



SOCIETY OF THE HONOR GUARD, TOMB OF THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER

P.O. Box 1111, Hermitage, PA 16148

www.tombguard.org www.facebook.com/societyofthehonorguard <https://twitter.com/shgtus>

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Centennial of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier -- Circular Letter #4

At the close of the American Revolution, General George Washington issued his "Circular Letter to the States". This device allowed him to express his heart felt gratitude for the trust placed in him, the unwavering support that met him everywhere and to share his thoughts on matters that would advance the noble purpose for which they had pledged, "their lives, their property and their sacred honor". In that spirit of gratitude for the trust placed in us to fulfill America's sacred duty to never, ever forget those who have or will serve in our military in times of war or armed conflict, we now share our thoughts and invite all of America to join us as we prepare for appropriate observance of the Centennial of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, in Arlington National Cemetery.

Background

At 11:00 A.M. on November 11, 2021, the people of the United States will mark the passage of 100 years since the interment of an unidentifiable member of the American Expeditionary Forces of World War I in Arlington National Cemetery.

The place of interment has come to be known as the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and regarded as America's most sacred shrine. As intended, it is dedicated to all veterans that have served and sacrificed on behalf of America and to their families. It is a place that captures the very heart of America. Congressman Hamilton Fish, Jr. hoped that "the grave of this unidentified warrior will become a shrine of patriotism for all ages to come, which will be a source of inspiration, reverence, and love of country for future generations." Millions of Americans have embraced that vision by their pilgrimage to the Tomb the Unknown Soldier and continued reverence over the generations, eloquently expressed their profound gratitude and commitment to America.

While we have witnessed the passing of generations, and with them the challenges of their times, we have also witnessed the profound respect, love and pride in the eyes and faces of our fellow Americans. Our service as Honor Guard, has enabled us to perfect a profound understanding that the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier fosters a unifying national identity that transcends our differences of race, religion, or politics.

In a previous Society Circular Letter (#3 – Never Forget Garden) we invited all of America to create a Tomb of the Unknown Soldier Never Forget Garden. Our purpose was to explore the language of flowers, plants, and trees to establish and keep, throughout our land, living tributes to our veterans and their families. Like the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, the coming Centennial is about America's sacred duty to never, ever forget or forsake our veterans or their families who have served and sacrificed on behalf of America. The Never Forget Garden can unify our Country by recognizing those who have ensured that America would live and endure. And, like the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, become an incredibly special and personal place to reflect upon those principles and values that define us as Americans. Our vision was that the Never Forget Garden be a kind of proxy for the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, especially for those who cannot easily travel to Arlington National Cemetery.

Since Circular Letter #3 was issued we have witnessed the enthusiastic response, launched the sale of the Never Forget Garden Marker, and welcomed the American Rose Society as supporters, partners and subject matter experts. (See our website www.TombGuard.org/Centennial).

Proposal

Building upon the overwhelming success of the Never Forget Garden and the Garden Marker, we now extend to our fellow Americans our invitation to join the Society as we recognize the white rose as the designated flower of the Centennial of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. To fully complete this homage, we ask that floral arrangements (single bloom, wreaths, bouquets, or sprays) used in

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memorial ceremonies at graveside of America's war dead or places of remembrance be exclusively white roses: or when not feasible, rose varieties that are deemed mission related.¹

It is simple in its proposal, yet ambitious in vision. It furthers the irreversible momentum now so clearly before us.

It will be an eloquent homage to both America's faithful performance of its sacred duty to never forget and to the moment in time when all of France joined with America as we brought home America's Unknown Soldier in 1921. It is well documented that the white roses came from the garden of French parents that lost two sons in the War. More recently, the President of the American Rose Society, took up the Society's quest to identify the variety of rose used in the ceremony and published his further findings: he has identified the most likely variety of white rose and the identity of the French family. This and other work by the American Rose Society and SHGTUS put us in a position to develop extensive discussions with the American Legion Post #1 in Paris, French rose growers, and the French Rose Society. Here in the States, we can offer comprehensive support to those seeking to use the language of flowers as they participate in Centennial TUS 100 and express their love of Country, profound gratitude and respect for those who gave their tomorrows so that we would could have our todays.

We have a singular opportunity to connect time honored traditions with the Centennial into a profound statement by individuals of their love for those that have served and sacrificed on behalf of America in times of war or armed conflict. It links the private act with the National and now the international community; The exclusive use of the white rose will be noticed; attract attention; and provide opportunities to teach – very much like our "Vision" statement about the Never Forget Garden. The very act in and of itself will project the form and face of patriotic commitment. The single act of using the white 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 so that we would live free. As an inspiring example, it would foster a 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.

