

# CAR LIFE Road Test

*Holiday Sports Sedan*

# OLDSMOBILE 98



TO THOSE ACCUSTOMED to the rarefied upper strata of fine automotive machinery, economy sometimes is as important as it is to the buyers of minimum transportation. Witness the pride of big-car owners in a fuel consumption advantage of a few miles per gallon, which, though worthwhile, can save them no more than about \$50 per year. Compared with the normal first-year depreciation of a \$6000 vehicle, this isn't much of a saving, but it is a matter of pride and justification to the owner.

On the other hand, consider the more rational economics of an Oldsmobile Holiday Sports Sedan: its base price is a clear \$1000 below those of mechanically comparable luxury cars, yet it offers an almost identical automotive package. The ride is exactly right for its market—a sweeping, silent float which, together with the complete subservience of the car to its power controls, effectively produces that sense of aloof disassociation from road and traffic required of this type of automobile. The appointments, too, are correct, each supplying its "Something Extra" in the areas of comfort, smoothness and appearance. In all, the Holiday Sports Sedan is an accurate embodiment of the luxury car buyer's desires and, barring prestige fixations, should be a bargain in its class.

Olds engineers have made some effort to combat the loss of road sensation inherent in such silent splendor (one of our irreverent testers referred to the car as "a mobile nirvana"). An optional Safety Sen-



tinel responds with a fearsome buzz and warning light when a preset speed is reached and the thermometer-type speedometer changes the color of its bar to warn of increasing speed. Incidentally, during our accuracy checks we found that the speedometer bar had its own built-in safety feature—its end is cut off diagonally and using the shoulder of the diagonal, rather than the point, allowed us to obtain accurate readings.

Docking and coming about in a craft of this tonnage and displacement is inevitably somewhat taxing, but the Saginaw-built power steering, with just 3.6 turns lock to lock,

plus a front and rear fender configuration which gives the driver an excellent sense of the car's extremities, help considerably. Visibility is very good, both front and rear, with virtually no glass distortion evident.

The over-all length of this year's 98 series has been increased by 2 in. to a grand total of 220 in., and the strong horizontal styling lines make its various models (there are five) look even longer. No station wagon is offered in the series (although both the Dynamic 88 and Super 88 lines offer a wagon), but none is needed; there is room for all in the trunk. The interior dimensions of the trunk are staggering—▶





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it almost invites occupancy—and a huge amount of luggage can be installed within its vaulted vastness. This is truly a trunk among trunks and the slow, majestic rising of its great lid is, somehow, an event symbolic of the entire car.

With all the above in mind, one conclusion is inevitable: the Holiday Sports Sedan is no sports car, despite current advertising. It is, however, a sedan for "sports" and is, perhaps, best suited to two purposes—ego satisfaction and long-distance touring. It is good for both, though we have certain mild reservations about its touring ability.

True, the big 394-cu. in. engine loafs along easily, even at well above legal highway speeds; a very minimum of effort is required at the power controls; and comfort is on every hand to aid long-term relaxation. However, those same "soft" shock absorbers which soak all the bumps out of city streets also allow an unsettling amount of sway and roll on sharply curving roads. The

noticeability of this can be blamed to some extent on the very effectiveness of the engine and brakes—one simply isn't aware of the car's considerable weight until side forces come into play.

The designers of the instrument panel apparently felt that Olds drivers might experience some revulsion at being kept too intimately acquainted with their powerplants' state of health. The only quantity indicators are the fuel gauge and speedometer—little red and green lights report the functions of all the rest; the engine must either be too hot or too cold to be noticed (assuming the lights are working), and the generator and oil pressure either are or aren't.

The Hydra-Matic 3-speed transmission (standard on the 98 series and available at extra cost on the 88) is well known for its strength and durability, but our particular specimen apparently was out of adjustment. It was responsible for one of the few jarring notes in the car: an odd low-speed rumble. Also, we were treated to some quite stimulating automatic downshifts while

