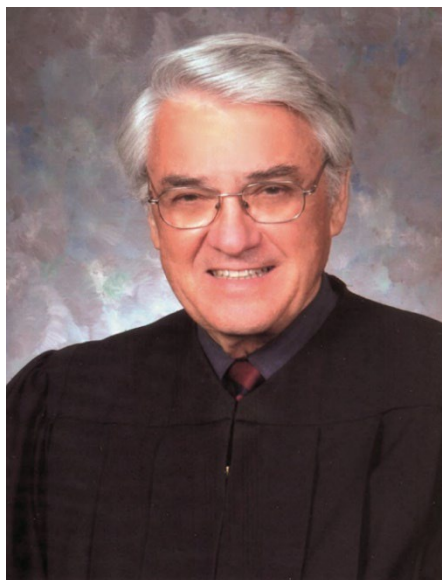




PATRICK E. HIGGINBOTHAM
AMERICAN INN OF COURT

**A Brief History of
The Patrick E. Higginbotham American Inn of Court**



Hon. Patrick E. Higginbotham
Founder



The Patrick E. Higginbotham American Inn of Court, formed in 1988, was the 56th Inn of Court chartered by the American Inns of Court Foundation in the United States. Originally named the Dallas Inn of Court LVI, the Inn changed its name in 1996 to honor its founder and first President, Judge Patrick Higginbotham of the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit.

Inspired by the efforts of the early proponents of the Inn of Court movement in the United States, including Chief Justice Warren E. Burger and Judge J. Clifford Wallace, Judge Higginbotham believed it would be valuable to bring judges, lawyers, and law professors together in an Inn of Court in Dallas, Texas to promote professionalism in trial practice. The Southwestern Legal Foundation, now known as The Center for American and International Law, assisted with the formation of the Inn, and has been the Inn's sponsor ever since.

Judge Higginbotham invited twenty-one prominent members of the Dallas bench and bar to be Masters of the Bench. All accepted the invitation, and the first meeting of the Masters of the Bench was held on July 18, 1988.

In addition to Judge Higginbotham, the original Masters of the Bench were:

Louis A. Bedford, Jr.	Morris Harrell	Fred Misko, Jr
James E. Coleman, Jr.	Hon. Merrill L. Hartman	Hon. Joseph B. Morris
Jim E. Cowles	John L. Hauer	Prof. Frederick C. Moss
Hon. Catherine J. Crier	James H. Holmes, III	Hon. Barefoot Sanders
Ernest E. Figari, Jr.	Jerry P. Jones	Charles P. Storey
John A. Gilliam	Prof. John E. Kennedy	Stephen D. Susman
John H. Hall	John L. Lancaster, III	Windle Turley

At their first meeting, the Masters of the Bench decided that there would be thirty Barristers and fifteen Pupils to round out the inaugural members of the Inn, with the Barristers serving three-year terms and the Pupils serving one-year terms. Meetings were to be held monthly from September to May, with each meeting to begin with dinner and then a substantive presentation. The members were to be assigned to pupillage groups to promote mentoring, with an appropriate mix of Masters of the Bench, Barristers, and Pupils. Each group was to be responsible for a substantive presentation during the Inn year. All these traditions have continued throughout the Inn's history, although the designation for the junior lawyers was changed from "Pupil" to "Associate."

In its early years, the Inn held its monthly meetings in the ceremonial courtroom of the United States Courthouse in Dallas. Over the years, Inn meetings have been held at a variety of locations in Dallas. Early in the Inn's history, the May meeting became an annual banquet featuring a prominent speaker, with the Inn welcoming returning Inn alumni and celebrating its members whose terms have concluded.

This is a photograph taken at the 2001 annual banquet of the Inn's first seven Presidents:



From the left: Hon. Patrick E. Higginbotham (1988-91); Charles P. Storey (1991-93); James E. Coleman, Jr. (1993-95); Hon. Merrill Hartman (1995-97); Hon. Joseph B. Morris (1997-99); John A. Gilliam (1999-01); Hon. Barbara M. G. Lynn (2001-03).

At the first meeting of its members in 1988, the Inn began a practice of opening each meeting with a Master of the Bench offering a Toast to the Constitution. That practice, which Judge Higginbotham began after observing the English Inns of Court open their meetings with a Toast to the Queen, has become a tradition not only at the Higginbotham Inn but at Inns across the United States. Also in its early years, the Higginbotham Inn began another tradition aimed at mentoring the Inn's junior members—a Master of the Bench telling a "war story" from their practice, whether funny, sad, embarrassing, or inspiring.

The American Inns of Court Circuit Professionalism Awards recognize lawyers and judges whose life and practice display sterling character and unquestioned integrity, coupled with ongoing dedication to the highest standards of the legal profession and the rule of law—wonderful examples for the junior members of the Inns of Court around the County. The award originated when Judge Higginbotham was President of the American Inns of Court Foundation. James E. Coleman, Jr., one of the

Higginbotham Inn's original Masters of the Bench, was the first recipient in any federal circuit, and was considered the standard for the award. Chief Judge Henry A. Politz presented the award to him at the 1996 Fifth Circuit Judicial Conference, before an audience including three United States Supreme Court Justices and hundreds of lawyers and judges. All the other federal circuits eventually adopted the practice of presenting the professionalism award, with a national committee of the American Inns of Court Foundation selecting the awardees.

