

1964 DODGE Polara Sedan

Big, Strong and Comfortable, this Dodge Won a 10,000-Mile Popularity Contest

OF THE THREE cars in the CL extended road test fleet, by far the most popular was the Dodge Polara sedan. Despite being bigger, heavier and more costly to operate, it was the car the staffers requested for both business and weekend junkets. As a result, its 10,000 miles included travel all along the West Coast, from San Diego to Seattle, and San Francisco to Las Vegas, and its wheels tracked every imaginable type of road surface.

What was the consensus of these drivers? The '64 Dodge is swift, sure and smooth, a fine traveler (albeit a little thirsty at the gas pumps) and a grand companion. It is the very embodiment of what the American car-buying public has long referred to as "a road car."

How about the cost of operating this big car for 10,000 miles? For an odometer-recorded 10,159 miles, it required 734.9 gallons of premium and super premium fuel—at a cost of \$244.00. It needed 5 qt. of oil at various intervals between the two complete changes, which added \$10.90 to the cost. Tires were rotated at 7000 miles (per recommendations by the manufacturer), which added \$2.00 more, and when the car was serviced it

needed 2 pt. of gear lubricant (\$0.80) to refill the differential case to the proper level. An oil filter at 8000 miles cost another \$3.45. The cost of operation, then, was: \$261.15 total, or \$0.0257 per mile.

This figure is nearly half again more than that of the Rambler American 440 and higher than that for the Ford Custom 500. It would seem, at the outset, that one has to pay dearly for the additional luxury. However, our computations do not take into consideration either, A) creature comfort, or, B) that old devil depreciation. Point A makes the car worth the extra cost of operation while Point B shows that the Dodge holds its value for a long period of time. (The National Automobile Dealers' Assn. Used Car Guide shows a 70.0% depreciation over 5 years for a similar Dodge, as compared with 74.6% for a similar Rambler and 70.1% for a Ford).

The driver and his passengers were well thought of when the '64 Dodge Polara was designed. As a result, the seating and steering positions are a good compromise for the majority of people, while the passenger accommodations are strictly first class. Especially appreciated was the rear seat leg

RALPH POOLE PHOTOS



RAISED ROOF of '64 Dodge sedans gives driver and passengers more headroom and an improved outlook. Outside rearview mirror is adjustable from inside the door.

and knee room, which allowed even good-sized adults a medium-sized sprawl. The fold-down armrest in the center of the front seat-back was also a boon to the distance traveler seeking a relaxed position. Too, the front seat rake can be adjusted by clamp bolts under each corner and this helps the driver attain just the right posture. Of the six drivers who sampled and commented on the Dodge, all were pleased by its comfortable quarters.

The Polara's optional 383-cu. in., 330-bhp engine must be listed as a creature comfort, too. The driver, after a few minutes with this husky powerplant, just knows that it will flatten any hill or pass any string of balky cars with hardly more than a flex of its muscles. Time and again it proved its worth in just those conditions, either empty save for the driver or loaded to the gunwales with family and baggage. It simply never lacked for power—the driver merely measured out what was needed by delicately treading the throttle pedal.

Coupled to Dodge's TorqueFlite automatic transmission, the 383 can either churn or loaf at the driver's command. Although most of us learned to live with the push-button transmission controls for this 3-speed

unit, the opinion was that a lever type of shift would have been easier, and far handier, to use. The 2nd gear button got an especially vigorous workout, since the kickdown system at the carburetor failed to function after a few miles and downshifts to 2nd, for passing and mountain climbing, had to be made manually. (Covered by Dodge's 5-years-or-50,000-miles guarantee, this item was repaired by a dealer just after the test was completed.) However, for creature comfort, this transmission ranks high. Either fully automatic or manually controllable, it imparts a sense of efficiency and tautness that few other automatics can match.

Soon after our original road test, one of our staffers embarked on a longer-than-usual holiday in the Polara. He returned, lauding its comfort and roadability, but griping about the car's propensity for bottoming out the rear suspension whenever the car was heavily loaded. So, we took the car to the local Dodge dealer, told him of the problem and had him install a set of overload/shock absorbers, Regal-Ride No. RR-87, on the rear. Although this hiked the rear end up in the air an inch or two, it also improved the ground clearance (important with

that long overhanging tail) and, happily enough, improved the car's already good handling qualities.

