



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: A Visit to the Shores of Normandy – Part 2

Guest(s): Dwight “Andy” Anderson, Steve Reiter and Henry “Duke” Boswell

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Dr. James Dobson: Welcome, everyone, to Family Talk. It's a ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute supported by listeners just like you. I'm Dr. James Dobson and I'm thrilled that you've joined us.

Roger Marsh: Hello and welcome to a special edition of Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh and today is the 80th anniversary of D-Day. On this pivotal day back in 1944, Allied troops stormed the French beaches at Normandy and changed the tide of World War II. Yesterday here on the broadcast, we heard stories from Dr. Dobson and his wife Shirley's trip to Normandy and the memorial to the fallen soldiers there. By the way, if you missed any part of that touching broadcast, I urge you to go to drjamesdobson.org/familytalk to listen to those timeless historic accounts of the war.

Now, today on the broadcast, we'll hear more from the people who were there and the people who remember this pivotal time. Dr. Dobson is joined by former audio engineer Steve Reiter and our tour guide Dwight Anderson. Let's join them right now, right here on Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: Steve, we mentioned last time that we had an absolutely wonderful tour guide who walked us through the cemetery at Omaha Beach and he told so many stories. One of them is about a woman named Peggy Harris, and we have his depiction of her experience. Shall we let our listeners hear it?

Steve Reiter: Doctor, it was by far my favorite story that he had told.

Dwight Anderson: If you can see the headstone here, you can see the guy's name is Billie D. Harris. You can see he was a first lieutenant. You can see he was a fighter pilot. He flew P-51s, and you can see on this headstone that he enlisted in Oklahoma and that he was killed on the 17th of July '44.

But what makes his headstone special for me is the fact that Billie here gets more flowers than anybody in the cemetery. You see, what we can't see from looking at the headstone is that Billie was 22 years old, and that on the 22nd of September... In fact, he just got flowers here recently. On the 22nd of

September 1943, he married a young girl named Peggy and she was 20 years old. They got married in Altus, Oklahoma where he was taking his pilot's training at that time. Well, they only had a short time together and he had to report for duty and was off to the war. Peggy moved back to a little town called Vernon, Texas where she lives to this day.

Now on the 17th of July, the story is when he was shot down on the 17th of July, the aircraft wasn't really damaged per se, but a round came in through the cockpit as he was strafing German positions, a round came in through the cockpit, mortally wounding him. But apparently, he had enough presence of mind to realize he was going to crash into a French village and he managed to jettison the fuel and he narrowly missed hitting a French village.

Well, one of the Frenchmen ran out there, opened the cockpit, saw he was dying, there was nothing he could do for him, heard some German motorcycles coming in, he had to run away. So because he was shot down behind enemy lines, he was reported as missing in action to Peggy.

Well, the French recovered his body. They gave him a proper funeral in the little village church and they buried him in the village churchyard.

Later the area was liberated by the Canadians and they went to the Canadians and they said, "Gee, we got one of your pilots here." I don't know why the confusion, but the Canadians apparently couldn't really identify him, but they took the French word for it. They disinterred him and buried him with some Canadians in the Canadian Cemetery.

Well, now several years have gone by. It's after the war and they probably got the aircraft, they got the aircraft identification number and they started connecting the dots and they said, "Wait a minute, this guy's not Canadian. He's American. In fact, he's Billie Harris." So they now attempted to notify Peggy again, but as I told you, Peggy had moved. They couldn't find her and they had no other address. So they gave up and Billie became what we call an administrative burial.

Now the French people, the wonderful French people in their village, they never gave up and they regarded him as a hero. They wanted to know more about him, and they started doing research and as you can well imagine, with the language differences and what do you write and all of that. It's not like nowadays you can go online and Google and get all this stuff in a few minutes.

But they kept researching and they never gave up and finally in 2005, 61 years later, they found Peggy. She comes over every year, people in the French village, they host her. Of course, your money's no good there. They treat her like a queen and they bring her by the cemetery. She was here for Memorial Day and every other day after that, up through the 6th of June.

It was on the 5th of June, I was out here and I was starting to tell Billie's story to a group of Marines. And lo and behold, just as I was about to tell the story, I looked and there was Peggy coming up the sidewalk. So I stopped and I said, "Guys, I want to introduce you to somebody really, really special." And I said, "Please, please, Peggy, come here. I want to introduce you to all these good-looking young Marines."

So she came over and we joked a little bit. I introduced her and I said, "Peggy, I was just starting to tell them Billie's story, but because you can tell it much better than I can, why don't you tell the story?" So she went ahead and told the story.

