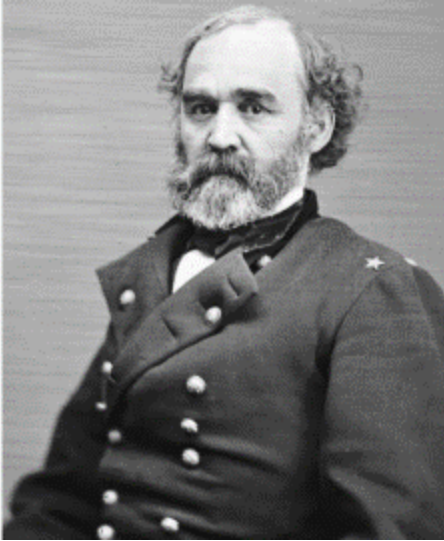


KIT KAT ESSAY OF MICHAEL SCHOEDINGER
January 17, 2023

When I set out a year ago to decide on a topic that I wanted to learn more about. My first thought was who in American history do I know very little about. I decided on Benjamin Franklin. Hence the title “The Most Influential Man in American History”. But then I went on Honor Flight in October and changed my mind. However, the title still worked. I have always had a passion for our veterans. I did not serve in the military but consider myself a very patriotic American. My bedspread as a little boy was an American flag! Most veterans that participate in Honor Flight will tell you that visiting the Vietnam Wall is their highlight. For me, it was visiting a different site in Washington DC.

Through the ages, one of the consequences of warfare has been large numbers of unidentified dead. Sometimes unidentified remains resulted from poor record keeping, the damage that weapons of war inflicted on bodies, or the haste required to bury the dead and mark gravesites. In the United States prior to the Civil War, unidentified remains were often buried in mass graves. A system of national cemeteries was established in 1862 to ensure the proper burial of all service members.



In 1866, U.S. Army
Quartermaster
General
Montgomery C.
Meigs, a renowned
military engineer,
oversaw the
creation and initial
design of Arlington
National Cemetery,
and the Tomb of
the Civil War
Unknowns.

Still, many unknown remains were recovered in the years following the Civil War. At Arlington National Cemetery, there are individual Civil War unknown burials as well as the remains of 2,111 Union and Confederate soldiers buried beneath the Tomb of the Civil War Unknowns, created in 1866.

[Tomb of the Civil War Unknowns](#)



While exact numbers are unknown, estimates indicate that nearly half of the Civil War dead were never identified. Unknown wartime fatalities have long been a heartbreaking

yet common consequence of armed conflict. Even ancient battlefields had mass burial pits with unknown remains. Unburied bodies brought disease, and armies did not widely issue identification tags until World War I. Without the tools and time to record, properly bury, and transport the dead, soldiers' remains often became lost and unidentifiable. The scale of the Civil War, and its powerful weaponry, resulted in staggering numbers of unknown dead on both sides. Cultural attitudes toward death also changed during the mid-nineteenth century. Americans felt great distress over the many missing and unknown soldiers who could not be properly buried or mourned. As a result, the U.S. government adopted new policies to care for the unidentifiable war dead. Whenever possible, these men received graves labeled as "unknown," and they began to occupy an honored place in military memory.

World War I and the Creation of the Tomb

During World War I, U.S. service members received aluminum identification discs, the precursors to "dog tags," to aid the process of identifying remains. The War Department created a new unit in the Quartermaster Corps, the Graves Registration Service, to oversee burials. During and after World War I, however, Americans debated whether bodies should be repatriated. With more than 100,000 U.S. casualties (compared to fewer than 3,000 in the Spanish-American War), repatriation was more challenging. If requested by the next of kin, the remains of service members who died in Europe could be transported to anywhere in the United States at no cost to the family.

Or, families could choose to bury their dead at permanent U.S. military cemeteries established in Europe.

