

# [***WWII Veterans Remember D-Day Invasion; GOP Lawmakers Slam Timing Of Biden Border Action; First Lady Jill Biden Attending Hunter's Trial; Now: Testimony At Hunter Biden's Gun Trial; Attorney General And House GOP Face Off At Hearing; Biden Faces Tighter Than Expected Race In Virginia***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6C62-49H1-F072-X000-00000-00&context=1516831)

Fox News THE STORY WITH MARTHA MACCALLUM 3:00 PM EST

June 4, 2024 Tuesday

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**Section:** NEWS; Domestic

**Length:** 6331 words

**Byline:** Martha MacCallum, Katie Pavlich, Jason Chaffetz, David Spunt, Jonathan Turley, Chad Pergram

**Guests:** Kevin McCarthy, Mark Penn, Glenn Youngkin

**Body**

MARTHA MACCALLUM, FOX NEWS CHANNEL HOST: Thank you, John and Sandra. Good afternoon, everybody. I'm Martha MacCallum joining you live from the Normandy American Cemetery in Normandy, France, where this week, we will mark 80 years since 160,000 allied forces stormed the beaches on D-Day. It was an offensive unlike any the world had seen.

It required courage in leadership and on the beaches and in the skies that would come to be known as the greatest generation. 9,387 of those heroes lie beneath the white crosses and stars of David you see behind me. They brought freedom to France after four brutal years of Nazi occupation and then they peeled back Hitler's grip on Europe step by step.

Later this hour, you will hear from the first of several veterans who will speak with this week who bravely fought that campaign. This is Stephen Malnikoff, a remarkable man who is now 104 years old.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

STEPHEN MELNIKOFF, WORLD WAR II VETERAN: As we moved on that morning of the 16th, we had casualties immediately. And they talk about D-Days, I tell people, the infantry has sometimes 10-15 day in one day. It all depends how fast you go.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MACCALLUM: He was talking about an action on the 16th, several days after D-Day. We're going to have more of that interview for you later. It is really incredible. He is quite a man, and you'll see some of that later in the show. But first to the big news of the day on THE STORY.

Moments ago, President Biden in the midst of a campaign and weeks before the first presidential debate announced executive action to stop the flow at the border when the average daily number breaks 2,500. The current number of people crossing illegally is double that right now. He again said that the former President Trump is the reason for the crisis. Watch what he just said.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JOE BIDEN, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: We came to a clear, clear bipartisan deal. It was the strongest border security agreement in decades. But then Republicans in Congress, not all of them, walked away from it, why? Because Donald Trump told them to.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MACCALLUM: After those remarks, there were some shouted questions about the border. The president did not take them.

Well, there are a lot of questions in that crowd and understandably so. Take a look at the new Fox Power rankings that reveal that of all the big issues you see on the screen, border security is the biggest one in terms of people's concerns, and it is the one where the current President Biden is the weakest. Trump on this measure beats him by 18 points on the issue of the border. Republicans hammering the timing of today's announcement five months from election day.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Let's do an executive order on the border, but, you know, let's make it so it really doesn't do a darn thing. It just helps us get through to November.

SEN. JOHN NEELY KENNEDY (R-LA): He's polling right up there with fungal infections. Part of the reason for that is that he gave in to the loon wing of his party, and he dissolved the southern border. Now, five months before an election, he has to appear to be willing to do something about it.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MACCALLUM: OK, a big lineup with coming up: Katie Pavlich, Jason Chaffetz, and Mark Penn. But first, we will speak with former House Speaker Kevin McCarthy. Speaker McCarthy, good to have you with us. Thanks for joining us today.

FMR. REP. KEVIN MCCARTHY (R-CA): Well, thank you. And Martha, thank you for being at Normandy. I remember being there five years ago at the 75th anniversary with you. And thank you for interviewing those heroes. Everybody should listen to those interviews and know just that we have very few left who were there on D-Day, and it's an honor to even hear from those heroes.

MACCALLUM: Yes, indeed. It is in many terms the final journey for a lot of these men and we have remarkable stories. There are people coming who are on hospice, who are being flown in for the day because it's one of their final wishes. And the people who help them do that are extraordinary as well.

