



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: A Visit to the Shores of Normandy – Part 1

Guest(s): Dwight “Andy” Anderson and Steve Reiter

Air Date: December 9, 2025

Dr. James Dobson: Welcome everyone to Family Talk. It’s 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: Well, welcome to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh and our Best of Broadcast celebration during the month of December continues with a program that was aired in honor of the anniversary of the storming of the beaches at Normandy. Remember that day? June 6, 1944, over 150,000 brave allied troops stormed those beaches in what would become a turning point in World War II. More than 4,000 American soldiers lost their lives that day with thousands more wounded. But their courage and sacrifice ultimately broke Hitler’s grip on Europe. On today’s edition of Dr. James Dobson’s Family Talk, you’re going to hear a special recording that features Dr. Dobson and his wife, Shirley, as they traveled to Europe and visited the Normandy American Cemetery. They walked those hallowed grounds where young men, some barely out of high school, gave everything for freedom. Steve Reiter who at the time served as our chief audio engineer here at Family Talk, accompanied them with recording equipment to capture this profound experience and today’s Family Talk broadcast features the recorded conversation between Dr. Dobson and Steve Reiter along with their knowledgeable tour guide, Dwight “Andy” Anderson, who serves as director of visitor services at the cemetery. We’re also going to hear from World War II veteran, Henry “Duke” Boswell, who was actually there on D-Day.

Now this broadcast is one of the most treasured from our archives and it’s featured on our 2025 Best of Broadcast Collection. I’ll share how you can get a copy of this special keepsake later on in the program. But first let’s get into part one of this conversation as we hear now from Dr. James Dobson on this special edition of Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: The highlight of the journey for me was a visit to Normandy on the coast of France. That was where the D-Day landings occurred on June the sixth, 1944. And on that day the allies stormed the beaches and five assaults there on the coast of France. And they were codenamed Gold and Utah, Juno, Sword, and of course Omaha, which was the bloodiest of them all and where we went to pay our tributes to the young men who died while trying to liberate the people of France. And in the tyrannical curse of Nazi imperialism in Germany and throughout Europe. Some of them were only 17 or 18 years of age. They

weren't men, they were boys. Some of them had graduated from high school, some of them dropped out of school in order to enlist.

And the names that are carved on the white crosses there in the cemetery, and of course, the Stars of David that are placed there in military configurations each represent a story of sacrifice and of suffering and bloodshed that occurred on June the sixth, 1944. 2,400 Americans died right there on Omaha and many of them on the sands and in the water's edge. I'll tell you that when Shirley and I visited Normandy, and we've been there twice now, the first time in particular, it rocked me so emotionally that I had a hard time coping with it. And there's a little chapel right in the middle of the cemetery, and I went in there and knelt and prayed and thanked God for the memory of those men who made that sacrifice. They knew they were going right into the face of the machine guns. They were being mowed down on all sides and being hit by a machine gun is not just a matter of dying. Men were dismembered. It was a horrible experience.

Steve Reiter: Yes, we're going to hear from Dwight Anderson. His nickname is Andy. He's an employee of the American Battle Monuments Commission working specifically at the Normandy American Cemetery. He's the director of visitor services there so he's essentially their top tour guide.

Dr. James Dobson: It's easy to throw around the word hero and sometimes I think it loses its meaning. But every one of those men that came to shore, including those that were terrified, and most were, were genuine heroes.

Steve Reiter: And they were ordinary guys, 17, 18, 19 years old. They're ordinary kids.

Dr. James Dobson: Another category of heroes that is rarely mentioned, and that relates to the women who were at home. They were raising kids by themselves and some of them didn't see their husbands for five years, and some of them never saw them again and knew that they were at risk. And some of them welcomed home their heroes who were blind or who had had legs shot off or arms shot off. And those women, for the most part did their part in winning the war too. Well, let's give our listeners kind of a visual understanding of what we were doing there. You came with recording equipment, portable.

Steve Reiter: I came with a handheld portable audio recorder, and I walked along with you and Andy, and we recorded stories and audio.

Dr. James Dobson: And we're going to let our listeners hear some of that conversation.

How many Americans do you have come here?

Dwight Anderson: We have about... we probably get about 1.3 million people visitors a year here. 20% of which are American.

Dr. James Dobson: Only 20.

Dwight Anderson: Well to us that's still not an insignificant number, but when you think that-

Dr. James Dobson: Considering what we owe these guys.

