

PHYSICIAN PROFILE:

Drs. Chiavetta

By Fiona Morgan

A love of medicine, and of learning, runs in the Chiavetta family. Stephen Chiavetta, Jr., was born in 1943 to parents who were first-generation Italian-American immigrants. His father was a steel worker for Bethlehem Steel, the largest employer in their

hometown of Easton, Pennsylvania. “My parents, who were not educated beyond high school, were strong believers in education and hard work,” he says. “My sister and I were never encouraged to learn the Sicilian dialect for fear of being thought of as uneducated.”

His parents encouraged him to study and work hard and to follow his interests. After graduating from college with a degree in biology, he excelled at the Marquette School of Medicine (later renamed the Medical College of Wisconsin). “I was attracted to the field of medicine because of my interest in science and a desire to help others,” he says.

It was during an externship at a community hospital during his second year of medical school that Steve discovered his love of pathology. “I saw firsthand the daily responsibilities and activities of the pathologists. I came to understand how pathology is a bridge between laboratory science and clinical medicine. The pathologists were viewed as the doctors’ doctor.”

As the Vietnam War continued to escalate during his last year of medical school, he applied for

a draft deferment to complete specialty training at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, prior to serving in the U.S. Navy as a physician in Jacksonville, Florida.

Steve and his wife, Janet, who had met in college while she was studying journalism, moved to Raleigh in 1976. He worked as a pathologist at Rex Hospital

until his retirement last August. During his 33 years there, he served as president of the medical staff and as a member of the bylaws committee, and he set up the bone marrow core biopsy program in the late 1970’s

“My greatest professional accomplishment has been the privilege to practice medicine as a pathologist for 35 years,”

Stephen Chiavetta Jr., John Chiavetta and Stephen Chiavetta III



Pictured left to right: Dr. John Chiavetta, Dr. Stephen Chiavetta, Jr., and Dr. Stephen Chiavetta III



The Chiavetta family, clockwise from left: Steve (III), Jennifer, Janet, Steve (Jr.), John, Rebekah, Hayden, Charlotte, Steve (IV), and Lilly

Steve says. Through his work in the field of anatomic pathology, he helped clinical physicians develop a clearer understanding of their patients’ diseases. Technological advances in the field have made that work increasingly effective during the course of his career. “I enjoy working as a team with the clinical physicians,” he adds, “assisting them in arriving at a diagnosis and providing them with information to help manage the patient’s disease.”

While his sons share his love of medicine, they chose very different specialties. John Chiavetta is an orthopedic surgeon in Raleigh, while Stephen Chiavetta III is an ophthalmologist in Wilmington.

Their father says his sons always had strong interests in science and math and did well in those areas in school. “I was neutral in providing direction to my sons regarding the practice of medicine as a career,” he says. “I was very happy when they applied to medical school and followed in my footsteps, but with both sons, it was definitely their decision. Actually, what mattered most to me was that they were happy in their chosen profession and worked to the best of their ability in whatever field they chose.”

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Stephen Chiavetta Jr.

BORN: November 1943 in Easton, PA

EDUCATION: LaSalle College, Philadelphia, B.A. Biology, 1965
Marquette School of Medicine, Milwaukee, M.D. 1969

CAREER HISTORY:

Rotating medicine/surgery internship, Greenwich Hospital, Greenwich Connecticut, 1969-1970.

Mayo Graduate School of Medicine, Rochester, Minnesota, Anatomic and Clinical Pathology 1970-1974; Subspecialty Training in Hematology, 1973-1974.

Assistant Chief of Pathology, Lieutenant Commander, Medical Corps of the U.S. Navy, Naval Regional Medical Center, Jacksonville, Florida, 1974-1976.

Adjunct Assistant Professor of Zoology, North Carolina State University, 1978-1990

Rex Hospital, Director of Hematology Laboratory in the Department of Pathology 1976-2009.

COMMUNITY: Volunteer at Alliance Medical Ministry

PROFESSIONAL SOCIETIES:

American Medical Association
North Carolina Medical Society
Wake County Medical Society
Fellow, College of American Pathologists
Fellow, American Society of Hematology
U.S. and Canadian Academy of Pathology
North Carolina Society of Pathologists
Raleigh Academy of Medicine, President 2005

FAMILY: Wife: Janet Moe Chiavetta
Two sons: John Chiavetta and Stephen Chiavetta III.