So, we'll tell everybody about that, but I do want to get your reaction to what President Biden said just now, because basically he said people can't enter the country illegally. They can come through the legal path, but they can't come illegally. So, I'm trying to figure out why he didn't feel that way for the past few years.

MCCARTHY: Look, what's interesting here is we've never had such a big problem on our southern border and the damage is already done here. I mean if you go to New York City, the number one issue is the southern border. You go to Massachusetts, he made every community in America a border community, and he only said three months ago there's nothing he could do on the border. There was no new law changed when the border was secure.

The only thing we changed was the president. Everybody sees through what this is. This is purely a campaign tactic he is taking right now that he can executive order, wipe away the next day. But remember, it's only after you allow 2,500 people to come illegally. So, when are you going to secure the border that the only way people come are legal? You can't do that under a President Biden.

MACCALLUM: Yes, I mean, it's really stunning. We looked back to the Obama- Biden administration and when it was on the high-end, it was 2,100. But this essentially says the average can be 2,500 before this kicks in. Plus, if you use the app, they say the Border Patrol app that they want people to use, then you can come right in as long as you use the app to make an appointment.

MCCARTHY: But you're still not going through the process. Remember this, this is the damage that he's done. In one month of last February, we caught more people on the terrorist watch list. Think how difficult it is to get on the terrorist watch list. In one month under Biden, than we did in the last entire administration all four years.

So, who's already in America? We're catching people on the terrorist watch list from Yemen. The number one group of people coming across the country in the last two months have been from China. China is not in Latin America. They're taking a plane to go someplace to walk up through.

And now, he's going to say, well, the first 2,500 can go, but use the app and you can get through. That is not securing the border, and he knows it. It's purely a false place he's trying to do for ***politics***. And I believe this will even backfire on him.

MACCALLUM: Well, that's what I want to ask you now about the ***politics*** of this, because you see that on the dial for these Fox News power rankings in terms of issues, Trump is plus 15 on the issue of the border. So, I guess if you're working on the Biden campaign, you're going to look at how many points can you pull it back? You know, if people, you know, maybe haven't followed the issue that closely, you know, they might say, well, he stopped that, I think, right? I mean, that's getting better, that situation.

MCCARTHY: No, everybody sees it in every community. It doesn't matter how far away you are from the southern border, you watch what Biden's policy has done. So, you see that in your community every day. When you go to the grocery store, you see what Biden's policies have done to inflation.

When you fill your car up, you see what Biden's policies with energy have done. And this is where they're tone deaf. They are arguing a whole another point instead of listening to the American public. That's why I believe this next election, President Trump is going to have a very big night.

MACCALLUM: All right, Kevin McCarthy, former Speaker of the House, great to see you as always. Thanks so much for joining us today.

MCCARTHY: Thank you.

MACCALLUM: All right let's bring in our panel: Katie Pavlich is here, Town Hall.com Editor; Jason Chaffetz, former Republican Utah Congressman, both are Fox News Contributors; and Mark Penn, former Clinton Advisor and Pollster, now CEO of Stagwell. Great to have all three of you with us. Thank you for being here.

I actually want to start by going back to October of 2020, Mark. And here, candidate Biden at the time is talking about opening up the borders and that that's why people should want to vote for him. Watch this.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

BIDEN: This is the first president in the history of the United States of America that's anybody seeking asylum has to do it in another country. You come to the United States and you make your case that I seek asylum based on the following, on the following premise why I deserve it under American law. They're sitting in squalor on the other side of the river.

(END VIDEO CLIP) MACCALLUM: OK, Mark Penn big change of vantage point on all this today, he says no you can't come into the country illegally, you can only come through the legal pathways. What changed?

MARK PENN, STAGWELL CEO: Well, absolutely, this is a big change going into the election season. I've said for many months now that he had to do something on this issue. It couldn't sit there the way it is. It's too big an issue. It's number one or number two, you know, in the polls with inflation. And so, I think he was responding to the Vox Populi here going into the election season. And the question is, is this executive order going to be an adequate response?