Dwight Anderson: Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. I wish I could take every American on a walk through this cemetery and share these stories like we're going to do today because this is a very, very special place, obviously. I mean, how many places in the world, stop and think about this for a moment, how many places in the world can you stop and look out like we are right now and you stop and you realize that the course of human history changed right here? Arguably Gettysburg for Americans, Waterloo in the 18th century for Europeans.

But how many places can you go in the world and say the course of human history changed right here? Because had we been unsuccessful here that day, it would've meant we'd have had to back off. It might've been another year before we could have got launched the invasion again. What would've happened in that year? Would we have built a nuke and nuke Germany? Would the Russians and the Germans signed a peace treaty? Would the Russians have kept coming all the way to the coast? We'll never know. But had we been unsuccessful here that day, you can be sure that the world would look a lot different.

Dr. James Dobson: You said earlier that you frequently are up at 5:30 in the morning-

Dwight Anderson: Yes, sir.

Dr. James Dobson: ... in the cemetery. And what things go through your mind?

Dwight Anderson: Well, I know the stories. I see the headstones. For me, some of them, it's like I greet them almost like a friend. I know who they are. I know their story. I can sense their presence. This is a very spiritual place in that sense. It's a very spiritual place.

Dr. James Dobson: Let me share something with you that I've never heard anybody else say and I don't know whether I'm accurate in it or not, but I think I am. And I wonder what your views are. The generation that paid this price, not only what was done here at Omaha Beach, but all five of the beaches and then they had to fight all the way to Germany, and if they survived this, many of them were killed on the way. And that generation paid an unbelievable price. That generation, the ones who survived, went home and were the fathers of the next generation, obviously, who in the late sixties hated everything they stood for. Hated their God, hated their country, their flag, their system of government in the late sixties with the rejection of everything these guys fought for. Has that ever occurred to you?

Dwight Anderson: It's incomprehensible to me. In 1968, I enlisted in the United States Marine Corps. I served in Vietnam. And when I came back after being gone for almost two years, it was like nobody got a haircut in that time.

Dr. James Dobson: So you experienced what I'm talking about?

Dwight Anderson: I experienced that. Yes, exactly.

Dr. James Dobson: What was the source of the hatred of this generation?

Dwight Anderson: I think part of it can be attributed to the fact that these guys came back home and they didn't talk. They didn't tell their stories. And that's why the Normandy American Cemetery is here because we want to ensure that these stories are kept alive and we want to ensure that the next generation and the following generations don't forget what happened here.

Dr. James Dobson: So the sixties' generation may not have understood this.

Dwight Anderson: I don't believe they understood it because so many of the veterans, you'll hear it from family members all the time. "Well, dad came home, but he never talked about the war." Or maybe they should have talked about it. Maybe they should have said how horrific this was and what they'd experienced. And maybe then that generation, my generation, if you will, would've had an appreciation. But I would hope that not my entire generation be painted with that broad brush because a lot of us, myself, served in Vietnam and we also... I'm a combat wounded Vietnam veteran, so I can relate to that generation of World War II very, very well. When the veterans come here, I have no problem relating to them.

Dr. James Dobson: Could this explain part of it, that the men who not only were here but fought all the way to Germany, if they survived, were changed, they were wounded emotionally as a result of it and may not have been able to give to their children.

Dwight Anderson: Absolutely. I think they wanted to put it behind them. Some of the things they had seen were so horrific. I had a veteran here a few weeks ago who'd been with the 45th division, and he was involved in the liberation of Dachau. And I asked him if he would, would he tell me what he saw. And he said, you can't describe it. He said the bodies were stacked 12 high. He said they had to go open all these boxcars to see if there was anyone still alive in the boxcars there at the railroad siding. He said, but the worst thing was the smell. He said the smell was so absolutely horrific that they took rags and soaked them in gas and wore gas soaked rags over their face because it was easier to breathe that than it was to breathe the smell. Now, how do you come home and tell your children about something that horrific or do you just lock it away realizing that probably people will never understand.

Dr. James Dobson: Our family had nobody here that we know of, and we lost no one that was close to us in the war. But her stepdad, Shirley's stepdad, fought in Guadalcanal, Iwo Jima and Okinawa on the South Dakota, USS South Dakota. And he came home and wouldn't talk about it.