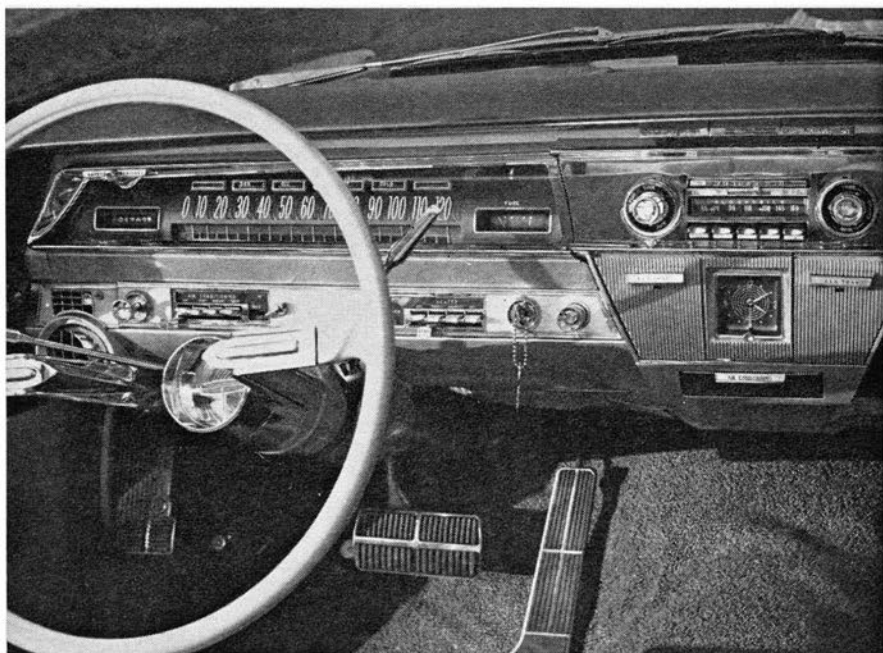
climbing steep grades, but these are characteristic of the current Hydra-Matic (as well as its 4-speed ancestor) and are not a matter for adjustment. We did, however, enjoy the lock-in ability of this transmission (L, 1st gear only; S, 1st and 2nd; D, all three ratios), and used it to good advantage during a mountain trip. Controlled deceleration through the transmission and engine is very comforting on a long grade and, in a car of this weight, is an important safety factor, through its assistance to the overworked braking system.

Though the Holiday Sports Sedan was never designed to be a sprint car, it is intended to have a somewhat sporting air. Actually, it has no difficulty in accelerating rapidly enough to cope with difficult traffic situations and has a top speed sporting enough to make the sirens howl. However, the joyful mechanical rapport between man and machine treasured by the enthusiastic driver is not easily achieved in the Olds 98, though we did manage a rather sporty heel-and-toe between the dimmer switch and the floor-mount-

ed radio station-seeker control.

Holiday passengers are surrounded by a host of diverting and useful gadgets, all of which work—no mean engineering achievement in itself. We laughed when we sat down to play with the above-mentioned floor-button radio station changer, but soon were willing to admit its very real value as a safety feature. Another optional device, a pull handle inside the glove box for unlatching the trunk lid, also seemed a bit effete at first, but proved a clear gain over key-fumbling in the dark. The heating system (standard equipment) also is worthy of considerable praise: it is quick and efficient, bringing warmth within a minute or two after a cold start and thereafter maintaining exactly the temperature selected.

