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

Air pollution in a city street

by R E Waller, B T Commins, and P J Lawther

(*British Journal of Industrial Medicine* 1965;22:128-38)

This paper is included in the series to exemplify the excellent work carried out by Pat Lawther and his colleagues at the MRC Air Pollution Research Unit at St Bartholomew's Hospital Medical College. (It may not have escaped the notice of readers how many of these papers have emanated from units now sadly closed.) Lawther made a remarkable contribution to the understanding of the effects of air pollution by sulphur dioxide and the symptoms of chronic bronchitis and showed how much things improved after the burning of coal in domestic fires had been prohibited.

Lawther is one of the nicest men it has been my pleasure to be associated with; he is fair and open-minded, extremely kind, cultured and a delightful companion, especially over a pint of beer. His lectures were outstandingly memorable and usually extremely funny but it was astonishing to see how nervous he was, even before addressing an undergraduate audience, knowing how consummate a performer he was.

This paper describes the levels of pollution from

motor vehicles in Fleet Street and among the pollutants measured was lead, "mainly as an indicator of pollution from motor vehicles." It is ironic that Lawther went on to say that he and his colleagues "do not consider that the $3.2 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$. . . constitutes an appreciable hazard to health" bearing in mind the furore which burst out in the 1970s and in which he became involved as the result of his chairing a committee set up by the then Department of Health and Social Security to examine the relation between lead and health. Lawther was a wonderful chairman of that committee, of which I was a member, and he conducted the proceedings skilfully and with an impartiality that his critics would have been unable to fault. The conclusion of that committee was that air-borne lead contributed considerably less to the body burden than did other sources such as food and water and probably had but a marginal effect on health. While he welcomes any reduction in lead in the environment (as was the strongly expressed view of the committee) I doubt whether he would wish to change that conclusion now.