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# CONVERSE

BULLETIN

SUMMER 2005



MEET  
**BETSY FLEMING**  
CONVERSE COLLEGE'S NINTH PRESIDENT

THE POWER OF THE LIBERAL ARTS

# Pass on the Converse legacy to a deserving young woman...

Look for a fee-waived application in the mail soon!

There are few things that are more fulfilling than knowing you made a difference in a young person's life. Share your Converse experience with young women in your community—help them to discover the caring professors, life-long friendships, and opportunities to lead and serve that await at Converse College.

Office of Admissions  
(800) 766-1115  
E-mail: [admissions@converse.edu](mailto:admissions@converse.edu)  
Website: [www.converse.edu](http://www.converse.edu)



**Bari Oliver Schiff** is relocating to Columbus, OH where her husband will be completing his medical residency. **April Willard** enjoyed teaching 8th grade and coaching cheerleading this year. **Kathryn Brackett** is completing her second year in the MFA program for creative writing. **Melanie Brown** will begin work on her Ph.D. in Mathematics at the University of Vermont. She recently played clarinet in the pit orchestra for the Kalamazoo Civic Theatre. **Amber Dillard** has completed her first year of graduate school in the Health Promotion program at the University of Kentucky and will be presenting at a conference in San Diego, CA. **Gabrielle Champan Leopard** is enrolled in the Marriage and Family Therapy program at Converse. **Valerie Brock** was recognized as the MPA Student of the Year and was awarded Outstanding Teaching Assistant at the University of Georgia. **Ivy Collier** is working on her MBA at Kennesaw State University. **Holly Gilmore** received three awards for her graduate research at USC and will present her findings at an upcoming conference. Holly also received the Outstanding Student Award for her program. **Sarah Rowan** will be moving to Australia to study at the Hillsong International Leadership Institute. **Robyn Hill Sanderson** is working on her MEd in Counselor Education for Student Affairs at Clemson and recently presented at the SCCPA conference. **Ryan Summerford** is interning at Healthworks at WakeMed in Raleigh, NC. **Avery Tomlinson** has completed her first year of vet school at UGA and will be studying various bird species in Costa Rica this summer. I am excited to be finished with graduate school and am looking forward to starting my job as a guidance counselor in August. This summer I will work

as a summer counselor with Spartanburg County Parks and Recreation. Send us your updates! Jodi

## CLASS OF 2004

### Next Reunion

### Alumnae Weekend, 2009

### Representatives:

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### Converse Fund Class Chairs:

Ms. Katy Kuersteiner  
Miss Courtenay Mims

Greetings from sunny Carolina! I hope everyone is well and enjoying life away from Converse. The "Paint the World Purple" reunion weekend was absolutely fabulous! Our class had one of the three largest turnouts. We all had an amazing time visiting with friends and learning what the class of 2004 has been up to this past year. A huge thanks to everyone who attended this wonderful event. If you were unable to attend, there will be many more to come with our next one in 2009. At the class meeting during the reunion we chose three new representatives for the class of 2004: **Jordan Greene, Quinn Burgin Saleeby, and Erin Poston Stone**. Please keep them up to date so Converse can keep track of our accomplishments,

marriages, births, and so on! I would like to remind you guys to give back to Converse any way you can. The easiest way is to refer high school students to the admissions office. Don't forget that every little bit helps! I know we are all just starting out and monetary gifts are hard to give, but know that even \$2 helps to build the Converse Fund. Alumnae gifts help young women attend Converse and I can think of nothing better than to give a little to the school that gave you so much! Keep up the good work Converse girls! I truly miss all of the fun times we have had and look forward to our next reunion! Be certain to check Life Events for additional class news. With love, Kate

## CLASS OF 2005

### 1st Reunion

### Alumnae Weekend, 2006

### Representatives:

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### Converse Fund Class Chair:

To our most recent graduates, we send our heartiest congratulations! We are delighted to have you as members of the Alumnae Association and look forward to great things from all of you! Please keep in touch with us and your class representatives listed above! Don't forget your 1st reunion will be in April 2006! Best wishes, The Alumnae Office



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*Correction: In the article "Protecting Our Environment" in the Winter 2005 Bulletin, Kathy Woodward's major was listed incorrectly. Kathy was a chemistry major.*

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# The Power of a Liberal Arts Education

by Dr. Thomas R. McDaniel, senior vice president

“There is nothing so practical as a good theory,” said John Dewey, one of America’s most important philosophers. And I say there is nothing so practical as a sound undergraduate liberal arts education. Through the liberal arts, students are encouraged to stretch their intellect and think analytically rather than just memorize data. It is through such thinking that students often discover interests and abilities within themselves that were previously unknown.

I hope that most of you Converse graduates have discovered just how practical your liberal arts preparation has been—even though it may not have been narrowly and directly connected to a given line of work. My own undergraduate double major in English and psychology was splendid preparation for my work as a college administrator. How about you? Has your liberal arts education made a difference in how you write, talk, think, and work? I surely hope so, for these are the most practical of human enterprises. Did your Converse education give you a broader view of your place in history, help you appreciate the arts, develop skills in math and science?

Because many of today’s prospective students (and their always-interested parents) focus too soon and too narrowly on specific job training and specialized occupational skills, liberal arts colleges such as Converse must work hard to help them understand just what a liberal arts curriculum is and why it is so valuable. The liberal arts are more than bodies of subject matter—history, philosophy, literature, mathematics, science, or the social sciences. They are more than vast quantities of information. At their best in the college classroom, they constitute the living legacy of the great thinkers and doers in our—and the world’s—civilization. In the classrooms of dynamic professors, the liberal arts connect learning to life. Mere note taking will not do; there must be debate, discussion dialogue among students and faculty; students must learn to defend and communicate their thoughts and beliefs, in well-argued oral and written discourse. Graduates should also have developed certain values, among them civic duty, personal responsibility, respect for people and their traditions, and intellectual honesty. Are not such skills and values central to success in the world of work?

According to a report by the US Department of Labor, 80% of children beginning kindergarten will eventually enter jobs that do not even exist today. In order to be successful, they will need much more than training in a single discipline. A liberal arts education can enable them to grow intellectually and personally more than they could ever dream, and prepare them to adapt to the continued transformations of the workplace.

Today’s students, including those in liberal arts colleges, want an education that prepares them to lead “the good life” and to earn a good living. For some that means developing career skills—by way of courses and internships—along with a deep appreciation for the life of the mind. While technical skills might give one entry into the workforce, it is a liberal arts education that can provide the power to excel there.

One might ask: Just how does a liberal education prepare women who are better people and better employees in the modern work force? Here is my view:

*First, by grounding students in their own cultural heritage.* Surely, a contemporary citizen and employee is well served by a study of the past, of the great works of art and literature, of the philosophical explanations of great thinkers who sought answers to the eternal questions: What is good, true, and valuable? The Converse general education program (GEP) assures a sound grounding in studies of our heritage and culture that help students answer such questions.

*Second, by broadening the world view of each student.* Students whose field of vision extends across countries and continents, in our shrinking world, will develop a rationale for decision making, in life and work, that will keep change



in context. The Converse study-travel opportunities and internships—constantly growing to an impressive array of options—contribute much to this broader perspective on the world.

*Third, by promoting intellectual inquiry, an active curiosity about the changing world, and a lifelong love of learning.* A sound liberal arts education prepares students for the unpredictability of the future. Mere job training will not suffice. The liberal arts teach students how to ask the important questions, how to solve problems never anticipated before, how to work with others for the common good. Such abilities will never be made obsolete by change.

What an education in the liberal arts does, ultimately, is to prepare people for a vocation. As Charles Ashmore, former dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, once observed, “an occupation reveals only what you *do*, what you are busy about. A vocation—a calling—bears the stamp of a person’s heart, mind, and soul.” In this respect a liberal arts education is both the most personal and practical preparation for life and work we can offer today’s young women. That has been, and will continue to be, the goal of a Converse undergraduate degree.

So, what makes a Converse liberal arts curriculum powerful? I believe it is the power to “liberate” us from the narrow and the mundane, to turn the theoretical into the practical (as Dewey implies in the opening quotation), to transform timeless truths into timely skills, and to elevate occupations into personal vocations. This power for a liberating education depends as much on the commitment of the student as the wisdom of the teacher. This is the ideal we strive to make real in our educational journey at Converse. 🏠





# Meet Betsy Fleming

## Converse College's Ninth President

When hired as director of the Gibbes Museum in Charleston, SC, Betsy Fleming embraced the challenge of changing the course of one of the oldest arts organizations in the United States. "The Gibbes was seen as stodgy when she came," said Valerie Morris, dean of the College of Charleston School of the Arts. "But she's not at all stodgy, and I think that carried over. When you meet her, she's young and attractive and it's hard to think about the place she's in charge of as being anything other than that."

Betsy holds a baccalaureate degree from Harvard University, and a master of arts in the history of design from Royal College of Art in London. She was a Henry S. McNeil Fellow at Yale University, where she earned a master of arts and master of philosophy in the history of art and is currently completing her Ph.D. dissertation. She has worked for The Frick Collection in New York, NY; The J. Paul Getty Trust in Los Angeles, CA; Yale University Art

Gallery; Victoria & Albert Museum in London; and Harvard University Art Museums. She has also served as a Whitney Fellow at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Her return to South Carolina presented an exciting challenge to operate as an effective change agent for an organization in distress.

"People simply weren't coming to the Gibbes," Betsy said. "I arrived with a fresh point of view, knowledge within the field, and a strong background in marketing and branding." As she completes her tenure at the Gibbes and prepares to take the helm as president at Converse in October, the results of Betsy's work speak for themselves: the museum's attendance has increased 20% since 2002 and contributions have increased by 75%.

"There were two essential ingredients to the turnaround success," explained Betsy. "The first involved building on the core strengths of the Gibbes as an

attraction, a center for learning, and a distinct collection within the museum world. The second emphasized changing public perceptions about the Gibbes through a grassroots marketing strategy that included targeted public relations, positive word-of-mouth, and special invitations."

It is that kind of passion, creativity, and innovation that the Converse College Board of Trustees sought in the College's ninth president. "Betsy is an energetic and dynamic woman who will be able to create a compelling vision for liberal arts education for women at Converse," said Susu Phifer Johnson '65, vice chairman of the Board of Trustees and chairman of the Presidential Search Committee. "She understands wholeheartedly the value of education, understands what it is to be excited about learning, and understands that it is fulfilling to take your passion and make it your life."

Converse strengthened its position by enhancing facilities, continuing to develop its highly accomplished faculty and administration, and improving its financial foundation. After her departure, timing was ripe for the next step led by a president with a fresh, even nontraditional, perspective. Betsy Fleming is just that sort of leader. "She's not your average person," said Susu. "Every once in a while someone remarkable comes into your life, and she's one of them. Betsy's candidacy gave us a whole new way of looking at the job."

"Converse has an exciting story to tell," Betsy said. "We need to make sure that every young woman of today knows about, and actively considers taking advantage of, the unique aspects of a Converse education. A popular question for new presidents of any organization is 'what do you plan to accomplish during your first 100 days?' I intend to begin my tenure listening, both on and off the Converse campus. I want to immerse myself in the Converse community in order to learn firsthand what makes the college so special. I expect to be very visible, attending performances and athletic events, and meeting and asking questions of students, parents, faculty and staff. I especially look forward to visiting with as many alumnae clubs and individuals as possible. That knowledge will help me to energize and expand Converse's extraordinary community: its people, resources, and traditions."

