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**Anthony Cosimano Receives HAI's Salute to Excellence
Lifetime Achievement Award**

Alexandria, Virginia (Jan. 12, 2024) – Helicopter Association International (HAI) is pleased to announce that Anthony “Tony” Cosimano is the recipient of the 2024 Salute to Excellence Lifetime Achievement Award. This award, sponsored by Bell, salutes excellence in management and leadership and is granted to an individual for long and significant service to the international vertical aviation community. It will be presented Feb. 26, 2024 at HAI HELI-EXPO 2024 in Anaheim, California.

Cosimano has enjoyed a long and storied career filled with not only captivating adventures but also key actions that have influenced the future of the helicopter industry.

“Tony has traversed over 60 years of industry change, technology, and advancement,” writes AW139 Capt. Stacy Sheard in her nomination of Cosimano for the award. “He was often the first, or one of the first, to fly commercial helicopters in many places around the world. Tony’s history has propelled the helicopter industry into what we know today. All the while, he offered mentorship and participated in various associations, committees, and endeavors supporting the industry and especially its people.”

It all began in Jamestown, New York, on a cold, rainy February day in 1956. Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz were in town for the world premiere of *Forever, Darling* and Cosimano’s high school band was to lead the parade through town. He watched the celebrity couple arrive via a Bell 47. It was the first time he’d seen a flying helicopter, and the wonder of it stayed with him.

Cosimano originally planned to be a musician. He attended the University of Michigan and, later, the US Military Academy at West Point, where he played trumpet in the US Military Academy Band.

While at West Point, Cosimano joined the school’s flying club and learned to fly airplanes, but it was helicopters that captivated him most. He applied to and was one of a few helicopter pilot candidates accepted into the US Army flight school, earning his helicopter wings in 1963. He deployed to Vietnam the following year to support South Vietnamese fighters from the air during the Vietnam War, flying armed Bell UH-1B helicopters with the Cobra Platoon of the 114th Aviation Company.

After leaving the army in 1966 following a very eventful flying career that included several close calls, Cosimano returned to New York and continued to pursue his passion for flying. Chesapeake & Potomac Airways hired him to fly AT&T underground right-of-way cables in a Bell 47.

In 1968, Cosimano cofounded Decair Helicopters with two partners. The company quickly grew, offering utility, flight training, and charter services in the New York City area and beyond.

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

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One of Cosimano's more memorable experiences in the early years of Decair Helicopters was providing aerial support for the Woodstock Music and Art Fair in 1969, transporting organizers, performers, and medical teams. That job helped boost the company's profile, leading to a police contract, new utility contracts outside the state, movie shoots, a large oil exploration contract in Peru, and support missions for multiple rescue operators. During that time, Cosimano also formed the Helicopter Emergency Lift Program (HELP) to assist local agencies with helicopter support at no cost to the community.

After selling his shares in Decair in 1978, Cosimano accepted a management position to form the Envirogas helicopter department in Buffalo, New York. He also formed media company Metromedia's helicopter operations unit and later the helicopter program at insurance giant AIG. He also became involved in the early stages of developing the AW139 by chairing a worldwide customer advisory board. After retiring from AIG in 2007, Cosimano took a position helping bring AW139 and A109 series helicopters from factory acceptance to the completion, sales, and delivery stages. He has also started another company, International Aircraft Purchase & Lease, to provide consulting and pilot services.

"It's definitely a passion, and that passion keeps me completely enmeshed in the helicopter industry," Cosimano says of what's driven him during his 60-plus-year career. "Every day is exciting, and I'm still flying, still very much involved and working with the [Leonardo] factory."

The Lifetime Achievement Award will be presented during HAI HELI-EXPO 2024. HAI HELI-EXPO®, the world's largest helicopter trade show and exhibition, will be held at the Anaheim Convention Center in Anaheim, California, Feb. 26–29, with the exhibit hall open Feb. 27–29. For more information on HAI HELI-EXPO 2024, visit heliexpo.com.

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HAI is the professional trade association for the global helicopter industry and represents more than 1,100 companies and over 16,000 industry professionals in more than 65 countries. Each year, HAI members safely operate more than 3,700 helicopters and remotely piloted aircraft approximately 2.9 million hours. HAI is dedicated to the promotion of the helicopter as a safe, effective business tool that provides unique advantages to society and to the advancement of the international vertical aviation community.