

RATAN Miah was very disappointed. Prisoners in the storybooks could always see the vast expanse of land and the free azure firmament from their cells. And from there, they dreamt about becoming free again one day. But all he could see was lacklustre buildings and the very grim faces of the guards. As the slight of built man whose age would hardly exceed forty-five, sat in the stuffy room he smiled to himself. And they say murderers don't have hearts or any mercy or emotion. How wrong they were! Nobody knew that better than Ratan Miah. Sitting all alone in his cell, he would often reminisce about the past few days. The chain of events was still very vivid in his mind.

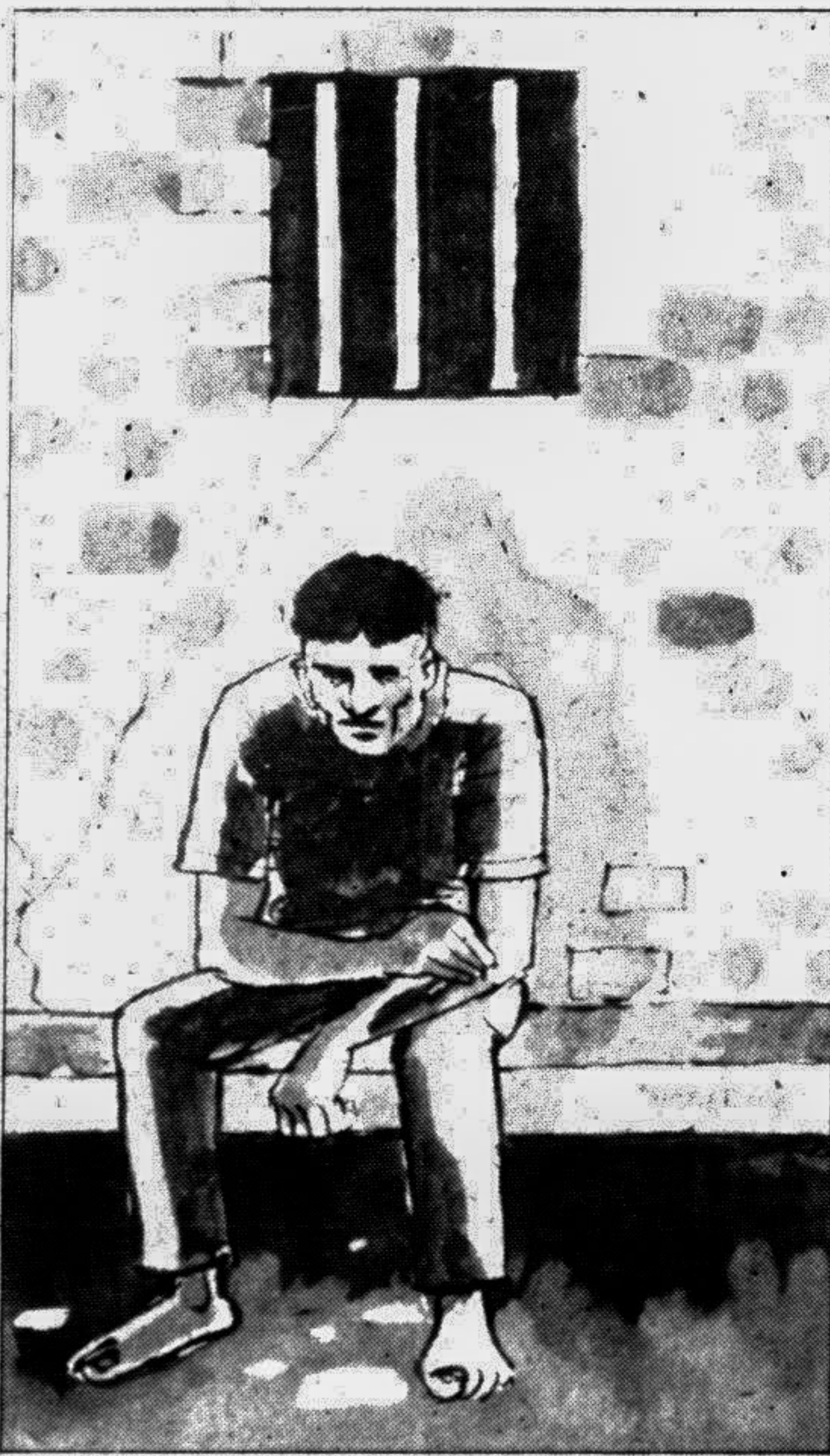
Ratan was a shopkeeper in the older part of the town. And to speak the truth, his family was not really well off. It could be attributed to the large amounts which slipped out every week because of liquor. Ratan Miah was an alcoholic. And what was left after buying himself the poison, Ratan found was not even barely enough to support his family consisting of a wife and two daughters. Another member was to join the family soon. Ratan knew this one would be a boy. He just knew it. He had always wanted a son, who, when grown up, would not take after his father in any way. He would be a decent, dignified and educated man.

