

# West Point

ASSOCIATION OF GRADUATES



**MEMORIAL SUPPORT**

*Preplanning Checklist*



## **The Corps! The Corps! The Corps!**

*The Corps, bareheaded, salute it,  
With eyes up, thanking our God —  
That we of the Corps are treading  
Where they of the Corps have trod —  
They are here in ghostly assemblage.*

*The ranks of the Corps long dead.  
And our hearts are standing attention  
While we wait for their passing tread.  
The Corps of to-day, we salute you —*

*The Corps of an earlier day;  
We follow, close order, behind you,  
Where you have pointed the way;  
The long gray line of us stretches  
Thro' the years of a century told  
And the last one feels to the marrow  
The grip of your far off hold.*

*Grip hands with us now though we see not,  
Grip hands with us, strengthen our hearts —*

*As the long line stiffens and straightens  
With the thrill that your presence imparts.  
Grip hands tho' it be from the shadows. —*

*While we swear, as you did of yore.*

*Or living, or dying, to honor*

*The Corps, and the Corps, and the Corps.*

—Based on the original version by  
Bishop H.S. Shipman  
Former Chaplain, USMA  
1896-1905

# Grip Hands...Though it be from the Shadows

We all know it is essential for families to have the difficult conversation about preplanning end-of-life wishes. While never easy, it is so important for every graduate, spouse, or partner to clearly define his or her personal vision of his or her funeral and to share crucial information as to what the legacy that follows will look like. When a death occurs suddenly, or when adult children are dealing with the death of a parent for the first time, knowing the deceased's personal preferences gives a better perspective to loved ones. Honoring the deceased's wishes reduces the workload and stress of planning in a time of crisis and brings peace to family members in grief.

This preplanning guide and checklist is designed to assist you with this process. As a supplement to the West Point Association of Graduates *For Your Peace of Mind* booklet, it is coming from a place of both necessity and caring and is intended as a list of items to consider. Much of this information was collected from those who have already suffered a loss and have walked this path, from professionals in the funeral industry, and from West Point classes who have compiled similar guides. As always, when dealing with life matters, please consult the appropriate legal and financial professionals for your final decision making.

## About WPAOG

WPAOG's Vision is to be the most highly connected alumni body in the world. Its Mission is to serve both West Point and the Long Gray Line. Established in 1869, WPAOG promotes meaningful interactions among graduates and helps them cherish the memories of their days at West Point. The Memorial Support Program is one significant way WPAOG continues to connect members of the Long Gray Line. By assisting graduates' families with memorial support and visits to their loved ones' beloved alma mater, WPAOG is able to strengthen these important connections for generations to come.

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## Section 1: *Preparing for Your Ghostly Assemblage*

Where is the best place to start this review of your life and the collection of relevant information?

An excellent place to start is with a love letter to your spouse, partner, children or any important loved one in your life. Tell them what they mean to you and how proud of them you are, individually and collectively. Both spouses/partners and parents should do this because, odds are, you won't know who will pass first.

Next, on your own, or together with your partner, gather all applicable information in preparation for a conversation with your loved ones. Streamline and categorize the details and information with the thought of making it easier for those left behind. Think of it as *Bugle Notes* for your loved ones, everything they need to know.

### Part 1: General, relevant topics to consider discussing

1. Picture the day. Will there be a local, hometown funeral? Or will you be remembered locally followed by a funeral service at West Point? Do you know you can opt to have a chapel service, followed by graveside committal or inurnment in the Columbarium Wall in the West Point Cemetery? With the recent expansion complete, there is plenty of room to accommodate burials for several decades. (See page 13 for more information on interment in the West Point Cemetery.)
  - a. Will it be a large service, or do you want just family present?
  - b. Will you be cremated, or do you prefer a casketed burial?
  - c. Who would you like to have speak at your funeral or say a prayer or do a reading?
  - d. Will there be music significant to you or meaningful to your family?
  - e. What would you want engraved on your headstone?
2. Now can be the time to interview funeral homes to manage the arrangements. Will transporting the body from your hometown to a funeral home here in New York be needed, or what are cremation options locally? This can be done with your nearby funeral home or one local to West Point. Include agreement for any prepaid arrangements or indicate funds set aside to cover these costs.
3. Identify the steps and who to contact in the order they should happen when the death occurs. Check your local county requirements as they vary depending on where the death occurs.
4. Obituary: Although some of the information will need updating upon your passing, it is recommended that you consider drafting your own obituary. This way you can shape how you would like to be remembered. Additionally, it will reduce another stress point on those left behind.
5. Include a list of positions held, career duty stations, decorations, medals, ribbons, badges, citations and commendations.
6. Have you written your [Memorial Article](#) to be published in the WPAOG TAPS magazine?
7. Update your Cullum File to include change of station/rank; update next-of-kin and adult children contact information. You may also report on life moments like marriage, children, job changes or other accolades. A copy of your DD214 can be included in your cullum file, in case your NOK needs a copy.
8. Clarify location of your health care proxy (for end-of-life instructions).



