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*Dedicated to the Advancement of the International Helicopter Community*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Contact: Dan Sweet

Phone: 703-683-4646

Email: [dan.sweet@rotor.org](mailto:dan.sweet@rotor.org)

## **HAI Announces the Passing of James Wisecup**

*Alexandria, Va. (August 3, 2020)* – Helicopter Association International (HAI) sincerely regrets the passing of industry stalwart and past chairman of the Board of Directors James O. Wisecup. Service information is pending and will be provided when available.

Wisecup, a highly experienced 16,000-hour dual-rated pilot, had recently retired from his post as assistant chief pilot of helicopter air ambulance (HAA) operator Air Methods. Never one to sit still, Jim had just completed the requirements for a bachelor's degree in aviation science from Southern Utah University (SUU). He was awarded the FAA's Wright Brothers Master Pilot Award in late June in recognition of his 50 years of professional, safe flight.

“Jim was a highly respected member of the rotorcraft community, and we will miss his knowledge and leadership,” says HAI President and CEO James A. Viola. “He was an advocate for safe flying, training, and mentorship, and he was always willing to share his experience and passion for flying.”

Growing up in the Houston area, Jim knew even as a teenager that he wanted to fly for a living—his first ride in an airplane had taught him that—so he joined the US Army, which was then recruiting high-school graduates to fill helicopter pilot positions in Vietnam.

During his year in-country, Wisecup flew for the MACV-SOG unit, which conducted special ops missions. Characteristically, he turned his year of living dangerously into a funny story, remarking that he had had three engine failures caused by FOD (foreign object damage). The first was caused by a mortar round, the second by an artillery shell, and the third by a rocket-propelled grenade. He earned several decorations, including a Purple Heart, Silver Star, Bronze Star, and multiple air medals.

Wisecup was discharged in April 1971 and used his GI benefits to get his fixed-wing ratings, but his real goal was to get a job in the helicopter industry. He started as a line pilot in 1974, flying for Offshore Helicopters in Texas, and five years later was chief pilot for Bristow Helicopters US operations. His work for Bristow took him all around the world.

After a stint at Arctic Air, Jim next moved to the HAA sector in 1987, working first for Rocky Mountain Helicopters and, after 2002, for Air Methods Corp. In a 2018 interview with ROTOR magazine, Jim explained his long tenure in air ambulance this way: “It felt like the right place to make a difference—helping pilots to be better pilots, our managers to be better managers, and my check airmen to be better check airmen. Because if we can help each other, it's a whole lot easier.”

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“Jim was a true leader at Air Methods who positively impacted nearly every aviator that came through Air Methods in the last two decades,” says Raj Helweg, chief pilot at Air Methods. “He was a foundational part of how we train our pilots today. When I first came to Air Methods, he mentored me, as well as so many others, on how to become an aviation operations manager. We truly lost a great aviator, a wonderful educator, and a tremendous person and friend.”

Throughout his career, Wisecup made a point of sharing his knowledge and experience with the rotorcraft community. He was an active HAI volunteer, serving on the Air Medical, Flight Operations, and Heliport Committees. His contributions were noticed by the industry, which elected him to the HAI Board of Directors, and he served as the 2018–19 chairman of the association. His last term on the board ended on June 30, 2020.

Wisecup was also active in the SUU College of Aerospace Sciences and Technology. There, he served as chairman of the Aviation Advisory Board, advanced flight instructor, and FAA designated pilot examiner, while mentoring hundreds of pilots. SUU representatives calculate that, since 2013, Wisecup had performed approximately 700 check rides with its students.

“SUU was truly blessed to have Jim Wisecup as part of our family,” says Michael Mower, executive director and chief instructor, College of Aerospace Sciences and Technologies. “His influence and involvement over the last decade have left an indelible mark on a multitude of young and old pilots. The course of SUU's aviation program is forever changed because of Jim's guidance.”

Jim is survived by his wife, Jessica, and their five children, spouses, and six grandchildren.

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*HAI is the professional trade association for the international helicopter industry. HAI members represent more than 3,000 aviation businesses and individuals who safely operate more than 4,500 helicopters approximately 2.3 million hours each year in more than 73 nations. HAI is dedicated to the promotion of the helicopter as a safe, effective method of commerce and to the advancement of the international helicopter community.*

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