

## NEWBY ODELL BRANTLY

*by J. Kenneth Brantley*

When I first learn to fly in the mid 60s, I had never heard of Newby Odell Brantly, or the "Brantly Helicopter". When I started flying professionally with the FAA in 1971, I found that I was one of about six Brantleys in the U.S. who flew professionally. One of the commercially rated pilots listed in our FAA registry, was N.O. Brantly. I had no idea what relationship he was to me, nor his fame in aviation. I, by then, had been asked by several aviators however, if I was related to the Brantly helicopter designer. I always responded, " yes, if his name was Brantly, then he was surely a cousin". In 1971, while flying in Pensacola Florida, I saw my first "Brantly Helicopter" in flight. It was just after that when I saw another one in the movie "Goldfinger". It would be 20 years later before I would meet the creator of this popular helicopter of the 1960s and learn not only of his relationship to me but of his significant contribution to aviation as well as other fields of technology.

In 1991, N. O. Brantly, was living in Frederick, Oklahoma. I was attending a course in nearby Oklahoma City in February when I drove down to Frederick to meet him. I had discovered that N. was for Newby and had already concluded that he was likely kin to Larkin Newby Brantly, who received land in Yalobusha County Mississippi in 1839. Larkin Newby was the son of James and Lettice Brantley, formerly of Chatham County, North Carolina.

Before visiting with Newby, I dropped by the airport at Frederick and met Olvis Jones. Olvis had work for Newby for several years in the late 60s and early 70s as his test pilot. I found Olvis in a hangar with four Brantly Helicopters. He explained to me the special design of the Brantley rotor system which help eliminate ground resonance. Olvis had flown over half of the 350 production models. He had some good comments on the Brantly, but gave Newby even higher marks as a person.

I drove to Newby's place and found him in the back yard of his beautiful subterranean home. He was a stately looking gentleman, especially for a man of 86 years. He invited me in and we chatted for some time. I soon found that I was talking to a very talented and gifted man. Inquiring about his life, I learned that he had graduated from Tech University in Calvary, Canada in 1922. He had spent a 5-year hitch in the military and had lived most of his life in Pennsylvania. When the government started issuing pilot licenses in 1927, Newby had been flying for some time. He received one of the first ones issued. He later flew jet aircraft in the military reserves, until he retired in 1961. That year he was voted the nation's " Pilot of the Year " by the National Pilots

Association. I learned that it was Newby Brantly who invented "two-way stretchable elastic" in 1931 and at one time had seven plants in four different countries. In 1946, he designed a helicopter, just for something to do. It would later become in such great demand, that he would open a plant in Frederick, Oklahoma and begin production. After it appeared in several of the early James Bond movies, sales would soar. Later a 5 place version was developed and is being manufactured today in Vernon, Texas. In 1972, Newby designed a bra that is presently marketed by Cameo. Newby said, then ,that he needed a small backhoe one day and found that there was no such thing for the smaller tractors so he built one. It was not long before Ford, John Deere, Allis Chalmers and others wanted him to build the small backhoes for their tractors. They are found all over the country now.

I did enjoy meeting this distinguished Brantly who has contributed so much to modern technology and who has also put the Brantly name in highlights. It was fun too, to talk to the number one Brantly aviator in the world after being in aviation myself and hearing his name for over two decades.

Newby died in or about 1992

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