

Mysteries of the 1963-1985 Avantis

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DID YOU KNOW THAT YOUR FRONT WHEELS AND TIRES COULD COME OFF YOUR 1984 -1985 AVANTI ?

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.

If you have a 1984 or 1985 Avanti, you'll want to read this article on the front wheels, as they could come off!

The 1963-1983 including all anniversary Avantis basically used the same braking system, with some changing of parts, along the way. I have always found that this braking system worked and stopped just fine. The biggest problem with this system is they are not set up and maintained to factory correct specifications.

In 1983 the biggest brake problem Avanti Motors had was getting those original parts made at a reasonable cost. Example: front caliper piston assemblies.

Avanti, under the Stephen Blake ownership, developed a new front braking system. This new front brake system was going to be on the 25 1983 Anniversary editions but didn't come out until the 1984 model Avanti.

The 1984 system did indeed stop better as the friction surface of the front brake pads was about 2-1/2 to 3 times that of the friction surface on the 1963-1983 pads.



1963-83 Pad



1984-85 Pad

The 1984 system was, and is, a very good system, but it did have some problem in the beginning which I was involved in factory corrections.

The biggest problem developed probably four to six months into the build for 1984 production. Avanti Motors engineering used one-inch thick aluminum spacers to convert the wheel bolt pattern back to 5 on 4-1/2-inches. The wheel adapter also served as a spacer for clearance for the wheel and the front suspension.

These one inch spacer adapters were made out of aluminum and they were breaking. The front tire and wheels were coming off as a person was driving the car.



- Left Front Fender
- Front Bumper
- Rotor & Bearings & Etc.
- Brakes
- Lower Control Arm with All Busings
- Upper Control arm with All Bushings
- Front 1" Sway Bar & Brackets
- Wheel & Etc.
- And of course a pair of N.O.S. Steel 1702205 Spacer Adaptors.

The factory called me to inform me of this problem. They were having new spacers/adapters made up in steel. Part #1702205. I placed my order for the new one inch steel spacer/adapters. The factory asked me to change them on my new 1984 Avantis, I had in stock and the ones I had sold. They also instructed me to pull both front wheels off all 1984 Avantis that came in for service and change the adapters to the steel ones. I was also instructed to tell the customer that I had changed them as the aluminum spacer adapters could break and Avanti Motors was paying the bill.

About 15 years ago I had a 1984 Avanti delivered on a flat bed tow truck. The left front wheel aluminum spacer/adaptor had broke and the left front wheel and tire came off. The five lug nuts were still attached to the wheel.

Luckily, I only had to replace the left front rotor, lug nuts and of course the spacer adaptor.

Apparently there are still 1984, and possibly 1985 Avantis with the aluminum spacer adapters. About a year ago I sold a bunch of N.O.S. 1984 Avanti parts for a 1984 Avanti that the left front wheel came off because the aluminum spacer adaptor broke. This car had a lot of body and suspension damage. This is just a partial list of the parts I supplied:

On March 25, 2021, I was talking to a customer from Oregon, answering service questions about his newly acquired 1984 Avanti. The five lug nuts that were holding the adapter/spacer to the rotor were only hanging on by a few threads. I asked him if they were aluminum and he replied yes. Once I explained the story and problems with the aluminum spacer/adapters, he ordered a set of the N.O.S 1702205 steel spacer/ adapters from me.

I hope you take this article as a opportunity to pull both front wheels on your 1984-1985 Avanti and take a magnet to the spacer adaptor. Of course the magnet won't stick to aluminum, and that is the easiest way to determine what you have.

If you have the steel spacer adapters, you might want to remove all five lug nuts that holds the adaptor to the rotor and put red Loctite on the threads. Just maybe when or if somebody has installed new rotor they may have not put the Loctite on the threads.

I know that a few are thinking if the aluminum spacer adapters have lasted for 37 years, they should be OK, but what if they are wrong? The factory wouldn't have gone to all the trouble to fix the problem, if it wasn't important. The parts order I took about 15 years ago, took approximately 22 years for the spacer/adaptor to break. It did do some serious damage, but luckily no one got hurt!

