

TEENS and TWENTIES

The Games People Play

by Fyyaz Shahnoor

CHRONIC boredom is like a contagious disease, inflicting grave mental and physical handicaps on a person. At one time when we were our children we could easily coax or morally blackmail and adult into accompanying us to the nearest "Shishu park" for some refreshing recreation.

However once a person is donned an adult he loses all such privileges instantly. In the absence of a "Bura park" adults are increasingly finding it difficult to fight the rigors of boredom. However extensive research shows that there are some games that adults are frequently indulging in with alarming intensity.

Dhaka - Aricha Grand Prix
Although the Indiana and Monte-Carlo racing circuits are known world wide as the best, the Dhaka-Aricha circuit has been acclaimed by the racing elite as the best among the worst. Participants can enter at will provided he or she has a vehicle. A prerequisite is that the vehicle should have at least two of the following qualities present in its frame work.

Broken wind-shield, worn out brakes tyres, malfunctioning brakes, non-operational silencer pipes, smashed headlights, absent shock absorbers.

Any owner having a vehicle with all six qualities present should contact the director of the National Museum without further delay. Total or partial inebriation of the participant is a preferable quality. The driver does not lose any points if he runs over the occasional pedestrian but he may be penalised by the judges if the victim does not die within three hours of being hospitalised.

A driver can score additional points if by certain tactical manoeuvres he can force other vehicles into accompanying ditches. Points will also be distributed on the basis of the amount of blood spilled and number of limbs dismembered throughout the race. Drivers should always keep in mind the motto of the circuit, "Why use your horns when you have a voice. Why use your voice when you can use your hands".



DU Campus Shooting Competition

Anybody can participate in this competition providing that the entrant has access to illegal fire arms. Heavy artillery is allowed, however anyone carrying a stinger anti-aircraft gun without prior authorisation will be immediately disqualified. Participants will be divided into two groups and will be directed to create an agitation on a minor disagreement. They will then take up positions adjoining the TSC or Mithur Canteen and start firing indiscriminately at each other.

The objective of this game is to exterminate the opposing force with minor casualties to one's own group. Judges shall be instructed to

distribute points on the basis of how many bullets are fired and how many have reach their destination. Although there is no extra point for killing an innocent bystander but usually that participant is awarded the "man of the match trophy" for going beyond his or her call of duty.

The match is said to be postponed if the police miraculously intervene (this seldom happens) and the contest will be resumed in no more than four days time. The competition will have a tie-break if both parties are able to procure a cine-die from the authorities by their enthusiastic participation.



Hijacking Contest

The objective of this game is to hijack as many fellow countrymen as possible within a given time period. Participants should maintain a proper dress code at all times consisting of jeans, faded shirts, goggles and keds. He or she should also have a motorcycle and a small arsenal of fire arms (Knives are not allowed unless it is a commando knife sharp enough to sustain heavy injuries to the rib cage of victims).

A past criminal record will be seen as a plus point by judges. Participants will have to be excellent at verbal abuse, threatening postures, and ofcourse consumption of intoxicants. Strict adherence to decorum is essential. Additional points will be given if one is able to hijack ones own parents. Constant collaboration with the law enforcement officers must be maintained at all times. The loot will have to be divided with them on a 60-40 basis as per decree of the Hijackers' Association.

The participant will immediately be disqualified if he or she is beaten up by the local people in the event of an unsuccessful hijacking attempt. If on the other hand one participant is able to hijacking another participant, his name will immediately be installed in the Hijackers Hall of Fame.



Too Close to Dhaka

by Gemini Wahhaj

ON Qurbani Eid day, I stood on Mirpur Road near Dhamondi Road No. 28, trying to get a rickshaw. There were none to be found. Most were occupied by the carriers of bloody dripping gosh. Other seemingly empty rickshaws sped by, not responding to my frantic ricksha, jaben???

Only a second look revealed piles of cow hide, or a whole skinned cow, lying on the footrest. I stood for almost half an hour, while the sky darkened slowly. Finally a bald rickshawallah with shifty eyes (the distinct gunda look) said jabo. I climbed up quickly. The open garbage corner stank badly, of things I did not want to imagine. There was blood everywhere. Every other person on the street carried an ominous looking plastic bag. Crows screeched overhead. I wanted to get home very badly, and quickly.

