The Pennsylvania Lawyer
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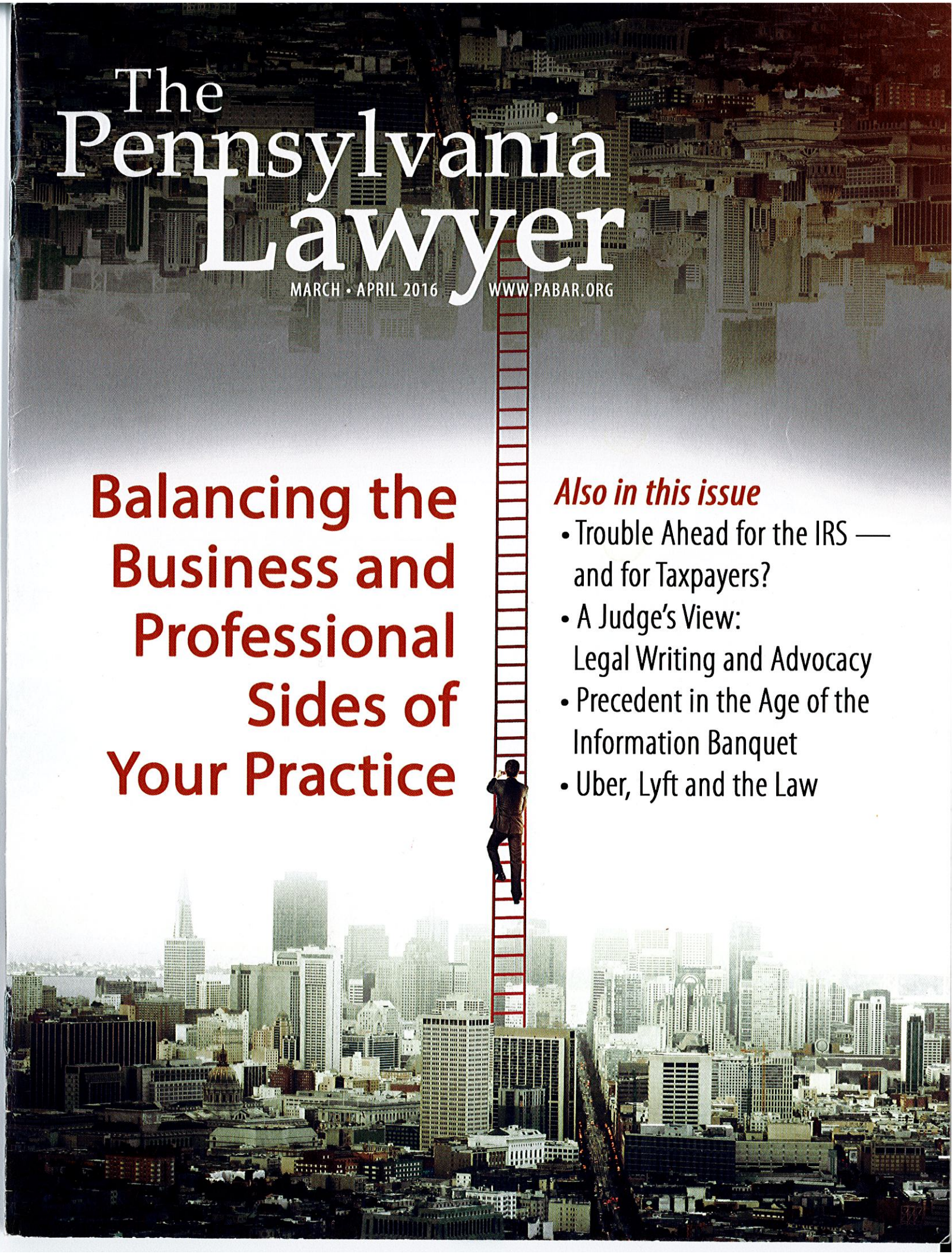
Balancing the Business and Professional Sides of Your Practice

Also in this issue

- Trouble Ahead for the IRS — and for Taxpayers?
- A Judge's View: Legal Writing and Advocacy
- Precedent in the Age of the Information Banquet
- Uber, Lyft and the Law



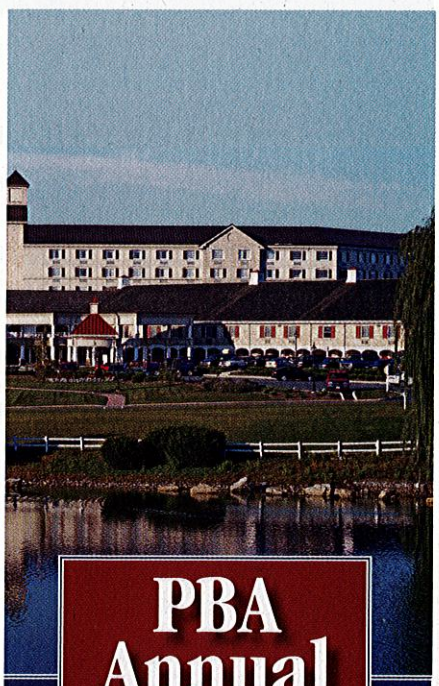
The Author Responds

I would like to address several comments [made about] my article, "Mental Illness and the Legal System," published in the January/February 2016 edition of *The Pennsylvania Lawyer*. In psychology, it often cannot be declaratively stated the etiology or cause of a disorder. Genetics and environmental factors, organic brain issues, undiagnosed medical conditions, etc. may all contribute. While at present cures may or may not be available, the purpose of the article was to point out some effective treatments, perhaps clearing the court dockets of disputes that could be settled elsewhere to the benefit of both parties and taxpayers. While the article only dealt with four specific personality disorders, it would be impossible in such a short article not to simplify or generalize the issues somewhat.

The article was not intended to primarily deal with nomenclature or labels. It could easily be claimed that labeling someone is not therapeutic for their treatment. However, labeling is necessary to a certain extent to inform treatment such as understanding how different treatment options may have fared. That said, the original purpose of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* was to label disorders across cultures, ostensibly to facilitate scientific research. Scientific research for advances in treatment improves lives and is certainly not for the purpose of calling people names or disregarding their basic civil or human rights.

Finally, I received an anonymous message on my voice mail at work. This individual sounded upset but had an interesting point. He pointed out that there were more illustrations of men in the article than women, suggesting that personality disorders might be more prevalent in men than women in the population. I had nothing to do with illustrating the article. … There have been studies done and articles written on gender differences in the prevalence of personality disorders. These studies may be difficult as the diagnoses are complicated and may shift over time with treatment, environment and perhaps cultural norms. These studies can be located through an Internet search.

Hilary Vesell
Hershey



PBA Annual Meeting

May 11-13, 2016

Hershey Lodge
Hershey, PA

Mark your calendar and watch for more information.

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