

# Alumnus Profile

## 10 Questions with . . . Peter C. Amadio, MD '73 2013 Alumni Achievement Award Recipient

Peter C. Amadio, MD '73, with his mother, Vilma Amadio. Photo by John Donges.

Peter C. Amadio, MD '73, was destined to become a physician. "I remember hearing about Jefferson when I was a small child; my dad was a student there, and he said that he turned in an application for me when I was 5 years old," he says. "My becoming a doctor was always the master plan from my dad's perspective." Amadio, currently the Lloyd A. and Barbara A. Amundson Professor of Orthopedics at the Mayo Clinic, is the recipient of the 2013 JMC Alumni Achievement Award, bestowed during reunion weekend festivities in October. "Everything in my early life focused on graduating from Jefferson and becoming a doctor. So it's a wonderful feeling to have recognition from an institution that means so much to me," says Amadio.

A participant in the Penn State five-year medical degree program, Amadio went on to a residency in orthopedics at Harvard Medical School, followed by a hand fellowship at Jefferson. "I met my wife, Bari, who was a nursing student, while I was at Jefferson," he says. "We are still married 40

years later." Amadio graduated 15 years after his father did in 1958, so they shared reunion years during Jefferson's Alumni Weekend.

Amadio spent time in private practice on Long Island before deciding to move north, joining the prestigious Mayo Clinic. "Mayo is a wonderful place to work; everything is collaborative and oriented around teams. It has a family feeling, very similar to what I always felt at Jefferson," he says. Amadio could claim Philadelphia as his home — he still has family living in the area — but he has lived in Rochester for almost 30 years. "My loyalties are split, but I will say that there is no good junk food in Minnesota. Philly has soft pretzels, Tastykakes and, of course, cheesesteaks," he says.

Amadio became interested in hand surgery and rehabilitation while working at Jefferson with James Hunter, MD '53, who died in January of this year. "Getting the tendons to move properly after hand surgery is a big problem; they tend to get stuck and the fingers don't move well. So I became interested in hand lubrication,

which led to partnering with a biomedical engineer at Mayo. For last 20 years, I've had an NIH-funded research grant, first on hand tendon lubrication then on tissue engineering, with a goal of building a better lubrication system and possibly artificial tendons. These are all things that started with Dr. Hunter," he says. As his collaboration with bioengineers increased, so did Amadio's role; he eventually became a professor of biomedical engineering in addition to orthopedic surgery.

He is currently studying how to use stem cells and naturally occurring lubricants to improve tendon healing after an injury. "We're trying to figure out ways to make them adhere to the surface of a tendon so it slides better and doesn't get stuck to surrounding tissues," he explains.

Outside of work, Amadio is interested in history and politics. "I used to think those were areas that I'd major in, but now they are hobbies," he says. "My dad was right — I was meant to be a physician."



**1. When you were a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?**

One of my earliest memories is playing with my father's 'bone box' — pieces of a human skeleton that medical students took home to study from in the 1950s. So it was pretty much medicine from the get-go.

**2. What drew you to your specialty?**

I remember clearly a conversation on this topic with William Baltzell, MD '46, a professor of ENT when I was a student. I asked him that question, and he said that the most important part of choosing a specialty was finding people, or even a specific mentor, you liked being around. For him, it was Chevalier Jackson. For me, that's been hand surgeons. I have had exposure to a number of great role models, both at Jefferson, with Drs. Hunter and Schneider, and elsewhere. Most of my best friends now are other hand surgeons, some of whom I have known for over 30 years.

**3. What don't people know about your field that you wish they did know?**

It's a team sport. Nothing happens unless the hand surgeon, hand therapist and patient work together.

**4. If you could work for a year in any location in the world, where would you do it?**

Come winter, as I'm shoveling my roof, I always think Hawaii would be nice.

**5. What is your biggest pet peeve?**

People who spend their lives looking backward instead of forward. You can't change the past, but you can change the future.

**6. What's on your bucket list (personally or professionally)?**

I enjoy horse racing and visiting race tracks when I travel. I've been to the Kentucky Derby every year since 1989. I would love to attend the royal meet at Ascot, in England, one day.

**7. What is the biggest challenge in your field?**

We have pretty good tools now in hand surgery to fix things, but not enough to replace them, when fixing isn't possible. Replacements for tendons, nerves, joints — even whole hands — that's the big challenge today for hand surgeons.

**8. What is the best decision you ever made?**

Marrying Bari. We met in November, married in June, and 40 years later we're still on our honeymoon.

**9. What is the most adventurous thing you have ever done?**

A friend and I bought a race horse about 10 years ago, and now we also own her babies, several of whom have raced. It's been a lot of fun.

**10. Who is your personal hero? Why?**

My wife. She has given me the strength to be who I am today.