We were on our way. I adjusted the hood, averted my eyes from the road, and settled in comfortably. The rickshawallah plodded on. But why were we going so slow? The rickshaw would pick up some momentum and then slow down again. I waited for the rickshawallah to get down and fix the problem. Then I looked down to see if the chain had fallen. And that's when I first noticed that I was riding with a one-legged rickshawallah.

His face was twisted in what I imagined to be excruciating pain. He pedalled with his right leg, and we advanced for a little while. Then we slowed down, and his right leg pushed down again. His left leg ended right below the knee.

Huge trucks carrying gorur chakra were stopped at every traffic light. And the sky continued to darken. We'd never make it home before night. We passed Pizza Palace (Lake? Hut? One of those) and its usual crowd of waiting rickshaws. There were more empty rickshaws ahead.

I hesitated a while. Then I asked, "Apni ki Parben (will you be able to make it?)" If he says yes, I thought, then I should resign myself to my fate. But if says no, oh, I would jump down immediately, and get a faster, safer transport home! "Parun, apa, Parun," he said.

And then, horror of horrors, he began to speak! He moaned about his fate, his pain, and the difficulty with which he passed each day. His voice rose shrilly. I had started a torrent of depression! We passed Magdonals. A pack of good-looking young people emerged out of their Mercedes in silk Punjabis to exchange Eid Kulakulis. They stood speaking animatedly, their eyes sparkling with Eid feelings. Were they about to go in for Chinese food? What kind of Eid was that?

Further ahead, some long-haired young men sat by the road, watching the Eid sights with great relish. Packs of fakirs (old women, strong men, and little kids) of all sizes crossed at every light, carrying all manners of cow parts. A family gathered on their roof to see the fun. That's it, that's it, I thought, just a little more way to go. We're marking good progress. And just then we slowed down again.

My rickshawallah was panting. Beads of sweat collected on his forehead. He veered dangerously a few times in the midst of the crazy New Market traffic. But then he recovered, or he pulled up strength from some hidden source. And he brought me home safely, through the BUET gates. I climbed down quickly and paid him handsomely, more out of horror for his condition than any genuine sympathy.

It was only later, while telling the story to a friend, that I viewed the matter differently. "A non-legged rickshawallah," she said. "How amazing!" So I reflected on his strength, the challenge of every rickshaw ride. Perhaps even getting a passenger was difficult, if everyone reacted like me. I thought also about our shared victory, how that day he'd been able to get me home, safely.

But then I started to think of more complicated things. The one-legged rickshawallah, the blood, the garbage trucks — they were all part of a Dhaka that I did not want to see. They were all sights too close to the basics of living, the struggle for survival. Too close for comfort indeed. Anyway, we regular Dhakaites can relax again, since all the blood has been washed and away and life is back to normal. As for unfortunate rickshaw rides, perhaps I should buy a car. With tinted glass windows.

'They Unite in Diversity Here'

by Naadir Junaid Seneka

THE place is known as the Teachers-Students Centre, but nowadays except for any solemn occasion or serious and important seminar we hardly find any teacher in the TSC. It is now a paradise, so to say, for all 'types' of students of Dhaka University and also for many young outsiders.

Sometimes the TSC area seems pretty disgusting and obnoxious because of some unwanted agitating activities. But it is generally agreed by the majority 'students of Dhaka University that the TSC area is the most attractive and fascinating site of Dhaka University. There is really something breath taking in the air of the TSC that makes the atmosphere of this place, in a word, exquisite. It seems that this place is forever inviting to any young boys and girls and you see them loitering in this campus from morning till night.

We are not going to compare the beauty of Dhaka University campus to some American University but there is no denying the fact that Dhaka University campus has its own attractions. Anyway TSC's 'DUS' the fast-food shop, splendid statue of Shonarjata Swadhinata, tall trees, neat-and-clean lawns and so many shining young faces, is surely a treat to any eyes. This place is only for fun, only for enjoyment. Even a very studious student, who remain tense all the time, with the tension of getting a first class in examination, can forget all his anxieties, when he is in the aromatic and romantic environment of the TSC.