Together, individually, and collectively, our actions will make the white rose the "electric cord" that connects this generation of Americans and all freedom loving people to America's past, present and future.

This Proposal is timely and feasible

Our work over the last several years gains traction and irreversible momentum each day. We have recruited participants, promoters, supporters, and partners that have added content, depth, scope and reach to our initiatives. Below are the developments that make this proposal timely and feasible.

- The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier Never Forget Garden, and the Society's Garden Marker has been well received by individuals and organizations (here and in France). Support grows daily for widespread implementation.
- The American Rose Society, a national organization with over 8,000 members and 300 chapters, has dedicated their resources to advance the Centennial Commemoration of the Unknown Soldier. The American Rose Society dedicated a special section at America's Rose Garden, the gardens of the headquarters, a Never Forget Garden.
- The American Rose Society's work has fostered further dissemination and recruitment. They created guidelines to encourage the installation of Never Forget Gardens by parks, public gardens and individual gardens; lists of suggestions for planting in Never Forget Gardens, and recommended rose varieties that help to express the mission of the Centennial of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier by their symbolism.
- The American Rose Society opened relationships with National Garden Clubs, Inc. rose societies in France, and others. They are working with the four-generation French rose nursery which is currently in the process of dedicating (naming) one and possibly two new roses to the Centennial TUS 100. They conducted research and published their findings that identified the most likely variety of white rose used in the selection ceremony of America's Unknown Soldier of World War I and the French family most likely to have provided the roses.
- The American Rose Society created a user-friendly data base that identifies roses, where they can be grown and where they can be purchased.
- The American Rose Society opened a working relationship with rose societies in France, and the French family mostly likely responsible for the with roses provided Sergeant Edward F. Younger in 1921. This family is several generations of rose breeders and growers and is currently in the process of dedicating (naming and registering) one and possibly two roses to the Centennial TUS 100. These are currently undergoing trials in Arizona, to be made available to for purchase in the United States.

¹ The American Rose Society, has designated an official representative (Marilyn Wellan -former President) to the Society of the Honor Guard, Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Ms. Wellan has completed a comprehensive list of roses and information needed for successful planting. In this list, she has identified roses that have been named to memorialize Centennial TUS 100 mission related events or individuals. More recently, she and the President of the American Rose Society have worked with the French family of rose growers that provided the Nephitos placed by Sergeant Edward F. Younger to designate America's Unknown Soldier of World War I, to name and register two roses honoring the Centennial. They are to be named, "Honor Guard" (white) and "Never Forget" (red).

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- The American Rose Society is working closely with the Centennial Committee and the Director of the Never Forget Garden in planning several articles to be placed in prominent magazines, and strategies for Never Forget Gardens installed or dedicated at the White House, The U.S. Capitol, and the City of Châlons-en-Champagne, France.
- The Never Forget Garden Committee has engaged several growers for the Nephitos white rose for Never Forget Gardens and use in Society and Tomb Guard ceremonies at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.
- Working with the American Rose Society we have developed sample designs for the Never Forget Garden and the roses and other plants suitable to the several growing zones in the United States.
- Prominent national patriotic organizations as well as individuals have sought the Society's guidance on what they could do to demonstrate their commitment to the mission of the Centennial TUS 100. Anecdotally, the Society has already recommended using wreaths with white roses, and the words "Never Forget – I am in it with you".
- Discussions with the Paris Post #1 Commander of the American Legion indicate substantial enthusiasm for a ceremony at the site of the selection in Châlons-en-Champagne, France, and the flowers to be used will be Nephitos, the white rose most likely used in 1921. While we are still in the preliminary discussions, there is much excitement about installing or dedicating a Never Forget Garden at or near the selection site. This Never Forget Garden will be planted with the Nephitos as the anchor planting and set the tone for the entire garden, and a Never Forget Garden Marker will also be installed.
- The Society has recommended that the white rose should be considered for all Never Forget Gardens due to its significant part in the selection of America's Unknown Soldier of WWI and how those white roses remained with the Unknown Soldier throughout his journey home and remained with him to the final resting place.
- The white rose is the official flower of the Society of the Honor Guard, Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.
- In those instances where using the white rose is not feasible, (thanks to the extensive research of the American Rose Society), we can provide information about other roses named for mission related remembrances. These will encourage interaction with the various gardening clubs and societies, nurseries, growers, and those who seek to use the language of flowers to express their personal expressions of love, remembrance, and pride.

This and more about the Society and its work on the Centennial of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier can be found on the Society's web page www.tombguard.org/centennial

Thank you for all that you do for our Country

Gavin McIlvenna

v/r

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