MACCALLUM: You know, Katie, we heard from the president many times. He said, I've done all I can do. You know, I'm out of options. And unless Congress comes up with something, my ability here is very limited. What do you think of this executive order that he dropped just a short time ago?

KATIE PAVLICH, FOX NEWS CONTRIBUTOR: Well, and of course, the president wasted no time trying to blame this problem on President Trump and Republicans again. But Joe Biden is an arsonist who is now running to the building. He purposely burned down, not with a fire hose, but with a bucket of water, wanting credit for putting the fire out.

He campaigned on this, as you just showed us. He told people to come here. He said he wanted free healthcare for illegal immigrants when he was on the campaign trail in 2020. He took back all of the executive orders that Donald Trump put in place to secure the border that were effective, not because they were not effective, but because they were done by the previous president and he vowed to his far left the party to remove all of those.

And now the American people three years later are suffering the consequences at every single level, education, tax increases, hospitals being overwhelmed, communities being overrun with people they can't house. And it was interesting today to see who was at the White House.

You had New York's, New York Governor Kathy Hochul there, he's doing this not just because it's an election issue, but because Democrats and his party are begging him to do something, to try and fix this issue and he's done something very small today, but it is nothing in terms of what he needs to do to actually get this problem under control.

MACCALLUM: So, Jason Chaffetz, does the president see a political opening here? We have a recent conviction for the former President Donald Trump, does he see this and we see some of the polling shows some softness for some supporters of former president Trump that maybe they'll look at this conviction and think differently. Does Biden see this as a moment to shift the gears here?

JASON CHAFFETZ, FOX NEWS CONTRIBUTOR: He's trying to talk about his weakest point, which is immigration. But I think there's something more nefarious here. I think he wants to start the legal action while he's still the president, so they can help steer that in the right direction. But this does nothing to secure the border. You know what this is? This is a ploy to get people to sign up on their app, and think of all the data that they get out of this app.

And what are they going to do with all of that data? So, none of this applies to you if you apply on the app. So, don't think this is slowing down anybody. There's nothing about border, the border wall. There's nothing about all those existing people. This is about getting people on their apps so they can track them and use that data. That's what this is about.

MACCALLUM: You know what, you make a great point. That jumped out to me as well today, Jason, because I was reading through the tenets of this, is that human trafficking victims, understood. Children who are coming alone, which might be good news for the cartels. And then, of course, if you use the app, as I mentioned, you can also get right in. So, it's pretty, pretty interesting and you have an interesting take on why they might be wanting to do that. Thank you all. Great to see you. We'll see you soon.

PAVLICH: Thanks, Martha.

MACCALLUM: So, right now the so-called laptop from hell makes its debut in Hunter Biden's gun trial today. The president's son is facing up to 25 years in prison if he's convicted on these charges. First Lady Jill Biden has been front and center today and yesterday during all of this, during the jury selection, and it continued again today. Jonathan Turley says that jury nullification in Biden County, he calls it, may explain the decision to take this case to trial -- he's next.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MACCALLUM: Hunter Biden's gun trial happening now in Delaware. He is facing another trial on tax charges. That one takes place in California in September, after his plea deal with the feds fell apart. He faces a total of more than 40 years in prison, potentially, between these two cases.

First Lady Jill Biden, sitting once again in the front row today, reportedly watching the jury and both sides very closely. The president released a statement on his own behalf, saying that he loves and respects his son.

Jonathan Turley is standing by. First to justice -- First, to justice correspondent David Spunt, who has the latest for us at the courthouse in Wilmington. Hi, David.

DAVID SPUNT, FOX NEWS CHANNEL CORRESPONDENT: Hi, Martha.

Well, the first lady left, she didn't come back after lunch, and we assume she is going to be gone the rest of the week, because she's going to be actually in France for a state visit, where you are right now, a little bit later this week.

But Hunter Biden's laptop, that physical laptop was actually held up in court. It was not plugged in. Exhibits are not being taken from the laptop directly. But it was our first time to actually see that laptop that's been in evidence for several years.

