

Peggy Drexler

This author and psychologist thinks the boys are all right and the moms are even better

by Cindi Cook | photography by Paul O. Colliton



LAST YEAR WHEN Peggy Drexler and her husband, Mickey, went to see the movie, *The Door in the Floor*, they had a bit of a surprise. "I really wanted to see this movie, and when the film began, there was our house!" she said excitedly, referring to their recently-purchased Hamptons home.

Drexler is a research psychologist and Assistant Professor of Psychology in Psychiatry at the Weill Medical College of Cornell University. Her book, *Raising Boys Without Men: How Maverick Moms are Creating the Next Generation of Exceptional Men*, was published this month by Rodale Press. Drexler has been a clinician and lecturer at the New York Hospital/Cornell Medical School and a Gender Scholar at Stanford

University. She has been published everywhere from the *Los Angeles Times* to the *Anchorage Daily News*, and is often consulted on the changing dynamics of the American family.

Drexler is a married mother of two, with a 27-year-old son and a 13-year-old daughter. It's a structure that puts her in the minority of American families. According to her research, only 23.5 percent of married couples in this country now form what she calls the "Father Knows Best" family—a household where the children live with a mother and a father. Her book explores the effects that

mothering in a non-traditional setting—mothers single by choice, lesbians, and lesbian couples—has on the raising of boys. The book examines every factor of their upbringing, from the general discrimination of women to boys' need for role models.

Raised by a single mother herself, Drexler says these maverick moms are doing a fine job. "They're creating what I like to call 'head and heart boys', those who have an easier time with how they feel. These boys have figured out how to deal with complex situations at a

very young age," she imparts. Moreover, the mothers have gone out of their way to connect—even while unloading the dishwasher or driving to school. Drexler believes that parenting isn't anchored to gender.

Years ago, Drexler and her husband Mickey had owned an old Victorian house in Water Mill that they adored. When they relocated to the West Coast, the house had to be sold; now, back east, Drexler says they are overjoyed to have found a similar place.

The new house was owned by two sisters who had lived there for more than 80 years. For a brief time they contemplated tearing down the historic residence, but instead were very happy to find buyers who would keep its historical details intact. Peggy and her family are now making their own renovations that will be completed by the summer's end. In the fall, they plan to enjoy the renovated home as well as all the pleasures that the season will bring: kayaking, going to the beach, dining at great restaurants, like Laundry, and poking around antique shops. "There's so much to do. I really love it and always feel so happy when

I'm out there," Drexler says. "We're very fortunate; I pinch myself every day."

Peggy Drexler will hold a book signing at Bookhampton in East Hampton on Saturday, August 20, with a celebration party to follow at Scoop on Newtown Lane. More information on her book can be found at www.peggydrexler.com. ♦

