

1956 Dodge Custom Royal Lancer

GENERAL	
Front engine, rear wheel-drive two-door hardtop	
Base price	\$2058
ENGINE	
Type	Super fluid Ram overhead valve V-8
Bore x stroke	3.63 in. x 3.8 in.
Displacement	315 cu. in.
Compression ratio	8:1
Carburetor	Carburetor 4-bbl.
Power	230 hp at 4400 rpm
Torque	315 lb.-ft. at 2400 rpm
DRIVETRAIN	
Transmission	Powerflite automatic (optional)
Final drive ratio (1:1)	3.54
SUSPENSION & BRAKES	
Front	Independent, coil springs
Rear	Live axle, leaf springs
Brakes (all)	Drum/drum, power assist optional
STEERING	
Type	Worm and roller
MEASUREMENTS & CAPACITIES	
Wheelbase	120 in.
Length	212 in.
Height	60.8 in.
Width	75 in.
Load lt.	5959 in.
Weight	3505 lb.
File size	7.60 x 15 in.
Fuel capacity	17 gal.

ing for a car like it when a friend found it on the Internet. They do know that it was sold new in western Pennsylvania, where it spent most of its life, and some time after its owner's death was parked in a garage for about 20 years. The original owner's widow then decided to sell it.

"And the way we understand it," Jim continued, "when the owner of the dealership saw it, he decided to put it in his personal collection."

He and his father aren't completely sure why the dealer eventually chose to let it go, but there was no passing up the chance to buy. After traileering it home across Pennsylvania, John recalled, it turned out to be in the condition a 7500-mile car should be in, but it wasn't perfect. Sitting unused for that length of time meant the Dodge wore a coating of sen-

"It was to the point where it was going to go downhill if you didn't give it the TLC," Jim said. "It was at the breaking point."

Lots of plain, hard work got the exterior looking very good, since beneath the white paint was intact and most of the chrome was good. And although it's no surprise on such a low-mileage car, the body and frame were rust-free.

As its problems were corrected and that thing up."

"From a safety standpoint, I put a dual master cylinder on there and replaced the brake lines. I didn't want to smack everything."

From sitting, so we went and replaced the brakes weren't healthy pulling wheels and the wheel cylinders recalled, "I said 'Well, we'd better start when the master cylinder went,'" John master cylinder's failure.

Those problems were preceded by the to put that in."

"Yeah, and then the diaphragm went out of it."

"We were driving," John said, "and we flooded right out. The gas was running got stuck with it because the carburetor flooded right out. The gas was running."

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Actually happened.

tion sounds a little neater than the way it ing the fuel pump, even if that descrip- took the Dodge from running to run- Rebuilding its badly leaking carburetor fly fixed by substituting a set of radials. had ruined the tires, but that was cas-

The most obvious was the dry rot that parts and while the Dodge hadn't suf- fered any disasters, it had problems.

the whole story. Unfortunately, long-term straight, solid body, of course, doesn't tell Talking about a nice interior and a from the glass, but it's just a theory.

jewelry as a driver wiped condensation defrosters—is that they were made by complained to *Popular Mechanics* of poor ble, since several owners of 1955 Dodge- tery. The theory—and it seems plausi-

eye level, but how they got there is a mys- the steering wheel at about the driver's Those marks are random and above in the inside surface.

The only interior problem was the wind- shield, which had a series of fine scratches

Mysterious Random Scratches

"I checked it underneath," John said. "Everything's as solid as a ram's horn under there."

No less important when it comes to a relatively uncommon car, it was complete and even most of its small trim parts were undamaged.

"We found one piece at Hershey last year," Jim said, "and we found the other piece we wanted on a parts car. And then we kept other ones, just in case."

For the right owner—the one who wants a car that stands apart from the crowd—a Custom Royal Lancer could be the solution. The feature car met Pendle-

they also shouldn't be impossible. parable parts for, say, a Chevy 265, but probably won't be as easy to find as com-

Mechanically, though, the Dodge is its in poor condition. and trim means expense, work or both if might be on. The sheer amount of chrome change with four doors and lesser mod-

Obviously, there's quite a bit of inter- cally in the case of a two-door hardtop, line model that's not often seen, espe- completeness is a factor on a top-of-the- for a car of this type, keep in mind that If you should happen to go shopping merit a close look.

and both interior and trunk floors also fenders at their heels. The rocker panels extreme rear near the taillights and the panels behind the wheelwells and at the spots are the inner fenders, the quarter buying. Some of the potential problem tion for making a critical inspection before thing," which is a strong recommenda-

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Look Before You Buy

John was fortunate both to find the Dodge and to be able to correct its prob- lems fairly easily, but few restorers can hope for that double dose of good luck. The parts car he bought was far worse, with a badly rusted body and frame.

"The parts car wasn't undecorated," he said, "and as soon as we hooked onto the frame, it pulled right apart."

He and his son said in unison that rust covered not just the frame, but "the whole thing," which is a strong recommenda- tion for making a critical inspection before buying. Some of the potential problem