Also, an FBI agent who joined the case last year, said that she heard parts of Hunter Biden's audio book to help prove that he was addicted to drugs around the time that he bought a gun. So, part of that was played.

Hunter Biden and his wife, Melissa arrived this morning just before 8:30, the typical time they arrive with day-two of questioning beginning at 9:00 a.m. this morning.

His attorney, Abbe Lowell, argued that Hunter was not using drugs but alcohol at the time, and he was rushed by the local salesman in 2018. He also says that there is a chain of custody issue with a gun pouch found in Hunter's car that had cocaine residue. Why? Well, he says Hallie Biden, the widow of Hunter's late brother, Beau, who was later in a relationship with Hunter tampered with it.

Lowell claims that Hallie Biden panicked when she found the gun in Hunter's car, put it in a pouch and threw it in a garbage can outside a local grocery store.

So, the prosecution began by saying, no one is above the law, and Hunter Biden should not be treated any differently than anyone else.

And the next witness we're expecting at some point soon as Hunters ex-wife, Kathleen Buhle, but right now that FBI agent still on the stand. Martha?

MACCALLUM: OK. Thank you very much. David Spunt in Wilmington. Let's go to Jonathan Turley, constitutional law attorney, GW law professor and Fox News contributor.

Jonathan, great to have you with us today.

(CROSSTALK)

JONATHAN TURLEY, FOX NEWS CHANNEL CONTRIBUTOR: Thank you.

MACCALLUM: I just want to start by putting up this timeline of the Hunter Biden gun case for everyone at home to just take a look at these dates.

The form was filled out on October 12th, 2018. And on that day, he checked no, on the gun form in terms of being on any unlawful drugs, or being a user of unlawful drugs. Then, one day later, he texts an unknown person that he's waiting for his dealer. And then, the next day, he texts Hallie Biden, "on a car smoking crack."

Jonathan, how difficult are these text messages for Hunter Biden, who is claiming and his lawyers claiming maybe it was alcohol at the time, or it wasn't actually on drugs when he filled out the form?

TURLEY: Well, it's obviously very difficult, very few people will buy these defenses. There is no defense that I can see here. I mean, it's akin to getting yourself locked in a bank fold and saying, I got lost on my way to the restroom. You can say that, but very few people are going to buy that.

And that sort of leads to this question of why they didn't just plead guilty. If he pleads guilty, there's a good chance he wouldn't get jail time, it increases that likelihood. And instead, he's going to go through a very embarrassing trial without a real defense.

I mean, they've also suggested that perhaps, he was the one who checked the box. Well, you're going to have the gun dealer, owner -- dealership owners standing -- who stood there, who's going to describe him doing that?

MACCALLUM: So, why do you think that he didn't plead guilty if you think that would have been the easier way out for him here?

TURLEY: Because I think this is looking like a nullification strategy. Jury nullification is when you either explicitly or implicitly encourage a jury to ignore the evidence. And this is the place to do it. Wilmington is the Biden hometown. This is the favorite son of the favorite son. And I think that there is a hope here that in combination with sympathy for the addiction, and perhaps, sympathy for the family, you can get a hung jury or even jury nullification, because that's the only viable option I can see here.

I mean, do you really think 12 people are going to say that a third person checked these boxes for Hunter Biden? Or that he had the world's smallest window of sobriety that can be reduced to a few hours? Of course, no one is going to buy that.

So, you're relying on something else. You're giving them, at least, the appearance of a defense, but you're really hoping for nullification.

MACCALLUM: Let me ask you quickly, Jonathan. Is it too heavy handed for the president to comment on this case for the first lady to be sitting in the front row of this jury? Do you have any problem with that or not?

TURLEY: I don't have any problem with his -- the father weighing in here for his son. Having Jill Biden in the court, however, is a reminder to the jury, that this is a Biden town. And this is a Biden case. And I think the prosecutors may be chafing at that.

MACCALLUM: Yes. Jonathan, thank you. Always good to see you. Jonathan Turley --

(CROSSTALK)

TURLEY: Thanks, Martha.

