The Converse All Star is one of the most well-known brands of footwear in the world. Since its introduction in the 1910s up to today, nearly a hundred years later, the popularity and legendary status of the brand is felt in nearly every corner of the globe, thanks in no small part to the man whose name is stamped on every pair of Converse All Stars: Charles “Chuck” Taylor.

The rise of the Chuck Taylor All Star to the ranks of an icon of American culture started, as most historical events do, without much fanfare.

It began in 1921, when Taylor, a player for the Columbus North High School basketball team who usually wore All Stars when playing, applied for a job at the Chicago sales offices of the Converse Rubber Shoe Company after graduation. He landed one, becoming one of the shoe manufacturer’s most popular pitchmen. In 1923, two years after Chuck Taylor joined the Converse Rubber Shoe Company, his name was added on the ankle patch of every Converse All Star, and in the process, placed his name in the annals of sports history.

Taylor was no mere spokesperson though; far from it, his career was a 35-year campaign that saw him travelling the length and breadth of the United States, selling both the new sport of basketball as well as thousands of pairs of All Stars. He used his experience in using the shoes as an amateur and a professional basketball player to sell them (he was part of a national league team called the Akron Firestones.) At the same time however, he was instrumental in improving the quality of the product, like introducing the distinctive diamond pattern on the sole, increasing its traction, and enhancing the All Star’s ankle support and flexibility. Eventually, as more and more athletes picked up on the game, All Stars became standard issue shoes for both amateur and professional leagues, as well as school teams. His efforts led to basketball being recognized as an official Olympic sport in 1936; of course, it meant more business for Converse, as the All Stars became part of the uniform for every competing team. The quality of his shoes also led to them being declared as the official athletic footwear of the U. S. Armed Forces at the time, and Taylor likewise serving as fitness consultant.

Chuck Taylor was possibly the first athlete to endorse a shoe brand, paving the way for athletes like Michael Jordan and Kobe Bryant to have their own shoe lines half a century later. He died in 1968, but not without seeing the fruits of his labor of love. He was probably one of the best examples of people who found success in selling an idea and a concept, and with that concept, thousands of pairs of shoes – all because he was passionate about what he did, and that passion reflected on the way he did business. More importantly, he revolutionized the art of salesmanship, his efforts resulted in Converse dominating the American casual footwear market at the time, and becoming a global brand that is popular to the present day.