## Part 2: Papers, numbers and more numbers

This section will be completed in phases. While thinking and talking about your death is difficult, so is assembling the paperwork of your life and all its parts. Here are some key topics to get you started:

1. Important information and numbers for both spouses/partners and your beneficiaries (include copies of documents as applicable):
  - a. Official name as listed on legal documents
  - b. DOB
  - c. Social Security number
  - d. Driver's license number
  - e. Passport number
  - f. VA claim number
  - g. Membership numbers for organizations you belong to:
    - i. Military ID cards
    - ii. Non-military ID cards
  - h. Other identification documents:
    - i. Marriage license
    - ii. Domestic partnership registration
    - iii. Divorce decree
    - iv. Adoption paperwork
    - v. Citizenship paperwork
    - vi. Organ donation card
2. Location of your computer password(s)
  - a. Usernames and password book for all digital accounts
3. List of all credit cards
  - a. Number including expiration date & CVV code
  - b. Authorized signers
  - c. Online log in information
4. Combination (or key location) to safes in your home
5. Safety deposit box number and key location. Perhaps consider bringing a loved one to the bank and add them as pre-approved for access. This is done at the bank where the box is located and both parties must be present.
6. Document required to be buried in any state or federal cemetery:
  - a. Report of Separation from Active Duty (DD214) First and foremost, find your DD214! Without it, burial arrangements cannot move forward. Once you have it, give a second copy to your spouse and a third copy to your children, next-of-kin, or lawyer. You can send it to WPAOG, and we will add it to your Cullum File. The WPAOG copy is for the convenience of your family only. The cemetery cannot request a copy of your DD214 from WPAOG; it must come from your next-of-kin.
  - b. If the DD214 is not available, a copy can be requested at [archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records](https://archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records).

It is a normal response to say that your spouse/partner knows where many of these papers and information documents are located, but in the highly unlikely and tragic situation where both spouses pass at the same time, think of whom else would need access to these vital numbers and documents and inform them as well. You may consider storing a second copy of them in a second, secured location in case the originals are lost.



## Part 3: Legal, financial and investments

1. Legal documents
  - a. Will: clearly outline how you want your assets distributed
  - b. Power of attorney
  - c. Advanced healthcare directive
  - d. Guardianship for minors
  - e. Contact information for your attorney
2. Information about your home
  - a. Basic home information
    - i. Ownership status
    - ii. Deed location
    - iii. Mortgage
    - iv. Lease or Rental Agreement
  - b. Homeowners or renters insurance policy details
  - c. Utilities and account numbers
  - d. Vendors and maintenance service
  - e. Security
    - i. Account information
    - ii. Instructions for entering house
  - f. Offsite storage
    - i. Location of facility
    - ii. Unit number
    - iii. Location of key/combination
    - iv. Fees
  - g. Other real estate you own or rent
  - h. Vehicle ownership (or loan) documents including
    - i. Cars
    - ii. Motorcycles
    - iii. RVs
    - iv. Golfcarts
    - v. Boats
    - vi. Snowmobiles
    - vii. Other
3. Banking, estate documents and locations
  - a. Savings accounts
  - b. Checking accounts
  - c. Safety deposit boxes
  - d. Trusts
  - e. Brokerage accounts
  - f. Money market accounts
  - g. Annuities, etc.
  - h. Outstanding loans or debts
4. Retirement plans
  - a. Identify plans (DFAS or other pension plans)
  - b. Contact information for financial advisor
  - c. Summarize provisions
  - d. Beneficiaries
5. Insurance policies
  - a. Life
  - b. Property (including vacation or second home)
  - c. Auto, motorcycle, rv, golfcart, boat, snowmobiles etc.
  - d. Flood
  - e. Valuables
    - i. List of valuable possessions
    - ii. Their locations (in home, safe or safety deposit box)
    - iii. Insurance information
    - iv. Include photos
    - v. Appraisals
  - f. Identify each policy
    - i. Company
    - ii. Policy number
    - iii. Online login information
    - iv. Beneficiaries
6. A record of your medical history





## **Section 2:** ***When Our Course on Earth is Run***

### **Part 1: What will you need when you lose a loved one?**

In preparation of this checklist, the Memorial Support team held several focus groups and individual meetings with surviving spouses who generously and honestly shared their thoughts on what could help others immediately after losing a loved one. They all agreed, whenever possible, it is helpful to select a close family member or a friend to be your “Chief of Staff.” The person entrusted with this role will have the opportunity to take care of those in your household immediately after the passing occurs.

