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Harold Brantley: A half-century's worth of appraisals

By DON SERGENT dsergent@bgdailynews.com 2 hrs ago



Real-estate appraiser Harold Brantley poses for a portrait Tuesday at his downtown Bowling Green office.

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Fresh out of Western Kentucky University with an agriculture degree in the early 1960s, Harold Brantley thought the road he was on would lead to a career as an agriculture extension agent.

Then a new road came along, one called Interstate 65.

“One of my agriculture teachers said they were going to build this big new road called I-65,” Brantley recalled. “They needed agriculture students to help them get the right of way.”

That stretch of asphalt, which has proved to be a life-giving artery for southcentral Kentucky, started Brantley on a career path that has lasted for half a century.

Brantley, 77 and still active as owner of Brantley Appraisal Co., was scheduled to celebrate that 50-year milestone last week with a ribbon-cutting at his East Main Avenue office, but weather canceled that event.

No celebration would have been possible if not for that I-65 work that introduced Brantley to the world of real-estate appraising.

“After I got into it, I loved it,” Brantley said of work for the interstate.

So much so that Brantley decided to open his own appraisal business in January 1968.

“I started on my dining room table,” Brantley said. “But that only lasted a month or so.”

He moved his offices to the Milliken Building downtown and later rented space from Charles M. Moore Insurance before opening his office on East Main in 1983.

From that start working with the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet on I-65, Brantley has handled thousands of appraisals and traveled throughout the state.

His latest appraisal, though, may be the one that gives him the most satisfaction. Assessing the value of his five-decade career, Brantley said: “I’ve just had a very good life. You never have to work a day in your life if you enjoy it.”

By all accounts, Brantley has enjoyed his work and his involvement in the Bowling Green community. So much so that he continues to work nearly 40 hours per week.

“I looked at several properties today,” Brantley said during an interview last week in an office filled with memorabilia from his professional and civic activities. “I do that most days. I don’t mind working long hours.”

That’s an understatement, according to Brantley’s son Bill, himself in the real-estate appraisal business in the Louisville area.

“Dad is a very hard worker,” Bill Brantley said. “And he believes in doing the right thing. Our main charge in real-estate appraising is to protect the consumer. I think he has done a good job of doing that.”

The younger Brantley remembers the early years of his father’s business, when he was trying to get established and was traveling the state to do appraisals.

“All I’ve ever known was him working,” Bill Brantley said. “A lot of times he’d leave on a Sunday and we wouldn’t see him until Friday.”

Those weeks were most likely spent doing the type of right-of-way appraisals that got Brantley started in the business.

“From the 1970s into the ’80s, I was primarily working for the highway department,” he said. “I was traveling from Pikeville to Paducah. That’s where I cut my teeth, in right-of-way work. I left many mornings at 3 o’clock to get to Pikeville by 8. I’ve literally done thousands of parcels for the highway department. I’ve worked in more than 60 counties in Kentucky.”



Despite the demands of his job, Brantley has fashioned a lengthy list of civic involvements as well.

He spent 35 years on the board of directors for The Medical Center at Bowling Green and has also held leadership positions in the Jaycees, the Rotary Club and the WKU Alumni Association.

He even dabbled in politics, serving two terms as a Warren County magistrate and waging two sometimes-contentious campaigns for Warren County judge-executive. “He has always been very civic-minded,” Bill Brantley said.

And hard-working, said longtime acquaintance Dewey Glasscock. Retired for 16 years from his banking job that put him in regular contact with Brantley, Glasscock said: “I don’t understand why he’s still going at it. I retired as soon as I had the chance. He enjoys his work, I guess, and he’s probably better off continuing to work.”

Bill Brantley doesn’t expect his father to stop at half a century.

“If it’s up to him, he’ll make it to 60 years. He’d be lost without his work. He’s not the type of person that looks forward to retiring,” he said.

Harold Brantley, who can remember appraising farmland at \$1,000 an acre and now values those acres at \$30,000 or more, will say only that he hasn't appraised his last piece of real estate.

"As long as the dear Lord allows me, I'll keep working," he said. "I have no immediate plans to retire."

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