In December 1920, New York Congressman and World War I veteran Hamilton Fish Jr. proposed legislation that provided for the interment of one unknown American soldier at a special tomb to be built in Arlington National Cemetery. The purpose of the legislation was “to bring home the body of an unknown American warrior who in himself represents no section, creed, or race in the late war and who typifies, moreover, the soul of America and the supreme sacrifice of her heroic dead.” Four bodies of unidentified U.S. military personnel were exhumed from different American military cemeteries in France. On October 23, 1921, the four caskets arrived at the city hall of Châlons-sur-Marne, France.



Crowds watch as a military procession escorts the Unknown's caisson through the streets of Châlons-sur-Marne, France, on October 24, 1921.

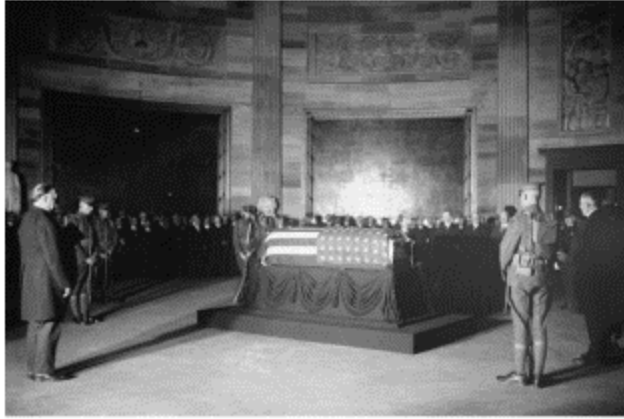
Early on the morning of October 24, 1921, Maj. Robert P. Harbold of the Quartermaster Corps, aided by French and American soldiers, rearranged the caskets so that each one

rested on a shipping case other than the one in which it had arrived. Major Harbold then chose Sgt. Edward F. Younger of Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 50th Infantry, American Forces in Germany, to select the Unknown Soldier. Sgt. Younger selected the Unknown by placing a spray of white roses on one of the caskets.



American soldiers carry the Unknown Soldier from the train to a caisson in Le Havre, France, on October 25, 1921.

The Unknown then journeyed by caisson and rail to the port town of Le Havre, France. From Le Havre, the USS Olympia transported the Unknown Soldier's casket to Washington, D.C. The Unknown arrived at the Washington Navy Yard on November 9, 1921, and was taken to lay in state in the U.S. Capitol Rotunda. About 90,000 visitors paid their respects during the public visiting period on November 10, 1921.



President Warren G. Harding and former President William Howard Taft pay tribute to the Unknown Soldier inside the U.S. Capitol, November 9, 1921.

On November 11, 1921, the Unknown was placed on a horse-drawn caisson and carried in a procession through Washington, D.C. and across the Potomac River. A state funeral ceremony was held at Arlington National Cemetery's new Memorial Amphitheater, and the Unknown was interred in the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Nationwide, Americans observed two minutes of silence at the beginning of the ceremony. President Warren G. Harding officiated at the ceremony and placed the Medal of Honor, the nation's highest military decoration, on the casket.



General John J. Pershing scatters soil from France into the Unknown Soldier's crypt during the burial ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery, November 11, 1921

Thousands attended the funeral. AT&T even used telephone lines to transmit President Warren G. Harding's speech to audiences at venues in New York City and San Francisco. To create a shared sense of nationwide participation, President Harding formally declared a national holiday, Veterans Day on November 11, and encouraged all Americans to observe two minutes of silence and to toll their bells during the funeral. In his speech, Harding honored the Unknown Soldier as a representative of the United States who connected the diverse American people to the world. Thus, from the start, the Tomb became a people's memorial, a collective grave representative of all Americans who fought and died in World War I. Simultaneously, it demonstrated the United States' wartime contributions to the world.



To prevent visitors from disrespecting the Tomb, the Army enclosed it within a fence. A civilian guard was added in 1925 and a military guard in 1926.

