



PHOTOS BY SCOTT MALCOLM

THE JUDGE

CAR LIFE ROAD TEST

ALL A-QUIVER, we went to glamorous, exotic Riverside Raceway to see Pontiac's latest offering, its answer to the latecomers on the Supercar bandwagon. Pontiac brass explained how they labored long and hard to come up with their newest. Drums rolled. Trumpets blared, and THERE IT WAS!

A GTO with cold-air kit and a four-speed stick.

Last year's test car.

Oh, not quite. The Judge, this year's version of last year's test car had:

An air foil.

A funny name.

As a mechanical change, if not pre- ▶

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continued

cisely an improvement, the air foil, sometimes known as a spoiler, gets first mention. In racing, the spoiler is functional. At top speeds, sleek racers develop lift. So much air rushes over and under that they all but take wing. The spoiler breaks up the flow, and generates negative lift, pushing the wheels harder against the pavement.

On the street, the spoiler is becoming a fad. The Z/28 Camaro has a dam across the rear deck, as does the fastback Mustang. Javelin has an optional adjustable spoiler. Cougar has a new model, the name of which we can't inflict on the public, with a spoiler.

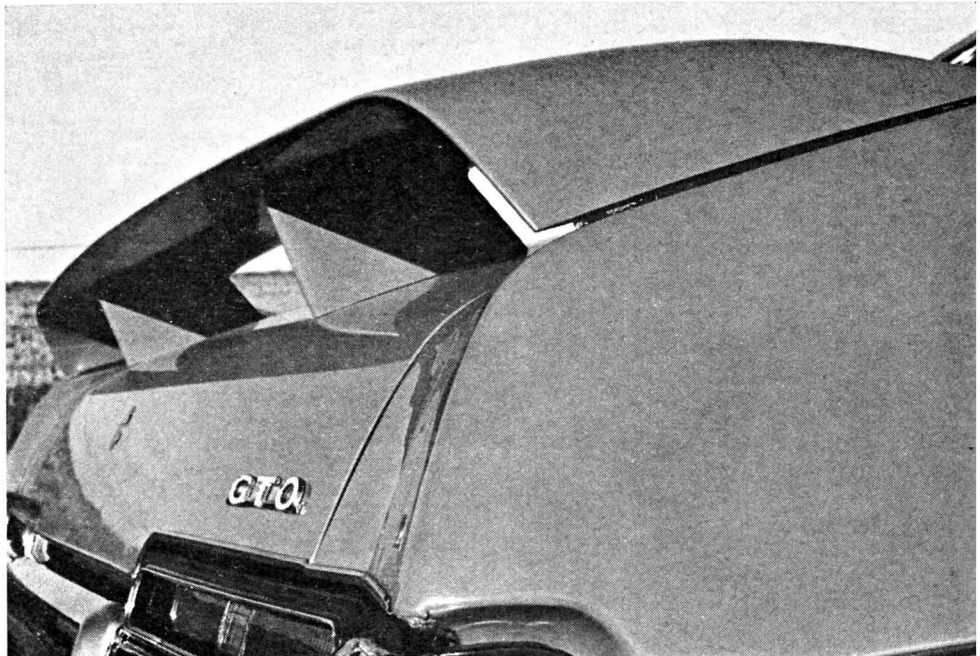
Pontiac's engineers claim that the spoiler is functional, at speed. The man who did the design was at the introduction, and said that at 100 mph, the air foil puts an extra 70 pounds of down-thrust on the rear wheels. Keen, said a member of the press, but what does it do at 65, the speed which the sovereign state of California feels is reasonable and proper? Gee, said the engineer, he hadn't computed it. Something less than half, he guessed.

With the name, Pontiac earns the same sort of immortality as did the city fathers of Jim Thorpe, Penna., or Truth or Consequences, N. M. Who was Jim Thorpe? What was Truth or Consequences? Ask your father, and don't be surprised if, in years to come, your son asks you whatever prompted Pontiac to name a car The Judge.

If they had shot the name on the rise, when everybody didn't know where it came from, when television fans met on Tuesday morning and told each other the jokes, they might have gained something. The car was in the works back then. It was hinted at, announced, canceled and brought back. By now, everybody knows what's coming. The label doesn't get a puzzled stare, it gets knowing smiles, from sweet old ladies on the freeway, even.

