

## preparations for the Graduation Ceremony

What a memorable week we had! I thought often about all the tips that I had kept from years past and how they helped our week run smoothly. I would suggest printing these off and putting them in a folder even if you are a plebe parent because the more information you gather and apply the better the week will go.

If you have the time and the money I would recommend getting to West Point as early in the week as possible. The cadets didn't seem as stressed the first part of the week as much as the last and this will give you more quality time together.

Your plans may not be the same as your cadets. Therefore be flexible. Instead of listening to the choir concert which we had planned we enjoyed a dinner out with other cadets and their parents planned by our cadets. I think we will remember that dinner and the fellowship we had much longer than a choir concert.

**PARADES:** They were held Tuesday thru Friday. Our cadet was in some but not others however we enjoyed each one. Tuesday through Thursday was not a problem finding space in the stands. We even got in without tickets. Graduation Parade day was a big concern because we had 19 family members and only 4 tickets for the stadium. We went to the nearby super discount store and bought several fold up outdoor chairs for \$9 a piece. This was lifesaver for our older family members. Four of our party got to West Point about 7:15 to stake out a place in the bleachers and along the side. Although the parade wasn't scheduled until 10:30 our chairs were in the second row along the side since the early risers got there by 6:30. At 9:00 those who entered the stands early and didn't have tickets were asked to leave. If they refused the cadets in charge were instructed to call the MP's. By then the sidelines were full and they would have had to stand several people deep to see the parade. So make sure you get there early if you want to see the graduation parade and make sure you have tickets for the stands. And above all have a designated meeting place. We used the same one for each parade and it worked well.

**SHOPPING:** Get it done early in the week if you are there. The visitors center was so crowded on Friday we could hardly move.

**GRADUATION BANQUET:** We were spread out over 3 locations for the banquet. Five of us ate in the mess hall with our cadet, 4 were at the Officers Club and 13 at the Thayer. I was concerned about this at first but I think those that ate at the Thayer had the best deal. They had a view of the Hudson and it sounded like their menu was more appealing than ours. The Officers Club and the Mess hall tables were so tight it was difficult to be served. The cost at the Thayer was only \$2 more than at the Officer's Club. Our cadet had to stand in line for 1 hour and 45 minutes to get only 4 tickets to the Officer's Club and I wished later that all our family could have been together at the Thayer.

**GRADUATION DAY:** I really wondered why we had to get to West Point 2 hours early when we had reserved seats. I didn't realize how long of a wait it would be just to get through the gate. There is also a long wait for the buses. I heard of people waiting 45 minutes for a bus to come to take them to the stadium. One problem we had is that some of our party missed the turn to West Point and got lost, arriving at the stadium after the speaker had started. Although they had been to West Point several times using that same route we found out they were used to following us and had never paid attention. Therefore make sure each car has a map or specific directions. I did give them a card with directions on the very first day but it was soon

lost. I would make sure I had several direction cards to hand out if I did it again. I was impressed that the officials planned a way for all to see the graduation ceremony in case of severe weather. Although only 3 people per cadet would have been allowed to go to Eisenhower to watch the ceremony everyone else could have watched via screens in the auditorium and classrooms of Thayer. Fortunately we didn't have to use that option although it was a very wet beginning to the ceremony.

**MEALS:** Early in the week we were able to eat at Grant but on Friday after the graduation parade it was packed so we walked our family up to Eisenhower and had plenty of room. We also ate at the Officers Club earlier in the week and the Firstie Club. After graduation I ordered sandwiches, salads and fruit plates from a local grocery store. The one problem we had is that I failed to tell our pickup person about all the items I ordered and due to the chaos at the store he was given only the sandwiches. Moral to the story have everything written down.

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