

**West Point Parents Club of Michigan**

# **Firstie Parent Handbook**



**Note: All dates, times, locations and prices referred to within are subject to change. Always verify before placing orders or making reservations.**

The West Point Parents Club of Michigan sincerely hopes that this handbook will be useful to you during your cadet's last year at the Academy. The following pages will provide you a basic overview of Firstie-year events.

Additional information and advice can be found by visiting the 2016 Class Page at: [www.westpoint.edu/classes/SitePages/2016.aspx](http://www.westpoint.edu/classes/SitePages/2016.aspx) the Parent Net [www.west-point.org/parent](http://www.west-point.org/parent) and any of the many websites maintained by Parent Clubs. Our club's website, [www.west-point.org/parent/wppc\\_michigan/](http://www.west-point.org/parent/wppc_michigan/) should be an important and frequently used resource. We maintain an up-to-date calendar of events on our site and all critical revisions to this handbook will be posted there as well.

Please do not rely solely on your cadet for information, and do not fall for the line, "I've got it all under control, Mom!" Even though, or maybe it's because they are Firsties, their priorities are not quite the same as those of the parents.

We recommend that you get busy early with your graduation plans. This is particularly important if you must arrange lodging, seating, and transportation for elderly or infirmed family members.

## **RING WEEKEND**

The first major event of your Firstie's year will be Ring Weekend, which will be held August 28-29, 2014. At one time the activities of Ring Weekend were considered as "FIRSTIES ONLY" events. Although, still considered "PRIVATE", family and friends can watch the ceremonies, attend the banquet and spend time with the Firsties as they are free for the weekend.

If your cadet invites you for this weekend, you will have a great time, but do not feel slighted if they do not request your presence, as there remains a strong tradition to reserve this weekend as "cadet time."

The rehearsal for the Ring Ceremony is held on Thursday so your cadet can let you know exactly where they will be standing for the Ring Ceremony on Friday. On Friday, around 4:00 p.m., you will want to be at the diagonal walkway intersecting the Plain near Washington Hall. This will be your chance to

see the lowering of the flag. Although this event occurs daily in your son's or daughter's life, it may be your only time to watch. Firsties will be dressed in India Whites (weather permitting) and as soon as the flag is lowered, they will form for accountability in front of Washington Hall.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment stands to the left in front of Eisenhower barracks, the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Regiments are in the center and the 4<sup>th</sup> Regiment is to the right, near the MacArthur statue. After accountability, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Regiments march to the left while 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Regiments go to the right where they proceed to Trophy Point Amphitheatre.

Ring Ceremony is situated so as to provide seating for the cadets only; spectators can occupy the sloping knoll surrounding the Trophy Point Amphitheatre. Bringing a folding chair or blanket to sit on would be recommended for those who don't wish to stand for this event. Inclement weather may move the ceremony to Eisenhower Hall, in which case, USMA may impose restrictions on attendees and/or limit the number of spectators that are permitted to attend.

Dress is casual to informal (defined by West Point as khakis or slacks, polo or shirt with collar, to collared shirt with tie, sport coat or blazer for men and slacks or skirt with polo or buttoned shirt to business dress, skirted suit, pant suit for women). Late August weather is unpredictable – be prepared for a cold rain or the scorching sun. Have bottled water and protective clothing handy.

Tradition calls for the Firsties to go to "The Area" after the ceremony where the Plebes greet them with these verses:

***Oh my Gosh, Sir / Ma'am....  
what a beautiful ring!  
What a crass mass of brass and glass!  
What a bold mold of rolled gold.  
What a cool jewel  
you got from your school.  
See how it sparkles and shines?  
It must have cost you a fortune.  
May I touch it, please, Sir / Ma'am?***

On Saturday there may be various open houses, followed by the formal dinner and ball Saturday night. Cadets will be attired in their India Whites (weather permitting). Women should wear long gowns or dressy street-length dresses. For gentlemen, dark

business suits are in order. **Remember that Washington Hall is NOT air-conditioned.**

This dinner is similar to the Plebe Parent Weekend banquet and there will be wine glasses and wine to transport, so be sure to carry your favorite packing materials (e.g., bubble wrap, tube sock).

