



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Honoring America's Veterans

Guest(s): Panel of U.S. Veterans and President Ronald Reagan

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Dr. James Dobson: You're listening to Family Talk, the radio broadcasting division of the James Dobson Family Institute. I am that James Dobson and I'm so pleased that you've joined us today.

Roger Marsh: Well, welcome to a special Veterans Day edition of Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh and like many of you here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, we recognize the courageous veterans who have fought for the preservation of our rights and freedoms, veterans who sacrifice much, and some gave all for the liberties we enjoy every day. Today's classic program is a collection of stories told by some of those brave men and women who were in the thick of the fight for our freedom. You'll also hear part of President Ronald Reagan's speech at Normandy given in 1984. Now, before we begin, the content heard in this broadcast may not be suitable for younger listeners, so parental discretion is advised. Here now are some very courageous United States veterans right here on Family Talk.

Narrator: The unmistakable sounds of war, though universally disdained by peace-loving nations, the United States has often found itself in the midst of conflict, hoping to liberate those who have never tasted the sweetness of freedom. Throughout the past century, our troops have battled tyranny and oppression around the globe, allowing others to enjoy the liberties we often take for granted. Here in this young land we call America, our very freedoms were birthed in war. Since declaring our independence from Britain more than 200 years ago, generations of warriors have denied their selfish instincts and given their blood to defend this land. Today we remain a free country. But when did you last consider the price paid for your freedom? We owe a debt of gratitude to families like these.

WWII Veteran: I'm old enough that I can remember what the effect of even the second World War was upon our family, and I can remember Keith's father's family getting a telegram from war department stating that Addison was severely wounded. I can remember my Uncle Luther getting a telegram from the War Department saying that his son, Elmo, was shot down over Japan, was killed. I can remember my uncle Lawrence got a telegram stating that Avery was killed in Belgium, heavy ground fighting. I can remember both of my brothers was drafted into the second World War, and then for some reason I got old enough, but I was drafted.

And I can remember a 19-year-old farm boy that landed on a troop ship in the Busan Harbor, South Korea. We was put on an old steam engine train with wooden boxcars. We was given live ammunition and told that we would probably need this before we got to where we was going. We rode on the train to just south of Seoul, Korea, as far as we go because all the railroad tracks was bombed out. We was put on trucks and taken another 10 miles. I kept watching in front of us and I thought there was a severe storm, because I could see lightning, I could hear the roar. The farther we went, the brighter it got and I knew that it wasn't the storm of what I knew.

Trucks picked us up and took us within about two miles behind where the fighting was at, and we spent two days there until we was dispersed to units that was really been hit and needed us the most. 2:00 o'clock in the morning, we walked in to the storm that I had watched. And I remember the next day, that I hadn't time enough to start a letter home. And I remember writing in that letter that, "Last night we walked through the gates of hell." I can still see the faces of the 19-year-olds that wasn't as lucky as I, that came home in pine boxes. I can still see the faces of the ones that came home, not a whole body as they went with.

Vietnam Veteran:

My brother and I both volunteered to go to Vietnam and went to Vietnam the end of 1965. My first baptism of fire, my company was on a search and destroy mission all day long, landed in a field, dug in, flares going off all night long, nobody slept, the adrenaline, the anticipation. That morning at dawn, about 5:30, we began our sweep. It was over 120 degrees that day, and we'd had about 20 casualties from heat exhaustion and heat stroke. And by 3:30, we were just totally, physically exhausted, soaking wet with sweat, we had leeches on your arms and legs.

And as we crossed that field, we were coming up to a pass of jungle and what we did not know is we had pushed a whole enemy battalion, 650 Vietcong regulars, into a peninsula and they were dug in the tree line, waiting for us. And as we crossed that field, I was an 18-year-old kid, my platoon sergeant was standing six feet away from me on my right. My best friend, Danny, I had gone through training with, was on my left. As we got close enough for the enemy, that when they opened fire, I was talking to my platoon sergeant, and as I was talking, looking at him, when they opened fire, a 50 caliber machine gun, when I hit him right in the top of his head and as I threw myself down to the ground, my best friend Danny was hit in the chest with a 50 caliber machine gun, killed instantly, both of them. We suffered 40% casualties in that one operation.

