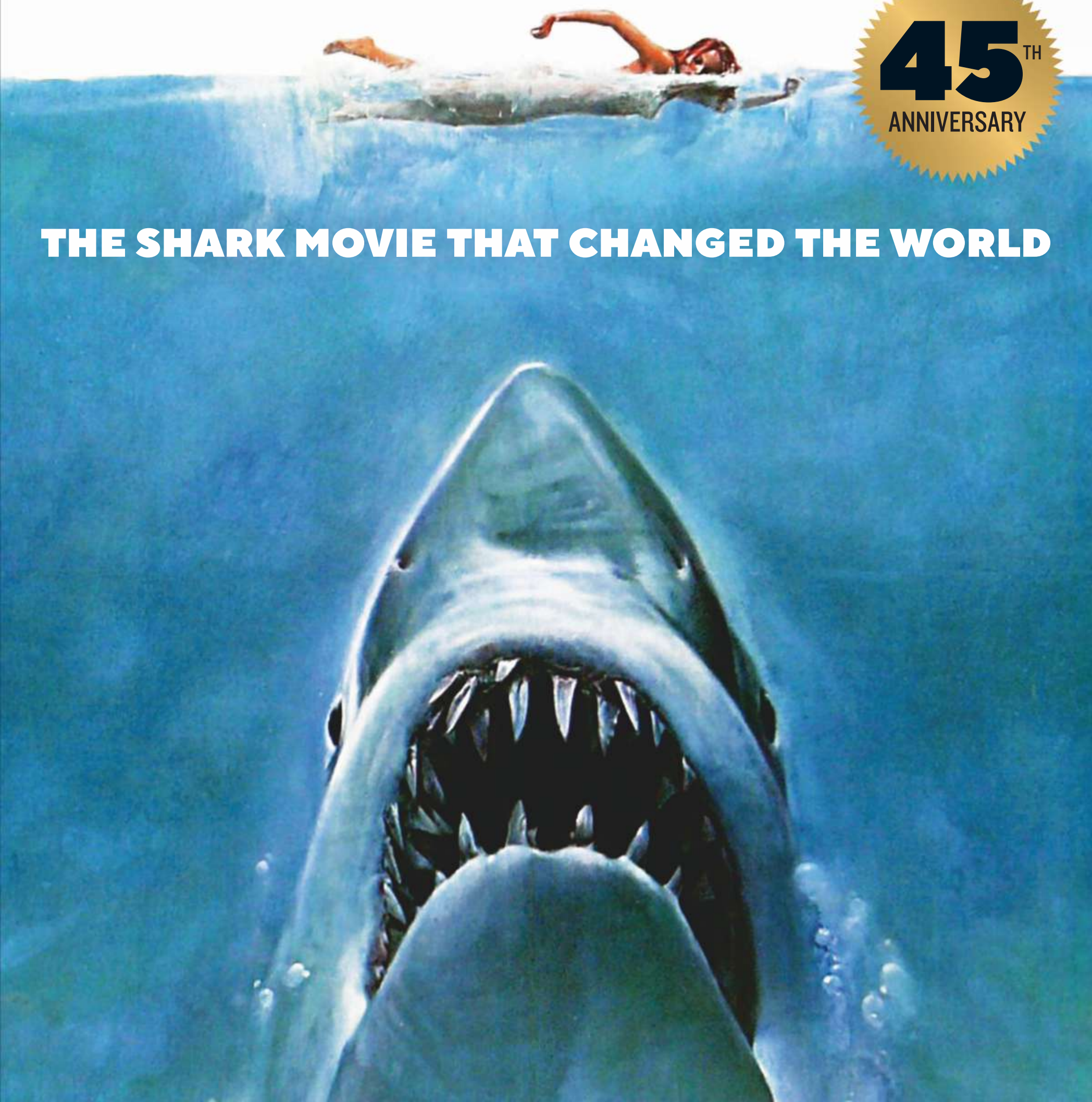
THE MAKING OF SPIELBERG'S ICONIC FILM

LIFE

THE BLOCKBUSTER, THE SCORE, THE FEAR

JAWS



45TH ANNIVERSARY

THE SHARK MOVIE THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

LIFE

JAWS

Robert Shaw, Roy Scheider, and Richard Dreyfuss in a 1975 publicity shot.

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Director Steven Spielberg with one of the film's three mechanical sharks.

LIFE

Jaws

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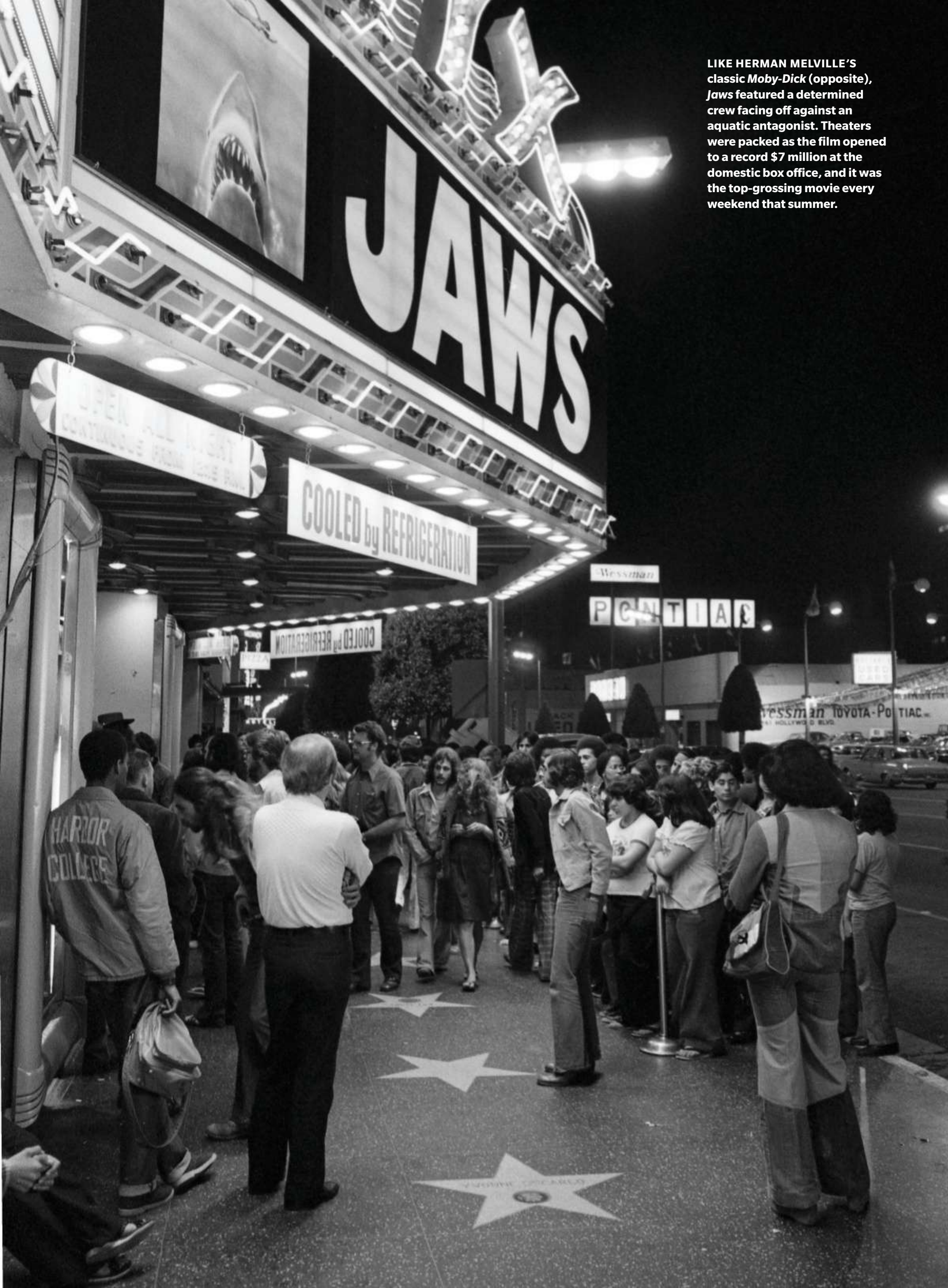
A MONSTER SUCCESS

In the summer of 1975, Steven Spielberg's *Jaws* revolutionized the film industry and terrified audiences with the harrowing tale of a malevolent man-eating shark

Forty-five years ago, Steven Spielberg's *Jaws* transformed the Hollywood landscape, sparked a cultural phenomenon, and took a huge bite out of the collective psyche. Visually compelling and augmented by an iconic musical score, the adaptation of Peter Benchley's novel about a great white shark terrorizing a beach resort was a masterpiece of the thriller genre. From the movie's opening moments, when a young woman gets devoured while taking an evening skinny-dip, Spielberg—just 27 when he made the picture—grabs us and never lets go. "I went to the third public screening in Hollywood, and the whole audience jumped as one when the girl was yanked under by the shark," recalls film historian and screenwriter Joseph McBride, author of *Steven Spielberg, A Biography*. "It was like a wave. The only comparable experience I'd had was while working as a vendor at Milwaukee County Stadium on November 24, 1963, the day Lee Harvey Oswald was shot. I was walking through the stands and everybody had these portable radios and the news came rippling through the stadium." ¶ *Jaws* would become history's highest-grossing film (eclipsed in 1977 by *Star Wars*), but it's remarkable that it ever got made in the first place. The shoot on Martha's Vineyard—directed by a rising but relatively unknown young filmmaker—was notoriously arduous,



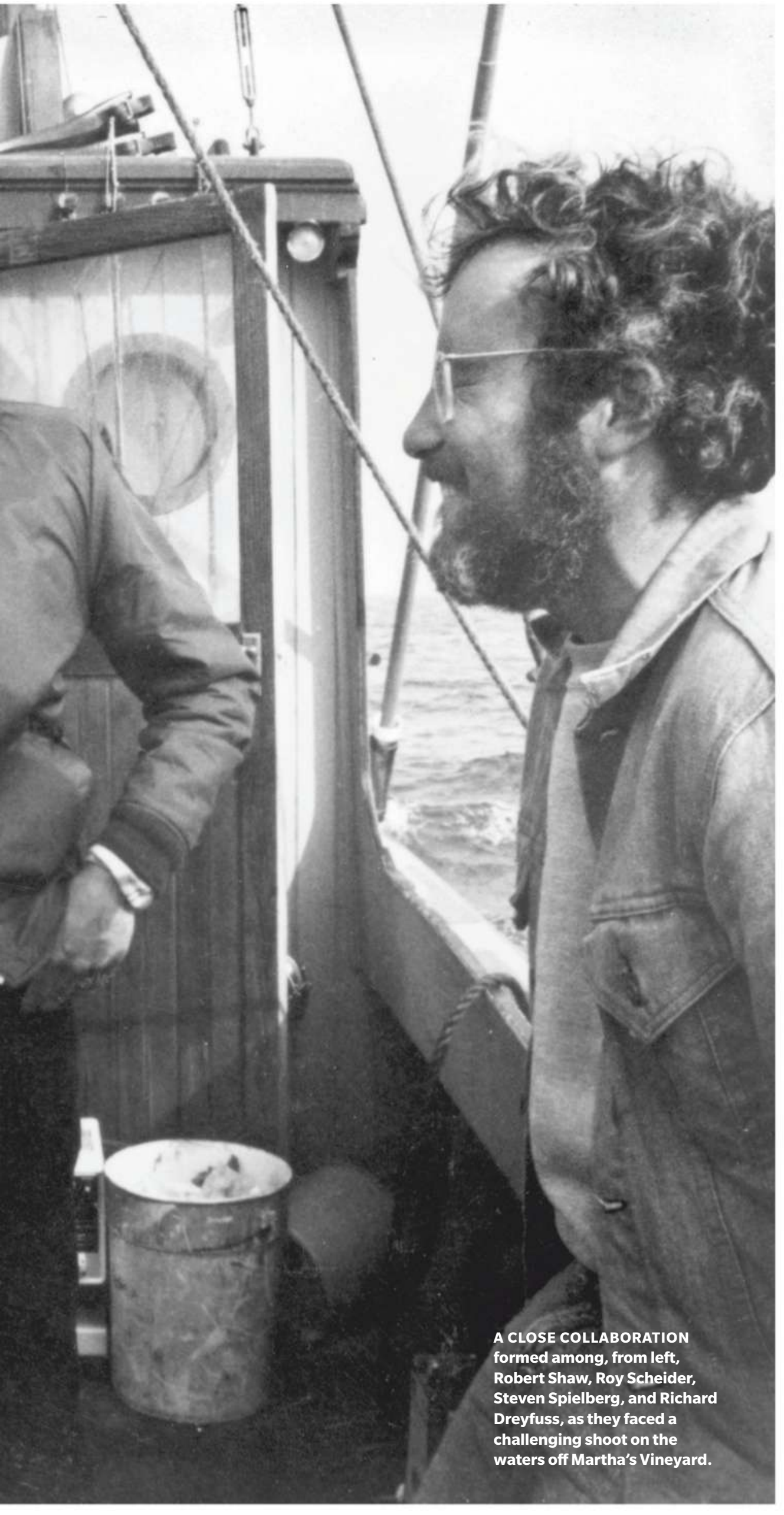
LIKE HERMAN MELVILLE'S classic *Moby-Dick* (opposite), *Jaws* featured a determined crew facing off against an aquatic antagonist. Theaters were packed as the film opened to a record $7 million at the domestic box office, and it was the top-grossing movie every weekend that summer.

not least because the elaborately designed mechanical sharks used for the title character constantly malfunctioned. As it turned out, those snafus made *Jaws* a better film. The villain doesn't even make an appearance until 81 minutes into the picture—in the tradition of Alfred Hitchcock and other masters of suspense, it was the *idea* of the shark, the unseen menace lurking in the depths, that had audiences grabbing their seats. "[*Jaws* producer] Richard Zanuck told me back in the '90s that if you made the film today, they would have used CGI and it would be stupid and unreal," McBride says. "It would all look like a cartoon, what they would do is have the shark do all sorts of stunts. I actually saw the storyboards they'd done for *Jaws,* and it showed the [mechanical] shark jumping and doing all kinds of tricks. Spielberg was thinking of doing that . . . [but] he later realized that what made the film work was you didn't see the shark very much."

On another level, the movie is also a gripping sea chase, with parallels to Melville's *Moby-Dick*, featuring three nuanced main characters—conflicted police chief Martin Brody (Roy Scheider), witty, rational ichthyologist Matt Hooper (Richard Dreyfuss), and Ahabian shark hunter Quint (Robert Shaw). Still, for all *Jaws*'s treasures, Spielberg nearly got the axe when the production went a whopping 300 percent over budget and the shooting schedule tripled from 55 days to 159.

"I think Sid Sheinberg [then head of Universal Pictures] always blocked the intention of Ned Tanen [the studio's production chief] to fire me," the director told *Entertainment Weekly* decades later. "Dick Zanuck and [coproducer] David Brown always told me that the other shoe was about to drop. They always warned me. And they didn't warn me to threaten me or to intimidate me, they just said, 'Is there anything you can do with the script, with the schedule, to avert a shutdown? What can you do?' And I didn't have anything to do, because I couldn't cut the script . . . I had to just keep moving forward, and

THE UNSEEN PREDATOR didn't appear until two thirds of the way through the movie, which only heightened the tension. Here, panicked beachgoers frantically run out of the water after the shark is sighted on the Fourth of July weekend.



A CLOSE COLLABORATION formed among, from left, Robert Shaw, Roy Scheider, Steven Spielberg, and Richard Dreyfuss, as they faced a challenging shoot on the waters off Martha's Vineyard.

the schedule was dictated by the mechanical shark, and by the weather conditions on the ocean. That's what dictated the overrun. And I think every time there was an intention to replace me, Sid stepped in quietly behind the scenes and stopped it from happening."

Perhaps, but Carl Gottlieb, who wrote the shooting script for *Jaws* and played a small acting role, credits the director's business acumen, as well as his cinematic talents, for the film's survival and phenominal success. "Steven had a superb sense of camera, in spades; he was very assured of his directorial vision—and he was also a consummate player of studio politics," says Gottlieb, whose book *The Jaws Log* is a vivid account of the produc-

SPIELBERG STUCK TO HIS VISION FOR *JAWS* AND SUCCESSFULLY NAVIGATED STUDIO POLITICS DURING THE EXTENDED PRODUCTION.

tion. "He knew how to get executives to kind of see things his way and was also very aware of budget and schedules. He could carry it all in his head. Steven was quite the wunderkind." The industry took notice: *Jaws* earned an Academy Award nomination for Best Picture and took home three Oscars, for film editing, sound, and John Williams's score.

On the business side, *Jaws,* released on June 20, 1975, was one of the first "summer blockbusters." Traditionally Hollywood studios saw those months as a dead zone, fit for a diet of low-budget B-grade cheese. One reason was that movie houses were just plain hot—who wanted to sweat for two hours or more in a leather or otherwise upholstered seat? By the late 1960s, however, more and more theaters were air-conditioned, which no doubt played a part

in the summer releases of *Bonnie and Clyde* in 1967, *Easy Rider* in 1969, and *American Graffiti* in 1973. When *Jaws* hit screens, multiplex cinemas were proliferating around the country, many of them in air-conditioned shopping malls—which were soon swarming with teens and tweens, a mine of potential moviegoers. Today, some 40 percent of Hollywood's annual box office revenue comes from summer releases.

It's difficult to believe now, but *Jaws* was also the first Hollywood movie to be aggressively advertised on television. For three nights leading up to the movie's premiere, Universal flooded all three major networks with half-minute-long trailers. The campaign cost about $700,000—not a bad investment for a property that quickly passed a record-busting $100 million at the box office and eventually grossed $260 million in the domestic market alone. (The studio spent $1.8 million total in preopening advertising, an unheard of amount at the time.) *Jaws* spawned three sequels and innumerable knockoff flicks about man-eating animals. It also inspired a fascination with sharks—as well as an unwarranted fear that led to a frenzy of overfishing and wreaked profound ecological consequences.

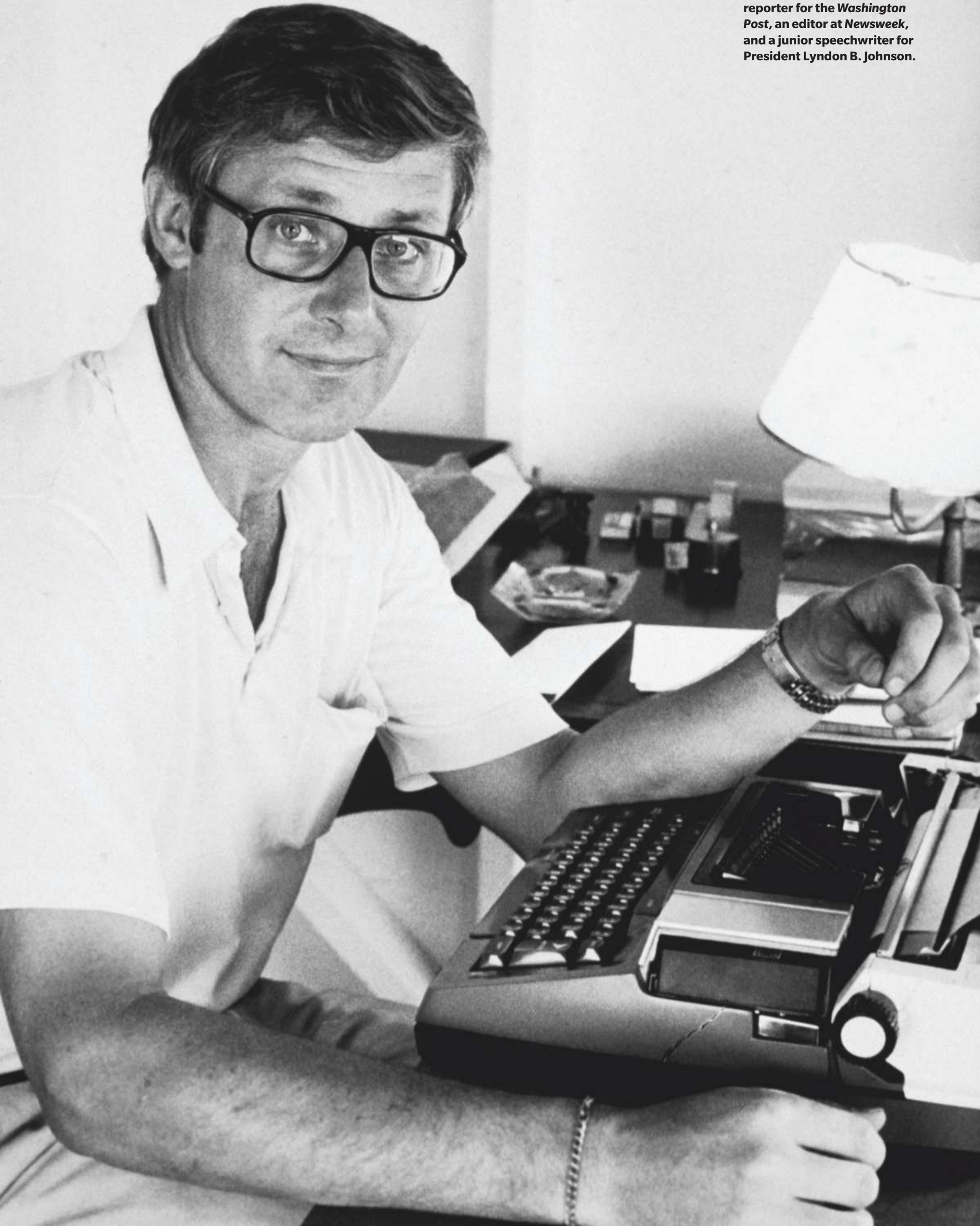
For two generations of film fans, of course, *Jaws* may be most notable for unleashing the juggernaut known as Steven Spielberg. The director, now 73, is a Hollywood institution, with a résumé including *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial*, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, the Indiana Jones films, *Jurassic Park*, *Schindler's List*, and *Saving Private Ryan*. Perhaps none of those acclaimed works is more accomplished than *Jaws*. "When I saw the audience reacting that first time I thought it was sort of a Grand Guignol kind of thriller film, though terrific in that regard," McBride says. "The more I've seen it, it seems very positively restrained by comparison to today's action films that have gotten so explosive and so violent. It's a terrific character study of three men. A lot of the film is very intimate on those guys and their relationships." ●

SHARK SIGHTINGS ARE A cause for concern, especially in Truro, Massachusetts, on Cape Cod, where sharks feed on the ample seal population and the beaches are frequently closed to swimmers, including in 2018 following a nonfatal attack.