Rich and Jones designed the finalized sarcophagus for the Tomb to be rich in symbolism. One side features carved figures representing Peace, Victory, and Valor. The other side includes the inscription, "Here Rests In Honored Glory An American Soldier Known But To God."



Workers who chiseled and cut the marble block that would rest atop the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier pose for a photograph before its transfer to Arlington National Cemetery, c. 1931

World War II and Korean War Unknowns

Following World War II, some Americans supported the idea of interring and honoring an Unknown from that war. However, the start of the Korean War in 1950 delayed those plans. In August 1956, President Dwight D. Eisenhower approved the selection and interment of Unknowns from both World War II and Korea. Fought on four continents, World War II complicated the selection of an Unknown. The chosen Unknown needed to represent all unidentified American dead, not just those from one theater of the war. In 1958, the Army exhumed 13 bodies from military cemeteries across North Africa and Europe and brought them to the Epinal American Cemetery and Memorial in France. On May 12, 1958, Major General Edward J. O'Neill placed a red and white wreath on one of the 13 caskets, selecting the Unknown who would represent the Trans-Atlantic (Europe and North Africa) Theater of World War II. The selected casket was then taken aboard USS Boston for its journey to the United States.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

NAVPERS 131 (REV. 1-44)

DECK LOG—ADDITIONAL REMARKS SHEET

PAGE _____

UNITED STATES SHIP

USS BOSTON (CAG-1)

Monday 26 May 58

(Day) (Date) (Initial)

ADDITIONAL REMARKS

- 00-04 Steaming independently enroute to Norfolk, Virginia from U. S. Naval Base, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, in accordance with COMCRULANT employment schedule of 1958, on course 325, speed 12 knots. Material condition YOKE (modified) is set. Boilers #2 and #4 and ships service generators #2 and #4 are in use. SOPA is Commanding Officer USS BOSTON (CAG-1). 0100 C/C to 338. 0127 C/S to 14 knots.

S. S. Kingsley
S. S. KINGSLEY, LT, USN

- 04-08 Steaming as before. 0603 C/C to 330. 0620 C/C to 333. 0623 Sighted Short Long Flashing Buoy, bearing 333.5, distance 6 miles. 0624 C/C to 334. 0640 C/C to 338. 0645 Passed Short Long Flashing Buoy abeam to port, distance 400 yards. 0645 C/C to 000. 0657 C/S to 10 knots. 0730 C/C to 150. 0747 USS BLANDY (DD-943) commenced her approach to starboard for passing war dead unknown. 0747 First line over.

R. A. Mozier
R. A. MOZIER, LTJG, USN

- 08-12 Steaming as before. Mustered the crew at quarters. Absentees: None. 0803 Completed passing of war dead unknown. 0810 All lines clear. 0814 C/S to 5 knots. 0815 C/C to 090. 0843 Made daily inspection of magazines and smokeless powder samples. 0849 C/C to 000. 0911 C/C to 310. 0931 C/C to 270. 0956 C/S to 10 knots. 1005 C/C to 320. 1020 C/C to 285. 1023 C/C to 260. C/S to 15 knots. 1023 Captain assumed the conn. Commenced maneuvering on various courses and speeds to take station astern of USS CANBERRA (CAG-2) on course 090, speed 10. 1040 Commenced approach to port side of USS CANBERRA (CAG-2). 1050 First line over. 1058 Commenced passing three unknown war dead to USS CANBERRA (CAG-2). 1105 Completed passing war dead. 1109 All lines clear. Commenced maneuvering on various courses and speeds to clear USS CANBERRA (CAG-2). 1110 C/C to 252. 1113 C/S to 16 knots. 1146 C/C to 255. 1150 C/C to 256.