Duties of your “Chief of Staff” could include answering the phone, tracking the messages to return when you feel up to it, helping with homework and getting your kids back to school and to activities when appropriate, answering the door, and keeping track of meals or flower deliveries. Even with this preplanning guide completed, and all the information neatly in one place, the decisions and planning required immediately after a passing occurs can be overwhelming.

Our focus group could not stress strongly enough the importance of taking time to grieve and not feeling as though you must first take care of everyone else. The “Chief of Staff” role will be just as valuable as the myriad of information you have collected by completing this checklist.

#### Sharing of information

Upon the passing, your “Chief of Staff” should contact:

1. Family
2. Professional advisors (lawyer, accountant, financial)
3. Social Security
4. Your house of worship
5. Membership organizations you are involved in
6. Former work colleagues
7. Friends, classmates and classmates
8. WPAOG (for both the graduate and the spouse’s passing) at 845.446.1617 or at [DNSreport@wpaog.org](mailto:DNSreport@wpaog.org). Information should include the date of death, location, next-of-kin contact information, and (if known) interment location. The information on the graduate’s passing will then be distributed to all their classmates.
9. The Class Care Coordinator, or a family member informing the class of someone’s passing, will provide further funeral arrangement information (such as funeral service location and time, local hotel information and, if possible, a copy of the local online newspaper obituary) through the Class Distribution List (maintained by WPAOG), post to the class Facebook Group/Blog/Sallyport page. Additional information on the family request for a charitable donation or flowers for the funeral or combination thereof should be passed on to the class treasurer for disposition.

For all those you want or who need to be notified either by phone or email, include their information in one place.

As part of this pre-planning checklist, review your current list of contacts, as well as old address books, and include a list of whom should be contacted as well as his or her current phone or email address.

At the time of passing, the next-of-kin will get legal pronouncement of death\*:

Immediately after someone dies, a medical professional will need to fill out the Pronouncement of Death form and, depending on where the death occurs, you will need to take different actions.

- a. Occurs in Hospital—Someone at the hospital will complete the Pronouncement of Death form
- b. Occurs at Home—Someone will have to call 911 and request that a person be sent to the house to complete the Pronouncement of Death form. If hospice was involved, they can complete the form
- c. Result of an Accident—Pronouncement of death may be at the scene of the accident or the body may be taken to a hospital or a coroner's office, where the pronouncement will occur
- d. Occurs in Nursing Home—Medical professionals there can also complete the form

\*Be sure the cause of death is listed correctly on the death certificate. For example, if a service-connected condition caused or contributed to the death, the condition must be listed on the death certificate in order for the survivor to receive VA benefits. Failure to do so could result in a delay or denial of benefits.





## Part 2: If you are considering West Point as the final place of rest

### Funerals in the West Point Cemetery

The mission of the West Point Post Cemetery is to “deliver the FINAL SALUTE” to members of the U.S. Corps of Cadets, its faculty, and staff, and West Point graduates and their spouses who choose West Point as their final resting place. The cemetery strives to commemorate and memorialize these individuals and to care for their final resting place in perpetuity. May it be said, “Well done; Be thou at peace.”

At the time of passing, the U.S. Military Academy Memorial Affairs Office at the West Point Cemetery will assist the surviving spouse/next-of-kin with several steps for interment:

- Obtaining a date for a memorial service
- Connecting the family with West Point clergy
- Arranging for military honors
- Coordinating with on post agencies

#### MEMORIAL AFFAIRS

Phone: 845.938.2504 Fax: 845.938.5232

Email: [memorialaffairs@westpoint.edu](mailto:memorialaffairs@westpoint.edu)  
[westpoint.edu/about/west-point-cemetery](http://westpoint.edu/about/west-point-cemetery)

### WPAOG Memorial Support for a West Point Funeral

The **Memorial Services Assistance Program** was made possible originally by a generous donation from Mrs. Betty Dettre in memory of her husband, MG (R) Rexford H. Dettre Jr., USMA Class of 1943 January. Mrs. Dettre’s gift, along with additional continued support from the Long Gray Line and others, helps enable the West Point Association of Graduates to provide the services of a Memorial Support coordinator to assist the families in a manner that is consistent with the respect and dignity that is West Point.

When a United States Military Academy graduate chooses the West Point Cemetery as his or her final resting place, it is an honor for WPAOG Memorial Support team to offer the personalized support to make this solemn experience dignified, memorable and seamless.

During the planning of a funeral at the West Point Cemetery, we follow the family’s lead as they define the day: Is it a somber day of remembrance, or is it a celebration of life? Most often it is a combination of the two, and family members are happy to be presented with options like tours, museum visits, and family dinners to create happy memories which otherwise may have only been associated with a sad event.