CHAPTER ONE

FROM PAGE TO SCREEN

Peter Benchley's best-selling novel tapped into a visceral fear of sharks and inspired one of the most popular films of all time



BEFORE BECOMING A novelist, Peter Benchley (seen here in 1976) was a reporter for the *Washington Post*, an editor at *Newsweek*, and a junior speechwriter for President Lyndon B. Johnson.

Peter Bradford Benchley boasted an impressive literary pedigree. His grandfather Robert Benchley (1889–1945) was a noted humorist, one of the famed wits of the Algonquin Round Table, and also a Hollywood character player, known for his comic shorts—such as the Academy Award–winning *How to Sleep* (1935). His father, Nathaniel Benchley (1915–1981), was a novelist, whose work *The Off Islanders* was adapted for the screen as the hit 1966 comedy *The Russians Are Coming, The Russians Are Coming*.

As a youth, Peter Benchley spent his summers on Nantucket Island, off Cape Cod in Massachusetts, where he often went shark fishing with his father and brother, Nat. Indeed, he harbored something of a fascination for the marine predators and was particularly struck by a 1964 item in the New York *Daily News* about a Long Island fisherman named Frank Mundus who had harpooned an enormous great white shark weighing some 4,500 pounds. Benchley made a mental note of the incident; seven years later he saw Peter Gimbel's 1971 documentary *Blue Water, White Death,* which vividly depicts the great white's terrifying lethal power—one harrowing scene shows a shark making a near-fatal attack on a crew member submerged in a supposedly protective shark cage.

While working as a freelance writer around that time, Benchley had lunch with Doubleday editor Tom Congdon, who asked if he had any book ideas. "I've been thinking about a novel about a great white shark that appears off a Long Island resort and afflicts it," Benchley recalled replying. In June 1971 he wrote up a four-page outline, accepted a $1,000 installment on his $7,500 advance (almost $48,000 in 2020 dollars) and started an 18-month process of writing, revisions, and rewrites. Benchley proposed several titles that were dismissed, among them *The Stillness in the Water* and *Leviathan Rising*. Mere minutes before the novel went into production, it still didn't have a name. Benchley remembered hashing the matter out at a Manhattan restaurant. "We cannot agree on a word that we like, let alone a title that we like," the author said in Laurent Bouzereau's 1995 documentary *A Look Inside Jaws*. "In fact, the only word that even means anything, that even says anything, is *jaws*. Call the book *Jaws*. Congdon said, 'What does it mean?' I said, 'I don't know, but it's short; it fits on a jacket, and it may work.' He

GROWING UP, BENCHLEY spent summers on Nantucket, an idyllic island getaway off Cape Cod and an obvious model for Amity, the fictional locale of *Jaws*.

said, 'Okay, we'll call the thing *Jaws*.'"

By the time Benchley had finished the book, he'd blown through his advance, had $600 left in the bank, and was considering a job with *National Geographic* magazine. As it turned out, that wouldn't be necessary—*Jaws* made more than a splash, unleashing a frenzied competition for the paperback rights—eventually bought by Bantam Books for a whopping $575,000 (more than $3.3 million today). The novel sparked a similar bidding war in Hollywood (though ABC nixed a *Jaws* TV project as too costly). "There was a lot of heat around town on this book," Peter Saphier, then an executive at Universal Studios, told Joseph McBride, author of *Steven Spielberg: A Biography*. "I thought, this is going to be a smash movie—send it to [studio boss] Lew Wasserman."

In a classic case of Hollywood misjudgment, the Universal story department rejected *Jaws*. But producing partners Richard Zanuck—son of legendary movie mogul Darryl F. Zanuck—and David Brown were intensely interested in the project. The duo, who had turned out a string of megahits (including *The Sound of Music*, *Patton*, *The French Connection*, *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, and *The Sting*) outbid Warner Bros., offering Benchley $150,000 and 10 percent of the net profits for the rights to the book and another $25,000 for writing the screenplay. "We got down on bended knee," Zanuck told McBride. "We made a lot of promises that, happily, we lived up to." They envisioned a relatively low budget film, an overly optimistic view, given that movies shot on the water were often unwieldy and expensive. Brown later conceded that they would experience "a panic of unpreparedness. If we had read *Jaws* twice, we might never have made the movie. Careful analysis could have convinced us that it was too difficult to make."

Now came the question of who would make it. The producers considered John Sturges, a distinguished action director (*Bad Day at Black Rock*, *The Great Escape*) before offering *Jaws* to Dick Richards, a young filmmaker who had made his feature debut with a Western called *The Culpepper Cattle Company*. But Richards blew the job when, during a lunch with Zanuck, Brown, and Benchley at New York's 21 Club, he kept referring to the title character as "the whale." "After he'd done it three times, I said, 'For God's sake, this is a f---ing shark,'" Zanuck recalled to McBride. "As we walked back to the office from this disastrous lunch, I said to Mr. Brown, 'We gotta renege.'"

Then one day, up-and-coming director Steven Spielberg dropped by the Zanuck-Brown office. At 26, the Cal State dropout had been making films since his childhood in Phoenix, starting with home movies—including an 8mm effort of a Lionel toy train wreck. In high


Huge Shark, of the Man-Eating Species, Caught at Belfort, N. J.

A Man-Eating Female Shark Which Was Caught Off Belfort, N. J., Yesterday in a Net After a Terrible Battle. The Shark Was Nine and a Quarter Feet in Length and Weighed 318 Pounds. When the Shark Was Cut Open Twelve Baby Sharks, Each Eighteen Inches Long, Were Found.

LEAGUE ISLAND MAY BE EQUIPPED FOR BUILDING BIG SHIPS

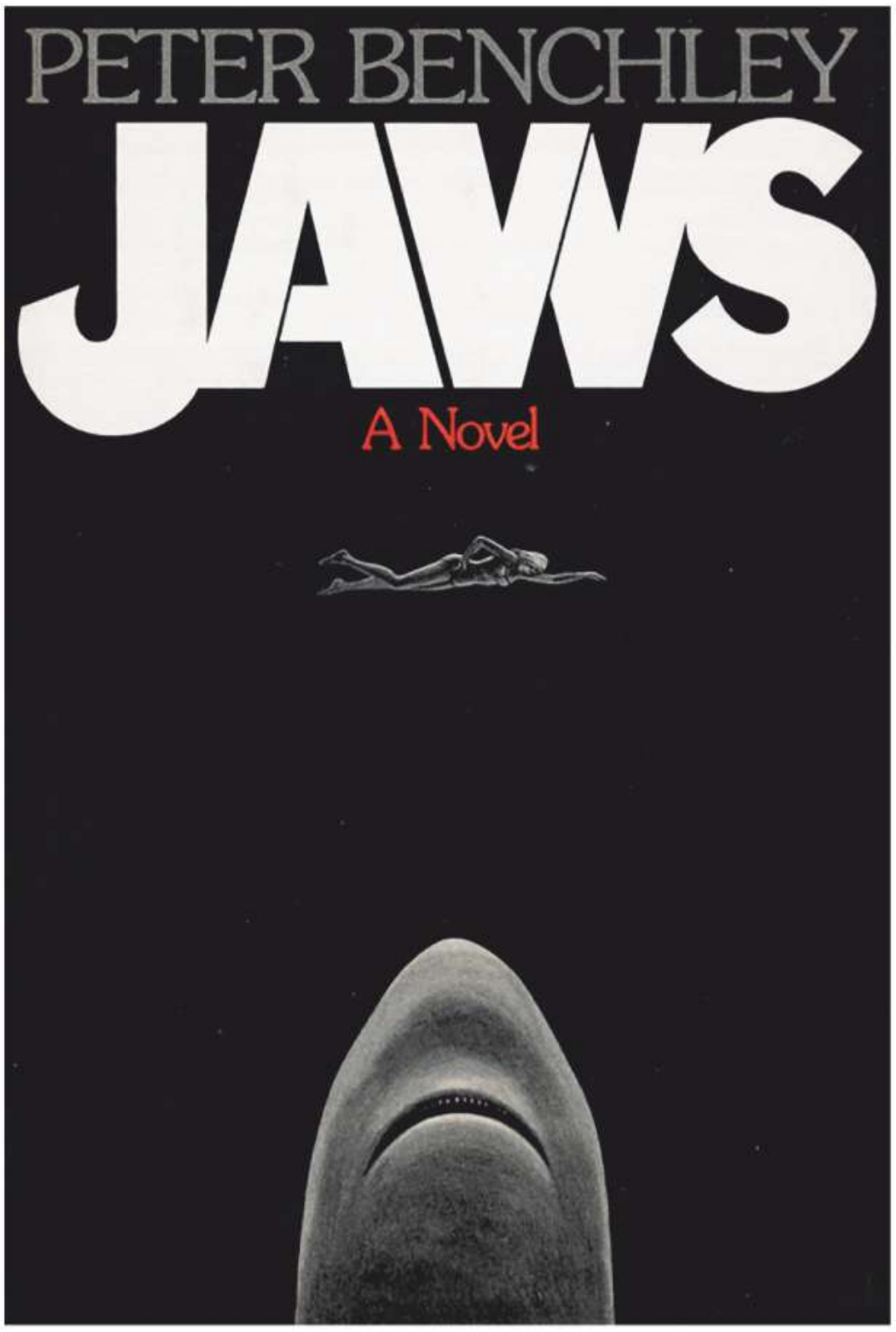
Senator Penrose Obtains Reinsertion of Phila. Item in Naval Bill

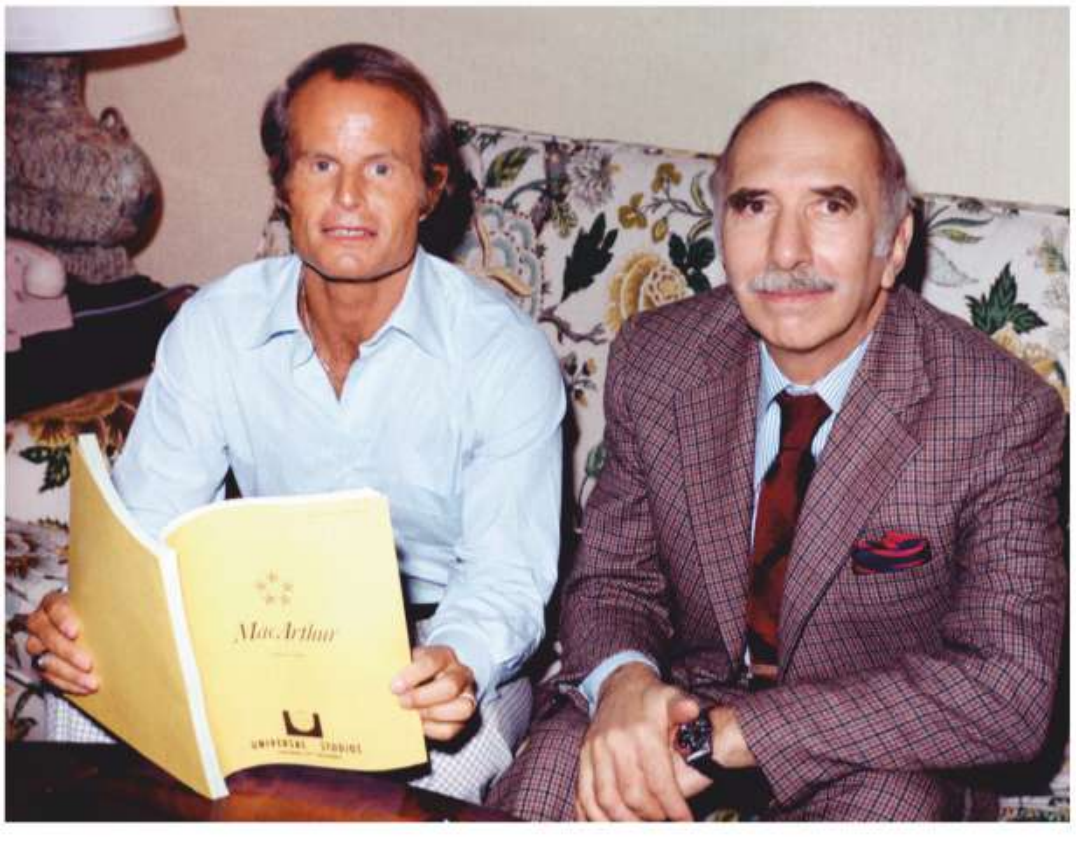
Omission of Local Yard De-

THREE DIE OF HEAT BEFORE COOL WIND

CARRANZA DOES NOT WISH WAR BUT WAS

AMONG THE INFLUENCES FOR *Jaws* **were the 1971 great white shark documentary *Blue Water, White Death* (opposite), the famed sport fisherman Frank Mundus (above, after catching a 3,450-pound great white off Montauk, Long Island, in 1986), and the frightening Jersey Shore shark attacks in July 1916 (as chronicled in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*).**





school, Spielberg made a 40-minute war film titled *Escape to Nowhere,* which won an award. He went on to land an unpaid internship at Universal. "Spielberg was going to Universal every day, which was an extraordinary opportunity, to hang around film and television sets, and meet people," McBride noted. "He had a lot of chutzpah as a kid. He would walk up to Cary Grant on the studio street and say, 'Hi, could I have lunch with you?'"

In 1968 Spielberg was given the chance to direct a 26-minute film about hippie hitchhikers called *Amblin'* (later the name of his production company). It wound up winning awards and impressing Universal vice president Sidney Sheinberg, who signed Spielberg to a seven-year contract, making him the youngest director ever inked to a long-term deal. Starting in TV, he debuted with an installment for the pilot episode of Rod Serling's *Night Gallery* anthology series—this one starring Hollywood icon Joan Crawford, who was initially skeptical of working with a green director. But, as she recalled in the biography *Not the Girl Next Door,* those doubts were quickly dispelled: "It was immediately obvious to me, and probably to everyone else, that here was a young genius. I thought maybe more experience was important, but then I thought of all of those experienced directors who didn't

"IF WE HAD READ *JAWS* TWICE, WE MIGHT NEVER HAVE MADE THE MOVIE. CAREFUL ANALYSIS COULD HAVE CONVINCED US THAT IT WAS TOO DIFFICULT TO MAKE."

—PRODUCER DAVID BROWN

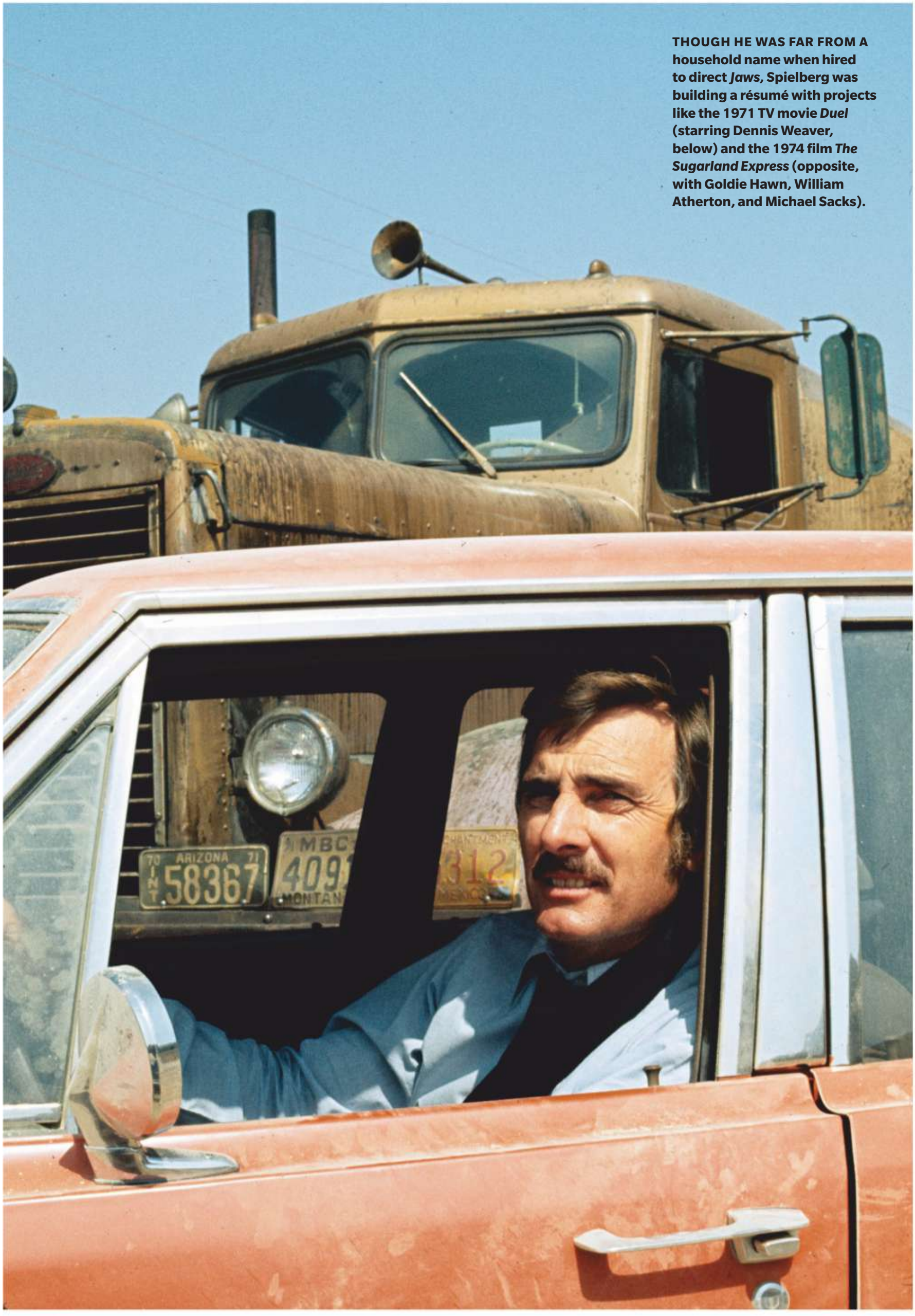
"I WANTED TO DO *JAWS* FOR hostile reasons," Steven Spielberg told *Time* in 1975. "I read it and felt that I had been attacked. It terrified me, and I wanted to strike back." The book was a best-seller and attracted the attention of (opposite) producers Richard Zanuck (holding the script to the 1977 biopic *MacArthur*) and David Brown, before it was even published in February 1974.

have Steven's intuitive inspiration and who just kept repeating the same old routine performances."

After directing episodes of *Columbo* and other series, Spielberg earned wide acclaim for the 1971 TV film *Duel,* about a murderous 18-wheeler truck that inexplicably stalks hapless motorist Dennis Weaver. In 1974 he made his feature debut with *The Sugarland Express,* starring Goldie Hawn as a wife who helps her husband break out of prison. "After *Sugarland Express,* which was very well received by the critics but not a popular picture, Steven felt he needed to do something that was more of a 'popcorn movie'—a mainstream movie," recalls actor-screenwriter Carl Gottlieb, Spielberg's longtime friend who would collaborate on the *Jaws* screenplay. "Zanuck and Brown had been optioning *Jaws* the novel, and there was a script in their office. Steven picked it up from a pile on the desk and said, 'What's this?' They said it's a movie about a shark. He said, 'Can I read it?' They said sure. So, he read it. And he said, 'Well, I gotta make this movie.'"

The screenplay Spielberg would work with came together only after substantial effort. Benchley's book was a gripping thriller, but he'd thrown in some subplots that seemed to blunt the suspense—for example, Chief Brody's wife has an affair with Hooper, the hunky visiting scientist. Admittedly a novice screenwriter, despite his $25,000 fee, Benchley tried two drafts of a script before it was handed off to Howard Sackler, who had won the 1969 Pulitzer Prize for his play *The Great White Hope.* Spielberg felt Sackler made improvements, and added revisions of his own, but was still unsatisfied and turned to Gottlieb. An actor and skilled comedy writer cast in the part of Meadows, a local newspaper editor [see page 22], Gottlieb honed his craft in improvisational theater, and Spielberg thought he might work well with the actors to refine a shooting script.

The script continued to evolve during filming, with Gottlieb, Spielberg, and the principal cast spending hours at dinners chewing over the possible scenes, making notes, suggesting sections of dialogue. After each of these sessions, Gottlieb would stay up nights at the typewriter, banging the back-and-forth into a usable script. The next morning, usually at dawn, a groggy Spielberg would read through the pages over tea; then Gottlieb would



THOUGH HE WAS FAR FROM A household name when hired to direct *Jaws*, Spielberg was building a résumé with projects like the 1971 TV movie *Duel* (starring Dennis Weaver, below) and the 1974 film *The Sugarland Express* (opposite, with Goldie Hawn, William Atherton, and Michael Sacks).