The hop immediately follows dinner. Firsties will have the option to have photos taken inside their class ring; a nine foot, 500 pound replica of a West Point ring that changes on the left side each year with the current class crest. On the night of the Ball, the lines for photos are extremely long, and you may want to take your own snapshots earlier in the day on Saturday or even on Friday right after the Ring Ceremony.

### **HISTORY OF THE WEST POINT RING**

As far as records show, the U.S. Military Academy, beginning with the Class of 1835, was the first school in the country to use rings as a class symbol. Except for the class of 1836, which chose not to have rings, and the class of 1879, which chose cuff links, each class has worn rings to symbolize pride in West Point and in each other.

Until 1969 the style of the rings was selected informally; but, that year the cadets held an organized meeting for deciding upon design. Thus began the Ring and Crest Committee, where members are chosen during Cadet Basic Training for each class. After considering crest designs submitted by members of their class, the Committee formally announces its choice during Plebe-Parent Weekend. Each class ring must have incorporated within its design: an eagle, an American flag, an officer's saber, a cadet saber, the class motto, class year, and "USMA."

Since the Class of 1917, rings have borne a class crest on one side and the crest of the Academy on the other. Although the design is uniform for any given class, the content of gold and the type of stone are the choice of each individual cadet. Legend has it that one cadet chose a small stone from THE AREA

to represent the many hours that he had spent there walking off demerits. Until graduation, the ring is worn so that the wearer most easily sees the class crest. After graduation, the ring is reversed so that the Academy Crest is the one nearest the heart. A cadet who resigns or is separated from the Academy before graduation forfeits the right to wear the class ring.

Each class since 1835 has chosen its own motto which was usually in Latin on the earlier rings, although one was in French and one in Scottish. In recent years the motto is in English and often rhymes with the year:

*Class of '12: "For More Than Ourselves"*

*Class of '13: "Defending the Dream"*

*Class of '14: "Forever One Team"*

*Class of '15: "For Those We Lead"*

*Class of '16: "With Honor We Lead"*

### **GRADUATION PICTURES**

In the fall of their last year, Firsties must schedule an appointment with Academy Photo to take *Graduation* pictures (*Yearbook* pictures were taken in the spring of the Cow year). Several poses are offered and a variety of packages of poses and quality are available. If you plan on including a wallet size photo in each graduation invitation and announcement, make sure your cadet gets photographed in the fall and that you order enough copies at that time. Because they are professional pictures, they are copyrighted and cannot legally be reproduced elsewhere. Reprints require four to six weeks and must be ordered from Academy Photo.

During the second semester of Firstie year, usually after spring break, a panoramic photo of the entire class is taken and made available for purchase (\$30) from Panoramic International Photography Company <[www.panfoto.com](http://www.panfoto.com)>.

Also during the second semester, Academy Photo will send out order forms providing the opportunity to purchase the "Graduation

Video". The video includes the Glee Club concert, the Graduation Banquet and Commencements.

## **BRANCH SELECTION / NOTIFICATION**

Throughout the first three years at the Academy, each cadet is given information from representatives of the 17 Branches of the Army regarding the requirements of each branch. An informational Branch Open House is held in October and shortly thereafter, each Firstie must indicate, in order of preference, all branch specialties for which he or she is qualified and eligible. Based upon performance, class rank, individual preference, current Army goals and requirements, each Firstie will learn of his or her branch assignment at the Branch Notification Ceremony, held in November at Eisenhower Hall.

## **POST NIGHT**

Post Night occurs in February of 2016. Each branch meets separately and the Firsties choose their first Post assignment, from those available, in order of their class rank.

Some branches follow different procedures. For example:

- Military Police branch receives the cadet's preferences beforehand, and then, on Post Night, notifies each of its cadets, via an email, of their Post assignment.
- Aviation branch does not participate in Post Night. Instead, Post selection is delayed until the 2LTs are at Officer Basic Course (OBC) in the fall of 2016.

*Now, fellows, we must say good-bye,  
We've stuck our four years through.  
Our future is a cloudless sky,  
We'll don the Army Blue.*

## **100<sup>th</sup> NIGHT**

The cadets celebrate this event in mid-February, and it commemorates the mere 100 days remaining until graduation. It permits the Firsties to reflect upon their four years at the Academy and to capture and relive those memories. The 100<sup>th</sup> Night

Show, written, directed, acted, and produced by the Firstie Class, has its traditions dating from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. It has evolved from a series of short skits into a full-length musical comedy, and depicts their years at USMA.

