



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Dr. Dobson: The Untold Stories – Part 2

Guest(s): Dr. James Dobson

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Dr. James Dobson: Hello everyone. You're listening to Family Talk, the radio broadcasting ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Dr. James Dobson, and thank you for joining us for this program.

Roger Marsh: Well welcome to Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh, and today we're continuing our walk down memory lane as we look back at the best of the best broadcasts in the history of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. It's our special behind the scenes look at Dr. Dobson's remarkable life and ministry as I took the guest host seat to interview the man himself. Now, if you were listening to us last time, you heard some pretty fascinating stories about Dr. Dobson's early years, and I think they're much more meaningful now that we know that Dr. Dobson has crossed the finish line. He's safely home with the Lord having passed away on August 21st of this year. But we remember his memory and we honor his legacy by continuing the work here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. So enjoy hearing these stories that Dr. Dobson hardly ever shared during his regular broadcast. He used to spend so much time focusing on the guests and bringing out the best in their stories. But on today's edition of Family Talk, you're going to hear some firsthand accounts of events ranging from state dinners at the White House to private moments with world leaders. By the way, if you miss part one of this broadcast, I encourage you to go and listen to it on our website at drjamesdobson.org. That's drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. But now let's get into part two of my conversation with Dr. Dobson talking about the untold stories right here on Family Talk.

Doctor, thank you for taking this time to share these stories with us. So often you are the one interviewing someone, but now you're giving me this remarkable opportunity to ask you questions about things that our listeners maybe never heard because you've never shared them before. Nothing off limits at this point. Is that correct?

Dr. James Dobson: It is correct. I have not shared 'em because I'm not sure anybody cares.

Roger Marsh: Oh, we do. We do.

Dr. James Dobson: It has just been an interesting life.

Roger Marsh: 1979, Focus on the Family Film Series takes off. 1980, Ronald Reagan is elected president. There's a connection there.

Dr. James Dobson: Ronald Reagan, of course, was elected president in November of 1980 and January the 20th, 1981, he was inaugurated. And to my surprise, I received an invitation to come to the inauguration and to the inaugural ball, and they sent me 10 tickets so I could bring four couples or eight other people and Shirley and me. And so we were thrilled beyond belief. I believed in Ronald Reagan and I still do. I think it was an absolutely great president. And so we were standing there on the west side of the Capitol building where the mall extends to Abraham Lincoln, you know that mall? Well, we were about a half a block from where the president laid his hand on 2 Chronicles 14, which reads, "If my people who are called by my name shall humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land." How we need a President now who will honor that Scripture. But I was standing there and my heart was filled with pride. It was called the "New Beginning." Now, I had come to Washington to catch a glimpse of the President and I did at the inauguration, and the inaugural ball was that night and there were nine inaugural balls, and we were at the ninth one, so it was after midnight when he showed up.

We were at the Smithsonian Museum and we were waiting and it was jammed. You could not move in that museum.

Roger Marsh: How exciting.

Dr. James Dobson: And it was thrilling. And we were there for three hours, I guess, or four before Ronald Reagan came. And about midnight, I said to one of my friends that had come with me, "When the president comes, everybody's going to try to get their coats and we're going to be stuck here forever. Let's go get our coats now." As we picked them up, we had 'em over our arms and a door swung open and in came the Secret Service. They opened the door. He was standing there. I was three feet away from him, and as soon as that occurred, they announced that he and Nancy were coming to the platform and the president said a few words, and then he danced with Nancy. I didn't get a chance to talk to him. I didn't even shake his hand. He turned left instead of right. But I want to tell you the interesting thing. Three years later, I had been invited by that president to come to the Oval Office and to the cabinet room and sit beside him with the jelly beans between us and advise him on how to strengthen the American family. And I came in there, was with him for a couple of hours along with other people who were there. After I had been there, they asked me to write what I said to him because there were four recommendations that I made to the president on that day, and he issued executive orders creating all four. And that was the beginning of my friendship with Ronald Reagan and with other projects that I had. I worked with him for five years.