SPIELBERG'S RIGHT-HAND MAN

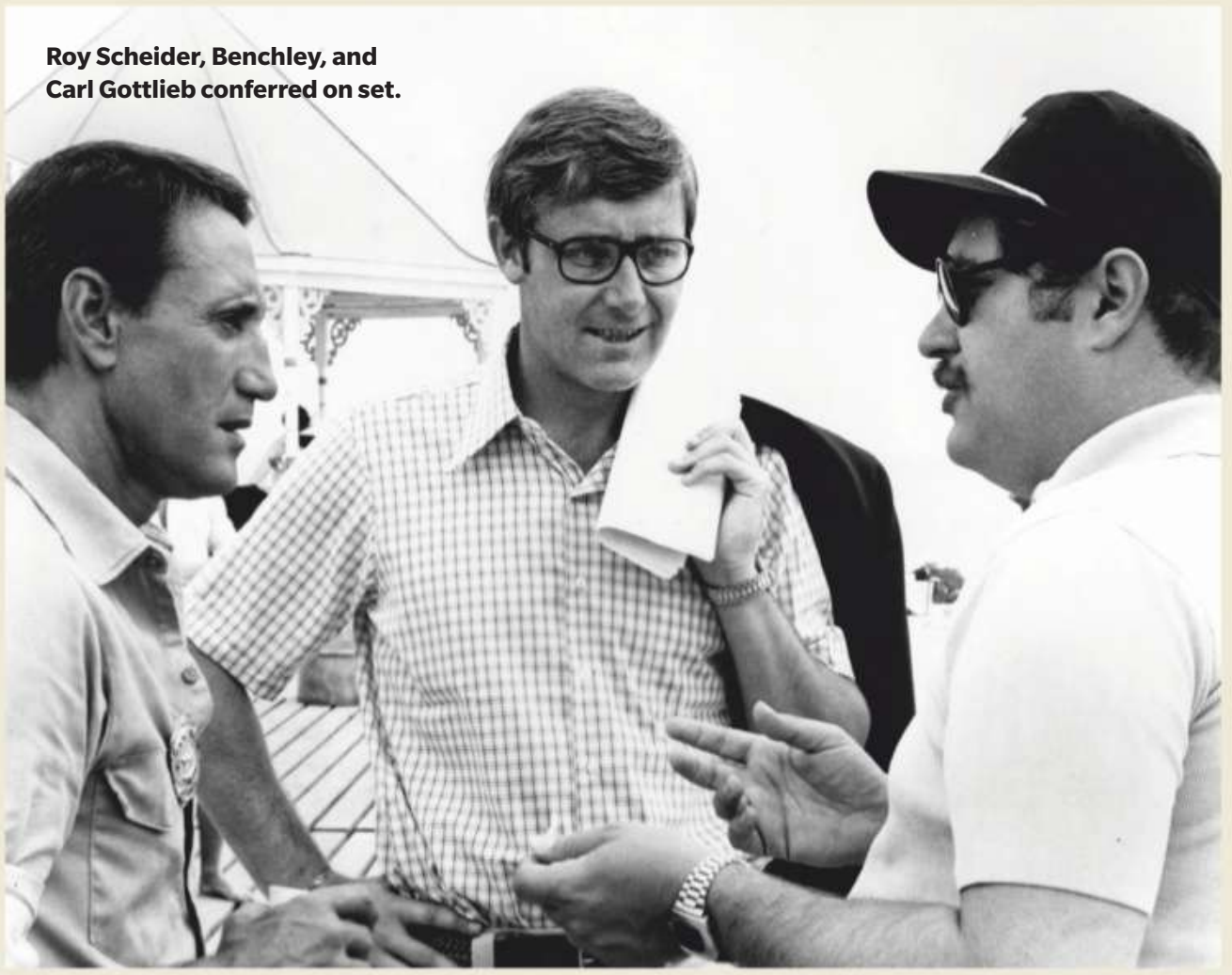
BEHIND THE SCENES OF A BLOCKBUSTER

New York City native Carl Gottlieb came up through the showbiz ranks in comedy. A graduate of Syracuse University, he joined The Committee, a San Francisco improvisation group, in the 1960s and found success as a television writer in Hollywood. In 1969, Gottlieb won an Emmy Award for his work on The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour*; he also wrote for hit sitcoms, including* The Odd Couple, The Bob Newhart Show, *and* All in the Family. *Between writing assignments, Gottlieb snagged some small acting parts in films such as Robert Altman's* M*A*S*H. *It was as an actor that he signed onto* Jaws, *but Gottlieb's main contribution was in crafting the shooting script, adding humor and humanity to what were rather stolid, cardboard characters. Post-*Jaws, *he wrote the scripts for the first two sequels as well as the definitive "making of" book of the film,* The Jaws Log. *In later years, Gottlieb found continued success as a screenwriter and also directed the 1981 Ringo Starr comedy* Caveman. *At 82, he often appears at* Jaws *events and retrospectives.*

How did you get involved in the project? Steven and I were pretty close friends in those days—he was like the new kid in town, and I was an established comedy writer. We had the same agent, Mike Medavoy, who went on to head Orion Pictures, and he kept putting us together for projects—he was a very early believer in packaging and synergy, and thought we'd do well together. He encouraged us to hang out, write stuff, and go out and pitch it, so we did. I acted and did little day parts in a couple of Steven's television projects, and then he went off to do *Sugarland Express* and I was doing *The Odd Couple* . . . Steven called me and said you know, soon we're gonna be making this movie and it would be great if you were there to help [the actors improvise]. And there's a part for you—Meadows, the local newspaper editor, which was a pretty good part. He sent me a copy of the script with a note on the cover that said, "Eviscerate it."

How so? Well, I went through the script—in those days it was my practice to write my reactions in a memo, you know, typing on paper—that's how we did it then. I wrote Steven a long memo detailing what I thought was good and bad about the script. He showed the memo to Zanuck and Brown, and they said, come out and meet with us, we're having breakfast at the Bel Air Hotel. We talked about the script, and talked and talked—breakfast became lunch, became high tea, and six hours passed. They said well, we want to start shooting in three weeks. The next day, they closed the deal with my agent. I gave one day's notice to the crew of *The Odd Couple* and said I'm off to do a feature—and off I went to the Vineyard with Steven and we started to take the script apart.

What was that collaboration like? That was a terrific process. Steven and I asked the studio to rent us a house with a housekeeper. I thought that was a good idea—we were in constant communication about the script. And he and I were the only ones who had any idea about the extent of the changes. Verna Fields brought her whole editing system up to the Vineyard and we would discuss each change in the context of what that did to the fabric of the screenplay. It's like a tapestry, you start pulling at one thread, it becomes undone, and you have to think about how to fix it; every change affects every other part of the script. Of course, there was no real script at the time, just an outline that we filled in as we went—I was just trying to stay ahead of the shooting schedule. Steven and Verna and I were the only ones who had the whole movie in our heads. It was very productive because we'd live, sleep, eat, and breathe the script. There was nothing else to do. Everybody else could fool around. Not us.



Roy Scheider, Benchley, and Carl Gottlieb conferred on set.

The actors collaborated on the script? Yes. They would come over, we'd talk about what they were going to do. We were lucky, the actors were very conscientious. They were equal partners in the collaborative process. If an actor came up with something, I didn't have any pride of authorship. I'd say, "Yeah that works, let's put it in the script." So, the script grew, with ad-libs and ideas and scraps of dialogue. Then they'd go out and shoot something in the day, and I'd look at the dailies and think, "Well, how am I gonna accommodate this?" That's how it went. Every day we'd have a look at whatever pages I'd written during the day, and if everybody kind of agreed about what I'd written, then we'd take it over to the production office and the nighttime elves would type the mimeo masters and distribute them to the crew at 7 a.m.

Spielberg was really starting out at the time. What was he like back then? There used to be an old vaudeville axiom, "Never let 'em see you sweat." That was Steven. He was preternaturally assured of what he was doing, and even if he wasn't sure, you'd hardly know it. I mean, I knew it—I knew he bit his nails, for example, and I knew what he was worried about and what he was spending sleepless nights about. But as far as the set and the actors went, he was in complete control. Asserted himself every place he needed to assert himself, and if it wasn't right, he insisted on getting it right. We started to go over budget, people got worried and nervous, but he just kept on shooting.

How were the stars to work with? They were all really interesting and they were all nice. Scheider was a very serious New York actor, committed to the craft. Dreyfuss was a new boy in town, but he'd been acting for a long time in television, so he had a bit of a career. And he had just had his first starring role in a movie, *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*. Shaw was a kind of renaissance guy, novelist, playwright, and an actor of that hard-drinking school—Albert Finney, Richard Harris, all the Royal Academy types. He was a polymath.

Did you think you were making something special? Not at all. [Because] we were on a distant location, the [studio] executive branch couldn't exercise daily oversight. By the time they saw the dailies we were two days deeper into shooting. If they had something to say it was too late to say it. It was a summer popcorn movie. That's how it was sold to the studio; the studio made it with those expectations. We shot it in the summer of '74 and it wasn't released until the summer of '75, so there was plenty of time to edit and tweak and polish and get it as good as it could be in postproduction. And you could tell from the very first time an audience ever saw the movie that it was going to end up being something special. It was this big, difficult picture that almost got s--t-canned a couple of times but the studio managed to stay with it and everybody who worked on it believed in it.

You went on to a busy career. I went back to writing television and variety shows, I got my comedy chops back. I knew Steve Martin from the old days on the Smothers Brothers show. Steve's career was developing, and we wrote *The Jerk* together. I had this whole career and always, there was this iconic film that wouldn't go away. It was always Shark Week somewhere on the planet; I did the sequels, there was *Jaws 2* and *Jaws 3-D*. Thanks to the Writers Guild, I still receive a healthy income from the reissue of *Jaws*. In recent years, I started doing autograph shows and fan shows. I've got a whole second life presenting the movie and answering questions about what it was like to do *Jaws*. ●

bicycle over to the production office, where the script typist would turn out a clean version for the entire company.

To bring the plot to life, Spielberg and Gottlieb had a diligent cast to work with. The director told Ain't It Cool News that he'd "tested dozens of possible Brodys" and considered the likes of Charlton Heston (one of his Universal luncheon dates, whom he rejected as too pompous and stentorian for the ordinary-guy police chief) and Robert Duvall (who passed because he wanted to play Quint) before Roy Scheider pitched himself for the role at a party. "Roy actually said to me, 'You have such a glum look on your face. What's

THE SCRIPT EVOLVED DURING FILMING, WITH GOTTLIEB, SPIELBERG, AND THE CAST SPENDING HOURS AT DINNERS CHEWING OVER THE POSSIBLE SCENES.

the matter?'" Spielberg remembered. "I said, 'Aw, I'm having trouble casting my picture.' He actually said, 'Who have you gone out to?' I named a few names and he looked at me and said, 'What about me?' He actually said, 'What about *me*?'" Spielberg said. "I looked at him and said, 'You're right! What about you? Will you make my movie?' Without even asking for a script he said, 'Of course! If you want me, I'll do it!'"

For Quint, Spielberg's wish list included two Hollywood stalwarts. "We went to Lee Marvin first, he turned it down," the director told *Entertainment Weekly*. His second choice was Sterling Hayden, best known for the 1950 noir classic *The Asphalt Jungle*, and especially as lunatic brigadier general Jack D. Ripper, whose sexual impotence sparks nuclear apocalypse

in Stanley Kubrick's 1964 satire *Dr. Strangelove*. Hayden "was a fisherman," Spielberg said. Indeed, he actually lived on a boat most of the time. "He said, 'When I go fishing, I want to go fishing for real. I don't want to go fishing for a fake shark.'" The director eventually tapped Robert Shaw for the part at the suggestion of Zanuck and Brown, who had loved working with the actor on *The Sting*. As for the scientist, "my first choice for Matt Hooper was always Richard Dreyfuss."

Perhaps, but according to McBride, the director had also considered Jon Voight (who turned down the role), Timothy Bottoms, Jeff Bridges, and Joel Grey. For his part, Dreyfuss wasn't keen on playing Hooper—he thought the role boring. The actor had broken through in George Lucas's huge hit *American Graffiti* and had just completed his first starring role playing a young Montreal go-getter in *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*. "I would go to see this movie in a minute," he told Spielberg. "I don't want to do it." But after some long sessions with Gottlieb, a close friend, Dreyfuss was convinced that his character could be made witty and interesting. As "an American Jew with clearly defined ethnic roots," Gottlieb observed, Dreyfuss represented "a tradition of intellectual inquiry, respect for learning, and intense involvement with morality and law." Throughout the shoot, however, the actor often disparaged the film. "Dreyfuss would say, 'What am I doing on this island? Why am I here? I

AS IMPRESSIVE AS THEY looked, the mechanical sharks created endless complications for the production, but producers (including Zanuck, right, with Spielberg) remained confident in their director's plan.

should be signing autographs in Sardi's. I should be feted all over New York City,'" Scheider recalled in the 2010 documentary *Jaws: The Inside Story*.

Even once production was underway the script would continue to prove a source of tension—between Spielberg and Benchley. The director had cast the tall, patrician novelist as a TV newsman covering the shark attack story, including a scene where the mayor of Amity erroneously proclaims the predator dead and the beaches open for July 4. Benchley's arrival on the set was met with some anxiety—justifiably, as it turned out. Few writers enjoy seeing their work altered for the screen and Benchley was no exception. He was particularly irritated by an interview Spielberg gave to *Newsweek*—in which, according to Gottlieb, the young director was misquoted. "Peter Benchley's view of his book was not my view of the movie I wanted to make from his book," the magazine reported Spielberg saying. "[Benchley] didn't like any of his characters, so none of them were very likeable. He put them in a situation where you were rooting for the shark to eat the people—in alphabetical order!"

Benchley took umbrage and struck back in an interview with the *Los Angeles Times*. "Spielberg needs to work on character," he said. "He knows, flatly, zero . . . He is a 26-year-old [actually 27] who grew up with movies. He has no knowledge of reality but movies . . . Wait and see, Spielberg will one day be known as the greatest second-unit director in America."

Two decades later, in an interview with McBride, Benchley looked back with regret on his comments. "In the great catalogue of stupid things one says in life, that ranks high on the list," he said. "It was an extremely unfortunate bit of anger . . . Universal was getting upset we were pissing all over each other in public. They said, 'Please stop this.' After that the two of us got together and told each other we were really sorry. In a way, my remark was a cleansing." Spielberg said his comments were taken out of context, and that he'd meant to say that the book was not easily filmable. But he seemed unable to restrain himself from dissing the novel—three months before the release of *Jaws*, the director told the film magazine *Millimeter,* "If we don't succeed in making this picture better than the book, we're in real trouble." ●

SCHEIDER (IN 1972) WAS a calm presence on the frantic set of *Jaws*. According to a 1975 *Time* story, "When tempers frayed and gloom hung heavy over the production, Scheider usually just tuned out and worked on his suntan."

ACTOR PROFILE

ROY SCHEIDER

The two-time Oscar nominee landed his most famous role as beleaguered police chief Martin Brody

He was an ideal figure for gritty 1970s cinema, lean and raw-boned, with a soulful, world-weary gaze and prominent nose broken in an amateur boxing match. Raised in Orange, New Jersey, Roy Scheider attended Rutgers University and then Franklin & Marshall College, where he graduated with a history degree and the intention of going to law school. But he joined the Air Force first, serving three years and attaining the rank of first lieutenant.

By the time of his discharge, Scheider had decided to become an actor; in 1961 he made his professional stage debut as Mercutio in a New York Shakespeare Festival production of *Romeo and Juliet*. For the next seven years, he worked in the theater, netting an Obie Award (off-Broadway's version of a Tony) for his performance in the title role of *Stephen D.*, a 1967 adaptation of James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. By then he'd broken into films—officially, if not auspiciously—billed as Roy R. Scheider in *The Curse of the Living Corpse*, a schlocky 1964 horror flick in which he portrayed an asthmatic alcoholic murder victim. "He had to bend his knees to die into a moat full of quicksand," Scheider's wife, documentary filmmaker Brenda Siemer, told the *New York Times*. "He loved to demonstrate that."

Scheider ramped up his film work in the early 1970s, notably as Jane Fonda's menacing pimp and lover in *Klute* (1971). That same year, he cracked the big time, projecting quiet intensity as the partner to loose-cannon cop Gene Hackman in *The French Connection*, a role that earned Scheider the first of two Academy Award nominations. It was a bit of a mixed blessing, he later reflected. "I got inundated with cop scripts after that," he said. "It was the same role

over and over." (Indeed, in 1973's *The Seven-Ups,* Scheider essentially reprised his *French Connection* character, which was based on real-life NYPD detective Sonny Grosso). "Every one had a chase sequence, every scene was either set in a garage or a vacant lot or a warehouse with everybody getting gunned down."

He played an entirely different kind of cop in *Jaws*, of course. Chief Martin Brody was flawed and vulnerable. "[Spielberg] thought it was a good idea to have a city type of guy put into that ocean community," Scheider told journalist Paul Iorio in 2000. "He's a guy who doesn't understand the community, is afraid of water, the least likely hero and that makes him the everyman."

Jaws had chase scenes, to be sure, but they were nothing like the ones Scheider played on the seamy '70s streets of New York. Nor, perhaps, did his urban crimers offer up anything as chilling as that moment in the open ocean when Brody's mortified face freezes at the sight of the mammoth shark and he backs into the cabin muttering to Quint the immortal—and reportedly improvised—line, "You're gonna need a bigger boat."

After *Jaws*, Scheider often played supporting roles in mediocre films. One flashy exception was an Oscar-nominated turn as a womanizing, self-destructive director of Broadway musicals in Bob Fosse's autobiographical *All That Jazz* (1979). It was Scheider's favorite part. That same year, however, contractual obligations to star in *Jaws 2* kept him from accepting the lead in *The Deer Hunter,* a gig that went to Robert De Niro.

Scheider was a voracious reader and sometime political activist—he protested against both the Vietnam and Iraq wars and helped found the progressive, culturally diverse Hayground School in Bridgehampton, New York, near his Long Island home. A twice-married father of three (one daughter, Maximillia, predeceased him), Scheider died at 75 of complications from multiple myeloma in February 2008. He'd done extensive stage work and appeared in some 60 motion pictures. But the headline of his *New York Times* obituary read "Roy Scheider, Actor in *Jaws* . . ." ●

HIGHLIGHTS FROM SCHEIDER'S COLORFUL FILM CAREER INCLUDE (clockwise from bottom, opposite) *Still of the Night* (with Meryl Streep), *Klute* (with Jane Fonda at his left), *The French Connection* (with Gene Hackman), *All That Jazz*, *2010: The Year We Make Contact*, and *Marathon Man*. He reunited with Spielberg in the early 1990s to star in the Spielberg-produced sci-fi TV series *seaQuest DSV*.

CHAPTER TWO

THE SHOOT FROM HELL

Jaws was riddled with behind-the-scenes drama, derived partly from filming on the ocean with temperamental robotic sharks that caused constant delays and headaches for Spielberg and Co.

"HAD WE SHOT IN THE TANK, I don't think *Jaws* would have been very successful, because it would look really phony," Spielberg (on set in 1974) told *Entertainment Weekly* in 2011. "But innumerable physical problems came along with that decision."

After considerable drama, the script for *Jaws* had finally come together. The narrative went as follows:

It's an early-summer dusk on the New England island of Amity, a quaint, upscale resort with sand-lined streets and clapboard Colonial homes. A young woman named Chrissie Watkins (played by Susan Backlinie) is partying with friends on the beach. She clicks with one of the guys, Tom Cassidy (Jonathan Filley), and asks him if he wants to take a swim. Cassidy, however, passes out drunk, so Chrissie goes by herself for a skinny-dip. While she treads water, we see her jerk, then jerk again—and then she disappears under the surface. Popping back up, the young woman thrashes for her life, screams bloody murder—then vanishes for good.