E. K. Wharton
E. K. WHARTON, LTJG, USN

- 12-16 Steaming as before. 1203 C/C to 250. 1227 C/C to 315. 1239 C/S to 15 knots. 1239 The Captain has the conn. 1245 Set the Special Sea and Anchor Detail. 1258 C/C to 288. 1301 C/C to 289. Entered inland waters. 1305 C/S to 10 knots. 1307 C/C to 290. C/S to 15 knots. 1310 Passed Cape Henry Light abeam to port. Distance 1 mile. Commenced steering various courses at various speeds to conform with Thimble Shoals Channel. 1400 Passed Thimble Shoals Light abeam to starboard, distance 200 yards. 1414 Passed Old Point Comfort Light House abeam to starboard, distance 800 yards. 1425 U. S. Navy Tug No. 282 came along side port bow. Pilot E. T. SEXON came aboard. 1428 U. S. Navy Tug No. 150 came along side port bow. The Pilot has the conn. 1432 U. S. Navy Tug No. 177 came along side port bow. 1448 Moored starboard side to pier 12, U. S. Naval Operating Base, Norfolk, Virginia with standard mooring lines doubled. Ships present include USS POCOON (AGC-16), USS VALLEY FORGE (CVA-45), USS RANGER (CVA-61), USS NORTHAMPTON (CLC-1), USS NEWPORT NEWS (CA-148). SOPA is COMSECFLT aboard the USS NORTHAMPTON (CLC-1). 1500 The Pilot left the ship. Pursuant to the orders of the Commanding Officer, DEPORREST, J. J., 651-63-24, MR1, USN left the ship to report to the Senior Shore Patrol Officer, Norfolk, Virginia for temporary duty.

R. A. Mozier
R. A. MOZIER, LTJG, USN

- 16-20 Moored as before. 1620 ENS MANLEY P. THORNTON, 564260/1100, USN, having completed temporary duty at Fleet Air Defense Training Center, Dam Neck, Virginia, returned aboard and resumed his regular duties. 1635 Pursuant to BuPers Msg. 112005Z, April 1958, ENS JAMES C. PRISBY, 612151/1105, USNR was detached from this ship with orders to report to Commander Service Force, U. S. Atlantic Fleet Norfolk, Virginia for duty. 1655 Pursuant to Commanding Officer's Order, DOUGLAS, GUYE CLIMTON, 884-47-09, SN, USN, and BORDERS, SAMUEL ALEXANDER, 465-68-39, SR, USNR were delivered under custody to Commanding Officer, U. S. Naval Retraining Command, U. S. Naval Base, Norfolk, Virginia, for confinement. 1740 In accordance with BuPers Orders Pers-R1121-GS-1 dated in December 1957, CHELECT, W-2, CHESTER C. CULP, JR, USN reported on board for duty.

A. J. Binsfeld
A. J. BINSFELD, ENS, USN

- 20-24 Moored as before.

A. S. Massimo
A. S. MASSIMINO, ENS, USN

APPROVED:

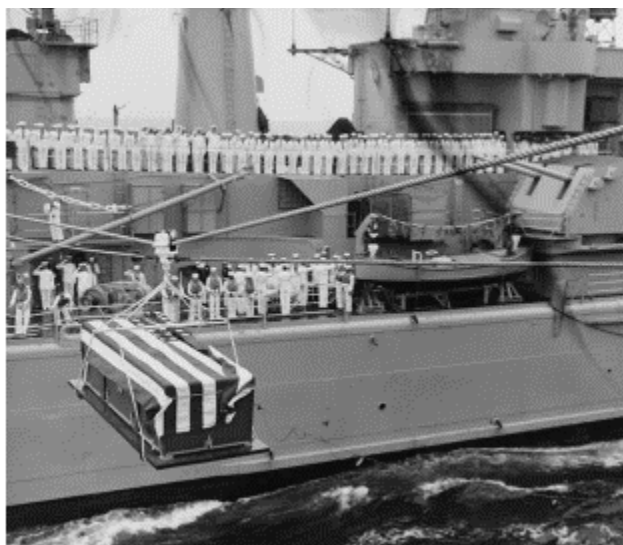
EXAMINED:

Robert L. Taylor
ROBERT L. TAYLOR, CAPT,
U. S. N. COMMANDING.