I can't describe what it was like as an 18-year-old kid, putting those bodies in those burial bags. And I remember walking over to Danny. Danny landed in grass knee-high, and he was just laying there, looking up into the sky, and those empty eyes. And I remember carrying his body. We put it in the barrel bag, and I remember picking it up myself and carrying it to the chopper, but because the chopper's such a target, they have to get in and get out, and because there was so many bodies, as I laid his body in the door of the chopper, the men in the

chopper, all they could do was grab these nameless bags and throw them in the back to make room for more bodies. And not all the months of training prepared me for that moment. It was like something died inside of me.

Narrator: In the Armed Forces, the cruel reality of war dictates that those you serve with can be ripped from your lives without mercy. A respected lieutenant or a captain, the private you sat with at breakfast just a few hours earlier, or a Marine, like Shane Childers.

Speaker 6: As Alpha Company came across the border the night of March the 20th, within a few hours, March the 20th became March 21st because we went across around 9:00 or 10:00 o'clock at night. And Shane, being a platoon commander, was out there directing where his men will go, and often asking them to follow him. He was leading his men in an assault on a gas oil separation plant. They had just about secured the area for the most part. All they could see were burning hulks of tanks and bunkers. Most of the Iraqis had surrendered. There was some sporadic gunfire.

But as he was assembling his men to get back in their armored vehicle to continue to go and reconnaissance the area, a truckload of Iraqi soldiers came barreling out of a hidden bunker and essentially just opened fire on that clustered group of Marines. But as the truck went by and fired, as I said, one shot did get Shane, it hit him below his bulletproof flak jacket, such that within I think five or 10 minutes Shane had died.

And he died there with his platoon sergeant right at his side, with his men. Shane, a young man who, all his life wanted to be a Marine, but a young man who, as a young boy, saw a Marine standing guard in Iran, at embassy, and said to himself, "That's exactly what I want to be. I want to be a US Marine." But loved his men dearly, led them heroically, a man that his Marines loved. In fact, many of them said, "He was really like a coach to us because the way he loved us." He was frequently in my office just to ask advice on how he could best meet the needs of his men, their marriages, their relationships, financial problems. And so to lose a man like that the first day was very difficult.

Narrator: The death of a comrade is agonizing, but the heartaches of a soldier's life aren't limited to the tragedies on the battlefield. When he puts his gun aside at the end of the day, his thoughts may drift back to his family or another challenge is looming. It's at times like these, that chaplains are called upon to soothe battle weary souls on the front lines.

Speaker 7: You take 1,100 men away from their families, and stuff begins to unwind. And I had the great privilege of going from tank to tank, Bradley Fighting Vehicle to Bradley Fighting Vehicle, trench to trench, and sitting with men as they pulled out pictures of their babies and said, "Chappy, I'm missing my daughter's birthday today." And they began to cry. And I'd hold them. "Chappy, I got a call from my wife when I went to the MWR phone last night, she's going to leave me. She can't take this military life anymore." Well, who's a warrior turn to in a

time like that? "Chappy, my daughter's going to have an emergency surgery."
"Chappy, there's not enough money to pay the bills.." Day after day, hour after hour. What a great privilege to pray with young men, to help them hold together as they sacrifice so that we could be free.

Narrator: Who are these men and women called upon to give sacrificially of their time, of their lives for our nation? They're your friends and your coworkers, the kid up the street, the girl who used to cut your hair, your uncle, your father, your son, your daughter. There are few who know today's troops like Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North. Not only did he serve as a Marine for 22 years, but he's also spent weeks on the front lines with today's military. Colonel North provides a striking description of America's young soldiers.