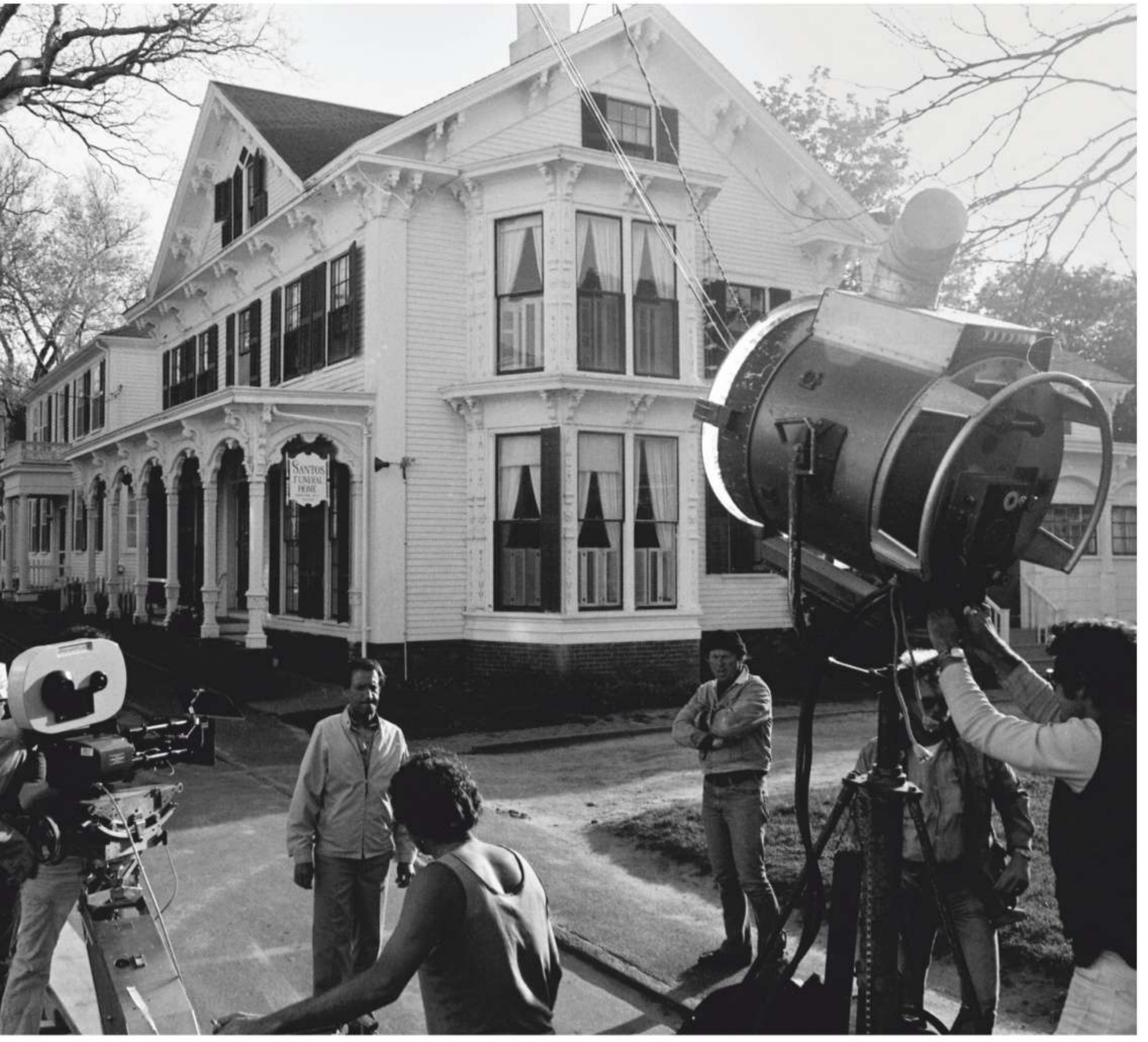
The next day, police discover Chrissie's partial remains along the shore; when the local medical examiner rules the cause of death a shark attack, police chief Martin Brody (Roy Scheider)—who has relocated from New York for some peace and quiet—decides to close the beaches. This incenses Mayor Larry Vaughn (Murray Hamilton) who fears the measure will destroy the town's economy. Abruptly, the coroner changes his conclusion, adopting the mayor's narrative that Chrissie was killed in a boating accident. Brody reluctantly accepts the ruling—until another fatal shark attack, this one involving a boy on a raft. Locals place a bounty on

the shark, which prompts an armada of fisherman to search for the killer fish. An eccentric, crusty professional shark hunter, Quint (Robert Shaw), offers his services for $10,000. Meanwhile, Matt Hooper (Richard Dreyfuss), a consulting oceanographer from the nearby Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute, examines Chrissie's remains, and confirms the worst—her gruesome death was caused by a shark—an unusually large one.

Amity breathes a sigh of relief when local fishermen catch a tiger shark, which is strung up in the middle of town, and Mayor Vaughn proclaims the beaches safe, against the advice of Hooper. Shortly thereafter, while probing the waters at night in Hooper's boat, the oceanographer and the police chief find a half-sunken vessel—the boat belongs to tough local fisherman Ben Gardner (Craig Kingsbury), part of the armada that took off to catch the killer. Hooper extracts from the hull what he recognizes as the embedded tooth of a great white shark—but he drops it after receiving the

SUSAN BACKLINIE PLAYED THE shark's first victim, Chrissie Watkins, in the chilling opening sequence that set the tone for the film (opposite top). Deputy Hendricks (Jeffrey Kramer, opposite, with hammer) shuts down an Amity beach. Roy Scheider and Jonathan Filley (as Chrissie's would-be love interest, Cassidy) film the scene in which Chrissie's remains are found (above).

THE MARTHA'S VINEYARD location provided a picturesque New England feel for the movie but also presented challenges for the crew, including irate locals and tourists who resented the disruptions created by filming, and sailors who frequently interfered with shooting on the ocean.



fright of his life: While Hooper probes a hole in the hull, out bobs Ben Gardner's disembodied head.

When Brody and Hooper report their findings to Vaughn, the mayor dismisses their theory that a huge great white shark caused the deaths and refuses to close the beaches—which are packed with tourists over Fourth of July weekend. The shark appears in a nearby estuary, kills a boater, and causes widespread panic. At that point, Brody convinces Vaughn to hire Quint.

And so, Brody and Hooper set out with the fisherman on Quint's boat, the Orca, *to hunt the shark. (In the book, Hooper has been having an affair with Brody's wife, and the police chief retaliates by attempting to strangle the scientist on deck.) While Brody mans the stern, laying down a line of chum, Quint and Hooper wait. Then, seemingly out of nowhere, the shark appears before Brody, who is mortified by the sight of the gargantuan predator. He backs up silently into Quint's cabin and then utters the most famous line of the film: "You're gonna need a bigger boat." Watching the shark swim by, Quint estimates that it's 25 feet long and three tons in weight. He harpoons the creature with a line attached to a flotation barrel, but the shark pulls the barrel underwater and disappears.*

That night, the men get drunk and Quint delivers a graphic monologue, revealing that he was one of only 316 crewmen (out of 1,195) who survived shark attacks and exposure after the sinking of the U.S.S. Indianapolis*; the ship was torpedoed by the Japanese after a secret mission to deliver the first atomic bomb to an American base on the Mariana Islands. The shark then returns, ramming the* Orca*'s hull and cutting out power. The*

men work all night to repair the engine. In the morning, Brody attempts to call the Coast Guard—but Quint, by now madly obsessed with killing the shark without anyone's help, smashes the radio. A lengthy chase ensues until Quint finally harpoons another barrel into the shark. The great white, however, drags the boat backward, swamping the deck and flooding the engine compartment.

With the Orca *slowly sinking, Hooper dons scuba gear and submerges in a shark-proof cage, planning to use a hypodermic spear to inject the great white with a lethal dose of strychnine. The shark attacks the cage, causing Hooper to drop the spear, which sinks to the bottom. The oceanographer manages to escape to the seabed—in the book he is killed in the cage—but the shark then attacks the boat directly, rising out of the water to swallow up Quint. Trapped as the* Orca *sinks, Brody jams a pressurized scuba tank into the shark's mouth, climbs the crow's nest, and shoots the tank with a rifle. The resulting explosion obliterates the shark, another key difference from Benchley's novel, where the beast's death is due to cumulative injuries, and not such a fiery Hollywood spectacle. Hooper surfaces, and he and Brody paddle back to Amity Island clinging to the remaining barrels.*

Steven Spielberg took the plunge into what early on promised to be troubled waters. Start with the title character. Naively, the producers assumed that *Jaws* could be made with a trained shark—after all weren't those creatures

SPIELBERG GETS UP CLOSE and personal with Scheider and Lorraine Gary, who played Ellen Brody. Gary, wife of Universal honcho Sid Sheinberg, reprised the role in *Jaws 2* and was the only original cast member to return for *Jaws: The Revenge* (a.k.a. Jaws 4).

just like any other malleable animal actors, finned or otherwise? Think of the adorably grinning dolphins in *Flipper* and *Day of the Dolphin*. But like Humphrey Bogart's Rick, who came to *Casablanca* "for the waters," they were "misinformed." As Carl Gottlieb wrote in *The Jaws Log*, "The upshot of it was that in all the world, for all the money and love that Hollywood can offer, there is no one so foolish as to claim to be able to train a shark. They're big, mean, primitive, simple fish; they don't live in captivity and they are singularly difficult to understand. So much for that aspect of casting."

The solution was to construct a mechanical "supershark" that would meld seamlessly with footage of actual great whites—taken in advance off the coast of Australia by Ron and Valerie Taylor, preeminent shark photographers who had worked on *Blue Water, White Death*, the documentary that had so influenced Peter Benchley. In the past, Hollywood ocean scenes

had been shot in huge studio tanks, supplemented by rear projection. But Spielberg, insisting on authenticity, would have none of it. "That meant that the usual movie magic couldn't be used—no long shots of a shark intercut with close-ups of faces reacting," Gottlieb recalled in his book. "No cutaways to miniatures, no models. The story and the movie required that you see a boat and men and a shark, all in the same shot, on the surface of an ocean with an open horizon."

That would eventually cause endless aggravation as production dragged on through the summer of 1974 on and around Massachusetts's Martha's Vineyard, when the waters swelled with sailboats. Spielberg would send out a crew member via motorboat to ask vacationers to clear the area. "Some people were nice about it," producer Richard Zanuck told Spielberg biographer Joseph McBride, "but other people . . . said, 'F--- you.'" Throughout, Spielberg remained unflappable. "Steven's idea was to have *nothing* on the horizon. He wanted to get this vulnerability of three men out there on their boat—and the shark," production designer Joe Alves told McBride. "The studio kept saying, 'Couldn't you shoot if there was just *one* boat?' But he was relentless about it." Perhaps, but years later Spielberg would marvel at his own twenty-something chutzpah. "I was naive about the ocean, basically," the director told Ain't It Cool News in 2011. "I was pretty naive about Mother Nature, and the hubris of a filmmaker who thinks he can conquer the elements was foolhardy, but I was too young to know I was being foolhardy when I demanded that we shoot the film in the Atlantic Ocean, and not in a North Hollywood tank."

The obsession with veracity caused problems even before production started on the Vineyard. In one of the movie's most terrifying scenes Matt Hooper, the visiting ichthyologist, gets attacked by the shark while trapped in an underwater cage. That presented a problem of scale—when the Taylors went to shoot actual great whites assaulting a cage, they couldn't find any sharks larger than about 10 to 15 feet long—roughly half the size of

CHIEF BRODY FRANTICALLY waves swimmers out of the water. The scene in which the boy on the raft is killed originally featured the shark lunging out of the water to devour him (below, left). The shot was considered too violent and was cut from the final film.

18+

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POLICE

the title character. The solution: Hire a diminutive stunt double for the as yet uncast Hooper. The gig went to Carl Rizzo, a rugged, 4-foot-11 former jockey who had doubled for Elizabeth Taylor in *National Velvet*—but, as it turned out, couldn't dive to save his life. "We liked his positive attitude. It was Carl's lack of experience that was a worry," Valerie Taylor wrote in her 2019 memoir, *An Adventurous Life*.

It did not go well. The crew lowered Rizzo into the water and, according to plan, he was rushed by a great white, lured in his direction by the bloody hindquarters of a dead horse. But then Rizzo lost his regulator, the device that controls the air flowing from his scuba tanks. Frightened and choking, the stuntman gestured wildly to be cranked up out of the water. Rizzo then made a few practice dives and became more comfortable with his scuba gear (including that regulator). They shot the sequence again, but just as Rizzo was about to enter the cage to be lowered underwater another hungry great white appeared, rammed the cage and knocked the ex-horseman back into the boat. Apparently Rizzo, who was badly shaken up, had had enough—and the scene was shot with the shark attacking an empty cage.

"THE FILM IS IN SOME WAYS A CRITIQUE OR EXAMINATION OF MASCULINITY."
—SPIELBERG BIOGRAPHER JOSEPH MCBRIDE

Filming in Massachusetts had actually begun in May without a hitch, a deceptively placid beginning for an epically storm-tossed production. Movies aren't shot in sequence, of course, though in this case, Spielberg got rolling with one of the early scenes: In a

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SCIENTIST MATT HOOPER (Richard Dreyfuss) arrives in Amity and is disturbed by what he sees when inspecting Chrissie Watkins's remains. "This is not a boat accident," he says. "There wasn't any propeller, there wasn't any coral reef, and it wasn't Jack the Ripper. It was a shark."

QUINT (ROBERT SHAW) MAKES his first appearance scraping his fingernails on a chalkboard at a town council meeting. He issues an ominous warning, "This shark? Swallow you whole," and he offers to catch and kill the shark for $10,000. "For that you get the head, the tail, the whole damn thing."

SPIELBERG AND DREYFUSS inspected the tiger shark caught by the townspeople. Opposite: While everyone else is celebrating, Hooper is skeptical that they've caught the fish behind the attacks.

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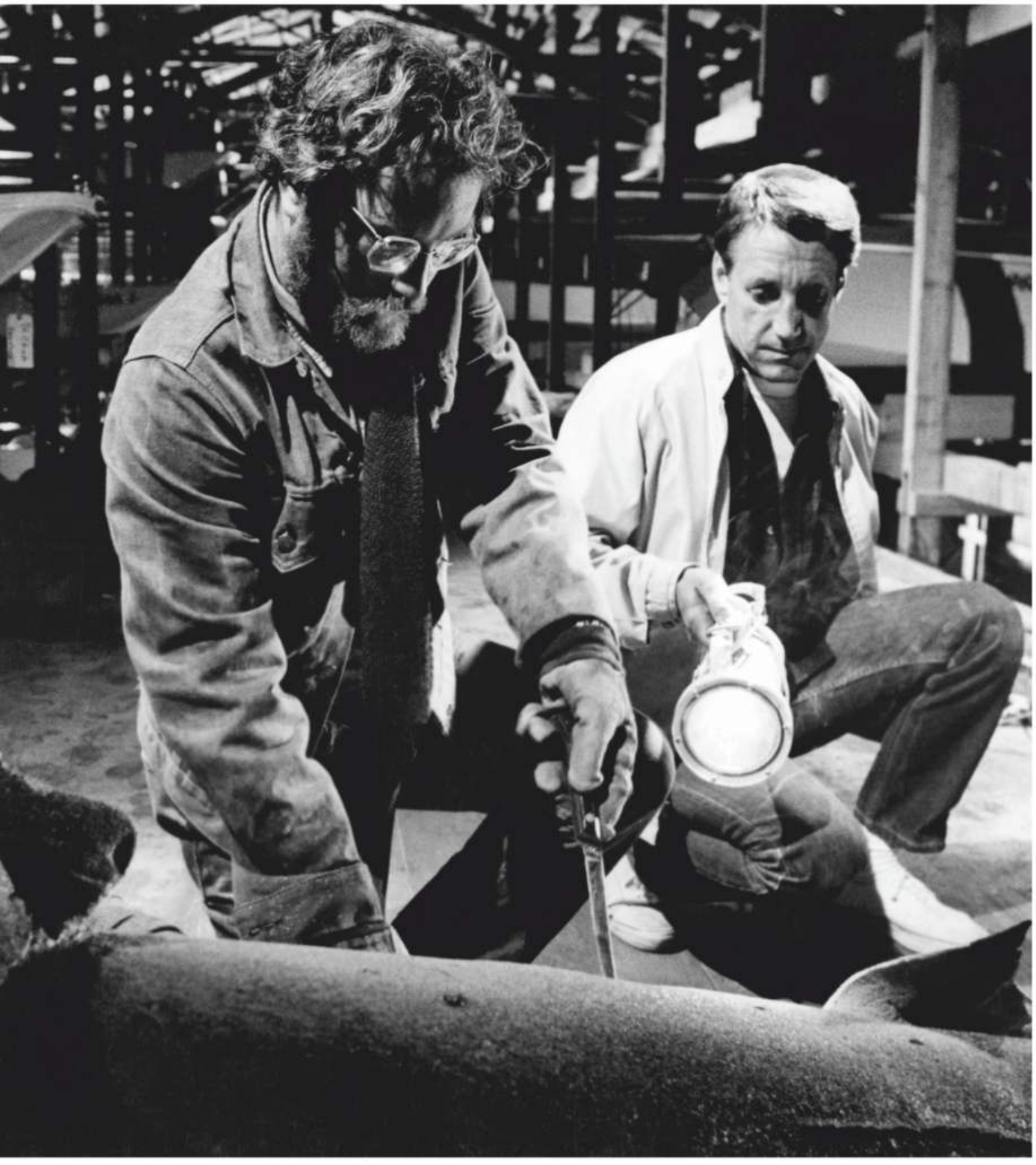
long tracking shot, Chief Brody questions the young college student (played by Vineyard local Jonathan Filley) who had partied with the missing Chrissie Watkins before she took her fatal swim; just then a deputy in the distance beckons them with a sharp whistle—the young woman's body had washed ashore—and the pair run up the beach to view the mutilated remains.

The constant, ongoing script changes, and Spielberg's unyielding perfectionism, frazzled the production department, which had its own challenges—such as local zoning laws. Alves created a meticulously detailed home for Quint that was to be built on a vacant lot in the quaint town of Menemsha. "Multileveled," Gottlieb wrote in *The Jaws Log*, "it reeked of blood and fish guts, was dressed with a marvelous collection of eccentric props and furniture, and was a perfect visualization of the complex character that [Robert Shaw] was playing." The structure had to be built to code—but there was a snag: Some of the pilings to support the shack had to be driven in past the waterline. That required a permit from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, which normally took at least six months—time the production obviously didn't have. "What if we put this thing up without a permit?" Alves asked a local official. The answer: Alves and Co. would be ordered to tear it down. But there was a loophole. It would take authorities six weeks to act on the violation, time enough to put up the shack, use it for filming and dismantle it. And so the shack went up.

"THE PRODUCTION REQUIREMENTS OF THE SHARK ACTION SEQUENCES IN *JAWS* HAD NEVER BEEN DONE BEFORE."
—CARL GOTTLIEB

But above all else, the most troublesome part of making *Jaws* was the shark—designed by veteran special effects director Bob Mattey, assembled at Rolly Harper's Motion



Picture & Equipment Rental in California, and trucked cross-country to Massachusetts. As Gottlieb notes, "the production requirements of the shark action sequences in *Jaws* had never been done before. Not in 75 years of moviemaking . . . just think of all the movies you've ever seen or heard about: giant gorillas climbing the Empire State Building, hordes of cavalry, heathen temples, parting the Red Sea, invaders from Mars destroying Los Angeles . . . But nobody had ever built a realistic photo double of a 25-foot great white shark that could swim, be photographed from all angles, and perform certain tricks like biting a man in two, attacking a boat, suffering strikes from harpoons and missiles."

The villain of the piece was actually played by a combination of real great white sharks (in long shots) and three intricately designed mechanical contraptions collectively named for Spielberg's attorney, Bruce Ramer—though as Gottlieb writes, crew members most often referred to it as "'that sonofabitchin' bastard rig,' or something equally direct." Spielberg and producers Richard Zanuck and David Brown insisted the shark remain a mystery, and any details about the creature were guarded almost as jealously as the Manhattan Project. The filmmakers were striving for authenticity and heart-pounding suspense—*Jaws* wasn't

HOOPER PERFORMS AN impromptu autopsy on the shark the locals caught and finds a Louisiana license plate in its stomach—but no human remains (opposite). Later, Hooper and Brody discover the boat of Ben Gardner, with nothing left but the severed head of the fisherman and a great white shark tooth "the size of a shot glass."

meant to be low-budget Saturday matinee fare in which it's comically obvious that the monster is a stuntman in a rubber suit. It would surely shatter the illusion to learn about the workings of what was supposed to be a horrifically fearsome predator. "Audiences being what they are," Gottlieb wrote, "we felt sure they'd be pointing to the screen, saying 'Look, you can see it's not real—there's the machinery, there's the operator, hiding inside.'"

