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CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
DC Agle, Whitney Clavin, Lori
Dajose, Marisa Demers, Andrew
Moseman, Katie Neith, Chris Quirk,
Omar Shamout

DESIGNER
Jenny K. Somerville

ONLINE DESIGNER
Sergio Solorzano

ILLUSTRATION, PHOTOGRAPHY, VIDEOGRAPHY
Randall De Chavez, Whitney Clavin,
Lance Hayashida, Sergio Solorzano,
Jenny K. Somerville, Bill Youngblood

COPY EDITOR
Sharon Kaplan

PRODUCED BY CALTECH'S OFFICE OF
COMMUNICATIONS AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS
Shayna Chabner,
Associate Vice President, Strategy
Implementation

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magazine@caltech.edu

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Left: The Olive Walk as seen on September
29, 2025, the first day of instruction in the
2025–26 academic year.

Letters

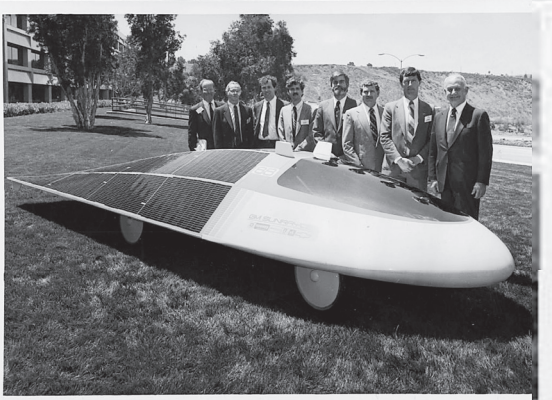
Sunraycer’s Story

As a proud Caltech alumnus, it grieves me to
point out that, contrary to the article in the
Spring 2025 issue of *Caltech* magazine, the solar
electric car that won the World Solar Challenge in
1987 was not the “Caltech” Sunraycer. Although
the multi-organization team that designed,
constructed, and raced the car was heavily
seeded with Caltech alumni (as described in
detail in the “Sunraycer Odyssey” article by Paul
MacCready in the winter 1988 issue of *Engineer-
ing and Science*) and testing in the on-campus
GALCIT 10-foot wind tunnel played a role, other
organizations deserve primary credit. To wit,
as described in Wikipedia, “The Sunraycer was
a joint collaboration between General Motors,
AeroVironment, and Hughes Aircraft.”

Full disclosure: I was vice president and
board director of AeroVironment at the time but
am one Caltech (and GALCIT) alumnus who did
not play a direct role in the Sunraycer project.

–Ivar Tombach (BS ’63, PhD ’69)
CAMARILLO, CA

Editor’s note: The article in question, “Computer,
Start Your Engine,” has been updated online to
reflect the parties involved in its creation.



Members of the Sunraycer project team pose with
the vehicle at the Hughes Aircraft headquarters in Los
Angeles in August 1987.



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