

Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery

The changing of the guard at this memorial is a somber yet honoring event. It is protected as a national monument and is dear to the American Heart. The soldiers that protect the memorial are active duty and this is their assignment and duty station. Only the best American Soldier is accepted into this role.

For years now, I have been a part of the 8th grade trip to DC. And I have my favorites - in regard to the events and monuments that we visit. One of these is the National Arlington Cemetery. At this stop on our trip, we watch the changing of the guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. And have been at some, where organizations or groups have chosen representatives to "Lay A Wreath" in honor of our fallen military members - in respect to those that could not be identified (Unknown). I would always ponder the thought of "Wouldn't it be great if some of our students could possibly - lay the wreath as part of the ceremony.

The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery stands atop a hill overlooking Washington, D.C. On March 4, 1921, Congress approved the burial of an unidentified American soldier from World War I in the plaza of the new Memorial Amphitheater.

Inscribed on the back of the Tomb are the words:

Here rests in honored glory an American soldier known but to God

Normally, the application time to "lay a wreath" at this monument is a two-year process. When I called two-months ago to see if it was possible, for our students to lay a wreath. There were no openings for the rest of the year. I asked if they had a cancelation list - and was promptly told, "No." The Arlington rep stated, "No one ever cancels their laying of the wreath." I asked her if she would still take my name and number just in case. But it had to fit our tour plans of either Thursday or Friday morning (early). She took my name and number.

A few weeks ago, on my way home from school I received a call that there had been a cancelation, and the cancelation was right in the time

slot we needed. She said, "This never happens."

With that said, we asked our DC students that had connections to the military through family or friends, whether it was a parent, uncle or aunt, cousins or siblings, or even a great grandparent if they would like to lay a wreath at the tomb during the ceremony. There were many, but we could only use four. We established an essay competition and asked our students to explain why they would like to participate in the event. Twenty-four students submitted essays to a blog site.

When their essays were reviewed, we removed their names - so that judging would be unbiased. It was close on some, and one or two really stood out from the rest. We have great appreciation for all the students that wanted to be a part of this event - and we would like all of those students that submitted an essay to stand-up.

Please applaud these fine young men and women.

When I call out the four names that were selected, will those students come forward to receive their information packet and a certificate:

Amelia Kramer
Alayna Moricz
Ethan Klask
Castor Peddycord

Can we have applause for these students.

Thank you