Upon confirmation of the date of the funeral, the West Point Association of Graduates Memorial Support team will send an introductory email offering condolences and assurances. Our goal is to help make a difficult day just a bit easier to get through and to share some general information regarding memorial support offered:

1. Providing ease of access onto the installation for the funeral.
2. Sharing relevant resource info (hotels, florists, reception, photographers, bagpipers and other service-related options) that a family may want in order to fulfill their loved one’s vision.
3. A Be Thou at Peace page is created on the West Point Association of Graduates’ website, offering a place for stories and memories to bring comfort to the family.
4. A listing in *TAPS* magazine (“Last Roll Call”) and in *West Point* magazine (“Be Thou at Peace”).

5. West Point classes may have someone in a support role who will reach out to your next-of-kin. Other classes have begun to adopt a class leader role known as the Class Care Coordinator. In both cases, the role was established to help survivors maintain ties to West Point, be a friendly voice offering moral support, build an ongoing relationship with others in your situation and create camaraderie through group emails, phone calls and holiday greetings.
6. Inviting family members to take a [Grad Insider Tour](#) while in town for the funeral. This presents an opportunity for family members, especially grandchildren, to travel the same roads and visit the very buildings that their loved one did, creating some new, happy memories.
7. We try to anticipate what information an attendee (especially a non-grad) may need. What does full military honors mean? Do the elderly or very young children know that a cannon or a gun may be fired during the funeral? We share information that will provide a comfort level in what can sometimes be an uncomfortable situation.

#### WPAOG MEMORIAL SUPPORT

Phone: 845.446.1620

Email: [Memorial.Support@WPAOG.org](mailto:Memorial.Support@WPAOG.org)

[WestPointAOG.org/services/wpaog-funeral-support/](http://WestPointAOG.org/services/wpaog-funeral-support/)

### **Part 3: Leaving a lasting legacy at West Point\***

As part of your checklist, you may want to consider planned giving—or charitable gift planning—through the West Point Association of Graduates, which provides the opportunity to support the Long Gray Line while honoring your or your loved one’s legacy with a gift in memory.

A legacy gift can be achieved through a bequest named in a will or trust for future support, or it can be made in the form of a life-income gift that provides payments to you or another person while offering a charitable deduction.

We are here to assist you in finding a meaningful way to honor your loved one’s legacy while accommodating your own personal, financial, estate-planning, and philanthropic goals. For more information, please visit [WestPointAOG.giftplans.org/](http://WestPointAOG.giftplans.org/)

From the Class of '77:

1. When you are ready, taking charge of financial affairs can be a very healing process. It gives us focus and empowerment when we may need it the most.
2. Consider creating a lasting memorial. One of the most healing experiences for survivors is to find a way to honor the people they have lost. Whether it is through a brick or paver in a memorial walkway, a scholarship in the name of your loved one at his or her alma mater, or a donation to a favorite charity, creating a tangible remembrance is an important part of paying tribute to those who have blessed our lives.
3. For many, particularly those who are not the chief financial decision maker in the household, professional financial counseling may be a comfort. Be sure to carefully screen financial advisors before you agree to work with them.

Please remember that this checklist is a starting point. Legal and financial situations can be complex, so it’s advisable to consult with an attorney or financial advisor to ensure that your plan aligns with your specific circumstances and local laws. Regularly reviewing and updating your plan is also essential to keep it current and reflective of your wishes.

\*From the Class of 1977 Guide

## Section 3: Resources

Below are resources which may assist you in completing your preplanning checklist. Please check [WestPointAOG.org/services/wpaog-funeral-support/](http://WestPointAOG.org/services/wpaog-funeral-support/) often as we will update this list as we discover helpful information.

### Author/Contributor Credit

In addition to the previous members of WPAOG's Memorial Support team who have collected many of these ideas and concepts over the years, we thank the classes of '56, '59, '62, '66, '70, and '77 for allowing us to include excerpts from their own similar documents. Additionally, we could not have presented this without the generous input of our surviving spouse focus groups. These men and women have suffered the personal loss of a loved one and now are hoping to help others on the same path.

## Creating a Care Community

### National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization

The National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization is the largest nonprofit membership organization representing hospice and palliative care programs and professionals in the United States. The organization is committed to improving end-of-life care and expanding access to hospice care, with the goal of profoundly enhancing quality of life for people dying in America and the same for their loved ones. [nhpco.org](http://nhpco.org)

### PREVENTS

PREVENTS seeks to change the culture surrounding mental health and suicide prevention through enhanced community integration, prioritized research activities, and implementation strategies that emphasize improved overall health and well-being, with a goal to prevent veteran suicide. By adopting a holistic public health approach, PREVENTS assumes that suicide prevention is everyone's business and that by working together, locally and nationally, everyone can play a role in preventing suicide. [VA.gov/prevents/](http://VA.gov/prevents/)

## Talk-of-a-Lifetime Resources

Having the talk with loved ones about end-of-life care and wishes is hard. The resources below provide tips and tools to make this talk a little easier and help guide you through the process of asking the right questions in an effective and considerate way.

