

**OWNERS REPORTS: BUICK SPECIAL  
DODGE LANCER**

# POPULAR MECHANICS

MARCH, 1961

35 CENTS

**SPECIAL: 38 PAGES on BOATS**



**Remarkable Gas Supplement: Better Mileage, Cleaner Engine**

OWNERS  
REPORT

A NATIONWIDE SURVEY

BASED ON 1,023,938  
OWNER-DRIVEN MILES

*Editorial comments in boldface type by Jim Whipple, PM's Auto Editor*

*Photos by Don Henick*

**F**OR MOST OWNERS, the new Lancer is their first experience with a compact car.

To a man (and woman), their reaction was one of pleased surprise.

Many of them apparently felt that in order to gain the lower initial cost and economy of a compact, it was necessary to give up riding comfort and adequate performance.

They discovered, however, that far from depriving them of these virtues, the Lancer has an excellent ride, travel-wise roadability and more than satisfactory performance.

Ease of parking and good vision down the

low, sloping hood came in for plenty of praise too.

For those who drive in cities or crowded suburbs, the psychological effect of switching from a "big" car to a compact (most Lancer owners traded from "full-sized" cars of 1955 through 1959 vintage) was something like changing from boots to tennis sneakers.

"Look, Ma, I'm dancing!" is the general attitude of those who found new fun and freedom dodging nimbly through traffic in their Lancers.

One illusion owners had when they slid behind the wheel of their new Lancers was

## WHAT LANCER OWNERS LIKE . . .

Handling ease .....	71.2%	Styling .....	20.1%
Comfortable ride .....	42.2%	Economy .....	19.8%
Power, performance .....	23.1%	Easy to park.....	19.5%



# Owners Like Lancer's Big-Car Comfort, Roadability



that they would become virtual strangers to their old friends at the local filling station.

They seemed to believe that the Lancer was a dead cinch to deliver 25 miles per gallon, summer or winter, uphill or down, on city streets or muddy country roads.

A surprising number of those who expressed disappointment reported they were getting over 20 miles to the gallon.

Sixty percent of all the Lancer owners said that they were getting over 20 miles per gallon on long trips with manual transmission; 30 percent didn't know.

Yet 36 percent said that mileage was not as good as they had expected. Some of the low-mileage figures reported can be attributed to a combination of winter driving conditions and faulty tune-up. For others the problem may very well be uneconomical driving habits.

Delighted as they are with Lancer's smooth ride and easy handling, a number had complaints about workmanship, headroom or minor points of design.

However the car's virtues far outweighed its faults to the 77.6 percent of owners who gave it an *Excellent* rating. Some 20 percent felt that it was at least *Average* and only a slim 1.5 percent said it was *Poor*.

For a closer look at the Lancer as its owners' see it, here, in the order of frequency, are quotations on the five best-liked features.

"It handles and corners extremely well"—New York chemist.

"The Lancer is truly the poor man's Jaguar; it's the best handling car at high speeds that I've ever driven."—Georgia financier.

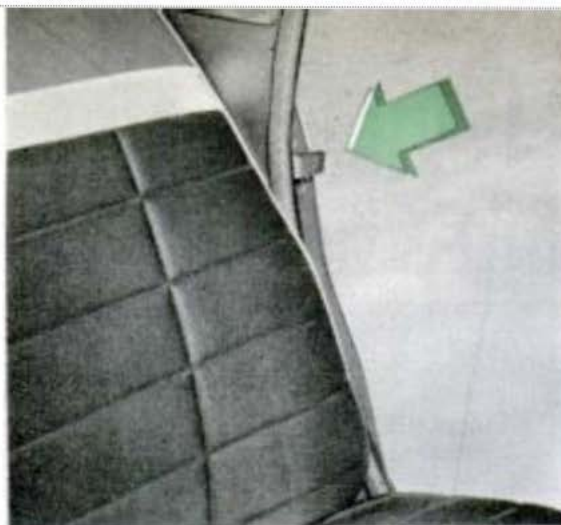
"Lancer is a simple basic car, not overpowered and undercontrolled—it's fun to drive again."—Ohio baker.

