

# Ray X *X-Rayer* #136

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<http://x-rayer.com>



## "A Great Man In A Twit Suit"

He was hooked in a Flash.

A boyhood memory still vivid in the mind of Guy H. Lillian III. He remembers the particular comic book issue that changed his life.

Guy: "My folks, little brother and I were visiting my grandparents in Rosamond, a bedroom town in the desert near Edwards Air Force Base. My grandmother had a basket of old magazines through which, one fateful day, I went leafing through and I chanced upon an issue of THE FLASH. The Mirror-Master was on it, beaming a light down on the Scarlet Speedster which reduced him in height. Hooked, gaffed, flopping in the floor of the boat ..."

This was back in the days when a comic book cost a dime. Then there was a tremendous price increase to 12 cents but that didn't stop young Guy from following the adventures of the

Scarlet Speedster.

For your 12 cents not only did you have stories told in four colors but also a letter department where readers via envelopes and stamps submitted their comments. An editor would creatively title the letters page. For the Flash it was Flash-Grams.

At that time National Periodicals/DC Comics retained the scripts and art by its creative crew after publication. To encourage more readers to write in original scripts and art were given out as prizes to the "best" LOC writer. Guy had a problem with how the prizes -- especially the superb artwork -- were being awarded for the dumb letters.

Guy: "...I grew annoyed at the way [Editor] Julie Schwartz was giving away artwork and scripts to the worst punsters among his Flash-Grams correspondents, and wrote him a letter complaining about it. He printed it. The rest is history ... or MY-story, as you prefer."

He became a letterhack, his frequent LOCs making him known to Schwartz and the younger DC staffers.

Guy: "Comics provided a vital world view for me, principally through my letterhacking to Schwartz. The stress of high school -- pretty much a universal experience -- was far easier to bear knowing that I had a place, a community, where I was known and my opinion valued beyond school's borders."

His letter writing would lead to his dream job.

Flash forward: Mid-1970s. Guy is living in New York City, employed as an editorial assistant at DC, getting by on \$100 a week. He abides in a safe high rise with medical students and nurses but in a rough section of town. He didn't find East Harlem to be that bad but there was still "drama" as it calls it. Knife fights outside his window. A suicide stretched out on the ground after a 14 story fall.

Guy: "I have no idea how I survived on my crummy salary during my year at DC. My extra money from little writing assignments helped, but somehow I brought my girlfriend up from New Orleans twice while I was there, went to several Broadway plays, and stayed alive. As for my neighborhood, I just didn't go out much at night. It was grimy but OK during the day."

He enjoyed his time at DC.

Guy: "My best assignment for DC Comics was writing dialog for some artwork Joe Orlando had on his shelves. I loved doing that and several of the stories were printed. Doing interviews and suchlike for AMAZING WORLD OF DC COMICS [magazine] was extra 'work' for which we received extra pay."

But his life ended up taking a different path after he left NYC for New Orleans. He thought he wanted to get a Ph.D in English Literature at Tulane University but one semester convinced him it wasn't worth it. There was his girlfriend at the time he thought was the One but that didn't work out. He regretted leaving DC Comics more than any other job decision.

Guy would end up getting a law degree, working as a public defender in New Orleans. During that time someone described him as a great man in a twit suit.

What's a twit suit?

Guy: "Your guess is as good as mine, but I need to keep the quote. I THINK it's funny. We'll see what your readership believes!"

Sure thing, Guy.

Guy's love of writing hasn't faded over the years: he keeps expressing himself through his fanzines like *Spartacus* and *Challenger*.

GUY: "I'm trying to write fiction again -- at age 68 (almost) it may be a foolishness but what the hey, better than counting my teeth. I've done a draft of a 'down-home' novella I need to expand and a couple of horror stories. I was going to publish one in CHALLENGER no. 41, but my wife [Rose-Marie] insists that I should try to sell it. She's the boss. I'd love to write about my career as a lawyer, public defender work. People who have fouled up in life are fascinating, especially if they're trying to overcome their mistakes."

He has many great fan memories including his attendance at a SF convention with Julie Schwartz and Julie's long time friend, Ray Bradbury.

