

Donald Thomas/ Urban Species

1st off, I'd like to mention that it really is a pleasure to be interviewing you. You're a bit of a legend among Spider-Man fans, and you do have quite the inspirational life story. People like you make me get up in the morning and try to achieve things! Thanks for doing this ☺

For me, I was exposed to Spidey through my Paps. He loves comics and the capes, (as does my Mum,) and before I could even read he'd sit me down and watch the 70's live action series, 60's and 80's animated series, whatever was out there! He still has my 1st ever drawing, it was of Spidey naturally... How did your obsession with Spidey start? Do you remember the moments or series of events that brought this on?

As a child, I first started reading DC comics. One day a cousin of mine Juan Waiters came by my house and after seeing my comics said, I'm going to show you some REAL comics. He brought me to the store and introduced me to Amazing Spider-Man #18. He said, brothers read Marvel. I was so taken by that story that I decided right then that I was going to collect Marvel comics. I gave away ALL of my DC and haven't looked back.

You were clearly an insanely active young man, what do you feel brought this on? And did Spidey influence your choice of athletics? Or was it visa versa?

I grew up on the same street as Mike Tyson-Amboy Street in Brownsville, Brooklyn New York. Tyson grew up on Amboy between Sutter Ave and Blake Ave, I grew up on Amboy St. between Riverdale Ave and Livonia Ave. The Betsy Head Park, later renamed Marcus Garvey Park, is what made those two streets Dead end Streets. I'm much older than Tyson and never actually met him. But those were some very mean streets. On my block, most of the guys had parents that did not allow us to engage in any crime, but in order to prove ourselves to the thugs all around us, we had a Daredevil Club. I organized the Amboy St. Chapter of the Merry Marvel Marching Society. Each guy took a character from Marvel and one of the guys on the block was a very good artist (Jimmy Mack), who drew a picture of our characters. Of course my guy was Spider-Man. I always loved to run and climb and jump. The initiation for our club was jumping off of a one story building onto another roof. My nickname at Tilden Canarsie Day Camp was Spider. At that camp I was also known for running and climbing.

What a lot of people don't know about you is your battle with Osgood-Schlatter from a very young age, which would've been quite a shock to someone of your lifestyle. Could you let us know the a little bit about your story on that? How it affected your life and your feelings on the whole thing?

Around age 11, I suffered with constant knee pain in both knees from a condition called Osgood-Schlatter disease, but it never stopped me from running and jumping so many people didn't know I had any problems. I also suffered every winter with acute rhinitis and bronchial problems. I remember the many times I would stay home from school due to the debilitating effect it had on me as well as the medications that I took that made me groggy. Today I am an Advocate for Preventative Health and Nutrition as we as a professional Disability Rights Advocate. My motivation for writing books and breaking

Guinness records with those books has been the pain and suffering that I experienced as a child due to illnesses that I later found out had strong nutritional and life style components. It's a major reason that I live in Hawaii today.

Was there any particular (Spider-Man,) story arc that captured what you went through as kid, discovering that you had Osgood-Schlatter?

My first Amazing Spider-Man comic was #18. In that book, Aunt May gives Peter a talk on having gumption and not being a quitter in the face of sickness and adversity. With the recent passing of my mother (Rosa Thomas) I dedicated those panels to her on my web site. Also, later on I read Amazing Spider-Man #3, where Johnny Storm told a group of students never to give up. And it not only had an effect upon Peter Parker (who had just been beaten up for the first time by Doc Ock) but it also had a positive effect on me. My best friend of 49 years by the way is named Ronald Blanche; his Marvel Character was The Human Torch.

As all Spidey fans know, Peter Parker's story has always been a continuing love story, (the man has passion!) Who's the Mary Jane in your life? And how does she fit in your world?