I'll tell you one other thing about Ronald Reagan. This is a very warm memory for me. The very last day, Ronald Reagan met with his staff after his second

term, he brought 'em all together and it was a highly emotional thing. You can imagine everybody was in tears. I was there. I had been invited there to talk about the fight against pornography, and the president had been working with us on that. And so I was sitting there quietly watching that final moment between the president and his staff and the warmth. They loved that man. We all did. And then he was gone. I had a dream shortly after that that was very symbolic. I dreamt that I was invited to the White House like I had been so many times and I went through the North Gate and I got there and there was nobody there. The gate was open and the guards were all gone, and I walked in and I walked across the front lawn to the portico and the front door and the door was standing open and I walked in and looked around and nobody was there, and I went up the stairs to the residence area and the president had moved out. He was not there. That was the end of the dream.

Roger Marsh: Wow.

Dr. James Dobson: You understand? I was dreaming about the fact that this Cinderella experience and this wonderful president was over. It's done and he's gone.

Roger Marsh: And we definitely saw a culture change in the United States after Reagan's...

Dr. James Dobson: No question about it. I've also worked with Herbert Walker Bush. I sat with him alone in the Oval Office. I had a chance to work with George W. Bush in a less intimate way, but I did some work with them too. But the time with Reagan was something I cannot describe, but I get emotional about it today.

Roger Marsh: I can tell. It still has an impact 30 plus years later.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah.

Roger Marsh: What a powerful memory. I can see you're glowing right now. Just remembering those types. Were there others, other powerful memories during that time for you?

Dr. James Dobson: There were a lot of 'em, but one that I would share with you was a state dinner that Shirley and I were invited to, and I don't know if you know what those are. When a dignitary is coming into town, they have a state dinner and they invite people that they want to honor, and Shirley and I were included in that only one, but it was quite a night, and it came to the night of the state dinner and Shirley and I looked at each other and said, you know what? You don't take a cab to the White House. You go in a limousine. We never even thought about that.

So I picked up the phone and I called my assistant Dee Ovy in California, and I said, you got to get me a limousine. Dee doesn't know one limousine from another. And she got one that was about a block and a half long. I'm not kidding you. This thing was.

Roger Marsh: It's like an aircraft carrier, right?

Dr. James Dobson: Unbelievable. I couldn't even see Shirley from the other side of it. We drove up to the front portico and one of the secret servicemen that I'd become great friends with was standing there looking out the portico when our limousine drove by and he was thinking, who in the world is that? So we get out of this limousine and a marine captain wearing white gloves, dressed to the nines, comes over and Shirley takes his arm and I'm dragging along behind. And we go into the White House and you curl around, and then there is a long hall, I'm sure you've seen it on television, which is right parallel with the Rose Garden.

And so they're bringing us all in and the hall has a little jog in it, and the photographers were all gathered right there to take pictures of the celebrities if they came by. And so Sylvester Stallone was right in front of us and they introduced him, Sylvester Stallone, and the lights flash and it was just everybody pop, pop, pop. Everything occurred at once. And then Michael J. Fox was next, and they took pictures of him and it came to us and the Marine turns to us and says, "And your name please." And we said, "Doctor and Mrs. James Dobson." He said, "Doctor and Mrs. James Dobson." And there was silence. There was not one flashbulb. That was not who they had in mind, and it was really very strange. We laughed over that. There was I think one disposable camera down at the end where somebody took one picture,

Roger Marsh: One click.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. But Raquel Welch was wearing a white dress. It was something to behold, I don't mean to be gross here, but everybody in the White House was watching Raquel Welch and she went on through the evening and danced with Ronald Reagan, and it was something to behold. Somebody about a month ago gave me a photograph of her and Ronald Reagan wearing that white. Did I mention it was a white dress?

Roger Marsh: It was a white dress, yes. I think we're very clear on that now, sir. Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: It was another Cinderella evening for us and we loved it. Now, I don't talk about, I haven't told that on the air, but for us it was a highlight.

Roger Marsh: Well, you're on the hot seat. We've turned the tables here today, Dr. Dobson. So of course the guest is going to answer some questions like that. Boy, the 80s were quite a decade in the Dobson household. And with your ministry too, I mean, at the start of the 80s with the film series and at one point having seven of the top 10 best-selling books in America, what a way to kick that decade off and culminating with your work in the Reagan White House in the late 1980s and then the new era, George Herbert Walker Bush coming in, inaugurated in 1989 and kind of ushering in the 1990s. You had a good relationship with Bush 41, as they call him.

