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Ms. Mansfield
Tomb of the Unknowns
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A Ceremony To Remember

I would be honored to lay a wreath at The Tomb of the Unknown Soldiers because of my family's history. There is a long line of veterans in my family. I also understand that visiting the Tomb is a once in a lifetime experience!

Since 1921, Congress approved burial of unknown soldiers at the Monument. The Army's 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment guards the Tomb. Since 1937, the Tomb has been guarded every day.¹ The Unknown Soldier Identification Badge has been awarded to 670 soldiers. All Sentinels' names are listed on the website.²

In order to guard the Tomb, rules must be followed. Soldiers are interviewed, endure vigorous training, and memorize Arlington Cemetery's history, including where veterans are buried. There are height and weight requirements for both men and women. Sentinels practice their step sequences for hours using metronomes.³

Volunteer guards must pass tests and have perfect military records.⁴ If you make mistakes while marching in front of the Tomb, or wearing your uniform, you are disqualified.⁵

Whatever the weather, a Sentinel's post at the Tomb is year-round and in 24-hour shifts. Most of their days are spent preparing their uniforms and rifles for duty. They practice "three-hour mirror time" to prevent making mistakes in public.⁶

Sentinels are required to maintain order at the Tomb. The guards ensure that visitors are silent and show respect for fallen, veteran servicemen.⁷

The number 21 is significant because it represents our Nation's highest honor of a 21-gun salute. Sentinels count off their steps in 21-step increments pausing for 21 seconds, changing directions, and facing the Tomb. The precise, 21-step routine repeats itself for 24 hours until the next changing of the guard.⁸

John 15:13 represents Sentinels' service to our veteran heroes. "There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends."⁹

Sentinels share PVCA's core values in that: 1) Sentinels place emphasis on honor, as we do at our school. 2) Guards live a lifetime of integrity, as we are taught at PVCA. 3) Volunteer servicemen have gratitude in their attitudes just like PVCA students. 4) Sentinels are responsible, preparing for each day's shift, as we should do in our studies. 5) And lastly, Sentinels persevere under pressure, similar to our academics at PVCA.¹⁰

After learning all about the Tomb of the Unknowns and the wreath laying ceremony, I would be honored if I were chosen.

Works Cited

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- ² “Tomb Guard Profile Board.” *Society Of The Honor Guard Tomb of the Unknown Soldier*, tombguard.org/tomb-guards/. (Accessed 12/19/19).
- ³ Wexler, Helen. “Guarding the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, 21 Steps at a Time.” *Boundary Stones WETA’s Local History Blog*, blogs.weta.org/boundarystones/2014/07/02/guarding-tomb-unknown-soldier-21-steps-time. (Accessed 12/19/19).
- ⁴ Brenner, Laurie. “Requirements of Soldiers Guarding the Unknown Soldier.” *Classroom, Leaf Group Ltd.*, classroom.synonym.com/requirements-of-soldiers-guarding-the-unknown-soldier-12083031.html. (Accessed 12/19/19).
- ⁵ “6 Misconceptions About the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier Sentinels.” *We Are The Mighty*, www.wearethemighty.com/tomb-of-the-unknown-misconceptions?rebelltitem=4#rebelltitem4. (Accessed 12/19/19.)
- ⁶ Page-Kirby, Kristen. “A Day With the Sentinels- the Elite Guards of the Tomb of the Unknowns.” *The Washington Post*, www.washingtonpost.com/express/wp/2014/11/11/a-day-with-the-sentinels-the-elite-guards-of-the-tomb-of-the-unknowns/. (Accessed 12/19/19.)
- ⁷ “The Changing of the Guard.” *Arlington National Cemetery*, www.arlingtoncemetery.mil/Explore/Changing-of-the-Guard. (Accessed 12/19/19).
- ⁸ “The Changing of the Guard.” *Arlington National Cemetery*, www.arlingtoncemetery.mil/Explore/Changing-of-the-Guard. (Accessed 12/19/19).
- ⁹ “John 15:13 New Living Translation.” *Bible Hub*, <https://biblehub.com/john/15-13.htm>. (Accessed 12/19/19.)
- ¹⁰ “Who We Are. Our Core Values.” *PVCA*, pvcama.org/who-we-are/#core-values. (Accessed 12/19/19.)