**Record of Service: D-Day Transcript**

**Anthony Wilson-Smith:**Hi, I am Anthony Wilson-Smith, president and CEO of Historica Canada. The way we see the world today is informed a lot by our past, both the good and the bad. This is where our podcasts come in. Podcasts like “[Residential Schools](https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/residential-schools-podcast-series)”, a three-part series created to honour the stories of survivors, their families, and communities and to commemorate the history and legacy of Residential Schools in Canada.

**Riley Burns:**“I didn’t want to be an Indian, I didn’t know who in the hell I wanted to be. I wasn’t accepted by the white man; I was accepted by my own people in my reserve.”

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**AD READ:** In 1971, Canada became the first country in the world to adopt an official multiculturalism policy. It was meant to preserve cultural freedoms and recognize the contributions of diverse groups to Canadian society. Today, multiculturalism is a defining feature of the Canadian identity, but for much of our history, that wasn’t the case. Today it’s a defining feature of the Canadian identity. But for much of our history, that wasn’t the case. Listen to A Place to Belong: A History of Multiculturalism in Canada, a five-part series from Historica Canada. Join us as we explore the history of multiculturalism in Canada. Subscribe to A Place to Belong on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or wherever you get your podcasts.

**Maia Foster:**Welcome to “Record of Service”, I’m your host Maia Foster. Today’s episode is a bonus episode. Earlier this year, we marked the 75th anniversary of the Allied Invasion of Normandy, dubbed Operation Overlord, and known commonly as D-Day.

Just a warning to those that may be listening with young ones around, today’s story contains graphic descriptions.

**Lloyd Bentley:** “D-Day was supposed to happen on June the fifth, but, because of the bad weather and the channel was very rough, they decided to put it off ’til June the sixth.”

**MF:**This is Lloyd Bentley, a Canadian airman from Northern Ontario, who served with Britain’s Royal Air Force. He flew with Transport Command, delivering troops and supplies to Allied forces.

**LB:**“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.”

**MF:**By this time, Canada and its Allies had been at war with the Axis powers since 1939. The Allies had lost control of continental Europe four years prior. But by 1943, the tides were beginning to turn thanks to the successes of the Battle of the Atlantic and the Italian Campaign. The Allies initiated plans for an invasion set for the following summer. It would be the largest amphibious invasion in history.

Just a quick note on the term “D-Day” – the term had been used to plan operations in the past, and all it really did was act as a place holder for the specific and top-secret date of an attack. Since the Battle of Normandy, it has been forever linked with June 6, 1944.

Martin Maxwell was one of the paragliders to go in on D-Day. He was born in Vienna and was sent to Britain on the Kindertransport, which took approximately 10,000 Jewish children out of Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland to the United Kingdom after the violence of Kristallnacht and before the outbreak of the Second World War. After his adoptive brother joined the Royal Air Force, he decided to join the Royal Pioneer Corps – a corps open to German and Austrian nationals.

**Martin Maxwell:**“Now, when I finished my training, I went to one of the officers that I knew because he was the sports officer and I played soccer; and I said, look, I didn’t join the army to dig ditches or to build bridges, I want to go to a fighting unit. So, he transferred me to the [Royal] Tank Corps. And there, one day, they got a request from the Glider Pilot Regiment to send two of their best, or maybe two of their worst, [laughs] to volunteer for the Glider Pilot Regiment. And a great friend of mine, who was not Jewish, and I volunteered, and we passed.”

“And we both took part in the D-Day operation. In fact, not he, but I, went the night before, on the first six gliders. And the whole idea was to capture the bridges behind the enemy line so that the Germans couldn’t send reinforcements. I just carried those wonderful commandos; and they were out there, within 20 minutes. It was a big battle, and the German garrisons were all dead. And we held the bridges until our paratroopers came in the night.”

**MF:**Here’s Lloyd again, explaining the Allies’ strategy:

**LB:** “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 Saint-Mère-Église. And then the middle lane landed at Omaha Beach and 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 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, et cetera, et cetera, Dutch. And they landed at Sword Beach.

“As you got near England, you could see that all the three lanes that were still coming out, about thirty or forty miles wide, probably. I swear you could see about two or three thousand aircrafts. 13,000 aircrafts took part and there was between 5,000 and 7,000 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.”

**MF:**Havelyn Chiasson, a member of the North Shore Regiment, remembers the experiencing of approaching the French coast by boat.

**Havelyn Chiasson:** “When we boarded the ships, they pulled out the maps and put them out on the tables in the big mess hall aboard ship and said, ‘You know, this is D-Day, we’ll be landing in France’. And so, it was a six-hour trip across to the coast of France, so we got up there in the morning, about five o'clock in the morning, and the big guns opened up, the navy guns. The artillery opened up that was there aboard ships. And the planes came in; bombed the beaches, and then we came down out of our big ships into our landing crafts.

“Then the orders for it; of course, the order for them to hit the beach as soon as you could. And these boats were all operated by navy men, experienced navy men. So, when you hit the beach, when you got to the place where you hit the beach, a big ramp went down, and the 36 men piled out. But sometimes they hit a reef and the ramp would go down, several would be drowned with all their equipment. Others would swim to shore, some would be killed from the artillery and the Germans, of course, had opened up with everything they had. We hit our beach at St Aubin-sur-Mer, that's where the North Shore [Regiment] landed.”

**MF:**They captured a mile of beach on the first day and spent the night there.

**HC:** “We were together for 5 and a half years. We were just like brothers, and then all of a sudden here is all these people you know dead - you know dead or wounded, most of them dead. I think we lost 100 people killed that morning on the beach besides the wounded, so it takes quite a jolt out of you the first day. But then after the first day, you know, the battle is over and you say, ‘What about Jim?’ ‘Oh, he was killed.’ You don’t think anything about it. And of course, you couldn’t do anything because, you know, here would be a brother, as I would call him, would be wounded real bad right there and you’d want to stop and bandage him up or do something before the orderlies - you weren’t allowed to. You had to go on. That wasn’t your job. I bandaged up a lot of fellas and a lot of my friends did too when you were stopped but when you were on the advance you couldn’t; you couldn’t do anything like that, you couldn’t stop and help anybody.”

**MF:**Just a head’s up, this next section contains descriptions of D-Day causalities. Here’s Lloyd again.

**LB:**“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.”

**MF:**Ontario nurse, Ruth Muggeridge, arrived in England in May 1944. She was stationed in a British military hospital.

**Ruth Muggeridge:** “We switched our status to a casualty clearing station, and we received the wounded personnel from hospital trains – one after midnight, and one at around three o’clock in the morning. There were about three hundred or so wounded personnel on each train, so we were all kept very, very busy.

“I was in the burn ward, and we got mostly the Armoured Corps boys. Our patients, I must say, were wonderful young men, and they were so grateful for anything we were able to do for them. One of our big plusses was the fact that we had penicillin, and it made a big difference in the amount of infection that would turn up in the different types of wounds. We were very fortunate to have it available to our military service, as there was none available to the civilian hospitals in Canada until after the war.

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