



THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN  
SUNFLOWER CEREMONY  
OF  
UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS SCHOOL OF LAW

Sunday, May 22, 1983  
1:00 P.M. And 3:30 P.M.  
CONCERT HALL, PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

*1:00 p.m.*

## PROGRAM

DEAN JOHN F. SUTTON, JR., Presiding

Certificate  
in recognition of  
Distinguished Service to the Legal Profession  
presented to

JAMES R. NOWLIN  
United States District Judge, Western District of Texas

Remarks by Judge Nowlin

Dean Sutton introduces graduates

Sunflower pinning by ASSOCIATE DEAN T. J. GIBSON  
and ASSISTANT DEAN SAM H. HALL

RECEPTION: 2:30 P.M. FOR





*DEAN JOHN F. SUTTON, JR., Presiding*

## PROGRAM

DEAN JOHN F. SUTTON, JR., Presiding

Guest Speaker on behalf of the Faculty:

M. MICHAEL SHARLOT  
Associate Dean for Academic Affairs

Dean Sutton introduces graduates

Sunflower pinning by ASSOCIATE DEAN T. J. GIBSON  
and ASSISTANT DEAN SAM H. HALL

ALL GRADUATES & GUESTS

## SUNFLOWER CEREMONY: HOW IT CAME TO BE

For the last 15 years and maybe 20 years after the University was established in 1883 none of the graduates had worn caps and gowns for the final ceremonies. Along at the turn of the century a salesman representing a supply house appeared at a meeting of the senior class and offered to rent each one a cap and gown. At that time the Law School was in the basement of the Main Building. No one thought to send downstairs and bring into the meeting even a few law seniors.

The faculty and seniors met—or a committee from each group met—and decided that the class would look very well in caps and gowns. So an order went out from the executive office or from the faculty member in charge of arrangements for commencement that all seniors were to wear caps and gowns.

The law students then met, and because they had not been invited to the original meeting, had not been consulted on the advisability of this step, they refused to rent or to wear the gowns and caps. Perhaps foreshadowing later events, they then formulated the reason to uphold their decision. This was, that caps and gowns at such a time were traditional to and representative of the academic school and not the professional school. Granted even that judges had worn the wig and gown for centuries, it was worn for a purpose entirely distinct from the purpose here proposed.

The faculty met with the President and at the meeting a decision was reached that the law students must conform to the wishes of the senior class or they must wear a significant insignia at the exercises. It was not in a spirit of conciliation or in appreciation of the dignity of the occasion that the sunflower was chosen as the "distinctive insignia." It was agreed, however, that the senior law students would wear white suits. Once more reasons were advanced to justify the choice of the flower. The sunflower or genus *Helianthus* belongs to a family with world-wide distribution. So, also do the lawyers. As the sunflower always keeps its face turned to the sun, the lawyer turns to the light of justice.

The Sunflower Ceremony used to be held once during the year, on Commencement Day. As the Law School student population grew, it was decided to have two exercises during the year, one in November for the December graduates and another one in May for the May and August graduates.

The ceremony is attended only by the senior law students and their families and friends. Originally, a sunflower was pinned on each senior by his/her best friend. This custom changed, however, and now the Associate Dean/Assistant Dean of the Law School assumes this responsibility.

The tradition was bent in May 1982 when 80 out of 340 graduates wore caps and gowns for the first time in the history of the Law School.

Again, in November 1982, a few expressed interest in wearing caps and gowns. Out of 60 seniors who attended the ceremony, only one wore a cap and gown.