Converse College is not new to Betsy. The Spartanburg native grew up literally just blocks from the College's main entrance. "As a child, I spent time on campus as a student in the Pre-College dance and music programs," she said. "My swim team also practiced in Converse's pool. The whole Fleming family often attended concerts and performances at Twichell Auditorium. My sister and I had numerous adventures in Mickel Library and the photography lab while my mother (Lib Burnett Fleming '65) completed assignments for Converse courses that she took for personal enrichment."

Betsy left Spartanburg at age 15 to attend Phillips Exeter Academy in New

Hampshire. There, her leadership was recognized by peers who encouraged her to serve as president of the senior class, and by faculty who presented her with the Thomas Cornell Hilary Award for Outstanding Leadership at graduation. "I recall feeling both surprised and honored to be recognized by the faculty in such a way," she said. "Exeter was the most formative learning experience, both inside and outside the classroom, of my life. It was where I began to consider myself a citizen of the world, and where I learned that my actions or thinking within a small close-knit community had resonance within a much larger world. Converse, like Exeter, is an unique, intimate learning environment that profoundly shapes anyone within her sphere of influence."

While she was recognized for her innate leadership skills, Betsy is quick to say that leading is not something she set out to do. "I credit friends and mentors who have encouraged me along the way to accept leadership positions or to run for offices. I gladly accepted each challenge, but realized early on that major responsibility typically accompanies the

**"We need to make sure that every young woman of today knows about, and actively considers taking advantage of, the unique aspects of a Converse education."**

honor. Leading an organization allows me to become more actively engaged in something that I value deeply. I work to achieve positive results that benefit the community-at-large."

The state of South Carolina has also set its sights on Betsy Fleming as a leader. Betsy is one of 20 members, one of only five women, selected from 215 nominees statewide to participate in the inaugural class of the Liberty Fellowship Program, which aims to develop values-based leadership in South Carolina.

In 1991, with a magna cum laude degree in fine arts from Harvard University, Betsy left for the Royal College of Art

in London, England. She earned her master's degree in two years. "I thrive on new adventures. Living and learning in a different country introduced me to new perspectives and activities. London was where I began to appreciate the liberties, opportunities, and responsibilities that are part of my American citizenship. While I am an active member of the global community who enjoys travel and foreign cultures, my home and my heart are in the US."

So when did Betsy's fascination with art begin? "My earliest art memory involves attending a performance of Martha Graham with my parents when I was four," she said. "There was extraordinary grace and beauty in her mixture of music and movement. If I close my eyes even today, I can still recall the charge I felt when seeing something so new, so unusual and so lovely. It transformed me for that brief moment."

"Art takes me to a place beyond daily life. As a scholar, I have spent a tremendous amount of time researching the 'who, what, when, where, why and

how' embedded in a work of art. My research has focused on the history of decorative arts and design, specifically how objects reflect the social, political, and economic circumstances in which they were created."

As for relaxation, Betsy Fleming rarely slows down. "I start each day with a power walk, a run or a yoga class," she said. "Downhill skiing is a favorite activity. And I'm always eager to try my hand at new sports, most recently surfing and golf. I love reading biographies and can think of nothing better than spending a week at the beach with my family."

# THE LIBERAL ARTS IN ACTION: Converse Alumnae Embrace Life's Twists and Turns

PEGGY RAINWATER '63

Director of Administration, The Rendon Group; Washington, DC



*Peggy Rainwater on a recent trip to Peru.*

If anyone asks how to choose a field of study, I tell them to do what they love. The value of a liberal arts education is in the love of learning and the discipline of studying. The broad perspectives and ideas I gained from my education gave me the confidence to look at alternatives in my life and pursue avenues which might have otherwise been considered too risky.

When I finished Converse, I thought I would teach piano in my home, live in a quiet neighborhood, raise children, and travel around the world. But my education has taken me to classrooms, inside a gubernatorial campaign, and eventually to the White House.

While interviewing for an office job after college, I was told that with such a beautiful education, I should be teaching school. The Fulton County (GA) Board of Education hired me on the spot as a choral director for Milton High School. I had the experience of singing with Alia Lawson and with a very good high school choir, but it was a challenge to put myself in the frame of mind to teach rather than learn and to listen and conduct rather than sing. But I learned to listen, to interpret a score, to impart that appreciation to the performers and to the audience.

While teaching, I volunteered for a political campaign for our congressman and immediately became hooked on politics. Someone I met during that time introduced me to Jimmy Carter, who was running for governor of Georgia. I liked him and his wife Rosalyn, and signed up to work full-time as scheduler for the campaign during the summer. When it looked like he would win in the general election, I resigned my teaching position and stayed with the campaign, then went to work in the governor's office.

The year was 1971, and women were not supposed to have responsible jobs in Georgia politics; we were supposed to be secretaries. But as the campaign's scheduler, I knew all the people of influence who had supported us, and I had proven to then Governor Carter and the first lady that I could handle challenges and I could produce. I fought to have my title changed to administrative assistant and became an integral part of the political team. I used my contacts and ability to organize, work hard, and study new things. While I was given tasks that others envied, I didn't have the salary to match. In fact, I had made more money as a poorly paid teacher.

During this time, I maintained my sanity and satisfied my desire to perform by teaching myself to play guitar and learning folk songs. I also joined the Atlanta Choral Guild which ultimately brought Robert Shaw, considered the finest choral conductor in the world, to Atlanta, and he invited the Choral Guild to perform under his direction. Singing under the direction of Robert Shaw was one of the peak musical experiences of my life.

At the end of Carter's term as governor, he announced his candidacy for president of the United States. It was obvious to me that I would work in that campaign. When we won I was named associate director of presidential personnel, responsible for the president's appointments to boards and commissions. Again I took on new responsibilities and challenges. Things were fast paced and very competitive, but it was a glorious time. Finally, being a female was not a liability. It was the '70s and women had powerful positions. We were few but we counted. I got to know some of the most influential and

*Peggy Rainwater '63 and her husband, Leo Surla, with President Jimmy Carter during his presidency in the 1970s.*



## PATTY DRIGGERS HAMPTON '85

Owner of Hampton Studios; Roswell, GA

learned people in the country as they advised the president and his cabinet.

After we lost the election of 1980, I found an associate from the Carter administration who owned a business doing public opinion polls. My Converse courses in mathematics came in handy for working with numbers, and my experience in politics gave me insight into polls. I became interested in managing that business, and when one of my friends started another polling firm, I helped establish the financial and administrative side of the company, working with lawyers, accountants and government registrations, and reports.

Today, I am the director of administration for an international strategic communications firm where I am responsible for finance, human resources, government security, and administration. I have helped this company grow from 12 employees and about \$500,000 annual income in 1989 to a staff of almost 150 and income of \$20 million today.

I have raised five children and am helping to raise four young grandchildren. My husband and I do indeed travel the world (last year we explored South Africa and Croatia; this year we've been to Peru and plan to visit India next). I take care of our 105-year-old town house on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC. I use my musical skills almost every day by singing in a chamber choir as well as my church choir, occasionally accompanying my husband when he sings, and sometimes conducting the church choir. I'm a long way from my Converse years, but thanks to the liberal arts foundation it all ties together!

After graduating from Converse in 1985 with a degree in computer science and psychology, I enjoyed a very successful career in computer science. But in addition to providing me with a degree, my liberal arts education made me realize that I can do anything I want to do. What may begin only as a passing interest can become a great passion once you open your mind to the possibilities. This is a great gift of the liberal arts education.

For 17 years, I climbed the corporate ladder at NCR Corporation, a global technological company. First, I was a technical analyst who traveled worldwide debugging computer programs at customer sites. I was then promoted into management where I was responsible for teams of analysts and later teams of programmers.

After several years of planning, my husband and I learned that we were to have twin babies. Miles and Francis were born in June of 1999. Because I was so busy with my career, I found myself watching someone else raise them. I decided to do something about this by resigning my management position with NCR. It was one of the toughest decisions I have made because I had planned to retire from the company. Much of our sense of self-worth often stems from job performance, and suddenly I did not have a traditional job. Actually, I was looking for a position with more flexible hours, but positions in my field were shrinking due to offshore programming centers.

I had an interest in photography but knew nothing about the business itself, so I went to work for another studio (without pay) for eight months to learn.



*Patty Hampton with her children,  
Francis and Miles*

The business side came naturally because I had recently earned my MBA from Mercer University. I also made some important contacts within the business and found a mentor who helped me with valuable advice about contracts, advertising, etc.

In February 2003, I ventured out on my own. Not having a guaranteed paycheck can be daunting. But it is exciting and scary to know that you alone are responsible for the success of your business. I handle all aspects; marketing, sales, technical support, management, bookkeeping, and planning. My business has increased every year by at least 200% and I now have several contract photographers working for me. Last year, I personally shot more than 50 weddings, and this year, the company is scheduled to improve over last year by another 200%. My liberal arts degree was a foundation that prepared me for the unexpected, and I am loving my life as a photographer!

## CHRIS KING GOFF '74

Director of Information Systems, Rotech Healthcare; Orlando, FL



Chris Goff at Rotech Healthcare

In a recent conversation with my niece, who is a rising sophomore at Clemson University, I asked the age-old question about what major she would declare. Her reaction, a shrug of the shoulders and a roll of the eyes, took me back to that point in my own life.

I began as a math major at Converse. Why? Because my mother, Suzanne Butler McLeod '50, was a math major at Converse and since I also excelled in math, that seemed as good as anything. I had no idea what my interests were at that point in my life. I remember Dr. Charles Ashmore (then dean of the College of Arts and Sciences) explaining to me that a liberal arts foundation offers exposure to many subjects and choices. As I look back, I realize he was absolutely correct. I eventually decided to pursue a degree in economics, but my education included quite a few business, math, accounting, and sociology classes as part of my course study. My career has offered me many challenges, and I believe the variety of courses in my Converse education enabled me to meet these challenges with confidence and resolve.

My career path has not been in economics, nor in math. I am director of information systems for Rotech Healthcare, a home healthcare provider in Orlando, FL. That's right, I'm a "techie."

My first exposure to a computer was on a visit to Oxford, MS, when I was a senior in high school in 1970. At the time, my uncle was chairman of the Electrical Engineering Department at the University of Mississippi. He gave me a tour of their computer lab, and I was most intrigued. Who knew this visit

would spark a lifetime interest?

My first job after Converse was in the accounting department of Wilbur Smith and Associates, an engineering company in Columbia, SC. Because of the nature of the engineering industry, I received very valuable experience in cost accounting. More importantly, they had a computer - an IBM 360! I spent as much time as I could justifying hanging out in the computer room just watching everything. My next job was in the SC Comptroller General's Office as an accounts payable auditor. My responsibilities included approving payment requests from all of the state agencies, but somehow I was assigned the task of balancing the daily computer run for the warrants issued by the state treasurer and worked daily with the computer group at the Budget and Control Board.

I moved on to the South Carolina Department of Parks Recreation and Tourism (SCDPRT) as an auditor. Magically, they purchased an IBM System 34, enabling me to actually touch a computer. I approached my supervisor

and volunteered to write programs if they would send me to training. That's how it all started.

I really did not understand terminology such as operating system, indexing, operation codes, etc. But this did not stop me. My initial project was to produce the first computerized press release for the SCDPRT. I designed the database and wrote the programs, and the Tourism Department input the data. I timed the printouts with a stop watch to ensure we could produce the necessary quantity in a timely manner, and each release took 90 seconds to print. The year was 1983, but I can still remember to this day the excitement at SCPRT from our first computerized press release.

