

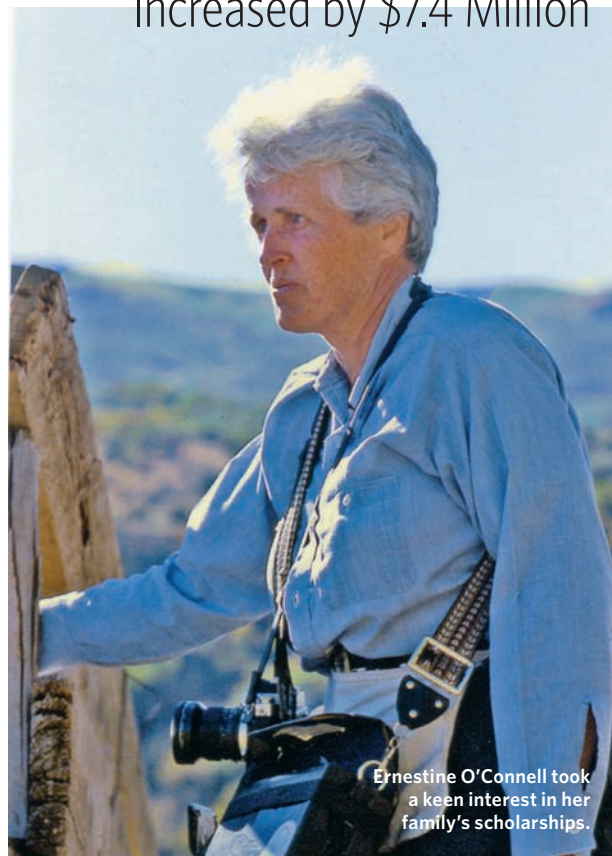
O'Connell Memorial Scholarship

Increased by \$7.4 Million

ERNESTINE O'CONNELL believed in blunt talk, quick action, and the power of a strongly worded letter. In 1996, she wrote to Louis Lataif, the School of Management's Allen Questrom Professor and Dean and former president of Ford Europe, asking to be put in touch with the highest-ranking Lincoln-Mercury official in North America. The problem? The air conditioner in her four-year-old Lincoln Town Car had failed.

"She was most unhappy that her Lincoln air conditioner should fail and need replacing after four years, all at her expense," recalls Lataif (SMG'61, HON.'90). "So I asked Jim O'Connor, a former colleague and friend, who was then general manager of Ford's Lincoln-Mercury Division, to intercede. Having collected the evidence from Ms. O'Connell, he sent her an apologetic letter and a check for \$1,171.94 — the full cost of the repairs. She was thrilled."

O'Connell (CAS'43, GRS'46, SED'58), who



Ernestine O'Connell took a keen interest in her family's scholarships.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE CHILDREN'S MUSEUM OF NAPLES

Bequest is biggest of its type in BU history

died in October 2009, demonstrated her gratitude and her enduring affection for the University in a characteristically dramatic way. She left \$7.4 million to BU to greatly increase the endowment of the T. George and Ernestine O'Connell Memorial Scholarship, a fund her mother, Ernestine O'Connell (CAS'15), established in 1961. It is the largest gift to a scholarship

fund in the University's history. The scholarship is awarded annually to juniors and seniors majoring in chemistry, geology, physics, biology, astronomy, or math in need of financial assistance.

"The O'Connell scholarships will help BU continue to attract and retain superb students in the sciences and mathematics," says Virginia Sapiro, dean of Arts & Sciences, "and this will be true for generations to come."

O'Connell's mother established the schol-

arship in honor of her husband, the Boston-area architect T. George O'Connell, for students showing outstanding ability in the sciences.

When her mother died in 1982, O'Connell honored her by adding her name to the fund's title. She continued to donate to the scholarship fund and remained keenly interested in its recipients. Since 1978, the fund has awarded full- or partial-tuition scholarships to eighty-five math and science students.

ALYCE NICOLO

Exploring the History in Our Blood

BU program helps answer questions about family

Desa Larkin-Boutté knows her mother's family well. Growing up, she would listen to stories about how her great-great-grandmother danced around a fire to celebrate her emancipation from slavery. Or how her great-grandfather, from Coffeeville, Mississippi — a town whose main attraction is the Piggly Wiggly — sent his children to school by renting land to sharecroppers.

But she never did learn much about her father's side.

That changed when Larkin-Boutté (COM'10) enrolled in the Family History Project, developed by BU's Howard Thurman Center and the New England Historic Genealogical Society (NEHGS), the oldest and largest genealogical society in the country.

Larkin-Boutté, who has lived with her mother since her parents divorced when she was five years old, saw the project as an opportunity to reconnect with her father and his family. Mainly, she was interested in uncovering some of her multicultural roots.

The semester-long project included a series of research trips, classes, and workshops, led by scholars such as John Thornton, a College of Arts & Sciences history professor, Linda Heywood, a CAS professor and director of the African American Studies Program, and Harvard University's Henry Louis Gates, Jr., who produced the PBS series *Faces of America*. The scholars help answer questions about family history and explain the origins of people and world events that shaped migration, including conflict, genocide, slavery, economics, and political and religious persecution.

Each student is paired with an NEHGS genealogist, who helps navigate the center's resources, including online family history database Ancestry.com, and off-line resources, such as compiled genealogies, birth and death certificates, census records, marriage licenses, and immigration and naturalization records. ROBIN BERGHAUS

WEB EXTRA
Watch videos of BU students and staff learning more about their family histories at bu.edu/bostonia.