I used to be very squeamish, if I saw a little bit of blood before this day, but when we got in the plane here, there was 25 or 30 wounded. Some had belly wounds, some had jaws shot off, arms and legs missing, and the shock was so great. From then on blood never bothered me at all.

I’m Lloyd Bentley and I was born on March 30, 1921 in Calvin Township, which is about 12 miles out of Mattawa, near North Bay. I served in England for twenty-eight months. When I first joined up they sent me from Sault Ste. Marie down to North Bay. That’s where in, where I was officially enlisted on October the first, 1941. And then on the start of September ’42 I came to Brantford and we’re supposed to get a hundred and sixty hours and sixteen weeks. We only got a hundred and twenty hours in nineteen weeks [since] the weather was so bad. So now we didn’t really graduate, they’d simply kicked us

out. I was no heck of a pilot, but I knew to find a landing. I landed between two twenty-foot snowdrifts and I crabbed in. And watching the instructor for about five minutes, which is one of the funniest things ever saw in my life. I’m on his left and for about five minutes all he could do was bite his lip, make faces and look over at me and shudder a bit and look back. And finally, he says, “Well, Bentley, there’s only one consolation: not always the best pilots live the longest.” I learned a lesson from that, so I never took any chances that I didn’t have to take.

After I finished getting my wings at No. Five [Service Flying Training School] my wife and I had got engaged on January the nineteenth, 1943. I thought I would get my three months operational training in Canada, but they decided to send me right overseas. So, I phoned my wife from Summerside [PEI] to say, “If you want to get married before I go over, it’s up to you. But I’ll leave it up to you. I don’t think it’s right that you should hang around do nothing, I might never get back, or I might be three or four years and you can’t -, I don’t want you, just sitting at home. I want you to go and go to dances and enjoy yourself. I intend to do it, to dance if I’m over in England, because I don’t drink. I have nothing to do, so I intend to go to dances.” So, we got married on that understanding and so when I got back into Brantford she had the bands ready in the Anglican Church – three times on Sunday — and so we got married on Tuesday morning and we had a 10-day honeymoon before I went overseas for twenty-eight months.

She was a doll. She used to write me practically every day and I wrote her every day for twenty-eight months. That’s my wife just before getting married. Doreen Doris Richards, oh, she’s a real blonde, most beautiful girl, most beautiful thing you ever saw in your life.

When I went over to England I took several courses, advanced flying, and blind flying, bat course, and blind flying, and then they sent me up to Northern Ireland for operational training.

(Pause)

That’s called a DC-3, or Dakota or C-47. The Americans called it a C-47. It’s got a ninety-five-foot wingspan. It could carry about five tonnes of supplies and then, there’d be eight of them, eight people in the plane, besides. And it was very easy to fly. The paratroops went out of here, of course, there’d be a line and they just went out into, well, they pulled and dropped off at the end. That’s nothing, there’s nothing special on there. Interviewer: I mean, paratroopers are pretty special.

They sent us out to Egypt. On the way out, we were attacked by a several squadrons of Ju-88s. The third night out they managed to sink about three of our ships and we shot, they shot down eight or ten of the German planes. That was me in Egypt, December ’43. That’s the sphinx and that’s the pyramid of Cheops.

Stalin met Roosevelt and Churchill at a conference just about the time we’re in

Egypt and Stalin told them straight they had to start a second front, or they couldn’t hold the Germans. So, they shipped us back to get on transport command.

On the way back, all we had to eat was corned beef. Well, I’ve always enjoyed corned beef, but the English had been living on corned beef for about three or four years. And the English bunch, they didn’t want to eat it at all, just the sight of it almost made them sick. I was almost murdered on that ship. I used to make them sick if they saw me eating. It was kind of amusing in a way. But I was hungry.

Newsreel: “In this third section of the newsreel record of our invasion, these photographic pictures show the consolidation of the beachhead positions and the thrust inland. The weather was none too good, but the little ships plugged on to the beaches, bringing enormous support in manpower and weapons. And bringing also the mechanical needs of our army and air force; the means to build our first airfields in France since 1940.”

