

## 1958

Production continued to 9,168 convertibles rolling enough to generate profit.



inch upward with off the line in 1958, Corvette's first

Externally, chrome was used extensively. New for '58 were dual headlights trimmed with chrome connected to a chrome strip that ran back across the top of the fenders; two simulated air ducts located low in the front fenders and larger bumpers connected to the frame rather than the fiberglass body. Simulated vents added to the cove behind the front wheel wells and twin chrome trunk strips became that year's distinguishing features. In addition, the Corvette's distinctive grill was reduced from 13 "teeth" to nine. Some models came with hubcaps instead of wheel discs and body paint was improved from enamel to an acrylic lacquer.

The body grew nine inches longer while width expanded by more than two inches. Weight went up 200 pounds to total more than one and one-half tons for the first time.

Inside the cockpit, new body panels and upholstery, including carpets, were added. All dashboard instruments were centralized directly in front of the driver, including a 160mph speedometer and a 6000rpm tachometer. A central console was added incorporating heater controls, clock and signal-seeking AM radio. Seat belts were factory-installed for the first time.

In terms of power, the fuel-injected, 283 cubic-inch, V-8 engine was now capable of producing 290 horsepower. Overall, five engine options were offered.

Meanwhile back at General Motors headquarters, designer Harley Earl retired and Bill Mitchell became the corporation's chief stylist. At the time, Mitchell had been developing the XP-700, a custom-built, highly-modified model with a long oval nose, twin-bubble plastic roof and a rear design that would later be adapted to the 1961 model. Work also began on the "Q-Corvette" that incorporated a rear-mounted transaxle and fully-independent suspension. That prototype's lower, sleeker lines eventually would be adapted to the next Corvette generation -the 1963 Sting Ray.

On the competitive circuit, two Corvettes were entered into the Sebring Grand Prix of Endurance, making that the last road race with official factory participation. And Duntov, driving a Corvette SS, hit 183 miles per hour at GM's proving grounds in Arizona.