The celebration begins Friday night with the premiere performance of the 100<sup>th</sup> Night Show at Ike Hall, which is open to all cadets and their guests. A second performance is given on Saturday, running concurrent with the 100<sup>th</sup> Night Ball. Even though 100<sup>th</sup> Night is more of a cadet-oriented event, many parents do attend. Whether you visit that weekend should be a joint decision with your cadet. The very nature of the occasion is a reminder that their Academy experience is rapidly finishing. So do not be offended if he or she wants to spend this time with fellow cadets.

Traditionally, Firsties have that Saturday free, and before Saturday's performance there is a formal banquet followed by a formal ball for Firsties and their guests. Cadets are formally attired and for guests, dark suits for men and dressy attire for women would be appropriate.

Vacation plans or marriage plans may be on the horizon, but unfortunately, the year is not over. There are senior projects to finish, term-end exams to endure, gear to organize and pack, rooms to clean, and preparations for that first assignment after leaving the Academy. But dream on, dear Firsties, you deserve a break today! Finally, after four years of hard work and discipline, the end (of this phase, at least) is actually in sight! We, as parents, have to be impressed at the awesome accomplishments of these fine young men and women.

## **NEWSLETTER - BIOGRAPHY ISSUE**

The Spring WPPC-MI newsletter is dedicated to the Michigan graduating cadets. One third of a page is reserved for each Firstie, and we request that parents submit the following biographical data for their Firstie:

- 1) Cadet Name and Academic Major
- 2) Honors / Awards / Accomplishments

- 3) Activities at W. P. (Sports, Clubs, etc.)
- 4) Your cadet's best memory
- 5) A cherished quote or "Guiding Words"
- 6) Branch, Post and future Training

Arguably, this is the most important issue of the WPPC-MI newsletter because it provides a forum to recognize our Graduates and their four years of hard work. It also serves as the introductory issue that our new members receive prior to our summer picnic. Reading about our Graduates, their accomplishments, and future plans is precisely the sort of knowledge these new members of the West Point family are seeking.

**Please help us by submitting the information about your 2016 Cadet to the Firstie Committee by the end of March 2016.**

### **CLASS HOME PAGE**

All graduating classes have a web site. After winter or spring break look for the Class of 2016 at [www.westpointaog.org](http://www.westpointaog.org)

### **PREPARATION FOR GRADUATION**

Your Firstie may order graduation invitations and announcements in early January of Firstie year. You may want to help your cadet with names and addresses of some family members who need to be included. Make a list for invitations and announcements so they know how many to order of each. You can also purchase Calling Cards, Note Cards and a Memory Booklet. If you miss the January deadline or don't order enough, use the parent-forum to watch / ask for extras from others.

USMA will post graduation information for the class of 2016 on the class page located at: [www.westpoint.edu/classes/SitePages/2016.aspx](http://www.westpoint.edu/classes/SitePages/2016.aspx) as early as April 2016. The Graduation Week Schedule will be posted and now would be a good time to prepare a "Graduation Guide". Creating a booklet that you can give to everyone that accepts an invitation to Graduation will be a little extra work up-front but will reap big reductions in chaos and stress later. Our Parents' Club has examples of "Graduation Guides" that

have been prepared for previous years that you can look through to get ideas for making one that fits your specific needs. At a minimum you should include in your Booklet:

- 1) West Point Maps, directions to Hotels, Events, Where to Eat or Rendezvous
- 2) Cell Phone & Other Contact Numbers
- 3) Grad Week Events & Recommendations
- 4) Clothing Advice: Formal vs. Casual
- 5) Weather extremes

### **GRADUATION WEEK**

Graduation for the Class of 2016 will be Saturday, May 21<sup>st</sup>. There will be various activities, and they will be posted on the website as soon as information is available.

### **CADET GLEE CLUB**

Concert time to be announced.

### **AWARDS CEREMONIES**

The Commandant's Award Ceremonies, the Academic Departments' Award Ceremonies the Superintendent's Award Review, and the Awards Convocation schedule is TBA. Pick up a copy of the Graduation Week issue of "Pointer View" as soon as you arrive on Post for specific schedules. Check with your Firstie to determine if he or she will be receiving an award.