1. Conversations Before the Crises: National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization [nhpco.org](http://nhpco.org)
2. Have "The Talk" with Elders: End-of-Life Issue Conversations: Aging Care [AgingCare.com](http://AgingCare.com)
3. The Conversation Kit: The Conversation Project [theConversationProject.org](http://theConversationProject.org)

## **Bereavement/Survivor Support**

### **Gold Star Families**

Survivor Outreach Services (SOS) provides long-term support to surviving families of fallen soldiers. Their services include grief counseling, financial counseling, benefits coordination, support groups, and garrison and surrounding area events.

SOS also honors survivors with Gold Star and next of kin lapel buttons. They are symbols of familial sacrifice, widely recognized throughout the country.

The Gold Star and Surviving Family Member (GSSFM) representative is the Army advocate for surviving family members—and any survivor can contact an Army GSSFM representative directly any time for any reason. These representatives are available to provide support and address complaints by spouses and other dependents of deceased service members regarding casualty assistance or receipt of benefits authorized by law. [Army.Mil/Goldstar](https://www.army.mil/goldstar)

You can contact a GSSFM representative at (833) 313-1960

### **Grief Share**

A grief share support group is a safe, welcoming place where people understand the difficult emotions of grief. Through this 13-week group, you'll discover what to expect in the days ahead and what's "normal" in grief. This program will help you cope with the loss of a loved one through videos, discussions, and a participant guide. You can join a group in person or online and find comfort, guidance, and hope from people who understand your grief.

### **Hope for Widows Foundation**

Hope for Widows Foundation is an established 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that was formed as a support system for and developed by widowed women. All members of the organization are essential to the foundation's mission and are the lifeblood of what it does. Although the help is not formally trained, it comes from experience, the innate understanding of walking through (and sometimes what seems to be crawling through) this uncharted journey.

### **TAPS (not related to WPAOG's TAPS magazine)**

TAPS provides a variety of programs to survivors nationally and worldwide. The National Military Survivor Seminar and Good Grief Camp has been held annually in Washington, DC over Memorial Day weekend since 1994. TAPS also conducts regional survivor seminars for adults and youth programs at locations across the country, as well as retreats and expeditions around the world.

Those grieving the loss of a fallen service member, or those needing support, can contact the TAPS 24/7 National Military Survivor Helpline at 800.959.TAPS (8277). [TAPS.org](https://www.taps.org)

### **WPAOG Survivors Community Outreach**

The West Point Association of Graduates is launching the Survivors Community Outreach initiative, bringing together those who have experienced loss of a loved one and share a common love of and connections to West Point. This outreach will include communication opportunities among survivors, as well as events and resources for coping with the loss of a loved one. Please email us at [Survivors.Community@WPAOG.org](mailto:Survivors.Community@WPAOG.org) for more information and to be added to the community.



## General Information:

### Find a Grave

Find a Grave is a website that allows the public to search and add to an online database of cemetery records. It is owned by Ancestry.com and information is reported by volunteers. [FindAGrave.com](https://www.findagrave.com)

### FTC Guide to Shopping for Funeral Services

The Federal Trade Commission helps users navigate and understand the process of shopping for funeral services. They define commonly used funeral terms, provide resources about making arrangements, and supply information about your rights. [FTC.Gov](https://www.ftc.gov)

## Military Active Duty and Retiree Survivor Resources

The following organizations can aid families in understanding and coordinating military benefits, as well as in notifying and applying to DFAS (Defense Finance and Accounting Services) and key sites related to retirees from My Army Benefits and other relevant organizations.

As information can often change within organizations, please visit [WestPointAOG.org/services/veterans-services/](https://www.westpointaog.org/services/veterans-services/) for new resources or updates to the current list. These resources are shared for informational purposes only and do not constitute a recommendation or requirement of use of any particular organization.

- **DFAS Retired Military** [dfas.mil/](https://dfas.mil/)  
Retiree payment and/or survivor benefit plan information
- **Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System** [tricare.mil/DEERS](https://tricare.mil/DEERS)  
As the surviving spouse, you will need to update your DEERS account. The Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) database contains information for each uniformed service member, U.S. sponsored foreign military, DoD and uniformed services civilians, other personnel as directed by the DoD and their eligible family members. (WPAOG recommends visiting the DEERS website for information on benefits and to update a graduate's DEERS account.)
- **Army Casualty and Mortuary Affairs**  
The Casualty and Mortuary Affairs Operations Division is dedicated to the mission of providing assistance to the families of our fallen soldiers.
- **Army Retirement Services Office:** [soldierforlife.army.mil/retirement](https://soldierforlife.army.mil/retirement)
- **My Army Benefits:** [myarmybenefits.us.army.mil/](https://myarmybenefits.us.army.mil/)

