

FRIENDS OR ALLIES: CHOICE FOR SURVIVAL by Kurt Saxon (c) 1977

In the 1950's, several thousand people had nuclear fallout shelters built, usually in their back yards. At first they met only ridicule by those neighbors who considered themselves above such hysteria.

In time, however, it occurred to those neighbors that something had changed in their relationship with the shelter builders. Often, those who had been friends for years came to despise each other.

It usually started like this: Sam would say to Paul, the shelter builder, "Paul, I don't believe there's going to be a war. But if it happens, I'll know where to come."

Paul would say, "But Sam, it's not a matter of belief. If it happens, it'll happen, and if it doesn't happen, it won't. Neither of us believes our homes will burn down some night. But we both have fire insurance. So my shelter is simply my nuclear war insurance."

"What if you had fire insurance and I didn't? If my house burned down, without insurance, I could never rebuild. Would you allow me to move my family in with you on a permanent basis?"

Sam might say, "But that's a poor analogy. I'd be glad to put you up for a few weeks and even help you to rebuild."

"But," Paul would reply, "We both make about the same wages. What if I bought a boat instead of fire insurance, thinking, 'What the hell, I'd rather play with a boat than sit around home worrying about an unlikely fire. Besides, good old Sam will bail us out. He's our ace in the hole.'"

"Would you want to be our ace in the hole if we left our welfare up to you while we ran around in a damn boat while you sat home worrying about a fire?"

"Harping on the boat again," says Sam. "I said you could use it."

"Forget the boat," says Paul. "The point is, that you considered the boat more important than nuclear war insurance. You have all kinds of insurance but you don't seem to know what insurance is. It's not negotiable. You have hospital insurance and I don't and I get sick; tough on me. You buy fire insurance and I don't and my house burns down; your insurance company wouldn't rebuild my house."

"Like your life insurance, my shelter is nuclear war insurance which covers only my family. If you want that kind of insurance, buy it. Don't expect to use mine."

By now, Sam is seeing that friendship has its limits and he resents it. "Okay," he says, "Just suppose your war should break out. So I haven't prepared. But we've been friends for years and I never put you off when you needed help. And you've always been on hand to help us. But now, when it's a matter of life and death, our friendship isn't worth a bo-diddly? Is that what you're telling me?"

"It's not a matter of friendship," says Paul. "My shelter was built for my family of five. It's for two weeks; maybe four if we absolutely had to stay longer. You crowd your family of five in there and we'd all be dead in a week."

"Maybe so," says Sam, "but the point is, you would just keep us out, knowing we would all be sprawled around the door, dead as mackerels. (He breaks into sobs.) And my littlest, Jenny, she's only five, you know. Before I'd let you close her out, I'd come with a gun."

Such arguments would go on to the point where the neighbors were no longer friends. I never heard of a case where, rather than break up as friends, the other neighbor built a shelter.

Telling the improvident their time is running out seldom motivates them to prepare. The improvident are the improvident. That's their nature. They know their basic helplessness, but will seldom admit it. They are more likely to react with hostility to survival advice than to begin their own preparations.

The difference between one who prepares and one who doesn't is more important than a difference of opinion. If you prepare to survive, you deserve to survive. Those who can, but won't prepare, don't deserve to survive and the species would be better off without them. If you have the kind of intellect that's geared to survival, it may be a matter of genetics. Your neighbor may lack these survival genes. Therefore, becoming his means of survival could not only doom both of your families to death, but if you should make it, you would have enabled a non-survival type to further pollute the gene pool. That's a no-no, although you might take in one of his brighter children if you really have enough room. If you are really in a position to save someone, you ought to be selective. But don't be too callous. Without basic human compassion, you might not be worthy to survive, yourself. Aside from making you seem callous towards others, your preparations put you out the Good-time-Charley field and you are seen as a part of the establishment. You are then no longer a buddy, but someone to use when things get rough. It's hard to explain but it's sort of like when you go into business for yourself; your wage-earning friends tend to drop away. You have a kind of security they can't aspire to. So they either drop away as friends or become actually hostile.

So you see, friendship ends when you establish a permanency and security your friends can't aspire to. Maybe they don't care to put out the extra effort or money. Maybe they're just lazy or stupid. It doesn't matter why they drop away. Just recognize the fact that Survivalists are likely to see their friends drift away.

So don't expect to impress a friend with your preparations. It's far better to get him sold on the idea of making his own preparations.

It's verly likely you can't get your friend to exert himself to make any survival preparations. Serious preparation would upset his whole lifestyle.

Most neighbors would rather rationalize away the danger than do something about it. Say you bought a house on an earthquake fault. So a guy comes and tells you you'd better move or get shook to pieces.

So there you are, with everything you have threatened with destruction. A survivalist would move, taking his losses in money, energy, and time.

But the average person would rationalize away the danger and never bring up the subject again. If he was smarter than average he would try to unload the property on some sucker, of course, never mentioning the fault.

So if you broach the subject of survival to a friend and he gives you the horse-laugh, just think of him as one who knows his house is built on an earthquake fault. He'll give you nothing but rationalizations as to why nothing will happen. Best just to ease away from him and tell him nothing further of your plans.

Since survival is the most important subject today, and only a few recognize it, you can't waste time with friends who have little potential as allies. The time is coming closer when if a neighbor isn't an ally, he's highly likely to become an enemy.

Only those who are working on their own survival programs are fit to associate with at this point. I'm not suggesting you snub

your friends or give up on non-survivors altogether. This would be rude and stupid. Besides, an intelligent friend might finally come around to your way of thinking as things get worse.

So just be businesslike when talking survival. It's very serious, so the drinking buddy would be more likely to be offended than interested.

In survival programs, an ally is worth any number of friends. In the coming months, you will learn to sort out your allies, who are aware of the coming crash, from your friends, who think you're a nut if you worry about anything but where your next baseball ticket is coming from.

As you come in contact with more Survivalists, you will be bored with your old buddies, anyway. And they will be bored with you, too. So don't feel panicky at the thought of your old cronies drinking without you.

Of course, your first choice of allies should be among your friends, especially neighbors. If you and your neighbor both had a roomy, livable shelter, you could link them up with a tunnel.

Such a setup would enable you to share the burden of buying supplies. Tools, books, and the various items of hardware could be shared, rather than having to buy two complete sets for two families.

Linked shelters would also permit visiting for moral support and economy. They would also be handy to resist assault. If one's shelter were under assault by the mob, the other could go through the tunnel and help fight them off. When the mob finally gave up and went off to die of radiation sickness, life in the shelters could become downright social.

In this way you can see how a neighbor who is an ally can be of great benefit. But a neighbor who depends on you to save his bacon is not only not an ally but he could become your worst enemy.

One way to help a neighbor to become an ally is to introduce him to other Survivalists. Then he will feel that you're letting him in on something. Also, if you have three or four guys in your home talking survival, your neighbor will feel he's the isolated minority in his stand that this is the best of all possible worlds.

Even if your area is an unlikely target for a nuclear bomb and underground shelters are not in your plans, the ally principle is still very important. You just can't waste time with a friend who is of no use in your survival plans.

An ally can be a person you don't even like socially. But if your ally shares your enthusiasm for survival, he will be far more useful to you than a friend who agrees with you on everything but survival.