

decided against trading in her 1954 Dodge station wagon, told *Time* magazine, "Americans are getting bored pouring time and money into their cars. There are too many better things to entertain yourself with. . . . People are just getting too sophisticated to worry about cars."

If so, then Sink and friends must have rolled their eyes at the facelifted '59 Dodge, with its optional swivel seats and "Level-Flite" rear air suspension. Though retaining the 122-inch wheelbase in place since '57, the car grew 5.2 inches longer and 1.7 inches wider. New "Jet-Trail" taillights and a protruding grille took the existing styling theme and made it look heavier.

Despite appearances, Dodge responded to complaints about its 1957 and 1958 models. It raised the rear roof and relocated the backseat of four-door hardtops for improved headroom. It also gently flattened the curve of its steering wheels for more thigh room and a clearer view over the hood. The expensive Regal Lancer was gone, but 361-cid V-8s were now standard in Royals and Custom Royals, with D-500s of 383 cubic inches and as much as 345 horsepower available.

Model-year production improved somewhat from 1958's severe downturn, but the gains came from higher demand for station wagons and the low-line Coronet. The tonier Royals and Customs contin-

ued to lose ground. Indeed, after 1959, Dodge dropped the Royal, Custom Royal, and Lawrence Welk. As *The New York Times* reported, "[A] feeling has begun to prevail that the Welk show is appealing to the same audience week after week. It is an audience that trade sources say is not a particularly good market for Dodge cars."

Dodge, like the rest of Detroit, became beguiled by the "youth market." Nothing was quite the same again—except Lawrence Welk.

Despite critics who called it "corn," *The Lawrence Welk Show* remained a television institution for the next 22 years. Welk became the second-wealthiest performer in show business after Bob Hope, and the second most popular tourist attraction in the LA area after Disneyland. Reruns of the program still air on public broadcasting stations.

As for Dodge, the last dance may play yet. **CA**

#### Find Out More

To read more about the topics mentioned in this story, please see these issues of *Collectible Automobile*: July 1984 (1958 Edsel), May 1985 (1956 Chrysler 300), July 1985 and February 1996 (1954 Oldsmobile Super 88), April 1986 (1956 Plymouth Fury), June 1986 and December 1998 (1954 Hudson Wasp), February 1988 (Dodge La Femme), August 1988 (1954 DeSoto), December 1990 (1954 Dodge Royal), August 1991 (1955-56 Dodge Royal), April 1992 (1954 Pontiac Star Chief), June 1992 (1954 Mercury Monterey), February 1993 and April 2009 (1954 Buick Special), August 1993 (1957-59 Dodge Royal), June 1994 (cars of 1958), December 1994 (Virgil Exner), February 1995 (Betty Skelton), April 1996 (1954 Nash Statesman), October 1996 (1956 DeSoto Adventurer), October 1997 (1956 Dodge D-500), December 2005 and February 2006 (Harley Earl), June 2007 (1957 Chrysler Corporation cars).

#### Clubs for 1954-59 Dodge Royal and Custom Royal Fans

National Chrysler Products Club  
P.O. Box 64  
Fayetteville, PA 17222  
Website:  
[www.nationalchryslerproductsclub.com](http://www.nationalchryslerproductsclub.com)

WPC (Walter P. Chrysler) Club, Inc.  
P.O. Box 3504  
Kalamazoo, MI 49003-3504  
Fax: (269) 375-5535  
Website: [www.chryslerclub.org](http://www.chryslerclub.org)

