

The Hands of Anna Paulson

Strong the hands of Anna Paulson. Hands that milked cows and midwived calves, baked bread and bathed babies.

Graceful, too, the hands that played Sunday preludes and painted sunsets.

All this and more were the hands of Anna Paulson until arthritis took its toll making her hands cramp up like the claws of some wild bird of prey.

Holding on to the aluminum walker, moving it by fractions across the carpet from bed to chair seemed all that was left for her hands to do.

But the hands of Anna Paulson were not dead yet. At age 92, on any day of the week, you could find them breaking chains, snapping rope, building bridges, turning the key in the prison door.

On every day of the week, the hands of Anna Paulson prayed.

On Sunday she prayed for her church, that the doors would stay open.

On Monday she prayed for the earth, for peace in the Middle East, and for the dairy farmers in Montpelier.

On Tuesday she prayed for her town, for the schools, and for the factory that just laid off another hundred people.

On Wednesday she prayed for the sick, especially for the boy next door who came home drunk again last night.

On Thursday she prayed for the hungry, especially for the children.

On Friday she prayed for the homeless, especially the children.

And on Saturday she prayed for the victims of abuse and violence, especially the children.

No pair of human hands could have been more powerful than those of Anna Paulson because when she prayed, the hands of Anna Paulson belonged to God, and the might of God's right arm belonged to her.

Strong the hands of Anna Paulson.

- by Kathleen O'Keefe Reed