

Ode to the Human Hand  
*by Marilyn Reeves*

While religious views are as varied as the number of people who have ever pondered the miracle of life, I think most would agree that some great Intelligence beyond our ken is the source of all its various manifestations, and we humans consider ourselves to be the most magnificent ... although if one were trekking through the jungle at night, there are certain large predators that might contest that claim. Nevertheless, homo sapiens are the one species who has harnessed fire, invented the wheel, built planes, trains and skyscrapers, and even created the Internet. So yes, I think mankind deserves a pat on the back for having ascended from the one-celled amoeba to the unquestionable top of the heap. And, according to science, our achievement of this lofty position is due in part to the construction of our hands. With four long fingers and an opposing thumb, hands are the greatest tool ever created! And, even more fortuitously, they come in pairs – each hand a mirror image of the other.

While we sometimes need a little help from other tools – things that are longer, sharper, tougher, stronger – they are often merely extensions of the hand and none so versatile as the hand itself. Have you ever searched through every tool in the box trying to find something that will open a jar, or untie a knot, or ... a thousand other little chores too numerous to mention ... just to finally resort to the use of your hands?

Because our hands are so frequently in motion – grasping, feeling, poking, searching – they are subjected to a plethora of nicks, cuts and scrapes, the scars of which trace a sort of roadmap of our journey through life.

Our hands can be trained to seemingly have a mind of their own. An accomplished pianist doesn't stop to think about every note his fingers touch – it's as though the fingers play the music on their own. As I sit and type this little treatise on Hands, my fingers automatically create the words generated by my thoughts.

Hands can be soft and smooth, muscular or time-worn. Hands are beautiful. Second only to the face, our hands most express who we are.

While our other senses inform us of the world around us, to intimately experience another object or being, we use our sense of touch. And it is our hands that make first contact.

Except for those unfortunate souls who were born without them, or have lost one, we take our hands – like the myriad other gifts we were given at birth – for granted. And although modern prosthetics have come along way toward creating bionic facsimiles, there is no real substitute for the human hand.