I am curious about how things work, so in 1985 I purchased the individual components of a computer and built one myself. After I figured out how it worked and the purpose of each component, I lost interest in the hardware, which led me to the software side of the business.

The next phase of my life began with a move to Orlando to accept a business opportunity for my husband. ASI Software was looking for an office manager with IBM System 34 experience, so I applied for the job thinking that if I could get my foot in the door, I may get an opportunity to do some programming. They did hire me, not as the office manager, but as a programmer. ASI developed an integrated software application in which we customized the modules based upon the client's business need. This provided a great deal of insight into the inner workings of many different lines of business.

In 1990, I joined Rotech to assist with programming for their in-house medical billing package. Within six weeks, I was made the information systems manager, and in 2001 I was named director of information systems. When I joined Rotech, we had approximately 35 locations and 400 employees with revenue of \$18 million. Today, we have grown to approximately 485 locations and 4,500 employees with revenue of \$600 million.

## KRISTI HINES HAGOOD '98

Environmentalist Specialist; Fort Gordon, GA

Although I did not realize it as a Converse student, my liberal arts education prepared me in unexpected ways for my career. When I arrived on the Converse campus in 1994, I had no idea what area should be my major. My first two years were filled with core courses; English, history, etc. Towards the end of my sophomore year, I decided to major in chemistry and minor in environmental studies. I had always performed well in mathematics and physical science courses, so the decision felt like a good fit.

I could not wait to get through those core courses. I never liked writing and assumed that strong writing skills would not be necessary in a chemistry career. History was certainly not my forte, and even though I was fairly good at mathematics I did not enjoy microeconomics. I thought surely once those courses were completed, I would never have to touch those subjects again. But as it turned out, I was wrong!

After graduating from Converse in May 1998, I headed to Florida State University to pursue a master of science in meteorology. I had no background in meteorology, but performed much better academically than many of my classmates. I credit much of this to being well prepared thanks to my Converse education. Many fellow graduate students had not taken the variety of courses that I had. Their undergraduate coursework had been much more streamlined within their major. In August 1999, I transferred to the University of Colorado at Boulder and earned my master of science in astrophysical, planetary, and atmospheric sciences. During graduate school, I was afforded the chance to teach meteorology labs as a research assistant. After graduation, I moved to Vancouver, WA, and taught one semester of physics at Clark College.

Today, I am an environmental analyst with Engineering and Environment, Inc., and work as an

on-site contractor in the Directorate of Public Works and Logistics (DPWL) at Fort Gordon, a 56,000 acre US Army Installation in Augusta, GA. One of my primary responsibilities is to ensure that the installation is in compliance with the National Environment Policy Act (NEPA).

NEPA acts as an umbrella law, which means that I have to be familiar with Federal, State, county, and local environmental laws. I review projects for compliance with NEPA, projects that range from simple repair and maintenance to new range and building construction to military field training exercises. I also work with the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), which involves coordination with our State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). All actions taken by Fort Gordon must be reviewed for compliance with both NEPA and NHPA. For example, as part of the NEPA review process for a project, we identify wetlands, threatened and endangered species, contaminated areas, cultural resource issues, permitting issues, and other environmental issues that may be affected by the project. If possible, we suggest alternatives that have less impact upon the environment. If an alternative cannot be used, we begin any

necessary consultation processes with other State and Federal agencies. We typically have five to ten major projects ongoing at any given time.

I rely heavily on a Geographic Information System (GIS), a geographic mapping system that identifies such locations as wetlands, threatened and endangered species, and contaminated areas, to help in project planning and analysis. When I began work at Fort Gordon, I had no experience with GIS software. Thanks to a liberal arts foundation that prepared me to be adaptable, I picked it up fairly quickly and use it everyday as a valuable tool.

Although I thought that I would never use the knowledge from my English, history, and microeconomics courses after college, those skills play a key role in my career success. My job requires that I write numerous documents daily, routinely deal with budget issues, and frequently recall dates of wars and other significant events in history. That's the beauty of a liberal arts education - especially one from a small college. My exposure to such a wide variety of courses prepared me for the many aspects of my career.

I've gained a wonderful appreciation for my liberal arts education. It taught me how to think and be prepared for most any topic, whether it is in my specialized field or not.



*Kristi Hagood '98 inspects a gopher tortoise burrow at Fort Gordon, Georgia with a US Army soldier. Kristi is an environmental specialist at the US Army installation.*

# OLD TIMES THEY ARE NOT FORGOTTEN



*Past and present collide when slave images from Southern currency of the mid-19th century are interpreted by a 21st century artist.*

*by James Shannon of MetroBeat (reprinted with permission)*

A series of paintings based on 19th century currency engravings seems an unlikely source of scholarly controversy, but the work of John W. Jones doesn't lend itself to easy categorization. His brightly-colored acrylic canvases depict scenes of slaves at work in the fields of the old South, powerful images whose impact is magnified because they are derived from actual bank notes that date to the 1850s. The pieces were featured in an art exhibit January 10-February 15 in the Milliken Art Gallery. A public symposium featuring Jones, Dr. Richard G. Doty, head of the numismatics (coins and paper money) section of the National Museum of American History at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC, and Dr. Michael Harris, art historian of African-American Art from the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill was held January 17 in a packed Daniel Recital Hall.

The title "Confederate Currency: The Color of Money" describes both the exhibit of some 70 works by Jones. Dr. Doty has been a champion of Jones' work, but cautions the event title was not totally correct.

"First off, they are not Confederate images," says Doty. "They are ante-bellum images of people which got adopted by the Confederates later on." The currency



is important, because it served as the direct inspiration for Jones in creating this body of work. Not that the artist is hiding this fact; far from it. The actual currency was on display alongside the paintings, and Doty made understandable its history.

"Money always reflects larger events, and there is no time in American history and when it is more true than in the period from after the Compromise of 1850 up until the first years of the Civil War," said Doty. "Although it had been a contentious subject since the founding of the republic, the issue of slavery inflamed the United States as never before during this period. Slaves had never appeared

on paper money before. Now they go through this evolution... from people basically in blackface to simple, sober images of workers—these guys are just working stiffs who happen to be black, chopping cotton, doing this and that, but there is no pejorative attached to them and there is no glorification of them as happy slaves either." In fact, many of the images were adapted from classical scenes of European agricultural workers by American engravers.

"Finally, beginning about 1857, when the South was getting hammered by the stuff from the North and so forth, Southern banks started asking

Northern printers for images which reflected the fact that slavery was a positive good,” noted Doty. “The thing you’ve got to understand about this stuff—it may have been issued by a bank in South Carolina, but it would circulate up to New York or Maine or anywhere else because it was money.”

Jones is a South Carolina native who illustrated training manuals and painted a mural during an extended military career that took him to Vietnam and Korea. While working at a Charleston blueprint company in 1996, he came upon a Confederate bank note a customer brought in to be enlarged. Jones says he was “astonished” when the magnification revealed the depiction of a slave picking cotton. He became fascinated with the images, and sought other currency at flea markets and on-line auctions. On the way to collecting more than a hundred of the bills, Jones began to paint the images he found there. In the process, he brought to life not only the scenes themselves, but their cultural, social, and political implications that remain predictably close to surface. At a time when the Confederate flag itself was again the subject of passionate contention in this state and

elsewhere, Jones knew his collection of slave images might trigger sharp reaction.

“There is a lot misinformation out there; twisted and diced up to suit each group’s agenda,” notes the artist. “Anytime you put factual information on the table and get people talking instead of fighting real or imagined battles, there is chance for healing. Slavery is a topic very few people want to talk about. It is treated like it is fiction, it never really existed.” This underlying narrative that informs Jones’ work transforms what might be seen as a technical exercise—albeit one remarkably well executed—into something that aspires to be much more.

“My experience researching this project has shown me that the most beautiful American Dream experience is the history of African Americans from slavery to present day,” explains Jones. “Many African Americans are ashamed of our slavery history, and many whites feel guilty about American slave history. With the paintings, African Americans feel empowered because we see the significant contributions of our forefathers as recorded in these notes, quite contrary to what is portrayed in many history books.”

The technique employed by Jones has resulted in a striking group of paintings that reproduce the almost classical images found on this currency in a way that preserves the engraved compositions while infusing them with color and expression that reflect artistic intent.

### **“The marriage of art and commerce in a college classroom ultimately teaches lessons that transcend both fields of study.”**

“My use of vibrant colors was designed to achieve many objectives,” says Jones. “The most important objective was to keep the collection interesting and engaging. I tried to use vibrant colors to bring the slaves back to life and give them back their voice that was taken from them.”

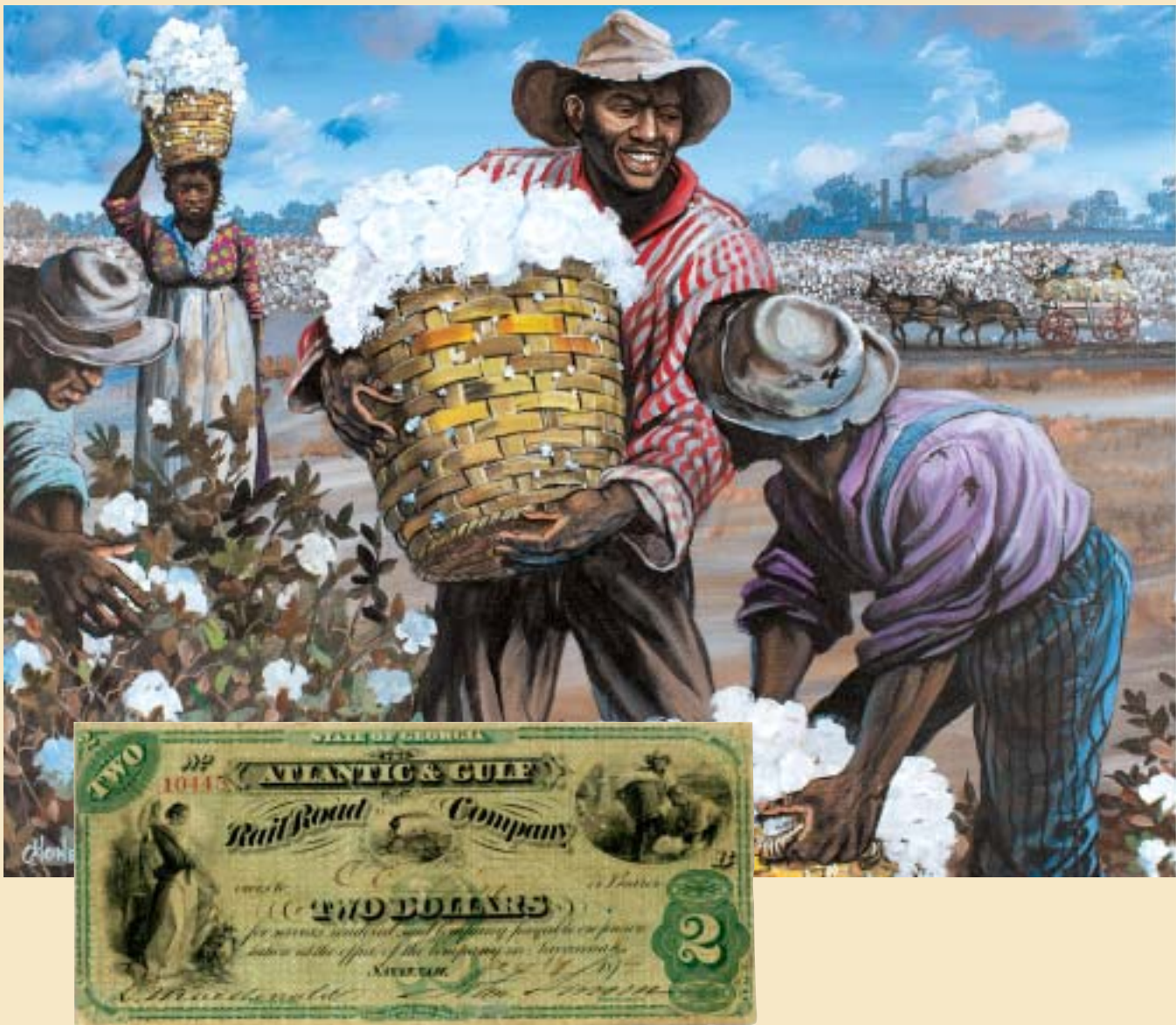
Jones’ paintings, while widely exhibited and the subject of considerable media attention, have not received universal acclaim. Dr. Harris, the author of *Picturing Race*, has emerged as a reluctant critic of the paintings in “The Color of Money.”