## WHAT THEY DON'T LIKE . . .

Poor workmanship .....	12.3%	Lack of head and legroom	6.6%
Poor gas economy .....	12.0%	Water leaks .....	4.5%
Gasoline filler inlet .....	6.9%	Transmission controls .....	3.9%



Wide front door opening provides good entry but protruding door latch (arrow) is a coat catcher



Rear door opening allows passengers to slide right into seat. But it, too, has snagging latch

"Like the riding comfort, roominess, handling and the fun of driving it."—Kansas real estate salesman.

*Fun of driving. Now we're getting down to basic values. What better recommendation for an automobile than to say it changes the business of driving from a boring chore to an enjoyable pastime?*

"The rear seat ride is surprisingly comfortable."—New Jersey retiree.

"Excellent ride, lack of sway on curves."—Alabama letter carrier.

"Comfortable to drive, is not fatiguing on trips."—Iowa teacher.

"The squad car I drive is a big, medium-priced job, and to me the Lancer with Torsion-Aire is just as comfortable to ride in."—Wisconsin police officer.

*This is true. Lancer's suspension manages to keep the car level and sway-free yet it retains soft spring action, something few if any other systems can do. There's a touch of real genius in the Torsion-Aire design.*

"Has amazing pickup at speeds up to 85 m.p.h."—South Carolina minister.

**Easy does it, Reverend!**

"I like Lancer's ability to cruise at 60 to 70 m.p.h."—Florida nurseryman.

"Three-speed automatic transmission gives me superb performance."—Iowa teacher.

*Lancer's 170 cubic-inch-displacement engine seems to deliver solid power without too much noise.*

"Lots of power, pulls a small house trailer as easily as my pickup and does it on less gas."—Michigan crane operator.

"I like the styling. The car doesn't try to look like a plane or a rocket."—New York doctor.

"It has a zippy look."—Georgia accountant.

"Like its clean, uncluttered lines."—Florida foreign-car distributor.

*This fellow handles a sleek line of sports cars, and he appreciates Lancer's rakish continental look that distinguishes it from most other cars.*

"Gas bill has been reduced about 50 percent since I bought the Lancer."—North Carolina printer.

"I travel about 30,000 miles a year and my cost of operation is much lower."—Connecticut salesman.

"I do not believe the high-mileage stories I hear, so my 20 miles per gallon over-all (with automatic transmission) is satisfactory."—Kansas government worker.

*This man has the right idea. Few cars of Lancer's weight and engine capacity will do better under average driving conditions.*

"The car fits into my garage and can be parked in an average space."—New Jersey manager.

"Lancer is easy to park, yet drives and handles like a big car."—North Carolina mechanic.

*This convenience factor combined with the feeling of "big car" capability on the highway will keep Lancer and cars like it on the market for a long time to come.*

*However, few cars are perfect and Lancer is no exception. Here are the five most common complaints in order of frequency of mention.*

"Some of the finishing touches were a little thrown together and sloppy."—California ranch manager.

"The parts, particularly the doors, do not fit well. This shows inside and out."—Ohio clerk.

"Some cases of careless workmanship, otherwise it is fine."—Iowa carpenter.





Designers of handsome front end should have moved parking lamps away from this mud-catching location



Roomy trunk results from locating tire under floor. This unfortunately makes filter pipe placement a problem

"Has the look of being put together by apes instead of conscientious production people."—Michigan engineer.

"I think it's high time that Detroit concentrated on better inspection of new cars at the factory. There have been a dozen or so small details on which the dealer's department had to make up for fac-

Next Page

essness."—Illinois advertising executive.

