

# Sun Visors: The History of 1963-1985 Avanti Sun Visors

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I have been asked to write an article to clarify the incorrect information of what materials, styles and shapes of the sun shields (sun visors) that were installed on all 1963-1985 Avantis.

Since I own the original Studebaker Avanti blue prints and tooling which provides indisputable information needed to produce 100 percent correct parts I what to share this information with all of you.

These original blue prints are drawn to full scale, most of the time, and show many different views. They give you the correct material used, harnesses, colors, and dimensions. If the part was changed in any way during production, it would list the updated version, with a date and the changes. These updated versions would have a new drawing, if needed.

The sun visors installed for 1963-64 Studebaker Avantis part #1347700 and 1347701 were also installed on the Avantis from 1965 to about 1971, or until they ran out of them. The memory of some Avanti enthusiasts, that insist that the original Studebaker Avanti sun visors were very firm, or hard is totally incorrect.

To prove what's correct, other than the original blue prints, I have a pair of original 1347700/701 Avanti sun visors that are survivors. I removed them from one of my 1964 Avantis. They are still soft and pliable, almost as soft as my N.O.S. visors

I have bent one of these survivor sun visors, just like I did with the New Original Stock that I make. It didn't break the foam or crack the vinyl, it just left stretch marks in the vinyl that will never return to the original texture. These original Studebaker Avanti sun visors were feather



1347700 1347701 N.O.S. sun visors

weights, they only weigh about 5 ounces each, without the chrome rods, unlike the reproductions that are being sold by others using the original part numbers, which are rock hard and extremely heavy.

Avanti Motors couldn't find any body that was interested or capable of making these. Avanti Motors knew I was a journeyman toolmaker, from Pontiac Motor Division and sent me copies of the original blueprints. They asked if I could find a shop to manufacture the original 1347700 and 1344701 Studebaker Avanti sun visors. This was probably around 1974 or 1975. The answers I was getting, were the same as they had gotten—not interested as they appear to be very difficult to manufacture. Even the company in Quincey, Michigan that made sun visors for the automotive industry and Avanti Motors second style sun visors, was not capable of making the original style. This is probably why the reproductions that I've seen, are of questionable quality, they are not made from the correct tooling and materials, that could control the weight and flexibility.

So I personally took on the challenge! When I was defeated by one idea, and only made scrap, I would try something different and after many, many months and a lot of scrap of different materials.

My toolmaker experience from Pontiac Motors paid off, along with my persistence and determination,



N.O.S. sun visor, being flexed



1964 survivor sun visor being flexed. It's still almost as soft as the new ones I make.

Chevy Corvette from 1953-1958 didn't offer any kind of sun visors as standard equipment—or an option. It wasn't until 1959 that General Motors offered sun visors as an optional cost item on the Corvette. They became standard equipment for the 1961 Corvette, but they were like all other automobile and truck manufactures, they were vinyl covered and/or plain hard cardboard.

The 1956 Ford offered foam sun visors as an option, along with seat belts and a deep dished center steering wheels. This same '56 Ford offered a soft padded dash pad over a painted steel dash. All in the name of safety!

Don't forget the main man, at Studebaker—Sherwood Egbert—was over six feet tall and just maybe the sunshielding part was the secondary thought and the main reason was the covered soft 1/2-inch thick foam sun visors, over the foam padded header panel for the entire safety package.

They were trying to sell the Avanti as the most advanced automobile on the planet. Which I think it was. If you study the design of the area between the overhead light switch panel and the A-pillars. The curved windshield header on the inside is made up of flat steel and becomes curved and soft after the foam and vinyl are glued in place.

If the sun visors weren't curved and were bigger, they would lose those beautiful flowing curved lines that it has with the original sun visors and through out the balance of the fabulous interior.

## The 2nd style of Sun Visors

The second style of sun visors, which I have in stock, for the Avanti is part number 1750140, which started in about the 1972 model. There wasn't a left or right, they are card board that have very thin layer of foam, under the tan vinyl. They were flat and a little longer and wider than the originals.

They actually look real nice, but looked like a normal sun visor, like any other car had. The new visors abruptly altered those free flowing tapered curved lines of the originals. The second design sun visors still didn't swing sideways, but now at least I could just like Avanti Motors did, add a second set of sun visors to the crash pad above the door window. This was an option for the Avanti owner that needed to block the sun on the sides. They didn't look out of place as they were flat like the crash pad and of course matched the regular sun visors. This did work for the customers and I installed quite a few sets in the 70s and 80s.

The second style was installed for almost 12 years, or until the middle of about 1984.



The second style sun visor #1750140 will fit all 1963-1971 Avantis. No modifications are necessary as they attach to the same mounting position as the originals (1347701 & 1347701)

## The 3rd style of Sun Visors

The 3rd set of sun visors were installed somewhere about the middle of 1984 through 1985 production. I don't have the part number, as I never purchased any for my parts inventory. They were a total unequivocally a disaster. As far as looks and usefulness, they were way too big in length and in height, and totally look like an afterthought, which they were. The amount of Avanti

engineering and design was zero. They were designed to swing sideways, but not in an Avanti.

They had a foam back cloth covering with a light flip lid mirror. There was a large hole drilled in the header panel to accommodate the spring loaded shaft and mirror wires. They were then attached with three Phillips screws. They really look out of place in their park location. When you tried to swing them sideways, you had to pull down real hard on the main top rod. After doing this a few times, the rod would bend and when you returned the visor back to it's original park position, you now found out that the sun visors cloth covered cardboard would not stay in the up position. You also found out that the unsupported end towards the light switch panel, was hanging down by an inch or two.

You would later find, that this was a very expensive repair. To retrofit the first style or second style sun visor

The new sun visors will have to be dyed, the windshield and door weather seal on the pillar must be removed. The leather or vinyl, for the windshield pillar and header panel, must be removed, and new leather or vinyl trim pieces must be made. Repairs must be made to the header, where the large hole and three screw holes were.



Mid 1984 through 1985

Two wood block must be made and installed for each side to support the first or second style sun visors.

Sun visor wood spacer blocks, from 1963 - early 1984 Avantis.



This kind of total disaster would have not happened under Altman's ownership, as the Altman philosophy was just one mistake could cost them the company.

If something needs to be changed, it first goes to engineering, then to drafting, then to prototype the part, then to install on a vehicle, to study and test. If everything worked correctly then it would go into production and finally, installed on the new cars.

Sadly, Blake's haphazardly philosophy was just make the changes—we don't need to do all that other stuff.