These boosters have a light coil spring surrounding the hydraulic unit and thus add to the rear end's roll resistance when cornering, although they also increase the effective rear spring rates. This makes the rear considerably more stable at 60-80 mph cruising speeds and permits carrying a full trunk of luggage without undue effect on the overall handling ability.

A 3000-mile trek covering the length of California, Oregon and Washington further proved the boosters' worth—along with the Dodge's good handling. The return route of this junket encompassed the Oregon coastline highway (U.S. 99) and infamous California Highway 1—which has more curves than a boa constrictor with the bends. Down these tracks, then, our test Polara wended its way, at a steady 14-15 mpg, undulating around the curves with alacrity and confidence (at least on the part of the driver—those 600-ft. drop-offs straight down into the sea will disconcert any passenger!). Along here, the power steering was greatly appreciated, in that it saved the driver considerable fatigue. Too, the automatic transmis-

sion could be held in 2nd to more surely negotiate the slower turns.

Another point in the Polara's favor was its two stylized "blades" running the length of the front fenders and ending in points just over the outer pair of headlights. These served the driver as positioning pointers, well within his range of vision, for both parking and highway driving. Keeping the left-side one lined up with the highway center stripe kept the car centered within the lane.

When the CL staffers took the car out for its final test at the end of the 10,000-mile period, they found the brakes to be no better than they had been in the 1000-mile test. That is, they worked adequately under ordinary conditions, but were not up to emergency stops. Again they faded, grabbed and locked during all-on applications from 80 mph while the decelerometer measured 21 ft./sec./sec. retardation. A quickly-locking left rear caused a sideways swerve, which fortunately could be counteracted by the Dodge's quick-acting power steering.

Standard brakes for Dodge V-8s are 10 x 2.5-in. drum types, with 314.2 sq. in. of swept area and a self-energizing action. This Bendix-developed

PUSH BUTTONS at left control Dodge's TorqueFlite transmission. Slightly oval-shaped steering wheel permits easier entrance and exit. Fascia panel is ribbed aluminum.



1964 DODGE

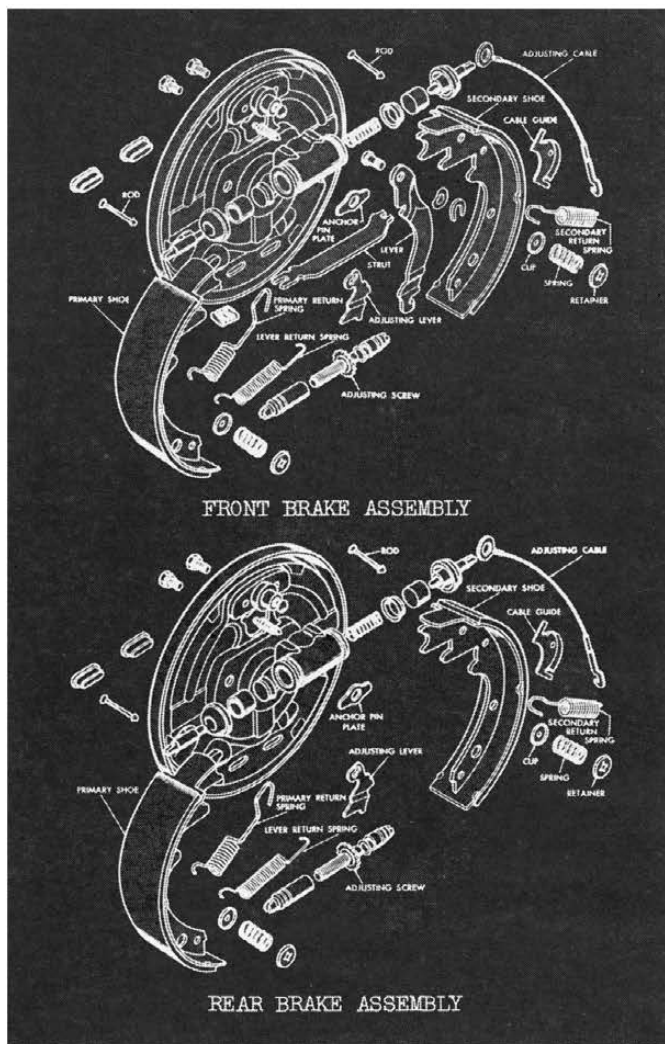
SELF-ADJUSTING brakes on Dodge require little attention and do an adequate job. Testers found bigger brakes desirable.