Guy: "Life has brought me into contact with some of the most fascinating people, many of them in science fiction and comics. I've interviewed Alfred Bester. I've known Julie Schwartz and Carmine Infantino. Poul Anderson and his wife Karen drove me to my first SF club meeting. Harlan Ellison asked me to try writing. Chelsea Quinn Yarbro adopted me as her fannish son. And there have been hundreds more. Through SF fandom I met Rose-Marie and saved my life. I've worked on program books for four worldcons, a NASFiC and two DeepSouthCons. I've formed friendships -- and enmities! -- that have lasted a lifetime."

And his legal career?

Guy: "Being a public defender was a great privilege. I learned more about the darkness in human nature talking to charming, destructive and tragic [Charles Manson ex-follower] Leslie van Houten than a thousand classrooms could have taught me. Through some of those classrooms, though, like [poet and novelist] Fred Chappell's in North Carolina, I learned to express myself without fear. But who's to say that didn't begin with my first letter of comment to Julie Schwartz at Flash-Grams?"

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Guy's zines can be found as PDF editions at <http://efanzines.com/Challenger/index.htm>

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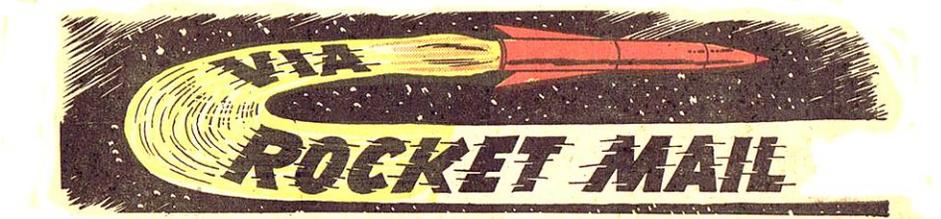
### **Hey, You Great Artists Out There!**

What does a twit suit look like? (See previous article.) Please send me your imaginative designs to [raypalmx@gmail.com](mailto:raypalmx@gmail.com) . ThanX!

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## MailboX

Comments? Criticism? Write to [raypalmx@gmail.com](mailto:raypalmx@gmail.com)



John Thiel  
May 13, 2017 Re: XR #135

Nothing like hating the town in which you live. I imagine that's not uncommon, and a lot of readers may have felt a response to your description of it. Plattsburgh doesn't seem to be very well-named, your reader might think "plates" at first and then get on to thinking of the duck-billed platypus. Then there might be "Splattsburgh", connoting the sound of driving into a pothole when entering it. I suggest you get a copy of "The Platypus of Doom", a more or less recent science fiction novel, and be seen carrying it around, pointing out to anyone who asks about it that the title reminds you of where you live, and in that way you could express your feelings to other people living there without seeming to be suddenly sounding off. I've disliked the place I live ever since moving into it; it's shown me something from time to time, but not usually. That's Lafayette, Indiana. It seems to be like a barony with Purdue University at its center and trying to ordain customs and events in the surrounding town. When hard times hit I'd go around talking about "Weird Shadow Over Lafayette". It seems like it would be hard to find the perfect place to live. I read Plato on the topic of a well-run society and wonder if this old-times concept will ever come to pass within my knowledge. So all I could say is "hang in there, move if you get the chance".

Well, a little interchange on such a topic helps to take some of the heat off.

John Thiel, 30 N. 19th Street, Lafayette, Indiana 47904

[RX: ThanX for your comments. Has Lafayette ever been the butt of jokes in the media, for example, the old sitcom Barney Miller? ("Plattsburgh. The end of the line.") How about being featured in an episode of Law & Order with NYC cops investigating a murder in Peeburgh, one character making a somewhat snide comment about the place? Or being mentioned in a mockumentary like The Last Polka starring John Candy in which the infamous Plattsburgh concert ruins the careers of the Schmenge Brothers? The old comedy series SCTV used to take a few shots. ("Today Plattsburgh cleaned up its downtown and now the city is separate from the dump.") So I'm not along in my negative feelings about this overgrown hinterland village that tries to act like a city. If you have talent and intelligence -- Stay away! There's nothing here for you.]

John Thiel replied:

Well, for a state noted for a high rate of urbanity, New York sure has a lot of low and unknown places in it. When I was in the Space Club one of my correspondents lived in Wappingers Falls, near Poughkeepsie, and he sounded somewhat like you in describing it.

Lafayette's never been mentioned in the media at all, to the best of my knowledge. If there's any news or anything, we don't get any feedback on it. Purdue's presence here gets some news, however—Purdue University.--JT

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tyrbolo@comcast.net LOC XR #135

Hi Ray,

I see in some fanzine that they were quite bemused to think someone would be discussing the Shaver material.