**This is a particularly perplexing problem where a basically excellent car like Lancer shows up with annoying minor flaws that require time and money way out of proportion to the original cost of production to correct. Chrysler Corporation is well aware of this problem but hasn't been able to lick it completely and still keep the costs in line.**

**And it isn't all the factory's fault. Some dealers do a much better job than others of backstopping production flaws. Then too, some buyers force the dealer to cut the price so low in order to make the sale that the allowance for "make ready" or correction of minor malfunctions is "given away." And some customers are so eager for delivery that they don't allow the dealer time for proper make ready. It is worth noting that all faults mentioned by Lancer own-**

**ers were relatively minor ones. Nobody's brakes failed, nor did a transmission crack up or an engine burn out.**

"Very poor mileage (17 over-all) considering what I expected from advertising and car's size and weight."—New York salesman.

"Gas consumption is a little too high for a car of this size."—Minnesota conservationist.

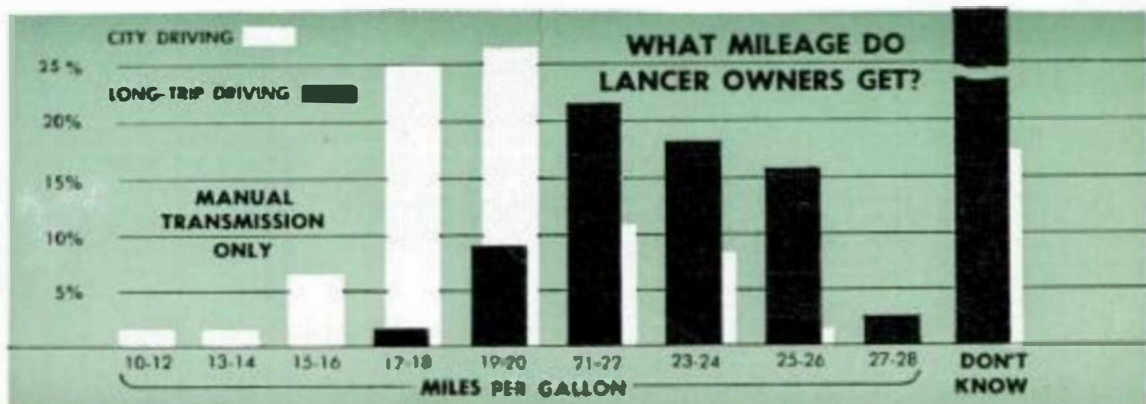
"I got better gas mileage (he reports 17 over-all) on my '55 Plymouth."—Connecticut teacher.

"I was told I would get up to 30 miles per gallon."—Georgia electrical contractor.

**Figures compiled from all the questionnaires show that most owners of automatic-transmission-equipped cars got between 14 and 20 m.p.g. in city driving. Of those reporting manual transmission mileage, 60 percent said they were getting between 21 and 26 m.p.g. in long-trip driving.**

**Few cars achieve over-all fuel economy which matches the unrealistic mileage promised in some advertising and sales pitches. Then again, there are such things as wasteful driving habits.**

(Continued to page 278)



# Owners Report on the Lancer

(Continued from page 121)

## SUMMARY OF OWNERS REPORT

## LANCER

Excellent 77.6%

Average 20.9%

Poor 1.5%



<b>Economy—manual transmission</b>	
As expected	50.0%
Better	13.8%
Not as good	36.2%
<b>Economy—automatic transmission</b>	
As expected	45.7%
Better	15.1%
Not as good	39.2%
<b>Best-liked features</b>	
Handling ease	71.2%
Comfortable ride	42.2%
Power, performance	23.1%
Styling	20.1%
Economy	19.8%
Easy to park	19.5%
Roadability	14.7%
<b>Most-frequent complaints</b>	
None at all	30.5%
Poor workmanship	12.3%
Poor gas economy	12.0%
Gasoline filler inlet	6.9%
Lack of head and legroom	6.6%
Water leaks	4.5%
Transmission	3.9%
<b>Had engine trouble?</b>	
No trouble	89.2%
Some trouble	9.6%
Considerable trouble	1.2%
<b>What was trouble?</b>	
Carburetor, timing	2.4%
Rough idling	1.2%
Valves, tappets	0.9%
<b>Best-liked exterior features</b>	
Grille	23.6%
Front end	13.8%
Simple, clean, smooth lines	11.4%