MACCALLUM: -- joining us this afternoon. And you bet.

Straight ahead this hour, Governor Glenn Youngkin, on new polling in Virginia, that shows a tight race developing between Biden and Trump in this generally blue state.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MACCALLUM: A dramatic showdown today on Capitol Hill. Attorney General Merrick Garland, facing off with the House Republicans who say that there's a double standard in the U.S. justice system.

Garland responded to accusations that the Justice Department was behind former President Trump's trial here in New York City, where former DOJ official Matthew Colangelo left his big job in D.C. at the DOJ, and came up to New York and joined the prosecution team. Watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

REP. MATT GAETZ (R-FL): You had no problem dispatching Matthew Colangelo.

MERRICK GARLAND, UNITED STATES ATTORNEY GENERAL: I did not dispatch Mr. Colangelo anywhere.

GAETZ: Well, do you know how he ended up there?

GARLAND: I assume he spoke -- he applied for a job there and got the job.

GAETZ: But see, you know what -- you know what --

(CROSSTALK)

GARLAND: I can tell you I had nothing to do with it.

GAETZ: Well --

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MACCALLUM: Another big issue, Garland's refusal to hand over the audio recording of that infamous interview with President Biden and Special Counsel Robert Hur. The A.G. says that releasing the transcript was enough.

Senior congressional correspondent Chad Pergram, reporting live from Capitol Hill. Hi, Chad.

CHAD PERGRAM, FOX NEWS CHANNEL CONGRESSIONAL CORRESPONDENT: Martha, good afternoon.

Well, Garland told the committee that it's policy not to release the audio tapes here. He says there is really not that much that would be added by releasing the tapes. He says it's full of filler words ands and ams (PH). But Republicans say that's precisely why they want to listen to the tapes. Listen.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

REP. ANDY BIGGS (R-AZ): We don't know whether they're -- the blank -- if he said there were blank times where there was silence. We don't know whether those were one minute long, two minutes long. We don't know if he's stuttered for and, and, and, and, and, because those were edited out.

We do not know whether this supports and substantiates Mr. Hur's findings.

PERGRAM (voice over): The GOP accuses garland of being unfair to former President Trump and taking it easy on President Biden. Democrats believe Republicans want to weaponize the audio tapes against the president ahead of the fall campaign. But Republicans warned Garland, he had better comply with the committee's demands.

REP. DAN BISHOP (R-NC): What happened to Peter Navarro and Steve Bannon when they decided to defy a subpoena of the Congress?

GARLAND: We received three -- four referrals, criminal referrals. Two were prosecuted, two were not.

BISHOP: What will happen to you, if your decision is baseless?

GARLAND: May I -- may I continue to answer?

BISHOP: No, I know what happened. You know that what happened too. They're in -- Mr. Navarro is in prison.

PERGRAM (voice over): Democrats noted that Judiciary Committee Chairman Jim Jordan never complied with a subpoena from the committee investigating the riot at the Capitol. Garland was mum when pressed about contempt of Congress, but he told the committee he will not be intimidated. And he worried about attacks on the Department of Justice.

PERGRAM (on camera): What are you going to say about contempt today?

Do you feel that's an abuse of the process when it comes to contempt?

GARLAND: An attack on the rule of law tears down people's confidence in the basic fundamental element of our democracy, that all people will be treated equal.

(END VIDEO TAPE)

PERGRAM: Now, there has been no floor vote on contempt of Congress for Garland. The reason, it's about the math. They lack the votes so far. Martha?

MARTHA MACCALLUM, FOX NEWS ANCHOR: Chad, thank you very much. So, Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin, could his state be headed for a toss up between President Biden and former President Trump? He joins me next.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MACCALLUM: Five months out from Election Day, this headline in The Hill today, "Trump poses a real threat to Biden in Virginia. Now keep in mind that President Biden won the commonwealth by more than 10 points in the last time around in 2020. But recent polling shows him in a virtual tie with former President Trump.