Oliver North: Average age, 19 and a half years of age, not old enough to buy a beer. If we're back here in the States, this youngster would be wearing cutoffs, and Nikes, and we call him a boy, but because he's in war, we call him a soldier, sailor, airman, Marine. He had a job in high school that he used to buy a car that was on average 10 years of age, used the car to take his high school sweetheart on dates. When he asked her to wait for him when he went off to war, she said she would, but she probably won't. When he gets back, she'll have a new boyfriend. He'll call him a wimp, and he'll be right, and she will know it. He writes to her about three times a week, actually writes about three letters a week. Two of those letters go to his girl. One of them goes to his mom, although he will never admit to the latter, never admit that he writes to Mom.

He's got a short haircut, tight muscles, wears a four pound Kevlar helmet, 20 pound flak jacket with armor plates, can walk all day in 100 degree heat with a 50 pound pack in his back. He's gone weeks without bathing, but he cleans his weapon every day. He can use his own weapon like it was part of his body, and his body like it was a weapon, and he can use either or both to save a life or take one, because that is his job.

Before he went in the military, this is a guy who couldn't have been bludgeoned into cleaning up his room, doing his laundry, or God knows, washing the dishes. But today he is remarkably self-sufficient. He prepares his own meals, washes and mends his own clothes, digs his own foxhole and latrine, and keeps his canteens full and his feet dry. The kid who once wouldn't share a candy bar with his little brother today will give his last drop of water to a wounded comrade. He'll give his only ration to a hungry Iraqi kid. And he'll split his MO with a mate in a firefight because he knows they both need it. He's a remarkable young guy. He knows that grown men don't cry because that's part of what we've been taught in our culture, but I have seen him weep unashamed over a fallen comrade. I've watched him hold them in their arms as they died.

After one such incident, the corpsman was trying to take the body of his squad leader from a young wounded Marine, squad leader was dead. They take the squad leader's body out of his arms. Young Lance Corporal stands up, and looks

at me, and he says, "You know, Colonel, heroes aren't just defined by how they die, but by how they live."

Newscaster: The last 18 hours has brought the greatest air attacks of all time against Germany. Thousands of allied heavy bombers attacked military targets in the Cologne area within 40 miles of the battleground at Okin, where American ground troops continue to make some progress.

Kaiser: I'll never forget that morning, it was on October the 12th, 1944, we had just gotten over the target and released the last of our 500 pound bombs. And this huge B-17 bomber sustained a direct hit under the belly of the bomber. When this shell exploded, I was setting, held a piece of armor plating to my back. I had my legs crossed. And a huge hole about the size of a grapefruit went right between my legs. And on the right side of my legs there was about three holes size of a baseball, and they were holes that went through the top to the top of the plane, and my face was filled with splinters from the cat walk, from pieces of metal, from the body of the plane, and it just engulfed my face.

And I said, "Oh Lord, I'm blind." And I shook my head, shook it off, and there I was. I was completely, not a scratch, not anything the matter was my eyes. And then, all of a sudden, it went in this spiral, a deep dive down to, we were pinned with centrifugal force. My back went up against the top of the bomber, and my arms and my legs were dangling down, and I couldn't get to my escape hatch. You see, at 29,000 feet, it was about minus 50 below zero, and we had electric heat lined suits on.

Also, we were on oxygen, and the first thing that happened, we realized that our oxygen was gone, and we began to gasp for breath knowing at 29,000 feet, just a few seconds, or maybe a few minutes, it's death, or else we would pass out. We began to pray and ask God to help us make a right decision before we bailed out. First prayer was answered. The big bomber went out of that steep dive when it leveled off a little like this.

I fell on my hands and knees back down to the belly of the plane and I crawled to my right about eight or 10 feet to my escape hatch. You see, when I pulled this fleece lined glove off, and I grabbed this metal object to release it, my hand froze immediately and, I didn't have strength to release my hand. And I asked Doug Johnson, I said, "Doug, help, I'm in trouble." And Doug came, and he put his hand over mine, and together we gave it a jerk, and the big door flew open in space. Neither had ever jumped, and we were terribly frightened.

