



Heroes

Okay, I admit it-I am a Baby Boomer and although my comic book purchases were more "Casper the Friendly Ghost" and Archie comics I loved watching Superman on television. During that time children weren't the only Superman fans, the adults were watching also because Superman was already one of their heroes. By the time I was watching Superman episodes, the comic book superheroes Superman (1938), Batman and Capt. Marvel (1939), and Wonder Woman (1941) were all there to help the fight against the Axis powers of World War II. True the superheroes had ebbs and

flows in their popularity over the years but they continue to endure. What is it that draws us to superheroes (and for that matter: real life heroes)?

Hero stories, most likely, go all the way back to ancient man gathered around a fire at night trying to keep their darkest fears from winning control in their thoughts. Their heroes would reflect qualities they wished to acquire, instilling them with the will to carry on no matter how difficult their day lives were. These stories would give them hope for their tomorrows and make them dig deeper to draw up the archetype hero within themselves making it possible for them to become a better person than the one presently listening to this hero story. This doesn't sound the least bit different from the effects hero stories have on humans throughout our history.

Joseph Campbell was quoted as saying, "Furthermore, we have not even to risk the journey alone; for the heroes of all time have gone before us; the labyrinth is thoroughly known; we have only to follow the thread of the hero-path. And where we had thought to find an abomination, we shall find a God; where we had thought to slay another, we shall slay ourselves; where we had thought to travel outward, we shall come to the center of our own existence; where we had thought to be alone, we shall be with all the world." Here lies the truth that is found within each story of the hero. The most important things we identify with from the hero's tale, albeit vicariously, it is not so much how to complete the courageous acts; how to survive the trials of endurance; or being able to vanquish a real or perceived threat. The elements of the story we most

identify with is how our hero coped with the failure of a courageous act; how he/she stood tall after succumbing to exhaustion; and how he/she continued on while still not finding the answer for subduing the threat and facing death.

True when we hear a successful end to the hero story we are uplifted and rejoice but which parts of the story drove the sword of truth straight to your heart? Which part of the story stirred the greater emotions? These were the parts that revealed to us that the hero was a human being like you and me. This is the most important lesson of a hero story: that each of us being human can persevere and become a hero. And this is why there will always be heroes and their stories.

With Gratitude,

Kai