

## Thoughts about graduation or ways to keep your sanity!! - Vicki Chavez

1. Plan, plan, and plan ahead. Get everything in writing and confirm often, especially hotel rooms and restaurants for graduation dinner. Get reservations and get email confirmation. This takes a lot of the stress off when you know you have a place to stay. Start planning early!
2. For your family and friends that are planning on attending, put together a booklet discussing events, times and locations. It sounds harsh but someone has to be in charge. Wait for no one!! Tell them where they need to be and then don't worry about it. There is too much going on for you to stress about being late, waiting for people, and possibly missing events.
3. Take plenty of film. I took 9 rolls thinking it would be enough. After all, it wasn't the first trip to West Point! I still ran out of film. The pinning and oath ceremony are in black and white because that is all I could find in the camera bag!
4. Plan on a lot of hurry up and wait. There is a lot of down time as you wait for your son or daughter to be available, or events to begin. We took a folding tubular chair for my mom, carried it everywhere with us and it was great. When she got tired, we could find a shady spot under a tree and she would sit and people watch as we ran around going to the bookstore, Grant Hall to pick up sandwiches, etc. It took the edge off knowing she was comfortable with bottle of water in a shady area as we ran around like chickens.
5. Plan on going to the cadet store. Go early either Wednesday or Thursday if possible to avoid the huge crowds.
6. Carry bottle water with you at all times in a backpack. Leave the fancy purse at home and carry a backpack. It is so much nicer to have both hands free.
7. WEAR COMFORTABLE WALKING SHOES!! Leave the fashion statement shoes at home; wear tennis or a really comfortable pair of shoes. If I could do it over, I would just park at the Buffalo Soldier field and walk everywhere.
8. Do not depend on the shuttle buses, if at all possible. They were very slowly. The lines waiting for shuttles ran anywhere from 2-3 hrs. You could walk easily and get there a whole lot faster. For the banquet, wear tennis shoes with your dress and carry the heels in a tote bag to put on later at the banquet. You will also need a tote for the wine glasses that you can take with you after the banquet, so take bubble wrap also. Of course, if you are traveling with elderly parents, grandparents, all this goes out the door and you must use the shuttles.
9. The most important advice I can give you is get there early for all events. Plan on at least 3-3.5 hrs early for everything to allow for shuttles if you are depending on them.
10. Finally, all the planning, stress, and hard work getting ready for graduation means nothing when you see the HUGE grin on your cadet's face when he/she walks off the platform with the diploma and commissioning papers in hand. Tears also appear when you see them for the first time in their Army green, with butter bars in place, and get their first salute from a NCO. Enjoy the graduation week. It is a lot like giving birth-hard work but all that seems unimportant as when you hold that precious baby in your arms- you forget all the labor involved!!