The three full-scale models of the great white, each 25 feet in length and weighing about 2,000 pounds, were made of steel with flexible joints that allowed tail, fin, and torso movements to mimic their flesh-and-blood counterparts. Two of the models were open on one side and were attached to a steel platform, "riding the trolley along specially greased rails, simulating swimming action," Gottlieb explained. "They could dive, surface, look to camera, bite,

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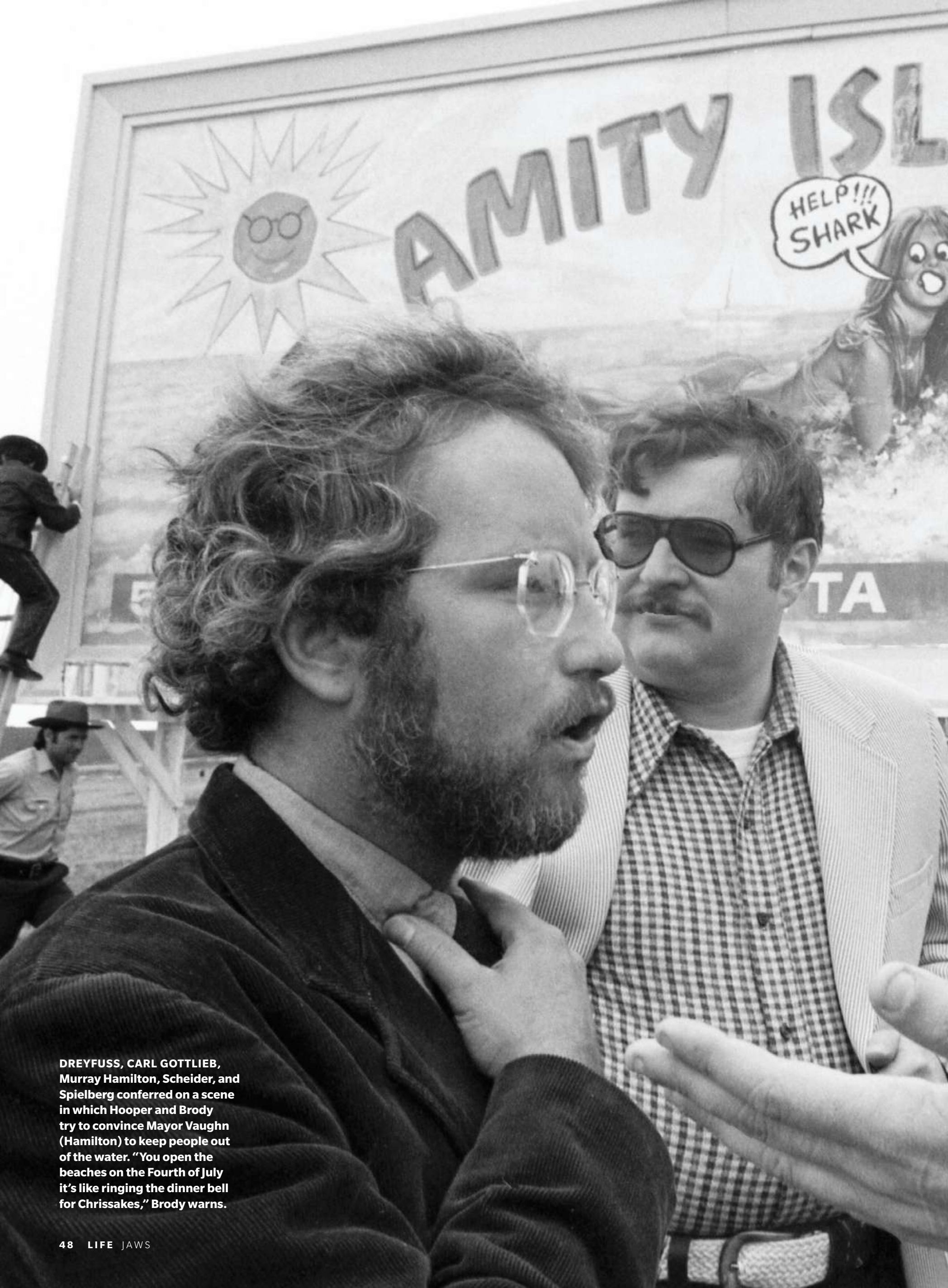

DREYFUSS, CARL GOTTLIEB, Murray Hamilton, Scheider, and Spielberg conferred on a scene in which Hooper and Brody try to convince Mayor Vaughn (Hamilton) to keep people out of the water. "You open the beaches on the Fourth of July it's like ringing the dinner bell for Chrissakes," Brody warns.


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WELCOMES YOU
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snarl, chew, flop their tails, and carry on most realistically for 60 or 70 feet of travel." The third shark, which was closed on all sides, was attached to a submerged device called a sea sled, made of rudder planes and bracing. It could allow Bruce to "swim" along the surface, guided by scuba divers manipulating the fins and planes.

Each version of Bruce had an internal welded steel skeleton covered by neoprene foam and topped by stretchy polyurethane "skin." "Inside, fastened to the skeletal armature, were 20 or 30 pneumatic rams and motors to drive the moving parts," Gottlieb wrote, "lashing the tail, opening and closing the mouth, rolling the eyes . . ." Every day of action, the sharks had to be dried out with oil-fired burners and blowers, washed, repainted, and tested. Essentially, it was a 24-hour operation.

The problem—a good one, as it turned out—was that for weeks after shooting started the "sonofabitchin'" contraptions didn't work. They hadn't been ocean tested in California, and as McBride writes, "no one had anticipated the corrosive effects of saltwater electrolysis on [the sharks'] complex substructure." When Spielberg's director friend Brian De Palma visited the set he found the atmosphere "like a wake," noting that "Bruce's eyes crossed, and his jaws wouldn't close right." Alves and his crew worked furiously to refine the mechanical creatures, which weren't anything

THE SHARK APPEARS IN AN estuary, killing a man and sending Brody's oldest son, Michael (played by Martha's Vineyard native Chris Rebello), into shock.

QUINT AGREES TO TAKE ON the job of killing the shark, and allows Brody and Hooper to join him. Shaw's daughter Deborah Kolar recalled a phone call with her father during production when he expressed skepticism about the project. "I think it's going to be really, really hokey and bad. The shark doesn't look real." But he was impressed with Spielberg. "He's a young guy, but he seems to know what he's doing."

close to functional until late summer. "We thought, Jesus Christ, we're making a picture called *Jaws*, and we don't have the f---ing shark," Zanuck would recall. "It was the goddamnedest thing to watch. The tail would be going right, but the head would be cockeyed. It was really painful. It took all of Steven's skill as a filmmaker to make it look like it worked." The only time it didn't really work, as it turned out, was the climactic shocker scene of the entire film, when the shark leaps out of the water onto the *Orca* and gobbles up Quint. The engine that was supposed to propel the shark didn't provide enough juice, apparently, and as production manager William Gilmore Jr. told McBride, "the shark sort of came up like a limp d---,

QUINT'S CLUTTERED HOME WAS A PERFECT VISUALIZATION OF THE COMPLEX CHARACTER THAT SHAW WAS PLAYING.

skidded along the water and fell onto the boat." It was later revealed that a year earlier Mattey had been penny-wise and pound-foolish. "It was supposed to be the money shot of the film and it didn't work because Mattey had skimped on the cost, to save $18,000, a relatively small amount," McBride says. "Steven went bananas—it was the only time during the making of the film that he really lost it. And it's the only part of the film that looks hokey. But at that point you've been with the film so long you kind of go with it."

Spielberg had less trouble (for the most part) with his human cast. "He's relaxed and open in the way he communicates what he wants, and he helps you to get there," Dreyfuss told McBride. "In his philosophy, the actors serve the story. But this doesn't eliminate

CONTINUED ON PAGE 58

ACTOR PROFILE

RICHARD DREYFUSS

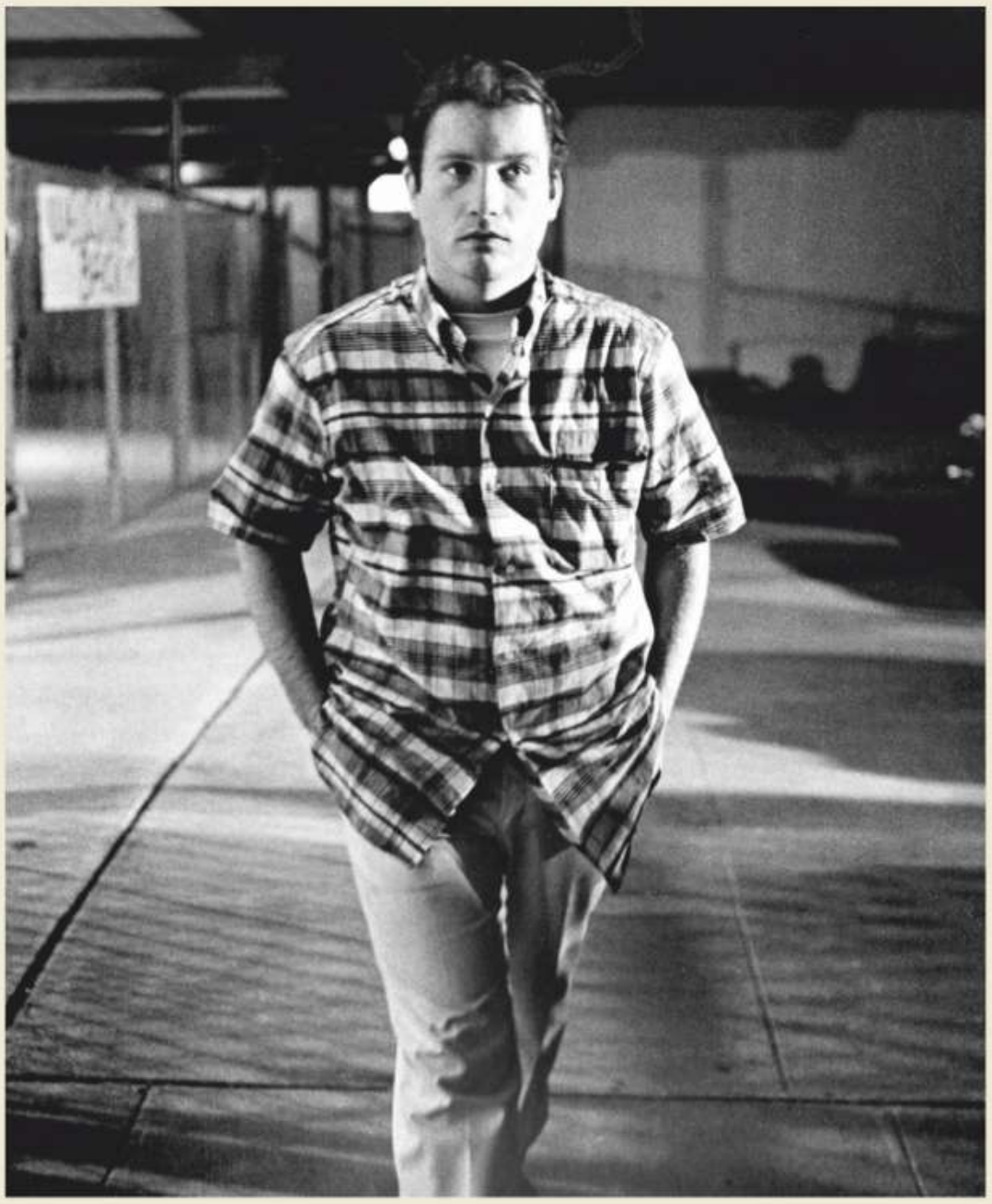
As brash as his *Jaws* alter ego, the outspoken Academy Award winner has led a colorful life on screen and off

"I think I have the finest body of work of any American actor," Richard Dreyfuss, now 72, told Britain's *Guardian* in 2016. "It truly reflects my principles." It's a typically brash, yet disarmingly frank, assessment by the fast-talking New York City native, whose career—and life—has followed a roller-coaster path over the past 50 years. Brooklyn born and raised in Queens until his family moved to Beverly Hills when he was nine, Dreyfuss got his start in small TV roles and spoke his first line of movie dialogue—"Shall I get the cops? I'll get the cops"—in an uncredited appearance in Mike Nichols's *The Graduate* in 1967.

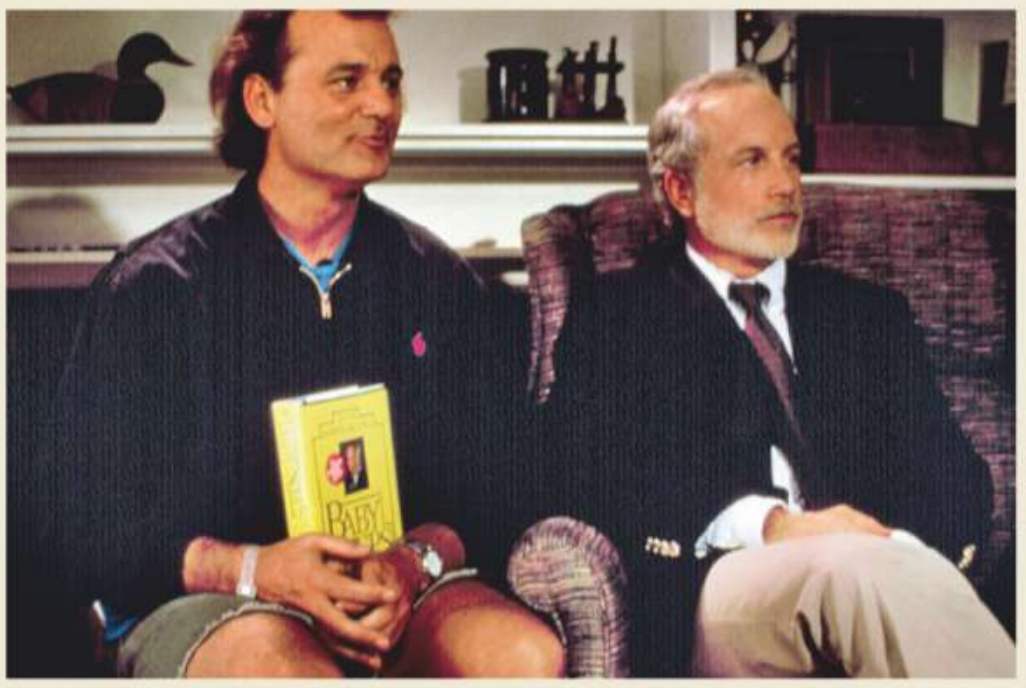
At five foot five, Dreyfuss made for unlikely movie star material by classic Hollywood standards, but fit right in with the off-beat, character-driven material of the late 1960s and '70s. He landed a breakthrough role in George Lucas's hugely successful teen hit *American Graffiti* (1973) and scored his first lead as a Canadian striver in *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* (1974), before *Jaws* made him a bankable star. "Steven [Spielberg] and I had one thing in common," Dreyfuss told *The Scotsman* in 2015. "I was the uncrowned prince of the actors; even when I was a teenager, they knew I was going to make it. And Steven was the uncrowned king of directors. And in that way, we related to one another." Some critics have called him Spielberg's stand-in, but Dreyfuss has waved that theory aside. "Steven is an enormous personality, but I'm not an alter ego. I'm me and Steven is Steven. He's made a couple of films where he needed me. But Steven's not a child and in many ways I am."

At 30, Dreyfuss became the youngest man at the time to win the Best Actor Academy Award, for his performance as a struggling actor in *The Goodbye Girl*

"I THINK THERE WERE TREES that we planted at the start of the shoot that were full grown by the time we left," Dreyfuss (here circa 1975) told *People* in 2000 of *Jaws'* protracted production.



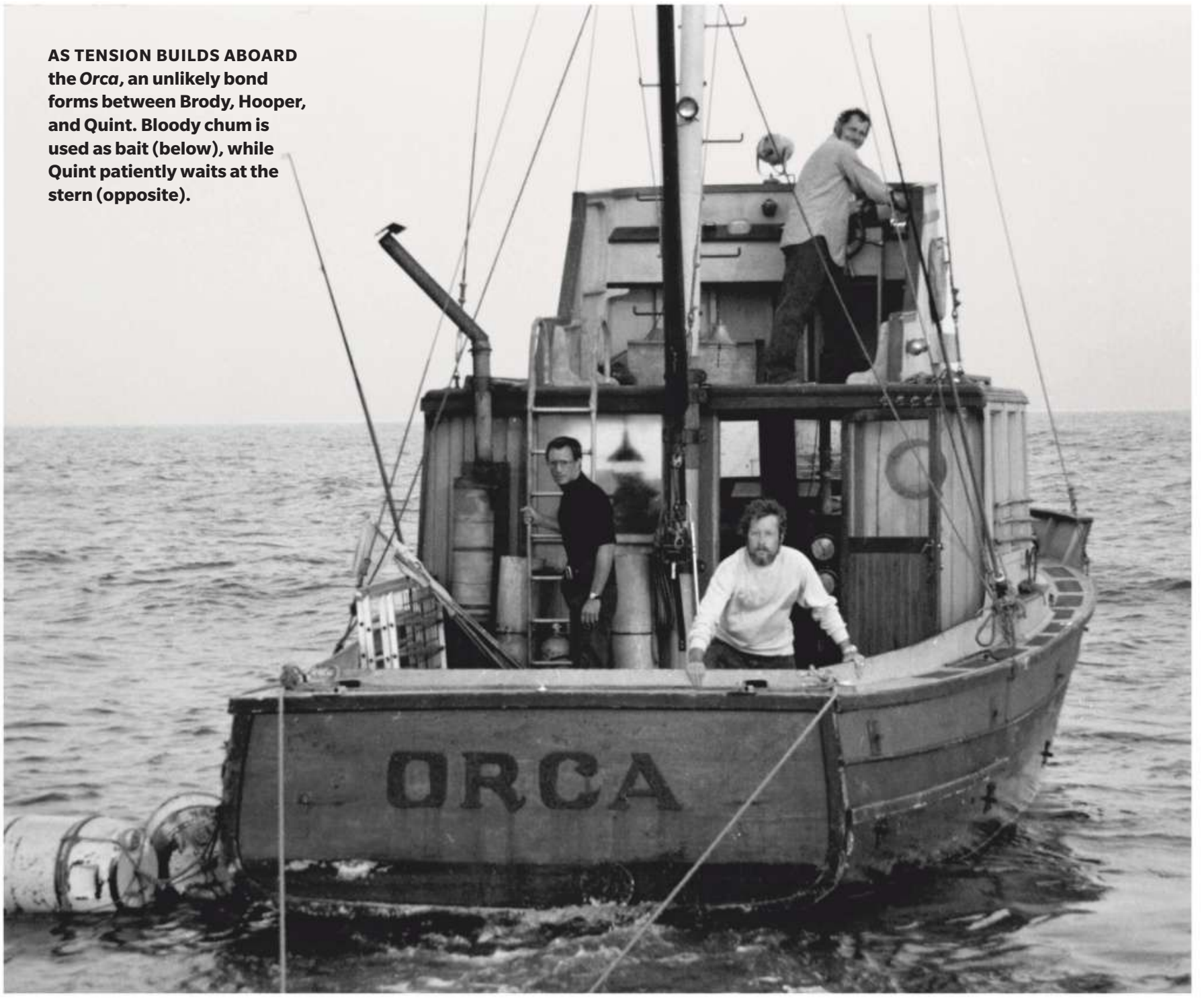
DREYFUSS CONTINUES TO WORK, BUILDING ON an impressive résumé that includes memorable roles in (clockwise from below) *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* (with Jack Warden), *American Graffiti*, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, *The Goodbye Girl*, *Mr. Holland's Opus*, and *What About Bob?* (with Bill Murray).



(1977). He simultaneously had a gripping turn as the everyman hero of Spielberg's *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977), and later appeared in such hits as *Down and Out in Beverly Hills* and *Stand By Me* (both 1986); *Stakeout* (1987); 1991's *What About Bob?* (as the harried shrink stalked by Bill Murray); and *Mr. Holland's Opus* in 1995, earning an Academy Award nomination for his moving portrayal of a passionate music teacher.

Dreyfuss has worked steadily on film, TV, and stage, but there were some significant detours along the way, in particular after his burst to fame, when the actor (who suffers from bipolar disorder) became mired in drug and alcohol abuse. He started using cocaine heavily in the '70s, sometimes participating in drug-fueled sex orgies; In 1982, Dreyfuss was arrested for possession of coke and Percodan after crashing his Mercedes into a palm tree (he came to consciousness while suspended upside down in the wreckage). The charges were dropped the following year after he participated in a drug education program. Rehab eventually sobered him up, and in the 2008 book *Moments of Clarity* by Christopher Kennedy Lawford, Dreyfuss looked back on himself in those days as "a board member and probably chairman of admissions for the A--holes Center" and admitted to *The Scotsman*, "I was a yeller and a screamer and a drug taker. And I was . . . having sex with people I shouldn't have been having sex with. It lasted about two or three years and then I stopped because it wasn't me."

Now happily married to third wife Svetlana Erokhin, the father of three and lifelong progressive balances his acting career with work on his Dreyfuss Civics Initiative, a nonprofit devoted to filling a woeful lack of civics education in schools and enhancing critical thinking about the way the U.S. government is supposed to work. "The thing that has always moved me is how much I loved acting as an urgent thing," Dreyfuss told *The Scotsman*. "I used to say there was a nuclear pellet in my chest and then, after 40 years, it turned into a friendship. It was not urgent anymore . . . I found that there was something else that was just as important, and however pompous this might sound, it was saving my country." ●



AS TENSION BUILDS ABOARD the *Orca*, an unlikely bond forms between Brody, Hooper, and Quint. Bloody chum is used as bait (below), while Quint patiently waits at the stern (opposite).