Three other Higginbotham Inn Masters of the Bench have also received the American Inns of Court Fifth Circuit Professionalism Award—the Honorable Patrick E. Higginbotham in 2007, Kim J. Askew in 2015, and the Honorable Sidney A. Fitzwater in 2018. In 2022, the Professionalism Award in the Fifth Circuit was permanently endowed and became known as the James E. Coleman, Jr. Professionalism Award in the Fifth Circuit, and Richard G. Stewart, Jr., a Higginbotham Inn Master of the Bench Emeritus, was selected as its inaugural awardee.

In 2002, all the Inns of Court in the Dallas-Fort Worth area established the Serjeant of the Inn award. The Serjeant of the Inn concept originated in 13th Century English Inns of Court. Candidates for Serjeant of the Inn from the DFW Inns must be a Master of the Bench in their Inn. They must have either significantly contributed to the profession and the community throughout their career; or must have made one or more significant contributions to the profession and the community which are deserving of recognition. The Serjeant of the Inn honorees from each Inn are recognized at the annual joint meeting of the DFW Inns. The Higginbotham Inn's Serjeant of the Inn honorees are:

Hon. Patrick E. Higginbotham	Prof. Frederick C. Moss	Kim J. Askew
James E. Coleman, Jr.	Nina Cortell	Hon. Sam A. Lindsay
Hon. Merrill L. Hartman	Hon. Joseph B. Morris	Hon. Sidney A. Fitzwater
Hon. Barefoot Sanders	Richard G. Stewart, Jr.	Barry Sorrels
Hon. Jay Patterson	Robert Cohan	Hon. Lana R. Myers
John A. Gilliam	Terrell W. Oxford	Hon. Catharina Haynes
Sylvia M. Demarest	Harriet Miers	John C. Eichman
Jim E. Cowles	Sherri T. Alexander	

In 2014 the Inn began inviting a select group of students from law schools in Dallas-Fort Worth who have an interest in litigation to join the Inn. Those students, whom the Inn has designated as Pupils, are assigned to a pupillage group and have been able to participate fully in the Inn's activities.

The Higginbotham Inn is very proud of our Barrister, Associate, and Pupil members who have recently been recognized for their outstanding contributions. In 2022, Alexandra Guio, a Barrister in the Inn, received the Sandra Day O'Connor Award for Professional Service from the American Inns of Court during a ceremony at the United States Supreme Court. The American Inns of Court established that award to honor an American Inn of Court member in practice ten or fewer years for excellence in public interest or pro bono activities and to honor Justice O'Connor for being the paragon of professional service throughout her distinguished career.

Also in 2022, the Higginbotham Inn established the Sue Bliss Panda Award in memory of Sue Bliss. Sue served the Inn as its Administrator for twenty-two years until her passing in February 2022 and was passionate about the Inn and its mission. The award will be given annually to the Associate or Pupil in the Inn who makes the most outstanding contribution to a pupillage group's program during the Inn year. Kate Marcom was the first recipient of the award in 2022. Ellen Earl Gillis received the award in 2023, Bobby Hill in 2024, and Carlye Dozier in 2025.

In 2023, the Higginbotham Inn established another award—the John A. Gilliam Outstanding Mentor Award. John Gilliam, who passed away in 2023, was a longtime member of the Inn as one of its original Masters of the Bench and as President of the Inn from 1999 to 2001. John was a great mentor to young trial lawyers. This award, established in John's memory, is given annually to the Master of the Bench selected by the Barristers, Associates, and Pupils as the most outstanding mentor in the Inn. John's friends and colleagues also have established the John A. Gilliam Outstanding Mentor Endowment Fund at The Center for American and International Law to provide annual financial support to CAIL as the Inn's sponsor. Justice Lana R. Myers was the first recipient of the award in 2024 and received the award again in 2025.

Masters of the Bench of the Higginbotham Inn also have provided national leadership through service on the Board of Trustees of the American Inns of Court. Judge Higginbotham served as President of the American Inns of Court from 1996 to 2000, Judge Barbara M. G. Lynn has served as a Trustee for several years and served as President from 2022 to 2024, and Kim Askew serves as a Trustee.

In the thirty-seven years since its formation, the Higginbotham Inn of Court has championed the vision of the American Inns of Court—a legal profession and judiciary dedicated to professionalism, ethics, civility, and excellence—among the over one-thousand lawyers, judges, law professors, and law students who have been members of the Inn.

PAST PRESIDENTS

Hon. Patrick E. Higginbotham

1988-1991

Charles P. Storey

1991-1993

James E. Coleman, Jr.

1993-1995

Hon. Merrill Hartman

1995-1997

Hon. Joseph B. Morris

1997-1999

John A. Gilliam

1999-2001

Hon. Barbara M. G. Lynn

2001-2003

Frederick C. Moss

2003-2005

Nina Cortell

2005-2007

Hon. Mary Murphy

2007-2009

Richard G. Stewart, Jr.

2009-2011

Terrell W. Oxford

2011-2013

Sherri T. Alexander

2013-2015

Kim J. Askew

2015-2017

Barry Sorrels

2017-2019

Hon. Lana R. Myers

2019-2021

John C. Eichman

2021-2023

Rudy Rodríguez, Jr.

2023-2025