“I am not a big fan of that subject matter,” says Harris. “I think that it’s interesting that there were African Americans on that Confederate money, that there were slaves, and I think that fact sort of undermines people who have Confederate flag license plates and all that, who say that it’s about Southern pride—because it was about slavery. But at the same time, I find the preoccupation with the way whites depicted blacks, particularly at that time, to be less than useful.”

“There are certain ways we look at history as a way of understanding what’s going on and how we got here. I think looking at slavery and all of that is entirely appropriate in that way. But I think the part of the story that has been least told



(Left to Right) John Jones, Dr. Richard Doty, and Dr. Michael Harris lead a symposium for “Confederate Currency: The Color of Money” in Daniel Recital Hall.



is the perspective of those who were captives. I find that my interest would be more in stories of the captives, or the perspectives of the captives, or how they felt about it—humanizing them, rather than worrying about how the planter class saw them. I would find that to be more interesting, and more needed.”

Jones is undaunted by this criticism, saying he’s seen the impact of his work up close. “My ‘Color of Money’ series is most successful in creating an environment for dialogue,” he observes. “Schools and universities are using the exhibition and accompanying Teacher’s Guide as a resource in teaching American history.”

As noted by Jones, the arrival of these works on the Converse campus was accompanied by the teaching of a course entitled “The Art and Economics of Race” by Dr. Suzanne Schweiler-Daab, associate professor of art, and Dr. Madelyn Young, associate professor of economics and chair of the Economics, Accounting and Business Department. This marriage of art and commerce in a college classroom ultimately teaches lessons that transcend both fields of study.

In the final analysis, however, Jones is more of an artist than a historian - but presenting his paintings side-by-side with actual currency makes the connection explicit. “The colors innocently draw in the

viewer, and once engaged they can begin to see that the meaning of the paintings is to be found in the juxtapositions - in the gaps of the ‘not given material’ between the painting and the money,” he says. “This constant interaction of paintings and currency allows the viewer to see a pattern, a story being told, a story of enslavement—the slave master actively affirming and aggressively promoting their plantation economy system. Most of the viewers that have seen the exhibition are just as astonished as I was when I saw the first note,” he says, adding, “I believe our kids need to know our unique history, to better prepare them for the realities of the world we live in.”

# converse entrepreneurs

## FIND STRENGTH WITHIN

*Becoming an entrepreneur is viewed by many to be the ultimate career risk. But the power of a liberal arts education is that it prepares graduates to tackle practically any field. During Reunion Weekend 2005, four Converse alumnae entrepreneurs participated in a panel discussion to share the struggles and triumphs of being their own boss. The panel was moderated by Haidee Clark Stith '76, executive director of the SC Women's Business Center.*

*While not a conventional entrepreneur, Mary Alice Ingram Busch '50 is president of the Charles Ingram Lumber Company in Effingham, SC, which employs 125 people and produces approximately 80 million board feet of Southern yellow pine annually. The company was founded by her father in 1930. Because she is an only child, Mary Alice was named president of the company in 1975 when her father died. The company owns its own land, manages it ecologically, and uses every part of the tree except the roots.*

*Angie Williams Cash '89 is one of eBay's power players. She began by purchasing items posted on the Internet site out of boredom, but her knack for understanding consumer demand and customer service has enabled her to build her company, Cashco1000 ([www.cashco1000.com](http://www.cashco1000.com)), into one of the top 300 sellers on eBay. Her company's focus is home decorative items and wallpaper borders. Visitors to Cashco1000 can search by themes for every decorative touch imaginable. Angie now averages \$50,000 in sales each month and has over 30,000 customer reviews with 100% positive feedback on eBay.*

*Jane Sproull Dempsey '91 began her own garden design business the same year she graduated from Converse. As her creativity spawned clientele that demanded more of her services, her art evolved into Smart Jane!, a creative design company for special events through which she consults and designs all types of events from business meetings to wedding receptions. Smart Jane!'s Web site, [www.smartjane.com](http://www.smartjane.com), went live July 1 and is now conducting e-commerce to customers throughout the US.*

*Kate Moore Tierney '78 describes Twigs, her Greenville, SC-based business, as "the Upstate's premiere resource for creative inspiration." Inside the business's 6,000-square-foot building, Kate and her staff create every imaginable floral combination. The building also serves as a boutique, lunch restaurant, event site, and home décor store. Over the years, the Twigs staff has produced a number of special floral events, organized hands-on workshops for gardening, and culinary demonstrations. Visit Twigs on the Web at [www.twigs.net](http://www.twigs.net).*

*In your opinion, what personality traits are inherent in an entrepreneur?*

**Kate:** I think that one characteristic of an entrepreneur is a strong instinct for what to do from A to Z. A second trait is the willingness to act on those instincts. A third is to intuitively know that change is inevitable, so the "Just do It" attitude has to surface. As for long-term learning, it must always take place. Learning leads to change and growth, and once you stop you begin to lose your edge.

**Jane:** Hustle. Watching the money you make while watching the money you spend to make it. Also, having the personal discipline to save profits for the lean months is very important. It is easy to get excited when you are doing well. It is easy to work hard at my business because it gives me great satisfaction. I am not a scholar. I found a way to be creative and make a living.

**Angie:** A strong personal drive to get things done. I played basketball at Converse, so my personal drive may be an extension of my competitiveness in sports.

*Is your career field similar to your field of study at Converse?*

**Mary Alice:** Heaven's no. I majored in English at Converse, and had always wanted to be a writer. Mathematics was something that I abhorred, but as

president of a lumber company, I had to get over that.

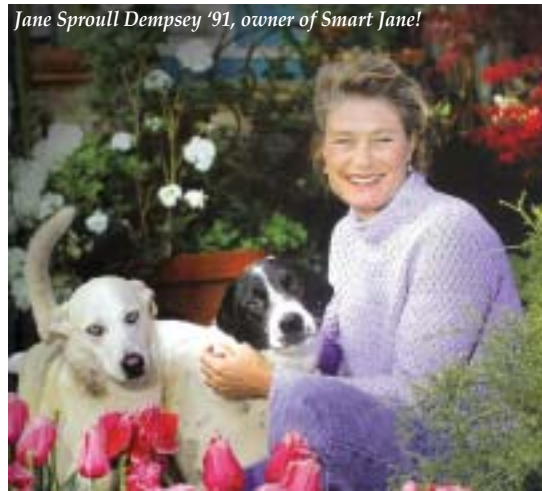
**Angie:** I majored in elementary education, and did actually teach for two years at a pre-school in Savannah, GA before my husband and I moved to Alabama.

**Jane:** As an art major, I really received the best training for my field. The degree from Converse was more than producing art work; I learned mechanics, balance, scale, and proportion. I could pick up on texture and line quality outside in the garden after learning how those aspects worked on paper or canvas. Converse was definitely the best education I could have asked for. I refer to my old art textbooks frequently.

**Kate:** I earned a BA in English from Converse and a MS in textile science from the University of Georgia. While at this moment I am not an English teacher or a textile designer, I lean heavily on both of my degrees in running Twigs. I believe that all of my experiences-both educational and career wise-paved the road that has led me to today.

### *What gave you your vision for starting your own business?*

**Kate:** I think the first vision was that I was not cut out for the corporate world and I began to plan my exit. My career path prior to Twigs was in a completely different direction. Out of graduate school, I was hired by JP Stevens in NYC in a sales and marketing capacity for their Consumer Products Division. The position led me to Ralph Lauren Home Furnishings. I was part of the original team that brought these products to the retail marketplace. I was then hired as promotion director for one of the Hearst magazines, and then came marriage. Marriage and textiles brought us to Greenville where I became the first US employee for an Australian-based textile



manufacturer. Having a corporate background and being educated in those disciplines was a distinct advantage for me.

I realized that for me, excessive time spent in meetings, preparing reports to be filed and gathering together committees was time spent in frustration. I am a hands-on person who wants to see what I have accomplished at the end of the day. The other thing I realized, at a relatively young age, was my huge capacity for work. I love to work, I love a challenge, and I love the impossible. My reasoning was this: if my talent was this huge capacity, that with age it would start to lessen. If I wanted

to recoup something for myself and family, I had better do it sooner than later. So I set out for the next step and found that a small floral shop in Greenville was to come on the market. As it would happen, this was the same floral shop that had employed me for a few months while I transitioned from New York into Greenville a few years back. I did at that moment have a vision of taking the whole strip center where the flower shop was located and turning it into a center for creative home services.

**Jane:** I really had no vision. I needed to keep my head above water and quick. A divorce early on left me feeling defeated and I had to prove to myself that I could make it. Now, I look back on it and cannot imagine my little life any other way.

**Angie:** Staying home with my two children was just not enough for me. I loved the Rosie O'Donnell talk show, and would watch it daily while preparing that evening's dinner. At that time, Rosie was spending a lot of time talking about



eBay, this new Internet auction site she had found. I wanted to see what this was for myself. One rare, quiet afternoon when the little ones were sleeping, I decided to log on to eBay for the first time and check out all the hype. There were hundreds of thousands of items for sale, just about everything you could imagine. I was thrilled with my new discovery. A bargain shopping site—I was in heaven! I have always prided myself on being able to find great deals and save money, now eBay was allowing me to do that out of my house instead of dragging two small children around the city. After about a month or so of buying, it hit me; “If all these other people can figure out how to sell their stuff on eBay, so can I.”

*Describe the planning process you went through in establishing your business.*

**Kate:** Once the decision was made to purchase the business, we began by creating a five year marketing plan, figuring financing, and developing a creative stance. My retail and manufacturing background helped with inventory assessment, buying plans, and margin evaluation.

**Jane:** I simply rolled the dice on a hope.

I had no plan and no clients. I borrowed money on a credit card and hoped for the best. Now with separate businesses I have learned to build business plans. I took classes at the local technical college and I have learned to read for business more than pleasure. The South Carolina Women’s Business Center has been very helpful with answering questions. Once you get going, those around you wish you well. You never know how many friends you have until you see the help they give you.

**Angie:** We already had the home computer and Internet hookup, so all I really needed at this point was a digital camera. My husband agreed to help me learn how to get the pictures from the camera to the computer, and worked with me to set up my own auctions. The first item I sold was a cat sweatshirt that was a Christmas gift that just didn’t suit me. It sold for around \$18. I was thrilled because I would have been lucky to get \$3 for it at a yard sale.

I really had stumbled into running my own business. When I started, it was just to earn a little extra fun money. I had no intention of really trying to take it to the business level; it just evolved. I

systematically started setting up an office so I could operate more efficiently. Shelving units, clothing racks, labels, and storage boxes were used to keep my inventory organized. I had certain days set aside to hunt for inventory and other days set aside for processing the orders. The evolution was quick.

