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## Preface

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*The American Inns of Court*

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In October, 2003, the Board of Trustees of the American Inns of Court Foundation announced the establishment of the Warren E. Burger Writing Competition, designed to encourage and recognize outstanding scholarship “promoting the ideals of excellence, civility, ethics and professionalism within the legal profession and beyond,” the core mission of the American Inns of Court.

The nationwide writing competition is in tribute to Chief Justice Burger, “founding father” of the American Inns of Court movement. As recounted by Justice O’Connor in her forward to *The American Inns of Court: Reclaiming a Noble Profession*, a history of the Inns movement, the American Inns movement is the “result of Chief Justice Burger’s commitment to improving the quality of legal professionalism in the United States.

In the 1960s, well before his appointment to the Supreme Court, Chief Justice Burger envisioned an organization that would help lawyers improve their advocacy skills, with an emphasis on the importance of professional integrity and ethics.” In 1977, he returned from a trip to London “with the idea of creating in the United States an organization patterned after the English Inns of Court, which have for hundreds of years provided mentoring to young lawyers. A number of prominent members of the legal community . . . joined the Chief Justice to hone his ideas into a workable concept. Forty-four members participated in the first American Inn of Court in Utah in 1980.”

This year, as the American Inns of Court celebrates its twenty-fifth anniversary, Chief Justice Burger’s vision is shared and perpetuated by over 25,000 active members in more than 350 Inns nationwide as well as nearly 60,000 alumni who have benefited from the unique experience of mentoring and skill development offered by the organization.

For this writing competition, judges, lawyers, scholars and other authors were invited to submit an original, unpublished essay on a topic of their choice addressing issues of legal excellence, civility, ethics and professionalism. The author of the winning submission will receive the Warren E. Burger Prize, including a cash award, at the American Inns of Court Celebration of Excellence at the United States Supreme Court.

Additionally, the winning entry will be published annually in the *South Carolina Law Review*, a nationally recognized and respected law review chosen because of its reputation for quality, its focus on professional development, and the combination of academic and practical issues in the law.

The winning entry was selected by a panel of judges comprised of Dean Stephen Gillers of New York University School of Law, Professor Geoffrey C. Hazard of the University of Pennsylvania Law School and Professor Nancy J. Moore of Boston University School of Law—to whom we express our gratitude for the generosity of their participation.

*My Last Lecture: Unsolicited Advice for Future (and Current) Lawyers*, submitted by Associate Professor Stephen D. Easton of the University of Missouri-Columbia School of Law, has been selected for First Place honors in the 2004 Warren E. Burger Writing Competition. This article focuses on the upcoming presentation of the author’s “last lecture.” In this fictional lecture series, this is the

last time that the professor will have the chance to talk to a group of law students. In this final address, the professor offers advice about how to increase professionalism, civility, job satisfaction, happiness; and service while practicing law, including such matters as: deciding what is (and what is not) worth fighting about; building a strong reputation; retaining and fostering personal morality; choosing work and clients carefully; balancing career and family; and giving back to the community.

The American Inns of Court, the University of South Carolina School of Law and the Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough Center on Professionalism invite judges, lawyers, scholars and other authors to participate in the second annual Warren E. Burger competition, which will begin in January 2005. For details, please visit the American Inns of Court Website—[www.innsofcourt.org](http://www.innsofcourt.org).

Donald G. Kempf, Jr., Vice President  
The American Inns of Court