Political analyst Larry Sabato, very well known for his understanding of Virginia, says, "If Virginia is even competitive in the fall, it's a very bad sign for Biden since Virginia is more Democratic than many of the true swing states." Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin is the first Republican- elected to that office since 2009, and he joins us now. Governor Youngkin, great to have you with us today. Thank you so much for joining me.

GLENN YOUNGKIN (R), VIRGINIA GOVERNOR: Martha, so great to be with you. And just to remind us all again, in 2020 Joe Biden won Virginia by 10 points. And to be even having this conversation today, I think fully reflects the change in view about not only the strength that Donald Trump would bring to the presidency, but the weakness that Joe Biden has demonstrated.

Listen, we have economic weakness, we have national security weakness, we have chaos at the border, we have energy weakness, and Americans and Virginians are ready for a change. And that's why I do think that all of a sudden, states that in 2016 were not in play, I think can be in play this year. Listen, it's still early days, but this strength from President Trump, not only in Virginia but around the country, is clear. And I think Virginians and Americans are ready for a change.

MACCALLUM: So I want to read you a quote from a former DNC official, because I just want to get your reaction to it, given the history in Virginia with your win and then some, you know, a bit more difficult midterm and house races, state races than you maybe would have liked. Ivan Zapien says, "One of the most underreported stories in ***politics*** is that in the last 20 years, the Virginia Democratic Party has built the country's most always on battle ready political machine. Regardless of what the polls say they're ready to deliver the state to Biden and Democrats up and down the ticket this year."

Is there an undercurrent sort of, you know, ready Democrat machine that makes it very difficult to match the polls that we're seeing?

YOUNGKIN: Well, I have to say that ready Democrat machine didn't show up in 2021, and that's why I'm governor. And I do believe that Virginians believe strongly in common sense conservative policies. And that's exactly what we have led with and demonstrated results from.

I mean, we have seen Virginia move from bottom third in job growth to near the top. We have more Virginians working than ever. Our communities are safer than they have been in a long, long, long time. We've reformed education. And we've demonstrated once again that there's room for common sense.

And I believe this is what the polls are reflecting, that America is ready for strength and common sense. And I believe Virginians will, in fact, again present themselves not as a result of some political machine, but reflecting their views that they are ready for change.

Again, it's a long way until November but here we sit in June, and the polls are tight.

MACCALLUM: I want to talk to you about where we are, where I am right now in Normandy. But I just want to ask you quickly, because you always -- your name always shows up on these short lists of potential vice presidential candidates with former President Trump. Is it a job you would be interested in?

YOUNGKIN: Well, I love my job. I have to say that being governor of Virginia is the most fabulous job I could possibly imagine. And I really do believe that I was called here to do this job. And I did fully endorse President Trump, and I told him that I would work enthusiastically to get him elected. And so that's exactly what I plan on doing.

But I am really committed to Virginia, and I look forward to continuing to lead. This is a chance for leadership in the commonwealth and across the country. Again that's why I do believe that states like Virginia, that Joe Biden won by a lot back in 2020 or back in play.

MACCALLUM: Yes. Well, we enjoyed visiting you and interviewing you at the governor's mansion. I can see why you like it. It's a wonderful spot.

Let me ask you a little bit about the history of Virginia when it comes to Normandy and D Day, because it's an incredible story about the Bedford boys. Shed some light on for those who don't know who the Bedford boys were. Explain the sacrifice of these Virginians.

YOUNGKIN: Well, of course, it is quite an honor to even be talking about the sacrifice that so many American heroes made on D Day just now, almost 80 years ago. And I just am so emotionally touched by where you are right now. I was there just a year ago.

On Thursday, I'll be in Bedford. Bedford, Virginia is not only the home to the national D Day memorial, but it's the home to the Bedford boys. And no jurisdiction in America suffered a larger percentage of fatalities than Bedford on D Day. And these were amazing men who felt that they could, in fact, eradicate evil from Europe. They put their hands up, and went and fought. And it is an amazing story of American courage, and it's an amazing story of heroism.

And that's why I always spend D Day in Bedford. Last year I happen to be in Normandy, but otherwise I'm in Bedford to honor these amazing men who stand for everything that is good about America.

