



vertiflite Book Review

The Bell 47 Helicopter Story

By Robert S. Petite and Jeffrey C. Evans

Reviewed by Parrish Kelley and Todd Carlson

AHS asked Parrish Kelley, son of Bartram Kelley (Bell Helicopter's first chief engineer), and Todd Carlson, son of Floyd Carlson (its first chief pilot), to review this book. Here are their views.

Todd Carlson

When we were children, my brothers – Blair and Rand – and I were always aware of the presence in our family of the Bell helicopter, specifically the Model 47 and its predecessor, the Model 30. This presence took the physical form of a large box of photos, newspaper clippings, letters, awards and log books. Although poorly maintained and totally disorganized, it was always there, just as are my memories of growing up with a helicopter in the back yard in Williamsville, New York, the occasional rides over Niagara Falls and other sights, and the many stories shared among family and friends.

While Dad lived and breathed the helicopter all of his adult life, the stories would come out in disorganized pieces. I have always longed for a logical organization of the photos, the stories and the history. When my older brother, Blair, passed away in 2006, the box became my responsibility and I began an effort to organize it.

Then in 2009, to my great pleasure, I was contacted by Bob Petite, who explained the book he and Jeff Evens were working on. We exchanged stories, photos, logbooks, etc. Bob and Jeff even travelled to Dallas to meet and review the collection in person. I was very impressed with their mission and knowledge, but even more so with their enthusiasm.

Their book, *The Bell 47 Helicopter Story*, answered all of my hopes and much more. It is beautiful, entertaining, complete, and probably the only place a Model 47 enthusiast could ever go to gain a complete understanding of one of the most iconic and loved aircraft ever flown. The authors' passion is very clear. It is the result of years of research and countless months of writing and editing. From the inception of the Model 30 and the initial certification of NC1H, through all the variations and experimentations to the current day, the book chronicles the development of the many versions and uses of the Model 47 and it is packed with interesting stories and surprising facts.

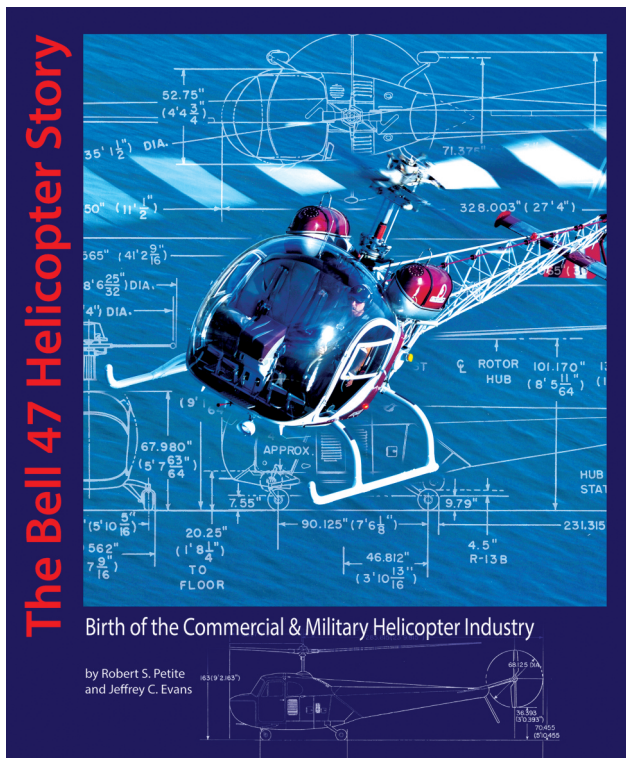
Parrish Kelley

Sometime around 1990, I went with my father, Bartram Kelley, to the Bell Helicopter Textron plant in Hurst, Texas, to look for the original 16 mm movies he and other engineers had shot during the project that produced the Bell Model 47 in Gardenville, New York. I was hoping to find the many hours of raw footage from which he had selected scenes for his one-hour movie, *The Birth of the Bell Helicopter*, which I saw as merely an engineering record. Unfortunately, the audiovisual department didn't have the original footage, but they did show us their vast array of still photographs going back to the founding of the company, a collection virtually unseen by the public. It struck me then that if it wasn't possible to make a general interest movie on the subject, at least these pictures could be published in a book to explain how the project progressed and to illustrate the development of the world's first commercially certified helicopter.

At that time, I wasn't able to interrupt my life to take on the monumental task of choosing prints and interpreting negatives for a comprehensive work of record, but I am happy to report that an equivalent task has been done by Robert Petite and Jeffrey Evans, authors of this book. There are nearly 1,400 illustrations, or about two per page, most of which are photographs (some in color), but there are also exploded diagrams, advertisements, blueprints, three-view drawings, and miscellaneous images, illustrating the evolution of the Model 47 through its production life.

Although I was born with the Model 47 and grew up with it, I was surprised to discover that there were variations on the theme that I had never learned of, such as the sleek, aerodynamic Model 47H-1, "Bellairus," of which only a few were built, an aircraft so visually pleasing that I wonder why this model, rather than the 47D, wasn't chosen to be installed at the Museum of Modern Art.

There is a brief chapter on the overseas licensees Agusta, Kawasaki and Westland; and there is a chapter on third-party modifications, which were sometimes troubling to my father, whose career as head of engineering paralleled the



of him in the pilot's seat is my father, Bart Kelley. Sitting between them was Harvey Gaylord, president of Bell Aircraft's helicopter division. None of them are acknowledged in the caption. In such a compendious work, it is inevitable that there will be some omissions and minor flaws, forgivable in a book that is so obviously a labor of love.

I am indebted to the authors for their energies in bringing this book to publication. Almost none of the Bell old-timers, most of them gone now, could have done a better job, and no one would have been more thorough. This book will always have pride of place in my library.

Title: *The Bell 47 Helicopter Story – Birth of the Commercial and Military Helicopter Industry*

Authors: Robert S. (Bob) Petite and Jeffrey C. Evans

Publisher: Helicopter Heritage Canada

ISBN: 978-1-882824-45-8

Print: 8½ x 11 inches; Hardcover with dust jacket; 6.5 lb (2.9 kg)

Format: 751 pages; more than 950 photos in black & white and 200 in color

Contents: 29 detailed chapters, index, bibliography and appendix

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Ordering: Order from the publisher at

www.helicopterheritagecanada.com or get a signed copy from the AHS Online Store at **www.vtol.org/store**

production run of the Model 47.

If there is any fault with the book, it might be that some of the pictures leave the reader wishing for more information about them. For example, a photo on page 363 shows Igor Sikorsky stepping out of a brand-new 47G-2, and to the right



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