Dr. James Dobson: I did. And what a gracious man. I met him at the White House when he was vice president, and we had about an hour together, and that was May of 1988. That's significant because my mother died one month later and he wrote me a personal note of consolation. When I had my heart attack, I was in the hospital. This was in 1990, and we didn't reveal who I was because we didn't want anybody coming in there. I really needed rest and I needed to recuperate. So the hospital did not know my name until George Herbert Walker Bush called to see if I was there. And then they were saying, who is this masked man here? But let me tell you one quick story. This is a cute story. I went to the Oval Office to meet with George Bush 41 and Millie was the name of their dog.

Roger Marsh: The First Dog.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. In fact, Barbara Bush wrote a book about Millie, and Millie was a spaniel. So I got there that day and Millie was in the Oval Office and she was lying over by the window and the president came over and talked to her and she wouldn't get up. And she just rolled her eyes up at him and I said, what's wrong with her? And he said, she's pouting. I said, why is she pouting? And he said, well, the grandkids are here, and she gets very jealous when the grandkids come, so she won't look up at you and she'll lie there all day long. So that was Millie. She just was very possessive of the Bush family.

Roger Marsh: And it doesn't matter if you're the president of the United States or not, when there's a dog that's pouting, that dog's going to have a good pout.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. Because those grandkids shouldn't be there.

Roger Marsh: Right. Well, Dr. Dobson, we could spend several weeks talking about all the famous celebrities that you have met and people who've sought you out. And I'm sure that have surprised you in terms of saying, wow, I didn't realize like Ronald Reagan's invitation to his inauguration. You did have an encounter, as it were with Prince Charles.

Dr. James Dobson: There were aspects of that meeting that I will really need to keep confidential because I feel like that was the understanding when we were together. But the essence of it is that I was given an to fly to London and to go to Prince Charles' estate in the Cotswolds. And it was really a fascinating experience. He is a much more gracious man than people realized He is. You think of him as obscure and British and...

Roger Marsh: Stuffy.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah, stuffy. But he couldn't have been warmer to us. Invited Shirley and me, and we came up the night before and we spent the night in a hotel across the street from his huge estate, and the next morning we were ushered in to the estate. And I would describe the decor of that building as shabby chic.

Dr. James Dobson: Do you know those words?

Roger Marsh: Yes, I do.

Dr. James Dobson: Shabby chic means deliberately old looking and I'd never seen that before. We walked down the hall toward his living room. There were bookshelves there that were overloaded, then were bowed in the middle, that kind of thing. We went into the living room and he met us there. And he then said something that just amazed me, and people who've heard it since then can hardly believe it happened. But he said, "I have a private chapel in the garden. Would you like to see it?"

Roger Marsh: Really?

Dr. James Dobson: And nobody goes into that chapel. In fact, the woman who for 20 years has taken care of the garden, ask us what was in it because she's never been in it.

Roger Marsh: Oh my.

Dr. James Dobson: If you look at my book, *Legacy: The Greatest Gift*, you will see a photograph taken of Shirley and me and Prince Charles in front of that chapel cause it's there. But anyway, he said, "Would you like to see it?" And we said, "Of course." So he brought us out into this garden, which is gorgeous. It's so manicured and into the opening of the chapel and took us inside. It is small. It is a place where he goes to contemplate and to pray and to think. And it has Byzantine art in it and a cross and a little bench where he kneels before the cross and it's obviously extremely meaningful to him.

Roger Marsh: And he brought you in there.

Dr. James Dobson: He brought us in there. And we were also with the Bishop of Liverpool in the Anglican Church, and he had something to do with my being there. And so we stood and talked about the things in the chapel, and then he did something that also is never done.

Roger Marsh: Prince Charles did this.

Dr. James Dobson: He did. And this was a surprise to both the bishop and me because Prince Charles turned to the bishop and asked him to pray. Commoners like us, never pray with a member of the monarchy. That's just not done.

Roger Marsh: Incredible.