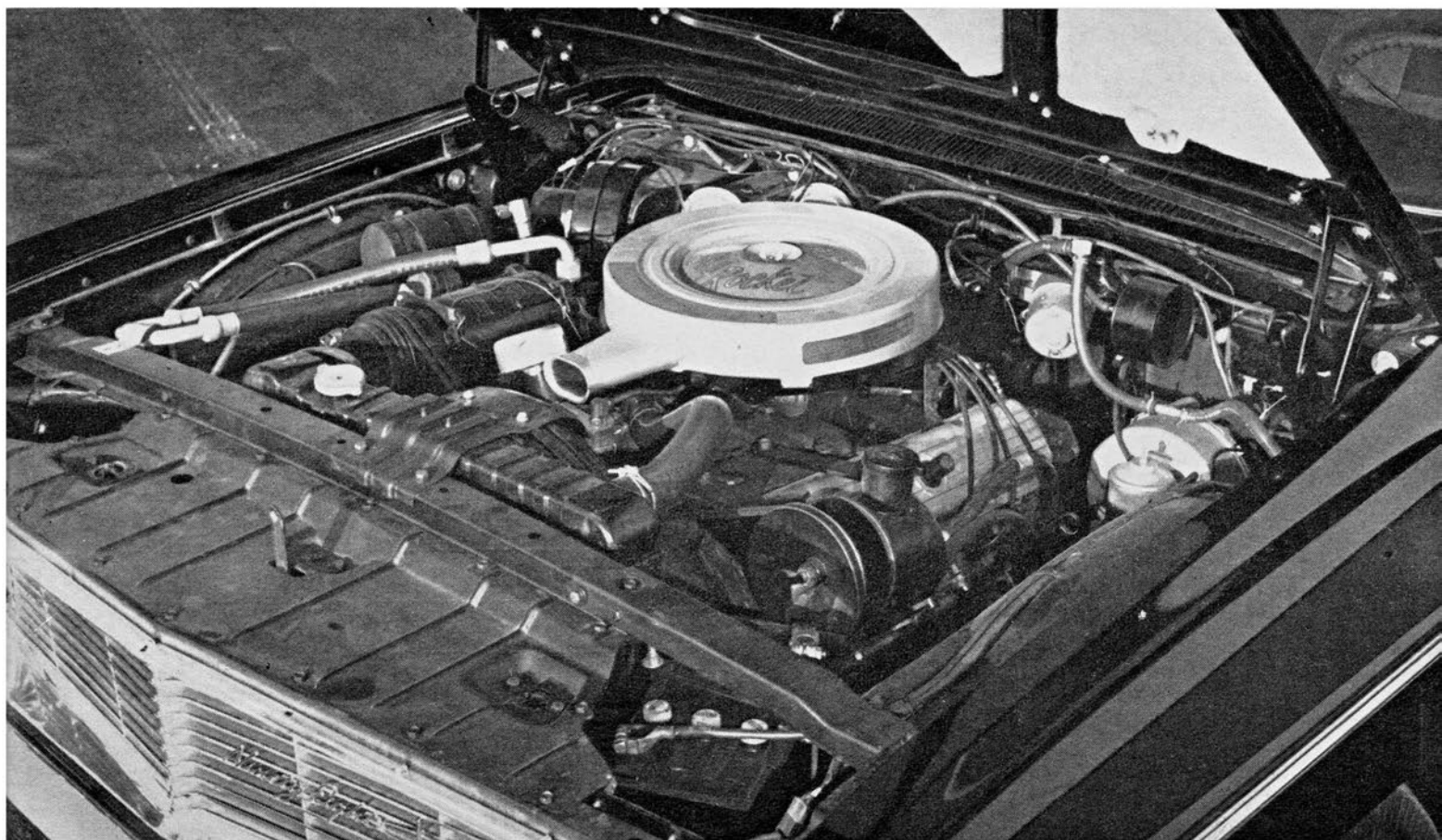
The electric windows (also standard) are quick and quiet, but could prove a mixed blessing to a family with inquisitive children. Toward determining whether unwary fingers might not be endangered by the windows' very speed and silence, we put some pretty impressive dents into a pencil. A driver's-side lock-out, or possibly a soft rubber top strip capable of absorbing fingers would win parental approval of the power window system.



Another opportunity for design improvement lies in the location of the wiper control, which is at the extreme left side and lower edge of the instrument panel. Wipers are usually needed quickly and under conditions of poor visibility, when taking one's eyes off the road can

have disastrous consequences.

There are few real innovations in the 1962 Olds 98 line. The body designers were generally content to stand pat on the successful 1961 configuration, with a new roof styling and lower, flatter trunk lid as their main offerings.