*What sort of obstacles did you face during the early days of the business?*

**Mary Alice:** The learning curve for me was very steep. Even though the lumber company was family-owned, I really did not know that much about it. When my father died in 1975, my first husband was actually going to take his place but he had a stroke. Since I am an only child, the responsibility fell to me. I am not afraid in the least to ask questions, so I surrounded myself with people whom I could trust and continue to rely upon them for guidance.

**Angie:** As the business continued to grow, it began to take over my life and I made the mistake of letting it go too far. I was not spend enough time with my children, the housework was falling by the wayside, my husband was neglected, and the inventory was taking over our living space. I needed help and this business plan needed some serious changes in order to make it work.

First, I hired a housekeeper. Then I hired someone to help me process the huge amount of E-mail. To get the business out of our living space, we decided that the best course of action was to buy a second home that was completely for the business. I had enough for a down payment from my eBay earnings and luckily we found one less than a mile away from our home. After moving the business, it continued to grow by leaps and bounds. I hired three of my neighbors, who still work with me today, along with several other people. Two of them were also stay-at-home moms who needed something flexible enough to





*Kate Moore Tierney '78, founder of Twigs*

accommodate their children's schedules and even bring the kids to the office if necessary.

**Jane:** I made the mistake of doing everything on my own for too long. All the jobs, be they fresh flowers, gardens, or billing clients, were under my control. It has been difficult to let go and let others help me as my business has grown. It has also been difficult for my clientele to accept that my employees will be handling their needs instead of JANE. I am still working to wean my clientele off so much of my own energies by persuading them that my employees are quite capable and talented. It has also been a struggle to find those talented, capable employees for the salary my business can afford. Finally, the business is large enough now for new clients to come along who start their relationship with my company by working with its talented staff and not just the owner!

*How long did it take for the business to become profitable?*

**Angie:** My business was profitable from the first day, but that is because of the almost non-existent overhead costs on eBay. I started with \$50 and was going around to the local garage sales, estate sales, local retail store's clearance sales, and thrift stores looking for stock. I found I had an eye for the stuff the buyers on eBay wanted so it did not take too long



*Angie Williams Cash '89, with some of her eBay inventory*

before I was consistently selling more than \$3,000 per month in gross sales.

**Kate:** Debt is an amazing motivator. One of the early obstacles was cash flow; one of the everyday obstacles today is cash flow. Establishing a good line of credit is one way to help those stressful months when the sales are slower but you must bring in the goods to be ready for the busy season.

**Jane:** Because I kept the overhead very low by operating out of my farm, profits were quick. Now, with a large retail space and an in-town location, my overhead has reduced my margins. Two and a half years into this we are seeing strong growth with many of our fixed costs in computers, vehicles, etc. taken care of. Jane Dempsey Studios is strong. Smart Jane! retail is breaking even and smartjane.com is just beginning with upstart costs. I see it on the bright side; the businesses under the Jane Dempsey Studios umbrella are all at different stages; however, we all make a good living. We enjoy our jobs and with good management, growth and profitability are bound to follow. If you cannot pay yourself and you have been at something for more than 16 months, there is a big problem somewhere.

*What are some of the most frustrating things about running your own business?*

**Jane:** Managing growth is difficult. You

must grow upward in a vertical style. Horizontal growth is chasing your tail. Growth requires constant monitoring of what is happening around you in your town, with your competition and in the global market place. Finding the right help is a struggle, but once you have the right help you can see the benefits of it immediately. Keep your good help by appreciating them and letting them know it.

**Kate:** Probably the greatest challenge that I face on a daily basis is staffing. My staff is comprised mainly of women producing the second income for their families. Many days we have to work around sick children and family issues. We have a close-knit staff who are willing to help each other but it can be stressful when we are short handed and our customer needs are high.

*Has your success in entrepreneurship been as fulfilling as you thought it would?*

**Kate:** Not having a boss and being able to realize my own potential were some of the early rewards. Now I am being rewarded daily by working at becoming a servant leader in this little Twigs world. Another reward is that I live on the same property as our main location. Having that closeness affords me the opportunity to be both an involved mom and a hands-on business owner. I am able to adjust my calendar so that I have enough time for both arenas. I do not show many people my schedule as they would be speechless to see the strange hours I keep.

**Angie:** eBay has been a great fit for my lifestyle. I can tailor my auctions around out-of-town trips, still be a "room mom" for my children's classrooms, go to parties, grocery shop. Whatever comes up, I am able to work around my business.

**Jane:** 50% yes, 50% no. As an entrepreneur, you live your work. 📌

# COMMENCEMENT 2005



(l to r) Carissa Brown, Andrea Weatherman, Amy Stahl

As speaker for the 113th commencement exercises on May 22, former New Mexico State Senator Ramsay Lea Gorham '73 reflected upon her Converse years and encouraged the Class of 2005 to appreciate their own Converse experience. "I can clearly see how my

it or not, people around you throughout your life have been preparing you for the walk towards your destiny. You are our generation's harvest, and you have been trained well."

Graduating senior **Andrea Dawn**

years as a Converse student prepared me for life," said Ramsay. "An internship led to my first job in Washington, DC, and a study/travel trip to France helped me to gain a more broad understanding of a culture where people think differently than I do. But most importantly, many of my Converse professors served as the best mentors one could ever hope for. Whether you realize

**Weatherman** and community leader **Sara Ellis Lehner '74** were presented with the Mary Mildred Sullivan Award for their positive influence and special achievements within the community.

Andrea, a native of Due West, SC, is a cum laude music major. She was commended for her insight, dedication, and genuine desire to serve and to share with those around her. Her service includes extensive involvement with the Converse SGA, the service-oriented Crescent organization, Mortar Board, numerous mission trips, working as a tutor with elementary school students, and serving as a youth leadership counselor.

Sara was recognized for her service to the Spartanburg Day School and as a Converse volunteer, her work with the Spartanburg County Foundation to promote the Citizen Scholars Program, and her organization of community centers, book and study clubs, and continuing education programs.

**Carissa Lee Brown**, a music and English major from Charleston, SC, was



## Converse Athletics Extended Membership in CVAC Conference

The Converse All-Stars have put their own spin to the old phrase "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em" with their acceptance into the Carolinas-Virginia Athletics Conference (CVAC). For a number of years, the All-Stars have competed against, and beaten,

many of the CVAC teams. But on

April 13, the conference announced Converse as its newest member. The All-Stars will compete within the CVAC in women's soccer, cross-country, volleyball, and tennis.

Because Converse has been a frequent opponent for many CVAC teams in a variety of sports, Converse was a natural fit for affiliate membership into the conference. "Members of CVAC are very familiar with the Converse athletic program," said Dr. Alan Patterson, commissioner of the CVAC. "We know

that their addition to the conference will enhance student-athlete experience not only for Converse but current CVAC member participants as well."

Converse begins its CVAC relationship as an affiliate member and will benefit from a number of advantages such as opportunities to participate in CVAC regular season play, CVAC conference championship play, eligibility for automatic qualification to NCAA Division II tournaments, and the ability to host conference championship tournament play.

"CVAC is recognized both regionally and nationally as a very competitive NCAA Division II conference, and membership is a significant step forward for the Converse College All-Star program," said Dr. Tom Reeves, interim president of Converse. "Our All-Stars have much to contribute both athletically and academically. We have already established a solid record in competing with CVAC teams, and our cross country team has been named to the 2004 All-Academic Team by the NCAA Division-II Cross Country Coaches Association."

presented with the Pi Kappa Lambda Award, which is given to the senior with the highest academic record in the Petrie School of Music.

**Amy Lynn Stahl**, an English major from Orlando, FL, was awarded the Elford C. Morgan Award for having the highest academic record in the College of Arts and Sciences.

**Dr. Laura Feitzinger Brown**, associate professor of English, was presented with the Kathrynne Amelia Brown Award, which is given to a faculty member who has excelled in the classroom.



Ramsay Lea Gorham '73

## Montgomery Renovation Nears Completion; Cabin Restoration Begins

Renovation to the Montgomery Student Center is on track to be completed by October. Plans include a cozy fireplace for the main lobby, the new Marsha Gibbs Chapel, a cyber cafe, student offices, a fitness center, a game room, an enhanced bookstore, computer stations, larger gathering spaces, a new seminar room and a conference room, enhanced space for the Career Services Office, the Day Student lounge, a multipurpose room, the Campus Life Office, and a new and improved post office.

Converse has also begun renovation of the much-loved log cabin. The project will include a new roof, restoring the logs, refinishing the floors, adding two externally accessible restrooms, incorporating handicap accessibility, new heating and air, and new lighting.

"The exciting part of this project is that we are not only refurbishing the cabin, but also the amphitheatre, which will include a new stage, redefined seating, electricity,

and a new sound barrier behind the stage," said John Hegman, vice president for finance and administration. "The combination of these two projects will give our students a wonderful venue for activities while protecting an historical quality of Converse."

Construction is expected to be complete early in the Fall Term. The project is being funded by a gift from an anonymous donor in honor of his spouse, a Converse alumna.



## Campus Community Walks to Beat Cancer



Jennifer Wahl '07 (left) and Wofford student Leah Harris at College Town Relay for Life

At 7 p.m. on April 15, members of the Converse community joined with their peers of Wofford College, Spartanburg Methodist College, and USC Upstate for the inaugural College Town Relay for Life—an all night marathon walk to benefit the American Cancer Society. The walk was held at Wofford.

"We had six teams from Converse: Crescent, Mortar Board, Project Serve/

Rotaract, the Freshmen Class, ROTC, and Faculty/Staff," said Jennifer Wahl '07, who served as chair of the event for Converse. "The teams set up campsites for the night, and many sold food and drinks to raise money at the event. We began with a survivor lap and a caregiver lap around the makeshift track. Then all of the teams had to have at least one person on the track at all times throughout the night."

The goal was to raise \$20,000, all of which went to the American Cancer Society. Each college was charged with raising \$5,000 towards the goal. "We held a letter writing campaign to let people know what we were doing, and in return they sent donations in honor or memory of someone who has been affected by cancer," said Jennifer. "We also sold luminaries, Relay for Life bracelets, and stars and moons which were in honor or in memory of someone." The goals were met, and

planning a College Town Relay for Life for next year is already in the works.

Cancer awareness is a passion for Jennifer, who is interning with the American Cancer Society this summer. "My mother passed away March 10, 2004 from complications of breast cancer," she said. "She had cancer from the time I was in the fifth grade so this is something I have experienced for the past ten years. I participated in Relay for Life with my church in Smyrna, GA and have participated in the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure for the past nine years. It pains me to say so, but you really do not become passionate about something until it directly affects you. I sympathize with others who have gone through or are going through the same thing that my family went through and I want to do everything in my power to provide relief or comfort to those suffering."



## Dear Fellow Alumnae,

I am honored to be your new president of the Converse College Alumnae Association. Carroll Sibley Clancy '71 was a wonderful leader the last two years and will continue to share her wisdom on our board as immediate past president. My goal is to continue her work of invigorating our Converse Clubs and encouraging all of our alumnae to come back to visit the campus

and see the new and exciting improvements. If you live too far away for a visit, don't forget to check out the marvelous Converse website at [www.converse.edu](http://www.converse.edu) and read the online magazine *Connections*. We alumnae are the best possible ambassadors for our College. Our student referrals to the admissions office are producing high numbers of entering freshmen each year. Keep those names coming in and help build our enrollment. Please continue to spread the word to young women about the benefits of a Converse College education.

