Continued from Contemplations in the July/August 2001 newsgram:

I studied a long time to become a doctor, but I didn’t have any patience.

Next was a job in shoe factory. I figured to be a shoe-in. I gave it my soul, but the boss was a heel.

I became a professional fisherman, but discovered that I couldn’t live on my net income.

Found work with Eddie Bauer, stuffing coat linings. Had to quit because I was always a little down in the mouth.

I managed to get a good job in pool maintenance, but the work was just too draining.

I got a job feeding giraffes at the zoo, but I wasn’t up to it.

So then I got a job in a workout center, but they said I wasn’t fit for the job.

After many years of trying to find steady work, I finally got a job as a historian. Then I realized there was no future in it.

My last job was working at Starbucks, but I had to quit because it was the same old grind.

SO I RETIRED AND I FOUND I AM PERFECT FOR THE JOB!

The newsgram will be changing. We’re aiming for smaller and more frequent newsgrams. Anyone interested in working with the newsgram should contact Linda Hillenbrand at 545-1922 or lindah@wost.umass.edu.

We would like to strongly encourage those of you who are not on the listserv to please join. It’s the easiest way for our President to get news quickly out to the membership. Check the front page of the website for a button to sign up.

USA applied for grants from both MTA and NEA and were turned down by both. We will try again but, in the meantime, consider buying a t-shirt! We could use the help at this point as we had counted on these grants. Call Jane in the office at 5-0165 or Linda at 5-1922. Arrangements can be made for mailing them.

The recipe booklet is nearing the end of the gathering stage. We would still love to get recipes from members until further notice. Campus mail them to 120 Hampshire House or e-mail them to lindah@wost.umass.edu.

Attention Veterans! Dan Kibe, one of our sick bank administrators would like to keep track members in USA who are veterans. Please contact Dan at 5-1013 or e-mail him at xxxxxx.

Read Across America is March 2nd! Contact the USA office to see how you can get involved. This is an NEA sponsored event held every year to commemorate Dr. Suess’ birthday.

The conversion to PeopleSoft has been moved up! Your final weekly paycheck will be March 1st and your first biweekly will be the 15th. No paycheck on the 8th. For those of you dreading bi-weekly paychecks this is great news.

USA needs stewards! If you’ve ever considered being a steward, now is the time. A Call for Nominations for stewards will be sent out soon. It’s a great way to meet people in USA, get involved and stay informed.

Nominations for 3 member-at-large positions and the Parliamentarian on the Executive Board will also be included in the Call for Nominations!

SICK BANK NEWS

Former USA Member Richard donated 440 days last year to the USA Sick Leave Bank. That translates into over 3000 hours for our bank! This is an incredibly generous gesture that will surely help the USA membership, especially those who will need to use the Sick Leave Bank in the future. If you feel moved to do so, please send thank you notes to the USA Office and they will be forwarded to Richard.

Please consider donating some of your sick time to the bank if you are retiring! Let’s keep the sick bank in great shape! Contact your steward if you have questions about retiring and sick time.
DENTAL INSURANCE UPDATE

We don’t have any good news about our dental coverage other than what we’ve already reported. Instead we will attempt an explanation as to how our dental provider is chosen. Many years ago a Health and Welfare Fund was created into which our employer paid an amount per week per employee. As members we do not pay anything into this plan — it is a benefit of employment at UMass. The Trustees are responsible for this fund and for choosing a plan, with input from a member of USA. In the beginning a very, very good plan was chosen and the fund depleted quickly. As years progressed plans became more expensive and the fund was unable to continue paying for the same good coverage. There were also very few choices in dental plans for our area. Even though our new contract reflects an increase for the fund, it’ll take many years for the fund to get to where it will need to be in order for USA to have better dental coverage. So, the good news is the contribution the state puts in per employee has been raised...it’s a start...it is a benefit and does not come out of our paychecks. The bad news is that it may take years before we are able to have the type of dental coverage that we’d like to have.

EDITORIAL

How much does your boss really know about your rights under our contract? This is something all USA members need to think about. If you have a question about something that happens in your area or a question of what you are entitled to under our contract and you ask your boss, be prepared to get a cryptic or misleading answer. If something doesn’t sound right, it might not be right and it’s up to you to find out the correct answer. The straight truth is that as workers we do have rights and there are steps to be taken if those rights are taken away. Workers through the years have fought hard for these rights and it’s up to us to uphold them. Ask questions! You might be surprised at the answers you receive.

BURNING QUESTIONS

We know that a lot of you have burning questions on early retirement, the contract and the recent cost-saving options, etc. News about these things in particular change so quickly and so often it’s impossible to keep up with mailing information to those who are not on the listserv. Please reconsider being on the USA listserv. E-mails that annoy are easily deleted.

CAREER LADDER UPDATE

The Career Growth and Learning Partnership was level funded for the recently ratified contract. In addition to the workshops offered through Workplace Education, USA will once again be reimbursing members for funds spent in pursuit of training or education. The process will change somewhat for the new contract and the reimbursement amount will be smaller. Please realize that our contract must be funded before we can go ahead with the reimbursements. The official Career Growth and Learning website is a little over 75% finished and will be a great place to start exploring.

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Chancellor’s Area - 56 (5%) — mostly OIT and Athletics
Academic Affairs - 629 (55%) includes Library, Fine Arts Center, Cont. Education, UMass Extension, 82 depts.
Administration and Finance - 185 (16%)
Auxiliary Services - 49 (4%)
Other - 136 (12%)
Student Affairs - 184 (16%)
mostly Health Services and Housing Services
University Relations and Development - 38 (3%)
Research and Graduate Studies - 44 (3%)
President’s Office - 10 (less than 1%)/UIS and Treasurer’s Office

University Staff Association
110 Hampshire House
University of Massachusetts