<b>Least-liked exterior features</b>	
Rear deck and fenders	9.3%
Rear end	8.1%
Gasoline filler pipe	2.4%
<b>Best-liked interior features</b>	
Upholstery	32.0%
Seats	20.4%
Door panel, instruments	19.2%
<b>Least-liked interior features</b>	
Glove compartment	9.3%
Ash tray	9.0%
Lack of head and legroom	6.0%
Headliner	3.6%
<b>Did consider different compact?</b>	
Yes, did consider	68.1%
No, did not consider	31.9%
<b>What make?</b>	
Falcon	29.4%
Valiant	24.1%
Corvair	18.0%
Corvet	13.7%
Rambler	7.6%
Miscellaneous	7.2%
<b>Lancer only car in family?</b>	
Yes, it is	55.0%
No, it is not	45.0%
<b>Make of other car</b>	
Another Lancer	1.2%
Dodge	17.1%
Plymouth	6.0%
Other Chrysler make	5.1%
Chevrolet	4.8%
Other G.M. make	7.5%
Ford	3.6%
Other Ford Co. make	2.7%
Foreign	3.6%

<b>Did consider "big" low-price car</b>	
Yes, did consider	40.6%
No, did not consider	59.4%
<b>What make considered?</b>	
Chevrolet	30.9%
Dodge Dart	25.4%
Ford	22.2%
Plymouth	19.8%
<b>How is dealer service?</b>	
Excellent	61.7%
Average	27.3%
Poor	11.0%
<b>Would you buy from him again?</b>	
Yes, would buy again	59.6%
No, would not	9.9%
No answer, don't know	30.5%
<b>Car traded in?</b>	
Dodge	21.8%
Plymouth	18.0%
Other Chrysler make	3.9%
Chevrolet	7.5%
Other G.M. make	5.4%
Ford	9.0%
Other Ford Co. make	3.0%
Other U.S. make	5.7%
Foreign make	4.5%
<b>Next car will be?</b>	
Lancer	24.2%
Dodge	12.0%
Other Chrysler Corp. make	7.5%
General Motors make	2.1%
Ford Co. make	2.7%
Foreign make	0.9%
Other U.S. make	0.6%
A compact car	6.9%
Undecided, don't know	43.1%

"Gas tank overflows when being filled."  
—California retiree.  
"Impossible to fill gas tank without spilling."  
—North Carolina college professor.  
"The most idiotic thing is having the gas tank filler pipe in the side so gas splashes on fender and leaves a stain."  
—California lawyer.

*Lancer's gas tank is located far forward to permit spare tire stowage beneath trunk floor. This, in turn, makes for an unusually large trunk—and a balky filler pipe. It would have been worth the manufacturer's time to solve this problem, which also appeared on Valiant last year.*

"Should have a little more legroom in back seat."  
—Wisconsin cheesemaker.

"Rain leaks in windshield, two front door jambs, at one rear door."  
—Florida insurance underwriter.

"There are a few leaks around the doors."  
—Alabama hotel manager.

*Leakage appears to be another facet of factory's quality control problem—an assembly rather than a design flaw.*

*Now for some more items on the plus*

*side. Here are the best-liked features ranking seven through twelve.*

"Lancer seems to be well-balanced when driving on slippery or icy roads."  
—Massachusetts bus operator.

"Holds road very well on sharp curves."  
—California railroad conductor.

"Terrific roadability. In this respect it will do as well if not better than any big car."  
—Idaho salesman.

"The Lancer is a real road car; it holds the turns at high speeds as if it were on tracks."  
—Florida drapery installer.

"Road-holding ability amazing! I drove 750 miles in one day by myself without being tired."  
—North Carolina chemist.

*And so it goes. We could fill the rest of the report with such enthusiastic references to Lancer's roadability. Despite its small size and light weight you can hurl the Lancer over rough roads at high speeds all day without undue discomfort or tension. In this respect it is a real sports touring car.*

"Enough space for family even though a compact car."  
—Pennsylvania nurse.

