

TOMB OF THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER

Interesting facts about the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and the Sentinels of the Third United States Infantry Regiment "Old Guard"

1. How many steps does the guard take during his walk across the tomb of the Unknowns and why?

21 steps. It alludes to the twenty-one gun salute, which is the highest honor given any military or foreign dignitary.

2. How long does he hesitate after his about face to begin his return walk and why?

21 seconds for the same reason as answer number 1.

3. Why are his gloves wet?

His gloves are moistened to **prevent his losing his grip on the rifle.**

4. Does he carry his rifle on the same shoulder all the time, and if not, why not?

No, he carries the rifle on the shoulder **away from the tomb.** After his march across the path, he executes an about face, and moves the rifle to the **outside shoulder.**

5. How often are the guards changed?

Guards are changed every thirty minutes, twenty-four hours a day, 365 days a year.

6. What are the physical traits of the guard limited to?

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".

Other requirements of the Guard:

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.

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.

The shoes are special! They are 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.

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. Every guard spends FIVE HOURS A DAY getting his uniforms ready for guard duty.

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.

More Interesting facts about the Tomb of the Unknowns itself:

The marble for the Tomb of the Unknowns was furnished by the Vermont Marble Company of Danby, Vt. The marble is the finest and whitest of American marble, quarried from the Yule Marble Quarry located near Marble, Colorado and is called Yule Marble. The Marble for the Lincoln memorial and other famous buildings was also quarried there.

The Tomb consists of seven pieces of rectangular marble:

Four pieces in sub base; weight B- 15 tons

One piece in base or plinth; weight B- 16 tons

One piece in die; weight B- 36 tons

One piece in cap; weight B- 12 tons

Carved on the East side (the front of the Tomb, which faces Washington, D.C.) is a composite of three figures, commemorative of the spirit of the Allies of World War I.

In the center of the panel stands Victory (female).

On the right side, a male figure symbolizes Valor.

On the left side stands Peace, with her palm branch to reward the devotion and sacrifice that went with courage to make the cause of righteousness triumphant.

The north and south sides are divided into three panels by Doric pilasters. In each panel is an inverted wreath.

On the west, or rear, panel (facing the Amphitheater) is inscribed:

HERE RESTS IN HONORED GLORY AN AMERICAN SOLDIER
KNOWN BUT TO GOD

The first Tomb of the Unknown Soldier was a sub base and a base or plinth. It was slightly smaller than the present base. This was torn away when the present Tomb was started Aug. 27, 1931. The Tomb was completed and the area opened to the public 9:15 a.m. April 9, 1932, without any ceremony.

Cost of the Tomb B- \$48,000 Sculptor B- Thomas Hudson Jones
Architect B- Lorimer Rich Contractors B- Hagerman & Harris, New York City
Inscription B- Author Unknown

Interesting Commentary

The Third Infantry Regiment at Fort Myer has the responsibility for providing ceremonial units and honor guards for state occasions, White House social functions, public celebrations and interments at Arlington National Cemetery and standing a very formal sentry watch at the Tomb of the Unknowns.

The public is familiar with the precision of what is called "walking post" at the Tombs. There are roped off galleries where visitors can form to observe the troopers and their measured step and almost mechanically silent rifle shoulder changes. They are relieved every 30 minutes in a very formal drill that has to be seen to be believed.

Some people think that when the Cemetery is closed to the public in the evening that this show stops. First, to the men who are dedicated to ! this work, it is no show. It is a "charge of honor." The formality and precision continues uninterrupted all night. During the nighttime, the drill of relief and the measured step of the on duty sentry remain unchanged from the daylight hours. To these men, these special men, the continuity of this post is the key to the honor and respect shown to these honored dead, symbolic of all American unaccounted for American combat dead. The steady rhythmic step in rain, sleet, snow, hail, heat, cold, must be uninterrupted. Uninterrupted is the important part of the honor shown.

Recently, while you were sleeping, the teeth of hurricane Isabel came through this area and tore hell out of everything. We had thousands of trees down, power outages, traffic signals out, roads filled with downed limbs and "gear adrift" debris. We had flooding and the place looked like it had been the impact area of an off shore bombardment.

The Regimental Commander of the U.S. Third Infantry sent word to the nighttime Sentry Detail to secure the post and seek shelter from the high winds, to ensure their personal safety.

THEY DISOBEYED THE ORDER!

During winds that turned over vehicles and turned debris into projectiles, the measured step continued. One fellow said "I've got buddies getting shot at in Iraq who would kick my butt if word got to them that we let them down. I sure as hell have no intention of spending my Army career being known as the damned idiot who couldn't stand a little light breeze and shirked his duty." Then he **said something in response to a female reporters question regarding silly purposeless personal risk.... "I wouldn't expect you to understand. It's an enlisted man's thing."** God bless the rascal... In a time in our nation's history when spin and total b.s. seem to have become the accepted coin-of-the-realm, there beat hearts - the enlisted hearts we all knew and were so

damn proud to be a part of - that fully understand that devotion to duty is not a part time occupation! . While we slept, we were represented by some damn fine men who fully understood their post orders and proudly went about their assigned responsibilities unseen, unrecognized and in the finest tradition of the American Enlisted Man. Folks, there's hope. The spirit that George S. Patton, Arliegh Burke and Jimmy Doolittle left us... survives.

On the ABC evening news, it was reported recently that, because of the dangers from Hurricane Isabel approaching Washington DC, the military members assigned the duty of guarding the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier were given permission to suspend the assignment. They refused. "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 service person. The tomb has been patrolled continuously, 24/7, since 1930. Very, very proud of our soldiers in uniform!