CLASS DAY EXERCISES
CAMPUS GREEN
FRIDAY, JULY 26, 1963
MISS DONNA ESTELLE JENNEY

"A TIME TO REFLECT"

Mr. Chairman, Doctor Jacobs, members of the Administration, Faculty, guests, and Class of 1963.

Today is an important day in our lives. It is a day we shall always remember; for after devoting a great deal of time to studying, going to classes, and taking what seemed to be hundreds of "little quizzes," we can now say, "We are college graduates."

As college graduates, we will assume new roles. In our society, each person plays several roles--as a family member, a church member, and a citizen. Each role carries with it certain obligations. The role of a college graduate in his career and in his daily life also carries many obligations. Let us take a few moments to reflect upon some of these.

Because education and knowledge enable people to develop a keener insight into the problems facing them and to accept the challenges created by a changing world, society sets high goals for its educated citizens. The greatest enemies of any civilization are ignorance and fear. Arnold H. Glasow said, "Fear is the lengthened shadow of ignorance." That is, we fear what we do not understand.
In contrast, the more we know about that which threatens us, the less we fear it. We all fear radioactive fall-out; yet most of us know little about it. However, Civil Defense agencies give us information about precautions we can take to survive fall-out. Thus, the informed citizen learns to accept this threat.

One of our greatest obligations in our new roles, then, is to fight fear and ignorance through education and understanding. Toward the end of World War II, Winston Churchill, that wise statesman who led his country through some of its darkest days, said, "The future of the world is to the highly educated races." In other words, to maintain leadership in a changing world, a country must have a great stockpile of knowledge with which it can keep pace with technological and cultural advancements. Therefore, we must assume the difficult task of fighting fear and ignorance. The fight against these two enemies is a difficult one, for people tend to resist and to resent changes in the structure of our society. We are often accused of being a nation of followers, placing the group above the individual and forgetting that the real essence of the group is the individual. Yet unless we, as college graduates, strive to bring about the necessary changes in our society, and to encourage the intellectual development of the individual, America will lose her most precious asset—the integrity of the individual as a man and as a citizen.

This, fellow classmates, is our second obligation—to cherish the individual and to encourage individual thinking and creativity. One of our basic rights is freedom of expression. In return for this right, we have the obligation to speak out when our country is faced with any crisis. Recently in a letter to the editor of a local newspaper, a woman who felt her time had come to speak out said,
"At one point in life, be it sooner or later, each man must do what he feels must be done in order to live peacefully, not only with himself but those around him as well. It is a time when he can no longer be silent and still remain faithful to all he deeply believes and cherishes."

Another of our obligations as brand-new college graduates is to do our best in all that we endeavor. Some of us here today will be accountants or business executives, some will be secretaries, and still others will be teachers. Of inspiration to us all may be the quotation, "The first thing to do is to fall in love with your work." It is true that if we love our work, we will know happiness in it; but how do we go about falling in love with our work? The answer is a simple one. We must do our best in whatever we undertake. By giving our best and by meeting squarely the challenge of every job, we will know success in our careers and happiness in our daily lives.

These are but three of our common obligations, and it is up to each person here to reflect seriously upon his obligations to society. As we set aside these few moments for reflection, we should also pause to give thanks; for we have much to be thankful for.

We can be thankful that we live in a country in which we are free to acquire an education and enter the career of our choice. We can give thanks, too, to our teachers, who have guided us and instilled in us a genuine desire to learn. We can be thankful, moreover, that not one of us has been alone, for many of our experiences at Bryant—studying, cramming, and worrying—have been shared with our classmates. We’ve also enjoyed so many pleasant times together that all of us can look back gratefully to these college days, enriched with shared experiences and blessed with friendship.
Finally, let each of us give thanks to two very important people in our lives--our parents. Let us not forget that this is their day, too, for without their sacrifices and the love and encouragement they have given us, this day would not be possible. So, parents, as your goal for your children is about to be realized, your sons and daughters say to you, "Thank you, Mom and Dad."

At last the achievement of the goal for which we have been working, planning, and dreaming is near. Tomorrow each of us will step forward to receive the long-sought college degree. Before we take that step, though, let us pause for just a few moments to think about the significance of this day, to reflect upon our new obligations, and to give thanks.