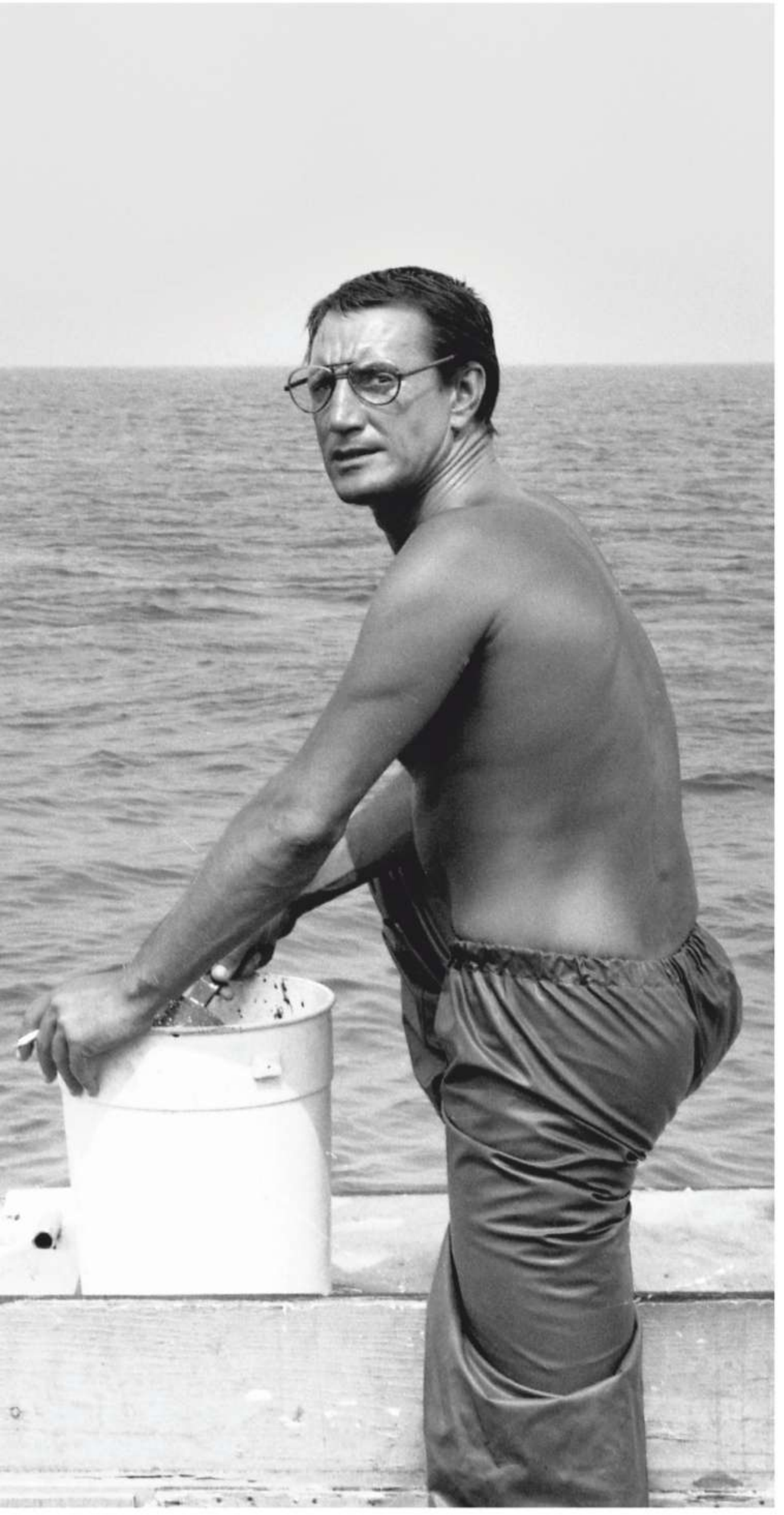
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 53

improvisation—not at all." Indeed, some of the film's best moments were improvised or ad-libbed, including Scheider's iconic "You're gonna need a bigger boat," and a hilarious bit of business between Shaw and Dreyfuss: In a display of dominance, Quint crushes a beer can; Hooper responds by crushing his Styrofoam cup. "[*New Yorker* critic] Pauline Kael called attention to that as a terrific spoof of macho behavior," McBride says. "The film is in some ways a critique or examination of masculinity."

Was the Quint-Hooper tension reality based? Legend has it that Shaw and Dreyfuss clashed during the shoot, though reports of a feud may be exaggerated. "If you got away from the set and away from the movie, everybody was pretty cordial," Gottlieb recalls. "But because the relationship between Hooper and Quint is adversarial, both actors took advantage of the fact that they could be adversarial off screen. The closer they got to the set, the more you could hear them snapping at each other. By the time we got to the set they were in full Quint versus Hooper mode. That tension showed up on camera—it wasn't put on. It was a real tension between actors that translated beautifully to the screen."

Mellower, perhaps, now that he's in his early seventies, Dreyfuss has denied any bad blood between him and his late costar. "I lost my sense of humor for one afternoon, that's not a feud," he told Scotland's *Daily Record* in 2019. "[Shaw] was walking down the gangplank holding a drink in his hand and said, 'Richard, help me out here.' I said, 'Do you really want my help?' He said he did, and I took his drink and I

THE SHARK FINALLY SURFACES, an hour and 21 minutes into the film, triggering Brody to utter the movie's signature phrase: "You're gonna need a bigger boat." Scheider (here rehearsing the scene) ad-libbed the line, which landed on the American Film Institute's 2005 list of the greatest movie quotes of all time.



threw it in the water. Every drinker on that crew went '*ooooh*' and then he got his revenge by taking the fire hose and pointing it at my face." In fact, Dreyfuss said, he and Shaw hit it off from the very start—after Dreyfuss complimented the Brit's performance in *Hamlet*. "I knocked on his door, he opened, and I said, 'Your Claudius was the greatest Claudius ever, it justified the entire play.' And he said, 'C'mon in here and have a drink.' We bonded like crazy."

Shaw was often lubricated with alcohol. One of those occasions occurred while filming the famous scene where Quint recalls his time on the *Indianapolis*—with the gripping monologue Shaw helped write. "We shot it twice," Spielberg told Ain't It Cool News. "The first time we attempted to shoot it Robert came over to me and said, 'You know, Steven, all three of these characters have been drinking and I think I could do a much better job in this speech if you let me actually have a few drinks before I do the speech.' And I unwisely gave him permission…I guess he had more than a few drinks because two crew members actually had to carry him onto the *Orca* and help him into his chair. I had two cameras on the scene and we never got through the scene, he was just too far gone. So, I wrapped…

JAWS WASN'T MEANT TO BE LOW-BUDGET SATURDAY MATINEE FARE IN WHICH IT'S COMICALLY OBVIOUS THAT THE MONSTER IS A STUNTMAN IN A RUBBER SUIT.

"At about two o'clock in the morning my phone rings and it's Robert," Spielberg continued. "He had a

complete blackout and had no memory of what had gone down that day. He said, 'Steven, tell me I didn't embarrass you.' He was very sweet, but he was panic-stricken. He said, 'Steven, please tell me I didn't embarrass you. What happened? Are you going to give me a chance to do it again?' I said, 'Yes, the second you're ready we'll do it again.' The next morning, he came to the set, he was ready at 7:30 and out of makeup and it was like watching [Laurence] Olivier on stage. We did it in probably four takes. I think we were all watching a great performance and the actors on camera were watching a great performance."

In the scene, following a gorgeous sunset and dinner, the trio bond over many drinks. While playfully comparing injuries and scars, Quint reveals that he had a tattoo with the words "U.S.S. *Indianapolis*" removed. Hooper and Brody are surprised to learn he was on that infamous World War II vessel. In a chilling three-and-a-half-minute monologue, Quint tells his compatriots that a Japanese submarine slammed two torpedoes into the side of the *Indianapolis* after they delivered the bomb that would eventually be detonated on Hiroshima. It took just 12 minutes for the boat to sink, and its crew of 1,100 jumped into the ocean.

"Didn't see the first shark for about a half an hour," he tells them calmly, with a faint grin on his face. "What we didn't know was our bomb mission had been

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AS THE PURSUIT INTENSIFIES, Quint and Hooper race to harpoon the shark with a tracking buoy. Despite the aggravation caused by malfunctioning mechanical sharks and the unpredictability of filming on open water (opposite), the end result was incredibly realistic.

IT TOOK A VIRTUAL ARMADA to film *Jaws*, with a crew of about 150, many navigating unfamiliar territory in the water. "The ocean was a real pain in the ass," Spielberg told *Time*. "With all the planning we did, nobody thought much about the currents or anything at all about the waves."

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 62

so secret, no distress signal had been sent. They didn't even list us overdue for a week."

At first light the next morning, "sharks come cruisin', so we formed ourselves into tight groups," Quint continues. "The shark comes to the nearest man, and that man he start poundin' and hollerin' and screamin', sometimes the shark go away . . . sometimes he wouldn't go away. Sometimes that shark, he looks right into ya. Right into your eyes. You know, the thing about a shark, he's got lifeless eyes. Black eyes. Like a doll's eyes . . . When he comes at ya, he doesn't seem to be livin' . . . until he bites ya . . . ah then you hear that terrible high-pitched screamin'. The ocean turns red, and despite all the poundin' and the hollerin' they all come in and they . . . rip you to pieces." By the end of first dawn, a hundred men had been killed, and the carnage only intensified from there. It wasn't until the fifth day that they were spotted by a pilot. It would be three hours more before they were finally rescued.

"You know, that was the time I was most frightened," Quint says. "Waitin' for my turn. I'll never put on a life jacket again.

"So, eleven hundred men went into the water, 316 men come out, the sharks took the rest, June the 29th, 1945. Anyway, we delivered the bomb."

As the summer of '74 dragged on, *Jaws* was never in danger of being pulled, per se. But the studio suits did become impatient, and for a time

SPIELBERG FORMED A CLOSE bond with his cast, collaborating with them on the script as revisions were made during the summer. In fact, Shaw, a playwright, rewrote Quint's horrifying account of the *Indianapolis* tragedy that the character recounts in the film.

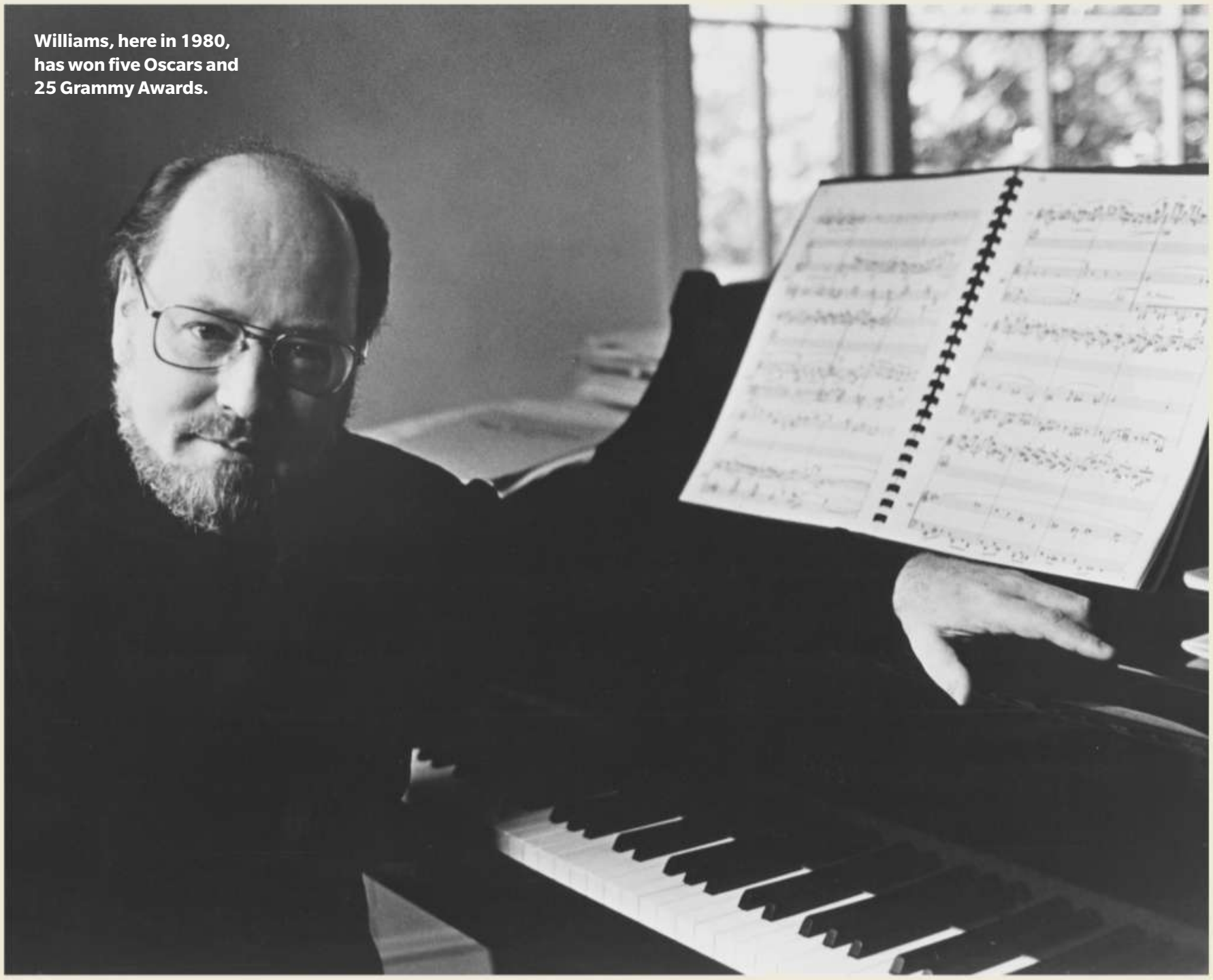
MUSIC MAN

DUN-DUN...DUN-DUN: SCORING THE SHARK

Just two notes. That's all it was—an E and F bass line, repeated over and over—that turned into one of the most memorable film themes in cinema history, the signature of John Williams's Academy Award–winning original score for *Jaws.* It remains a supreme musical expression of white-knuckle suspense, one Spielberg likened to Bernard Herrmann's iconic music for Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho.* Added Roy Scheider, "That score has become as popular as the national anthem."

As Williams told music journalist Jon Burlingame, he saw the theme as an embodiment of the shark itself, sounds from the depths of the musical scale, just as the shark lurked deep in the ocean. The E-F-E-F line could be manipulated, softened, and slowed down when the great white bided its time, amped up when "Bruce" moved in for the kill—"so simple, insistent, and driving that it seems unstoppable, like the attack of the shark," Williams said. "I just began playing around with simple motifs that could be distributed in the orchestra and settled on what I thought was the most powerful thing."

When he signed on for *Jaws,* Williams had two decades of work in Hollywood under his belt. He'd written music for various TV shows, including *Gilligan's Island* and *Lost in Space,* and he won the Academy Award for scoring the 1971 film adaptation of *Fiddler on the Roof.* Williams first worked for Spielberg on the director's debut effort, 1974's *The Sugarland Express.* Later, they would collaborate on *Close Encounters of the Third Kind,* the Indiana Jones films, *E.T.,* and *Schindler's List,* among others; and of course, Williams earned wide acclaim for his *Star Wars* and *Harry Potter* scores, and as conductor of the Boston Pops orchestra. His music for *Jaws* included other themes throughout the film, but that E and F may be the most indelible notes Williams, now 88 and a 52-time Oscar nominee, ever put to paper. "The score," Spielberg said, "was clearly responsible for half the success of the movie." ●



Williams, here in 1980, has won five Oscars and 25 Grammy Awards.

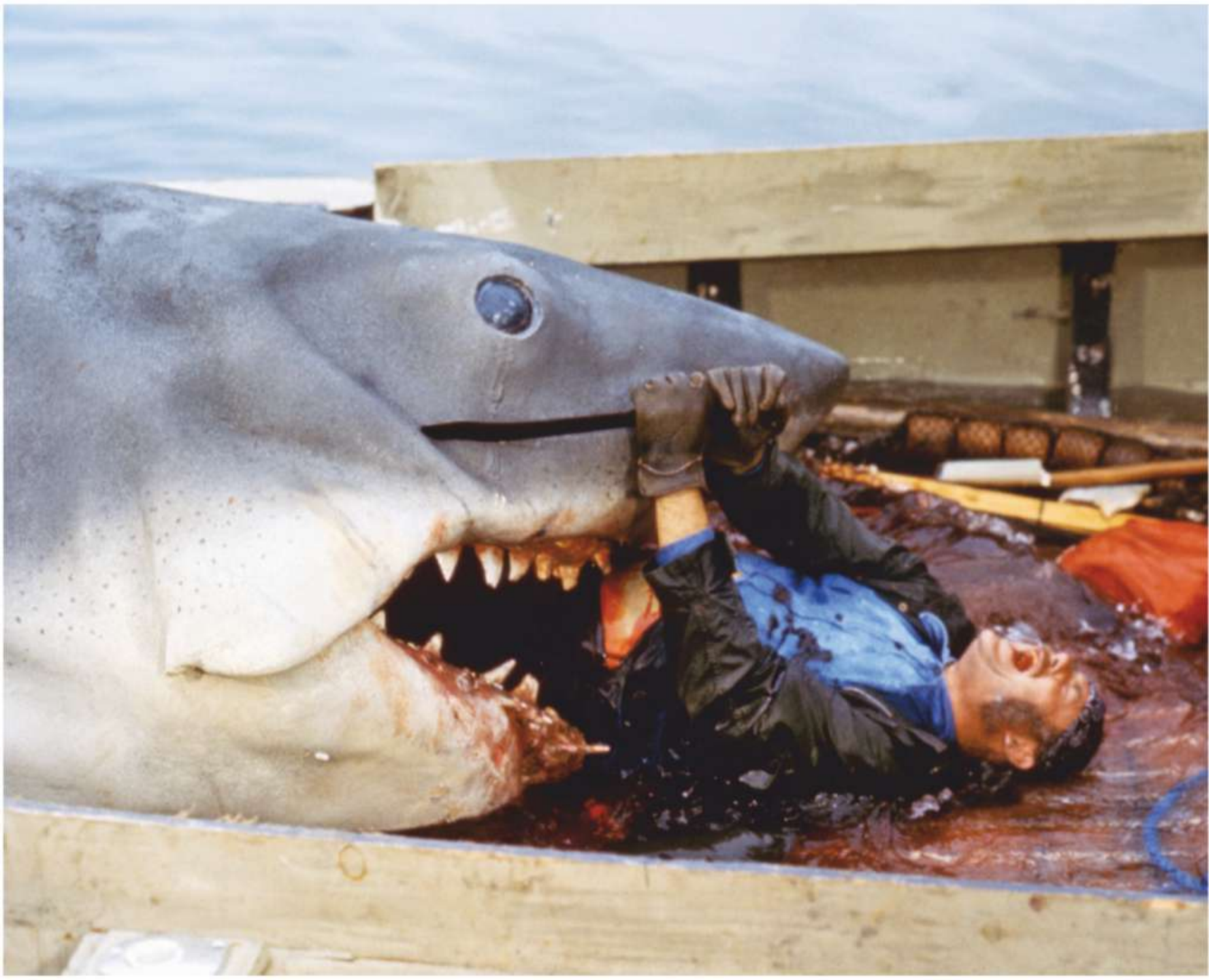
the project was "in intensive care," as Zanuck put it. It didn't hurt that Lorraine Gary, wife of studio VP Sid Sheinberg, had been cast as Ellen Brody, the chief's wife—and that she was a Spielberg fan who often told her husband how brilliant her young director was. Sheinberg, for his part, backed him up. Meanwhile the endless delays wore cast members to a frazzle. "The entire company had developed a foxhole mentality," Gottlieb recalled, "experiencing battle fatigue, nervous exhaustion, and incipient alcoholism."

Dreyfuss worked off his excess energy cruising Martha's Vineyard's bars for female companionship. Scheider, who spent much of his down time reading voraciously and sunning

AS THE SUMMER DRAGGED ON, *JAWS* WAS NEVER IN DANGER OF BEING PULLED, BUT THE STUDIO SUITS DID BECOME IMPATIENT.

an impressive physique, finally cracked one day, tossing a tray of food and throwing a screaming fit. "The next day, Roy was fine," Gottlieb remembered. Shaw had some rough going from the very start: He and his actress wife, Mary Ure (who would die less than a year later at 42 of an accidental alcohol-barbiturate overdose), rented a house and one night early in the shoot received a "taste of New England hospitality," Gottlieb wrote. "A local eccentric fired a few rifle bullets through their front door, penetrating the walls and chipping tile as they ricocheted around the downstairs bath." (The incident was kept quiet and the gunman, who gave no reason for his outburst, got off with a fine.) Eventually the production went so far over schedule that Shaw's work visa was close to

DREYFUSS WAS SUBMERGED IN the cage for the confrontation with the monster. Footage of a real shark attacking an empty cage was edited in to create the intense underwater sequence.



expiring, which meant that the Irish resident would owe the IRS taxes on the money he'd made on *The Sting* and *The Taking of Pelham One Two Three*. "Shaw was beside himself," Gottlieb recalled. "Every day that he wasn't required on the island, Robert would fly to Bermuda or Montreal, just to get out of the country for a few days and keep his worktime days in the U.S. down within the required limit." (In fact, Shaw did wind up owing a bundle, but he made up for it somewhat with *Jaws* overtime pay because the production had gone so far beyond schedule.)