### 1954-59 Dodge Royal and Custom Royal: Models, Prices, Production

1954	Weight	Price	Prod
<b>Royal (wb 119; hardtop/convertible 114)</b>			
club coupe	3,365	2,349	8,900
4d sedan	3,425	2,373	50,050
hardtop coupe	3,355	2,503	3,852
convertible coupe	3,575	2,632	2,000*
chassis	—	—	1
<b>Total 1954 Dodge Royal</b>			<b>64,803</b>
<b>1955</b>			
<b>Royal (wb 120)</b>			
4d sedan	3,425	2,310	45,323
Lancer hardtop coupe	3,425	2,395	25,831
Sierra 4d wagon, 6P	3,655	2,659	5,506
Sierra 4d wagon, 9P	3,730	2,761	
<b>Total Royal</b>			<b>76,660</b>
<b>Custom Royal (wb 120)</b>			
4d sedan	3,485	2,473	55,503
Lancer 4d sedan	3,505	2,516	
Lancer hardtop coupe	3,480	2,543	30,499
Lancer convertible cpe	3,610	2,748	3,302
<b>Total Custom Royal</b>			<b>89,304</b>
<b>Total 1955 Dodge Royal/Cust. Royal</b>			<b>165,964</b>
<b>1956</b>			
<b>Royal (wb 120)</b>			
4d sedan	3,475	2,513	26,616
Lancer hardtop sedan	3,625	2,697	3,795
Lancer hardtop coupe	3,505	2,583	11,787
Sierra 4d wagon, 6P	3,710	2,869	4,473
Sierra 4d wagon, 9P	3,800	2,974	
Suburban 2d wagon	3,620	2,729	1,875
<b>Total Royal</b>			<b>48,546</b>
<b>Custom Royal (wb 120)</b>			
4d sedan	3,520	2,623	27,829
Lancer hardtop sedan	3,675	2,807	4,226
Lancer hardtop coupe	3,505	2,693	14,417
Lancer convertible cpe	3,630	2,913	1,378
<b>Total Custom Royal</b>			<b>47,850</b>
<b>Total 1956 Dodge Royal/Cust. Royal</b>			<b>96,396</b>

<b>1957</b>			
<b>Royal (wb 122)</b>			
4d sedan	3,620	2,712	19,923
Lancer hardtop sedan	3,690	2,818	8,824
Lancer hardtop coupe	3,585	2,769	12,252
<b>Total Royal</b>			<b>40,999</b>
<b>Custom Royal (wb 122)</b>			
4d sedan	3,690	2,881	22,548
Lancer hardtop sedan	3,750	2,991	12,068
Lancer hardtop coupe	3,670	2,920	17,629
Lancer convertible cpe	3,810	3,146	2,456
<b>Total Custom Royal</b>			<b>54,701</b>
<b>Total 1957 Dodge Royal/Cust. Royal</b>			<b>95,700</b>
<b>1958</b>			
<b>Royal (wb 122)</b>			
4d sedan	3,570	2,797	7,515
Lancer hardtop sedan	3,640	2,915	3,332
Lancer hardtop coupe	3,565	2,854	4,318
<b>Total Royal</b>			<b>15,165</b>
<b>Custom Royal (wb 122)</b>			
4d sedan	3,640	3,030	9,981
Lancer hardtop sedan	3,670	3,142	5,747
Lancer hardtop coupe	3,610	3,071	7,172
Lancer convertible cpe	3,785	3,298	1,139
Regal Lancer htp cpe	3,650	3,245	1,163
<b>Total Custom Royal</b>			<b>25,202</b>
<b>Total 1958 Dodge Royal/Cust. Royal</b>			<b>40,367</b>
<b>1959</b>			
<b>Royal (wb 122)</b>			
4d sedan	3,640	2,934	8,389
Lancer hardtop sedan	3,690	3,069	2,935
Lancer hardtop coupe	3,625	2,990	3,483
<b>Total Royal</b>			<b>14,807</b>
<b>Custom Royal (wb 122)</b>			
4d sedan	3,660	3,145	8,925
Lancer hardtop sedan	3,745	3,270	5,019
Lancer hardtop coupe	3,675	3,201	6,278
Lancer convertible cpe	3,820	3,422	984
<b>Total Custom Royal</b>			<b>21,206</b>
<b>Total 1959 Dodge Royal/Cust. Royal</b>			<b>36,013</b>

\*Includes 701 "500" Indianapolis 500 pace car replicas. Source: *Encyclopedia of American Cars*, by the Auto Editors of Consumer Guide®, Publications International, Ltd., 2006.