*'Twas the song we sang  
in old plebe camp,  
When first our Gray was new,  
The song we sang on summer nights,  
That song of Army Blue.*

### **SUPERINTENDENT'S RECEPTION**

Traditionally the Academy Superintendent holds a reception on the lawn at Quarters 100 for parents and guests of the graduating class. Consult the schedule to verify the specific times for each regiment. Dress for this event is considered informal - business suit or coat and tie for men and afternoon dress or suit for women. A shuttle service is usually provided from Buffalo Soldier Field for this event.

## **BACCALAUREATE SERVICES**

Baccalaureate services for the Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish faiths are usually held in their Post Chapels during graduation time.

## **GRADUATION PARADE**

Held at the Plain the day before Graduation, the parade has traditionally commenced promptly at 10:30 a.m., rain or shine. If you plan to arrive that day, plan to be there early. Do NOT try to drive on Post; go to Buffalo Soldier Field to park and take the shuttle - one runs every 10 to 20 minutes (the Plain is about a 20 minute up-hill walk along the Hudson). **ARRIVE EARLY FOR ALL ACTIVITIES** because seats fill fast. Dress is casual - slacks with a collared shirt for men, slacks or skirt with blouse or pantsuit for woman. Your cadet can get only four tickets for the reviewing stands for the parade. Ten minutes before the parade the stands will be open for un-ticketed admission – though by that point, available seating is very limited. For additional family members, there is ample standing room around the sides of the field, BUT again arrive early (one hour or more) for the best front row spots.

During this final parade held specifically for the class of 2016, parents should have tissues ready for a swelling of emotion like that felt four years ago for the R-Day parade. This time, the entire Corps bids the class farewell, and when your cadet steps out of ranks to receive the final salute, it is an emotion-charged moment. By all means, use your camera and video-cam, but consider it a miracle if you can actually get a decent shot of your cadet. It is not an easy task to find your cadet even though you think you know where he or she is supposed to be.

Be prepared for ANY KIND OF WEATHER. Unlike Michie Stadium, umbrellas are permitted in the review stands and may even be useful for shade from the blistering sun – though consideration must be given to avoid blocking the view of spectators behind you. By noon, the parade will be history, and you will have, hopefully, found your cadet if you remembered to **ARRANGE A MEETING PLACE BEFOREHAND**.

There are some nice shade trees behind the reviewing stands that provide a cool place to chat. You won't want to visit terribly long, though, because you'll probably be tired, hot, sweaty, and want to get back to your motel to shower and dress for the banquet that evening, usually held from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. in Washington Hall. Keep in mind that, although a special day for the 2016 parents, this is a typical workday for others in the area, both on post and off. The location of your motel may require that you leave extra early because of commuter traffic.

## **FOR THE HANDICAPPED**

Be aware that your cadet **MUST** make arrangements for disabled members of the family and this must be done **WELL AHEAD OF TIME**. The Academy issues special handicap parking passes in a color different from the regular USMA graduation-parking pass. Displaying this pass in your windshield will allow you to park in specific areas reserved especially for vehicles with this pass. The Military Police will direct you to the proper area. There may be designated handicap parking sites with special shuttle buses to get disabled family members closer to the stadium.

The Handicap Plate issued by your state may also serve the same purpose and may eliminate the need for a special USCC pass. However, always check first because regulations may change from year to year. For the Academy's handicap pass, your Firstie should initiate this process through his or her TAC Officer as early as he or she can. With all of the building and renovation at West Point, traffic patterns are constantly changing. It may be possible to drop off handicapped individuals close to events, behind the bleachers for the parade and the back ramp of Michie Stadium for graduation.

At the Plain, the closest handicap accessible restrooms are at the Officers Club and the Library. Neither is very close. The graduation ceremony may entail a lot more effort. Whether your disabled person arrives at Michie Stadium via special shuttle or via your vehicle, the challenge comes in getting



him or her and the elderly up the ramp and into the stadium. Wheelchairs can be parked on the upper level. For the less disabled, the trek can be slow going and exhausting. Handicapped seating for these folks is available, but your Firstie must make these arrangements well ahead of time. Even handicapped seating usually requires going up or down a step or two into reserved seats, and there are no handrails. West Point is designed for the physically fit, so make sure that you have able-bodied family members to help the infirmed ones.

