



Allen Marketing & Associates, Inc.

Your Insurance & Financial Gatekeeper for the 21st Century

“Delivery of a Son” Based on a True Story

It was a memorable, emotionally trying time. Seeing a child with no hair and thick glasses was shocking, but on the final march back at the end of the day (after the oath and swearing-in ceremony), he saw his mother and gave her a big smile, she knew everything was going to be okay. On the first day of college, they got real value-priced haircuts, some new clothes, memorized a bunch of information, squared away their rooms, learned how to eat, march, stand, turn and salute and took an oath to defend the Constitution and pledged themselves to a life of sacrifice and selfless service to their country. All-in-all, not a bad way to start your adult life.

It is tough to leave behind our first-born as we drove out the main gate and headed for the airport. But our grief is partially assuaged by the knowledge that he's attending an incredible institution that every American can be proud of. To see and experience West Point, even as a visitor, is to be shocked by its magnificence. Any stereotypes that one may entertain are quickly dismissed. First off, nestled into the side of a granite mountain and perched high above the Hudson River, it's physically imposing with breathtaking scenery in every direction. The buildings and grounds are as pristine as they are historically significant. Although the Academy's motto is "Duty, Honor, Country", one of their favorite sayings is "much of the history we teach was made by the people we taught". And as you walk past the larger than life statues of Patton, Eisenhower, Washington and MacArthur and go past places named Lee, Grant, Pershing, Sherman and countless other figures from our history, you start to realize the significance of those words. Without exception, every officer we met – and there were many – were the quintessential 21st century warrior-scholars. They typically had one or more Masters degrees and spoke with a confidence and casual elegance that defied belief – equally at home discussing military matters as they were with philosophy, history, sports or their home town. I met and talked with one chiseled Colonel who looked like a 50-something Rambo, but spoke eloquently of the changes that had occurred at the Academy since he graduated in 1980. Today, the emphasis is on retaining cadets. A failed cadet is now viewed as a failure of command leadership. So if a cadet fails, those above him or her are called to account. Hazing is gone because it proved to be unproductive. Cadets are still yelled at constantly and have to do a mind-numbing amount of seemingly meaningless tasks, but there is a purpose behind everything. So why do cadets have to fold their underwear in a certain way, and pay attention to an endless number of details? Because details matter – get a grid wrong on an artillery strike and your men might be the ones getting shelled instead of the enemy. And just when I thought the Academy was going soft, I heard how they had actually increased the amount of cadet military training with an emphasis on close-quarters urban warfare. Clearly, West Point has changed and evolved with the times and shown itself willing to adopt new and innovative methods to accomplish its mission. But West Point's mission remains the same and is best summarized by the following quote from General Douglas MacArthur's farewell speech given to the Corps of Cadets at West Point in 1962: "And through all this welter of change and development your mission remains fixed, determined, inviolable. It is to win our wars. Everything else in your professional career is but corollary to this vital dedication."

I know it's emotionally tough right now, but we know our boys are in a great place and we all look forward over the next four years to seeing how West Point cuts and polishes our diamonds-in-the-rough into 21st century warrior leaders. Duty, Honor, Country – what three words could be more necessary in this day and age.

One final thought... As we were standing in the processing line at Eisenhower Hall getting ready to say goodbye, a plaque on the wall was noticed by my son. It was the following quote from Eisenhower:

**“The hand of the aggressor is stayed by strength and strength alone”.
He turned to me, smiled and said, “...and not by diplomacy, that's why we're here”.**