I didn't get married until I was 42 years old. Not because of any dating deficiency but because I was very committed to my research and philosophy as well as living in Hawaii. While I've had the good fortune of knowing some very wonderful ladies in my life, the one that proved herself to be my greatest support and closest friend is the one that I married. Her name is Pamela. She is the one who after many years of not reading comics, bought me a copy of Spider-Man 2099 #1. I'd mentioned one day that I needed to get back into a hobby and that comic book collecting (Spider-Man in particular) was my hobby of choice. She's gone on to buy me #4,300 as well as a ton of Spidey t shirts and the large Spidey Bust for my birthdays (the ladies a saint). I consider myself very blessed to have had a very supportive mother and an equally supportive spouse. She is and will always be - The Lady in my Life.

You spearheaded the New Jump Swing movement, apart from having a cool ass name, how did this come about, and how much of the New Jump Swing do you attribute to Spidey?

Shortly after under going knee surgery, I read in a Runner's World magazine about the benefits of rope jumping. Since I was still athletic in mind, I bought a rope and started. I've always been a boxing and martial arts fan and liked the times when I saw various boxers jump rope. Bruce Lee's Jeet Kune Do of which I am an adherent also called for rope jumping. As my rope jumping was motivated for rehabilitation purposes, I developed a program of jumping designed to be easy on the knees and joints as well as allow someone with back pain (I've had two cases of being out of work due to back injuries sustained at a mental hospital that I worked at). My first thought for a name for my program was Aeropics, but upon trademark search, I found that the name was taken. The primary music that I liked to jump to was The Isley Brothers, Micheal Jackson, and Carlos Santana along with dance and disco music. Then I thought that since my jump rope program required you to jump part of the time and swing

the rope part of the time why not New Jump Swing? I started jumping in 1975 before New Jack Swing music came out. Spidey is a web swinger and slinger.

You have published book on some very deep philosophical subjects, which discusses approaches to life. Care to touch upon the books and little bit on your thoughts on them?

Every Guinness Record speech that I have given was based upon my books. I am the author of The Philosophy of Divine Nutrtrion-1977 and The Way of PDN-The Ultimate Vegetarian Athletic Nutrition Program-1986 as well as New Jump Swing-Record breaking Jump Rope program for Fun, Fitness and Cross Trainig-1992.

Briefly, the principles of PDN are based upon the concept that every religion has dietary and longevity advise. An analysis and synthesis of that advice is the foundation of Philosophy of Divine Nutrition. As stated earlier, I am a student of the late Bruce Lee's Jeet Kune Do. Philosophy of Divine Nutrition or simply PDN is an Internal Martial Art based upon the principles of Jeet Kune Do. PDN is for health and longevity similar to Tai chi and other internal martial arts. There are various types of Chi energy. The energy needed for public speaking is called Yu chi. My Guinness records were designed to demonstrate this cultivation of chi. Also within African culture, the Griot is a master of public speaking and has the role of being the chronicler of the culture. The late Alex Haley of Roots fan, met with Griots and it was stated that there were some who could speak for a whole day without repeating themselves. My demonstrations through the Guinness book were designed to document in modern times this cultural practice as well.

At a quick glance, you seem to be a multiple Guinness Book of World records holder for talking a lot! Lol. Could you please enlighten ignorant minds, (like mine,) on what you did, and what the entire experience was like?

I am a three times Guinness Book World record holder and as such one of the longest talkers in documented Human history. I am an Ordained minister (non denominational). As part of my trial sermon, I presented my doctoral thesis in Metaphysical philosophy to my teachers and public at the Tree of Life School located in Harlem, New York. My book, the Philosophy of Divine Nutrition was my sermon. The record that I had to beat was 72 hours. I achieved the record at 93 hours for which I am listed in the 1980-84 editions of the Guinness book.

I also hold two records for After Dinner speaking. To demonstrate my concept of Sports nutrition and drug free athletic performance enhancement, I presented the research for my second book in 1985. The title of that speech was "The history of Herbs in maintaining Physical Fitness" That record is listed in the 1986 and 87 editions of the Guinness Book. -19 hours and 20 minutes. The previous record was 12 hours.

I established my own publishing and Nutrition Company called PDN Publishing and Health Products, Inc., and through it, I presented my book The Way of PDN-The Ultimate Vegetarian Athletic Nutrition program for my second After

Dinner Speech record. The existing record was 24 hours and I broke that with 32 hours and 25 minutes. That record along with a picture of me can be found in the 1989 Guinness Book.