J. E. Tanner
J. E. TANNER, LCDR,
U. S. N. NAVIGATOR

TO BE FORWARDED DIRECT TO THE BUREAU OF NAVAL PERSONNEL AT THE END OF EACH MONTH

See a portion of the ships log [here](#). To represent the Pacific Theater of World War II, the Army exhumed five bodies from Fort McKinley American Cemetery in the Philippines and the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific (“The Punch Bowl”) in Hawaii. At the same time, they exhumed four bodies from the Korean War that were also buried at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific. All nine caskets were brought to Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii. On May 15, 1958, Army Master Sergeant Ned Lyle selected the Korean War Unknown. The next day, Air Force Colonel Glenn T. Eagleston selected the World War II Trans-Pacific Unknown. On May 26, 1958, all three caskets were placed on the deck of the Canberra, with the Korean War Unknown placed between the two World War II Unknowns. Navy Hospital Corpsman 1st Class William R. Charette, a Medal of Honor recipient from the Korean War, then selected the World War II Unknown. The caskets of the World War II and Korean War Unknowns were then transported to Washington, D.C.



Both Unknowns arrived in Washington, D.C. on May 28, 1958 and lay in state in the U.S. Capitol Rotunda for two days. Two days later, the Unknowns were transported to Arlington National Cemetery and interred in crypts to the west of the World War I Unknown.

Vietnam War Unknown

In response to mounting political pressure to recognize a Vietnam War unknown, President Jimmy Carter and Max Cleland, Administrator of the United States Veteran Administration and a Vietnam veteran, dedicated a bronze plaque honoring American service members in the Vietnam War on Veterans Day, November 11, 1978, at Memorial Amphitheater.

A U.S. service man's remains were found near a stream in An Loc, Vietnam in 1972. Known only as X-26, he was taken to the U.S. Central Identification Laboratory in Hawaii. In 1984, it was determined that he would receive the honor of becoming the next U.S. unknown soldier. At Pearl Harbor, the unknown was ceremoniously appointed as the Vietnam War Unknown by Marine and Medal of Honor recipient, Sergeant Major Allan J. Kellogg, Jr.



After the ceremony, the casket of the Vietnam Unknown was transported to Washington positioned in the helicopter hangar of the USS Brewton, under a constant "death watch" by the crew and U.S. Marines.

Upon arrival in Andrews AFB, the casket was greeted by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the former U.S. Commander in Vietnam, General William C. Westmoreland.



The pallbearers then carried the casket to a funeral coach for the transfer into Washington, D.C. The procession

arrived at the U.S. Capitol plaza with the party moving solemnly up the east Capitol steps into the rotunda, where President Ronald Reagan waited and delivered the eulogy. He observed that the Unknown symbolized "the heart, soul and spirit of America," and "we may not know of this man's life, but we know of his character. We may not know his name, but we know his courage. He accepted his mission and did his duty. And his honest patriotism overwhelms us". The Unknown would lay in state for the next three days, to be viewed by tens of thousands of visitors.



President Ronald Reagan presided over the interment ceremony at Arlington and observed that the Vietnam War Unknown was a symbol of all U.S. troops still missing in Vietnam. He reminded his listeners in the Memorial Amphitheater, across the U.S., and around the world that, "an end to America's involvement in Vietnam cannot come before we've achieved the fullest possible accounting of those missing in action. Our dedication to their cause must be strengthened with these events today. We write no last

chapters, we close no books, we put away no final memories".



The Vietnam War Unknown was interred on May 28, 1984. Despite ongoing progress in the identification of unknown Vietnam War fatalities, the burial of the Vietnam Unknown went forward.