This doesn't mean we don't like GTOs. We do. Pontiac invented the Supercar, for this generation, anyway, and the GTO is still one of the best.

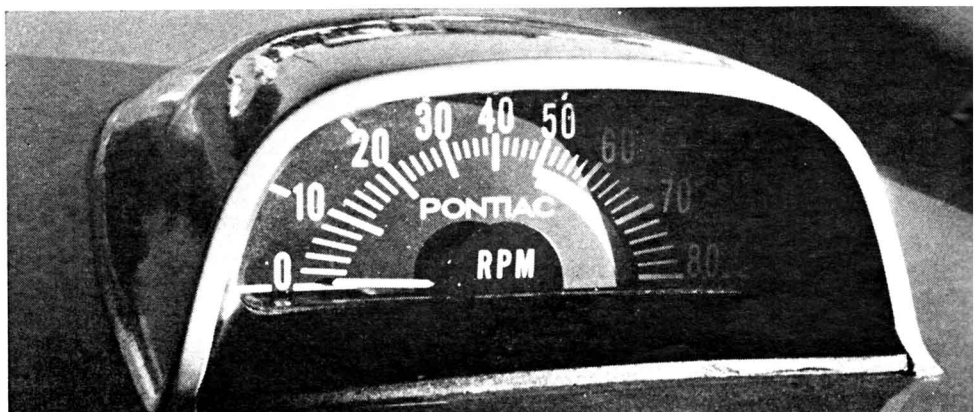
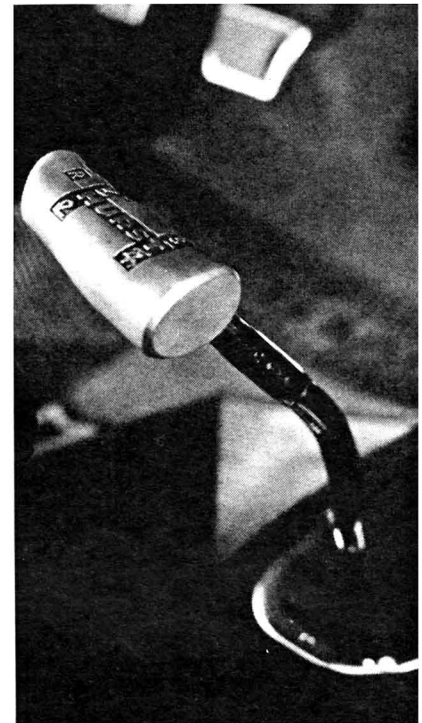
The test car had the Ram Air IV engine, the 400-cid V-8 with a wild camshaft and scoops in the hood. The scoops can be closed by a handle beneath the dashboard on cold or rainy days. The engine is rated at 370 bhp. The division officials at the Judge's in-



SPOILER is attached to struts that bolt onto the trunk lid. The tips curl down to the tops of the rear fenders. Usefulness at highway speed is minimal.

SHIFTER is T-handle by Hurst, with maximum grip. It's standard equipment on all stick-shift Judges, three speeds or four. An automatic is also available.

HOOD-MOUNTED tachometer is easy to see and read while still watching the road. Factory paints red line at 5000 rpm, but engine wound happily to 6000.



roduction made it very clear that the engine produces more than this, and was given the rating to satisfy the head office, that is, General Motors, and the insurance people.

The Ram Air IV is a very peaky engine. The idle is a rough, rolling bark, music to the driver's ears and a warning to people in the next lane.

The power curve must be something to see. We'd bet it goes straight up. There is very little power at low rpm. One tester opined that at low revs, it wouldn't push water downhill. Exaggeration, said another staffer. So all right, the Ram Air IV *will* push water downhill.

Around town, the Judge needed the four-speed transmission. The engine refused to lug, and wouldn't smooth out at less than 3000 rpm. In traffic, the driver roared along in first or second gear. On the open road, with the engine up on the cam, the Ram Air IV smooths out. With a steady foot, the engine is strong from 3000 to 6000, our limit. The power rating is at 5100, but because the factory admits it's capable of more, we used 6000 for our shift point.