The young Marines, of course, some of them were very moved, and one of them, he said, "Ma'am, I don't mean to be rude or anything like that, but" he said, "your name is still Mrs. Harris? Does that mean that you never remarried? You never had your own family?" And she said, "That's true. I never did. But," she said, "it's simple." She said, "Billie here, he loved me and he was married to me until the day he died. And I love him and I'll be married to him until the day I die." That's why Billie gets more flowers than anybody in the cemetery.

Dr. James Dobson: My goodness, that is a powerful story. Wouldn't it be incredible if Peggy were listening to us today? I would like to say to her, "Thank you, dear lady, for waiting all those years for Billie, remaining faithful to him. You obviously loved him with all your heart and obviously he loved you."

I want to say to all the husbands and wives out there who have loved ones on a foreign field and are in harm's way, that we appreciate the sacrifices that you make, you and your children, and we pray that God will reunite you in His good time.

One of our tour guides, his name is Geert Van Dem Bogaert, shared with us, and I think it is self-explanatory.

Geert Van Dem Bogaert: So ladies and gentlemen, we found out what happened during those first 12 hours of the longest day. Those paratroopers were dropped behind enemy lines after midnight, one in the morning, and first troops then came ashore here at Omaha Beach at 6:30 in the morning. But as I said, for most civilians, the news would arrive later. For most civilians in occupied Europe, it would arrive later. It would arrive in the afternoon of June 6th at about 1:30 in the afternoon. That's because the only reliable source of information that the civilians had was the BBC because everything else was controlled by the Germans and it was propaganda. So if you wanted some reliable information, you had to listen to the BBC. But the only problem there, obviously, strictly forbidden to listen to the BBC.

But a lot of people took that risk and one family did so as well. It was a family of four, father, mother and two daughters, and they were sitting around an old

radio set tuned into the BBC. They closed the windows and curtains and neighbors weren't there. House was empty. Now they couldn't turn the volume up too much. So when you gather around here, I didn't bring a radio obviously, but what I did bring is a recording of what that and thousands of other families heard on the afternoon of June 6th on the BBC.

Speaker 6: This is the BBC Home Service. D-Day has come. Early this morning, the Allies began the assault on the northwestern face of Hitler's European fortress. The first official news came just after half past nine when Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Expeditionary Force issued Communique number one. This said, "Under the command of General Eisenhower, Allied Naval Forces supported by strong Air Forces began landing Allied Armies this morning on the northern coast of France."

Geert Van Dem B...: And there you have it, first official news of the D-Day landings. You can imagine the atmosphere in the room changed slightly from fear and apprehension. There was obviously some joy, there were some tears. And for the oldest daughter in the family, who was 15, that news meant to her it was simple, that good was going to win over evil.

Now obviously, she didn't know any of these men, but she was thinking of it and we know it because she kept a diary. Her name was Anne Frank and she wrote in that diary on June 6th, 1944, that she believed that good was going to win over evil. Now obviously, the men we talked about he probably had no idea that he gave that little girl one of the last moments of joy in her existence according to her diary because a few months later, she was arrested and deported to a concentration camp where she died in March of 1945.

Those soldiers didn't realize that they were fighting maybe for this girl and that this girl didn't know them. It's like us, 99% of the people that come here don't know the people in the cemetery. There's no connection. But what they did here changed the course of world history so it changed our lives as much as it did theirs. That's why I always like to thank people for coming to the cemetery and remembering their own history.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, that's what we're trying to do today, and it's the reason that we have devoted these days to the story of D-Day, the story of Normandy and the story of the defeat of Nazi Germany.

President Reagan went there for the 40th anniversary to the site of the Normandy Battle, actually at what is known as Pointe du Hoc. He gave one of the most memorable speeches ever given by an American president and makes me wish that he were here now and we're going to play an edited version. We should also add that there were many veterans there on Pointe du Hoc who were actually involved in the D-Day landings.

Ronald Reagan:

We're here to mark that day in history when the Allied armies joined in battle to reclaim this continent to liberty. For four long years, much of Europe had been under a terrible shadow. Free nations had fallen. Jews cried out in the camps, millions cried out for liberation. Europe was enslaved, and the world prayed for its rescue.

Here in Normandy, the rescue began. Here, the Allies stood and fought against tyranny in a giant undertaking unparalleled in human history.

We stand on a lonely windswept point on the northern shore of France. The air is soft, but 40 years ago at this moment, the air was dense with smoke and the cries of men and the air was filled with the crack of rifle fire and the roar of cannon.