For Murray Hamilton (Mayor Vaughn), the film's long slog meant professional frustration—while trapped on the island, he was missing out on some juicy stage roles. At times, like other cast and crew members, Hamilton sought liquid relief. One night en route back from a watering hole, he stooped down to pet a little black dog, thinking nothing of the telltale white stripe running down its back—even after absorbing a full blast of skunk spritz. Only back in his hotel room did Hamilton notice the stench—and only after burning his suit and taking numerous showers did he rid himself of the overpowering odor. "For a gentle and talented actor like himself to be a stinker, even for a few hours, must have been a humiliation," Gottlieb wrote. No one was more restless than the production crew. "I was really afraid of half the guys," Spielberg told McBride. "They regarded me as a nice kind of Captain Bligh. They didn't have scurvy or anything, but I wouldn't

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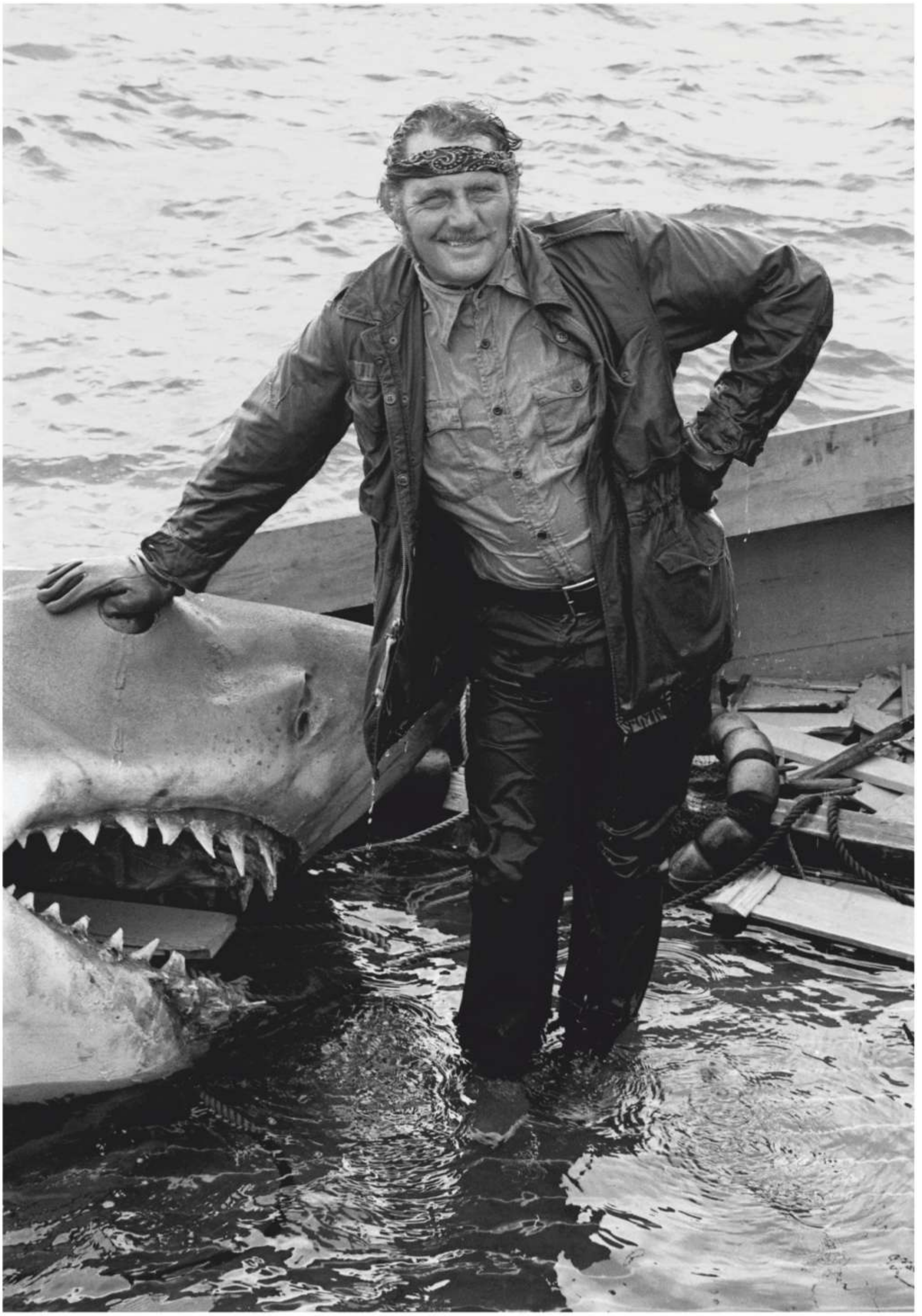
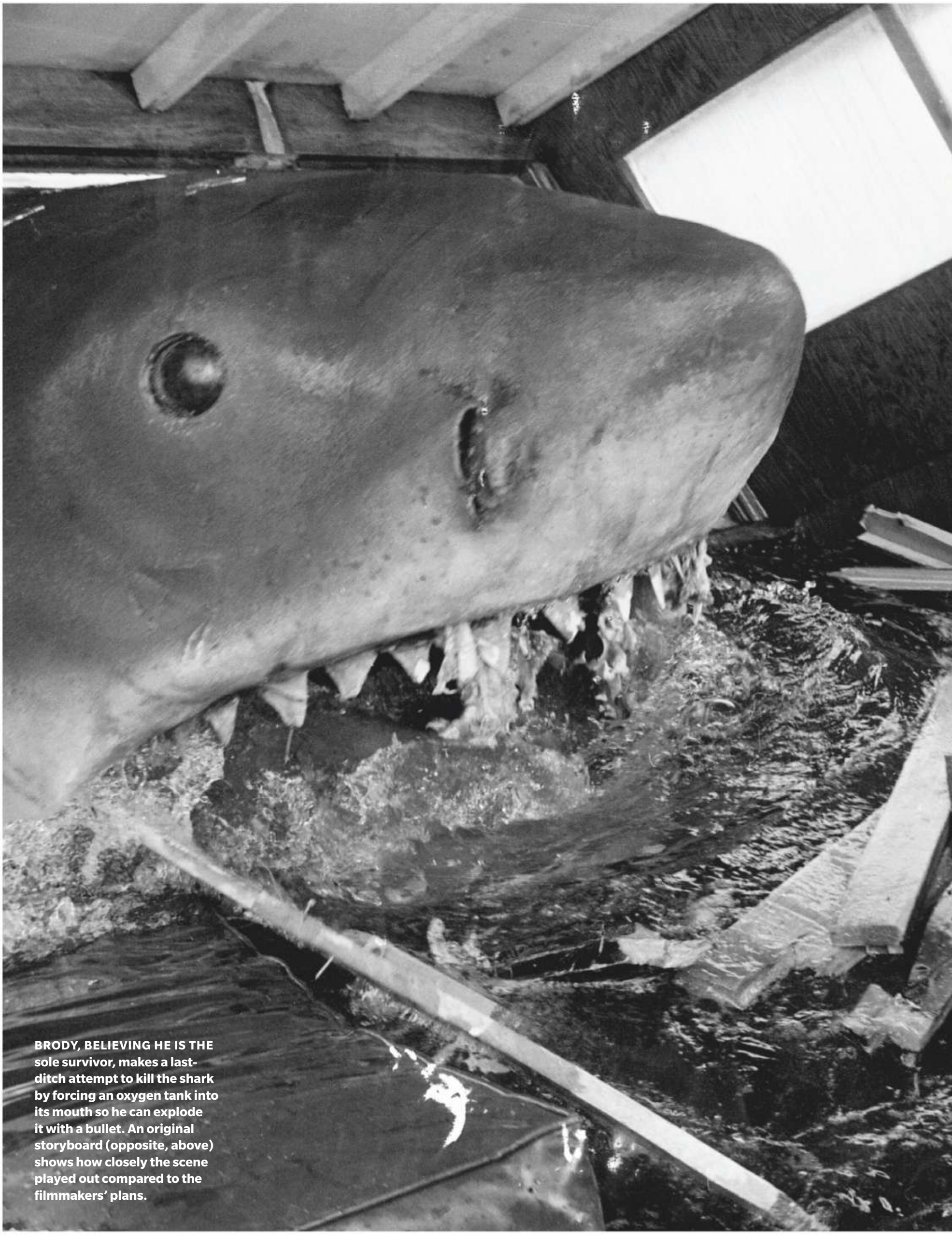
***JAWS* PUSHED THE LIMITS OF its PG rating with Quint's violent, bloody death scene. In the book, the character meets his demise by drowning after the shark pulls him underwater while tethered to a harpoon.**





BRODY, BELIEVING HE IS THE sole survivor, makes a last-ditch attempt to kill the shark by forcing an oxygen tank into its mouth so he can explode it with a bullet. An original storyboard (opposite, above) shows how closely the scene played out compared to the filmmakers' plans.


46A
i
SHARK IN CABIN- BRODY
SHOVES AIR TANK IN SHARKS
MOUTH

SCHEIDER PREPS FOR HIS FINAL showdown with "Bruce" as the *Orca* sinks. Verna Fields (opposite, top, with Dreyfuss after winning the American Cinema Editors' award for *Jaws* in 1976) earned an Oscar for skillfully knitting together the film's hard-won footage. Producers Richard Zanuck and David Brown flank Scheider after winning the People's Choice Award for favorite movie (opposite, bottom).

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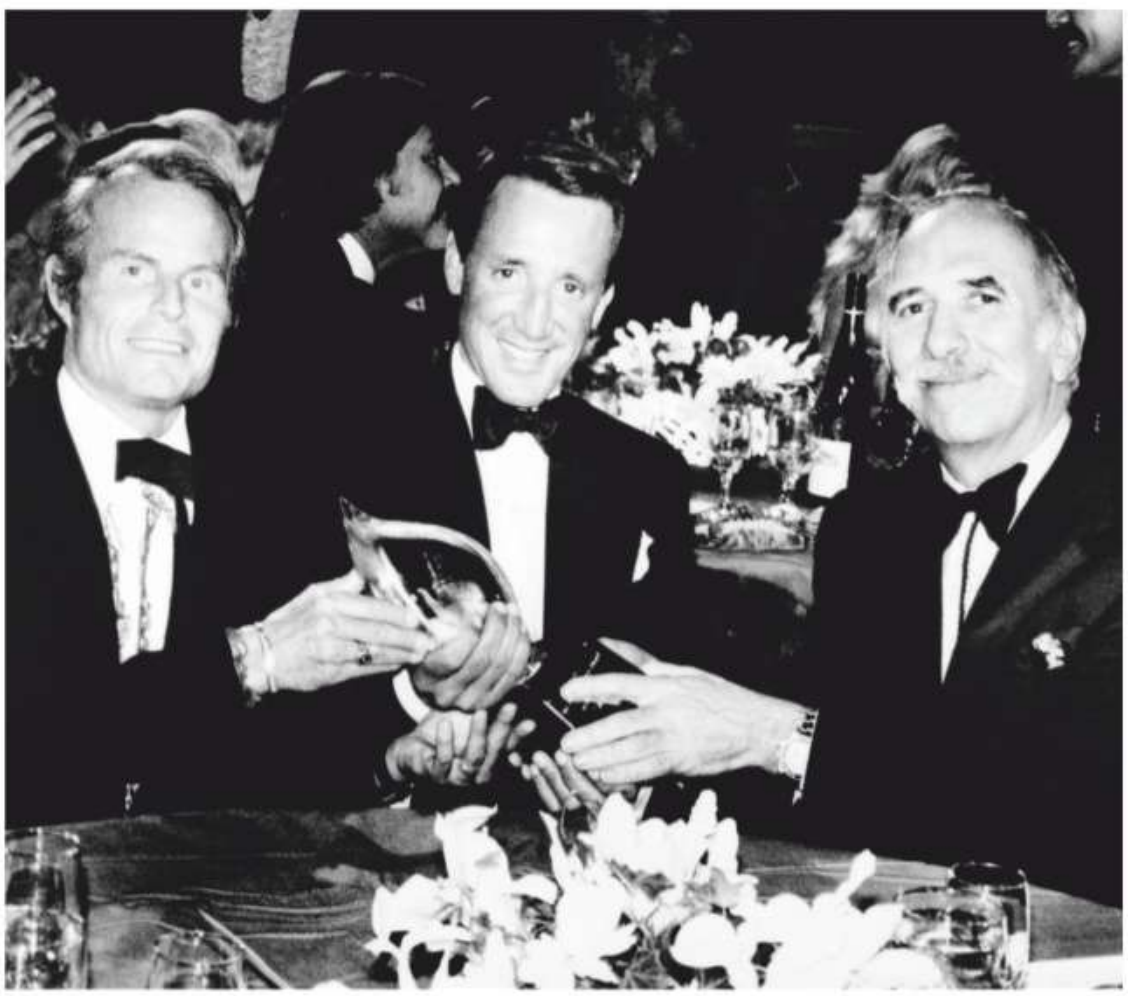
let them go home."

Finally, *Jaws* wrapped in September 1974, scarcely a month after President Gerald Ford declared another long nightmarish ordeal—Watergate—over. Spielberg heard the crew was planning to dunk him into the drink after the final take. He got wind of the plot and outsmarted them, quickly hopping a ferry to the mainland, where he caught a car to Boston. There, in the hotel bar, "he and a hyperkinetic Rick Dreyfuss made a spectacle of themselves, mostly by screaming "'Motherf---er, it's over! It's over!'" Gottlieb wrote. That night, Spielberg "couldn't sleep, jolting upright in bed, with a sensation of being shocked with electricity. A full anxiety attack overwhelmed him, complete with sweaty palms, tachycardia, difficulty breathing, and vomiting . . . dreams of Martha's Vineyard kept assaulting his unconscious, and it persisted for three months after he left the island."

After three weeks of reshoots in California, additional dialogue by Gottlieb, and editing by Verna Fields, *Jaws* was ready for the public. "They finally took it out to be tested in front of an audience, first down in Dallas—and the reaction was shockingly good," Gottlieb recalls. "The next night was in Lakewood, California, down in Orange County. Steven and I shared a limo down to the multiplex and saw it play there with astonishing results. It was obvious that this was more than a movie. Sid Sheinberg said, 'We're gonna go wide with this—we're gonna open on 400 screens.' In those days, movies rolled out, they played in big cities then went to second-run theaters, and then if you lived in Butte, Montana, you didn't see a movie until a year after it opened in Dallas or Denver or San Francisco. So, the picture opened wide and it just kept grossing. It caught the public imagination. Everything worked optimally, including that ineffable unpredictable audience reaction. You can't manufacture that, there's no way to plan for that. Now we were all along for the ride." ●



ACTOR PROFILE

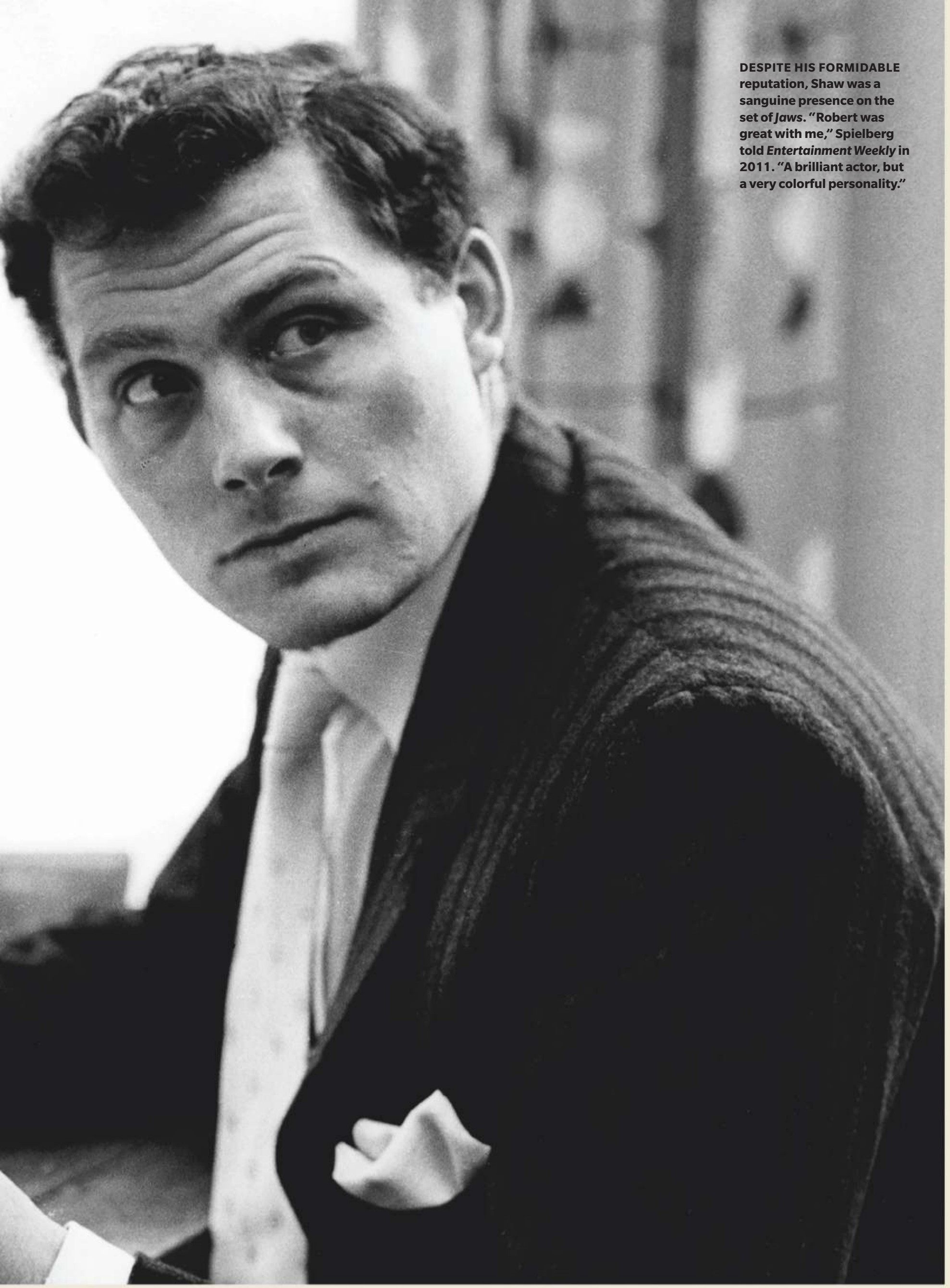
ROBERT SHAW

The bold Brit faced off against James Bond, con artists, and one extremely formidable great white shark

Robert Shaw stood about 5 foot 10, but he was larger than life, part of that gloriously flawed line of hard-drinking, hell-raising, and sublimely gifted British actors trained for the classical stage before they graced Hollywood screens. Though he portrayed a range of characters, Shaw's rough voice and penetrating gaze made him a natural for hard, often villainous roles. He was something of a renaissance man, finding success as a writer—notably with his 1967 novel, *The Man in the Glass Booth,* inspired by the trial of Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann, which Shaw later adapted into a play.

Shaw grew up in Cornwall, England, and Scotland's Orkney Islands and was quite the athlete as a schoolboy, starring in rugby, squash, and the 400-meter dash. Tragedy shadowed his youth, however: When Robert was 12, his physician father, Thomas, an alcoholic who suffered from depression, died by suicide by taking a fatal overdose of opium. Shaw blew off a medical scholarship to Cambridge and pursued an acting career, enrolling in the ferociously competitive Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London, which he recalled as "closer to a concentration camp than a school." After graduating from RADA, Shaw acted in a mix of Shakespearean and contemporary stage roles in Stratford-upon-Avon and London's West End. Notable early stage successes were starring in *The Long and the Short and the Tall* with Peter O'Toole and in Harold Pinter's *The Caretaker,* his Broadway debut. (The former ran in 1959, the year Shaw's first novel, *The Hiding Place,* saw print.)

Shaw made his first motion picture appearance in *The Dam Busters,* a 1955 British war film, and gained TV popularity in England as a pirate-turned-privateer in *The Buccaneers,* which ran from 1956 to '57. He made his big-screen splash in 1963 as a platinum-haired assassin stalking Sean



DESPITE HIS FORMIDABLE reputation, Shaw was a sanguine presence on the set of *Jaws*. "Robert was great with me," Spielberg told *Entertainment Weekly* in 2011. "A brilliant actor, but a very colorful personality."

A YEAR BEFORE HIS DEATH IN 1978, SHAW STARRED IN ANOTHER ADAPTATION of a Peter Benchley book, *The Deep*. High points from his body of work on film include (clockwise from opposite top): *From Russia with Love*, *The Sting*, *The Taking of Pelham One Two Three*, *Battle of the Bulge*, and *A Man for All Seasons*.

Connery's James Bond in *From Russia with Love*. Shaw earned an Academy Award nomination for his charismatic Henry VIII in 1966's *A Man for All Seasons*, and gave one of his standout bad-guy turns as Irish mobster Doyle Lonnegan in megahit *The Sting* (1973).

Then came *Jaws* and Quint, a role originally intended for Lee Marvin.

Along the way, Shaw gained a reputation for arrogance ("Most of the time, in movies, I'm about 50 times larger than the part," he once said) and heavy drinking. "Can you imagine being a movie star and having to take it seriously without a drink?" he asked in a 1977 interview with Robin Leach for *People*, adding, "I agree with Richard Burton that drink gives poetry to life. Drink for actors is an occupational hazard born largely out of fear." Still, he conceded, "I don't know how much I drank, but it was too much."

He hit the bottle hard after the 1975 death of his second wife, Mary Ure—mother of four of Shaw's 10 children—from an accidental overdose of alcohol and barbiturates. Hours earlier, Ure, who had struggled with depression and drinking, had opened in a new play, after which she attended a party. "I didn't go partying with her because I had to get up early the next morning for a film," Shaw told *People*. "She came home, took two pills and slept on the sofa so as not to disturb me. She never woke up."

After *Jaws*, Shaw appeared in a flurry of films, including *Robin and Marian* (1976), menacing Connery again as the Sheriff of Nottingham, and in a rare good-guy role as an Israeli Mossad agent in 1977's *Black Sunday*. By then he had remarried (to his longtime secretary) and settled on a 75-acre farm in the Irish village of Tourmakeady, County Mayo, where he renovated a 19th-century stone mansion. Shaw told friends his spread was "the nearest point on earth to heaven," adding, "when I go, I hope it will be from here."

He wasn't far off. While driving near home with his wife, Virginia, and their 20-month-old son, Thomas, Shaw felt ill, stopped the car, stepped out, and died on the roadside from a heart attack. He was just 51. Thirty years later, the village unveiled a stone memorial in Shaw's honor. "He was a wonderful person," Virginia said at the ceremony. "He was fun, generous, naughty, drank too much, and loved his children." ●

BIGGEST AND BADDEST

Great white sharks are the world's largest predatory fish—they can measure more than 20 feet in length and weigh as much as 5,000 pounds. "There's nothing in the sea this fish would fear," Peter Benchley wrote in *Jaws*. "Other fish run from bigger things. That's their instinct. But this fish doesn't run from anything. He doesn't fear."

