As part of the 50th birthday celebration, we are arranging to reprint 12 papers, *the Editor's Choice*, which have appeared in previous issues of the *Journal*. They have been chosen partly to illustrate the range and scope of the *Journal* over the years and partly because they are or were important in their day. More significantly, they have been chosen because they exemplify some of the best in scientific writing and can all be read with great pleasure and all who wish to communicate their observations, their ideas, or their enthusiasms would do well to study them and learn from them.

We will publish one paper each month through the year and they will appear in the order in which they were originally published.

Editor's Choice

Hazards of deep-sea fishing

by R S F Schilling

(*British Journal of Industrial Medicine* 1971;28:27-35)

I think that it is a sound rule to view with suspicion those about whom no one has a bad word to say. In Richard Schilling's case, however, we must make an exception for he is perhaps the kindest and best man I have known. He is the most important figure in occupational health in this country since Hunter. His *Occupational Health Practice* enjoyed great success although without achieving the remarkable status of Hunter's *Diseases of Occupations*. But it was as a teacher that Schilling excelled. He was the founder and first director of the TUC Centenary Institute of Occupational Health at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and in an astonishingly short time he had set up MSc courses for occupational physicians and occupational hygienists to which students came from all over the world. A great many of those who are in senior positions in these specialties were trained by Schilling. It was a particular irony and sadness for him to see the department which he built up into the foremost academic unit of its kind in the world, decline and eventually close as the result of politicking and mean mindedness by those who might have been expected to know better.

One of the most admirable of Schilling's qualities was his encouragement of those at the start of their career. I met him first as a wet behind the ears hygienist when I was asked to talk about lead in air measurements to the MSc course at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. I took with me a piece of apparatus for obtaining airborne lead, which was like something from a Ronald

Searle cartoon and a far cry from the wizardry that today's hygienists play with. Schilling was immensely kind and it was this single contact that later determined me to take up a career in occupational medicine; it was an ambition to work in his department but by the time I did so, Richard had retired although he maintained a close association with the department.

Schilling has what all good occupational physicians should have—that is, an affection for working people and a concern to see that they should come to no harm as a result of their work; this is plain from his writings. The present paper on deep-sea fishing, his Ernestine Henry lecture of 1970, resulted from work that was brought about by spending six days at sea, ostensibly investigating what became known as “Dogger Bank itch”, a dermatological complaint among fishermen. He writes that he “became aware of hazards other than skin disease, in particular, the very high risk of accidents”. Schilling realised that the publication of accident statistics by the Registrar General did not take account of those recorded separately by the Registrar General of Shipping and Seamen; when these *were* considered it was evident that fishermen had an accident mortality “at least twice that of coal miners”.

Schilling ends this paper with a sentence that contains a sentiment which sums up his expectations of the occupational physician. “Possibly more than anyone else the occupational physician is able to influence management to adopt an enlightened policy on health and safety.” Whether or not we consider that they are truly able to do this, we must all agree that occupational physicians should certainly make this their goal.