



Pierce Watters, Editor

One of the great American myths is "it's one man against the world." When I first started watching Kung Fu movies, I was thoroughly confused. The villains were completely indistinguishable from the heroes. Finally, I asked a Chamorro friend, Keko, an aficionado of these films, "how do you tell the good guys from the bad guys?" His answer, "The good guys are usually still alive at the end."

After months of thought, and viewing, the reason for my confusion suddenly became quite clear. It was not unusual for the heroes to band together and defeat one, more powerful villain. Good guys ganging up? Why, that was unamerican! The Rifleman never needed any help. He could blow away any number of outlaws, just him his American brand of courage, and, of course, his rifle. He was the American Warrior.

This realization, along with many conversations with mentors and peers, led, eventually to the conclusion that "they", whoever "they" were, didn't want us ganging up. It didn't really matter who "they" were. The really vital point was the fact that most of us were living our lives alone and we felt this was the way it should be, the natural and right way.

The rise of human civilization owes a great deal to socialization. When early homo sapiens banded together to defeat a common enemy, (carniverous animals, the cold, large, edible herd beasts) then towns and cities and armies and football teams could only follow.

In a new book, *The Secrets Men Keep*, the authors, Dr. Ken Druck and James C. Simmons, speculate on this very problem.

"Men today are guardians of some of

the world's best-kept secrets...We block off entire areas of ourselves, stamp them 'TOP SECRET', and file them away. And we keep their very existence a secret from wives, girlfriends, children and buddies...Men today no longer know what it means to be a man. We are bombarded on every side by conflicting and contradictory signals from our wives, women friends, mothers, fathers and peers. 'Be strong but don't be macho', urges one voice. 'Be sensitive but don't be a wimp,' says another. Today's men are uncertain about what they want and what their choices are. Being a man in the eighties is hard work if, as men, we take our signals from others'.

Perhaps this American solitude, the authors think, is a defense mechanism. If you don't open up, don't share your thoughts and feelings with others, you are protected. This may be the mental version of Dr. Noreen Vickrey's armor-ing (IAM, Vol. 2, No. 3). By revealing one's inner feelings to others, especially other men, you may give that other leverage, a weapon that could be used against you.

Some anthropologists and archeologists have come to new conclusions recently, regarding the switch by homo sapiens from hunter-gatherers to farmers. The reason: beer. You can't have beer all year round unless you till the soil and domesticate the grain. A local newspaper published a drawing of ancient Sumerians, males, standing around a huge earthen vat of fermented barley, sipping through straws (to avoid ingesting bits of grain) and talking. Things haven't changed so awfully much right up to the present. In *The Secrets That Men Keep*, it is stated that men, instead of forging real friendship, with other males, have developed an

alternative relationship, an uneasy truce which the authors call "Beer Buddies". "Short of having sex together, two men may do just about anything as long as there is beer present. Beer has done more to bring men together over the ages than baseball, football and the Indy 500 combined. 'Let's go for a beer' is male code for 'Let's spend some time together.'...Beer and masculinity go hand in hand...Beer not only provides a reason for two men to sit together without public suspicion. It also furnishes us with a safe means for letting our guard down, opening up, and showing some emotions. We can be sentimental, tearful, silly, and affectionate with other men—if we have been drinking beer. And later if we are embarrassed by our actions, then we can always claim that we had 'one too many' and none of our buddies will think the worse of us."

Men obviously do need male companionship. Many other cultures don't seem to have such difficulty showing affection, opening up. One particular scene comes to mind. In a PBS documentary on China, two men were shown walking down the streets of Beijing, holding hands. If two men did this in America, they would probably be arrested and held for AIDS testing.

Without this kind of male friendship, bonding, we have an awfully hard time truly working together. This inability to make real male friends only fosters and encourages the "one man against the world" attitude.

Thoreau wrote, "Most men live lives of quiet desperation." The solution to this situation is to make and have true friends, and remember the Chinese phrase Gung Ho, "let us work together". By working together as

From The Editor

AMERICAN WARRIOR: THE BIG LIE

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"We must all hang together or surely we will all hang separately."

—BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

friends, without crutches like beer, we can become Peaceful Warriors and build a better world. ‡

The Secrets Men Keep, Dr. Ken Druck with James C. Simmons, Ballantine Books.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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