CHAPTER THREE

A LEGACY OF FEAR

Thanks to *Jaws*, sharks earned a reputation as calculated killers—leading to their demonization and brutal mass slaughter

CRUISING
Named for the color of its underbelly, the great white roams coastal waters where temperatures range between roughly 55 degrees and 75 degrees Fahrenheit. The sharks' powerful tails generally help propel them about 15 mph, though they can hit 25 mph or faster in small bursts.

The impact of *Jaws* reverberated far beyond Hollywood and multiplex box offices—for good and ill. More than a groundbreaking and immensely successful motion picture, Steven Spielberg's masterwork was a cultural phenomenon—one that turned out to have vast and dire psychological and ecological consequences. The celluloid shark was a dead-eyed avatar of pure amoral menace that gave nightmares to millions of moviegoers. To be sure, the roster of movie monsters is a lengthy one, ranging from the cheesy to the sublime. Many—Godzilla, for instance, or the creatures of Spielberg's later franchise, *Jurassic Park*—played on the primal human fear of being eaten alive or crushed to death. But for the most part these were fantastical beasts, prehistoric throwbacks the size of skyscrapers and grotesque mutations (often caused by nuclear testing or some other man-made abomination), and they required a certain suspension of disbelief.

"*Jaws* was sort of a breakthrough moment in cinematography. It did such a marvelous job—and it seemed so real that people believed it," says George Burgess, emeritus director of the Florida Program for Shark Research at the Florida Museum of Natural History in Gainesville. "A wide spectrum of international society saw that film and came away with the idea that sharks are man-eaters." With their cavernous mouths and multilayered rows of razor-sharp teeth, sharks are real indeed, lurking in the deep and occasionally swimming near shore to nosh on our limbs or torsos. After *Jaws*, few could think of these sea creatures without hearing John Williams's throbbing score, seeing Chrissie Watkins's mutilated remains, or Ben Gardner's disembodied head. It was all so devilishly effective—and patently unfair.

"Sharks do bite humans, they do so fairly frequently, about 85 times a year worldwide," Burgess says. "That said, divide that number by hundreds of millions of people in the water, your

chances of being bitten are infinitesimal and the chance of death even lower because you have five or six [shark-related] deaths a year. It's a real problem, but not worthy of the hype it's often given." *Jaws* is fiction, of course, and as such it takes liberties—even more so in the sequels, when the shark is seen as increasingly vengeful, targeting specific victims. "Nothing could be farther from the truth," Burgess explains. "Sharks have tiny little brains. Almost all their brain mass is dedicated to their sense of smell, sight, hearing, determining vibrations. They're swimming sensory machines, with not a lot of brain for intuition and revenge and things like that. Sharks basically go through life eating, eating, eating, screwing, and

"A WIDE SPECTRUM OF INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY SAW [*JAWS*] AND CAME AWAY WITH THE IDEA THAT SHARKS ARE MAN-EATERS."

—GEORGE BURGESS

eating and eating some more."

In truth, sharks—even great whites—had a fairly benign reputation until the past 100 years or so. And they were considered pests for feeding off the bait or catches of commercial fishermen. At the turn of the 20th century, there was a consensus among scientists that sharks had never attacked humans. In 1891, Hermann Oelrichs, a multimillionaire American shipping magnate, offered a $500 reward for anyone who could provide definitive evidence that a shark had bitten a person. (The prize, worth more than $14,000 today, went unclaimed.)

But during the first two weeks of July 1916 a great white shark apparently went rogue, killing four swimmers and wounding another along the New Jersey shore. Known as the Twelve

PROGRAMMED TO HUNT

Sharks detect prey with an exceptional sense of smell, and also have specialized electroreceptors called the ampullae of Lorenzini, connected to the seawater by pores on their snouts and other zones of the head, which can pick up the tiny electromagnetic fields generated by animals.

Days of Terror, the incident reportedly served as one of Peter Benchley's inspirations for *Jaws.* The book and movie fueled a surge of shark fishing tournaments on both coasts, "a collective testosterone rush among fishermen who felt obliged to catch a shark and have their picture taken with their foot on the head and the jaws hung in their house," says Burgess. "Commercial fishermen got involved and a market opened for shark fins. A motivating factor was that the fins themselves were sold to the Southeast Asian market, where shark fin soup was like a caviar, a high-priced braggin' food and a staple in major events such as weddings, where serving shark fin soup instead of

JAWS LED TO "A COLLECTIVE TESTOSTERONE RUSH AMONG FISHERMEN TO CATCH A SHARK AND HAVE THEIR PICTURE TAKEN WITH IT."

—GEORGE BURGESS

a wedding cake was a sign the parents were going all out. Or when people were trying to impress a client, it would go for $150 a bowl in restaurants—or more."

Some fishermen engaged in the downright sadistic practice of shark finning: catching sharks, slicing off their fins for sale, and dumping the fish back into the ocean, still alive, but not for long. Without their fins, sharks cannot swim, of course, and so they sink to the bottom and die. It was this practice that converted Peter Benchley into a pro-shark activist. The author was diving in a marine sanctuary off Costa Rica in the 1980s when he came upon "the corpses of finned sharks littering the bottom of the sea," Benchley recalled in an interview, calling it "one

HIGH JUMPER
When a great white shark sets its sights on fast-moving prey near the surface, such as a fat-filled seal, it can build up a burst of speed and breach as high as 10 feet out of the water.

STAYING POWER
Longevity is a hallmark of the great white. Fossils date back 11 million years. The sharks themselves often live past 70—and they're late bloomers, reaching sexual maturity at about the age of 26 for males and 33 for females.

of the most horrifying sights I have ever seen." Benchley deeply regretted his portrayal of sharks in *Jaws*. "Knowing what I know now, I could never write that book today," he said, years later. "Sharks don't target human beings, and they certainly don't hold grudges." He spent much of his post-*Jaws* life advocating for the protection of sharks.

The demonizing and targeting of sharks in the wake of *Jaws* precipitated a kind of genocide. Overall, estimates of the number of sharks killed by humans each year range widely, from 30 million to as many as 100 million—so even the lower figures are grim. And that's no small matter. The 400-plus shark species are critical to ocean biodiversity and ecosystems. Because

PETER BENCHLEY SPENT MUCH OF HIS POST-*JAWS* LIFE ADVOCATING FOR THE PROTECTION OF SHARKS.

they feed on sick and dying animals as well as healthy ones, sharks are key players in maintaining ecological balance. Burgess suggests the number of large sharks fell by 50 percent along the eastern seaboard of North America in the years following the movie's release and sensational success. Research led by biologist Dr. Julia Baum suggests that between 1986 and 2000, in the northwest Atlantic Ocean, there was a population decline of 89 percent in hammerhead sharks, 79 percent in great whites, and 65 percent in tiger sharks.

"Sharks are overfished easily and don't recover very readily," Burgess explains. "They're slow to reach sexual maturity, carry very few young, carry them for a long time, nine to 18 months. In the end if you knock a population down, sharks will take decades to recover." At the time, few in the scientific community understood the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 92

GREAT PEARLY WHITES
Sharks' mouths are lined with as many as 300 serrated, triangular teeth arranged in up to seven rows. It's essentially an inexhaustible supply—when a great white loses a tooth, it simply grows a new one. A single shark can have 20,000 teeth in its lifetime.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 89

problem, because very little research funding was going to shark studies. "Sharks, unlike most other bony fishes—because they're considered a nuisance—simply didn't get to the front of the line, unlike salmon or trout or other food or sports fish," he adds. That was the upside of *Jaws* for sharks. "It forced the scientific hand to recognize we've got to put money into shark research."

Meanwhile, the pop-culture obsession with sharks continues unabated. In 1988, the Discovery Channel launched Shark Week, an annual seven-day block of programming devoted to the sea creatures, which has become a wildly popular summertime tradition—in fact, it's cable TV's longest-running event.

THE POP-CULTURE OBSESSION WITH SHARKS CONTINUES UNABATED WITH SHARK WEEK AND THE *SHARKNADO* MOVIES.

Originally geared toward education and shark conservation, Shark Week grew increasingly entertainment oriented, featuring more and more dramatic and sometimes sensationalistic programming that promoted dubious science. "Docufictions" such as *Megalodon: The Monster Shark Lives* and *Monster Hammerhead* drew controversy and criticism from experts. Of course sharkmania reached an absurdist apex with *Sharknado,* a TV film (with five sequels) in which a cyclone sweeps up killer sharks and dumps them on Los Angeles, New York, and around the world.

"These are neat critters," Burgess adds. "They're among the oldest of the fishlike things out there. Sharks go back 400 million years—they developed a plan very early on in evolution that worked." ●

PICKY EATER
Experts say that when great whites attack people it's often because they've mistaken them for other prey. Sharks crave much higher-fat foods, and prefer to dine on animals like baby seals, whose bodies can have as much as 50 percent fat content. This diving photographer, with his scuba gear and bulky motion-picture camera, is not a tempting dish.

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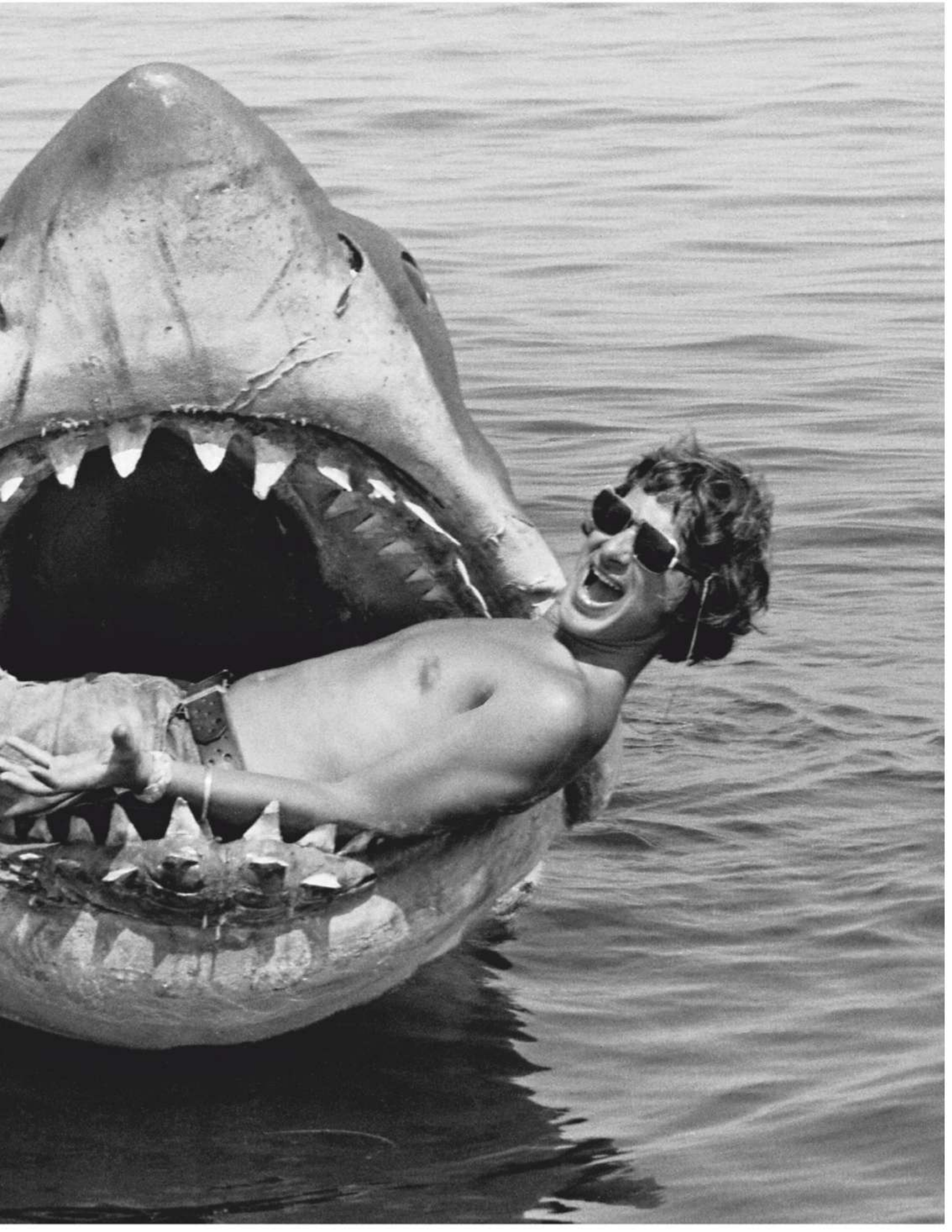
SPIELBERG ENJOYS A MOMENT of levity on location in 1974. "I think because I was younger I was more courageous, or I was more stupid—I'm not sure which," he recalled of the shoot in the 1995 documentary *The Making of Jaws.*



TERROR ON THE WATER

"[*Jaws*] is a dread dream that weds the viewer's own apprehensions with the survival of the heroes."

–*TIME*, JUNE 1975

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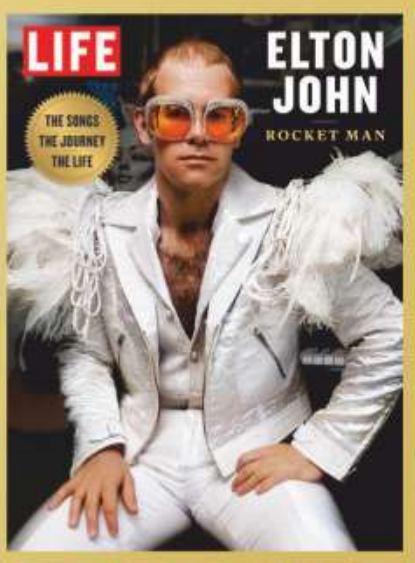

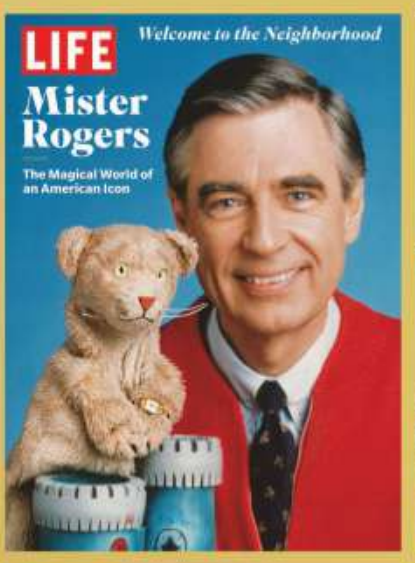

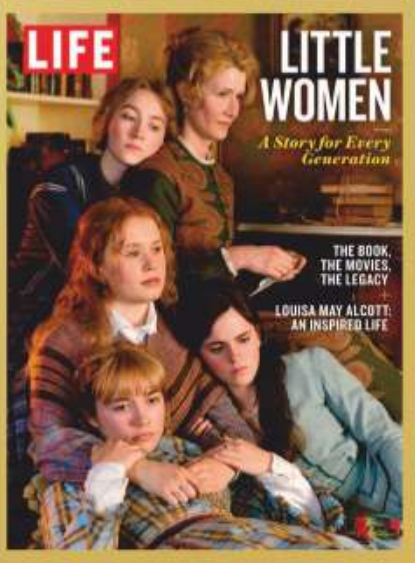

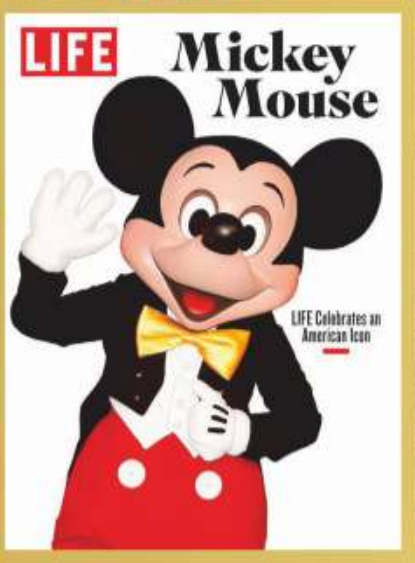

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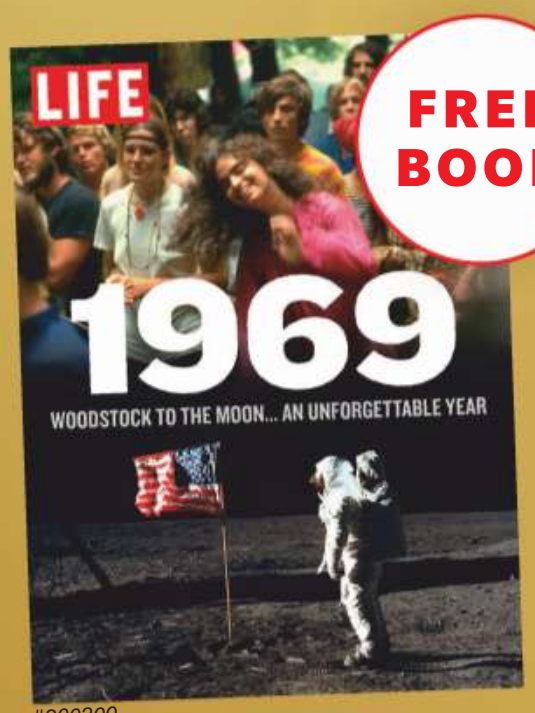

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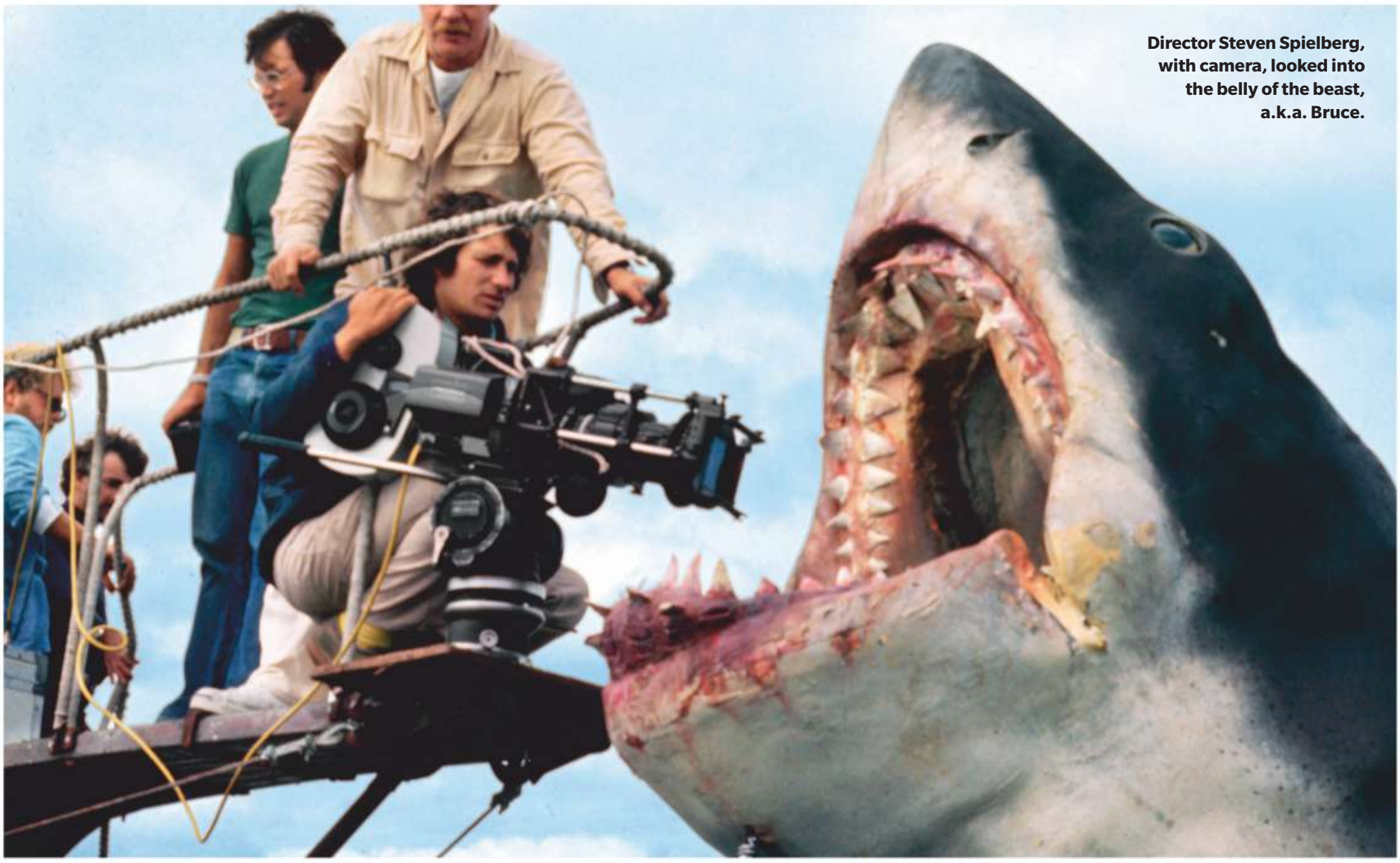
Despite energetic warnings from experts, Mayor Vaughn (with tie) kept the beaches open. Bad move.

A REALLY BIG FISH STORY

HOW A LARGER-THAN-LIFE SHARK BECAME A BLOCKBUSTER THAT CAPTURED THE NATION FOR ONE CRAZY SUMMER—AND FOREVERMORE



Director Steven Spielberg, with camera, looked into the belly of the beast, a.k.a. Bruce.