At dawn, on the morning of the 6th of June 1944, 225 Rangers jumped off the British landing craft ran to the bottom of these cliffs. Their mission was one of the most difficult and daring of the invasion, to climb these sheer and desolate cliffs and take out the enemy guns. The Allies had been told that some of the mightiest of these guns were here and they would be trained on the beaches to stop the Allied advance.

The Rangers looked up and saw the enemy soldiers at the edge of the cliff, shooting down at them with machine guns and throwing grenades and the American Rangers began to climb. They shot rope ladders over the face of these cliffs and began to pull themselves up. When one Ranger fell, another would take his place. When one rope was cut, a Ranger would grab another and begin his climb again.

Soon, one by one, the Rangers pulled themselves over the top and in seizing the firm land at the top of these cliffs, they began to seize back the continent of Europe. 225 came here. After two days of fighting, only 90 could still bear arms.

Behind me is a memorial that symbolizes the Ranger daggers that were thrust into the top of these cliffs and before me are the men who put them there. These are the boys of Pointe du Hoc. These are the men who took the cliffs. These are the champions who helped free a continent and these are the heroes who helped end a war.

You were young the day you took these cliffs. Some of you were hardly more than boys with the deepest joys of life before you. Yet you risked everything here. Why did you do it? What impelled you to put aside the instinct for self-preservation and risk your lives to take these cliffs? What inspired all the men of the armies that met here?

We look at you and somehow we know the answer. It was faith and belief. It was loyalty and love. The men of Normandy had faith that what they were doing

was right, faith that they fought for all humanity, faith that a just God would grant the mercy on this beachhead or on the next.

It was the deep knowledge and pray God, we have not lost it, that there is a profound moral difference between the use of force for liberation and the use of force for conquest. You all knew that some things are worth dying for, one's country is worth dying for, and democracy is worth dying for because it's the most deeply honorable form of government ever devised by man.

All of you loved liberty. All of you were willing to fight tyranny, and you knew the people of your countries were behind you. The Americans who fought here that morning knew word of the invasion was spreading through the darkness back home. They felt in their hearts, though they couldn't know that in Georgia, they were filling the churches at 4:00 AM, in Kansas, they were kneeling on their porches and praying and in Philadelphia, they were ringing the Liberty Bell.

Something else helped the men of D-Day, the rock-hard belief that providence would have a great hand in the events that would unfold here, that God was an ally in this great cause. So the night before the invasion, when Colonel Wolverton asked his parachute troops to kneel with him in prayer, he told them, "Do not bow your heads, but look up so you can see God and ask His blessing in what we are about to do."

Also that night, General Matthew Ridgway on his cot, listening in the darkness for the promise God made to Joshua, "I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." These are the things that impelled them. These are the things that shaped the unity of the Allies. Today as 40 years ago, our armies are here for only one purpose, to protect and defend democracy. The only territories we hold are memorials like this one and graveyards where our heroes rest.

Here in this place where the West held together, let us make a vow to our dead. Let us show them by our actions that we understand what they died for. Strengthened by their courage, heartened by their value and borne by their memory, let us continue to stand for the ideals for which they lived and died.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, that was President Ronald Reagan on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the D-Day landings. This was the first time in world history that the forces of an invading army and navy and the military might was arrayed, not for the purpose of conquering and subjugating people who lost in that conflict, but for the purpose of liberating. And that's what they did.

As soon as the war was over, we had what's called a Marshall plan and we began giving money, \$50 million to Germany that had brought this Holocaust on the world. Our enemies complain about our not being perfect. What we did to the Native Americans. What we did to the Mexicans, all the things that we've done wrong. But look back at D-Day. This is a time when we did it right.

Steve Reiter: And I've never been more proud to be an American than when we were there.

Dr. James Dobson: In fact, Steve, I know you were deeply touched by this, but you recently took a trip to your hometown in Wisconsin to see your family. You had your two children with you and on the way there, you came across something that you did not know was there.

Steve Reiter: No. We pulled off in Greenwood, Nebraska to get gas. It was late at night and Matthew, my six-year-old, and I went out for a little walk with the dog. Next to the gas station was a World War II museum and Matthew asked me, "Daddy, what's that?" So I explained to him what World War II was about, and he asked me, "Well, were there tanks and were there guns?" "Yeah, there were tanks and guns." "Were there bad guys?" "Yeah, buddy. There were some really, really bad guys."

I explained this to him in six-year-old terms and it's a conscious decision on my part to start to teach him about the importance of our country's history and the sacrifices that have been made for our freedoms.