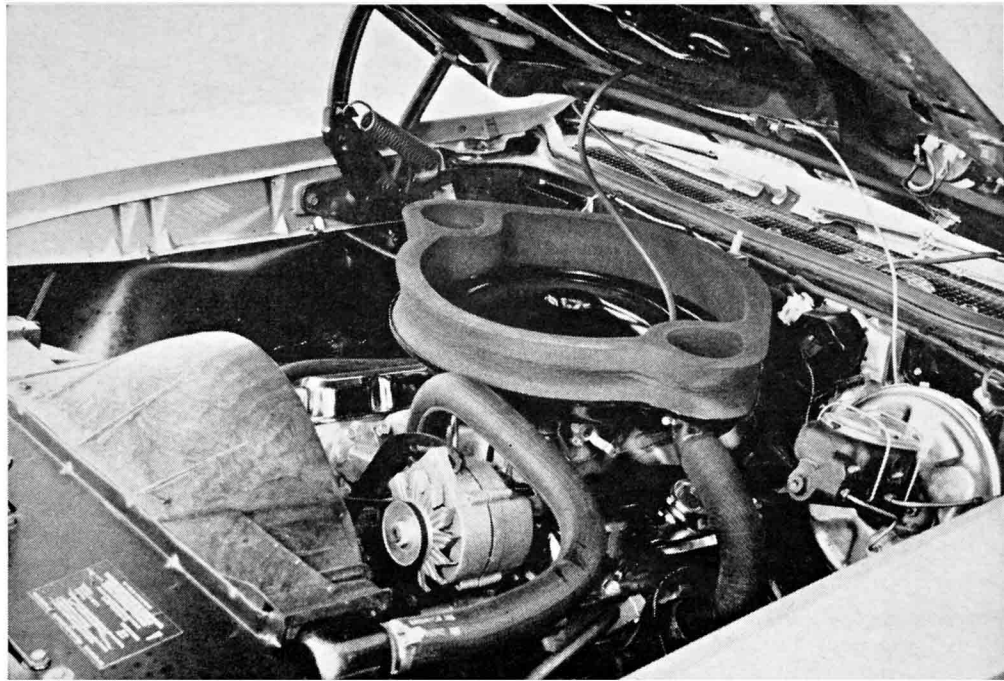
Quarter-mile times didn't compensate for the Judge's low-speed temperament. It wasn't the best GTO we've driven. Last year's car was just as touchy on the street, but fractionally faster at the strip. Fast starts were tricky: The engine wouldn't come alive until 3000, so we couldn't idle off the line. Dropping the clutch at 3000 put too much power down, and the tires spun. After much experimentation, the testers turned their best times by starting at 2500, and applying more power just as the tires bit and the Judge came off the line.

The Hurst T-handle shifter, standard equipment on Judge manual transmissions, worked well, but the engine sagged at each shift. The secondary barrels of the four-barrel carburetor open only when there's a pre-determined flow of air through the primary barrels. On the test car, all four weren't in operation until the throttle had been open for about one second. Power in each gear came in two steps. Had all 370+ horses been available at once, the times would have been better. A sharp tune-up man could do it. We test cars as they come from the factory, so it wasn't done.

Judge suspension is standard GTO, that is, standard Tempest with stiff springs. The ride is firm, with better control than the Tempest has, but the Judge was not a sporting automobile on Orange County Raceway's road course.

The handling comes in stages. At a brisk pace, the Judge is responsive. The driver can tell what the front wheels are doing. Initial understeer is kept within bounds by cranking on more steering lock.