Another very important identity that Ratan held in the area, was that, he was a hitman. It was, though, not in the traditional sense as his appearance and methods were rather "unorthodox." Yet Ratan's name was a revered one in his own field. It was rumoured that he had assignments from as far away as Calcutta and West Bengal. And it went around, that no matter what cost, Ratan always got the work done in time.

It was just after Ratan had a fight with his wife one day about his drinking and failure to adequately support the family, when Ratan received an offer. And one-lakh taka offer. Though Ratan had decided earlier to quit the business, the amount made him think

Human Being

by Adnan R Amin



twice. It was almost tempting. Two weeks later, a fine sunny morning. A split-second decision had turned out to be, for Ratan, the mistake of his life. As his other accomplices got away, Ratan was unfortunately apprehended in a hijacking bid, foiled by public intervention. As the rage of the people culminated in beating Ratan up, he discovered they could be very relentless at times. After what seemed like ages, the police interposed and picked up the battered hijacker. As the police van reached the police station, everyone got down, and after a session of formalities Ratan was locked up, and later in the day was transferred to the Central Jail. The instant the sentry took him to cell no-64, Ratan Miah knew everything was alright. He entered the room and looked around. Yeah! Rakesh Halder was there, sitting alone. Looking glibly, frail and vulnerable. And after a couple of days, one dark night, Ratan took out the knife which had been secured safely on the inner side of his thigh all this time. It was time to finish off Rakesh Halder. In the darkness, he grasped blindly, went over to Halder's bed and plunged in the knife. Instantly warm blood was spattered on his face and clothes. Ratan's work was done.

In the court, Ratan had pleaded guilty. And consequently, he had received the highest penalty possible. The death — penalty. Akram Bhai also kept his end of the bargain. He paid Ratan's family the entire fees. The Halder murder had political reasons behind it. And Halder had stashed away pretty damaging evidence against a particular political party. So they had Rakesh Halder removed. Ratan Miah was secluded in a lonely cell. He was to be hanged the next day. He had turned down his wife's request to come and visit him. He did not want that. Ratan Miah was busy planning his son's future. He knew he had done his best and his son, will — one day — grow up to be a perfect gentleman. Decent and dignified. Not like his father. Not at all like his father. He would grow up to be a true human being.

Steven Spielberg's Close Encounter With His Past

IT was a Bleak Wintery Day in 1992 when Steven Spielberg's plane landed in Krakow, Poland. The celebrated filmmaker was on a mission that was both professional and intensely personal. A decade earlier, when his movie ET was setting box-office records, Spielberg had become enthralled with the true story of a German Catholic who had rescued more than 1100 Jews during the Holocaust. Spielberg had immediately bought the film rights to Schindler's List.

Now he was visiting the sites where the atrocities — and rescues — had taken place. His first stop: the Nazi death camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau. As he stepped beneath its gate, Spielberg shivered. Ahead lay a flawless grid of pathways, barracks and tram platforms designed to process tens of thousands of human beings — all so meticulously planned, he thought with rage, for the murder of my fellow Jews.

A while later Spielberg was taken to a sinkhole behind "Crematorium No 4." He stuck his hand down into the rainwater and pulled up dark gray silt mixed with a grist the consistency of cornmeal. "Human bone," explained the guide, Spielberg gagged.

As a toddler, Steven Spielberg had learned his numbers from the tattoo of a Holocaust survivor. "This is a five and here's a two," the man told the boy, pointing to the numbers burned into his arm. "Here's a six. But I'll show you a trick. When I do this — he inverted his arm — 'now it's a nine!'"