Why is the TSC so favourite to the students? It is a dream of the freshers of Dhaka University to join in the 'Adda' of the TSC. The fame of the TSC spread like wild fire from the very beginning. If we explore to the interior of the TSC in one fine morning after 10:00 a m, we can realise why youths are so mad for this place. In the morning the TSC is always full of excitement and enthusiasm. So many handsome boys and glamorous girls are seen sitting with their class-fellows and gossiping — the cafeteria, with colourful chairs and oval-shaped tables, and



with active waiters is always a sought after place. It is always a party there.

In the other side of the corridor near the guest room, a masculine long-haired boy of the Finance Department is seen sitting with a cute girl of the Anthropology Department. They are one of the renowned pairs of the University. There are so many 'twos' like them who find a sanctuary in the TSC.

Some students are seen arguing excitedly which cricket team is the most balanced in the world at the moment — West Indies, India or Pakistan? In another group of classmates the topic of discussion is 'Grameen Check' or 'Bibi Russel's Fashion Show'. Some serious-looking students are seriously talking about 'War Crimes Files'. But in another group, some students are talking about Jimima Gold Smith, the wife of Imran Khan. Some girls are seen discussing with their boyfriends to settle a class-party plan. In another side some boys are preparing some big posters. Their handwriting is absolutely stunning. The posters they are making will be able to attract anyone very easily. At the end of the TSC there is a bushy jubub tree. The TSC is comparatively quiet here.

Sitting on the beautiful green grass under that tree a slender-figured boy is seen playing the guitar. A haunting music from his guitar perfectly matches with the atmosphere of that quiet place.

That haunting melody makes the silence more and more significant. In the cafeteria, some boys and girls have booked a big table. There a boy, most probably he is from the English Department, shouting loudly with his harsh voice, "Peter O'toole is the best. He has no comparison. Don't you see 'The Night of The Generals'?" A tall, fair girl, with a glass from the same table, opposing him and says, "Okay pal, did't you see 'Scent of A Woman'! Al Pacino is not so negligible."

In a corner-table of the cafeteria a senior student, with a cut in his chin, is playing on a flute. A nice musical tone comes from his table. And as soon as he finishes, the whole cafeteria applauded him.

Some girls just step in the corridor through the main gate. All of them have put on 'Saree' and they look so gorgeous. Instantly all the boys eye them with an admiring look. They sincerely praise the sweetness of those girls but they don't tease them. Teasing the girls is unthinkable in the TSC. Here everyone is everyone's friend.

In the noon it is usually couples who love to spend their best moments of the day in a somewhat silent TSC. And in the afternoon the TSC is again crowded with a lot of people. These moments are mainly reserved for the activists of cultural organizations and the student-politicians. The members of the various cultural organizations powerfully recite, the lines of any famous poem. The sublime beauty of the twilight and their remarkable recitation mixed with each other creates a strange situation which can hardly be described. And in the meantime in the spacious courtyard the student-politicians are exchanging their opinions with each other, laughing, gossiping, shouting and enjoying their times.

TSC — without the charm of this place Dhaka University campus surely would be deadly boring. The TSC holds the young and the youthful, the dull the bold and the feeble, the best and the worst — they unite in diversity here.

Few Moments with An Ambassador

I Want to Change the Image of This Country

by Rabeth Khan

IN this world of busy and self-centered people, there are few, who really pause a while and think about their country. And to think about other countries of the world.

Other than one's own is more of an added bonus or a miracle I suppose. Mr Jean Michelle Lacombe, the honourable Ambassador of France to Bangladesh, is one of those rare persons who has been performing this miracle continuously.

For the last two years, since his arrival here in Bangladesh, he played a significant role in promoting the art and culture of this country by holding art and handicrafts exhibition in his own residence, arranging for various sort of shows, auctions etc.

A few days back I met this extraordinary, energetic man in person, of course that too in opening ceremony of a tapestry exhibition of an organization called Needleart, arranged at his residence. Thus having the opportunity to talk to him, I asked him about his promotional role and the secrets rather reasons of his love for Bangladesh.

