

CHAPTER

1

HANDS

Through the Ages

LONG AGO PRIMITIVE SHARKS HAD RIDGES RUNNING down their sides from gill to tail. Later, muscles grew into the folds, and eventually the central portion of each ridge receded while the ends enlarged to form fins both fore and aft. All was well.

Then one day several hundred million years ago, a fish was swimming blissfully in a shallow pool. The tide went out and much to the fish's surprise, she could use her five-rayed fins to move around a bit on the rocky bottom. The tide came in and she swam away, never to give this event another thought. The world, however, was forever changed.

For many generations thereafter, that fish's offspring went back to the pool and progressively got better at moving across the rocky surfaces on their fins. Some even started squirming short distances overland from pool to pool. They developed pockets in their throats that could absorb oxygen directly from the air, which was far more efficient than deriving oxygen from moving water through their gills. Not only was breathing more efficient on terra firma, but also plant food was abundant and there were no predators. The fish slowly developed stronger skeletons, waterproof skin, and longer fins. They now walked and hopped and only returned to the water when they laid eggs. Amphibians

The Hand Owner's Manual

Other topics covered in Chapter 1: Hands Through the Ages

WHEN ANCESTRAL MAN FIRST STOOD UP

Wrist fractures stemming from falls on outstretched hands

CAST TREATMENT FOR FRACTURES

History of treatment by immobilization

GOING DIGITAL

Origin of our base-10 numbering system

RULERS ON HAND

Fingers, hands, and arms as useful measuring sticks

THE HAND IN SPIRITUAL LIFE

Buddhism, Judaism, Islam, Christianity

FIERY HAND PRINTS

Museum of Purgatory in Rome

HANDS INVADE ENGLISH

Words stemming from "hand" in various language