## Veteran (non-retiree and retiree) Resources

- **Grad's Form DD214:** [archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/](https://archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/)
- **Reporting the Death of a Veteran to VA:** [va.gov/resources/how-to-report-the-death-of-a-veteran/](https://va.gov/resources/how-to-report-the-death-of-a-veteran/)
- **VA Survivors Benefits:** [va.gov/family-member-benefits/](https://va.gov/family-member-benefits/)
  - Dependency and Indemnity Compensation
  - Survivors Pension
  - Home Loan Benefits for Survivors
  - Life Insurance
- **Burial Allowances—VA:** [va.gov/burials-memorials/veterans-burial-allowance/](https://va.gov/burials-memorials/veterans-burial-allowance/)
- **Burial Benefits—National Cemetery Administration**

Burial Benefits provides resources and answers to frequently asked questions such as national cemetery eligibility, survivor benefits, headstones and markers, burial flags, and more.
- **List of All National Cemeteries:** [cem.va.gov/find-cemetery/all-national/](https://cem.va.gov/find-cemetery/all-national/)
- **VA Home page:** [va.gov/](https://va.gov/)
- **National Resource Directory:** [nrd.gov/](https://nrd.gov/)
- **Soldier for Life:** [soldierforlife.army.mil/](https://soldierforlife.army.mil/)
- **USA.Gov Veterans:** [usa.gov](https://usa.gov)

## WPAOG Information and Resources

**Death Notification:** To report the death of a graduate to West Point Association of Graduates, please email [DNSreport@wpaog.org](mailto:DNSreport@wpaog.org) or call 800.232.4723, ext. 1545. Please be ready to provide the graduate's name, date of death, place of death, cause of death (if known), next-of-kin contact information, and burial information (if available).

### Grad Insider Tour

The exclusive Rockbound Highland Home Grad Insider Tour includes a series of tour stops not available to the public and allows graduates to share unique experiences of West Point with their families and guests. Visit [WestPointAOG.org/RockboundHighlandHome](https://WestPointAOG.org/RockboundHighlandHome)

### Memorial Articles/TAPS Magazine

WPAOG publishes memorial articles of graduates' lives that are written by the next of kin, a classmate, or a family member. Next of kin receive a free archival copy of the memorial article. An outline of the process and guidelines for writing and submitting articles are available at [WestPointAOG.org/memorials](https://WestPointAOG.org/memorials). Support is available for authors or next of kin throughout the article writing process by emailing [memorials@wpaog.org](mailto:memorials@wpaog.org) or calling 845.446.1647. Memorial articles are published in TAPS magazine each summer and posted online upon completion. Online memorial article pages offer the reader the option to leave a personal testimonial about the graduate.

Pre-orders and payment for TAPS magazine must be made by June 30. The cost is \$25 per copy. Orders may be placed online at [WestPointAOG.org/purchaseTAPS](https://WestPointAOG.org/purchaseTAPS) or by calling 845.446.1645.

### Pre-Planning

The partnership between WPAOG Memorial Support and members of the Long Gray Line can begin with the graduate and/or a close family member discussing the difficult topic of planning a funeral. This is an

opportunity for the graduate to share his or her vision of their funeral and begin to aim towards defining their legacy. While never easy, these are essential conversations for helping spouses, children, and extended family members cope when the death of a loved one occurs.

WPAOG Memorial Support encourages graduates, along with spouses and/or family members, to schedule a meeting with a member of the Memorial Support team to discuss pre-planning and to get answers to any questions not included in this brochure. Please visit WPAOG's website for an in-depth list of pre-planning resources and information including contacts for class and/or local Society surviving spouse liaisons, Sallyport and other support groups.

Devoting only a few hours of time now can avoid confusion, stress, and possible conflict among surviving family members during a difficult time.

The best person to make these decisions is the graduate, and the best time to make these decisions is now.

### ***The Register of Graduates & Former Cadets***

WPAOG's oldest publication, *The Register of Graduates & Former Cadets*, was first published in 1868. Individual entries record the name, class, Army and civilian careers, and other self-reported information of every West Point graduate since 1802. WPAOG encourages graduates to keep their *Register* information up to date.

### **Sallyport**

In keeping with the vision for the Long Gray Line to be the most highly connected alumni body in the world, WPAOG uses Sallyport to help graduates and surviving family members maintain and strengthen their connection with one another. All members of WPAOG can access Sallyport, which is a no-cost mobile platform that makes it easy for graduates and family members to join a local Society and stay connected with their class and shared interest groups. Surviving spouses can also maintain their connection to their loved one's class through Sallyport. Members can learn about and register for events and stay up to date with affiliations by activating a Sallyport profile and downloading the WPAOG Sallyport app from the Apple and Android app stores. Sallyport can also be accessed from a desktop.