Turning to the Unknown, he continued by suggesting the Unknown died fighting for human dignity and for free men everywhere and, "today we embrace him and all who served us so well in a war whose end offered no parades, no flags, and so little thanks. Thank you dear son, and may God cradle you in his loving arms." He then placed the Medal of Honor upon a simple black stand in front of the Unknown, and stated, "for service above and beyond the call of duty - in action with the enemy during the Vietnam era." Reagan assured the audience that the government would continue looking for the Vietnam War's missing in action personnel.



The Department of Defense and civilian partners continued working to identify remains recovered from Vietnam. In 1994, the family of U.S. Air Force Captain, Michael J. Blassie was presented with an overwhelming amount of evidence that suggested the Vietnam War Unknown was likely their son, a pilot who had been shot down in 1972. In keeping with current DoD policy and President Reagan's promise to "write no last chapters, close no books, or put away final memories", the decision was made in May 1998 to exhume the Vietnam War Unknown in order to perform DNA testing.



U.S. Air Force Captain, [Michael J. Blassie](#)

After Arlington closed on May 13, 1998, a camouflage cover was erected above the Tomb to maintain dignity. The marble slab was carefully removed and the disinterment of the Vietnam War Unknown was performed. The Tomb Guards maintained a vigil during this entire process. By the next morning the Unknown casket was draped in an U.S. flag and the plaza was returned to its former condition and ready for one of the most important events in its history. Secretary of Defense William Cohen delivered remarks at the ceremony that morning stating, "we disturb this hallowed ground with profound reluctance. And we take this step only because of our abiding commitment to account for every warrior who fought and died to preserve the freedoms that we cherish". The Vietnam War Unknown was taken to the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology at Walter Reed Army Medical Center for the DNA testing. On June 28, 1998, the test results confirmed that the Vietnam War Unknown Soldier was Michael J. Blassie.

On July 10th, 1998, a MC-130E aircraft from his former unit, the 8th Special Operations Squadron, flew his remains back to his home state of Missouri. He was then re-interred at Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery in Saint Louis County, Missouri. The crypt designated for the Vietnam War Unknown remains vacant today. On September 17, 1999, which is National POW/MIA Recognition Day, it was rededicated to honor all missing U.S. service members from the Vietnam War.



The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier is Arlington National Cemetery's most iconic memorial. The neoclassical, white marble sarcophagus stands atop a hill overlooking Washington, D.C. Since 1921, it has provided a final resting place for three of America's unidentified service members. The Tomb has also served as a place of mourning and a site for reflection on military service.

Guarding the Tomb

In 1926, soldiers from nearby Fort Myer were first assigned to guard the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. The guards, present only during daylight hours, discouraged visitors from climbing or stepping on the Tomb. In 1937, the guards became a 24/7 presence, standing watch over the Unknown Soldier at all times.



The 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment, known as “The Old Guard,” was designated as the Army’s official ceremonial unit on April 6, 1948. At that time, The Old Guard began guarding the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Guards are changed every thirty minutes, twenty-four hours a day, 365 days a year. Soldiers of The Old Guard also serve as escorts to the president and conduct military ceremonies in and around Washington, D.C., including military funeral escorts at Arlington National Cemetery.

Soldiers who volunteer to become Tomb Guards must undergo a strict selection process and intensive training.

For a person to apply for guard duty at the Tomb, he must be between 5' 10" and 6' 2" tall and his waist size cannot exceed 30 inches. FOR THE RECORD, I HAVE NOT QUALIFIED FOR THE OLD GUARD SINCE I WAS 11 YEARS OLD! Every guard spends five hours a day getting his uniforms ready for guard duty. The first six months of duty a guard cannot talk to anyone, nor watch TV. All off duty time is spent studying the 175 notable people laid to rest in Arlington National Cemetery. A guard must memorize who they are and where they are interred. Among the notables are: President Taft, Joe E. Lewis {the boxer} and Medal of Honor winner Audie Murphy, {the most decorated soldier of WWII} of Hollywood fame. They must commit 2 years of life to guard the tomb, live in a barracks under the tomb, and cannot drink any alcohol on or off duty for the rest of their lives. They cannot swear in public for the rest of their lives and cannot disgrace the uniform {fighting} or the tomb in any way. The shoes are specially made with very thick soles to keep the heat and cold from their feet. There are metal heel plates that extend to the top of the shoe in order to make the loud click as they come to a halt. There are no wrinkles, folds or lint on the uniform. Guards dress for duty in front of a full-length mirror. After two years, the guard is given a wreath pin that is worn on their lapel signifying they served as guard of the tomb. There are only 400 presently worn. The guard must obey these rules for the rest of their lives or give up the wreath pin.