(Continued to page 280)



"It was to be our second car, but we use it a lot more than our large car. In fact we are leaving for Florida soon and plan to take the Lancer."—Illinois retired executive.

"Everyone says it is a big little car."—South Carolina life insurance manager.

*People are amazed at the space that turns up in Lancer—for passengers' legs, feet and elbows as well as for luggage.*

"I like . . . the amount of room there is in this size car."—Iowa nurse.

"The solid feeling of the body is what I like."—Pennsylvania clergyman.

"Power steering is not necessary."—New Jersey salesman.

"Steers easily, brakes well."—Minnesota beautician.

*Very few owners need power steering, almost no one should require power brakes. This is one of the real plusses of lighter weight and good design.*

"I especially like the nylon fabric upholstery. It's very soft and one's clothes slide across rather than stick as they do to some fabrics."—Michigan housewife.

"Attractive upholstery and appointments."—Illinois credit manager.

"Cushioned foam rubber seats covered with a durable nylon material."—New Jersey tavern owner.

*As a matter of fact this seat upholstery gives a real luxurious feeling and appearance that's a bit above the plastic door paneling and headliner.*

Switching back to the complaints, here, in order of frequency, are items seven through fourteen.

"Needs more horsepower on the highway."—Ohio accountant.

"Has enough power for city travel, not enough for highway travel."—Alabama senior clerk.

"Not enough oomph in passing."—New York dentist.

*We don't buy this complaint. If you switched to a Lancer from a powerful V-8 you may have to change your passing habits but you'll find that you don't miss many opportunities in a day's drive. For another \$43 you can get Lancer equipped with the 145 hp. engine used in Plymouth Six. This job will match muscles with most standard low-priced V-8s.*

"Rear-view mirror placed at a position (from top of windshield frame) obstructing view."—Iowa teacher.

"Location of mirror is bad, anyone sitting in center of front seat bumps his head against it."—Minnesota truck driver.

"Interior mirror always in the way."—Georgia teacher.

*This mirror can be a problem. Manufacturers might provide screw locations (filled) for alternate mounting of mirror bracket at either top or bottom of frame.*

"Everything rattles that isn't welded on."—Alabama office worker.

"This car isn't very rattle-free by a long shot."—Ohio floor installer.

"Very poor door and window fitting and adjustments."—California oil worker.

*Cause: poor quality control on assembly or lack of proper dealer make ready. The remedy: time consuming correction plus a few more ounces of pride.*

"Heater is too large, gives too much heat, should be forced outside air."—California security officer.

"Heater should work at driving speed without blower."—Nebraska gas worker.

*Here's where we perform a real service. You can turn off heater-defroster blower in any position by pulling out (gently, please) the push button that you've just selected. Factory goofed, left this out of manual.*

"Increase area cleared by windshield wipers."—New Jersey engineer.

"Door latch on center post is poor design. I've torn my coats while getting into the car."—North Carolina salesman.

"Poor fitting glove compartment and ash tray."—Ohio salesman.

*All is not lost, though. Here are some additional best-liked features.*

"The trunk is plenty roomy."—Michigan factory worker.

"Plenty of trunk space."—Illinois salesman.

*Lancer's trunk (and Valiant's) is both roomy and convenient.*

"Driving view good down over the hood."—Pennsylvania teacher.

"Very good brakes."—Nebraska farmer.

"Brakes extremely well."—Florida architect.

*The gentlemen are right, Lancer has sufficient lining area and braking action that's smooth and requires light pedal pressure.*

"I like the alternator. I've had heater, lights and electric wipers going all at once and ammeter showed no discharge."—Ohio printer.

