



1, 2. A  $\frac{1}{8}$ -scale clay model from November 1952 shows Dodge styling considered for 1954 or possibly 1955. 3, 4. The convertible in the new Royal series was chosen to pace the 1954 Indianapolis 500. Dealers sold 701 replicas of the specially trimmed and equipped "500" ragtop. (Owner: David Studer) 5. The pace car displayed at the Chicago Auto Show. 6. Movie stars Jerry Lewis (left) and Dean Martin in the pace car at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. 7-10. In March '54, Dodge added a "spring special" Royal two-door hardtop with a new two-tone paint scheme that predicted the look of the 1955 models. A 241-cid hemispherical-head "Red Ram" V-8 powered Royals. (Owners: Bob and Roni Sue Shapiro)

With their lives now more reliant on cars, families came to want more than basic transportation. As personal incomes rose in a spurt of postwar prosperity, they could afford something more luxurious than a Chevrolet, Ford, or Plymouth.

The Dodge Division of Chrysler Corporation built what they wanted. In 1954, Dodge introduced the Royal, a top-of-the-line series intended for the adult driver. One Royal advertisement in *Life* magazine even described the car as a "solid citizen." (The Royal appeared to fly out of Manhattan, presumably destined for Levittown, the planned suburban community on Long Island.) Dodge was also a sponsor of the family-themed television comedy *Make Room for Daddy*, which starred Danny Thomas. In the 1954 season, Thomas began and ended each show riding in a Dodge Royal convertible.

Sales brochures called the Royal "a superb achievement in fine car luxury and performance." Dodge's biggest engine, the 241-cid, 150-bhp, hemispherical-head "Red Ram" V-8, powered the Royal. Interiors featured color coordinated Jacquard fabrics "of such quality they have never before been used in a medium-price car"—though ad copy was quick to point out that Jacquard wore well and cleaned easily, and the owners manual included upholstery cleaning tips for every spill from blood to, ahem, "illness."

Plentiful standard equipment lightened the family man's burden. A map light, glove box light, handbrake warning light, back-up light, cigarette lighter, foam-rubber seat cushions, two-speed electric wipers, deluxe three-spoke steering wheel, and chrome tailfins were all

part of the Royal treatment. In March, a "spring special" hardtop was added. It featured a two-tone paint job with a color break that fanned out behind the hood scoop, over the doors, and onto the rear-quarter panels, where it angled back up over the rear deck.

Accoutrements once reserved for high-priced cars filled the options list. PowerFlite two-speed automatic transmission cost \$189 extra. Power steering cost \$150.50. Buyers could choose Motor Rim chrome wire wheels for \$279.50 or even AirTemp air-conditioning for \$642.60.

The Royal cost more than any previous Dodge. Base prices in the four-model series ranged from \$2349 for the club coupe to \$2632 for the convertible. In price, power, and equipment, the Royal competed against the Mercury Monterey,