George M Briggs, PhD

Society for Nutrition Education is Formed
For information about George Briggs’ professional career and accomplishments, a good reference is his biography published in the Journal of Nutrition in 1997 (Volume 127, pages 2267–2269).
Excerpts from George Briggs notes
for talk on HISTORY of SNE and JNE - Annual Meeting
September 19, 1970

In 1962 University Extension along with
Ag. Extension
U.C. Davis
Public Health UCB
Public Health State of CA
Nutritional Sciences UCB cooperatively put on several
large workshops for nutrition educators around the state.

I had Ann Burroughs take a poll to see if there was enough
interest in communication between workshops - should a nutrition
education society be formed? The answer was yes. This idea
resulted in JNE and SNE.

In 1963, 1964 and 1965, I sent letters to:

American Institute of Nutrition - perhaps a separate division?
Answer: No, we are not involved in Nutrition Education.

American Home Economics Assoc. - any interest?
Answer: No, we are doing the job well.

American Dietetic Assoc. - are you interested in this?
Answer: No, we are doing this in our own journal.

The Nutrition Foundation, New York - can you help?
Answer: We are doing this pretty well, we have Nutrition Reviews.
First Meeting in Berkeley, July 2, 1968

Articles of Incorporation filed in California on June 10, 1968 and five members of the Board of Directors were named.

- George Briggs: President (Nutrition Sciences, UCB)
- Ruth Huenemann: President-Elect (Public Health, UCB)
- George Stewart: Secretary (Food Science, UCD)
- Gaylord Whitlock: Treasurer (Ag Extension, UCB)
- Helen Walsh: Director at Large (Calif Dept. Public Health)
December, 1969

Jean Mayer, Special Consultant to President Nixon, and George Briggs, Panel Chair, distributing the Journal’s first supplement issue at the White House Conference on Food, Nutrition, and Health.

Quotes from Briggs:

- This review . . . indicates that the nutrition of our nation has deteriorated in recent years.
- This picture of our nation’s nutrition should shake any complacency, and crystallize our thinking to provide stimulus to progress.
- The work of applied nutritionists is only beginning.
- Society is only beginning to understand the breadth of this subject of nutrition so vital to everyone.
California's Nutrition Needs Not Being Met, Says Expert

By Barbara Hansen

Ten to 30% of California's population does not eat properly.

"We are in a much worse state than people dreamed of a few years back," observed Dr. George M. Briggs, professor of nutrition in the department of nutritional sciences at UC Berkeley.

"There is malnutrition. There are hungry school children. There are adults who aren't eating right. And there are those who don't worry about what they eat and eat too much."

These problems are not new but were ignored in the past, he noted.

Workshop Speaker

Dr. Briggs was here to address a nutrition workshop for teachers held at Cal State L.A. and coordinated by the Dairy Council of California. His topic was nutrition and disease.

"I think we would have far fewer people on relief, fewer alcoholics, fewer people in hospitals, less obesity, fewer dental caries and more people should eat doesn't mean they will eat it. "You have to change their motivating factors," Dr. Briggs said.

Principles of good nutrition "have to be drilled into kids from the day they are in kindergarten until they finish school. We feel we can only break the cycle if we also work with the parents through the school system."

That means bringing the parents to school or going into their homes if necessary, he added.

A Challenge

Nutritional education shouldn't be a drag. "It should be a challenge, a science, fun," Dr. Briggs said. "By the time kids reach the 7th or 8th grade, they are sick of the Basic Four food groups. They want to be challenged by things that relate to the space program, to modern biology."

Home economics classes alone can't be relied on to supply nutritional information as all students don't take them, he said.

Nutrition could be included in biology courses, he suggested, and gym teachers could relate food to physical fitness.

Dr. Briggs, who is executive editor of the Journal of Nutrition Education, observed that gym teachers get little or no nutrition education and that some strange food faddist ideas are passed on by coaches.

He stresses the need for nutrition specialists in the school system. "The State Department of Education doesn't have one nutritional scientist," he reported. "There is a nutrition specialist in every school district. What we need is as many nutritionists in our schools as we have music specialists."

The state government also needs nutritional experts. "There isn't a Ph.D. level nutritional scientist in the state government," Dr. Briggs said. "There are 60 of them in the University of California system, but they are not called upon enough by the state for advice," he said.

Although there is much to be done, "much can be done within a few months," Dr. Briggs said.

"There is no reason our people should be hungry."

Dr. Briggs criticizes the state for not having an enrichment law. "This is ridiculous," he said. As of now, unenriched cereal products share the market..."
Timeline:

- **July, 1968**: First meeting, Board of Directors elected
- **Fall, 1968**: Prototype Journal published
- **Summer 1969**: Published Volume 1, Number 1 of Journal
- **Fall, 1969**: First Journal Supplement
- **November 1969**: Second meeting to plan expanded membership
- **December 1969**: White House Conference
- **September 1970**: Third meeting, first of expanded membership at Berkeley Marina, His Lordship’s restaurant
- **September 1971**: Fourth meeting, Scottsdale, Arizona
Series of articles tracing nutrition education highlights and advances by decade, as documented in JNEB, was published.

Elucidate not only progress in the field but also demonstrate how societal changes are reflected within our discipline.
Goal and Purpose

1970: Overall goal is to promote good nutrition for all by making nutrition education more effective. It will be promoted at all levels: international, national, state, and local. Activities of the Society, in addition to publishing the Journal, shall be: education, communication, and research.

Today: The Society represents the unique professional interests of nutrition educators worldwide. SNEB is dedicated to promoting effective nutrition education and healthy behavior through research, policy, and practice and has a vision of healthy communities, food systems and behaviors.

Future:
George M. Briggs passed along to his family members a strong sense of responsibility to learn from those who have gone before us. The Journal pages provide an archive of the development of our discipline and a collective memory of where we have been as nutrition educators, enriching our journey into the future.
Vitamin B12

1920s–1940s: Recognition that liver cured anemia.

“Intrinsic factor” in the stomach affects absorption of “extrinsic factor” in food.

1946: Briggs and his postdoc discovered a microbial assay system permitting the rapid assay of vitamin B12.

This assay system was crucial to the team effort led by Merck and Co. to identify vitamin B-12 as an essential nutrient.
Vitamin B12

1948: Merck group (led by Karl Folkers) isolated the “extrinsic factor” in crystalline form from liver

1956: Dorothy Hodgkin described the structure of the B12 molecule, for which she received the Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 1964.

1971: Robert Woodward announced the successful synthesis of the vitamin after ten years of effort.
1958 Borden Award

In recognition of:

- Basic research in nutritional interrelationships.

- B12’s relationship with other dietary components.

- Collaborative work on microbiological assay techniques, instrumental in the isolation and discovery of vitamin B12.

- Development of experimental synthetic diets making it possible to determine effects of nutrition deficiencies and to study unidentified growth factors.

George M. Briggs
Chief, Nutrition Unit, Laboratory of Nutrition and Endocrinology, NIAMD, National Institutes of Health. Born Grantsburg, Wisconsin, February 21, 1919. B.S. (1940), M.S. (1941), Ph.D. (1944), Univ. of Wisconsin. Graduate Assistant, Univ. of Wisconsin, 1940-44. Faculty, Univ. of Maryland, 1945-47; Univ. of Minnesota, 1947-51. Staff, National Institutes of Health, 1951—.