



Convertible cost overruns shrunk the tooling budget for 1959-60 changes to a mere \$700,000, which didn't buy much. Still, there was no need to change the winning "Squarebird" formula.

cost of \$2.9 million had more than gobbled up the original \$2 million tooling budget for late-1958-through-1960 changes. The revised tooling budget for *all* 1959-60 modifications was only \$700,000. And you didn't buy much for that, even in the Fifties."

Accordingly, the '59 "Squarebird" was a virtual duplicate of the '58. Aside from the newly optional 430-cid V-8 and the revised rear suspension, mechanical alterations were confined to a new auxiliary coolant tank and radiator fan plus a relocated windshield washer system. Late in the model run, the convertible was treated to a fully automatic top mechanism, activated by a single dashboard pushbutton, replacing the previous manual top. Exterior tinware was mildly modified: larger Bird emblems on the hardtop's roof, thin-bar horizontal grille insert (repeated at the rear in the appliques around the taillamps), small ornaments for the front fenders, pointed chrome spears instead of hash marks on the door "bombs," relocated name script, and revised wheel covers. The only interior difference was white instead of black instrument faces. Paint colors and upholstery choices were shifted

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This page: "The Squarebird" made one of its few competition appearances at the inaugural Daytona 500, run on the then-new International Speedway in late February 1959. Top: Johnny Beauchamp drove his T-Bird (no. 73) to a photo finish against Lee Petty's Oldsmobile (no. 42). Center: Beauchamp was declared the winner and posed for pictures in Victory Circle. Bottom: But the judges had second thoughts, and gave the trophy to Petty four days later. Opposite page: This immaculate 1960 hardtop was purchased new by Jack and Holly Stewart of Hawthorne, California—and they've had it ever since.