Despite such wrenching reminders of Nazi horrors, young Steven grew up feeling ambivalent about his Jewish heritage. To him, being Jewish too often meant not being part of the "normal" world.

Christmastime was especially tough for Steven as a young boy. His family lived at that time in Haddonfield, NJ, on a block that won awards for its Christmas decorations. Surrounded by brightly lit houses, Steven called his own unadorned home "the black hole."

"Can't we put some lights up?" he asked his father.

"We're Jewish," Arnold Spielberg replied. "Be proud of who you are."

However, Steven wasn't proud, because he felt different — and alone. This sense was heightened when the family moved to Phoenix and again were among the neighborhood's few Jews. Feeling alien, Steven created an imaginary friend to confide in — a short, hairless creature from outer space.

Lifetime Impressions. Things didn't get any easier for him as an adolescent. "Nerdy kids like me weren't real popular in those days," he recalls. "Shy and self-conscious, he tried athletics, but he was uncoordinated too. That didn't help on the dating front, since the girls he liked preferred jocks."

One day during a mile run for his physical-education class, he realized that — for a change — he wasn't last. A single retarded boy flailed behind him, and Steven saw that the youngster was putting his whole heart into the run. What's more, the other students were screaming for the boy to pass him.

Steven shortened his stride until the retarded youth nosed ahead of him at the finish. Steven's empathy cost him dearly. His heart sank as the other boys swarmed toward the victor, lifted him to their shoulders and carried him off the field. Later, sitting alone with tears in his eyes, Steven felt humiliated. But he also felt uplifted.

Alienated from his peers, Steven found solace by concentrating on a new hobby — filmmaking. He'd been fascinated with movies since his father had taken him to see The Greatest Show on Earth when he was five years old. A gigantic train wreck exploding on the screen left an impression that would last the boy a lifetime.

A few years later Steven borrowed his dad's eight-millimeter movie camera to film The Last Train Wreck, using his own electric train set. Soon Steven was making horror pictures, using his sisters as victims. In one he played a dentist, with his sister Anne as the patient. He pulled "pop-corn" dipped in ketchup out of her mouth with a pair of pliers.

Taking Chances. In high school Steven invited the popular, athletic kids to star in his movies. Flattered, they agreed. Performing for Steven's movie camera became a favorite pastime. Suddenly his classmates wanted to be like him, and Steven gained acceptance.

During the summer before his senior year, he stayed with a cousin who lived near Hollywood. One day he joined a bus tour of Universal Studios. During a bathroom break he got off the bus and never got back on. Wandering around the lot, he watched TV crews film their shows until dusk.

That's when he came across Chuck Silvers, head of the stu-

dio's film library. "What are you doing here?" Silvers asked.

"I want to be a director," Steve boldly replied. "But I wasn't learning anything on the tour, so I started looking around myself."

Laughing, Silvers said, "Come back tomorrow. I'll get you a pass."

Silvers gave the youngster a week's passes to the lot. The next week Steven found someone else to sponsor him. On the third week, running out of sponsors, he took a chance. Walking in the gate, he waved at the guard. Used to seeing the young man, the guard waved back. Steven was in.

For three months he visited the lot every day. He found an empty office and moved in.

Other movies, including Jurassic Park (1993), cemented the Spielberg legend. To date, his films have grossed more than \$4 billion, making him the most commercially successful director in history.

Sense of Urgency. Yet when Spielberg first considered making his most important film, Schindler's List, he was scared. Believing other directors were better suited to such a serious subject, he tried to give the rights away to experienced directors like Martin Scorsese. There were no takers.

Then came the birth of his first child, Max. "I thought about the beliefs my parents had tried to instill in me when I was young and unwilling to

taken to the camps. The scene was written that afternoon and shot the next day in the very house where she'd lived.