FAVORITE LEISURE ACTIVITIES:

Model trains, light home repairs, studying Italian, traveling and spending time with grandchildren.

FAVORITE MOVIES: *Life Is Beautiful*, *Cinema Paradiso* and *The Godfather*

LAST BOOK READ: *Culture Warrior* by Bill O'Reilly

LIKES ABOUT THE TRIANGLE: The Triangle offers [Continued on page 37]

John Chiavetta

BORN: January 1973, Rochester, MN

EDUCATION: Broughton High School
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, B.A. Mathematics and B.S. Biology, 1995
UNC School of Medicine, M.D., 1999

CAREER HISTORY:

Orthopaedic Surgery Residency, Mayo Clinic School of Medicine, 1999-2004
Adult Reconstruction Fellowship, Charlotte Orthopaedic Specialists, 2004-2005
Orthopaedic Surgeon, Raleigh Orthopaedic Clinic, 2005-present

COMMUNITY: Project Access

White Memorial Presbyterian Church
Rex Hospital, member of the orthopedic quality assurance committee, global peer review committee, and infection control committee

PROFESSIONAL SOCIETIES:

American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons
American Association of Hip and Knee Surgeons

FAMILY: Wife: Rebekah Chiavetta, Children: Charlotte, age 5, and Hayden age 2 ½. A baby is due in April.

FAVORITE LEISURE ACTIVITIES:

Sporting activities with the kids, woodworking, golf, fixing and breaking things around the house.

LAST MOVIE SEEN: *The Sound of Music* with my 5-year-old daughter

LAST BOOK READ: *The Bible Salesman* by Clyde Edgerton

LIKES ABOUT THE TRIANGLE: The cultural diversity and intellectual feel of the Triangle, coupled with the small-town feel of Raleigh and each of the cities in the Triangle. Also, having the beach and mountains close by.

DISLIKES ABOUT THE TRIANGLE: The long distance away from extended family in the Midwest and Northeast.

ADVICE TO YOUNG PHYSICIANS

STARTING PRACTICE: Follow your interests. Getting in a specialty that you enjoy will likely lead to a long enjoyable career.

Stephen Chiavetta III

BORN: June 1971 in Rochester, MN

EDUCATION: Vanderbilt University, B.A. Mathematics, 1993
UNC School of Medicine, M.D. 1997

CAREER HISTORY: Internal Medicine Internship, Yale University, Greenwich Hospital, Internship 1998
Medical and Surgical Ophthalmology Residency Mayo Clinic School of Medicine, 2001

Cornea Fellowship, Duke University, 2002
Ophthalmologist, Coastal Carolina Eye Clinic, Wilmington, 2002-present

COMMUNITY: Director of CME by the Sea Medical Meeting, Southeastern North Carolina

Habitat for Humanity
Historic Wilmington Foundation
St. James Episcopal Church

PROFESSIONAL SOCIETIES:

American Medical Association
Fellow, American Academy of Ophthalmology
International Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery

FAMILY: Wife: Jennifer Chiavetta
Children: Lilly, age 6, and Stephen IV, age 4

FAVORITE LEISURE ACTIVITIES: Golf, fishing, travel and college basketball.

FAVORITE MOVIE: *Fletch*

FAVORITE BOOK: *Poor Charlie's Almanack* by Charlie Munger

LIKES ABOUT THE TRIANGLE: The Triangle is an inspiring cosmopolitan area with a huge number of things to offer, but still somehow maintains its North Carolina flavor.

DISLIKES ABOUT THE TRIANGLE: No complaints.

ADVICE TO YOUNG PHYSICIANS

STARTING PRACTICE: Enjoy the privilege of being a doctor.

At least as important than their intellectual gifts, their father says, “Stephen and John have always been kindhearted and have demonstrated an understanding of human emotions. Both have the ability to discuss a patient’s medical problem in a compassionate way and at the same time explain a medical diagnosis in a way patients are able to understand. While they were in high school, I remember hearing the two of them discussing how they would enjoy teaching. Medicine provides ample opportunities to teach. A love of teaching makes a physician’s life more rewarding.”

Indeed, both sons cite the opportunity to teach and care for patients as a source of career satisfaction.