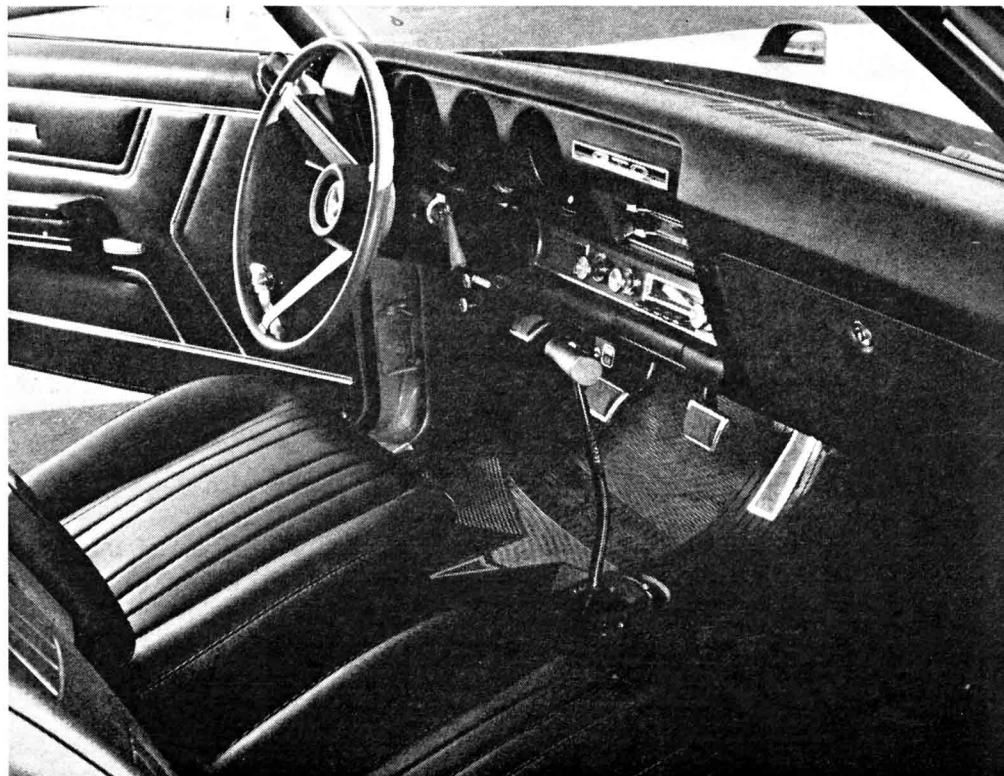
More speed, and the Judge wallows across the track. Once the front slides in earnest, all the steering available won't



COMPRESSIBLE GASKET seals hood scoops to the top of the air cleaner. Holes at each side connect with ducts running to the engine from behind the grille.



LOCKED REAR tire, above, prevented testers from utilizing front disc brakes. Interior, below, was plush, and comfortable for long periods of time.



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continued

help. Hard braking slews the rear wheels out. The only escape from a tight corner is letting up completely on the accelerator, so the front wheels can catch, and scrub off speed.

Once this point is passed, when all the weight is riding on the outside front wheel, full power and the proper gear can hang the tail out. Once pushed to the wall, the Judge could be accelerated through turns at extreme angles. This should only be done experimentally, on a road course. Driving the Judge at speed is enjoyable, but not rewarding.

Braking suffered from a lack of unity. The front disc brakes worked well, but the proportioning between front and rear didn't. The front discs never had the opportunity to perform. As soon as they gripped, the rear of the body came

up, and the lightly loaded rear tires locked. The driver had to ease off. Deceleration rates were within an acceptable range, and fade moderate, but the brakes should do more than they did.

The interior was fine, with one excellent feature, and one infuriating one. The bucket seats are as comfortable as the Tempest bench seat wasn't, there's lots of room for driver and one passenger, and the controls could be reached and located without problem.

The hood-mounted tachometer is great. Couldn't be better. The location puts the tach within the driver's line of sight, and far enough away that his eyes can quickly shift and focus between the road and the tach face. At the strip, he can watch for shift points without ever losing sight of the pavement ahead.

But the water temperature and oil pressure gauges are upside-down. Do we mean that when temperature and pressure go up, the needles go down? Yes, and a panicky feeling it is to be sardining down the freeway, glance at the oil pressure and discover the needle slumped

on the floor. Why Pontiac doesn't let up mean up, we don't know. The driver can get used to it, just as buyers of those fad wristwatches can get used to a clock hands that rotate counter-clockwise, with three o'clock at nine o'clock and so forth. We simply don't see why they should have to.

The Judge is at its best on the highway, where the engine runs fast enough to be happy, and the suspension needn't do things it doesn't like to do. The noise is enthusiast noise, and the inside is comfortable for long trips. At low speeds, the engine can be lived with, and while the Judge isn't the quickest car around, it's competitive, with quarter-mile times well under the Supercar 15-sec. barrier.

Maybe the problem is that we expected more from The Great One. Pontiac has built and is still building excellent cars. This year, the result was the Grand Prix. It may inspire a horde of imitations, just as the first GTO did.