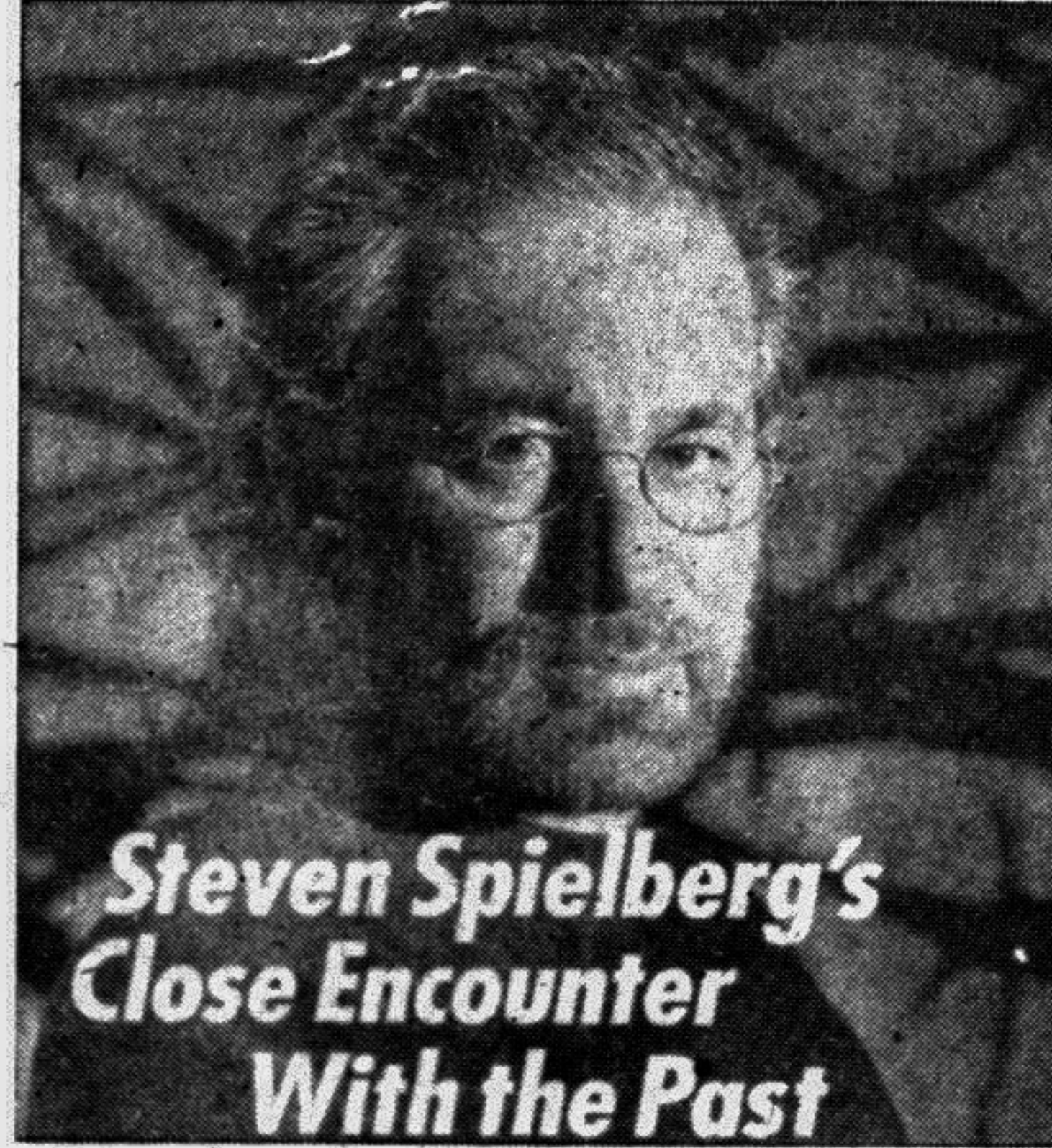
The real events behind the film were never far from Spielberg's mind. Standing before a church in Krakow, he thought, As a Jew, if I had been in this spot 50 years ago, I would have received an automatic death sentence. Clapping his hands behind his back he bowed his head in homage to those who'd died.

Keeping his emotions in check while dealing with the horrific subject matter took its toll. Filming a scene in which young children were separated from their parents and forced onto trucks, Spielberg broke into tears. "There were evenings when I'd come home from shooting and just need to be held by my wife," he remembers.

Despite Spielberg's dedication to the picture, he didn't expect the nearly 3 1/2 hour, black-and-white movie to be a hit — or even to break even. So he was astonished when Schindler's List inspired global acclaim. After years of being snubbed at the Academy Awards, he saw the 1993 film win seven Oscars, including Best Picture and Best Director.