“I enjoy the aspect of helping people, really making a big difference in their quality of life,” says John, who has practiced at the Raleigh Orthopedic Clinic since 2005. “So much of my day with patients is spent educating them about their disease process and explaining the different treatment options.” He also likes the variety of people he meets in practice, and the technical aspect of joint replacement surgery, with its many tools. “I love working with my hands.”

On choosing the field of medicine, the younger Steve says, “I liked knowing I would always feel intellectually challenged in my job and every working day. I would feel the satisfaction that comes from helping people. I chose ophthalmology because I really like the physiology and physics of the eye and it is a specialty that has a good balance of medical treatment, continuity of care, and surgical treatment.”

If their father did not try to steer them into medicine, once they chose the path, he did lobby them to do specialty training at the Mayo Clinic. Perhaps it was

predestined that they should continue the tradition: Both sons were born in Minnesota while their father was in residency.

Steve took up the suggestion easily. For John, it was a tougher decision. “He said it was a very cold part of the country and for that reason wasn’t sure it was a good place for him,” his father recalls. John eventually changed his mind and completed a five-year program in orthopedics. The brothers overlapped during a two-year period during their training there.

“We all share in that common experience, and have a deep regard and respect for the top quality medical care practiced there and the training we received,” their father says. “Needless to say all of us have a great appreciation for mild North Carolina winters.”

After a fellowship in hip and knee replacement in Charlotte, John moved back to Raleigh, where he lives with his wife and two young children. He and his father both volunteer to provide affordable care to low-income working families in Wake County.

John is also an accomplished researcher, with multiple research publications to his name. That method of advancing the field him satisfaction, as does each successful joint replacement surgery he performs. “There is no professional accomplishment greater than changing someone’s quality of life, allowing them to walk without pain, to play with grandchildren or to get back into activities they love,” he says.

Steve and his wife moved to Wilmington when he completed his specialty training in 2002, “because we love the water and the beauty of the area. We thought that instead of waiting till retirement to enjoy the coast, we’ll enjoy it now,” he says. In addition to his practice with Coastal Carolina Eye Clinic, he feels

Stephen Chiavetta Jr.

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endless activities in which to participate. The universities provide opportunities for learning for adults of all ages at many different levels. The athletic teams provide wholesome entertainment for our families. There is convenient shopping, many cultural opportunities and an interesting diverse population, which brings so much enrichment to our area.

ADVICE TO YOUNG PHYSICIANS STARTING PRACTICE: Show kindness and compassion in your work. The vast knowledge of medicine learned by physicians is greatly shortchanged if not accompanied by compassion.

gratified by his work on the description, genetic analysis and characterization of a potentially new corneal dystrophy of the eye. He was the first person in Southeastern North Carolina to perform a partial thickness corneal transplant.

As for the next generation of the Chiavetta family, John’s 5-year-old daughter, Charlotte, and 2-year-old son, Hayden, sometimes accompany their father on Saturday morning rounds at Rex. Steve’s 6-year-old daughter Lilly and 4-year-old son Stephen have visited given their dad an eye exam at his office. Both John and Steve say they will follow in their parents’ footsteps by encouraging their children to learn, to care, to try their best and to do what they love. §

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dents—William S. Powell, Archie K. Davis, William C. Friday, and, currently, Willis P. Whichard. In addition to the officers, the current Board of Directors consists of H. David Bruton, Timothy B. Burnett, James W. Clark, Jr., Dana Borden Lacy, Nancy Cobb Lilly, Danyne Romine Powell, W. Trent Ragland, Jr., and John L. Sanders. The Society is rare, if not unique, in that it has never paid a salary or levied dues. This means that gifts from its

members and friends go directly to programs, not to a salaried bureaucracy. H. G. Jones, who has served as its founder and secretary during the entire history of the organization, will turn the position over in July to Martin H. Brinkley, a Raleigh attorney, who will serve as combined secretary-treasurer. Further information on the Society may be obtained on its web page, www.ncsociety.org.

Bland Simpson, author, musician, actor,

outdoorsman, and distinguished teacher of creative writing, will receive the 2010 North Caroliniana Society Award during a banquet in the Hill Alumni Center in Chapel Hill on May 21. In keeping with its motto of “Substance, not Show,” the Society does not advertise its events through the media, but friends of the recipient may contact the secretary at University of North Carolina Campus Box 3930, Chapel Hill 27514-3930, for an invitation. §