D-Day was supposed to be happening on July — June — the fifth, but, because of the bad weather and the channel was very rough, they decided to put off ’til June the sixth. At midnight June the fifth, we had a job of dropping paratroops about five or six miles inland from Juno Beach. Four hundred thousand people took part in D-Day and about a hundred and fifty-six thousand landed that day and there was about a quarter-million in the Navy and Air Force and aircrew. They went from England, in three different groups, three different lines. The western-most line were the Americans and the ships were down below and they had probably fighter planes and then transport and medium bombers, et cetera. There were several, several heights of them. The West most landed at Utah Beach state, near Sainte-Mère-Église. And then the middle lane landed at Omaha Beach and they were badly – they had the real, the toughest, fighting of anybody. And then the eastern-most lane was British and everybody else. And when they got nearer to shore they split into three different lanes and the western-most lane was, was Gold Beach, were British. The middle lane was the Canadians at Juno Beach. And then the eastern-most lane was the British, French, Free French, Norwegians, Dutch, et cetera. And they landed at, at Sword Beach. And the first load of wounded we flew back, as you got near England, you could see all the three lanes were still coming out, about thirty or forty miles wide, probably. I swear you could see about two or three thousand aircraft. There were thirteen thousand aircraft that took part and between five and seven thousand ships. And I swear, if I had long legs and stepped down on those ships I could have walked back to England, they were so thick. It was the most amazing sight I’ve ever seen in my life.

Operation Market Garden was from September seventeenth as far as transport command was through to September 23. On Thursday we’re late getting over there. On the way back near Eindhoven we just nicely got in one of several little wee clouds that were up there and going south, we looked up just after we got into this little cloud, and we could see fighter planes flying about five or six hundred feet going north. And within a minute we could see flashes hitting the ground. And we get back to England and find out that only six out of thirteen of our planes got back from our squadron. They shot up half a transport command that day. They were so badly shot up that transport planes didn’t fly on Friday, and on Saturday the Germans were really ready for us by this time, and several planes had their oil line shot up when we went over Arnhem - the Bridge Too Far — and so our oil line was damaged, and we got back as far as Eindhoven and scraped over the power lines.

I went from Phillips plant in Eindhoven out to the North Sea, and this was a first day that we had captured that airport. The Germans were in the southwest corner of the airport in a bush and there was a temporary landing strip on the southeast corner of the airport, which would be possibly a mile and a half, two miles away, and we managed to land there but we didn’t stop in time and end up in a potato patch. And so, we were very lucky, because Jimmy Springfield, a friend of mine from Sault Ste. Marie, they had to land where the Germans were, and the crew were all killed getting out of the airplane. So, we were very fortunate. I go see Jimmy Springfield’s grave in Arnhem. He’s buried in Arnhem Cemetery at Oosterbeek.

In March, April, May ’45 they sent sixteen of us pilots to take long-range transport courses in Northern England in a place called Crosby-on-Eden. I didn’t take part in the crossing of the Rhine. And out of sixteen pilots, only seven of us passed, and I had my head damaged on July the fifteenth, 1944. So, in spite of my dizzy spells and headaches, I managed to get the equivalent of a commercial pilot’s licence, but I never flew one hour after the war. When the war was over, that was it. And we were too late to fly troops to fight the Japanese by the time we finished the course on June 13, 1945, and so they sent us back to the same squadrons. And I guess partly because I was only one in the squadron that had this course, I used to fly Polish generals over to Supreme Headquarters in Frankfurt, Germany — in my condition. I didn’t fly one hour after the war in spite of having the equivalent of a commercial pilot’s license. And I went back to the Royal Bank for three years. We used to work 70, 80 hours a week and it was a lot of stress. So, I couldn’t stand it with my headaches and dizzy spells. So, I quit the bank. I’ve had a good life, just the same. But, things didn’t work out the way I had expected when I went in the Air Force.