

Wheels: An e-mail from Travis says, “I have a 1997 Olds Regency with 130,000 miles. This car has recently developed a “rumbling” sound that comes from the trunk area. The car starts and runs great – the noise occurs about 30 to 60 seconds after start up and lasts 3 to 5 seconds. This noise also occurs at intermittent times, at idle, or at very slow speeds. I do not hear the noise at any speed above 5 to 10 mph.

My “expert” automotive buffs have given me two opinions – fuel pump going bad or a loose baffle in the exhaust system. Do you have any suggestions?”

Halderman: As you know, it is extremely difficult to diagnose a noise. My first guess, and it is a guess, would be the fuel pump. The pumps in these engines are a pattern failure and noise is a symptom. An experienced technician using an ampere probe and a digital storage oscilloscope may be able to see a pattern that indicates that the pump will fail shortly, but even this test is not 100% accurate and it still comes down to an educated guess.

I suggest that you use a funnel and place it in the fuel filler opening and have an assistant start and operate the engine while you listen for the noise. The funnel will help you hear the pump. If you do not hear the noise during this test, then the problem is likely in the exhaust.

