

***Hands***  
by Amy Radford

The work of our hands can change the world. It is through them that skyscrapers are built and stories are crafted. They are beauty and strength and dignity.

Clinging to my father's hand as a child, my tiny little hand was lost in the strong, rough, calloused expanse of his grasp. Often in the winter I would watch him carefully apply lotion to his hands because they would be so cracked, they would bleed. Whether he was picking me up to carry me or wiping away my tears, those rough hands were always gentle.

Callouses take time to develop. They are a sign of consistent hard work. The thick, rough skin can only develop from repeated and daily use of your hands to rake and shovel or stack and lift. Those hard spots are tough and resistant to friction. It is proof that you know how to work hard with your hands.

That was our family. We weren't the sit around type. We were the keep busy, there is always something to do, so keep on going, and make sure you are working all the time type. It wasn't about just getting the job done. It was about doing it right.

There is a certain satisfaction that comes from working hard and doing a good job. Maybe that is some of the motivation behind our family work ethic. But the other motivation came from a family quote. My grandfather died of a heart attack when I was five, but I have memories of him reading to me and bringing me treats from his job. He was a school janitor, so when I came to visit, he would bring home discarded picture books and the kind of ice cream you ate with a small wooden spoon. I don't remember the feel of his hands, but I am sure they were rough. He always told my dad, "Never be ashamed of calloused hands."

My hands are not calloused like my dad's but, I work hard in my role as both a teacher and a writer. My mind is a muscle that has grown stronger and more adept as I pursue the work of writing. I write my stories or lessons by hand and type my stories using my hands. I do not have calloused hands to prove my work ethic, I have words and students as evidence of the work I do.

It took me a while, but I found my work, what I am producing as a creative, is just as valuable as the work that my family has valued for so long. These works of writing are like the fuel for my dreams. Each word is stacked carefully in just the right order. It is hard and laborious and the work ethic I learned as a child, fuels me to keep going.