

# Handshake

By J. W. Henson

WHATS IN A HANDSHAKE?

THERE IS MUCH THAT CAN BE TOLD ABOUT AN INDIVIDUAL FROM THEIR HANDSHAKE.

Many times I decide whether or not I like an individual by the way he does this bit of civilization's welcome. Some people use the handshake as a put-down to make the other person feel inferior. Below I have listed some greeting etiquette, with an occasional thought on some of it.

**THE HANDSHAKE.** Extend your arm so that the upper arm has a 45 degree outreach. That way you will not appear too intimate, nor too distant. Give the other individual your full hand with the four fingers parallel and slightly curved inward. Press the curve of the thumb lightly against theirs. Do not hold the embrace too long except in cases of sympathy, love, or asking for additional information, such as a repeat of their name. Try to have nothing between you and the one you are greeting. Step around, across, upon or whatever you can do to put the two of you on equal footing. In an office it may be necessary to reach across a desk, but it is much better if the one behind the desk will step forward to receive the hand.

If it is a touching moment you can lay your left hand on top of the two clasped hands. This is a gesture short of a hug, but more intimate than just a common handshake.

**NEVER SHAKE HANDS WITH THE LEFT HAND.** Never that is unless your right hand is missing or diseased. I resent a person who has an object in their right hand to offer me the left hand. If you are carrying something that can not be transferred to the left hand or set on a table, then politely say, "Excuse me for having my hand full, we'll shake as soon as I can get rid of this thing." I do not regard it a gesture of relaxed friendship, but rather a lack of interest in me and the occasion. They are saying to me, "I don't take you very seriously. I am totally wrapped up in myself, and want you to see what a great guy I really am!" Its very awkward to shake a proffered right hand with the left, and one should not offer the left hand and be caught in the same foolish game.

**NEVER OFFER A GLOVED HAND.** Remove your glove even against their insistence that you not do so. Ignore a gloved hand that is offered to you. It may seem insensitive, but in this age of relaxed performance it is good to remind the brash bore of his manners.

**STAND WHEN YOU SHAKE HANDS.** If you are seated, and another approaches to shake your hand, stand, even against their insistence that you not do so. Do not half rise,

but come to your full stature before offering your hand. If one is very old or sick this rule does not apply.

**GIVE A GENTLE SQUEEZE TO THE OTHER'S HAND.** No one likes a cold fish in their hand, nor do they like to be brought to their knees by a blacksmith's clutch. Women's hands are more delicate than a man's. Size up the individual and the feel of his hand to know how firmly to press. Older people may have bones that ache, and will remember the handshake long after you are gone.

**DIRTY HANDS.** If another extends his hand, shake it regardless of how dirty your own may be. Make no excuse. He asked for it, give it to him, and if you extend your hand to a dirty appendage accept it.

**FULL ATTENTION** should be given to the person whose hand you are shaking. Do not nod and continue to talk to another. Face the person and look them in the face with a sincere smile, and some cheery greeting as appropriate.

**HOLD NOTHING** in the right hand as you shake. If you are wearing gloves, remove the right one before shaking.

**WOMEN.** When I was a lad it was manners for the woman to extend the hand if she wished to shake with you. I now consider it proper for the man to give his hand to the woman first.

**COLD, SWEATY PALMS** These give the other individual the notion that you are nervous, or out of your element. I vigorously exercise my fingers by flexing them into a fist and rapidly extending them to increase blood flow through the extremities when I have been out in the cold.