Dwight Anderson:

But I think it, trying to answer your original question. Maybe that's why that next generation didn't appreciate what that generation had gone through and what they'd sacrificed. But I think it's important that we keep these stories alive. And that's what we're here for today. And we're going to take you out in the cemetery and we're going to share these stories, and I can assure you that people are going to listen and hopefully come to an understanding of what really took place here.

Here we have a headstone of a young paratrooper. Now, as you can see has a very French name. He was actually born, Rene Croteau was actually born in Holyoke, Massachusetts. The reason we know his story is because we were online on a website called Baseball and Wartime.

So Rene Croteau was a semi-pro ball player, very good ballplayer. We've got a picture of him and the team he was on. He was a very, very tough looking young kid. Muscular, good-looking boy. His nickname was Punchy. He might've had some other characteristics that earned him that nickname, I don't know. But anyway, when he got drafted in the Army, Rene here, Punchy, he volunteered to be a paratrooper. And he came over here and he jumped in here on D-Day with the 82nd Airborne. Now, I talked to you earlier about the suffering of the French people here in Normandy. Well, they'd only been here a few days, and the platoon was approached by a young French boy, probably about 15 years old, who was kind of in a bad way. Croteau of course could speak French.

And he asked the boy in French, "Where's your family?" And the boy responded back in French, "They're dead." Well, GIs being GIs, they took the boy under their wing and Croteau was kind of his big buddy who took care of him because he was the one person in the platoon who could communicate with this young boy. Well, they had a lieutenant in the platoon who was kind of small in stature, and he was killed. And so they figured, well, he don't need his boots anymore and took his extra uniform and they gave it to the young boy to wear until the 4th of July, Independence Day and Rene here, Punchy, he was the lead scout in the platoon, and he had to go across and clear the other side of the field before the platoon came across.

So as he started to cross, a German machine gun opened fire and cut him down. While the young French boy seeing that screamed, ran out and attempted to drag him to safety. The Germans of course only saw the uniform and they killed the young boy. Now, when we tell this story to the French schoolchildren, we remind them that there's 307 unknowns here. And is it possible because the French have tried to find out who that boy was, where he's buried. They've not been able to find out. So, we remind these schoolchildren of the 307 unknowns here. Is it possible that a graves registration team coming along several days later, here some bodies, shot up, mutilated, but in American uniform, is it possible that the young boy's in fact buried here in the cemetery? Of course, we'll never know. We'll never know. But if in fact he is, I think it would be very fitting.

Dr. James Dobson: To listen to these stories from the lips of the tour guide was to be drawn into history and to learn what really happened at Omaha. It was not just troop movements and tanks and generals who were making decisions. It was people like you and me who knew what they were doing. They knew it was likely to cost them their lives or their health. That's why I want to recommend that every American who has the wherewithal to come here should do so.

Steve Reiter: Doctor, I can tell you right now, having been there on that ground there at the Normandy American Cemetery, I have never been as proud to be an American than I was on that day.

Dr. James Dobson: Are you different for having gone there?

Steve Reiter: I'd like to say I'm the same person, but I have an even greater appreciation for our country and what we stand for.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, D-Day refers to Disembarkation Day, to disembark is to leave. And on the date for the assault on the coast of France, the Americans, the British, the Canadians, and the Australians had been gathering in the UK for more than a year in anticipation of that amphibious landing. And of course, June the sixth, 1944 is the day designated by Dwight Eisenhower, the supreme commander of the Allied forces, and he finally said those fateful words, "Let's go." I remember my dad being on pins and needles as the invasion finally got underway. Americans had known for more than a year and some of them longer than that, that it was going to be necessary to invade the coast of France or maybe Normandy, but we didn't know the details. But no one knew exactly where it was going to occur. And when the news broke that it was underway, people all over the world, including millions in the United States, were on their knees asking for divine intervention and victory on behalf of their sons and daughters and husbands.

Steve Reiter: In fact, Doctor, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt gave a six-minute prayer over the radio asking God for blessing for our troops and for success over in Europe as they made this invasion.

Dr. James Dobson: And we have that recording. Let's hear it.

Speaker 5: Ladies and gentlemen, the President of the United States.

President Roosevelt: My fellow Americans, in this poignant hour, I ask you to join with me in prayer. Almighty God, our sons, pride of our nation, this day have set upon a mighty endeavor. A struggle to preserve our Republic, our religion, and our civilization, and to set free a suffering humanity. Lead them straight and true, give strength to their arms, stoutness to their hearts', steadfastness in their faith. They will need thy blessings. Their road will be long and hard. For the enemy is strong, he may hold back our forces.