MACCALLUM: Yes, you are so right. And I looked up the list. The Hobart brothers, Bedford Hobart is buried here, and I'm going to go find his tomb. But his brother's body wasn't found, and his mother left the brother here so that her sons could be here together. That's just one of the amazing stories that we have here.

Governor, thank you so much. Hope to see you soon. Governor Glenn Youngkin from Virginia, thank you.

YOUNGKIN: Martha, thank you. If I could add that his brother will be buried there.

MACCALLUM: I have read that. It's a remarkable story. Governor, thank you so much for sharing it with us and give our best to the people of Bedford.

More than a hundred World War II veterans have come to Normandy to mark the 80th anniversary. And these heroes are now mostly between 97 and 104 years old. You'll hear from Steve Melnikoff, who hit the beach here in Normandy the week of D Day next.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MACCALLUM: Steve Melnikoff landed here on Omaha Beach behind us in France 80 years ago at the age of 24. That's right, that makes him 104. He fought with the 29th Division, 175th in the infantry, and he earned two Purple Hearts and three bronze stars, initially in operation Overlord and then here in Normandy, France in the weeks that followed.

Look at these wonderful pictures of these young men, and Steve among them. He told me about his memories from 80 years ago, what he thinks of the nation that he and others fought and so many died for, and how he thinks it's doing today.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

STEVE MELNIKOFF, WORLD WAR II VETERAN: I'm Steve Melnikoff, and I'm with the 29th Division -- I was with the 29th division, one of the D Day divisions, and it was on Omaha Beach. And I'm originally from Rhode Island. And then my work after took me to Baltimore Area. That's where I lived out of Baltimore Area.

MACCALLUM: So what do you remember about that day? You know, when you talk about how difficult it was and overcoming these odds, and planners saying that it couldn't be done, what was in your heart? What do you remember?

MELNIKOFF: The infantry only got twelve weeks training, but because they knew were going to go into this battle, we got 17 weeks training. But then after the 17 weeks, we came over to England and I trained five additional months in St. Ives and -- before we went in. And so, this whole group of men, they -- we knew after a little bit that we were going over here.

MACCALLUM: So once you made it up the beach, and I'm sure you lost a lot of people that you knew probably on the ship, right?

MELNIKOFF: Yes.

MACCALLUM: And what was that like for you?

MELNIKOFF: Yes. I'll just say this. On the first day, the 29th Division and the 1st Division had casualties, 5,720. I'll say that again, 5,720 casualties on the first day.

MACCALLUM: So tell me about where and when you were wounded.

MELNIKOFF: Yes. I was wounded on June 17th. It was an attempt. This was the second attempt to take (inaudible) that was a target. I was a Browning automatic rifleman and the automatic rifle -- the assistant. The automatic was my buddy. We were together since the years had gone. We were two together. That was a team and we didn't forget it.

Well, he was -- as were getting ready to dig in foxholes at the end of that first day, a small general squad came over and with automatic fire put the gun over the hedgerow, and he was shot and killed.

MACCALLUM: What was his name?

MELNIKOFF: His name was Arthur Giottis (ph), came from New Hampshire. We were together. We were pretty much drafted about the same time. And from Fort Devens, that's where we started. And we shipped to Texas where we could get a trainer.

And that's where I told you about the Camp Fannin training. That was a training that was more advanced so that we could fire every single gun that was available to the combat infantrymen. And so, we were together all that time and time in England. We danced together, we drunk beer together in England. We did the whole thing. But he was my buddy and we lost him.

So the next day I became the gunner (ph) man. And the life of a machine gunner, or a (inaudible) or a rifleman is not very long in combat because what you do is you fire the biggest thing that's against you, and that's the machine gun. That day I was hit. I was shot right in the neck here by a machine gun. And I don't know how it's possible for a machine gun to only hit me once.

But as he went along with his machine gun like this, he hit me and he moved the gun over, and he fired. And alongside of me was my first lieutenant, and he was there. And he got the bulk of that because I don't know what's my instincts or the shot knocked me down, but I went to the ground. And he didn't. He didn't. He just stood there.