"Coming to Dhaka was like revisiting home. Because, I spent a part of my childhood in Calcutta and my first posting as an ambassador was to India in New Delhi in 1971. There is a similarity between the Indian and the Bangladeshi culture. So when I came here, everything seemed familiar and very much known to me," the ambassador reveals his impressions.

Commenting on the promotional role he is playing to uphold the art and culture of Bangladesh, the honourable French ambassador says with a smile, "As I have an emotional relationship with this region, I am tired to see the negative images of Bangladesh portrayed in the West. To the people of western countries, Bangladesh means a place of natural disasters like flood, drought and cyclone. So to change this depleted image, I am promoting art and culture of this country to prove that there are more positive things to Bangladesh other than natural calamities."

I then asked him if there were any forms of scholarship given to the talented people of Bangladesh in the field of art and culture for higher education in France in their respective fields and he informs, "Yes, there are two scholarships annually in the field of art and sculpture. And though there isn't any scholarship for talented persons in the field of handicrafts, we will consider it in the future. And through the cultural co-operation between the governments of France and Bangladesh, three exhibitions of Bangladeshi painters have already been held in France in 1991, 1992, and 1993.

Finally, I wanted to know the demand of Bangladeshi art and handicrafts in France, Mr Lacombe answered confidently, "The demand of Bangladeshi art and handicrafts is good. There are some French companies in Bangladesh which are actively involved in the trade of Bangladeshi handicrafts. To my understanding, the French market is very much interested in Bangladeshi embroidery work done on luxury table-cloths, curtains, bedspreads and cushion-covers".

The way Mr Lacombe, being a foreigner, has been promoting the art and culture of this country is a lesson we should all learn. The richness of his morality and his feeling towards a foreign country is unmatched. But at least we can follow his example and build the image of our country which will make us proud. Hats off to Mr Jean Michelle Lacombe and merci beaucoup (thank you very much).

Learn to Accept the Ways

by Rowan Khan

WE all know how difficult it is to get any time out of our resource persons. After hours, even days of telephoning, running out of wit — all just to arrange an appointment with "His Majesty any Bureaucrat — when finally you persuade him to give a tiny fraction of his very valuable time to you then begins another story.

Keeping in mind the traffic problem both inside and outside his office you start at least 15 minutes earlier than you would have usually done. And thus you commit mistake number two, (first one was the reason you needed him because you reach 15 minutes earlier than the agreed time.

When the princely PS announces your arrival, you are reminded, that it is not your time as yet and that you have to wait till the agreed time. Supposing you have the meeting at 12 noon, you wait till it's 12 to enter 'His Majesty's court room'.

But all such minor things have setbacks. At 12:05 pm when you finally enter his room, you see that he already has two people waiting (for his decision or consent or a signature) and he is entertaining (or being entertained) another guest. Miserable, but still you wait for your turn.

This special sort of talk session is basically a two-way entertainment procedure. Of course there are hidden implications that you wouldn't be knowing. But when the guest says "Sir during your reign in that department things were more organised (in a disorganised manner of course) such haphazard planning wouldn't have happened if you were in the seat this would have happened, that would have happened," etc, etc, never ending etc.

