



## C. Guy Suits

1905-1991

By Walter L. Robb

A GIANT AMONG US has departed. How does one, in a few minutes, pay homage to a man's life, to the highlights of a loving husband and father, to an adventurer, leader, pioneer, in all his endeavors? For, yes, Chauncey Guy Suits lived a full, productive life.

In fact, writers of do-it-yourself books might well pause to consider his story. He designed his own boomerangs and skis; largely furnished his home with handsome handmade reproductions of antique furniture; rewove Oriental rugs; constructed his own customized leather camera cases; and designed, cut, and sewed dresses for Mrs. Suits. He also, at one time or another, was a self-taught professional clarinetist, a hiker, a hunter, a skier, and a yachtsman, a skin diver, a pilot, and a photographer extraordinary.

As Guy himself put it in a 1937 talk, "I have often heard people say that they would love to have a hobby, if they had the time. That is doubtless true in many cases, particularly with college students, but it is also true that it is not time that is lacking so much as the ability to make the best use of the available time. An active man can no more cease his activity at the point of a clock than he can stop breathing—activity is a part of his constitutional equipment. And so a portion of his leisure time activity is diverted to music, or painting, or archaeology, or botany, or hiking and skiing—and the list is endless."

If Guy had pursued all of his hobbies with his customary enthusiasm, they might well have interfered with his work. That never happened, as evidenced in 1945 at the age of thirty-nine. Already a distinguished scientist, he became the youngest officer of GE and director of one of the world's foremost industrial laboratories. He had been a member of the GE Research Laboratory since 1930 and was widely known for his work in many phases of scientific research, especially high-temperature, high-pressure electric-arc discharges. His studies ultimately resulted in seventy-seven patents.

During World War II, Guy devoted the major portion of his time to the direction of research under the auspices of the Office of Scientific Research and Development. As chief of Division 15 of the National Defense Research Committee, he headed the leading U.S. effort on radio and radar countermeasures. It was estimated that those countermeasures saved the U.S. Strategic Air Force some 450 planes and 4,500 casualties alone, effectively countering a \$2 billion Axis radar system.

At the close of the war, Guy returned to GE and directed the extensive postwar expansion of the company's scientific research activities. This included the planning and construction of a completely new home for the research lab on a 600-acre site in Niskayuna, New York. Today, that facility, now forty years old, stands in clear testimony to that quality of design and construction that Guy insisted upon. No other laboratory I have visited has stood the test of time so well, and we pledged to maintain the lab as the living testimonial to Dr. Suit's memory.

As director of research for GE, Guy organized research teams that made hundreds of inventions, enriched scientific knowledge, and yielded vast material benefits to mankind. Those innovations included the first Man-Made™ diamonds and the first commercial process for mass-producing them; Borazon® cubic boron nitride, a synthetic material second in hardness only to diamond; the Multi-Vapor® lamp, still the leading high-efficiency light source; chemical research that led to Lexan® and Noryl® resins, two of the world's most famous engineering polymers; and the demonstration of electron tunneling-work that later won Ivar Giaever a share of the 1973 Nobel Prize for physics.

Most impressively, many young scientists Guy and his team brought into the lab are still the world's leading experts in their fields, even twenty-five years after his retirement. His successors—Art Bueche, Roland Schmitt, and myself—were hired during his tenure, and we all owe Guy a huge debt of gratitude for his counsel and support. He loved his family and the Adirondacks, but he also loved GE and the people who made up the GE family.

While it is only human for us to mourn the loss of a loyal and courageous friend, we are also filled with thanksgiving for having shared in even a part of Guy's full life. He made each day exciting, each conversation stimulating, and each minute and hour time well spent. May his love for life challenge us to look within ourselves—to inspire us to even greater undertakings, knowing Guy would approve.

Guy was without peer—such a gentleman; kind husband and father; devoted environmentalist and adventurer; and an honorable, proud, and decent American.

But Guy Suits didn't waste a lot of words explaining his philosophy of life. On the contrary, he lived his philosophy and led by example. His message to all of us was, "Live life to the fullest!" He showed us the way . . . oh, so well.