### **GRADUATION BANQUET**

This banquet is traditionally the night before graduation and takes place in Washington Hall. This is a formal affair - tuxedo or conservative dark business suit for men and long or short formal dresses for women. Cadets will be dressed in formal Dress Mess. Typically, each cadet may purchase tickets for only three guests for this banquet. Often, other Firsties may need only one or two tickets, so there is a possibility of getting extras by starting early to ask classmates. Your Firstie can also purchase tickets for an overflow banquet in the West Point Club nearby. These are on a "first come, first served" basis as there are only 400 seats there. Check the class page as to when the tickets will be available. The Academy makes many announcements (via computer bulletin board, etc.) to let Firsties know what arrangements can be made. The West Point Club has a video hook up with Washington Hall for the banquet, so guests there can see and hear the speakers. The meal is the same one served in Washington Hall.

**Keep in mind that Washington Hall is NOT air-conditioned and can get very warm.** The West Point Club is air-conditioned.

For those family members who cannot get into the West Point Club, the Thayer Hotel also has a banquet; for reservations call the Hotel. After the banquet, there is a formal reception and dance at Eisenhower Hall, usually from 9:00 p.m. until 1:00 a.m. Long after the weary parents have limped back to their respective motels, the Firsties are still in full swing.

### **GRADUATION CEREMONY**

In May, each Firstie is issued TBA limited number of tickets for reserved seats. Ample additional non-reserved seating is available for more guests, if needed. You should check with your cadet on the procedure for additional tickets. Again, your cadet must arrange for handicapped seating well ahead of time. Your Firstie should check to see if this is done through his or her TAC or with the S4 in Washington Hall. A live broadcast of the ceremony is usually available in Holleder Center, where the doors open at 8:00 a.m. This may be a viable option for the handicapped or less stalwart.

Be up EARLY! Dress is informal by West Point standards: a business suit or coat and tie for men and an afternoon dress or suit for women. You should plan to be at your assigned parking area or Buffalo Soldier Field no later than 7:30 a.m. to catch a shuttle. Michie Stadium actually opens at 7:00 a.m. Post 9/11 security requires extra processing and early arrival is recommended as lines will form before 7:00 a.m.

Except in the case of severe inclement weather, the Graduation Ceremony will be held outside in Michie Stadium. Come prepared with ponchos, sunscreen and hats. Consider bringing paper towels to wipe off dew and dirt from the seats. And, of course, don't forget the binoculars, camera, and video-cam, along with plastic bags to keep them dry if necessary. Because of security, umbrellas, very large handbags, canned or bottled drinks, and anything that airline security would prohibit will not be allowed into the stadium. A snack bar will be open in the stadium for coffee, rolls, etc.

**NOTE: In the event of severe inclement weather, the Graduation Ceremony will be held in Ike Hall with only three tickets available per Firstie.**

The graduating class will march into Michie Stadium by company thirty (30) minutes before the ceremony begins. Make sure to ask your cadet where he or she will be seated. Cadets are usually grouped by company, and they are assigned a specific

seat in a certain row. With good binoculars, you can probably find your cadet on the field. After the customary opening remarks and presentations, the featured speaker will give the graduation address. The ceremony is not elaborate but is impressive and solemn in its tone and setting. The members of the graduating class are about to receive their diplomas and assume the positions of responsibility for which they have worked so long and hard. Honor cadets receive diplomas first, followed by class members in a specified order. After all of the diplomas have been presented, the Superintendent gives the Commissioning Oath to the graduates. The First Captain then announces: "Class Dismissed" and the white hats are tossed high into the air.

While the diplomas are being presented, hundreds of little children gather at the opposite end of the field. Having eagerly awaited the traditional "Hat Toss", each one now scrambles to get a white treasure to take home. All cadets, of course, have their names inside their hats and some have written a special note or inserted a crisp bill for the lucky child who will catch the hat. For those families who may be taking children to the graduation, take care to listen to the announcements made prior to the ceremony. They will announce the age range and height restrictions for children that will be allowed onto the field for the "Hat Toss" event. Teenagers are too old, and toddlers are too young.

### **AFTER GRADUATION**

Parents and guests are allowed on the football field immediately after the hat toss - remember to arrange with your cadet for a meeting place. These new 2LTs will be leaving Michie Stadium to change into Army Officer Uniforms. So, this will be the last opportunity to photograph them in West Point attire - have a camera ready.

