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Bryant College 97th Commencement
Class Day Address, July 28, 1960
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THE LADDER TO SUCCESS

Patricia Ann Tobiasz, Bryant '60

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Mr. Chairman, Doctor Jacobs, staff members of Bryant College, parents, friends,
and classmates:

Sara Vaughan, the well-known inspirational vocalist, once sang about building a stairway to paradise with a new step every day. Very similar to Sara's stairway is my ladder to success. As I envision it, this ladder consists of five rungs, each representing a "new step." At the top of the ladder lies the goal--success.

Think for a moment. Visualize a ladder. What do you see at the very bottom? I see HUMILITY. When we came to Bryant as freshmen, we received a good lesson in humility when our senior friends placed beanies on our heads and ordered us to wear them. As part of our preparation for business, then, we learned to take orders before we gave them. No one is so important that he cannot perform menial tasks. For example, if you are told on your first day at work to empty a wastebasket, you may react in one of two ways: You may give a retort such as "That is the janitor's work, not mine." Or you may pick up the wastebasket, empty it, and return it without a word. The person of true humility has that intangible quality that makes him completely free of false pride and arrogance. He is the person who is willing to start at the bottom rung of the ladder, no matter how excellent his qualifications are.

We come now to the second rung on the ladder to success. Here I see PERSEVERANCE. It has been said that "genius is only the power of making continuous efforts." So, let us behave like geniuses. The germs of success lie dormant in us, but constant hard work and courage are required in order to awaken them. The person who has a purpose, who fixes his eyes on a definite goal and makes for it with all his strength, is certain to surmount the difficulties and obstacles that block his path and, in so doing, incidentally, to add zest and fun to his living.

And that brings us to the third rung on the ladder. Here I find CO-OPERATION. From people in the business world, I have heard countless remarks that all boil down to this: It doesn't matter how much you know or how much you can do if you cannot get along with other people. Business comprises organized groups of individuals working together as a team. No person works alone. As long as the team stays united and each member does his full share, business runs smoothly. However, just as the efficient operations of a sensitive machine can be disrupted by the failure of one essential part, so too can the efficient operations of a business be retarded or disrupted by bickering and dissension from even one member of the team.

On the fourth rung of the ladder I see CONTINUED STUDY. At this point you may be saying to yourself, "What? I'm all through with studying and racking my brains--now I'm ready for work!" The person who is truly successful always keeps in mind the old saying that "no one knows everything about anything." It is always interesting to watch the progress of two people, each possessing equal ability, after they are graduated from college. One of them may be satisfied with what he has learned up to the day of graduation, but the other is not content; he thirsts for added knowledge. While the first man is sitting back in his chair, thinking to himself, "I have learned everything I need to know

about my profession, " the second man is already on his feet, adding to his skills, increasing his personal worth, and steadily gaining in the race for promotion.

And now we have arrived at the final and most important rung on the ladder--SELF-KNOWLEDGE. Some of us have set up goals that we can never meet because we have not yet discovered the limitations set by our failings. Others of us have not set sufficiently high goals because we have not yet discovered our potentialities. Whether your ambition is to be a top executive, a legal secretary, or an ordinary--but not so unimportant--housewife, know how much responsibility you can shoulder and still do a good job. Strive neither to exaggerate nor to minimize your capacities and limitations. Know also the probable area of your success. Remember that each one of us can individually contribute to the world's good where others cannot, because each one of us has his own special worth. Before you walk away from Bryant, make one more visit to South Hall. Take an unbiased look at yourself in the mirror that says "as others see you." Next, evaluate yourself, honestly and sincerely, on the basis of your shortcomings and your talents.

If you are to be a true success, then, the ladder to success must be complete. As I see it, it must have at least these five rungs. Take away humility, and you will find yourself defeated by arrogance and pride. Take away perseverance, and you will give up before the battle has even begun. Take away co-operation, and you will disrupt the operations of your team. Take away continued study, and you will be the loser in the race for promotion. Take away self-knowledge, and you will be only the distorted image of the person you would like to be. You can see what would happen if any one of these rungs were removed--the ladder extending toward your goal would be weakened. Retaining all five rungs will make for a strong ladder--a ladder that will carry you to ultimate success.