Success may not come with rushing speed, but we shall return again and again. And we know that by Thy grace and by the righteousness of our cause, our sons will triumph. With Thy blessing, we shall prevail over the unholy forces of our enemy. Help us to conquer the apostles of greed and racial arrogances. Lead us to the saving of our country and with our sister nations into a world unity that will spell a sure peace. A peace invulnerable to the scheming's of unworthy men, and a peace that will let all men live in freedom, reaping the just rewards of their honest toil. Thy will be done, Almighty God. Amen.

Dr. James Dobson: The gravity of that moment can be heard in his voice. This is the President of the United States essentially imploring God to save us on that day. And I believe he did it because we could easily have lost.

Roger Marsh: Now as Dr. Dobson just mentioned, our purpose here on today's classic program is to help people understand the magnitude and intensity of D-Day. Let's listen now to a first-person account from a man who was actually on the ground that day, World War II veteran, Duke Boswell.

Henry Boswell: June 6th, we led the D-Day invasion into France. We jumped between midnight and one o'clock in the morning. We jumped on the little town of Sainte Mère-Église which was just a few miles behind Utah Beach. Our mission was to capture the crossroads and the bridges, hold them until our troops could get there from the beach. Also, keep any German troops from getting down to the beach to attack our troops that were landing. We lost quite a few of our men. Many of them landed in the trees around the town. Unfortunately, a barn had caught fire in the town and the villages were up and the Germans were guarding them. They had to get permission from the Germans to try to put the fire out. And so the German guards were up guarding them and of course, when our men landed, some of them landed right in the town. Right over these people.

And of course, they were shot immediately by the Germans. The ones that landed in the trees were shot before they could get out of their chutes. But one of our men landed on the church. His chute was caught on the edge of one of the smaller steeples, and he was hanging there and the Germans were shooting out of the belfry of the church with their machine guns. He tried to play dead. They saw him, pulled him inside, took him prisoner. Later when we got close to capturing them, they took him with them. But in the process of getting out, he managed to escape and got back to us. And even today, I was back over there this summer for the first time in 60 years, and they still make a tremendous, tremendous holiday out of June 6th in this French town. And they have a parachute hanging on the church with a mannequin hanging below it. They have a bar named John Seale Bar for the guy that was... He died a few years ago, but he was one of the local heroes.

Roger Marsh: The sacrifice made on those Normandy beaches reminds us that freedom has never been free. Ordinary young men showed extraordinary courage and their legacy calls us to stand firm for what's right in our own generation. You're listening to a special edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk and this

recollection of Dr. Dobson, his wife, Shirley, and a team from the Family Talk studios visiting the shores of Normandy. This special program is available online at drjamesdobson.org. You can listen to it there and share it with others when you go to drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. But keep in mind that today's broadcast is also featured in our 2025 Best of Broadcast Collection, a carefully curated set of our most powerful and impactful programs not only from the past year but throughout the 15 year history of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. From strengthening marriages, to defending biblical values, these conversations offer timeless wisdom your family will treasure. Of course, now that Dr. Dobson has been called home to be with the Lord, we miss his voice all the more and this keepsake collection has even deeper significance. Now we will send you the complete collection, the six-CD set, as our way of thanking you for your gift of any amount to support the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. And right now, your support will go further than ever. Some faithful friends of our ministry have stepped forward and created the Dr. James Dobson Memorial Matching Grant. That means every dollar you donate will be doubled now through December 31st. This remarkable grant honors Dr. Dobson's legacy and is available as I mentioned for up to \$6 million dollars. Think about it. A \$50 gift becomes \$100. \$1000 gift becomes \$2000. A \$10,000 gift becomes \$20,000. Think about how your doubled gift will help us continue strengthening families through the end of 2025 and on into the future.

Now you can make a secure donation at drjamesdobson.org. If you prefer, call a member of our constituent care team. That number is 877-732-6825. That's 877-732-6825. Or if you'd prefer, why not send your tax-deductible donation through the U.S. Postal Service. Our ministry mail address is Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk P.O. Box 39000 Colorado Springs, Colorado, 80949.

Well, I'm Roger Marsh and on behalf of all of us here at Family Talk and the JDFI, thanks so much for listening today. Be sure to join us again next time right here as we continue on with part two of this moving tribute to the heroes of Normandy. That's on the next edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

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