



Spine Stability - Anthony Calabrese (1928-1990) and Salvatore Calabrese

A Family Tradition

Through his daily experiences with some of the most difficult cases Anthony Calabrese, a certified prosthetist and orthotist in Philadelphia Pennsylvania was determined to improve the current state of the orthotic industry. He was committed to the design, manufacturing and application of appliances, which included taking patient measurements to develop the required devices ensuring proper stabilization and patient comfort.



Anthony Calabrese

Satisfying the Demand

Mr. Calabrese recognized that cervical collars were either soft foam or rigid metal. Soft foam collars were made with open cell urethane and one piece construction which offered little or no support. Rigid metal collars were uncomfortable and had to be removed for x-rays thereby compromising cervical spine stability. In 1971, Mr. Calabrese solved this problem by inventing and marketing the Philadelphia® Cervical Collar, the first two piece, semi rigid collar manufactured with cross linked, closed cell polyethylene Plastazote® foam and Velcro® fasteners. Unique sizing was achieved by being an off the shelf product with a custom fit. Within a few years, the Philadelphia Cervical Collar Company's niche market grew establishing itself as a leading manufacturer in the orthopedic industry with a revolutionary product and in 1978 moved to a 5,000 square foot facility in New Jersey.



Family Tradition

In 1981, Mr. Calabrese brought his son, Salvatore into the family business. Salvatore quickly learned every aspect of the design and manufacturing process while attending college. In 1988 after earning a degree in biology, he joined the company full time, turned his attention to office procedures and implemented the computerization of accounting and administrative tasks. Until his passing in 1990, Mr. Calabrese and Salvatore collaborated on designs and inventions of cervical orthoses and collar enhancements. Most importantly they focused on products for paramedics and emergency technicians to stabilize cervical spine injuries at accident scenes and during patient transportation. "Besides being my father" Salvatore says, "he was my mentor and friend who taught me how to look beyond things and conceptualize new designs, products and techniques."



Salvatore Calabrese

Salvatore asked his sister, Carolyn Palavage to join the family business in 1991. She had a communications degree and a background in human resources, marketing and customer service which was the perfect compliment to Salvatore's management capabilities. Their ability to closely work together allowed them to resolve several company issues and enabled them to focus on product realignment, research and development and machinery procurement.



Carolyn Palavage

International Success

With the Philadelphia collar firmly established in the United States, they marketed their entire product line throughout the world and achieved the status as the gold standard in the international medical community. During the next thirteen years, Salvatore designed and invented 14 cervical orthoses and collar enhancements, including the One-Piece®, Patriot®, and Atlas® collars to meet the challenge of emergency, orthopedic and rehabilitation markets. They focused on products that enhanced patients level of comfort while maintaining optimal cervical support. Salvatore attributed the success to, "our customer commitment cycle: listen, design, prototype, test, production and continuous improvement." Salvatore's latest invention was the second generation of the Philadelphia collar with lateral supports which fully immobilizes a patient's cervical spine. "My father and brother understand innovation" Carolyn said, "and with their 38 patents, 16 trademarks and patents pending we continue to redefine the orthopedic marketplace."



Quality Commitment

Salvatore and Carolyn decided to prove their commitment to their father's vision by the construction of a new 52,000 square foot building located in Thorofare, New Jersey, investing in the company by upgrading office technology and automating product processes. Their investment in the company and employees was recognized by several prominent organizations and received the 2000 Small Family Business of the Year and Blue Chip Enterprise Awards. Also, they have received numerous supplier awards from their customers for product quality, excellent performance and on-time delivery. "Since my father, brother and I were former patients and wore the Philadelphia collar, we are also the most demanding customers" Carolyn said. Salvatore recalls his father's statement, "While recognition is rewarding, the Calabrese family's fundamental objective is to continually exceed our customers' expectations."



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