In May, I had the opportunity to meet and speak to the class of 2005. What a talented, bright, and enthusiastic group of women

they are! The liberal arts education Converse alumnae have received has prepared us for life's unexpected challenges. Converse has empowered us with organizational and interpersonal skills, varied interests and a wide range of knowledge. From volunteer opportunities, to politics, to professional achievements, to being a school "room mother," we have used our liberal arts foundation to improve the world for those around us. We are prepared for any challenges we may face!

With the arrival of Betsy Fleming as our ninth president in October, we are poised for an exciting future. Please join me in welcoming President Fleming to the Converse community as we embrace the future of the College with our enthusiasm and support.

*Sandra Sherard Bethea*

Sandra Sherard Bethea '67  
President, Converse Alumnae Association

## Call for Nominations: Alumnae Board and 2006 Alumnae Achievement Awards

Please participate in the process of nominating candidates for the 2006 Converse College Alumnae Board slate and Alumnae Achievement Awards. All alumnae are eligible for nomination.

Nominees to the alumnae board should be willing to give their time, energy, resources, and service to assist the board in achieving its goals. They should be advocates of the liberal arts and the education of women, embrace the mission of Converse College, and inspire other alumnae to follow suit. The Nominating Committee, chaired by Palmer Davison Ball '84, will meet in September to begin the process of selecting the slate for election at the annual meeting on Saturday, April 29, 2006, during Reunion Weekend.

The following positions will be filled:

- Secretary
- 1st vice president and Nominating Committee chair
- 2nd vice president and national club chair
- Golden Club president

- Converse II representative
- Graduate degree representative
- 1950's decade representatives (3)
- 1960's decade representative (1)
- 1970's decade representatives (4)
- 1980's decade representatives (3)
- 1990's decade representatives (2)
- 2000's decade representatives (4)
- Board members at large (3)

Alumnae Achievement Awards will also be presented during Reunion Weekend. Alumnae from classes ending in 1's and 6's, members of the Golden Club, and members of the Class of 2005 are eligible for consideration. All nominations will be forwarded to Polly Hill Woodham '51, chair of the Records and Recognition Committee. Nominees not selected for the 2006 awards will remain in the pool for future consideration.

Awards to be presented (visit the Converse Website for a description of each award):

- Distinguished Alumna Award
- Mae Elizabeth Kilgo Spirit Award
- Community Service Award

- Career Achievement Award
- Career Achievement in Music Award
- Converse 100
- Star Award

Please mail, fax, or E-mail the following information by **AUGUST 25, 2005**:

- Name of nominee and class year
- Position/award for which she is proposed
- Brief remarks about the nominee

MAIL: Converse College Alumnae Office  
580 E. Main Street  
Spartanburg, SC 29302

FAX: (864) 596-9735

E-MAIL: [melissa.johnson@converse.edu](mailto:melissa.johnson@converse.edu)

Nomination forms are also available online:

[www.converse.edu/  
awardnominations.asp](http://www.converse.edu/awardnominations.asp)

AND

[www.converse.edu/  
alumnaeboardnominations.asp](http://www.converse.edu/alumnaeboardnominations.asp)

# Come Travel With Us!



from medieval Cefalù to charming Corleone; from beautiful Bagheria to the magnificent mosaics of Monreale. Dive into Sicilian culture and tradition with a hands-on lesson in ceramics, antiques restoration, or cooking.

*The Converse College Alumnae Office and the Wofford College Alumni Office are jointly planning this trip through AHL.*

## SICILY: THE CULTURAL SEASON

*December 3-12, 2005*

In 1787, the poet Goethe described Palermo as "the most beautiful promontory in the world." Cradled in a wide bay, Sicily's bustling capital, Palermo, is an extraordinary cultural crossroads and a living reflection of its rich history. In the 10th century, Palermo was a multicultural metropolis and the world's second largest city (after Constantinople). Hundreds of years later, Norman culture flourished and in 1943, Sicily's strategic location attracted the attention of World War II Allied Forces. Explore the island's cultural riches from the ancient archeological site of the Valley of Temples, to the Allied landing beaches;

## GREECE 2006: FOLLOWING THE FOOTSTEPS OF PAUL

*May 19-June 2, 2006*

Trace the Apostle Paul's journey and gain a renewed appreciation for his mission, message, and ministry by exploring the great cities of Classic and Hellenistic Greece. Explore the Scriptures in their original setting of Philippi, Thessaloniki, Berea, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, and Patmos, where pivotal events of the early church come alive. Visit Vergina, site of the royal tombs; Meteora, with its towering monasteries; and Delphi, shrine of the ancient god Apollo. Of course, no tour would be complete without a cruise of the wonderful Greek islands. Led by Dr. David Sparks, president of Footsteps

SAVE THE DATE FOR  
**Reunion  
2006!!**

**April 28-29, 2006**

**Golden Club, classes ending in 1's and 6's, and the Class of 2005**

For more information, contact Elizabeth G. Simons, associate director of alumnae, at [elizabeth.simons@converse.edu](mailto:elizabeth.simons@converse.edu) or 864-596-9058.

Ministries, and his wife Elizabeth, who will help relate Paul's message to today's world while taking you off the beaten path to experience Greek food and culture to the fullest extent.

*Contact Melissa Daves Johnson, director of alumnae, at [melissa.johnson@converse.edu](mailto:melissa.johnson@converse.edu) or (864) 596-9055 for more information.*



## Converse-Wofford Couples, Be Our Guests!

**The Wofford  
Homecoming Street Party**

**October 7, 2005**

The Converse College hospitality tent will be located at the corner of W. Main and Magnolia Streets.



For reservations: 1-800-584-9098 or [melissa.johnson@converse.edu](mailto:melissa.johnson@converse.edu)

## Join us at a Converse Club Event in your area! Fall 2005 Alumnae Event Schedule

*(This is a preliminary list. Additional events will be announced soon.)*

- September 6 Nashville Luncheon
- September 7 Chattanooga Luncheon
- September 7 Johnson City Wine and Cheese
- September 14 Gastonia Luncheon
- September 28 Greenwood Luncheon
- October 1-2 Fall Meeting of the Alumnae Association Board in Spartanburg
- October 7 Converse-Wofford Couples Hospitality Tent in Spartanburg
- October 12-19 Fall Foliage trip to New England
- October 27 Hickory Luncheon
- November 10 Pittsburg Luncheon
- November 20 Golden Club Luncheon in Spartanburg

**December 15, 2004**  
**Alumnae Christmas Party**  
**Charlotte, NC**

Hosted by Bob and Joe Anne Smith Cole '62

*(l to r) Marian McGowan Nisbet '62, Melissa Daves Jolly '69, Martha Hackney Grodzicki '64, Joe Anne Smith Cole '62, Jane Jackson Avinger '62*



**January 18, 2005**  
**Cocktail Party**  
**Florence, SC**

Hosted by Robin and Barbara Holman Stith '70

*(l to r) Robin and Barbara Holman Stith '70 with Dr. Tom Reeves*



# ALUMNAE EVENTS

**February 15, 2005**  
**Luncheon at the City Club**  
**Washington, DC**

*Attendees: Dawn Barnard '94, Elise Neil Bengston '83, Lynn Chambers '79, Jessica Eggmann '00, Phyllis Perrin Harris '82, Nancy Posey Hughes '80, Melissa Daves Jolly '69, Fran Lyle Kelly '64, Katy Krueger '99, Rufus and Peggy Bradford Long '49, Elizabeth Jackman Noyes '69, Kirstie Waugh Tucker '96, Helen Walker '98, and Anne Waters Westbrook '63*



**February 10, 2005**  
**Wine and Cheese Party**  
**Orangeburg, SC**

Hosted by George and Bessie Wolfe Hill '48, pictured.



**February 16, 2005**  
**Luncheon at Petit Louis Bistro**  
**Baltimore, MD**

*(l to r) Row 1: Anne Gilliam Carroll '62, Esther Sharp Hearn '73, Patty Cornbrooks Link '70, Barbara Cornbrooks '73; Row 2: Joyce Seeley Barnett '60, Laura Matthews Pappas '98, Melissa Daves Jolly '69*



**February 24, 2005**  
**Alumnae Musical Event**  
**Rock Hill, SC**

Hosted by Martin and Harriet "Sister" Marshall Goode '59

*(l to r) Dr. Tom Reeves, Claire Fisher '04, Elizabeth Simons, Grazier Connors Rhea '74, Ann Davidson Marion '47, Sister Marshall Goode '59, Jeannie Marion and Martin Goode*



**March 3, 2005**  
**Cocktail Party at Twigs**  
**Greenville, SC**

*(l to r) Adelaide Capers Johnson '69, Andy and Harriet Messer Goldsmith '69, Bryce Copeland Mazur '01 and Rogan Martin*



**March 3, 2005**  
**Garden Luncheon at Twigs**  
**Greenville, SC**

*(l to r) Kate Moore Tierney '77, Trish Hemingway Campbell '58, and Dr. Tom Reeves*



**March 16, 2005**  
**Luncheon at The Vineyards**  
**Winston-Salem, NC**

*Jenny Kimbrel Bunn '67 with Dr. Tom Reeves*



**March 17, 2005**  
**Cocktail Party**  
**Raleigh, NC**

Hosted by Ken and Martha Beach Howard '80

*Attendees: Katherine Smoak Brook '89, Carroll Sibley Clancy '71, Julia Jones Daniels '53, Julia Riddle Elks '92, Marcie Blackburn Gordon '80, Rebekah Hilton Hans '03, Carlisle Caughman Harvard '63, Anna Watkins Hattaway '62, Martha Beach Howard '80, Barbara Baker Kennedy '68, Craig Harris McDaniel '65, Charlotte Smith Purrington '69, Carolyn Riddick '66, Boopie Poole Rose '63, Helen Timmons Rose '73, Margaret Maxwell Smith '54 and Fran Tracy-Walls '68*



**March 31, 2005**  
**Cocktail Party**  
**Richmond, VA**

Hosted by Drake and Kathy Richards Watson '76

*(l to r) Melissa Daves Jolly '69, Katy Krueger '99, Diane Ansley, Dr. Tom Reeves, Kathy Richards Watson '76 and Drake Watson*



**April 7, 2005**  
**Cocktail Party at the Capital City Club**  
**Atlanta, GA**

Hosted by Gay Simmons Colyer '73 and Liz White Calvert '84

*(l to r) Gay Simmons Colyer '73, Dr. Tom Reeves, Nancy Keep Tait '50, and Liz White Calvert '84*



**May 5, 2005**  
**Alumnae Tea with Converse Musicians at The Woodfield Inn**  
**Flat Rock, NC**

*(l to r) Bunny Haden Keenan '62, Corenthia Brewton King '84, Jean Hooper Crook '44 and Polly Hill Woodham '51*



**May 19, 2005**  
**Senior Candlelight Dinner**  
**Spartanburg, SC**

Members of the Class of 2005 were honored guests at the Senior Candlelight Dinner held at the Piedmont Club through the generosity of Nancy Bain Cote '79.

*(l to r) Jennifer Telleri, Anne Marie Harnett, Katie McDonald and Bethany Nichols*



This form is also available at [www.converse.edu](http://www.converse.edu).

## Refer a Student to Converse

Name of student \_\_\_\_\_

Street address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip code \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Name of high school \_\_\_\_\_

Year of high school graduation \_\_\_\_\_

Areas of interest \_\_\_\_\_

Any relationship to Converse? \_\_\_\_\_

## Join the Converse Network

Please check areas in which you are interested.