Nothing really goes out of date in human activities. It might get bypassed in the neophile chase of new, new and better. A lot won't turn out better and saying so identifies you as a cynical caster of doubts on the holy enterprise of onward and upward.

Lovely material about what an Aardvark spawned in the dayes of yore.

The Illuminatus gang noticed an RA Wilson tale in the January Asimov's of 1981. Turns out it wasn't the RAW who wrote Illuminatus Trilogy with Shea.

I've been watching anime trying to fit the odd broken bits of the Gundam universe together. So far not much luck. I did find a review of Ghost in the Shell that noted enough discrepancies to make me avoid it even though they thought it was worth seeing for the way it was filmed. Destroying the entire backstory of Motokos origin probably made sense to some hollywood nitwit but it trashes the entire reason for the story.

They did the same thing to Howard's Conan who was in on the sack of Velitrium as a teenager. The movies had him pushing a corngrinder as a teen.

How about that NSA terror weapon loose on the Net? Security folk have been yelling for years that the weaponization of security flaws is a really bad idea. Now maybe they will see why.

Warm Regards.

Dave

*[RX: Jackie Chan is a great performer but when they remade Karate Kid he taught his pupil kung fu. And as for that Conan movie showing him spending years grinding corn to explain how he built up his muscles: what a load. If that's all Conan did before he found freedom he would have the intelligence and social skills of a five year old if that. In Howard's stories Conan*

*learned how to survive on his own, being a thief if necessary. If Arnold's muscles were a problem then it could be explained that Conan exercised to be a great fighter and along the way he worked hard labor. Chained to a cornginder during all of his teen years? There's no bullshit like Hollywood BS.]*

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Lloyd & Yvonne Penney penneys@bell.net

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June 16, 2017

Dear Ray:

A few computer problems will not keep me down, I have too much locking to do! I hope this will get to you before the end of the day. Here's comments on issue 135 of X-Rayer.

It is great to see that the creativity of one person inspired the creativity and success of another. I remember Cerebus from my earlier days of fandom, and if I recall, Dave Sim was probably a guest at some of my earliest conventions in the Toronto area. I believe Dave came from the Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario area. I am not a comics fan, but I remember some of the biggest comic shops in Toronto in their heyday, and there was so much more than just DC and Marvel. I hope those other comics inspired many of the most successful modern comics artists.

Where I live in Toronto, our view of the city is slowly being eaten away by huge condominiums. They are turning places I wouldn't want to live in into places I can't afford to live in. Yvonne would like to move, and so would I, but finances don't allow for it, and with my extended unemployment, moving is not likely to happen in the foreseeable future. We realize we need to be more mobile, should the opportunity to move come up, so we are now in the middle of (yuck!) weeding out our book collection. The dumpster is the last option for us, but it is an option.

I do like paper fanzines, and I still get some. However, part of the above-mentioned weeding may also include weeding my fanzine collection, or simply give the whole thing to friends. I am still wrapping my head around the whole thing.

Yours,

Lloyd Penney.

*[RX: While I don't believe in isolationism there is a great downside when jobs are exported out of a country, leaving behind a very limited job market. I don't know if this applies to your situation.*

*The Plattsburg area has been economically depressed for decades. Low-paying jobs for the most part even if you have a college education. Being only an hour away from Montreal has been a great benefit for corporations up north who take advantage of the local free trade zone. One time the head of the free trade zone agency was on TV, pitching it to Canadian corporations. He said that this area had a willing and ready workforce. He forgot one adjective: desperate. Many people have to work two or three part-time jobs just to get by.*

*Some job-seekers in this region don't get hired because they're overqualified. Years ago I was told by an employment advisor to hide my college education on all applications. She said my BA degree was preventing me from being employed. Four years of college to end up working a minimum wage job. Maybe you're in the same boat.*

*Of course there are better places to find work but how can you move away when your financial situation has you anchored down?*

*Good luck with your move. With my eXperience I was unaware of how much stuff had accumulated. I didn't have time to sort it all out and so some of it moved with me. Now I have to get the energy to weed out what is left. My advice: start early with the sorting.*

*Don't give up hope. Keep plugging away. ]*

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### **Parting Shot**

Image: "To Mars"

Submitted by Dave  
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– END XR #136 –