

FIFTY YEARS AGO, JUNE 1959

An Editorial, "The Luckless Legion," deplored the rising number of traffic fatalities: 10,680 from January through April, up 4% from the same period last year. "Since the advent of the auto, more than 600,000 people died or were crippled." The editor suggested caution as a remedy: "When you are tempted to indulge in insensate speed, do not step on the gas; when you have the right of way, do not insist on taking it, for many dead men had the right of way..."

John R. Paul, MD, Professor of Preventive Medicine, Yale University School of Medicine, delivered the Eighteenth Charles Value Chapin Oration: "Chapin and Modern Epidemiology" at the 148th annual meeting of the Rhode Island Medical Society. The Journal reprinted his oration. Dr. Paul described Dr. Chapin's focus on the variation in disease. "They [men of Dr. Chapin's ilk] will seek to find some means of grappling with the problem of illness in a world where living things, be they viruses or men, are both struggling to survive."

Francis B. Sargent, MD, gave the Presidential Address at the same 148th annual meeting. In "Our Allies - The Hospitals and Blue Plans: Assets or Liabilities?" Dr. Sargent urged the American Hospital Association and Blue Cross to resolve their disagreements. "We will all hang together or separately. Our cause must be presented competently to the public by every means of communication. It must be made clear that only when an individual directly or indirectly pays his own way can he have free choice of physician and hospital."

"The Rheumatic Fever Program as Administered through the Division of Maternal and Child Health of the RI Department of Health" described Rhode Island's state-financed free clinics.

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO, JUNE 1984

An Editorial, "Is the Autopsy Gaining Respectability?" commented on the declining numbers of autopsies.

Thomas D. Gidley, LLB, partner, Hinckley & Allen," contributed "Maybe You Can Strike Back." Discussing the "proliferation of seemingly groundless malpractice suits in recent years," Mr. Gidley noted that a recent Rhode Island Supreme Court ruling (*Salvadore v Major Electric & Supply*) may have opened the door for physicians to counter-sue. In the case, the plaintiff had alleged "malicious prosecution and civil conspiracy" from 4 civil suits filed against him. The Superior Court decided for the defendants; the Supreme Court reversed the decision.

Barry M. Manuel, MD, Associate Dean, Boston University School of Medicine, discussed "Professional Liability: The Crisis of the 1980s." He called for "Tort reform and consumer-purchased 'maloccurrence' insurance."

Mark S. Mandell, JD, partner, Mandell, Goodman & Schwartz, LTD, Providence, in "Professional Liability," commented: "The majority of patients will not sue physicians who show compassion, sensitivity and courtesy."