But the original Supercar hasn't kept pace. Maybe Pontiac isn't allowed to. The Grand Prix gets the big engine, be-

1969 THE JUDGE PONTIAC GTO



DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase, in.....	112
Track, f/r, in.....	60/60
Overall length, in.....	202
width.....	75
height.....	52
Front seat hip room, in.....	21 x 2
shoulder room.....	59
head room.....	38
pedal-seatback, max.....	41
Rear seat hip room, in.....	59
shoulder room.....	57
leg room.....	32
head room.....	36
Door opening width, in.....	42
Trunk liftover height, in.....	28

PRICES

List, FOB factory.....	\$3493
Equipped as tested.....	\$4439
Options included: Ram Air IV engine, \$390; front disc brakes, \$64; four-speed transmission, \$195; power steering, \$100; Polyglas tires, \$72; AM radio, \$61; hood-mounted tach, \$63.	

CAPACITIES

No. of passengers.....	5
Luggage space, cu. ft.....	15
Fuel tank, gal.....	22
Crankcase, qt.....	5
Transmission/dif., pt.....	3/3
Radiator coolant, qt.....	18

CHASSIS/SUSPENSION

Frame type: Perimeter.	
Front suspension type: Independent by s.l.a., coil springs, telescopic shock absorbers.	
ride rate at wheel, lb./in.....	.91
antiroll bar dia., in.....	1.0
Rear suspension type: Live axle, two upper and two lower control arms, telescopic shock absorbers, coil springs.	
ride rate at wheel, lb./in.....	1.10
Steering system: Integral assist recirculating ball gear, parallelogram linkage ahead of front wheels.	
overall ratio.....	22:1
turns, lock to lock.....	4
turning circle, ft. curb-curb.....	41
Curb weight, lb.....	3735
Test weight.....	4030
Distribution, (driver),	
% f/r.....	58/42

BRAKES

Type: Vented disc front, drum rear, proportioning valve.	
Front rotor, dia. x width, in.	11.12 x 1.75
Rear drum, dia. x width.....	9.5 x 2
total swept area, sq. in.....	323.6
Power assist: Integral.	
line psi at 100 lb. pedal.....	800

WHEELS/TIRES

Wheel rim size.....	14 x 6JK
optional size.....	n.a.
bolt no./circle dia. in.....	5/4.75
Tires: Goodyear Polyglas.	
size.....	G70x14
normal inflation, psi f/r.....	24/24

ENGINE

Type, no. of cyl.....	V-8
Bore x stroke, in.....	4.12 x 3.75
Displacement, cu. in.....	400
Compression ratio.....	10.75:1
Fuel required.....	premium
Rated bhp @ rpm.....	370 @ 5500
equivalent mph.....	118
Rated torque @ rpm.....	445 @ 3900
equivalent mph.....	84
Carburetion: Rochester QuadraJet 1x4.	
throttle dia., pri./sec.....	1.38/2.25
Valve train: Hydraulic lifters, pushrods and overhead rocker arms.	
cam timing	
deg., int./exh.....	42-86/95-45
duration, int./exh.....	308/320
Exhaust system: Dual, reverse-flow mufflers.	
pipe dia., exh./tail.....	2.25/2.0
Normal oil press. @ rpm.....	55 @ 2600
Electrical supply, V./amp.....	12/37
Battery, plates/amp. hr.....	66/61

DRIVE TRAIN

Clutch type: Single dry plate, diaphragm-type pressure plate.	
dia., in.....	10.4
Transmission type: Four-speed, fully synchronized.	
Gear ratio 4th (1.00:1) overall.....	3.55:1
3rd (1.28:1).....	4.54:1
2nd (1.64:1).....	5.82:1
1st (2.20:1).....	7.81:1
Shift lever location: Floor.	
Differential type: Hypoid with limited slip.	
axle ratio.....	3.55:1



OVERSTEER at speed made the Judge's front wheels plow ahead, and the driver needed full steering lock to keep the car on the course. It's better on the highway.

cause its wheelbase moves the car out of the intermediate class. General Motors won't let the divisions use bigger engines in intermediates, so Pontiac can't do a Ford. Pontiac doesn't have compacts, so it can't do a Chrysler with pocket Supercars. The 400-cid engine has apparently