Rescue Mission. As Spielberg was finishing filming for the movie in Israel, two elderly survivors of the Holocaust came up to him. "Tell my story," each begged. On the flight home to Los Angeles, Spielberg thought of their pleas. Let us speak, they seemed to say. After 50 years of silence, we want to tell the world what happened.

By the time his plane landed, Spielberg had resolved to get their stories told. The next day, he described to his staff his idea for the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation. Its goal is to preserve — and humanize — history by videotaping the eyewitness accounts of tens of thousands of Holocaust survivors. "It's a kind of rescue mission," he explains. "The window for capturing the testimonies of survivors now in their 70s and 80s is closing fast. We want to allow as many of them as possible to tell their stories in the time they have left."



Steven Spielberg's Close Encounter With the Past

One of Hollywood's most commercially successful movie makers adding his name to the building directory: S Spielberg, Room 230.

When Steven started taking a job in Northern California, the boy ran into his first anti-Semitism. Some of his new high-school classmates coughed the word "Jew" as they passed by, and one bully regularly hitting him during flag football.

Just before graduation Steven filmed a senior-class excursion to Santa Cruz and asked several students — including the bully — to look up at the sky and then flinch or put a hand over their eyes. He didn't explain why.

When the finished film was shown at graduation, the scene showed a sea gull flying overhead, then cut to the students — including his nemesis — touching their faces as though they'd been splattered by the passing bird. Steven expressed the bully to be furious. After the film, though, he came over, a changed person. Spielberg recalls, "He said the movie had made him laugh and that he wished he'd gotten to know me better." His filmmaking, Steven could see, had helped him break through painful social barriers.

After high school Spielberg enrolled at California State University, Long Beach, and crammed his classes into two days a week. The rest of the time, he went back to Universal Studios, hanging around, learning how to direct, edit and dub.

Blockbuster String. Spielberg also made his own 26-minute silent film, Anblin, about a boy and a girl hitchhiking to California. He showed Anblin to Chuck Silvers, who took it to the head of Universal's TV production, Sid Sheinberg. Impressed, Sheinberg offered the aspiring director a long-term contract. At age 21 Spielberg had launched his career.

Four years of TV directing and writing movie scripts followed. Then producers Richard Zanuck and David Brown gave Spielberg a chance to direct a feature film, The Sugarland Express. Though it was a box-office disappointment, the producers saw Spielberg's talent. They signed him to do another movie, a thriller about a shark.

Jaws became the highest-grossing film of its time. Spielberg followed this with more blockbusters. His youthful fascination with extraterrestrial life led to Close Encounters of the Third Kind (1977), which Spielberg wrote and directed. Once when George Lucas and Spielberg were on a sandy beach in Hawaii, Lucas described to Spielberg a script he'd written called Raiders of the Lost Ark. Spielberg immediately said he'd like to direct it. Lucas gave him the job.

But even greater success would come with a small, hairless creature from outer space. Based on Spielberg's imaginary childhood friend, ET — The Extra-Terrestrial (1982) captured audiences — and profits — as no film ever had.

Housed in old whitewashed production trailers, Spielberg's foundation has already brought in well over 10,000 testimonies from around the world. The videotaped interviews are indexed electronically, enabling viewers to search thousands of hours of testimony for specific information and to cross-reference particulars.

