



Jack J. Anderson, Class of '55, has retired from a varied career. His books and other writing may be downloaded for free from <http://www.jjanderson.info/>. His email address is jack@abq.com. Comments are welcome.

Electrons

I was a guest at my son's Thanksgiving family dinner and, as is their custom, each person at the table told what she or he was thankful for. Many touching and heartening thanksgivings were uttered and most there offered multiple reasons for a thankful heart. In addition to being thankful for those gathered around the table (and for *much* more), I said I was thankful for electrons. Well, to be precise, controlled electrons.

There is frequently laughter and good hearted teasing when my son's family gathers for meals and other occasions but I suspect this particular declaration of mine confirmed in the minds of my grandchildren the strangeness (some might say weirdness) of their aging grandfather.

I am particularly thankful for electrons as electricity which is, as Wikipedia points out, "a very convenient way to transfer energy." These two columns could not contain the ways in which our electron friends in the form of electricity are essential in today's world but let me suggest a few: heating and air conditioning, communications of all kinds (including the ubiquitous cell phone), water pumping, manufacturing, rockets into outer space, heart pacemakers, the Internet.

I am also thankful for indoor plumbing, clean air and water, traffic signs and signals and laws—yes, I know, not everyone obeys them—and various paper products (but not especially for paper junk mail). Even in this era of instant electronic messaging, I enjoy taking a pen and writing a letter or note (in cursive, of course) on high quality paper. Perhaps that's just my nostalgia.

Reasons to be thankful seem endless. People are thankful for finding the right job—sometimes *any* job!—finding a home,

getting accepted into the right school, meeting their life partner, finding the right domestic pet companion, art and music.

Like other Americans, I am thankful for those who choose lives of service, such as first responders, men and women in the military, law enforcement professionals, medical specialists—and *teachers*, who frequently do not receive the respect and support owed them. It is a thankfulness practice to tell people such as these they are appreciated. Sometimes a timely and sincere thank you can brighten someone's day.

Probably every spiritual practice and religion has thankfulness customs and observances. But you don't have to be religious to be thankful. Thankfulness can be a state of mind chosen and cultivated. Just the simple act of saying "I am thankful!" upon rising and retiring can help nurture a positive frame of mind.

If you follow international news, the plight of other people on our dear planet can stir compassion, encourage donations, and also evoke thankfulness to be living in the U.S., our many problems notwithstanding. We may not always be really, *really* thankful for a meal made of leftovers but after a moment of reflection we can get in touch with gratitude for having food at all while many others do not.

When I mentioned to a friend of mine I was writing an article about thankfulness he quickly said I should be sure to mention being thankful for friends such as himself. Because he is frequently rather irksome, I replied I was thankful for him only *some* of the time. Nevertheless, I took his point. (By the way, his wife agrees with me about his being an irksome fellow.)

No doubt you, dear reader, have many reasons of your own to be thankful. If you are among the very fortunate, you have wonderful loves for which to be thankful—life partners, parents, siblings, children, grandchildren, other kin—and friends (even irksome ones). Sometimes just laying eyes on or hearing the voice of a loved one can evoke a sense of thankfulness. Thankfulness for the real wealth and success of life can be found in thankfulness for life's great loves.