

Bob Thomas, wind energy “father”, VAWT pioneer and inventor, dies at 85

By Kevin Wolf, WHI Co-Founder
April 2019

Bob Thomas grew up and worked on the family farm in Michigan where he gained knowledge of tractor mechanics and farm values and later secured a degree in aeronautical engineering from the state’s world famous university. This background, coupled with the powerful [recurring dream of being saved by a star](#) while hanging dangerously on the edge of a cliff led to the invention and development of Wind Harvest’s technology and were the heart and soul of its Windstar vertical axis wind turbines.

WHI’s website has the details and tells some of the stories at these links

- [How the dream led to Bob Thomas](#), George Wagner and Sam Francis becoming the cofounders of the original Wind Harvest Company in 1975.
- The different [Windstar prototypes](#), that Bob, most often with the help of his son Dean, engineered, built, installed operated and learned from.
- The simplicity and brilliance of his designs in the [company’s patents](#).
- The invention he will be most known for is the [Coupled Vortex Effect](#) which he discovered and proved with three counter-rotating Windstar 530G VAWTs that operated in North Palm Springs. Putting VAWTS so close together is the breakthrough VAWTs needed to achieve the efficiencies of HAWTs.
- The reason why he is known as the [father of wind energy in the US](#).

Bob Thomas believed in VAWTs and the importance that they will play in bringing the world into a 100% renewable energy future. He spent much of his life working towards this goal. A key part of his legacy will be in the hundreds of thousands of VAWTs that will be installed around the world in the decades to come because of his pioneering brilliance, heart and spirit.