**INTRODUCTION SPEECH**

**FOR**

**ALICIA MARTIN**

Hello everyone and thank you for joining us at this very special apprenticeship graduation ceremony. We are thrilled to see and celebrate this year’s graduates and their families and we are even more thrilled to have a very special speaker with us today. While most... or all of us know and were impacted by the very sudden and tragic loss of our wonderful leader and inspiration last year, we all knew and believed... and still **do** believe in our hearts that Tom Wanamaker would have wanted to continue to lead and inspire through the thoughtfulness, courage, and optimism of others. Welcoming this new crop of graduates to our professional construction community is exactly what Tom would have endorsed and worked for, and having our very special commencement speaker, Tom’s wife, Sophie Wanamaker, keeps his mission, message, and enthusiasm alive in all of us.

Tom Wanamaker was an amazing professional, a devoted family man, and a dedicated colleague. He spent his life in tireless service to others, and whether he was serving his country as a decorated Veteran of the United States Army, promoting career opportunities for young people within the construction industries, or inspiring colleagues and trainees as the Training and Development Director for ABCIL member company, Manhattan Mechanical Services, Tom always led and inspired with a kind heart and a positive attitude.

In many ways, Sophie Wanamaker has enthusiastically and admirably picked up Tom’s “torch” **(If you want to make a little joke you can say**) ... Don’t worry, Sophie is trained to carry and care for that torch with all the proper precautions (**and wait for the laugh**) ... and she does it from the heart. As a Talent and Acquisition Specialist for Accenture, Sophie has used her gifts and skills as a motivational speaker to encourage others in a variety of professions. She has extensive experience in counseling and guiding people at all levels of their career development and experience and her ability to listen and identify what works or needs improvement in a situation has been proven consistently. As someone who knows this industry from a very special vantage point, namely that of her husband who believed so much in supporting the growth of our construction community, it’s a privilege for all of us to have the opportunity to gather encouragement and insights from this uniquely talented woman.

Both Tom and Sophie shared an almost contagiously positive outlook on life. Encouragement and gratitude were and are the paths they’ve chosen naturally, and now Sophie will share a little of that “not so secret sauce” with all of today’s graduates.

The English Poet Tennyson, once said, “I am part of all that I have met.” To have had the honor to know Tom Wanamaker was one of the gifts of life.... to have the opportunity to listen to the encouragement and wisdom of Sophie is a treasured extension of Tom’s legacy.

Graduates, I also want you to be aware that his program doesn’t end today... (**If you want to make a joke you can say**) ... okay... the classroom time ends today.... but every day you will use what you’ve learned. You will test yourselves, and you will find new and more advanced questions and problems that come up. Please know that although you may be leaving school.... we won’t be leaving you. We... and all of the Associated Builders and Contractors ... and Sophie... are here for you. Thank you for your expression of confidence in this industry. Thank you for being the future of construction, and thank you in advance for the encouragement you will give as new generations are guided and inspired by the work and dedication of people like Tom and Sophie Wanamaker.... and **YOU**!!!! We all wish you the best of luck.... and here is Sophie Wanamaker....