- Alumnae board
- Development/fundraising
- Class representative
- Converse Clubs
- Serve on an Alumnae Telephone Committee
- Assist admissions with student recruitment
- Provide an internship for current students
- Host a reception for prospective students
- Attend a college fair in your area
- Call prospective students
- Provide contacts with hiring personnel

## Alumnae Information Update

Please include relevant dates and information in order for your life event to be published. Please type or print all information.

Name (first, maiden, last) \_\_\_\_\_

Class year \_\_\_\_\_

Street address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip code \_\_\_\_\_

Home phone \_\_\_\_\_

Work phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

### Vacation Address

Street address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip code \_\_\_\_\_

## Marriage Announcement

(no engagements, please)

Name (first, maiden, last)

\_\_\_\_\_

Class year \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse's full name

\_\_\_\_\_

Date of marriage

\_\_\_\_\_

## Birth / Adoption Announcement

(please circle)

Mother's name (first, maiden, last)

\_\_\_\_\_

Class year \_\_\_\_\_

Father's name

\_\_\_\_\_

Daughter's/son's name (first, middle, last)

\_\_\_\_\_

Birth date \_\_\_\_\_

## Career Change

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Company \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip code \_\_\_\_\_

Work phone \_\_\_\_\_

## Advanced Degree

Degree earned \_\_\_\_\_

Date awarded \_\_\_\_\_

College/university \_\_\_\_\_

## Death Announcement

(attach additional sheet if necessary)

Name of deceased (first, maiden, last)

\_\_\_\_\_

Class year \_\_\_\_\_ Date of death \_\_\_\_\_

Place of death \_\_\_\_\_

Surviving relative \_\_\_\_\_

Address of surviving relative

\_\_\_\_\_

## Mail or fax this form to:

Converse College Alumnae Office  
580 East Main Street  
Spartanburg, SC 29302  
fax: (864) 596-9735

You can also recommend a student by  
sending an E-mail to [admissions@converse.edu](mailto:admissions@converse.edu).

# REUNION 2005: PAINT THE WORLD PURPLE!

## 2005 ALUMNAE ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS



**DISTINGUISHED ALUMNA AWARD**  
*Elizabeth Grier Gower '45*



**CONVERSE 100 AWARD**  
*Elizabeth Jennings Caughman '30*



**CAREER ACHIEVEMENT AWARD**  
*Sandra Kopp McNutt '75*



**CONVERSE 100 AWARD**  
*Nancy Orders Smith '75*



**CAREER ACHIEVEMENT IN MUSIC AWARD**  
*Nancy Reep Tait '50*



**MAE ELIZABETH KILGO SPIRIT AWARD**  
*Mary Alice Ingram Busch '50*



**COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD**  
*Tara LeWynn Sturdivant '85*



**STAR AWARD**  
*Lesa Underwood '90*

Alumnae with class years ending in a five or a zero, the Golden Club, the Class of 2004, and their guests returned to Converse for Reunion 2005 on April 29-30. New events this year included a round table discussion on entrepreneurship led by Haidee Clark Stith '76, representing the SC Women's Business Center; tours of the new Phifer Science Hall and newly refurbished Mickel Library and Residence Hall lobbies; and an ice cream social and a tour of the newly-renovated Cudd Residence Hall.

The weekend also included the Golden Club Luncheon, Classes without Quizzes, the All-Class cocktail party and All-Star silent auction, a play in Hazel B. Abbott, class meetings, All-Class Assembly and Memorial Service in Twichell, Awards Luncheon, alumnae recital—all culminating in individual class dinners on Saturday night. During the Awards Luncheon, the 2005 alumnae achievement awards were presented. (Recipients are pictured on facing page.)



# A Desire to Support Converse

"During my four years as a Converse student, I never had a bad day," said Dot Ormond Grier '50. "Between my sophomore and junior year, I actually came close to transferring to Duke University because my parents wanted me to be closer to their home in Greenville, NC. I had been accepted by Duke and had given up my room, but when the time came, I just could not leave Converse."

It was that strong bond to her alma mater that encouraged Dot and her husband Tom to include Converse in their estate plan. Together, the Griers have established a charitable remainder unitrust earmarked to strengthen the College's endowment. "We feel a desire to support Converse, not an obligation," said Tom. "We specifically wanted to do what we could to strengthen the endowment because it is what enables Converse to continue to invest in programs and facilities."

The charitable remainder unitrust also presents benefits to the Griers; including a substantial tax deduction and a steady income for the couple. "The tax benefits are advantageous, but we would have done this even if those benefits were not available," said Tom.

The Griers have remained close to Converse throughout the years and are rotating off a term as members of the College's Board of Visitors. "I am extremely impressed by today's Converse students," said Dot. "They are not only exceptionally intelligent, but are very savvy as well. They make me even more pleased that Tom and I could make this gift to Converse."

Friendships made between Converse students often last lifetimes, something of which Dot is living proof. "A few of us did go through a natural period of drifting apart after graduation, but over the last ten years, a small group of us have made of point of getting together at our house on Kiawah Island. Our neighbor says that he can tell when our Converse friends are here

because of all the laughing going on."

To learn more about planned giving opportunities, contact the Office of Development at (864) 596-9018 or E-mail [development@converse.edu](mailto:development@converse.edu).



Tom and Dot Grier

## A Birthday Celebration



Surprise 80th Birthday Celebration at Converse College for Don Bain, former Converse trustee (1969-86) and chairman of the board. The Bain Room was dedicated in honor of Mr. Bain in 1992 for his inspired and caring service to Converse; and his portrait was installed in the room upon his 80th birthday in June. Bain's daughter, Nancy Bain Coté '79, is a member of the Converse College Alumnae Association Board and serves with her husband, Paul, on the Board of Visitors.

(l to r) Paul and Nancy Bain Coté '79, John Shallow and Anne Bain, Don and Barrie Bain, Elizabeth and Kittler Zibart.

# It's All About YOU!

A little bit can go a long way in raising the level of alumnae participation for supporting Converse College. We often hear alumnae say that since they are unable to make a big gift, they cannot make an impact. But because alumnae participation is the key to our success, a \$5, \$10, or \$25 gift is just as important as a \$500 or \$5,000 gift. In fact, during the 2004-2005 fiscal year, 70% of the gifts given to Converse by alumnae were \$100 or less.

Why is alumnae participation such an important statistic? A higher alumnae participation rate can go a long way in boosting our *U.S. News & World Report* ranking. The magazine uses the alumnae giving participation rate as its only indicator of alumnae satisfaction in their alma mater in its annual rankings of colleges and universities. In addition, Converse applies for foundation grants on a regular basis, and our alumnae participation rate is often a significant factor in deciding if we are awarded the grant.

As Converse aspires to the prominence of a national institution, our goal for alumnae participation this year is 35%. We ended the 2004-2005 fiscal year with 30% alumnae participation.

How can you participate?

#### Online:

You can log on to [www.converse.edu](http://www.converse.edu) to use our secure online system in making a credit card gift.

#### By Phone:

You can make your gift by calling 864-596-9018.

#### By Mail:

Make checks payable to Converse College.

#### Mailing Address:

Development Office  
Converse College  
580 East Main Street  
Spartanburg, SC 29302

## A Will: Exercising Your Legal Right

Tom and Dot ('50) Grier have provided a life-income gift that will ultimately benefit Converse. This is in addition to their other estate planning to provide for family. While a charitable remainder trust may not be for you, personally directing how you want your assets to be distributed in the event of death is:

Having a will is a privilege and right—one that more than 70% of American adults fail to exercise. You spend your life working, accumulating, and caring for family and loved ones. Shouldn't you, and not state law, determine how your property will be distributed?

#### Excuses —

- "Not today! Tomorrow's soon enough."
- "I don't have enough money to worry about it."
- "If I make a will, I'm inviting death."
- "Family members know what I want."

#### Effects of Ignoring Your Privilege —

- If married, as little as one-third of your estate could actually go to your spouse
- An inflexible legislative formula determines distribution regardless of intentions and promises made
- State law determines who will administer your estate

#### Benefits of Exercising Your Right —

- Arrange distribution of your assets to maximize family security—perhaps providing more for a family member with special needs
- Name the person to administer your estate and ensure distribution according to your wishes
- Can provide support for charitable interests such as Converse College

A will can be a very powerful instrument. You decide how your estate will be distributed upon death; the decision is not left in the hands of lawmakers. Thoughtfully prepared and carefully drafted, a will can provide peace of mind for you and your beneficiaries. And careful planning today ensures that your desire to provide a legacy for Converse's future will happen.

## An Option for Life Income: The Charitable Gift Annuity

Unitrusts are not the only life-income gifts. With a charitable gift annuity, you can make a gift to Converse College and receive a stream of income for life—for yourself or for one or two beneficiaries. The benefits are:

- Most importantly, you make a significant gift to Converse
- Payments you receive will never change and are guaranteed for life
- Your cash-flow is increased
- You receive an income-tax deduction in the year you fund the annuity
- A portion of each payment you receive is tax-free
- Funding with appreciated stock spreads capital gains tax over your life expectancy

#### BENEFITS OF A CONVERSE GIFT ANNUITY

AGE OF BENEFICIARY	ANNUAL YIELD
65	6.0%
70	6.5%
75	7.1%
80	8.0%
85	9.5%
87+	10.0%

The chart above shows the current payment rates at selected ages.

Please contact Dianne Ansley, director of planned giving, at [dianne.ansley@converse.edu](mailto:dianne.ansley@converse.edu) or (864) 577-2088 for detailed illustrations based on your individual situation.

# New Steinways Arrive at Converse

by Stephen G. Reed, NYT Regional Newspapers

They tried Chopin and Bach. They tried Debussy and Rachmaninoff. They tried German folk songs.

With each selection, it seemed, the delegation from Converse College heard something new: a fine, high note that sounded with exceptional clarity, or low tones that lingered just a little too long.

Moving among five grand pianos in a spare white room at the Steinway & Sons factory in New York City, Dr. Douglas Weeks, who heads the keyboard division of Converse's Petrie School of Music, listened for minuscule aural cues to indicate which piano would be the perfect purchase for Converse.

"I think it's a huge responsibility because we're going to have this piano for a long time," said Weeks, visibly wrestling with the decision.

He and four others from Spartanburg—Dr. Joe Hopkins, dean of the Petrie School of Music School; Pat Case of Case Brothers pianos; and Kurt and Nelly Zimmerli, who were buying the piano for Converse—came to Steinway in January to make the selection. The factory, a red brick complex in a wind-swept industrial area of northern Queens near LaGuardia Airport, is the birthplace of all Steinway grand pianos in North America.

The group saw a new, curvaceous piano rim being made—a process that involves cementing together 18 layers of maple strips, each one 3/16 of an inch wide and 21 feet long, with a special glue. The strips, which altogether require six men to lift, are then bent into the rim's distinctive shape by a hand-tightened press.

They got a lesson in the exotic wood veneers that can adorn a Steinway—rosewood, mahogany, and bubinga. They watched a worker match veneers and saw a technician fine-tuning a finished piano, adjusting the felt hammers and metal wires just so. But tourism wasn't really the point. The point was choosing a piano.

The Zimmerlis donated two Steinways to Converse—a new grand piano and a small piano, manufactured elsewhere, for a practice room. The \$100,000 gift recognizes their 50th wedding anniversary last year. "We both love music, so we came up with that idea," Nelly Zimmerli said.