A Tomb guard walks the mat while guarding the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier

Each element of the Tomb Guard's routine has meaning. The Guard marches 21 steps down the black mat behind the Tomb, turns and faces east for 21 seconds, turns and faces north for 21 seconds, and then takes 21 steps down the mat. Next, the Guard executes a sharp "shoulder-arms" movement to place his/her weapon on the shoulder closest to the visitors, signifying that he or she stands between the Tomb and any possible threat. His gloves are moistened to prevent his losing his grip on the rifle. The number 21 symbolizes the highest symbolic military honor that can be bestowed: the 21-gun salute.

Serving at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier was a defining period in the lives of many Tomb Guards. Although Tomb Guards come from every state in the US and every walk of life, they are forever bonded through their shared experience of service at the Tomb. Tomb Guards are handpicked and rigorously trained, and they describe their service as a privilege and an honor, and are undeniably proud of their service. They are part of an unbroken chain of Soldiers dating back to March 25, 1926.

The Sentinels Creed

*My dedication to this sacred duty is total and wholehearted.
In the responsibility bestowed on me never will I falter.
And with dignity and perseverance my standard will remain perfection.
Through the years of diligence and praise and the discomfort of the elements,
I will walk my tour in humble reverence to the best of my ability.
It is he who commands the respect I protect.
His bravery that made us so proud.
Surrounded by well-meaning crowds by day alone in the thoughtful peace of night,
this soldier will in honored glory rest under my eternal vigilance.*

The Sentinel's Creed is the Tomb Guard standard. The 99 words of the creed capture the true meaning of their duty. You will often hear the words "Line-6" proudly uttered by Tomb Guards as they converse with each other or with their chain of command.

In 2003 as Hurricane Isabelle was approaching Washington, DC, our US Senate/House took 2 days off with anticipation of the storm. On the ABC evening news, it was reported that because of the dangers from the hurricane, the military members assigned the duty of guarding the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier were given permission to suspend the assignment. They respectfully declined the offer, "No way, Sir!" Soaked to the skin, marching in the pelting rain of a tropical storm, they said that guarding the Tomb was not just an assignment, it was the highest honor that can be afforded to a serviceperson. The tomb has been patrolled continuously, 24/7, since 1930.



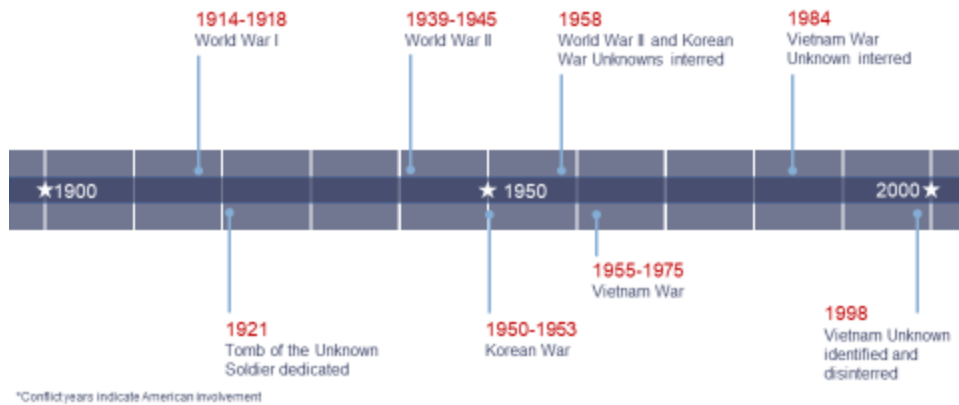
**"Here Rests In Honored Glory An American Soldier
Known But To God"**