### **Grip Hands: Strengthening the Long Gray Line**

As the lyrics of "The Corps" declare, membership in the Long Gray Line does not end with the death of a graduate. WPAOG's Survivor Community can help surviving family members remain connected to West Point forever. Family members are encouraged to continue to attend class reunions, Army West Point sporting events, Society activities, and Founders Day celebrations. For more information, email [Survivors.Community@WPAOG.org](mailto:Survivors.Community@WPAOG.org)

### **West Point Funerals**

If the West Point Cemetery is the desired resting place, it is important that the next of kin contact the cemetery directly as soon as possible after the death occurs. The Cemetery's Memorial Affairs staff will initiate the process to schedule the burial.

The USMA Memorial Affairs Office is a Department of Defense entity and can assist the next of kin with:

- Obtaining a date for a memorial service
- Securing the appropriate West Point Chapel to arrange the funeral service and chaplain support
- Arranging for military honors
- Coordinating with post agencies

All funeral services held at the West Point Cemetery are listed on the WPAOG Calendar.

## WPAOG Veterans Services Specialist

Our mission is to create a veterans service program specifically for West Point grads and their family members.

We provide an online resource portal and pre-recorded webinars, accessible through Sallyport and the WPAOG website, for use now, throughout their lives and after passing.

Specifically:

- Identifying benefits earned
- Offering tangible and effective ways to obtain benefits
- Sharing relationships held with trusted partners of other Veteran organizations
- Participating with other WPAOG Care Umbrella populations like the survivor community and providing suicide prevention training

Visit [WestPointAOG.org/services/veterans-services/](https://WestPointAOG.org/services/veterans-services/) for more information.

## West Point Legacy Opportunities

### Brick and Paver

WPAOG Brick and Paver Program provides an opportunity for graduates and friends of West Point to memorialize a loved one, classmate, friend, or coach in a meaningful, lasting way. Bricks inscribed with meaningful tributes are placed on the historical grounds surrounding Herbert Hall, the center of alumni activities at West Point. The walkways serve as a permanent, elegant remembrance to graduates, families, friends, and visitors. For more information about the Brick and Paver Program, visit [WestPointAOG.org/brickandpaver](https://WestPointAOG.org/brickandpaver) or email [bricks@wpaog.org](mailto:bricks@wpaog.org).

### Class Ring Memorial Program

The tradition of class rings originated at West Point and began when the Class of 1835 received their rings. Since then, the class ring has become the symbol membership within the Long Gray Line. In 1999, Ron Turner '58 proposed the idea of a Class Ring Memorial Program, writing, "...we need a program whereby graduates may bequeath (or graduates' descendants may donate) West Point class rings for the specific purpose of incorporating the gold into the class rings of future graduates." Demonstrating that he had a long-term "tradition" in mind when he proposed his idea, Turner recommended retaining some gold after each melt so that it shavings could be placed in the following year's melt, thus ensuring each year's "Memorial Gold ingot... would contain some of every ring donated." The first melt was held in 2000 for the bicentennial Class of 2002. To date, 895 West Point class rings have been donated, the earliest one being worn by a graduate of the Class of 1896.

To learn more about the Class Ring Memorial Program, visit [WestPointAOG.org/services/class-rings](https://WestPointAOG.org/services/class-rings) or contact Class Services at 845.446.1614.

### Planned Giving

One of the most healing experiences for survivors is to find a way to honor the people they have lost. Whether it is through a brick or paver on the memorial walkway at their alumni building, a West Point scholarship in the name of the loved one, a donation to the team they played on or club they belonged to while a cadet, creating a tangible remembrance is an important part of paying tribute to deceased family members.

Planned Giving—or charitable-gift planning—through WPAOG provides the opportunity to support the Long Gray Line while accommodating personal, financial, estate-planning, and philanthropic goals.

