

Mason left France determined to translate into English Massignon's best-known work, a four-volume history of the 10th-century Muslim martyr Mansur al-Hallaj. He returned to Harvard to pursue a master's in Middle East studies and a doctorate in Near Eastern languages and literatures, and began a translation process that would last 13 years.

The friendship between the two scholars proved formative; just as Mason had sat, rapt, with Massignon, listening to his mentor expound on the life of al-Hallaj, countless students found themselves seeking out Mason after class to hear him talk about Massignon and the rare texts Mason had studied for the translation, published in 1982 as *The Passion of al-Hallaj*.

"He was a fantastic storyteller," says Christian Krokus, a University of Scranton associate professor of theology and religious studies, who was a PhD student at Boston College when he chose to write his dissertation under Mason's supervision at the University. "Just a font of a rich context for the academic texts. I'd say, 'Have you ever read this,' and inevitably, he'd not only read it, but knew the author personally."

His work was constantly enriched by people he met by chance—from the Italian artist Dino Cavallari, who became a close friend and collaborator on an illustrated version of *Gilgamesh*, to his wife, whom he met during her graduate studies at BU's School of Education. He listened as often as he spoke and enjoyed celebrating the expertise of his students and colleagues.

Betty Anderson, a CAS associate professor of history and director of the Institute for the Study of Muslim Societies & Civilizations at BU's Frederick S. Pardee School of Global Studies (Mason was founder and director of the institute), recalls that he was unflinching in his support of her and other scholars of Islam across the University and dogged in his efforts to bring them together for interdisciplinary studies. In his seminars, he remained quiet while urging his undergraduate students to debate the material.

"It was an awakening for me to discover how to justify my beliefs, and I took that skill with me to law school," says criminal defense attorney Sarah Peerwani (CAS'08). "He got me ready for the real world."

Mason wrote every day, producing five translations, four volumes of poetry, two memoirs, and eight works of fiction, two of them set for posthumous publication. In recent years, he switched from keeping bound journals to writing a blog on his website, [www.herbertwmason.com](http://www.herbertwmason.com), where he posted short biographical and creative sketches. In a 2016 entry, he considered Massignon's theory of *Badaliya*, or exchange, as represented in the way individuals form connections that are strong, unselfish, and enduring:

"One is given a self, one is driven to create a second self, and finally one is called to exchange oneself with another who is suffering physically, spiritually. For the third self one takes on the other's suffering self. The first self is given by nature, the second by will and creativeness, the third by love."

## ENG's Carlo De Luca Was a "World-Leading Innovator"

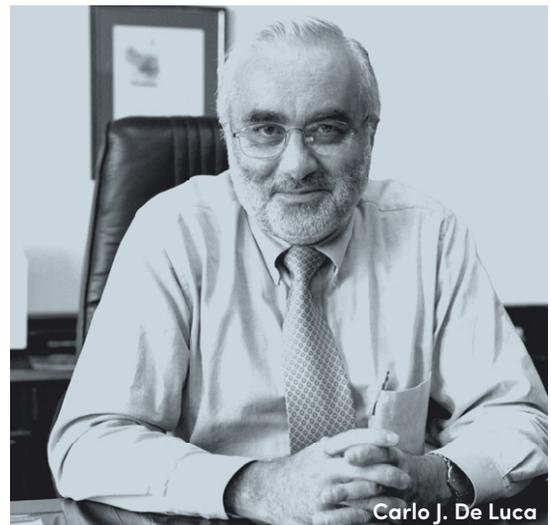
**CARLO J. DE LUCA**, 72, a College of Engineering professor emeritus of biomedical engineering and of electrical and computer engineering, died on July 20, 2016.

Before he joined the BU faculty in 1984, De Luca had been a faculty member at MIT, Harvard Medical School, and Queen's University. He was also a School of Medicine research professor of neurology and a Sargent College of Health & Rehabilitation Sciences professor of physical therapy. De Luca, who earned a doctorate from Queen's University, served as ENG dean ad interim from 1986 to 1989. He played a leading role in ENG's early development as a research institution.

Kenneth Lutchen, dean of ENG, points to De Luca's impact on the college's early efforts to establish a research portfolio. "Carlo was the director of the NeuroMuscular Research Center and was probably the first real star research faculty recruited to the College of Engineering," he says. "His reputation helped attract some of the leading faculty thereafter. Our standards of excellence as a research college perhaps started with Carlo."