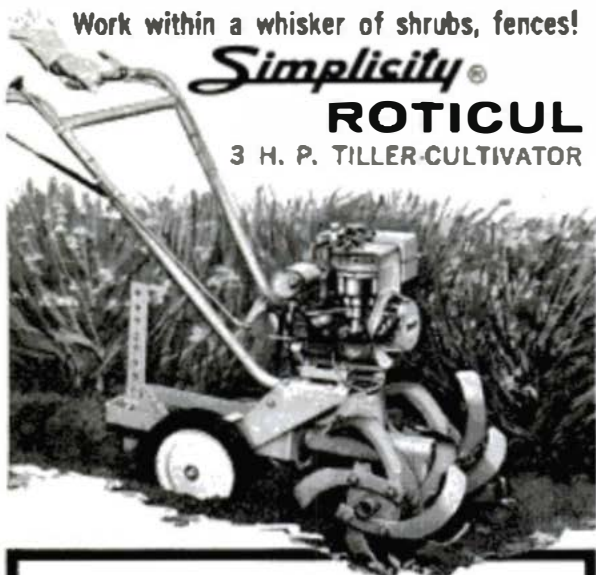
"I like the new alternator for keeping the battery charged."—Wisconsin store manager.

*Few people realize what a great improvement the alternator is over the conventional d.c. generator. With it batteries will last about three times as long.*

*(Continued to page 282)*

Work within a whisker of shrubs, fences!

## *Simplicity* **ROTICUL** 3 H. P. TILLER-CULTIVATOR



### Finger-Tip Control! Patented Power Reverse!

It takes a quality tiller to do precision tilling. Roticul tills within a fraction of an inch of fences, hedgerows, etc., with full operator visibility, quick responding finger-tip controls, full power reverse to end exhausting pull-back. Scientific tilling action; non-winding, self-sharpening tines guaranteed against breakage. Write for free catalog!

**SIMPLICITY MANUFACTURING CO.**  
6140 Spring St. • Port Washington, Wis.

Maker of Simplicity Garden Tractors, Pocket Big Riding Lawn Mowers, Simplicity 700 Riding Tractor



### A PARKER HACK SAW for any day in the week

The Parker model you want, saws easier, holds blades more rigidly, and fits your pocketbook. Unconditionally Guaranteed.

Manufacturers of World-Famous Trojan Saw Blades and Frames

**PARKER MANUFACTURING CO.**  
WORCESTER 1, MASS., U. S. A.

Now for some minor complaints to balance off the report.

"Doors hard to close, very flimsily constructed."—Alabama druggist.

"Doors are difficult to close at extremely cold temperatures."—Nebraska quality control man.

We agree with above cold weather complaint. At -15° the lubricant on internal latch parts keeps them from latching tight.

"Tire size too small, 15-inch tires would give better road clearance and better wear."—New Hampshire government administrator.

Clearance is a result of chassis design as much as wheel size. Lark with 15 inch wheels has only 0.7 of an inch greater clearance than Lancer. He's right on wear though; 15-inch tires will outlast 13-inches if the weight on them is the same.

"I've had a lot of trouble with windows, they roll up and down very hard, and they rattle."—Wisconsin electronic technician.

"Door windows rattle."—California guard.

"Parking lights are in a poor position, get covered with mud and slush too quickly."—New York engineer.

That about sums it up for Lancer, a highly pleasurable car rated excellent by 77.6 per cent of its owners, 30 percent of whom had no complaints at all. Except for quality control problems of the factory and some minor design flaws this car would probably be an unqualified favorite. ★ ★ ★

**WAITING FOR YOU** in the April issue will be two million-mile owners' reports, on the 1961 Chevrolet and Rambler American, plus how-to's on converting your garage for modern living needs, and giving your car a spring tune-up.

### Relative of Deadly Radioisotope May Lead to Better Bone Studies

Strontium 85, a safe relative of the deadly Strontium 90 of fallout fame, is being tested for use in a new method of diagnosing diseases of the bone. The technique, known as an osteogram, uses tiny amounts of the radioactive isotope, injected into the body and traced by scintillation counters as they are absorbed and deposited in the bones. Studies show that the rates of absorption vary in diseased areas from the rates in normal bones. The same method will also be useful in following progress of repair of bone fractures, as well as in basic studies of bone chemistry.