After they moved off, I walked my way back to a medical station, and when I got there, they redressed it. They put me on a plane with a bunch of other wounded veterans, and we were flown back to England.

Actually to a (inaudible). Ever seen a movie (inaudible)?

MACCALLUM: Sure.

MELNIKOFF: It was a (inaudible) and that's -- and it was in Warwick in England, I remember that.

MACCALLUM: Let me ask you about this place. Tell us about the greatest generation foundation that you have participated with nine times to come here to Normandy.

MELNIKOFF: Yes. What this building was at one time, it was the headquarters of the Command German in this area of the occupation.

MACCALLUM: There are Nazi murals on the inside of the walls in this building. That was the German headquarters that were restored, basically to bring them back so people can understand what this place was. But now this is a place where veterans of World War II and Korea, and Vietnam travel in groups together to come here every year to Normandy.

What does it mean to you to be part of that? You're the senior statesman, I think, of the group, right?

MELNIKOFF: Yes. I guess I am, yes. And even more than that probably simply because of the attrition, okay

MACCALLUM: Yes.

MELNIKOFF: There's not many of us left, especially combat man, yes. And so, what it means to me, I establish a mission for myself, because when I come here, I talk to people like you, but I also talk to kids, tall people of all up and down the scale. I especially love to talk to kids.

And I know that if I talk to them, I tell my story, what they get absorbed. And if they're small and not even big enough to absorb, I tell their moms to, when they take a picture of me, they can tell them that I can remember Steve Melnikoff, they might remember Steve. And I tell them, make sure they know that, because they're going to be here to tell a story, you know, when we're all gone.

MACCALLUM: When you think about America today, and the country that you fought for and many of your brothers died to preserve freedom, what do you think about the United States?

MELNIKOFF: Today, well, I see some things that I really don't like. I see a resemblance was happening in 1939-'38. I was there. I meant reading the book or something like that. I was there.

And this feeling that we have, the people are so absorbed in with themselves. They're not the way we were. We volunteered. I didn't volunteer but we were drafted. But we knew we had a mission and we did. I always tell people we're a hell of a lot tougher than you guys, yes, because we didn't have the conveniences.

I can remember my mother lighting a gas lamp in a house. I can remember all the things that we went through. But I tell people we had a depression but I thought, don't be sorry for us, but I guarantee you, when I was a kid, I had a lot more fun than your kids have.

Because you know what it was? We were independent, and they let us plan our games, play our games, get messed up. It didn't matter. But now everything is so -- so, you know, we played football. We didn't have padding all. So we had a generation that because you had to walk to school, we had to -- they put all the shoes on you. They say, go to school, that's it, and back.

And so there's nobody. They worked. We're independent. And I think that was a generation that we able to do things because they were so mostly factory workers.

And I'll say one other thing. I'm 104. I'm in pretty good health. I'd say I'm okay. But you know something, because were poor, we ate basic foods. We had rye bread. We had very little meat because it's too expensive, a lot of vegetables. Now the doctors tell you, hey, you're supposed to do that. We didn't have -- we didn't have white bread because it was more expensive than duck bread. Now it's going far worse.

So what I say we're tougher. It was just that we're forced to be tougher because we had to walk. Parents walk to work. And I just hope that they'll be able to do something like our generation if it becomes necessary. And I see things on the edges that are sort of reminding me of that period.

MACCALLUM: Well, Steve Melnikoff, thank you very much. It's really an honor to talk to you, sir.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MACCALLUM: Indeed it was. And the Greatest Generation Foundation by Timothy Davis, amazing organization. You'll learn more about them as we continue our coverage this week live from Normandy right after this.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MACCALLUM: We will be back live from Normandy again tomorrow with more special coverage, as the world marks 80 years since D Day.

That is "The Story" for this Tuesday, June 4, 2024. Thanks for being with us. We look forward to the coverage all throughout this week. Your World gets started right now. I'll see you tomorrow.

**Load-Date:** June 4, 2024

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