



Published May 12th 2021

## LLLCF Distinguished Speaker Series presents 'Guarding of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier'

By Diane Claytor

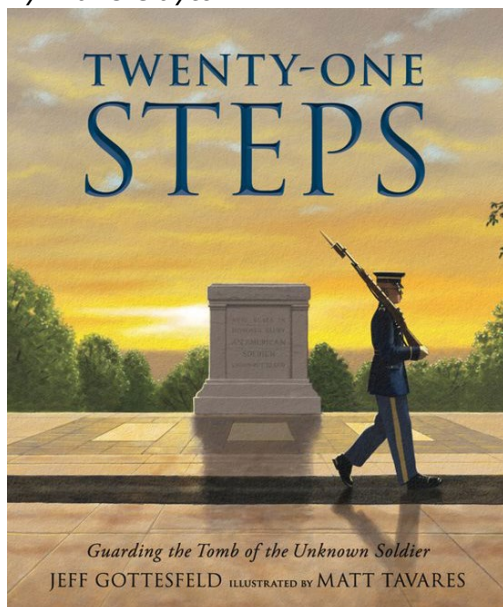


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One of the more popular programs sponsored by Lafayette Library and Learning Center Foundation (LLLCF) is their Distinguished Speaker series. Pre-COVID, prominent authors would discuss, and often read, their books to an in-person audience. These days, of course, the presentations are done virtually.

On May 20 at 2 p.m., Jeff Gottesfeld will read and discuss his newest book, "Twenty-One Steps: Guarding the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier." It's the story of the sentinels, those men and women who pay homage to America's fallen as they keep constant vigil at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington National Cemetery.

Sarah Blumenfeld, development and programs director for the Foundation, is particularly excited about this presentation. "It's being done right before Memorial Day and is a great civic message demonstrating our deep respect for America's soldiers," she says.

Although geared towards third- and fourth-graders, Gottesfeld says that he always writes with the intent of delighting older readers as well, often providing previously unknown information. Writing from the viewpoint of the Unknown Soldier, "Twenty-One Steps"

offers a perspective that adults will absolutely appreciate.

Gottesfeld has written for TV, theater, the stage and even wrote a movie. "Writing for kids like this is super special," he says. "It's an artistic challenge to tell a full, great story in less than 1,000 words. I write books that I think matter about people that are significant, even if they are not famous. The values of my books are very important to me."

Kirkus Reviews states that Gottesfeld's book "impeccably honors its subject . it's instantly personal and instantly heart-rendering." The Wall Street Journal says that this book, luminously illustrated by Matt Tavares, is a "work of sobering beauty." Penguin Books calls it "a tale that honors the soldiers who honor the fallen."

Steve Shodeen, a Bay Area resident and former sentinel (November 1991 through March 1995) will join Gottesfeld to share his experiences as a sentinel and answer questions. "Jeff and Matt put in a lot of effort to get everything just right. This book absolutely captures the honor and solemn attitude of the sentinels," Shodeen says.

To register for the May 20 program, go to [cclib.bibliocommons.com](http://cclib.bibliocommons.com). "Twenty-One Steps" may be purchased at Bel and Bunna's Books in Lafayette.

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