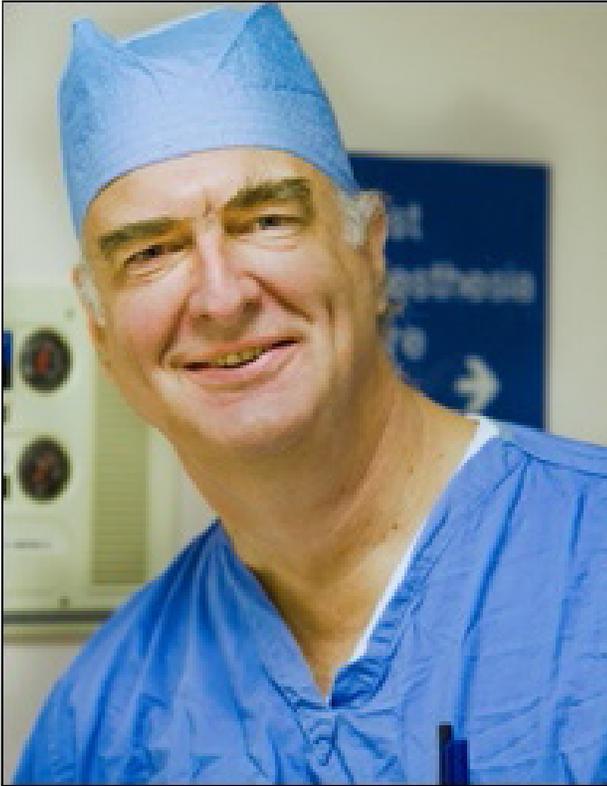




Russell J. Nauta

November 13, 1951 - June 12, 2020



Russ Nauta, a big man with a big heart and a sly sense of humor, died in a motor vehicle accident in June 2020 and the Boston surgical community lost one its most endearing members. Russ arrived at the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital in June 1977, in the first full class of interns under John Mannick's leadership. Born and raised in New London, CT, Russ went to college at Wesleyan University, graduating in 1973, before heading off to Georgetown Medical School. When he was at Wesleyan, Russ met Claire, and they were married the year after starting Georgetown. Russ was drawn to surgery, no doubt by his mother's career as a nurse, but also his father's career as a skilled craftsman, drawn to building things with his hands.

Photograph courtesy of Kurt Newman, MD

The Peter Bent Brigham that he came to in 1977 was a far cry from the huge hospital that the Brigham and Women's Hospital is now. It was a small, 250 bed institution that fostered a very close, familial relationship between attendings and house staff. Russ immediately took to it and became a popular co-resident, a mentor to those who came behind him and, literally, a towering figure on the old wards at the Brigham. After 5 years of residency, he was selected to be the Arthur Tracy Cabot Fellow and Superchief in his 6th year, spending 6 months at the Brigham and 6 months at the West Roxbury VA. The Brigham Ward Service, by then renamed the Cushing Service, was the busiest service in the Department of Surgery, serving all undesignated patients who came through the Emergency Room, running a very busy consult service at the Brigham and the Dana Farber, and manning a clinic 2 days a week that served the Mission Hill community. Russ was indefatigable and when things got busy would call out to his resident team on the way to the OR, "fire-up". Russ was a superior raconteur with an elephant's memory for stories and long-forgotten foibles of residents and attendings. Russ loved telling stories, on rounds, or in the surgeon's lounge, or at the professional meetings where he cherished gathering together with friends and colleagues.

*In tribute to their dedicated efforts to science and medicine, deceased members of the Harvard Faculty of Medicine (those at the rank of full or emeritus professor) receive a review of their life and contributions with a complete reflection, a **Memorial Minute**.*

He was soft-spoken, often so quiet that one had to lean in to hear what he said. But most statements were followed by a belly laugh and chortle. Russ was an impactful mentor and role model for residents, students and colleagues. He was everyone's answer to the question "who would you most like to have at your side in a bunker?"

After finishing the residency, Russ was recruited back to his alma mater, Georgetown, where he built a huge practice, became the Director of the Surgical Residency, and Chief of the Division of General Surgery. He rose through the ranks, becoming Full Professor with Tenure. He was certainly proud of these achievements, but more than that the numerous relationships he developed with students, residents and attendings. A faculty teaching award was named for Russ at Georgetown

In 1998 Russ relocated to Mt. Auburn where he served as chief of surgery. He had appointments as Vice Chair of Surgery at the BI-Deaconess and was Professor of Surgery at HMS. His time in Boston was marked by training a generation of devoted house staff and earning the undying support of his faculty. He was President of the Boston Surgical Society and served on the Harvard Admissions Committee for many years.

Despite the many accolades, honors, and achievements, his own primary identity for himself was as that of a "family man". He was married to the love of his life and best friend, Claire for 46 years. He loved the role of Dad to daughter, Dr. Allison Nauta and her husband, James, and to their son, Russell Nauta and his wife, Rebecca. Most of all he loved being Grandad to his three grandchildren. He casts a long shadow over the hundreds of students, residents and faculty with whom he worked and nurtured.

Respectfully submitted,

David C. Brooks, MD, *Chairperson*

Aram N. Demirjian, MD

Stephen E. Dolgin, MD

Kurt Newman, MD

Marc L. Schermerhorn, MD