

## FACULTY OBITUARIES

# A Master of His Craft

**Jack Falla**, longtime COM lecturer, was generous in assisting students

By Jessica Leving (COM'10)

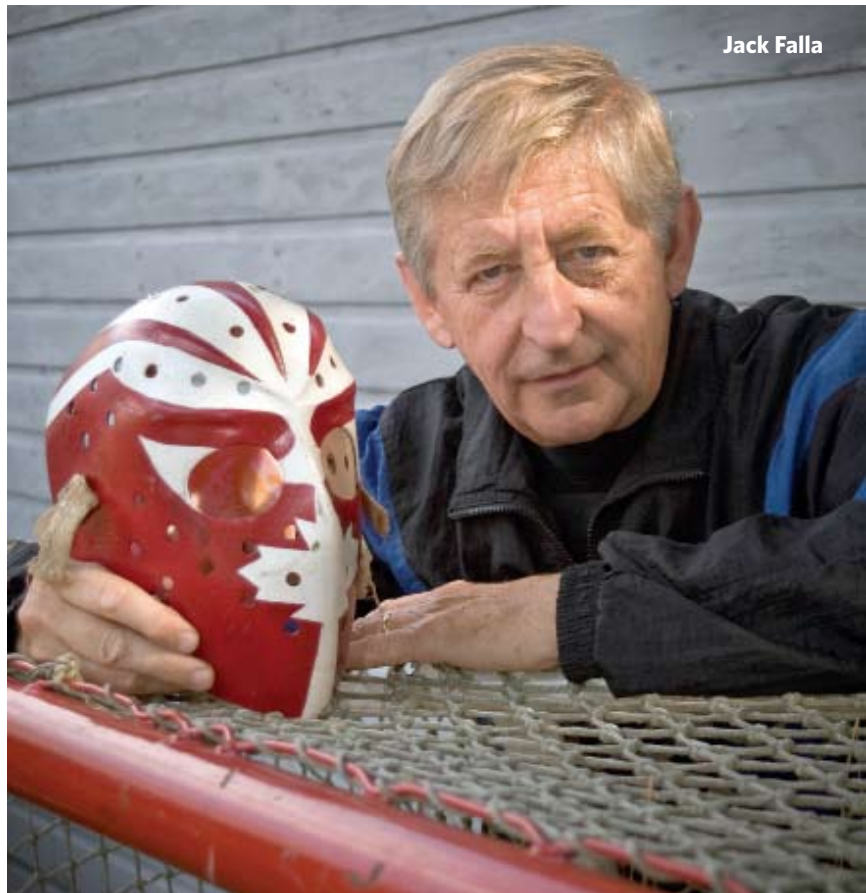
JACK FALLA, a lecturer in sports journalism at the College of Communication, was deeply committed to his students, fostering their writing skills, mentoring them, and helping them find internships and jobs.

In return, Falla asked only that students share his dedication to the craft of sports journalism. He notoriously scheduled his twice-weekly sportswriting class for 8 a.m., the dreaded early-morning slot that guaranteed a class of only the most devoted students.

Falla (COM'67, '90) died on September 14 of a heart attack while visiting family in Maine. He was sixty-four years old. Ed Brennen (COM'06), the night sports editor at the *Boston Herald*, says Falla's class was worth the early-morning wake-up. "Having Jack Falla teach you sports journalism was like having Warren Buffett as your economics professor," says Brennen. "You knew he'd reached the top and was a master of his craft, and you were in awe. Then you found out what a fantastic guy he was."

Indeed, Falla brought years of sportswriting experience to his teaching. He was a former writer for *Sports Illustrated* and for *Hockey Magazine* and was the author of five books about hockey, notably *Saved*, a novel about a Boston Bruins goalie, and *Home Ice: Reflections on Backyard Rinks and Frozen Ponds*. His final book, *Open Ice: Reflections and Confessions of a Hockey Lifer*, was published in October 2008.

"Jack stopped into my office last Thursday and left me a copy of *Open Ice*," COM Dean Thomas Fiedler (COM'71) said the day after Falla's death. "Unfortunately, I wasn't there



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to chat with him, and the book sat on my desk unopened. When I came in this morning, already saddened by the tragic news of his death, I noticed it immediately and opened it to find this inscription: "Tom, Anyone who thinks hockey is a tough game never tried running a college. I can only say that however tough it may be to run a college, it will be much tougher without Jack on the faculty. He was a great teacher, a great journalist, and a great alumnus of COM. He will be terribly missed."

Tributes sprang up across the Internet within days of Falla's death. Sports bloggers and writers, from *USA Today* to *Boston.com* to the *New York Daily News* posted eulogies to the man who in many cases had helped them get their job.

"Jack e-mailed me several times on behalf of his best students to

see if the Boston Celtics could give them their break," says former student Peter Stringer (COM'98), Internet operations manager for the Celtics. "Early in my career, Jack made a few inquiries on my behalf as well."

Friends say Falla's passion for sports and his generous nature pervaded his personal life as well. In 1982, he built the Bacon Street Omni in his backyard in Natick, Massachusetts, an ice rink named after the street where he and his family lived. In a tradition he continued every winter until his

death, family and friends were welcome to come, skate, and enjoy the Falla hospitality.

Memorial donations can be mailed to the Jack Falla Fund, Boston

University College of Communication, 640 Commonwealth Ave., Boston, MA 02215. The fund benefits students pursuing sports communications.

See the College of Communication's tribute to Jack Falla at [www.bu.edu/bostonia](http://www.bu.edu/bostonia).