The "Silver Dollar Salute" is a tradition during which each new 2LT presents a silver dollar to the first soldier rendering them a salute. At one time this tradition involved the exchange of an actual "silver" dollar, but increases in the value of silver have made

this an expensive and inappropriate practice (refer to army regs. regarding gifts). It has been suggested that a practical way to continue the tradition is by offering an Eisenhower Dollar with that first salute. Also known as an "Ike" Dollar, it closely mimics the heft, size and look of a silver dollar. While actually clad with nickel, it is the only silver-colored dollar coin that displays the face of a USMA grad, and it can be purchased for less than a couple of dollars from any coin shop. Your cadet will want to have one of these Ike Dollars prior to the graduation ceremony so that it will be available when needed.

### **OFFICER UNIFORMS**

Cadets are usually measured for their officer uniforms in October of the Firstie year. Custom tailored uniforms are available from tailors such as Haas or Jacob and Sons. The cost of the uniform may be as much as \$1,500 and is the responsibility of the cadet. The work is excellent and usually includes lifetime tailoring. Uniforms are usually available through the Post Exchange at a savings of about \$400. The lower cost reflects garments of somewhat lesser workmanship with no fitting included.

### **BAR-PINNING CEREMONY**

Bar-Pinning is the process of installing the first rank of an officer on the new 2LT's uniform. Although the Academy does not have a formal ceremony for this event, some Companies dictate the specifics, while others allow the 2LTs to participate in pinning ceremonies that their club or team conducts. The 2LTs may be allowed to choose participants and invite attendees - parents, friends, favorite professor, classmates, favorite TAC, or Mentor. If your graduate's Mentor is still at the Academy, it would be a nice honor to include him or her as a token of respect and gratitude. Firsties (and their family and friends, if permitted to attend) often find that Bar-Pinning is the most emotional and moving ceremony held during Graduation Week.

### **MOVING OUT OF THE BARRACKS**



The graduates must empty the barracks rooms by 4:00 p.m. on Graduation Day (and this deadline may be set earlier). Usually the cadets clean ahead of time, washing the floor and walls so that the rooms will pass inspection by the TAC. To avoid the mad dash of over 4,000 cadets and graduates moving out of the barracks, most of this should be accomplished prior to graduation day. Anything that the cadets can't fit into his or her car will have to go with you. Try to load these things earlier in the week. Each cadet is allowed to mail up to 200 pounds free in May of his or her last year. Encourage your cadet to mail as much as possible at this time.

**NOTE: Do not send army uniforms via this free service - Items may not be received in time for BOLC / OBC.**

### **CONCERNING HOTELS AND MOTELS**

While some motels require reservations and full payment years in advance, others may not take reservations until January 1<sup>st</sup> of the graduating year. For graduation week, most motels will have a three to five night minimum stay. Parents who have not made reservations before the start of Firstie year will find that nearby accommodations are not available. The later you make reservations, the farther you will be from the Academy. Farther away may be less costly with no "minimum stay".

**NOTE: Verify everything. For example, don't assume that a two-story motel will have an elevator to get handicapped persons to a second-floor room.**

### **GRADUATION GIFTS**

In the fall, Firsties have the opportunity to purchase the Class Pistol (\$970). Weapons, even commemorative ones, come with a host of legal and regulatory baggage. Even soldiers must turn them in to the company armories on Army Posts. This gift often ends up in storage at Mom & Dad's house.

New 2LTs will have many needs, ranging

from civilian clothing to small appliances and furniture. It may be best for your officer to report to OBC first to find out the regulations and space availability in the Bachelor Officer Quarters (BOQ) before any of these items is purchased. Other gift ideas that work around these uncertainties include memberships and subscriptions, and a gift of money is always welcome.

For memberships, consider the Association of Graduates (membership for a graduate is automatic, but the Magazine is \$50 @ 800-232-4723, x1518, also they offer an on-line version for only \$12), or even an associate membership in your graduate's name to the West Point Parents Club of Michigan (\$15), which would be a great way to keep the new 2LT up to date through our quarterly newsletter. As for subscriptions, Army Times (\$55 @ 800-368-5718), "R&R" Travel News (\$28 @ 888-685-0203) or any of "Military Living's" publications about travel opportunities just for the military (available at any PX) would be appreciated.

