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[Prof. Woolner] remembers with glee one scientific hoax he helped perpetuate. He and chemistry professor Reg Friesen are "responsible for adding one person to the grand sweep of history" – Claude Émile Jean-Baptiste Litre.

Litre was "born" during a crippling blizzard in a hotel room in Ottawa, in December 1977. But his creators told the world he had been born February 12, 1716 in France. Litre even had a list of scientific accomplishments that Woolner created. For ten years, much of the world believed it all.

The idea for Litre was Friesen's, Woolner says. It originated with a technical quibble: Some chemists wanted to make the abbre-

viation of the litre measurement to be "L" instead of "l," to avoid confusion with the figure 1. "But the rules of nomenclature of the Conférence Générale des Poids et Mesures require that upper-case letters be reserved for units which are named for individual scientists," Woolner says. "Since no such person existed for the litre measurement, it seemed reasonable one should be invented."

Woolner wrote a study of Litre for the April 1978 issue of *Chem 13 News*, a science publication from Waterloo geared mainly for high school teachers.

"I realized that drama, revolution and romance were all very good, but the joke

would be better if the article came across as a piece of sober historical research," Woolner wrote ten years later. "The idea was to give a straightforward account with correct dates and accurate historical details, but with one person added to the great stream of history. So that's how I wrote it."

And over the years other scientists filled in missing sections to Litre's biography. "It was clear that a great deal of innocent pleasure was being had by one and all," Woolner says.

Information about Litre started appearing in international publications, and even made the CBC radio program "Quirks and Quarks." Eventually the deception had to be put to rest.

The article EM9520 reprinted above is used in Figure 1.3 of the STAT 231 Course Materials and in Statistical Highlight #1.