Nicholas A. Halasz was born on March 13, 1931, in Budapest, Hungary. He received his early education in his native land, graduating with a B.A. degree from Teachers College, Budapest, before immigrating to the United States and receiving a Sc.B. degree from Trinity College in 1950. He attended medical school at Yale University, receiving his M.D. degree (cum laude) in 1954. He continued his postgraduate training in general, cardiovascular, and thoracic surgery at the same institution. After obtaining his U.S. citizenship, he served his military service from 1956 to 1958 as a captain in the U.S. Army and he functioned as a surgical officer for the 121st Evacuation Hospital in Korea at Fort Dix Army Hospital. Following completion of his surgical training at Yale, he moved to the West Coast, joining the faculty of the Department of Surgery at UCLA, in 1963, as an Assistant Professor. He was quickly promoted to Associate Professor.

In 1967, he was one of the founding faculty members of the UCSD School of Medicine, joining UCSD as a Professor of Surgery and Head of the Division of Anatomy. Dr. Halasz was also the founding Director of the UCSD Transplantation Program, and he performed the first kidney transplant in San Diego. He developed one of the best human anatomy courses for medical students in the country. He received numerous awards and prizes, both as an undergraduate and postgraduate, and was a Markle Scholar in academic medicine from 1964 to 1969. He holds the record at UCSD for receiving the Kaiser Award for Teaching Excellence in four separate years. He was also awarded the Chancellor’s Associate Award for Excellence in Teaching in 1989, and was voted Physician of the Year at UCSD Medical Center in 1994.

Nick Halasz was known as a teacher and mentor for generations of housestaff and medical students. An outstanding clinician, teacher, researcher, and colleague, he was a “renaissance man” in the truest sense of the term. He has unselfishly served the Department and the University in multiple important roles and on countless committees. He has acted as interim Division Chief and Program Director in General Surgery during the period of 1981-83. When he retired from full-time University employment in 1994, he undertook the position of Chief of Surgical Services at the V.A. Medical Center in La Jolla, where his organization, leadership, ingenuity, and sense of fairness helped reorganize and rejuvenate surgical practice and teaching at that institution. His published contributions of over 170 papers covered a wide variety of general surgery topics from transplantation to trauma, hepatobiliary disease, wound healing, gastrointestinal disorders, etc. He was a member of virtually all the prestigious national and international surgical organizations and societies and participated in the affairs of very many of them in active fashion. He served on the Editorial Board of several peer-reviewed journals. He was a board member/Director of the American Board of Surgery, from 1984-1988. He has been President of the San Diego Society of General Surgeons, California Society of Transplant Surgeons, and Western Association of Transplant Surgery.

In spite of all his achievements and contributions, Nick was a quiet, modest, and unassuming person. His dedication to surgical education was genuine. He made a lot of personal sacrifices to help others in our department. He was one of the few true surgical scholars that I have met. He was a world traveler, knowledgeable in the arts, literature, wine, and especially surgical history. He invariably had one or more surgical vignettes to share with us at our weekly grand rounds and mortality and morbidity conference on Saturday mornings. He never missed any such meeting when he was in town.

Nick faced his final illness with the same calm dignity that he approached any problem. He was a model patient and was genuinely considerate to his doctors and nurses. He was at work in his office 10 days following a major thoraco-abdominal operation! Once he realized that his disease was terminal, he planned his departure with thoughtfulness, taking care of all his affairs to spare his family and friends any potential hardship or difficulty later on.

Last, but not least, Nick was a good family man and a loyal friend. He is survived by his wife, Diane, and by his two children, Peter and Katherine. He is missed by all of us. As a mark of posthumous recognition, the General Surgery Service at the V.A. Medical Center and the Anatomy Dissecting Room at UCSD have both been named after him. In addition, the Department of Surgery has established a Nicholas A. Halasz Endowment Fund for this yearly memorial lecture.

- A.R. Moossa, M.D.
The Department of Surgery has created an endowment with the purpose of fundraising for the Nicholas A. Halasz Chair at UCSD. All contributions are tax-deductible and should be made payable and addressed to the "Nicholas A. Halasz Endowment Fund" in care of the UCSD Department of Surgery.

Program

7:30 a.m. Welcome

Mark A. Talamini, M.D.
M.J. Orloff Family Professor & Chairman
Department of Surgery
University of California, San Diego

7:35 a.m. Remembering Nicholas A. Halasz, M.D.

Michael Bouvet, M.D.
Professor of Surgery
Director, Endocrine Surgery
Co-Director, GI Cancer Unit
Department of Surgery
University of California, San Diego

7:45 a.m. Introduction of Guest Speaker

Mark A. Talamini, M.D.
M.J. Orloff Family Professor & Chairman
Department of Surgery
University of California, San Diego

7:50 a.m. The Fourteenth Annual

Nicholas A. Halasz Memorial Lecture

“A 20/20 Look at General Surgery”

Tom R. DeMeester, M.D.
Emeritus Professor & Chairman
Department of Surgery
Keck School of Medicine
University of Southern California
Los Angeles, California

Dr. DeMeester received his medical degree from the University of Michigan and completed his surgical residency in general and thoracic surgery at The Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland.

Dr. DeMeester's interest is in foregut and pulmonary disease. He is the originator and developer of the field of non-invasive foregut ambulatory monitoring and has made a number of important contributions to the understanding of the physiology and pathophysiology of diseases of the esophagus and their surgical correction. In the area of oncology he has focused on malignant degeneration of Barrett's esophagus, esophageal tumors and lung cancer. His studies have resulted in 478 publications in peer-reviewed journals, 191 book chapters and 9 books, and he has been invited to present 41 named lectures. He received an honorary Doctorate of Medicine degree from Linköping University, Sweden; Lund University, Sweden; the University of Athens, Greece and the University of Padua, Italy. Dr. DeMeester was elected a member of The Johns Hopkins University Society of Scholars and an Officer of the French Order of Academic Palms. He has received honorary membership in the European Surgical Association, German Society of Visceral Surgery, Spanish Association of Surgeons, Association of Upper Gastrointestinal Surgeons of Great Britain and Ireland, Hungarian Surgical Society and is an honorary fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland. He served on several editorial boards and is an ad hoc reviewer of many surgical journals. He is past president of 5 surgical societies. In 2012 the American Surgical Association awarded Dr, DeMeester the Medallion for Advancement of Surgical Care.