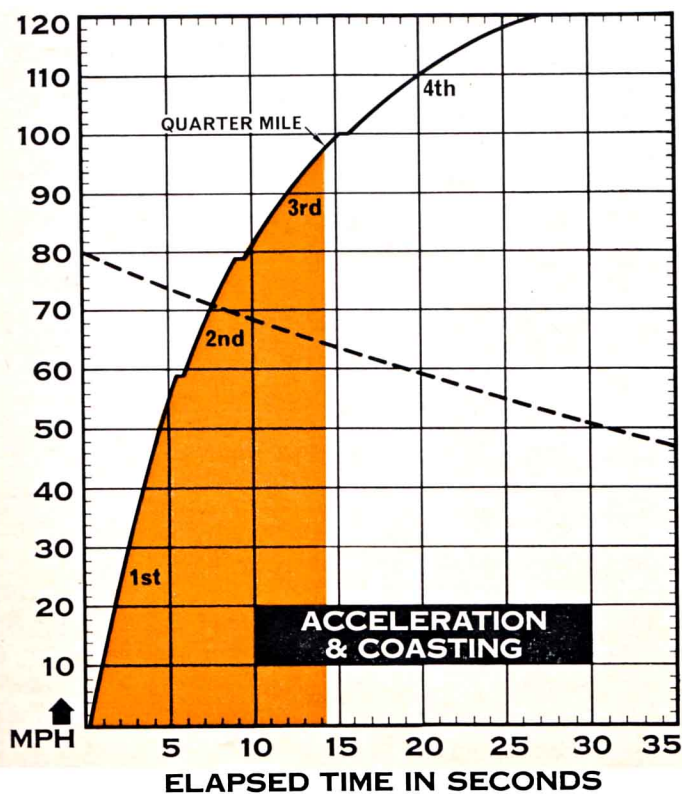
gone as far as it can go. Pontiac could, and we're told will, adapt a rear anti-roll bar like Oldsmobile's, but that's the only easy improvement the suspension could use.

What's left? A hot semi-Supercar, possibly, with GTO suspension and

engine for a Tempest coupe, like Olds' W-31. Flamboyant Pontiac didn't go that route; they opted for orange paint, a spoiler and that name.

Can't fool the kids, right? Don't bet on it. You'll be betting against Pontiac. ■

CAR LIFE ROAD TEST



CALCULATED DATA

Lb./bhp (test weight).....	10.9
Cu. ft./ton mile.....	151.0
Mph/1000 rpm (high gear).....	21.5
Engine revs/mile (60 mph).....	2790
Piston travel, ft./mile.....	1744
CAR LIFE wear index.....	48.6
Frontal area, sq. ft.....	21.7

SPEEDOMETER ERROR

Indicated	Actual
30 mph.....	27.8
40 mph.....	39.0
50 mph.....	49.8
60 mph.....	59.8
70 mph.....	69.7
80 mph.....	79.5
90 mph.....	89.2

MAINTENANCE

Engine oil, miles/days.....	6000/120
oil filter, miles/days.....	12,000/240
Chassis lubrication, miles.....	6000
Antismog servicing, type/miles.....	check engine tune, replace PCV valve/12,000
Air cleaner, miles.....	clean/12,000
Spark plugs: AC R44S.....	gap, (in.).....0.033-0.038
Basic timing, deg./rpm.....	15 BTDC/1200
max. cent. adv., deg./rpm.....	20/5300
max. vac. adv., deg./in. Hg.....	20/17
Ignition point gap, in.....	0.016
cam dwell angle, deg.....	28-32
arm tension, oz.....	28-31
Tappet clearance, int./exh.....	0/0
Fuel pressure at idle, psi.....	5.0
Radiator cap relief press., psi.....	14-17

PERFORMANCE

Top speed (5800), mph.....	124
Test shift points (rpm) @ mph	
3rd to 4th (6000).....	100
2nd to 3rd (6000).....	79
1st to 2nd (6000).....	59

ACCELERATION

0-30 mph, sec.....	2.7
0-40 mph.....	3.5
0-50 mph.....	5.6
0-60 mph.....	6.2
0-70 mph.....	7.7
0-80 mph.....	9.8
0-90 mph.....	12.2
0-100 mph.....	15.3
Standing 1/4-mile, sec.....	14.45
speed at end, mph.....	97.8
Passing, 30-70 mph, sec.....	5.0

BRAKING

Max. deceleration rate from 80 mph	
ft./sec./sec.....	27
No. of stops from 80 mph (60-sec.	
intervals) before 20% loss in de-	
celeration rate.....	8
Control loss? Moderate.	
Overall brake performance.....	good

FUEL CONSUMPTION

Test conditions, mpg.....	7.8
Normal cond., mpg.....	9-11
Cruising range, miles.....	190-230