De Luca is known for introducing engineering principles to the field of electromyography, a diagnostic procedure that records electrical activity in muscle tissue. He founded Delsys, Inc., in 1993, a company that produces wearable sensors for movement technology. He was its president and CEO until his death.

"Carlo De Luca was a world-leading innovator in using engineering methods to study human motor function," says John White, an ENG professor and chair of biomedical engineering. "Many of the text-



Carlo J. De Luca

book findings in this research area were due to Carlo's efforts. He was a critical early hire in building the research reputation of the College of Engineering."

De Luca was a founding fellow of two bioengineering societies: the American Institute for Medical and Biological Engineering and the Biomedical Engineering Society. He served a term on the National Advisory Council for Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering of the National Institutes of Health and two terms as president of the International Society of Electrophysiological Physiology. He was also the founder and president of the Neuromuscular Research Foundation.

Among De Luca's awards are the 2012 Borelli Award from the American Society of Biomechanics, the 2006 Tibbetts Award from the Small Business Technology Council of the USA, and the 1999 Isabelle and Leonard H. Goldenson Technology Award from the United Cerebral Palsy Foundation. SARA CODY

## COM's Elaine Lewis Was Forward-Thinking

**ELAINE LEWIS**, 61, a former College of Communication assistant professor of mass communication, died on March 11, 2016.

Lewis joined the faculty in 1981, and was "a groundbreaking professor at COM," says Tobe Berkovitz, a COM associate professor of advertising. "Her forward-thinking approach to computers and communication helped shape the college. She was dedicated to her students and to developing curriculum that became a foundation for many of the programs at COM."

Lewis grew up in Mattapoisett, Mass., and earned a bachelor's degree in interdisciplinary visual studies from Wellesley College, a master's in communication arts from Cornell University, and a PhD from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. She focused her research on standards for computer-generated imagery and mathematical modeling of cognitive processes.

During her long and varied career, Lewis held several research design positions at institutions including MIT,



Elaine Lewis

Cornell University, and Ergometrica in Cambridge. She served on the board of the Boston chapter of the Association for Women in Communications and was an editor of the International Communication Association's *Communication Yearbook*. She codveloped the Productivity Index methodology, which helps businesses maximize efficiency, and conducted studies for several corporations, among them Apple Computer and United Airlines.

"I always found my conversations with Elaine not only pleasant, but informative," says Otto Lerbinger, a COM professor emeritus of public relations, who worked with Lewis in the 1980s. "We often talked about her special interest in communication graphics." That interest led to her helping to establish the Boston University Photonics Center. She was also codirector of BU's Project for Interdisciplinary Research in Information and served on the executive board of the BU Communication Research Center. KYLER SUMTER (COM'19)

## STH's Richard Nesmith a Leader in Social Justice

**RICHARD D. NESMITH (GRS'57)**, 88, a retired School of Theology professor of Christian social ethics and former dean of STH, died on March 1, 2017.

Nesmith was a leader in helping ministerial students and church bodies relate to the issues of racial justice, war, and peace, and in strengthening the role of women in church and society. He was instrumental in the Inner City Parish in Kansas City, which linked the primarily African American churches

with the instructional program of Saint Paul School of Theology. From 1969 to 1974, he was director of planning at the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries in New York City, helping the national denomination provide leadership on issues of social justice in cities and rural communities.

Nesmith's teaching often occurred in student field visits, in addition to in the classroom. In his undergraduate teaching and his teaching at Saint Paul, he encouraged students to engage in grassroots community issues as part of their education. He spent time in a Montgomery, Ala., jail for taking Northern white students on visits with African American leadership in the city following the successful 1955-1956 bus boycott that resulted in the integration of the Montgomery bus system. He was convicted of "conduct calculated to provoke a breach of the peace." He declined an offer to be dismissed with a fine, and appealed the case until the verdict was reversed and court costs reimbursed by the US Circuit Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, in 1963. The Court of Appeals ruled the arrest "illegal as a matter of law."

From 1989 to 1997, Nesmith and his second wife, Patricia Nichols Toscano, worked on a United Methodist Television series, *Perspectives: Faith in Our Times*, he as moderator and she as associate producer. The series featured interviews with national figures representing church, society, and politics, and was carried nationally on the Odyssey network.

Nesmith was an ordained minister in the United Methodist Church. Born on a family ranch in western Nebraska, he completed his AB studies at Nebraska Wesleyan University. He prepared for Christian ministry at Garrett Theological Seminary, on the campus of Northwestern University, earning an MDiv in 1953. He received a PhD in Christian

Richard D. Nesmith

