

Introduction and Dedication

# FAMILY LAW



This is the first *Michigan Bar Journal* family law theme issue that is being dedicated to honor a colleague. The Family Law Section Council of the State Bar of Michigan voted unanimously to dedicate this theme issue to Norman N. Robbins.

Norm is the consummate professional. He has been an inspiration to all who have had the good fortune of working with him, either as his adversary in a case or by being involved with him in one of his many endeavors. When Norm was actively involved in private practice, he demonstrated that one could be an effective advocate for one's client and, at the same time, be civil and professional. Norm treated opposing counsel as an integral part of the solution.

Our profession was good to him and, in return, he repaid our profession many times over. He has effectively improved the practice of family law through the "power of the pen," in his capacity as executive editor of the American Bar Association *Family Advocate* and as editor-in-chief of the nationally acclaimed *Michigan Family Law Journal*. Among his many achievements (which are too many to list here), Norm was past chairperson of the State Bar Family Law Section, a Fellow of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers and past chairperson of the Michigan chapter, and past chairperson of the Michigan Board of Marriage Counselors. He was also a recipient of the State Bar Family Law Section Lifetime Achievement Award.

Not only does Norm perform, he has an amazing ability, as this writer is quite familiar with, to inspire others to also contribute. The Family Law Section Council has made an excellent decision in dedicating this theme issue to Norm.

This issue includes articles about cutting-edge topics, written by skilled family law practitioners James P. Cunningham, Karen S. Sendelbach, Mark A. Snover, and Daniel R. Victor. When Norm began practicing family law, the content of these articles was not even on the radar screen. Mr. Cunningham's article addresses

a common issue in family law cases—whether property is marital or separate. After discussing the current state of the law, Mr. Cunningham argues the need for legislative action pertaining to this issue. Ms. Sendelbach's article is a historical discussion related to the child support guidelines and those areas of the guidelines that will become effective October 1, 2008. Mr. Snover's article is a thorough analysis of the current state of the law relative to the modification of spousal support awards, with a particular emphasis on recent appellate decisions. Mr. Victor's article is a thought-provoking analysis of an issue significant to all in private practice—the retainer fee. Each of these articles is essential reading for those of us involved in family law.

A review of the well-presented articles in this issue makes it apparent that family law continues to evolve and change. During our careers, we learn that not all change is good. All members of the Bar can have an impact on future change by being actively involved in the State Bar of Michigan Family Law Section or the family law committee of their local bar association. These bodies exist to have a positive impact on family law. ■



*Harvey I. Hauer is the coordinator of this theme issue. Mr. Hauer practices exclusively family law. He is a Fellow of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers and the Michigan Chapter's past president. He is a former chairperson of the Family Law Section of the State Bar of Michigan, the Family Law Committee of the Oakland County Bar Association, and the Michigan Supreme Court Domestic Relations Court Rules Committee.*