Dr. James Dobson: And every parent listening to us out there has an obligation to tell that story to the next generation because it can be lost, courage and conviction and strength on that day.

Steve Reiter: Dwight Anderson, our tour guide for the day, he had pulled us aside, Doctor, and given us his final thoughts. Then immediately after that, he set you and your daughter Danae up to receive one of the flags that was being taken down and Danae were a part of the flag folding ceremony at the end. So we'll hear the closing thoughts as well as taps that was being played as you and Danae received that flag.

Dr. James Dobson: You can hear it fluttering as it comes down in the wind-

Steve Reiter: Yeah, it was emotional.

Dr. James Dobson: ... and it was a very emotional moment.

Roger Marsh: Here now is Dwight Anderson.

Dwight Anderson: You had a very full day here today, sir. I tell people often that you cannot come to the Normandy American Cemetery and spend the day like you have, as we have today, and leave here and not feel changed in some way. I want to leave you with a couple questions.

The first question is, we have to ask ourselves, what would the world look like if all of these men, these soldiers here had lived today? How many children would they have had? How many grandchildren would they have had? What might they have accomplished, their children accomplished? What might they have

contributed to humankind?" But it's a question we could never know the answer to because here they lie.

But the second question, I think we can know the answer to that question, and that is, "What would the world look like today had they not made their sacrifice?"

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah, absolutely.

Dwight Anderson: And I think the world that Mr. Hitler envisioned is not the one that's shared by many Americans. So I think we can know what the world would've looked like had they not made their sacrifice.

Now, I've thought about this for some time, and I think about these men and what they sacrificed, and I asked myself, do we owe them a debt? My answer's going to surprise you because I'm going to say no, I don't feel we owe them a debt and let me explain. You see, to me, a debt is something that can be repaid and what these men gave us was a gift.

So I'll put it in a biblical sense for you. If you think about God gave mankind the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ, who came down and died for our sins, He sacrificed His Son and He gave us that gift of eternal life. Now, these men, obviously, they didn't die for our sins, but they did die for our freedom and they gave us that gift of freedom. What we do with that gift is entirely up to us, but we should cherish that gift of freedom every day and never forget these men and honor their sacrifice. Those are the last thoughts that I want to leave you with, sir, here today for your visit.

Dr. James Dobson: The primary reason we came here is to keep this truth, this story, alive and I fear that the younger generation doesn't understand it. They don't know it. They haven't been here, and they haven't been told most of them about it. We hope to convey it to them and to do it by radio and I thank you so much for helping us do that.

Dwight Anderson: The motto of the American Battle Monuments Commission was given to us by General Black Jack Pershing and he said, "Time shall not dim the glory of their deeds." So what you're doing in through your ministries and everything hopefully will keep these stories alive. Because if the young people of today don't know these stories and they don't understand what happened here, we have no one to blame, but ourselves. It's our fault if they don't know those stories.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, you've certainly done your part and I-

Dwight Anderson: Thank you, sir.

Dr. James Dobson: ... thank you for it.

Dwight Anderson: Thank you very much, sir.

Roger Marsh: And with that, we conclude our tribute to those who fought on the beaches and over the skies of Normandy. They have our gratitude and praise forever, and our prayer is that these stories will pass down their legacy and stories to new generations as well.

Now, if you'd like to share any part of this special two-day D-Day memorial program from Family Talk, you could do so with a friend or a family member by visiting our website at drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. That's drjamesdobson.org/familytalk or send them right from your smartphone when you use the Family Talk app.

Now, if you're a father and you're looking for a unique devotional that will help you better connect with your son and encourage your own spiritual growth, we have a brand new resource to share with you. It's the new devotional from Mark Hancock, the CEO of Trail Life USA, and this is a great resource, especially with Father's Day coming up.

The book is called *Trail-Ready: 101 Devotions for Dads with Boys*. Now, if you'd like to reserve a copy of this encouraging and insightful devotional, simply visit our website at drjamesdobson.org/familytalk and then click the link at the bottom of today's broadcast page. We'll be happy to send you a copy of the book, *Trail-Ready*, as our way of thanking you for your gift of any amount in support of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute.

Remember, you can also reserve your copy of this devotional by phone when you call 877-732-6825. Again, that number to call is 877-732-6825. It's our prayer that God will lead you and your son closer together and to the Lord using this powerful resource. Amen, indeed.

Well, I'm Roger Marsh. Thank you so much for joining us today. Be sure to join us again tomorrow right here for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Announcer: This has been a presentation of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute.