The car was crated/shipped, unassembled, to the USA, where it was not reassembled for some time. There was light damage in shipping, and Ms. Vanier said the settlement was not quick. The car was re-painted when reassembled the same show only color.

Thanksgiving evening, getting really late, she had arranged and paid the Texaco station operator to stay open just in case. I drove another 100 miles to get the car. It was about 1:30 A.M. when I got there, he lowered the car, and directed the car over to the gas pump as Ms. Vanier had also paid for gas.

I then called my wife who was extremely angry. It was the middle of the morning and I was not driving back up to Los Angeles. I honestly forget how she got back to San Diego. I had had enough trouble finding a friend in the middle of the night to drive the Healey from the gas station. Alot of miles, alot of time, the deal was complete.

Now to today. Part of the divorce settlement was selling this car to a stranger (so no friends could have it). So now you do.

And that is the true story of how I found this car and owned it for the last 25 years, and how you have come to own it. Odd that it would be Thansgiving of 1997 when you would now have it. I guess Thansgiving does bring some nice things.

got a Chevy Nomad for the baby. I had forgotten about the need to transport cribs, and all the things that come with a family.

In retrospect, by forcing me to sell this Avanti instead of taking money in the divorce settle, she exacted revenge 25 years later for leaving her alone and stranded on Thanksgiving 1973. I heard about it for 25 years. Despite her 7 figure settlement, she gets pleasure in forcing the sale of the car I owned for 25 years. On the other hand, she was never in it, and I had many pleasurable drives with my daughters. That was kinda nice. The girls are grown now, graduated from Berkeley, and are as sad as me to see this Avanti go. It was a Dad and the Girls only car! They both drove it Thanksgiving 1997 as a farewell.

And that is the true story of how I found this car, and owned it for the last 25 years. Odd that it would be Thanksgiving of 1997 when you would now have it. I guess Thanksgiving does bring some nice things.

