

## IN PRAISE OF JOHN SILBER

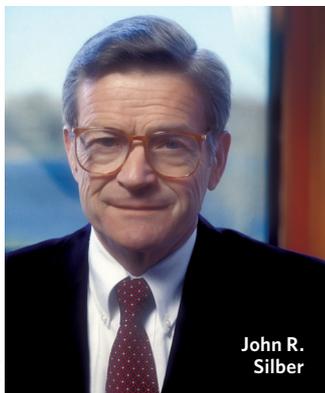
I READ THE campaign issue of *Bostonia* (Fall 2012) with more than my usual interest and am impressed with the improvements to BU since I attended and worked in the alumni relations office there. Kudos on the fundraising and improvements to the campus, especially to student accommodations and facilities.

Now for some history. While the current administration has benefited the University greatly in every sphere, it did not invent the idea of upgrading the school. Let us not forget who got the ball rolling. I was starting my junior year at Boston University when John R. Silber swooped in as president and started making sweeping changes. (See *obituary on page 76.*)

Most of the students, including me, and much of the faculty, many of whom were fired, intensely disliked the man and hated what he was doing. However, he started to turn the mediocre school where I had begun my undergraduate education into a respected institution. In time, long after I graduated, I came to appreciate Dr. Silber's intelligence, vision, and sense of justice.

ROBERTA M. KATZ  
(CAS'72)  
*Suffern, N.Y.*

JOHN SILBER'S TOUGH side is well known. Less known is his other side. After Anthony Campbell (STH'65), a School of Theology professor, a preacher-in-residence,



FRED SWAY

John R. Silber

and a mentor, died of a massive stroke in a car with me on September 27, 2002, President Silber and Dean Robert Neville approved a fellowship based on my academic work and unusual institutional service.

I studied and lived in Frankfurt am Main in order to read, write, and rest. During my international residency, Dr. Silber stayed in regular contact, correcting my reports *auf Deutsch*, and sharing his experiences in Germany and his knowledge of the language, country, and culture. Most of all, he urged me to finish writing my PhD dissertation. He once wrote, "It is time that you remembered what Kierkegaard said about the purity of heart. It is to will one thing! That one thing is the completion of your dissertation."

After graduating in 2007, I was offered a tenure-track position at Furman University. His letters kept coming and total over 100. Numerous letters relate to undergraduate teaching. He read and commented in detail on my self-evaluations, chair's evaluations, and student

evaluations. In addition to matters regarding teaching and tenure, his letters offer practical advice on marriage, children, work, family, and building and remodeling a house.

His final letter, in mid-September 2012, dictated but not signed, includes more tips on teaching, enclosed with his report on Central America for my March 2013 trip to El Salvador. Interestingly, he died on September 27, the same day as Professor Campbell.

ECHOL NIX, JR.  
(STH'00, GRS'07)  
*Greenville, S.C.*

## BU'S BRAIN RESEARCH

ROBERT STERN AND all the staff associated with the Center for the Study of Traumatic Encephalopathy ("Looking for Trouble," Fall 2012) have done a wonderful job in bringing chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE) to everyone's attention, including the NFL's. Their research is ongoing, and hopefully will bring the day CTE can be diagnosed before death, and hopefully treated. They deserve all our support.

GEORGE C. MITCHELL  
(CAS'72, MED'74)  
*South Easton, Mass.*

## BOXING TEACHER A CHAMP

THE ARTICLE "THROWING Punches" (Summer 2012)

got my attention, big-time. As a BU student in 1947, I penned an item for our student newsletter on the lack of intercollegiate boxing in the New England area. Boxing was an integral part of my Marine Corps boot camp training in 1943, and I continued to box in the amateur ranks following discharge from the Corps in 1946, during my four years at BU, and for a brief period following graduation.

I lived in Braintree, Mass., and trained at Boston's Gym in Quincy Square. The three-round bouts drew fairly large audiences at Brockton, Salem, Quincy, Chelsea, and other sites in metropolitan Boston. I did win most of my fights. Then I moved to North Carolina for a second stint with the Marine Corps (during the Korean War) and served in the public affairs office.

BU made a good move by hiring John O'Brien to teach boxing "from the feet up" at the Fitness & Recreation Center. The idea of intercollegiate boxing obviously never got off the ground, despite my newsletter "campaign." I am sure that his students hope, as I do, that he will have many more years of good health and continues with his popular program.

DON KNIGHT  
(DGE'48, COM'50)  
*Kensington, Md.*

## WRITE TO US

Letters are edited for clarity, style, and length. Please include your full name and address.

WRITE TO *Bostonia*, 985 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, MA 02215  
EMAIL LETTERS TO [bostonia@bu.edu](mailto:bostonia@bu.edu)  
SUBMIT ON THE WEB AT [bu.edu/bostonia/letters](http://bu.edu/bostonia/letters)