You are renowned for helping others with disabilities or at risk youngsters; do you think this sense of selflessness was ushered by your love of superheroes/comic books?

I can say first and foremost that I had a mother who taught me self- less ness. I am an only child and she told me that she was so concerned that I would grow up to be selfish that she made me give away my toys and clothes that were still good as a way of teaching me altruistic values. I was an Altar boy and Choir Boy for the First African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church in Brooklyn, New York. I was also an honours student in English, Science and history most of my life. Those attributes made me very aware of how blessed I was as a person. I came from a neighbourhood and school system where 60% or more of the children were reading below grade level. When I graduated from the 6th grade, I had a 10th grade reading level. I knew at a young age the Power that I had and I was guided by some very wise people into making sure that I didn't forget my Responsibility.

All three of my world records were done in Harlem, New York, to bring to the attention of that community the fact that hey hold the record for the most nutrition related diseases.

Okay, now for some fanboy questions; what do you think of the current Brand New Day storyline? And what do you think of all the whiny fans about the reboot? Is it just? Or some insanely vocal small fan base?

First let me say that I am and will always be a Fan Man(too old to be called a boy).I am very grateful for the internet and Superhero Hype.com as well as HeroTalk.com for the opportunity to meet some of the most knowledgeable people on the planet regarding Spider-Man ,Black Panther and other Marvel Characters.

Having said that, fan boys must accept the fact that the Comic book medium is no longer their exclusive club. With Television and most importantly the movies, the fan base for Marvel characters has increased exponentially. Spider-Man /Peter Parker in the last 46 years, has lived the life of three men. He has gone through every life phase imaginable and several that can only happen to a comic book character. There will be an Amazing Spider-Man 46 years from now. If Peter Parker/Spider-Man did not have a reboot, he would be similar to how he is portrayed in Amazing Spider-Girl; retired with a family and out of the super hero lifestyle. The roots of the character is a young man, who loves his Aunt May, has money problems, dating problems and lack of respect from the general public especially the media. I keep referring to the Swing Shift Directors Cut issue where Tom Breevort gives his analysis of where Spidey went astray and how they are going to bring him back to his roots. I'm enjoying Brand New Day and look forward to Marvel tightening up the continuity issues that this reboot has created. Since my philosophy of life is committed to longevity, I'm looking forward to reading Amazing Spider-Man 46 years from now!

Looking at your pics and your cool outfit, you seem to be quite the Bruce Lee fanboy too... How'd that work into

A stated earlier, PDN is an Internal Martial Art based upon Bruce Lee's Jeet Kune Do. That track suit was worn by me at every Guinness Record that I have attempted (7). I hope to get the suit placed in one of the Guinness Museums-maybe with your assistance!

If you were Joe Quesada for the day, what would you do?

I'd do an internet search and find every fan web site and officially recognize them for their love and support of Marvel product. I'd then establish a contest for writers and artists with a specific story line based upon specific Marvel characters and use that as a way of developing a pool of writers and artists that Marvel could draw upon with an emphasis on minorities and females. After lunch, I'd challenge the EIC of DC to an annual sales contest.

With Iron Man, Hulk and Wolverine on the Hollywood Horizon, which one has got you jumping for joy?

As a Marvel Stock holder, I'm supporting ALL of them, especially Iron Man and The Hulk. I plan to see each one at least twice!

Were you satisfied with Spider-man 3? Thumbs up or down?

Thumbs up but it made my no.3 out of the 3. Spidey 2 was #1, Spidey one -#2 and Spidey # -#3. This first trilogy captured the Ditko/Lee Spider-Man. I'd like to see another cast and maybe director capture the Romita/Lee Spider-Man.

Finally, are there any final words you'd like to throw out to the adoring public?

First let me say that 2008, makes my 30th anniversary for being a 3 times Guinness record holder-this interview through Urban Species and Tough Magazine is the first one to acknowledge that-so I sincerely thank you for your respect.

Secondly-to all of the public-Aloha and Spidey rules(except in Wakanda)

Thanks Donald, 'Spider-Man,' Thomas