

Alumnus Profile



Photo by David Rehor

10 Questions with . . . Anthony Calabrese, MD '72

Anthony Calabrese, MD '72, has hit many high notes since he graduated from JMC. Professionally, Calabrese served the country on active duty as chief of gastroenterology at Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland. He served as president of the medical staff at Anne Arundel Medical Center in Annapolis, Md., and is a member of the Maryland State Colorectal Cancer Advisory Committee. He has been consistently voted a "Top Doc" and continues to care for patients as a founding member of Anne Arundel Gastroenterology Associates.

Personally, he married Nancy (nee) Meier in 1970. She later became a Jefferson alumna herself, graduating with the first BSN class at Jefferson in 1974, and is now a nurse practitioner at St. John's College in Annapolis. They have two sons.

In his spare time, Calabrese hits high and low notes as the lead tenor saxophonist for the Bayside Big Band, a 17-piece orchestra. Nearly every week the band performs jazz and swing music at concert halls, clubs, weddings and other venues in the Washington-Baltimore area.

Calabrese joined the band 15 years ago, but his love of music began early in life growing up in Elizabeth, N.J.

"I started to get interested in music at about age 9," he says. "My dad was a truck driver but played piano professionally on weekends as a second job. I took lessons from one of his colleagues and later played first chair clarinet with my high-school band."

Music remained in the background for years, but after his time in medical staff leadership, Calabrese picked up his saxophone and clarinet again.

"When my tenure as medical staff president was completed, I decided I would make more time for me and get back to playing more seriously," he said. "After a long period of only rarely bringing out my instruments to play, I started back playing regularly with the local community college band and then was recruited to join Bayside Big Band."

The rest, as they say, is history.

1 When you were 5, what did you want to be when you grew up?

The first thing I can remember is thinking I'd work in a pharmacy like one of my dad's musician friends. I always liked the idea of helping people, but I saw limited options since neither of my parents had finished high school. Later, when I did well academically, I thought I might consider dentistry. I began college as a pre-dental student, but with the encouragement of my dad, I soon switched to aspiring to becoming a physician.

2 What drew you to your specialty (gastroenterology)?

There are four main reasons: a) the breadth of GI encompasses all of internal medicine; b) the "art" of taking a history and listening how patients describe their symptoms to come to an accurate diagnosis; c) the impact of Jefferson professors (most notably Drs. Gonzalo Aponte

and O. Dhodanand Kowlessar); and d) the ability to be both a cognitive and procedural specialist.

3 What was the most fun you ever had in your career?

When serving on active duty in the Air Force, I was asked to be the attending physician for members of the U.S. Congress on a "junket" through the Caribbean. I got to spend two weeks with the congressmen, their spouses and staffs. The trip included touring several countries, off-shore fishing and fighting a blue marlin and several days in Cuba. We had personal meetings with several political leaders, including Fidel Castro.

4 What was your first job?

My first real job was the summer after high school when I worked on a "track gang" repairing railroad tracks with hand tools for the Pennsylvania RR. Of note, that summer job earned enough for me to pay for my first year's college tuition (I was a commuter and lived at home).

5 What is your biggest pet peeve?

What I see as an America that has historically afforded tremendous opportunities through both personal and family effort and sacrifice becoming a society where excellence and honest achievement are not goals held deserving of reward. Entitlement and mediocrity are not what made America great.

6 What is the biggest challenge in your field?

The marked rise of educational costs and longer training programs required for certifications, coupled with the anticipated decreased compensation for physicians across the board, make planning for economic realities for physicians alarming going forward. The days of private practice may be gone.

7 What was your most memorable moment at Jefferson?

Graduation day, when my Italian immigrant grandparents and my parents were so proud to see me graduate as a physician cum laude.

8 What is the proudest moment in your career?

Being consistently named by my peers as a "Top Doc."

9 What is your highest priority for the coming years?

Phasing out of practice and into retirement gracefully.

10 What is the best decision you ever made?

Inviting myself to join my current GI practice in Annapolis.

— Stacey Miller