America just celebrated the centennial of the dedication of the Tomb on Nov. 11, 2021. At this event, Stanford scholar Laura Wittman reflected on how the historic monument came to be a widespread symbol for public grief and mourning. Wittman, who is the author of *The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, and Modern Mourning, and the Reinvention of the Mystical Body* reflected on how the concept of taking a single, anonymous body, recovered from the frontline and given a formal burial, became a widespread approach to recognize the concrete cost of modern warfare.

What does the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier symbolize?

This is what caused me to do some research on my return from Honor Flight and what intrigued me to go forward with this essay topic.

TOMB OF THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER: A TIMELINE



It is unprecedented, historically, in that it contains an anonymous body, retrieved from the battlefield, and given a ceremonial burial and a major monument. It responds to two unprecedented aspects of this war: first, the sheer number of the dead, whose bodies could often not be buried individually or repatriated, but who could be symbolically buried via this single, distributive body; second, a celebration of anonymous sacrifice, made by a humble soldier, who just did what he was asked. A hero despite being more “cogs in the machine” than individuals.

In the last 100 years, it is compelling because of its insightful attempt to reconnect grieving to the body. In the 19th century, Western culture became largely alienated from death and dying: Cemeteries were moved away from cities largely for sanitary reasons, and death was increasingly medicalized; public grief lost its ritualistic character and became far shorter. The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier compensates for all this alienation by offering closeness to a single body for all who lost a loved

one they cannot literally touch. I chose to study the Unknown Soldier because of the idea that the most embodied aspects of grief, those that are “written in the body”, could receive a symbolic and theatrical expression in a monument. We are still today seeking ways to recover from trauma and grief, and clearly recovery is linked in complex ways to expression of our feelings. The Tomb is a revealing take on how such expression can be given a public face. I know I got very emotional watching the pageantry of honoring the dead.

I think there are two lessons that the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier teach people today. First, this monument and others around Washington are a key reminder that some of our veterans are still suffering. The Tomb can be an extremely powerful political voice that is all too often appropriated by agendas that are made later, for other purposes. Second, this monument reveals the importance of the body in grieving. Survivors need to see the dead to prove to their minds that it is real. This was never more validated than after 9/11 where people today still don't believe their loved one perished. Western culture has neglected the importance of that encounter, but I think it would benefit greatly from seeking new ways to make it happen. But I digress.

Arlington National Cemetery conducts more than 6,000 interments, organizes 3,000 ceremonies, and hosts between three and four million visitors every year. Approximately 400,000 individuals are buried in these hallowed grounds, including service members from all of

the United States' conflicts, from the American Revolution through today. Each one has a story to tell.



Members of the first all-female honor flight lay a wreath at the Tomb on September, 22, 2015. The ceremony included 75 female veterans from World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War and was organized by the Columbus Hub of the Honor Flight Network.

Now entering its second century, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier has evolved into a national place of mourning connected to all of American history. What began as a single grave now symbolizes American wartime fatalities more universally. All my life I thought there was only one soldier in the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Now I know the whole story.



The view from the amphitheater looking down on the Tomb

The Tomb originated as a place for Americans to collectively honor and remember the unidentified and missing World War I dead. Although it remains connected to World War I, the addition of Unknowns from World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War expanded the Tomb into a distinctive, multigenerational shrine. The Tomb now functions as a ceremonial space for the performance of American diplomacy and patriotism. It is a people's memorial that inspires visitors to reflect on service, valor, and sacrifice. At the Tomb, they are never forgotten. The Tomb sarcophagus is decorated with the inscription: "Here rests in honored glory an American soldier known but to God."