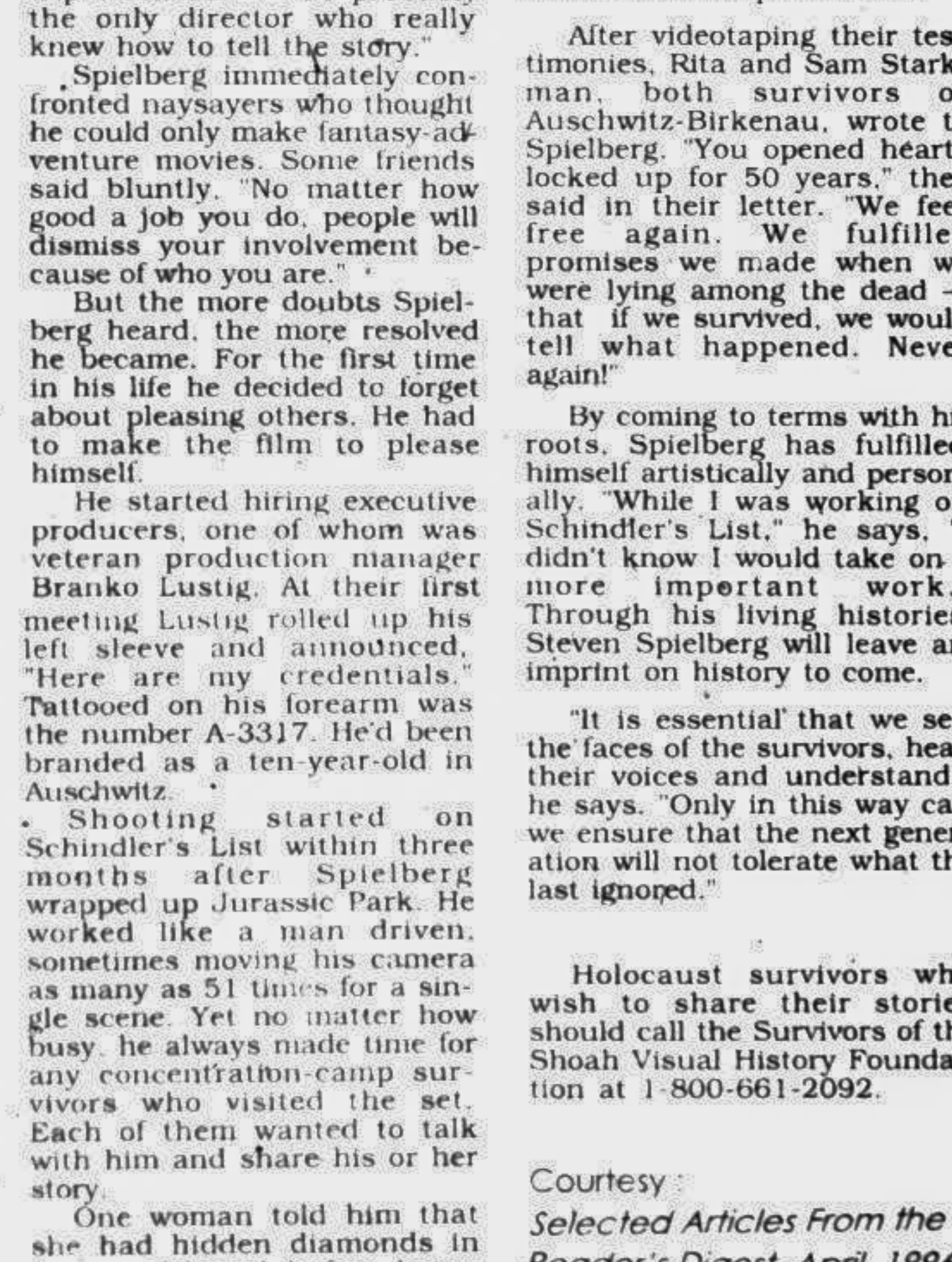
After videotaping their testimonies, Rita and Sam Starkman, both survivors of Auschwitz-Birkenau, wrote to Spielberg. "You opened hearts locked up for 50 years," they said in their letter. "We feel free again. We fulfilled promises we made when we were lying among the dead — that if we survived, we would tell what happened. Never again!"

By coming to terms with his roots, Spielberg has fulfilled himself artistically and personally. "While I was working on Schindler's List," he says, "I didn't know I would take on a more important work." Through his living histories, Steven Spielberg will leave an imprint on history to come.

"It is essential that we see the faces of the survivors, hear their voices and understand," he says. "Only in this way can we ensure that the next generation will not tolerate what the last ignored."

Holocaust survivors who wish to share their stories should call the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation at 1-800-661-2092.

