

The Travels of Eight Little Spyderys

.....by Ray Martin - photos: Ray Martin/Jim Anderson

By the title, you might think that this story is about the typical little spiders that most people are familiar with. Not so, it is about automotive wheels, namely those made by the Spyder Motor Co. in the early 1960s and available as an option on the 1963/64 Studebaker Avanti's.

My first exposure to these wheels was in 1982 when I purchased my first 1966 Studebaker Daytona Sport Coupe from Alain Gilbert of St. Georges, PQ. When I bought this car from Alain, it had 8,800 miles on it and was equipped with A/C, power steering, power disc brakes, bucket seats, plus four Spyder wheels. To further fill the option list, he had installed a 4 speed transmission. We met in Ottawa and I purchased the car looking forward to driving my new acquisition home. Over the next few years we drove it all over the U.S. to Studebaker International meets, namely Estes Park Colorado and Indianapolis, Indiana where we had a chance to drive it on the famous Indianapolis Speedway.

In 1988 I made my first mistake when I decided to sell it. There was about 22,000 miles on it and it didn't take long before I had a buyer. Denton Wright of Burlington was the happy new owner! The mistake that I mentioned was that I sold it with the Spyder wheels. Denton did not like the wheels and ended up selling them back to Alain Gilbert. Alain was restoring a 1963 Avanti at that time and put the wheels on that car. He later sold the Avanti to Jim and Barb Anderson of Dundas, who still own it today, complete with the Spyder wheels. There-in concludes chapter one of my story.

Over the next decade, regretting having sold those wheels, I began a search to replace them. In 1998 I was restoring another 1966 Daytona Sport Coupe and went to a flea market in Dunkirk, New York. A friend of mine knew I was looking for these wheels and came and told me there was a set for sale at the other end of the flea market. I bought this second set including the centre caps and brought them home and installed them on my second Daytona Sport Coupe.

About four years later I made my second mistake, selling this car with the wheels to a Ken Wren from Toronto. I lost track of the car for several years and then suddenly received an email from a Tony Olkowski of Jackson, Michigan. Tony announced to me that he had bought the Daytona from Ken Wren and he wanted to know if I had a set of original wheels and wheel discs, as he wanted to bring his car back to original condition. To make a long story short, we exchanged the original wheels etc. for the Spyder wheels and tires on one of my trips to South Bend. These wheels are now on my 1984 Avanti. I have made a promise to myself to not make a third mistake by selling them again.

When I look back it seems unusual that these 8 wheels were originally installed on 1966 Studebaker Daytona Sport coupes and now they reside on Avanti's for which they were intended.



VERY NICE LOOKING WHEEL



DETAIL OF CENTRE CAP



JIM & BARB ANDERSON'S 63 AVANTI