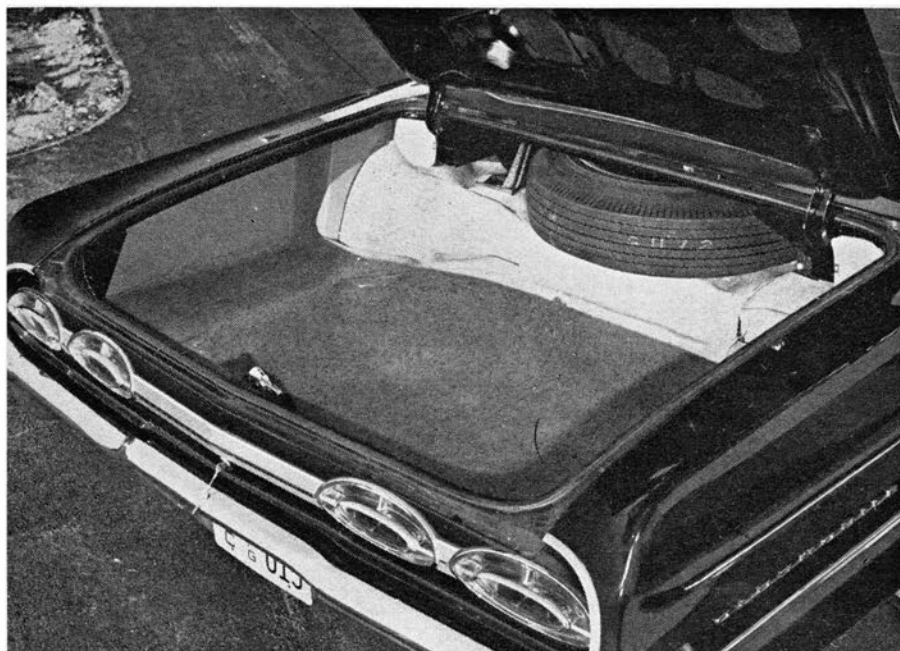


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The engineers were somewhat more active at Olds, providing a new combustion chamber design for the 394-cu. in. engine which, together with general tuning improvements, gives both additional horsepower and torque (see "The High Cost of Horsepower," *Car Life*, January 1962). Throughout the "full-size" series, tapered roller wheel bearings replace the former ball bearings, and the chassis, generator and distributor are designed to need no further lubrication during the life of the car (during "normal usage").

All of which shows the Holiday to be a finely engineered big car, in which the driver and passengers are cradled in roomy comfort. Olds is to be congratulated for its ability to create such a relatively inexpensive luxury automobile. ■



## CAR LIFE ROAD TEST



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### SPECIFICATIONS

List price.....	\$4256
Price, as tested.....	5093
Curb weight, lb.....	4630
Test weight.....	4965
distribution.....	57.3/42.7
Tire size.....	9.00-14
Tire capacity, lb.....	4700
Brake swept area.....	310
Engine type.....	V-8, ohv
Bore & stroke.....	4.12 x 3.69
Displacement, cu in.....	394
Compression ratio.....	10.25
Bhp @ rpm.....	330 @ 4600
equivalent mph.....	122.0
Torque, lb-ft.....	440 @ 2800
equivalent mph.....	74.1

### EXTRA-COST OPTIONS

Radio, back-up lights, power seat, power antenna, Safety Sentinel, under-hood and trunk lights, non-glare mirror, bi-phonc speaker, air conditioning, wsw tires, outside mirror.

### DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase, in.....	126
Tread, f and r.....	61.0/61.0
Over-all length, in.....	220.0
width.....	77.9
height.....	56.6
equivalent vol, cu ft.....	562
Frontal area, sq ft.....	24.5
Ground clearance, in.....	6.2
Steering ratio, o/a.....	21.8
turns, lock to lock.....	3.6
turning circle, ft.....	46.5
Hip room, front.....	62.8
Hip room, rear.....	62.8
Pedal to seat back, max.....	40.0
Floor to ground.....	12.0
Luggage vol, cu ft.....	39.6
Fuel tank capacity, gal.....	20.0

### GEAR RATIOS

4th (1.00), overall.....	3.08
3rd (1.56).....	4.80
2nd (2.93).....	9.02
1st (3.51).....	10.8

### PERFORMANCE

Top speed (4600), mph.....	122
best timed run.....	n.a.
3rd (4600).....	78
2nd (4600).....	42
1st (4650).....	36

### ACCELERATION

0-30 mph, sec.....	3.1
0-40.....	5.0
0-50.....	7.1
0-60.....	9.4
0-70.....	12.3
0-80.....	16.8
0-100.....	28.2
Standing 1/4 mile.....	17.2
speed at end.....	81.0

### FUEL CONSUMPTION

Normal range, mpg.....	13/16
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### SPEEDOMETER ERROR

30 mph, actual.....	30.8
60 mph.....	59.6
90 mph.....	88.2

### CALCULATED DATA

Lb/hp (test wt).....	15.0
Cu ft/ton mile.....	104.0
Mph/1000 rpm.....	26.5
Engine revs/mile.....	2265
Piston travel, ft/mile.....	1390
Car Life wear index.....	31.5

### PULLING POWER

4th, lb/ton @ mph.....	240 @ 72
3rd.....	430 @ 58
2nd.....	off scale
Total drag at 60 mph, lb.....	195