And I said, "Doug, this thing's on fire. It's going to blow up. Doug, jump." And Doug said, "Look at your parachute." He said, "I can't jump." You see, the red ripcord handle should have been right here, and there was no red handle, no ripcord handle. In fact, there was no parachute. And it had exploded like in the waist of the plane. And Doug said, "Kaiser, we've been trims too long. I'm going to ride this bomber down with you. If it burns, if it blows up, I'll die with you." And I said, Doug, thank you, but don't be a fool.

When I told Doug to jump, I saw him jump. As soon as he released from the plane, I saw him pull the rip cord and his parachute successfully opened. Then I began to wind up the contents of this tangled parachute. I began to compress it just as little like this, little at a time. I got an object small enough that I thought I could jump out. And I prayed a little prayer, and I said, "Lord, I don't know what to do. It looks like death is imminent. Lord, I need a word from you." And seemed like the Lord said, "HC, I'm the God of miracles and of sheer faith, 29,000 feet, if you jump out, I'll show you."

With that in mind, I leaped out. When I cleared the bomber, I opened my arms like this and I turned the contents of the parachute loose. It didn't open. It was just all tangled, and I was falling faster and faster like this. And in despair, I just bowed my head and I said, "God, thousands of miles away from my pasture, my Godly parents, and Lord, maybe you can't open this parachute." And when I told the Lord he couldn't, he showed me that he was a God of miracles. The parachute did open. Otherwise, I wouldn't be here with it.

I looked up at a beautiful sight, the parachute had opened. And you know why I fell all that many feet before it opened? Because right up over my machine gun was an oxygen bottle that, I'd clip it on my harness and it would sustain life for eight to 12 minutes. When the big bomber went in this dive, that bottle came loose, and it was bouncing down through the waist of the plane, and I couldn't catch it. I didn't have enough wind to chase it. And the good Lord let me free fall all that distance until I got down in the atmosphere where there's plenty of oxygen. And he just said, "Okay, I'll do the miracle, now I'll open it." And I looked up and I saw that beautiful sight.

Narrator: Perhaps one of the most dramatic moments in American history occurred on the banks of Normandy. Nearly two thirds of the brave soldiers who stormed the beach that day died. Marking the 40th anniversary of the D-Day invasion, the late President Ronald Reagan stood on the wind swept shores of France and spoke of the unparalleled determination those men displayed.

Ronald Reagan: At dawn on the morning of the 6th of June, 1944, 225 Rangers jumped off the British landing craft and 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 Rangers looked up and saw the enemy soldiers, the edge of the cliffs, 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. They climbed, shot back, and held their footing. 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.

40 summers have passed since the battle that you fought here. 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? 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 them 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 were here to liberate, not to conquer. And so you and those others did not doubt your cause. And you were right not to doubt. 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. 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. And 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." Strengthened by their courage, heartened by their value, and born by their memory, let us continue to stand for the ideals for which they lived and died.

Speaker 12: I would like in some way for them to remember not so much what I did, but what the ones that died did. It used to bother me that I would think, "Now, Lord, why did I live through this and all these good people didn't? Why were they killed and why wasn't I killed? Why did you let me live?" I don't know the reason and I probably never will, but maybe it was because he left me so that I could maybe pass the lesson on to the other people, that we died trying to preserve the freedom that we have and to pass on the lesson that freedom is not free. Somebody's got to pay for it. And that's what I'd like to pass on, to let them enjoy these freedoms, know that someone paid dearly for them, and be ready to help pay for them if the time should ever come.

Roger Marsh: Well, what heroic and sobering stories presented by these U.S. veterans and also the late President Ronald Reagan on today's edition of Family Talk. And for those listening who have or are currently serving in the Armed Forces, we thank each and every one of you for your service, and we pray that God continues to bless you and keep you safe. I'm Roger Marsh. Have a blessed weekend. And be sure to join us again Monday right here for another edition of Family Talk.

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

Dr. James Dobson: Well, Thank you everyone for tuning into our program today. You may know that Family Talk is a listener supported program and we remain on the air by your generosity, literally. If you can help us financially, we would certainly appreciate it. God's blessings to you all.