Another very good gift idea would be to purchase from the Cadet Store (845-938-2121) the items of the cadet uniform which must be turned in upon graduation. The Red Sash (\$75), Plume (\$55) and Cadet Sabre (technically it's a sword, \$135) would make great mementos, and the USMA-owned items can then be turned in at your cadet's convenience instead of facing the long lines at turn-in after graduation. The Cadet Store also sells a variety of Sabre display plaques and frames (\$70 - \$150).

### **GRADUATION KUDOS & MEMENTOS**

Traditionally, Firsties whose parents are members of WPPC-MI receive a recognition card signed by WPPC-MI members in attendance at our February meeting. In addition, the Club provides a memento to the parents in recognition of their cadet's graduation. Examples of mementos distributed in the past include flags flown over the Capitol on Graduation Day, real "silver" dollars encased in commemorative holders, as well as IKE Dollars suitable for use as the "Silver Dollar Salute." The WPPC-MI will notify parents of the Club's

intentions a few months before graduation to avoid any duplication of efforts.

### **AFTER-GRADUATION LEAVE**

Upon graduation, a West Point cadet has a five-year service commitment for the education provided. Even so, the new 2LT is entitled to a 60-day graduation leave. The timing of this leave may vary according to the Army's needs, possibly broken into two or three shorter periods instead of 60 days all at once. In any event, over the summer, fall and maybe into the winter, all 2LTs will attend Officer Basic Course in their branches and various service schools such as Airborne, Flight School, Ranger School before they report to their first duty post. What schooling they receive depends on their branches, qualifications, and school openings.

### **TO OUR NEW GRAD PARENTS**

CONGRATULATIONS! You survived four years of highs and lows. Your constant support of your cadet has been greatly appreciated, even if they don't say it. You have had a major part in helping the Academy provide Leaders of Character who will serve our great country for many years.

We encourage you to continue your participation and membership in the Parents' Club. Your support and shared knowledge is vital to the services our club provides to current and future parents and their cadets. Please let us know your observations during Firstie year so that we may update and improve this Handbook. If you have ideas to add, please send an email to WPPC-MI while your thoughts are fresh.

**Approximate Dates**

**Event & Purpose, or Things to be done**

**Reference**

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## **Calendar for Parents of Cadets in the Class of 2015**

Immediate & <u>URGENT</u>	<b>GRADUATION LODGING</b> - If not already arranged, obtain lodging for family & friends for the week	Page 8
28 - 29 AUG 2015	<b>RING WEEKEND</b> - Events on both Friday and Saturday	Pages 1-2
12 SEP 2015	<b>WPPC-MI MEETING</b> - Bring Plebe boodle, learn about Branch Night, and volunteer for the Firstie Committee	N/A
19 SEP 2015	<b>TAILGATE @ WEST POINT</b> - Join the party, as we host the annual tailgate for MI cadets	N/A
NOV 2015	<b>BRANCH NIGHT</b> - Branch Notification Ceremony	Page 3
FALL 2015	<b>GRADUATION PICTURE</b> - Remind your cadet to sit for their picture and order enough for all uses	Page 2
12 DEC 2015	<b>ARMY/NAVY GAME</b> - Last chance to go as a cadet parent!	N/A
26 DEC 2014	<b>ALL ACADEMY BALL</b>	N/A
JAN 2016	<b>ORDER INVITATIONS &amp; ANNOUNCEMENTS</b>	Page 4
FEB 2016	<b>POST NIGHT</b> - Date varies for some Branches	Page 3
FEB 2015	<b>100<sup>th</sup> NIGHT</b> - Events on both Friday and Saturday	Page 3
FEB 2016	<b>WPPC-MI MEETING</b> - See "Grad Week" presentations and sign the Club's "Graduation Congrats" card	Page 8
<b>During the week of</b> MAR 2016	<b>CADET BIOGRAPHIES</b> - Submit to Firstie Committee	Page 3-4
APR 2016	<b>PARENT GUIDE FOR GRAD WEEK</b> – Watch for updates to Class of 2016 web-site	Page 4
<b>Before</b> 01 MAY 2016	<b>PREPARE GRADUATION GUEST HANDBOOK</b>	Page 4
21 MAY 2016	<b>GRADUATION DAY &amp; MOVE OUT</b> - The big day also requires 2LTs to be packed & out by mid-afternoon	Pages 6-8