

the elements of the inductive method articulated by Francis Bacon in the early seventeenth century—namely observation, hypothesis, experimentation, and data analysis—that allowed Goldberger to prove that pellagra was caused by niacin deficiency, the contributions of other investigators were required to fully clarify the centuries-old mystery of this deficiency disorder. Notable among these is Conrad Elvehjem, a biochemist at the University of Wisconsin, who isolated and characterized the structure of niacin, established a pellagra model in dogs, and demonstrated that purified niacin (nicotinic acid) from brewer's yeast cured pellagra. Noteworthy, too,

is Sir Frederick Gowland Hopkins at Cambridge University, who isolated tryptophan from protein. It was subsequently shown that humans could metabolize tryptophan to niacin, thereby satisfying much of a human's niacin requirement.

Dr. Bryan has done a masterful job of interweaving the saga of the conquest of pellagra with the fascinating and admirable biography of James Charles Babcock, who weathered twenty-five stormy years of caring for patients with pellagra at the state mental asylum in South Carolina, while passionately and relentlessly supporting and encouraging other physicians and scientists in their

search for the cause and treatment of the red plague of pellagra. But the story isn't complete. Questions remain for today's young scientists in the health professions to contemplate: for example, why was pellagra much more prevalent in women?

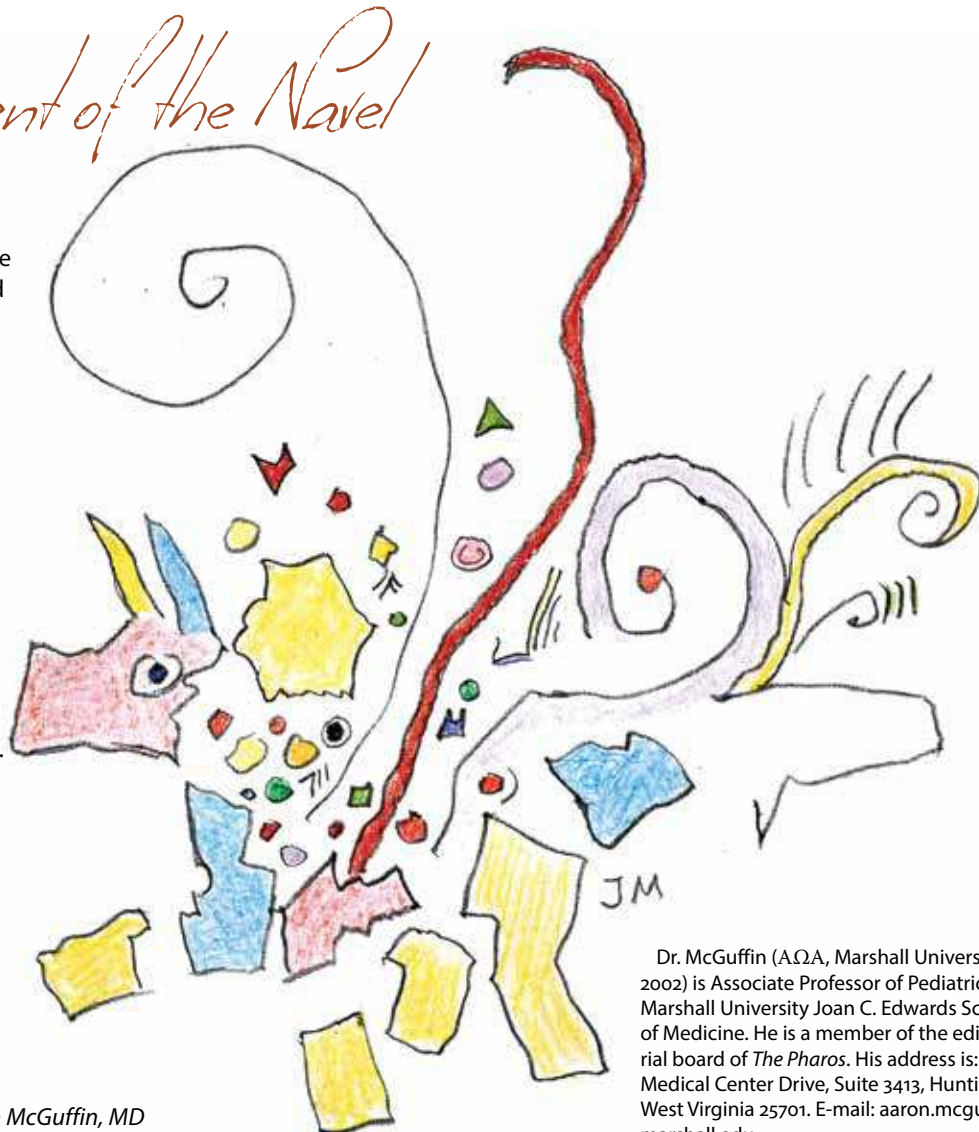
Dr. Glew is emeritus professor of Biochemistry and professor in the Department of Surgery at the University of New Mexico School of Medicine. His address is:

MSC10-5610  
1 University of New Mexico  
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87131-0001  
E-mail: rglew@salud.unm.edu

## The Lament of the Navel

In my heyday  
I was the linchpin of life,  
a three vessel thoroughfare  
role-playing the command  
for go forth and multiply.  
The ebb-and-flow  
of a divine miracle,  
the oxygen lorry  
for a living being.  
Until that final day.  
My incubation,  
triumphantly  
poured out  
like a priceless piñata  
precipitated into daylight.  
The blinding snip  
of surgical shears  
as we separate.  
Cold clamps of conclusion.  
Lack of acknowledgment.  
Humiliation worsened  
by days of dangle,  
the center of attention.  
Everyone waiting  
for me to fall off  
so that it is finished;  
a blind pouch  
of disgrace;  
life-giver to  
lint trap.

Aaron McGuffin, MD



Dr. McGuffin (AQA, Marshall University, 2002) is Associate Professor of Pediatrics at the Marshall University Joan C. Edwards School of Medicine. He is a member of the editorial board of *The Pharos*. His address is: 1600 Medical Center Drive, Suite 3413, Huntington, West Virginia 25701. E-mail: aaron.mcguffin@marshall.edu.