

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**

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Clubs for 1954-59 Dodge Royal and Custom Royal Fans

National Chrysler Products Club
P.O. Box 64
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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

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

1954	Weight	Price	Prod
Royal (wb 119; hardtop/convertible 114)			
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
Total 1954 Dodge Royal			64,803
1955			
Royal (wb 120)			
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	
Total Royal			76,660
Custom Royal (wb 120)			
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
Total Custom Royal			89,304
Total 1955 Dodge Royal/Cust. Royal			165,964
1956			
Royal (wb 120)			
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
Total Royal			48,546
Custom Royal (wb 120)			
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
Total Custom Royal			47,850
Total 1956 Dodge Royal/Cust. Royal			96,396

1957			
Royal (wb 122)			
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
Total Royal			40,999
Custom Royal (wb 122)			
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
Total Custom Royal			54,701
Total 1957 Dodge Royal/Cust. Royal			95,700
1958			
Royal (wb 122)			
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
Total Royal			15,165
Custom Royal (wb 122)			
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
Total Custom Royal			25,202
Total 1958 Dodge Royal/Cust. Royal			40,367
1959			
Royal (wb 122)			
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
Total Royal			14,807
Custom Royal (wb 122)			
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
Total Custom Royal			21,206
Total 1959 Dodge Royal/Cust. Royal			36,013

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