system is currently in use on at least 95% of the current domestic automobiles, so our criticism must be shared, in part, by them, too. Dodge offers an 11 x 2.5-in. optional brake for this car and its station wagons (but which are standard equipment on 426 cu. in.-equipped cars such as the Polara convertible tested in the March CL), which would improve the braking situation, but it would seem something more radical than this is needed. Obviously the Dodge's long front and rear overhang, deeply shrouding its wheels, hamper the rapid dissipation of the heat generated in braking. Aluminum-finned drums such as Buick and Lincoln use would help get rid of the heat, too. Larger-section tires would improve the tractive ability, while a harsher lining material would combat the fading tendency.

Dodge, along with others, is undoubtedly giving a great deal of serious thought to the adaptation of disc brakes, at least to the front wheels. This is, as Studebaker discovered, an excellent way to boost the car's stopping power. There are certain problems with disc brakes, just as there are with drum brakes, but in the end the discs may offer the best solution.

Performance figures slimmed slightly as mileage mounted, so that the final test revealed a definitely superior automobile. As can be seen by the data panel, this improvement was most notable in the upper rpm ranges, where the engine seemed to run much easier and more freely than in the preliminary test. As a result, shift points were upped to 5000 rpm, from the original 4600 rpm, and acceleration times dipped. Interestingly enough, a "Sunday Drive" sort of acceleration away from an imaginary stop sign produced times only a half-second worse to 60 mph, a full second less to 80 mph. So, there's much to be said for the let-the-automatic-do-it sort of driving. As with most other facets of motoring, the Dodge does this extremely well.

This, then, was the Dodge Polara sedan after 10,000 miles—stronger than before, comfortable to a high degree and reliable as the Federal Reserve Bank. We can't give a higher recommendation than this: When the test was finished, one of our drivers bought the car.



CAR LIFE EXTENDED ROAD TEST 1964 DODGE Polara 4-door Hardtop

SPECIFICATIONS & DATA

Price, as tested.....	\$3648
Test weight, lb.....	4050
distribution, % f/r.....	55/45
lb./bhp.....	13.2
Tire size.....	7.50-14
Brake swept area, sq. in.....	314
Wheelbase, in.....	119.0
Tread, f/r in.....	59.5/59.6
Overall length, in.....	209.8
width.....	74.9
height.....	55.1
Fuel tank capacity, gal.....	19.0
Engine type.....	V-8, ohv
displacement, cu. in.....	383
bhp @ rpm.....	330 @ 4600
torque, lb.-ft. @ rpm.....	425 @ 2800
Mph/1000 rpm.....	23.6
Car Life Wear Index.....	41.0

GEAR RATIOS

3rd (1.00), overall.....	3.23
2nd (1.45).....	4.69
1st (2.45).....	7.91
1st (2.45 x 2.2).....	17.4

PERFORMANCE

Top speed (5000 rpm), mph.....	118
Shifts, rpm @ mph (manual)	
3rd ().....	
2nd (5000).....	81
1st (5000).....	48

ACCELERATION

	1000 miles	10,000
0-30 mph, sec.....	3.5	3.2
0-40.....	4.6	4.3
0-50.....	6.3	5.8
0-60.....	8.4	8.2
0-70.....	11.3	11.1
0-80.....	15.6	14.8
0-100.....	28.8	25.5
Standing ¼-mile, sec.....	16.2	16.0
speed at end, mph.....	81	83

PULLING POWER

70 mph (3rd), max. gradient, %.....	17.0	17.1
50..... (2nd).....	25.9	26.0
30..... (1st).....	35.5	36.0

FUEL CONSUMPTION

734.9 gal. for 10,159 miles.....	14.1 mpg
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