Courtesy: Selected Articles From the Reader's Digest, April, 1996



David Duchovny, the gorgeous star of the 'X-Files'

Apology

Kazi Khaled Arafat

This isn't just another poem about a rainbow or a cloud a smile or a song. Though that's what I wanted to write at first. That's what made me take up my Red Leaf with blue in hand the chewed cap and tear a page off an exercise copy which is ridiculously overpriced for being anointed with the navy blue seal of Money Tales the blessed logo of my school. I had many pretty rhymes in mind but I guess I'll just have to forget them like I did to so many of the truths about myself and instead let this "poem" be an apology. To all the x's and y's and constants and variables and friends and enemies and acquaintances and strangers, parents, teachers, classmates, neighbours, all the humans, for whom my conscience hurts. For some backstab on another which most probably you forgot but which lingers on in my memory. But then again, I guess most of you have similar thorns in your sides too facts which you feel in the bottom of your hearts on the heart of your bottoms. Maybe it's human to push someone off a cliff to avoid the leap yourself and then voluntarily feel the ground rushing up. And then again, maybe you've forgiven me for some sin I didn't even want to commit. I'd like to drown in your ocean of human kindness. And anyway, you started it.

Quotable Quotes

Hope not sunshine every hour. Fear not clouds will always lower. Happiness is but a name. Make content and ease thy aim.

Robert Burns

To each of you there comes a greater inheritance in connection with our possessions from the constitution and laws, than from those by whom those same possessions were left to us.

Cicero

Conversation is in its better part. May be esteemed a gift, and not an art.

William Cowper

Conscience is an elastic and very flexible article, which will bear a deal of stretching and adapt itself to a great variety of circumstances.

Charles Dickens

A Comparison

by Inshirah Kishwat Sakhawat

A recent visit to Bangkok surprised me. Most of you must have heard about the horrid traffic jams. I won't deny that but the fast development in only a few years sure outweigh it. Old buildings have been broken down and tall, beautiful ones built. Not a single dented or broken car could be seen. And the most comforting was the fact that when a new building was under construction a large strong net was covering the building to ensure the safety of the pedestrians.

Unfortunately the same could not be said of our own country. Let me give you a real life example — there is a construction of an almost twenty storied building right behind our house. We are now past the state of complaining of our view being blocked and have focused our worries on the impending danger of stones, nails, rods etc falling inches from our heads. For safety purposes WE, ourselves had to put up nets which had cost quite a deal of money. A wing of our house now lies in shadow throughout the day. And this is just one example of negligence and unheeded social costs on the part of the constructors.

Ironically, some warped safety precautions have been taken. For example dividers made of steel cylinders supported on steel stands have been newly kept on our roads so that cars cannot change lanes or take U-turns. What dangerously has been overlooked is the fact that majority

of these dividers can not be seen at night as they are not illuminated in any way for the drivers to see.

We witnessed breathtaking tourist spots while in Phuket. The reason they had become tourist spots is not only because of their beauty, but man had contributed a great deal. Beside the beaches, where there were rocks and forests, restaurants and cottages were built for people to stay and watch the beautiful and natural scenery. These were made of wood etc, which consumed very little finance so that the loss or damage would not be irrecoverable in case of rare cyclones etc. Cox's Bazar in comparison has almost no such tourist attraction enhanced by man. True that nature is in no way less in beauty but man has not helped it be recognised here in Cox's Bazar.

As I saw those sights I thought about the similar but even more beautiful scenery of Kaptai, Sylhet and Chittagong Hill Tracts. I still fail to understand why these beautiful places have not been touched by man and the fact that we have to go abroad just to see the same sights which we could see here in our own country.

No matter how long it takes, I still have hope that the problems of Bangladesh will be seriously taken under consideration and will one day become the most beautiful and less populated country in Asia.

Quiz Club

Answers (2.8.96)

- Gabriel Garcia Marquez
- CFC (chloro-floro-carbon)
- Centre stem along the middle of a leaf.
- Acids.
- 5.5%
- Tofael Ahmed.
- Penelope Heyns.
- Budapest.
- UAE, Qatar and Bahrain.
- Jefferson.

Here are this week's ten quizzes. Crack them, send your answers to us and win away the Quiz Club prize!

- In which year the Russo-Japanese war began?
- What is the capital of Tahiti?
- When did Taiwan withdraw itself from UN?
- What is the approximate height of Kilimanjaro?
- When was Ernest Rutherford awarded the Noble Prize?
- Who is the writer of the book, 'War and Peace'?
- What does the word ROM stand for?
- The name of the Indian Prime Minister is _____
- What is the estimate GDP growth of Singapore?
- Who is the country's Finance Minister?