

# CASUAL LIVING

## Four furniture industry leaders inducted into American Furniture Hall of Fame

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HIGH POINT — Four furniture industry leaders — Hershel Alpert, Bernard Castro, Harry M. Cornell Jr. and Jena Goldman Hall — were inducted into the American Furniture Hall of Fame last night at a banquet during the High Point Market.

Alpert and Castro were longtime retailers while Cornell is the chairman emeritus of Leggett & Platt and Hall is a furniture designer and merchandiser.

“Each year, it is humbling to learn about the great personal accomplishments and contributions to our industry made by the individuals inducted into the Hall of Fame,” said Bill Kimbrell, president of the American Furniture Hall of Fame Foundation. “They are role models in every sense of the word and it is a reminder that our industry is full, not just of ingenuity and leadership, but of generosity to others expressed in time, talents and resources. We are pleased to honor them.”

Alpert, who died in 2010, began his career working for his father’s furniture store and later, along with his brother, founded Alper’s Inc., a furniture showroom and warehouse in Seekonk, Mass. After it was sold to General Cinema Corp. he continued as president, growing the business to 15 stores in four states. In 1985, he, his brother and another partner bought it back. Alpert was president and CEO for the next 35 years and received numerous retail industry awards. Even after selling the business in 2007, he remained an industry consultant.

Castro, who died in 1991, and his wife, Theresa, started with \$400 in 1931 and built what would become Castro Convertibles, a manufacturer and retailer that sold more than five million sofa-sleepers at its 48 stores on the East Coast. An Italian immigrant who worked as a furniture apprentice while earning a degree in interior decoration, Castro invented and patented many convertible mechanisms and also was known as an advertising genius. He generously donated his time and resources to the home furnishings industry and his community, the Hall of Fame said.

Cornell helped build Leggett & Platt from a small regional company into a Fortune 500 giant. He transformed the components manufacturer from five plants and \$7 million in annual sales into a \$4 billion company with 130 plants in 18 countries. He won numerous business awards and in 2002, the business school at his alma mater, the University of Missouri, was named Cornell Hall. He also funds the Cornell Leadership Scholarship at the university.

Hall, president of Jena Hall Associates, has created licensed programs for Broyhill Furniture as well as developing products and integrated marketing for American Leather, Johnston Casuals, DMI-Wynwood, Pennsylvania House, Vanguard Furniture and Aspenhome, where she was executive vice president of merchandising and design. She has curated the launch and design of HGTV Home Furniture for Bassett Furniture, and created merchandising concepts for retailers including JCPenney, Robb & Stucky, Macy’s, Domain, Ethan Allen and Thomasville Interiors. She was also the founding president of WithIt, the women’s leadership and development network, and has been active in charitable work.