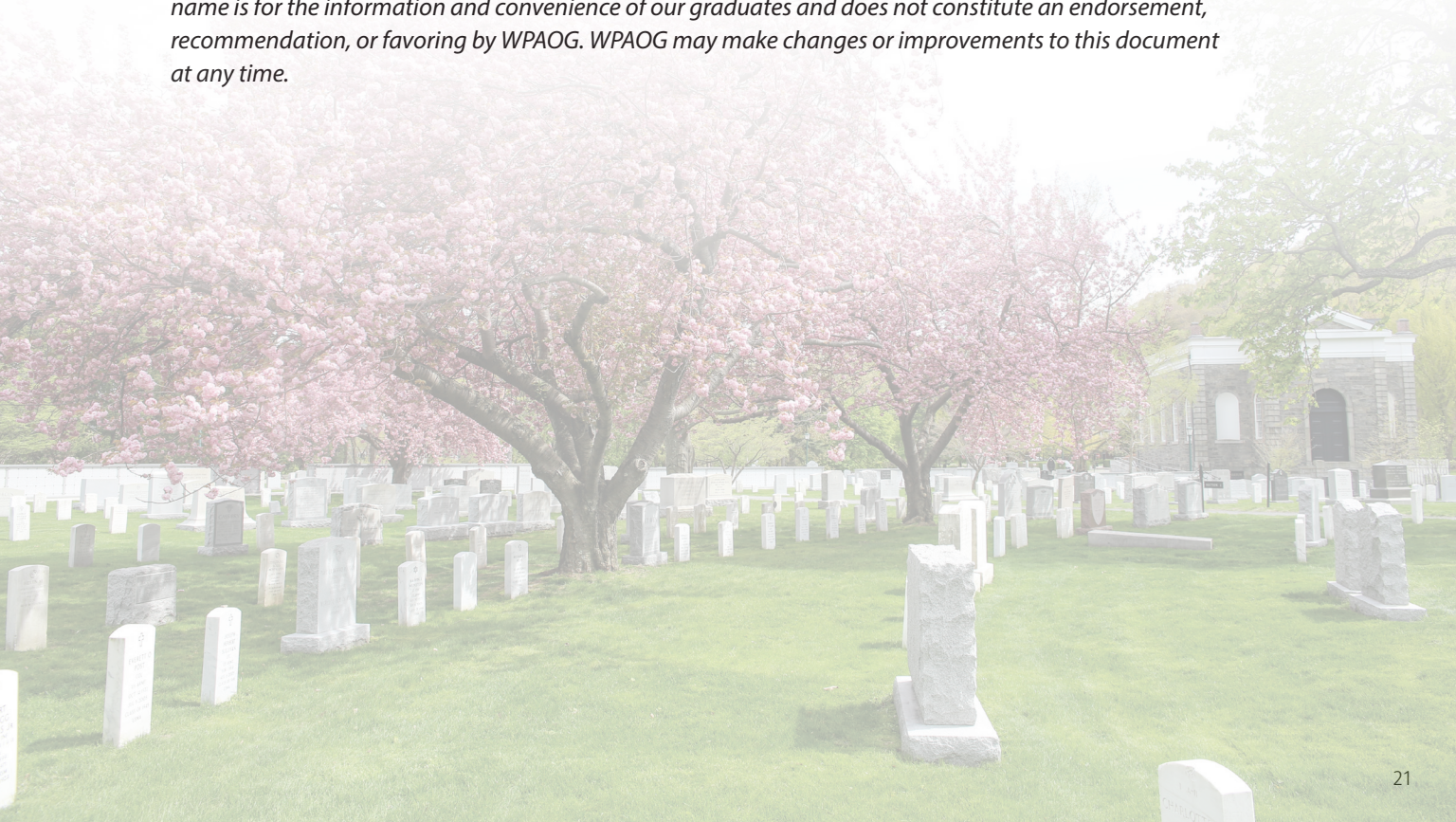
A legacy gift can be achieved through a bequest named in a will or trust for future support, or it can be made in the form of a life-income gift, such as a charitable gift annuity or charitable remainder trust that provides payments to the holder or beneficiaries while offering a charitable deduction.

With proper planning, a graduate may actually increase the size of their estate or reduce the tax burden on their heirs. Just as important, a planned gift allows one the opportunity to make a meaningful contribution to West Point.

The WPAOG Development team is ready to assist in finding a meaningful way to honor a loved one's legacy. For more information, visit [giftplanning.WestPointAOG.org/](http://giftplanning.WestPointAOG.org/)

### **Disclaimer**

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## ALMA MATER

*Hail, Alma Mater dear,  
To us be ever near.  
Help us thy motto bear  
Through all the years.  
Let Duty be well performed.  
Honor be e'er untarned.  
Country be ever armed.  
West Point, by thee.  
Guide us thine own aright,  
Teach us by day, by night,  
To keep thine honor bright,  
For thee to fight.  
When we depart from thee,  
Serving on land or sea,  
May we still loyal be,  
West Point, to thee.  
And when our work is done,  
Our course on earth is run,  
May it be said, "Well done:  
Be thou at peace."  
E'er may that line of gray,  
Increase from day to day,  
Live, serve, and die, we pray,  
West Point, for thee.*

—Based on the original version by  
P.S. Reinecke, 1911

**MEMORIAL SUPPORT**



**West Point**  
ASSOCIATION OF GRADUATES

*Serving West Point and the Long Gray Line*

WestPointAOG.org | Herbert Alumni Center, 698 Mills Road, West Point, NY 10996