For Converse, the acquisitions mean an opportunity to become a Steinway School, joining a list of 49 institutions where Steinways predominate, including The Juilliard School in New York, the Yale School of Music, the University of Georgia, and the University of Maryland. Hopkins said the designation would help attract top students and faculty by showing a commitment to excellence in instruments. Along with the Zimmerlis' gift, Converse has received \$125,000 from Bill and Rhett Morrison Lowndes '54 to update the music school's climate control system to better care for the pianos. The Lowndeses have challenged the community to match their gift.

Personal selection of the Steinway grand is important because not all pianos are exactly alike. While a piano can be tuned and adjusted, "the thing that can't be changed is its inherent quality," said Sally Coveleskie, Steinway's director of institutional sales. "You look for the voice of that particular piano."

Weeks took the job seriously. Although the others offered opinions, Weeks, with his practiced ear and expert touch, could

Dr. Douglas Weeks tests pianos at the Steinway factory.





distinguish discrepancies imperceptible to the casual listener. “I’m interested in the sound, but that’s not just a sound,” he said. “It’s the sound from the softest to the loudest. It’s the evenness of the sound from top to bottom.” And then there’s the touch. “That’s where you get really subjective, because pianists have different techniques,” he said. “In the end, I think I have to choose what works for me.”

Getting there wasn’t an easy process. The options were dubbed A to E and lined up along a wall in the selection room. Weeks played each one in turn, beginning with E, with a variety of compositions to test everything from pounding fortissimo to softest pianissimo. “I always thought if you buy a Steinway, you buy a Steinway, and that’s it,” said Zimmerli, chairman emeritus of Kusters Corp. and a Converse College board member. “Most people don’t know every instrument is different. If Steinway would just ship one down, we would think it sounds beautiful.” But given a choice, even among exceptional brand-new instruments, everyone developed opinions.

always comes back to it.”

After several rounds, Hopkins tried to narrow the choices by lowering the lids on less favored pianos. Weeks, not ready to relinquish them, kept playing all five. During a quiet moment, when Weeks stepped aside, Zimmerli took to the benches and treated the room to a round of German melodies.

When the group adjourned to lunch, Weeks sat silently as the others chatted over sandwiches and carrot cake. He slipped away to spend more time with the pianos. In the end, it came down to A and E. Weeks — indeed, everyone — preferred the “bright” sound of E. But Weeks preferred the feel of A’s keyboard.

Steinway technician Sylvester Sammartine stepped in, making almost imperceptible adjustments to E. Weeks played it, and played it again. His brow furrowed, his hands moving with liquid smoothness. Everyone sat rapt. Weeks had played for three hours, more or less. In minutes, the group would have to depart for the airport

and the flight back to Spartanburg. “It’s got a lot of clarity,” Weeks said. “It’s never harsh. A little bright, but it always has that singing — always. Doesn’t it?” The others unanimously agreed.

Weeks played E some more. “It was the first one I sat down at, and I got this beautiful singing sound that I really wanted to hear,” he said. He played a few more bars, as if cementing a bond. “It has a lush sound,” Weeks said. Kurt Zimmerli clapped his hands decisively. “Let’s go,” he said. And with that, piano E—known by its unique serial number, 568778—was chosen for Converse College. 📌

Converse welcomed pianist Ann Schein as clinician for the 2005 Piano Clinic shortly after the arrival of the new Steinways. Ms. Schein taught participants in the lobby of Blackman Hall, with an audience of students, teachers, and community members who enjoyed seeing the pianos used for the first time. Schein served on the piano faculty of the Peabody Conservatory from 1980-2000 and is currently an Artist-Faculty member of the Aspen Music Festival. In addition to her teaching, she has performed with leading orchestras and conductors around the world.



# Faculty Retirees

As the 2004-2005 academic year came to a close, three long-standing members of the Converse faculty bid farewell to Converse. Throughout their Converse tenures, Drs. Anita Davis, John Turnbull, and Jeff Willis have touched the lives of many Converse students, and will certainly be remembered fondly for their contributions.

## Dr. Anita P. Davis Charles A. Dana Professor of Education



Upon arriving at Converse in 1969, Dr. Anita P. Davis provided key assistance in establishing the College's first major in elementary education. She served as a member of numerous campus organizations including the Faculty Senate, the Tenure and Promotions Committee, search committees for various faculty positions, and the Teacher Education Advisory Council. She was also an energetic member of

National Women's History Month and National Library Month activities.

For many years, Dr. Davis advised the Converse chapter of Kappa Delta Epsilon, which is designed to unite education students and professional educators. She was adopted by Converse residence halls and by Mortar Board. She directed the Athena Program for gifted students for two years, instituted and directed a day care program for two years at Converse, and made more than 100 local and national presentations. She served as department chair for 19 years. In 1986, she was presented with the Kathryn Amelia Brown Award for excellence in teaching.

A prolific writer, Dr. Davis has authored, co-authored, and edited more than 80

books and booklets. She has also co-edited an online journal and a state journal. One of her recent books, *REAL HEROES: Rutherford County Men Who Made the Supreme Sacrifice During World War II*, was a tribute to her father who was killed in World War II, and was the third best-selling book in Rutherford County, NC, for 2002. *Chimney Rock/ Rutherford County* was the county's best-selling book in 2002, despite its publication only 60 days before the end of the year. Many of her books have been written specifically for educators, including three 400-page test preparation guides. Dr. Davis was instrumental in the publication of the first children's biographies of Harriet Quimby, the first licensed American woman pilot.

## Faculty Accomplishments

Dr. Jeff Barker represented Converse at the spring 2005 meeting of the South Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities Chief Academic Officers group, where he was elected president of the group for 2005-2006.

Mac Boggs' digital artwork has been selected to appear in the 4th Lessedra World Art Print Annual in Sofia, Bulgaria. A panel of international judges selected artists from around the world.

Dr. Laura Feitzinger Brown presented a paper at Cambridge University, England, as part of an international conference sponsored by the Renaissance Society of America and the Society for Renaissance Studies (UK).

Karen Hill was appointed to the Board of Directors for the Christian Performing Artists' Fellowship, which oversees the MasterWorks Festival USA in Indiana and MasterWorks Europe in Winchester, England.

Dr. Jerry Howe co-authored "Cl2O4 in the Stratosphere: A Module from the Physical Chemistry On-Line Project," which was published in the Journal of Chemical Education. The project was a four-week long

collaborative experiment in computational chemistry that was developed and tested over the last six years by the authors.

Steve Hunt recently traveled to the national Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival in Washington, DC, where he performed duties as Region IV National Playwriting Program Chair. In addition, he recently directed Converse II Theatre major Dr. Deborah Gideon and guest artist Peggy Magarahan in the play "LOST" by Mary Louise Wilson for the South Carolina Psychological Association Convention in Charleston, SC.

Dr. Susan Lyle performed St. Matthew Passion with the Bach Chor Oppenau in Stuttgart, Germany and has been invited to present a lecture on Balancing the Vocal Registers at the Sixth International Congress of Voice Teachers in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Teresa Prater and David Zacharias had artwork accepted into the 30th Annual Anderson County Arts Center Juried Art Exhibition. Zacharias also had a piece of art accepted into the 13th Annual Strictly

Functional Pottery National, a nationally juried exhibition, in Lancaster, PA.

Dr. Siegwart Reichwald is serving as editor for Mendelssohn Performance Studies (Indiana University Press) and will contribute articles on "Mendelssohn as Orchestral Conductor" and "Mendelssohn's Tempo Markings" to this edition.

Susan Tekulve has had a literary travel essay set in Italy accepted for publication with Puerto Del So, a literary journal in New Mexico with acceptance rates as low as one percent.

Dr. Melissa Walker was one of the invited speakers for a symposium celebrating the 150th anniversary of the South Historical Society, the centennial of the South Carolina Department of Archives and History, and the seventy-fifth anniversary of the South Carolina Historical Association.

Dr. Douglas Weeks taught at the Cairo Conservatory of Music and at Helwan University in Cairo, Egypt for three weeks in December as a Fulbright Senior Specialist, presenting master classes and lectures as well as teaching individual private lessons.

## Dr. Jeffrey R. Willis

Andrew Helmus  
Distinguished Professor of History



Before joining the Converse College faculty in 1967, Dr. Jeffrey Willis taught at The Citadel and Randolph-Macon Woman's College. The Greenville, SC, native brought a passion for history to Converse and to the Spartanburg community.

Dr. Willis is a past president of the South Carolina Historical Association and is currently president of the Spartanburg County Historical Association. He has served as a board member of the Greenville Historical Society and the Historic Greenville Foundation, and has been a member of the Walnut Grove Plantation Committee. He is the author of *Spartanburg, South Carolina (The Postcard History Series)* and *Converse College (The College History Series)*. He has published numerous articles and essays on local history and also serves as editor of *The New Greenville Mountaineer* and *The Papers and Proceedings of the Greenville County Historical Society*. He was also editor of *The Drover's Post*, the newsletter of the Spartanburg County Historical Association, for many years. An in-demand speaker in the Upstate, Dr. Willis has regularly presented programs for community organizations.

Dr. Willis has taught a wide range of courses in modern European history with specialties in British history, Russian history, Irish history, and 20th century Europe. He is the founder of the popular Converse London Term, and has directed the program since its inception in 1970. He has also taken students abroad to Ireland and Russia.

In 1991, Dr. Willis was presented with the Kathyne Amelia Brown Award for excellence in teaching.

# Converse College Salutes Academic Excellence

Dr. M. Scott Robbins, associate professor and chair of music history, theory and composition, was presented with The 2005 O'Herron Award for Faculty Excellence. The award is given to a faculty member who demonstrates exceptional teaching effectiveness, creativity, mentoring and advising, involvement in student-related activities, and achievement in research and publication. Robbins has won 12 consecutive ASCAP (American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers) awards, and his compositions have been performed by orchestras from Toronto to Miami.

Dr. John Theilmann, professor of history and politics and co-director of the Nisbet Honors Program (pictured at right), was given the Scholarly and Creative Achievement Award. Since 1976, Theilmann has produced more than 30 publications, including essays, book chapters, and encyclopedia and dictionary entries. His topics range from the later medieval to the early modern

period of English history, politics and popular culture.

The Department of Musicology and Composition (pictured below) was given the Curriculum Innovation Award for demonstrating exceptional accomplishment in curriculum development. Members of the department are Drs. S. David Berry, M. Scott Robbins, John Ryan Turnbull, Kelly McElrath Vaneman, and Siegwart Reichwardl.



## Dr. John Turnbull

Associate Professor of Organ  
and Chair of the Department of Performance Studies



A native of Frederick, OK, Dr. Turnbull holds degrees in organ and piano from the University of Oklahoma and the Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the Eastman School of Music of the University of Rochester. While a student at Eastman, he was awarded the Performer's Certificate and the Artist's Diploma, the school's highest awards for excellence in performance. He went on to study organ and harpsichord at the Amsterdam Conservatory as a Fulbright Scholar in the Netherlands.

Dr. Turnbull was a winner of the Southwestern Regional Organ Playing Competition of the American Guild of Organists and has appeared as recitalist at many of that organization's conventions.

Since joining the Converse faculty in 1978, Dr. Turnbull has chaired The Petrie School of Music's Department of Performance, conducted the Converse Chorale for 17 years, and taught first- and second-year music theory and aural skills, organ literature, church music courses, and classical piano. He has served on the Faculty Senate, and was instrumental in securing the 57-rank Casavant Freres organ which is a prominent feature of Twichell Auditorium. Dr. Turnbull has also served as organist and choirmaster at the Episcopal Church of the Advent in Spartanburg.