



## SOCIETY OF THE HONOR GUARD, TOMB OF THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER

P.O. Box 1111, Hermitage, PA 16148

[www.tombguard.org](http://www.tombguard.org) [www.facebook.com/societyofthehonorguard](https://www.facebook.com/societyofthehonorguard) <https://twitter.com/shgtus>

December 18, 2022

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### LEGAL COUNSEL

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## RE: Yellow Rose Bouquets & Wreaths in Commemoration of the End of the Vietnam War Circular Letter

Flowers can speak for us when we struggle to express our feelings in words. One of the more moving experiences as a Sentinel at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier is witnessing how flowers expressed the deepest of emotions and solemn tribute to our veterans. Building upon the success of the Society of the Honor Guard, Tomb of the Unknown Soldier's recognition of the "language of flowers" with the Never Forget Garden and Garden Marker, and the Never Forget Bouquet we now invite our fellow Americans to join the Society as we recognize the yellow rose as the designated flower of the Vietnam War Commemoration. Our selection expresses the Society's recognition of the rose as our National Flower and the association of the color yellow with the Vietnam War and, by extension, our long-standing reverence for the men and women who answered our country's call during the Vietnam War.

**Proposal:** We ask that floral arrangements (single bloom, wreaths, bouquets, or sprays) offered in ceremonies at graveside of America's Vietnam war dead or places of remembrance be exclusively yellow roses, or when not feasible yellow flowers that are deemed mission related.

It is simple in its proposal, yet ambitious in vision. It furthers the irreversible momentum to the "welcome home" for our Vietnam War Veterans; to sustain and build upon it. It will be an eloquent homage to both America's faithful performance of its sacred duty to never forget and to our Vietnam Veterans, their families and our allies. Our invitation supports those seeking to use the language of flowers as they express their love of country, profound gratitude, respect and pride in our Vietnam War Veterans.

With the coming conclusion of the Vietnam War commemoration, we have a singular opportunity to connect time honored traditions with this national moment when America will pause to remember and embrace the Vietnam War Veteran and our country's full recognition of their honorable answer when they were called to serve. It links the private act with the national and international community.

The exclusive use of the yellow rose will be noticed; attract attention; provoke inquiry and thereby provide opportunities to teach: to tell the many stories of these great Americans; their service and their sacrifice. The very act in and of itself will project the form and face of patriotic commitment. The single act of using the yellow rose, (regardless of size of the wreath or bouquet or how many) will make known that this moment, whether public or private, is one where America comes together in performing the sacred duty to never forget or forsake those millions of Americans that served and sacrificed during the Vietnam War. Each floral tribute will foster our unifying national identity that transcends our differences of race, politics or regional connection. Its messaging is both personal and yet a proclamation to the national community. It can serve as the "electric cord that more perfectly connects all of America to our Vietnam War veterans, their families and our allies.

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*"Soldiers never die until they are forgotten, Tomb Guards never forget."*

The yellow rose symbolizes friendship—long lasting friendship that is exemplified by the bond between Veterans of the Vietnam War. Its sunny tones and warm golden glow, like beacons of light, serve to bring joy and cheer during difficult times. The presentation of yellow roses serves as a supporting and loving gesture that says “thank you for your friendship and for your impact on my life.” Planners for all Commemoration events are encouraged to use YELLOW ROSES in wreaths, alternative configurations and bouquets.

The Society of the Honor Guard, Tomb of the Unknown Soldier has long recognized the yellow rose and its immutable relationship with the Vietnam War Veteran. Starting with the Society’s inaugural reunion rose ceremony, and continuing as one of our defining traditions, the last rose placed is the yellow rose upon the crypt once occupied by the Vietnam Unknown Serviceman.

**The Bouquet:** Long-stemmed YELLOW ROSES shall make up the bouquet. The most reliable source of roses will be from florist shops; however they can be garden-grown if available. It is recommended that orders for YELLOW ROSES be placed early to insure they are available. Please use water-filled plastic floral tubes (from florist) placed on the end of each stem to keep them fresh until the presentation. An odd number of roses (nine, eleven, eleven, thirteen, twenty-one) will make appropriate presentations. Roses are usually available by the dozen. The Bouquet may be tied with yellow ribbon from 1 to 2 inches wide, with streamers the same length as the stems of the roses. Alternatively, the presenter or the organizer of the event might opt to use a ribbon of another color to tie the rose stems, especially if that color ribbon makes the presentation more meaningful to the presenter, the organizer, or to those assembled. Organization lapel pins, military cockades, or special message (“WELCOME HOME”) may be attached to the ribbon if desired.

For those that would like an example of what the bouquet could look like please visit: [Never Forget Bouquet-of-the-Centennial\\_062521.pdf \(tombguard.org\)](#)

**The Wreath:** Wreaths are often desired in ceremonies for military occasions or events and at cemeteries, but there are other configurations that are also appropriate. On this occasion, yellow roses shall be dominant in the wreath. Other floral and foliage material may be used. Again, yellow ribbon can be used to enhance the meaning and the beauty of the wreath.

**The Presentation:** Bouquets and Wreaths shall be presented with the reverence deserving of the moment, held with both hands, and presented with arms extended.

We encourage all organizations and civic leaders to adopt the Yellow Rose in recognizing our nation's Vietnam Veterans, just as the Society continues to adopt the White Rose to recognize those who have served and sacrificed, even to the point where their final resting place is marked simply as an “Unknown Soldier”.

*Gavin McIlvenna*

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