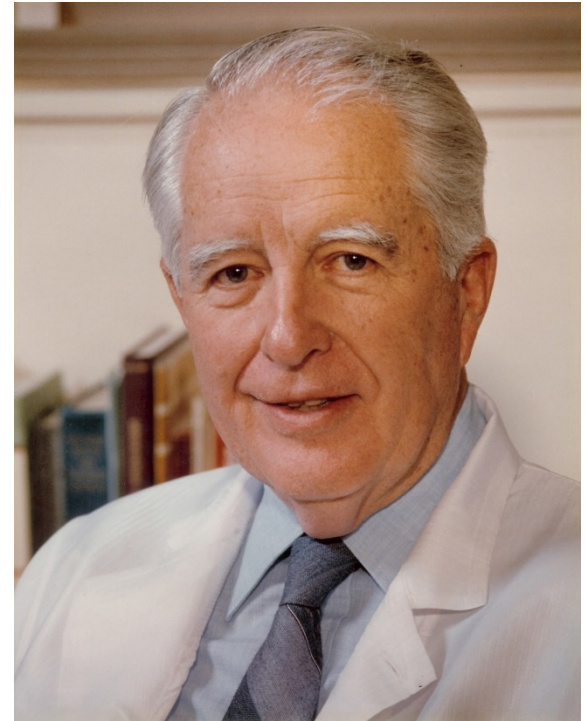


# George M Briggs, PhD

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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).

## Biographical Article

### George M. Briggs (1919–1989)

Suzanne Hendrich

*Food Science and Human Nutrition, Iowa State University, Ames, IA 50011*

George Briggs was born and raised in the setting of a land grant university. His father, George M. "Soybean" Briggs, was a field crops extension agronomist and professor of agronomy at the University of Wisconsin from 1919 until his retirement in 1954. Briggs, senior, was a pioneer evangelist for crop improvement who routinely carried soybeans in his pockets to distribute to his audiences. This same evangelical flair typified George Briggs, the younger, in his enthusiasm for balanced nutrition: the proper amounts of a variety of foods chosen from the major food groups.

George M. Briggs, Jr. was born in Grantsburg, Wisconsin, on February 21, 1919. He had one sister, Helen, and five brothers, William, H. Randolph, Frank (killed in action in World War II), Rodney and Robert. Briggs attended elementary and high school in Madison, Wisconsin. He earned his B.S. in agricultural chemistry, with honors, at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, in 1940, where he also earned an M.S. in biochemistry in 1941, advised by C. A. Elvehjem and E. B. Hart. His Ph.D. in biochemistry in 1944 was based upon his work in Elvehjem's laboratory, where he continued as a post-doctoral fellow for several months. Briggs was Associate Professor from 1945 to 1946 and Professor (1946–1947) of poultry nutrition at the University of Maryland. He served as Associate Professor of poultry nutrition at the University of Minnesota from 1947 to 1951. Briggs worked as Chief of the Nutrition Unit of the National Institute of Arthritis and Metabolic Diseases, Bethesda, Maryland, from 1951 to 1958, and was Executive Secretary of three training committees (Biochemistry, Nutrition and Pharmacology) in the Division of General Medical Sciences, National Institutes of Health, from 1958 to 1960. He was appointed founding department chairman of the Nutrition and Home Economics Department at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1960, seeing that department through its transition to the Department of Nutritional Sciences in 1962, and serving as chair until 1970. He continued as professor of nutrition in that department until his retirement in 1984. George also was the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs of the College of Natural Resources at the University of California, Berkeley, from 1977 to 1980.

The accomplishments of this career in public institutions began with his research, which was a major driving force throughout his career. The long-standing goal of University



growth must not only be of adequate energy and nitrogen content but must also contain micronutrients, which were as yet to be identified (Carpenter et al. 1997). In particular, his ongoing efforts to optimize diets for poultry led Briggs to acquire funding for Mary Shorb to complete development of a microbial assay system permitting the rapid assay of vitamin

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  
*in* Nutritional Sciences UCB cooperatively put on several  
*Berkeley* 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.***



# Supplement I: Review of Studies on Vitamin and Mineral Nutrition in the United States, 1950-1968

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

# Los Angeles Times, July, 1970

22 Part VI—Thurs., July 16, 1970 Los Angeles Times ★

## California's Nutrition Needs Not Being Met, Says Expert

BY BARBARA HANSEN  
Times Staff Writer

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



DR. GEORGE M. BRIGGS  
... nutrition should be fun.  
Times photo

clude the poor, minority groups and the aged. "The poor," said Dr. Briggs, "have been ignored by educators, professional nutritionists and people concerned with good health until just recently."

He noted that people on welfare can't afford a good diet unless they know enough about nutrition to choose foods intelligently. They must learn how to

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 music 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



# 2008: Fortieth Year of Journal

- 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.

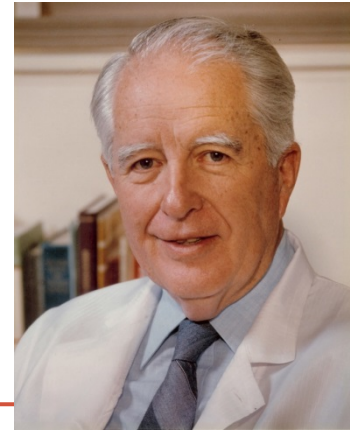
# Goal and Purpose

- **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



## What is Past is Prologue

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*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.

THE POULTRY SCIENCE ASSOCIATION



**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—.*