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Converse Celebrates the Legacy and Philanthropy of Ernestine Raclin

Spartanburg, SC: Lifelong supporter of higher education and former Converse first lady Ernestine Melvin Morris Carmichael Raclin (1927-2023) further cemented her legacy at Converse with a generous estate gift of \$10.3 million. This planned gift is the largest legacy gift and the second largest single gift in Converse's history.

A 1947 graduate of St. Mary's College in South Bend, IN, and staunch supporter of women's colleges, Ernestine valued liberal arts education for women. Her ties to Converse began in September 1956 when she came to Spartanburg with her young family to start a new chapter in their lives at Converse. Her husband, Dr. O.C. "Mike" Carmichael, Jr., became the institution's fourth president in its then 67-year history. When they arrived in Spartanburg, a young couple in their late twenties, their four children, Carmen, O.C. "Crom," Ernestine "Tina," and Clark, spent part of their formative years at 580 East Main Street.

Carmichael Hall on campus is named for the couple, though Converse University President Boone Hopkins, Ph.D., thinks the spirit of the building's dedication plaque is a strong sentiment of Ernestine's unique contributions to the institution. The bronze plaque notes the couple's "foresight, dedication, and leadership" which enabled Converse "to strengthen further its contribution to liberal education for women." Her legacy gift will carry on that commitment to education for future Converse students, both male and female.

"We are incredibly grateful for the life and legacy of Ernestine Raclin," President Hopkins shared. "Her dedication to higher education, her philanthropic spirit, and her love of Converse inspired many and will continue to do so. The impact of this generous gift will be felt for years to come on our campus."

Raclin's gift will be used to invest in the future of Converse University in accordance with its Strategic Vision Plan and the university's mission to empower students to become transformative leaders who see clearly, decide wisely, and act justly. Funds will be used toward the following initiatives:

- Supporting the current fiscal year budget for immediate impact on Converse's three pillars: people, programs and places
- Creating an endowment for merit salary enhancements for staff and faculty, with an additional amount earmarked for salary increases for faculty and staff this fiscal year
- Addressing campus improvements in residence halls and facilities, plus deferred maintenance, in fiscal years 2024 and 2025
- Creating matching gifts for the recent restoration of Cudd Hall and the upcoming renovation of the Milliken Fine Arts Building.

President and Mrs. Carmichael learned the value of being active in their community from a young age. President Carmichael's father, Oliver, was the sitting president at the University of Alabama in 1956, so young Mike grew up on the college campuses of Alabama College (today, the University of Montevallo) and Vanderbilt University. Raclin was from the philanthropic Morris family of South Bend, IN. The youngest of four children, Ernestine was named after her father, Ernest Morris, and carried his passion for philanthropy as her father pioneered automobile consumer financing. The family has impacted the South Bend community with transformative gifts of \$1 million to the University of Notre Dame in 1947 and continued their support for the following decades.

After departing Converse in 1960, Dr. Carmichael served as the chairmanship of the Associates Corporation of North America and the FBT Corporation, Inc. Additionally, he was the former treasurer and finance committee chairman for the Republican National Committee until his sudden death in 1976 while playing tennis. Ernestine then assumed the role of president of 1st Source Bank. She attributed her volunteer work and education to the knowledge, skills, and self-confidence needed to take over the chairmanship.

In 1977, she married Robert Raclin and continued her philanthropic work as the first woman on the board at First Chicago, MidCon, and Nipsco. A founding member of PBS television station WNIT and the Stanley Clark School, Ernestine became a leader in economic development as Chair of Project Future, where she led every fundraising campaign it launched. Ernestine chaired The Regional Approach to Progress and was a member of the Board of the Indiana State Chamber of Commerce and the St Joseph County Chamber of Commerce. Her focus on improving health and human services continued as Chair of the United Way and Chair of the Governor's Task Force on Title XX. Raclin was the first woman in the United States to chair a United Way campaign and to serve on the Board of United Way of America. She was the first woman on the Board Member of the University of Notre Dame and the first woman to chair a major campaign for the University.

Recognizing Ernestine's commitment to education, she was honored with multiple honorary degrees, including an Honorary Doctor of Laws from Notre Dame (1978), Honorary Doctor of Laws from Indiana State University (1981), Doctors of Human Letters (honorary) from Converse College (1974), Doctor (honorary) from Vincennes University (1987), Doctor (honorary) from the University of Southern Indiana (1988), and Doctor in Technology (honorary) from Purdue University (1992). Her awards include the Engineer of Mines Morris Memorial Award at Indiana Academy, the Community Service Award at St. Mary's College, Ivy Tech's Excellence in Education Award, the Edmund F. Ball Award at Indiana Public Broadcasting Society, the

Castaldi Award at United Way Indiana, the Top Volunteer Award at United Way Indiana (1987), and the Helping Hands Award from Hospice of St. Joseph County.

About Converse University

Converse University empowers students to become transformative leaders who see clearly, decide wisely, and act justly. Converse was founded in 1889 by citizens of Spartanburg, SC, who aimed to create an educational experience for women, and in fall 2020 it welcomed its first undergraduate co-educational incoming class. The University encompasses the School of Liberal Arts and Sciences, the School of Business and Data Science, the School of the Arts, The Graduate School, and the Converse College for Women. Converse students experience deep scholarship, transformative mentorship, experiential learning, and wonderful support for and belief in each other. Through this unique formula, Converse is a creator of opportunity for its students through a personalized education that also includes the professional and technical skills graduates need to be successful in their careers.

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