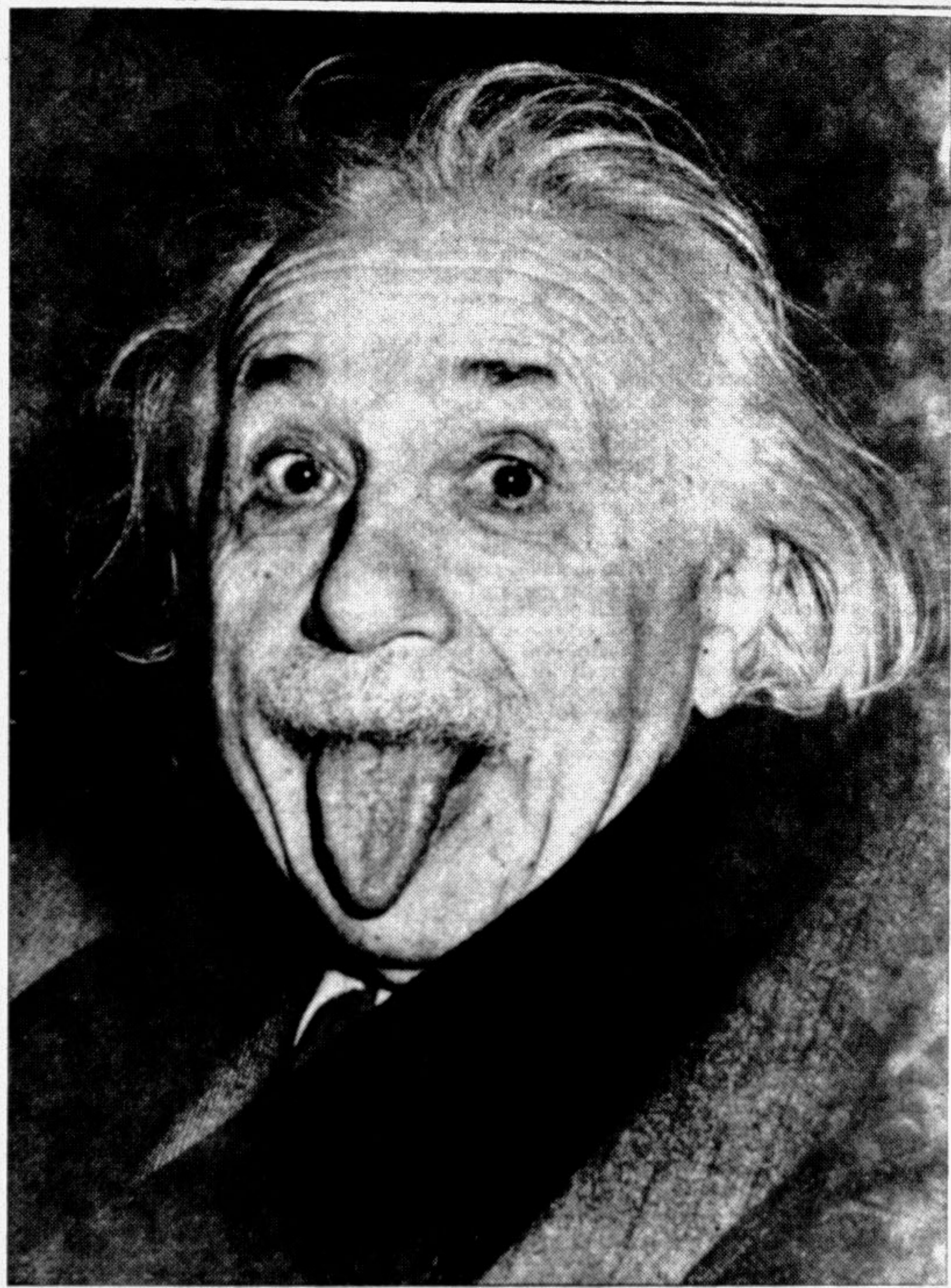
And the important man smiles back and says "Please have a cup of tea." He is in reality saying sit a while and take the files, the papers or anything that is bothering him personally and that needs 'his' specific help to accomplish. Something he wants done quickly, something like installing a digital or ISD telephone number in his house, etc's again.

Bored of witnessing this pampering conversation, you make a noise or cough a little so that he remembers you. With a frown on his face he will errand someone to give you a cup of tea and ask to 'sit'. Suddenly this punctual man forgot all about time and keeps you waiting (of course unintentionally) till it's almost 1 pm.

Then at last he summons you and with a smile says "now, how can I help you, what can I say?" (So humble) of course he may help you in a thousand way, but for now he may say 'sorry' for keeping you waiting or something sweet to at least make you think and realize again he is worth the wait. Unfortunately modesty is not a way with the 'royals' (it never was).

You get your information within 10 to 20 minutes, provided you have a slip pad and a pen to give him, in-case he wants to write down some data or show you some structure.

Anyway all these waitings, all these hassles and troubles are worth the time you spend on him (and he knows that too). Without his authoritative information you have no report, no research, no nothing. There are no alternatives to this bureaucratic feudalism, at least this is how it looks from the other end of the table. Learn to accept whatever and however 'His Majesty' treats you.



Albert Einstein's response when asked to smile for his birthday, Princeton, 1951. Photograph by Art Sasse