

With Just a Little Encouragement ...

Just because others don't see the importance doesn't mean it's not important.



Just ask Mary Anderson.

On one of those nasty winter days complete with freezing rain. Mary was riding a streetcar, observing the poor visibility the driver had. The front window would swing open, and the driver would reach out and wipe the snow away momentarily—but in the

process he let the nasty weather blow into the streetcar.

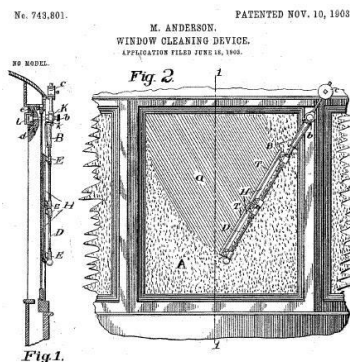
Such a "luxury" was not available on most vehicles. Drivers usually just stuck their heads out the window to see, or they frequently stopped to clean the window. And a lot of people just drove by intuition.

Right then and there, Mary began sketching out an idea. She patented the first windshield wiper on November 10, 1903. It was a great labor-saving device, not to mention it made the vehicle safer.

But no one was interested. No one.

Gradually over time, car manufacturers adapted the idea, but not before her patent expired in 1920. Within two years, Cadillac made windshield wipers standard equipment. But Mary Anderson never made a dime.

In reviewing different sources, I find no record that Mary Anderson was bitter or fought back. She simply returned to her home in Alabama and lived her life working in real estate.



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We're surrounded by people who've made big and small contributions to our lives, people who receive no recognition. And most of them do it without a burning desire for recognition. Maybe they just see it as their job.

- The mail carrier who endures the bad weather to bring you another L.L. Bean catalog.
- The high school kid at the grocery store who asks you that one burning question: "Do you want your milk in a bag?"
- The volunteer who prepares each week and then spends an hour with your child teaching him about Jesus.
- The co-worker who is there every day but inwardly feels unnoticed or under compensated.

Observe the people around you and thank them for what they do—no matter how simple or insignificant that contribution may seem. Even if they earn a paycheck while doing it. We all gain a great emotional boost when people acknowledge us and what we do.

- *"Anxiety weighs down the heart, but a kind word cheers it up" (Prov. 12:25).*
- *"A word spoken at the right time is like gold apples in silver settings" (25:11).*

Mary Anderson contributed to our cars, even though she never financially benefited. We may not be able to boost the income of those around us, but we can boost their spirits with the right words—words of recognition and appreciation.

Words of thanks double as words of encouragement. Those we serve with our words are motivated to keep at it ... to do better ... to step up and serve in ways they haven't before ... to encourage others themselves.

"Therefore encourage one another and build each other up as you are already doing" (1 Thess. 5:11).