Dr. James Dobson: But he prayed a wonderful evangelistic prayer. It was really a beautiful prayer. And then I did something that I still can't believe I did. This was one of a kind.

Roger Marsh: I can't wait to hear this.

Dr. James Dobson: I said, "Your highness, may I pray for you?" And he said, "I would like it if you would do that."

Roger Marsh: Oh, wow.

Dr. James Dobson: And then I prayed with Prince Charles.

Roger Marsh: Beautiful.

Dr. James Dobson: And it was a precious moment. And outside the Navy, representatives from the Navy, including two or three helicopters were out there waiting for him. He was 45 minutes late to review the British Navy, and he stayed with us for 45 extra minutes out there. He showed us around the grounds, showed us the wedding gift that they had been given by the Army, when he and Diana married and the other things. His wife, Camilla was having surgery, so she was not there, but we spent a good part of a half day there and it was just a very special time.

Roger Marsh: You and Prince Charles?

Dr. James Dobson: Yes.

Roger Marsh: Just praying in his private chapel.

Dr. James Dobson: Yes. And we corresponded afterward. I've now lost touch with him, but I will always appreciate the fact that I had an opportunity to be there. A lot of people don't consider him one of their favorite people because he leans sometimes in a Muslim direction, not that he is Muslim, but doing what he can for mosques and things like that. All I saw was a very gracious man who has a meaningful faith and is dead serious about the environment more than I happen to be.

Roger Marsh: But you can have a great appreciation for it.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. He knows what he believes.

Roger Marsh: Well, that's how I ended my conversation with Dr. James Dobson back in February of 2016 as we were having a conversation about the programs that eventually became known as Dr. Dobson and the Untold Stories here on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. Hope you've enjoyed this visit down memory lane made even more meaningful by the fact that Dr. James Dobson now has gone home to be with the Lord. He did so at the tender age of 89, just six days before he and his wife, Shirley, would've celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary. And what's interesting about this is Dr. Dobson, of course is now with the Lord, but his ministry lives on, his legacy lives on. That's what he believed that God wanted him to do was create a ministry that would outlive him. And there's no limit to the impact that we can make for God's kingdom when we stand firm in our convictions.

Through his decades of ministry, Dr. Dobson consistently championed biblical truth about marriage and family, and the far reaching impact continues today through the Family Talk broadcast and what's happening with our apps and our online ministries as well. It's only made possible through the generous support of friends like you. And your gift today will help us continue reaching America with the unchanging truth about faith, family, and God's design for marriage and children. Now toward that end, a group of friends of the ministry have gathered together and put together the James Dobson Memorial Matching Grant. This is an opportunity for each of us to make a donation to support the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute and have that gift doubled up to, are you ready? Up to \$6 million. That means if you make a donation of \$100 today, it will be doubled and will count as \$200. If you make a \$100,000 donation, it counts as \$200,000 because of the matching gift. And as our way of thanking you for your gift of any amount in support of the James Dobson Family Institute today, we'll be happy to send you a copy of the 2025 Best of Broadcast Collection.

This six-CD set is curated not just from the past year, but throughout the entire 15 year history of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. It features the very first program on Family Talk that aired on May the third, 2010. We'll also get a chance to hear the last interview Dr. Dobson recorded for the Family Talk broadcast and literally the final words Dr. Dobson spoke into a microphone here in the JDFI studios before he went home to be with the Lord. You won't want to miss this opportunity to get your copy of the 2025 special collector's edition of the Best of Broadcast bundle from us here at the JDFI and you can do so when you go to drjamesdobson.org. You can also express your interest by going to our constituent care team. You can call them at 877-732-6825. Now keep in mind tomorrow is New Year's Eve. It's the end of 2025, and that also means for tax deduction purposes, if you want your year-end gift to count in tax year 2025, it needs to be postmarked no later than tomorrow, December 31st. If you'd like to send your tax-deductible donation through the U.S. Postal Service, you are welcome to do so. Our ministry mailing 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 when you're going to hear, are you ready for this, the very first Ever Family Talk program. From May the third, 2010. We're going to dust it off in the archives and freshen it up a little bit. If you want to hear a little bit of history, make sure you join us again tomorrow for the next edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, the voice you can still trust, for the family you love.

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