NINETY YEARS AGO, DECEMBER, 1922

Frank T. Fulton, MD, presents an article on the endocrine glands to review some of the normal functions of the ductless glands as far as known, to touch upon some of the disturbances of function which are fairly well understood, and to present some of the conflicting views without arguing for any conclusion. The author identifies to main groups of individuals who are actively engaged in studying the subject. One group is strictly scientific and is composed of physiologists and experimental pathologists who try to reproduce in animals some of the recognized conditions which are believed to be due to disturbed endocrine function. The other group is made up of clinicians, some of whom have had laboratory training, are conservative, have critical judgement and are contributing valuable observations. However, many, the author notes, lose sight of the scientific side, are fascinated by the wonderful variety of symptoms and conditions and are carried away by theories until their enthusiasm warps their judgement that their conclusions are of little value.

In regards to chiropractics and public health legislation, an editorial presents the following commentary: “Occupying as he does the position of a protector of humanity against disease, it is quite remarkable that the average physician should feel that he is belittling his dignity in defending from open assault this acknowledged right. Yet this is the attitude assume by many, whenever it has become our unfortunate privilege and necessity to appear before committees of legislative bodies at the State Capitol to protest the passage of laws inimical to public health. The average law-maker is the average man, usually desirous of equalizing opportunities and his knowledge of what constitutes public health is vague; he is not a physiologist and he may believe with Still, the osteopath, that the human body is a machine. Still did not and the law-maker does not visualize its complexity, however, or the problem of metabolism, for with either, these things have never existed. Our law-maker may sympathize with these persons who practice chiropractic. These followers of Palmer, who believe (or they do not) that all diseases originate from a common cause, to wit, the maladjustment of one or more vertebrae—whether mumps, pneumonia, appendicitis, erysipelas or toothache. Preventive medicine, sanitation, and research are meaningless terms in the chiropractic code and it is most probably to these people unknown. Education and not altogether censure should be our attitude toward the legislator, therefore, bearing in mind that any cult or ‘ism tinctured with a little mysticism still has, even in these modern days of disillusion, its followers and its lure.”

FIFTY YEARS AGO, DECEMBER, 1962

A. A. Savastano, MD, opens the topic of the sport of boxing with the death of Benny “Kid” Paret from head injuries received in the championship prize fight on March 24, 1962, at Madison Square Garden and the resultant firestorm of criticism regarding boxing as it is currently conducted. The author states a long history of enthusiasm for the sport—having treated many boxers, particularly during his time as staff surgeon at the Polyclinic Hospital and Medical School in New York City. He also presents a short history of the sport going as far back as the year 4000 BC with the ancient Egyptians. Savastano acknowledges that the chief argument against boxing is that the contents of the skull (the brain and its appendages) are the chief target. Severe brain damage and death are not uncommon in the sport, making its future, in the author’s opinion, dubious with public opinion, in a large sense, opposed to the continuation of the sport. The author expresses hope that the Boxing Education and Research Foundation will develop some sound ideas regarding safety, and that an insurance, welfare, and pension plan can be established, such as exists in some other sports.

Laurence A. Senseman, MD, reports on visiting hospitals in Africa. He describes conditions and populations of various hospitals, clinical practices, attitudes, and resources. He closes: “One month spent on this, the second largest continent, is hardly enough to permit one to draw any conclusions, except that it offers the physicians a tremendous challenge. That the “Dark Continent” is awakening is an understatement. It is alive, vital, and progressive. The new countries are struggling for their survival, identity, and independence. They look to us for understanding, assistance, and medical aid. Many physicians are needed if only for a short period of service in the native hospitals. Such an opportunity to be a good will ambassador is indeed a wonder experience and privilege.”

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO, DECEMBER, 1987

Much of this issue is devoted to the Pawtucket Heart Health Program. With public health advocates seeking to determine how best to influence positive lifestyle changes on a board scale, the individual physician, while a vital factor in education and direction of his patients, is limited by the scope of his practice. Rhode Island, however, is privileged to be the site of a world-renowned research project that may produce a compendium of answers to the goal of effective community-wide intervention.

The Pawtucket Heart Health program serves as an inspiration to those in the public health field, and thanks to that and its precursors, the community will become increasingly skilled in reducing cardiovascular disease through community action. The corollary may be parallel efforts in the future to reduce the incidence of other diseases that have stubbornly resisted the best efforts of the medical-scientific community.