

U  
n e m p l o y e d

A Memoir  
by  
Reginald L. Goodwin

INNERCIRCLE PUBLISHING

A decorative flourish consisting of a horizontal line with a central oval containing a stylized 'C' or 'G' shape, with intricate scrollwork extending upwards and downwards from the line.

*Unemployed - A Memoir*

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ISBN: 0-9762974-5-0

**1**  
Edition

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## Foreword

I've had the disturbing epiphany of reading about blogging and its current impact on our society and world. One fellow got hired because of the software content of his tech geek blog; the other persons got fired because of the creative distain they published about their companies in their blogs. Human Resource departments are making searching the Internet for blog content a common practice in hiring decisions. Blogging is being added into the appendices of companies approved modes of "official communication."

I've been asked often by my wife, "did your blogging cost you the interview/job"? So, I bravely did a Google search on my formal name, Reginald L. Goodwin. Here's some of what "shook out":

***[www.worldtangsoodo.com/regions/Listing.asp?region=4](http://www.worldtangsoodo.com/regions/Listing.asp?region=4)***  
***[www.brown.edu/Students/Tang\\_Soo\\_Do/Registry.htm](http://www.brown.edu/Students/Tang_Soo_Do/Registry.htm)***

These are web sites attached to the martial art I teach and study. I'm an Engineering Physics graduate of North Carolina A & T State University, December of 1984 (an Orwellian year, in reflection).

I then did a search on "Reggie Goodwin." I first received mention on some alumni association functions ***<http://www.ncatwesternregion.com/chapters.html>***. I'm mentioned in several articles on hosting poetry venues (as I do at Mitchie's Fine Art and Frame Gallery every 2nd Saturday from 3 – 5 PM): also innocuous.

This blog began with what you will soon read in the introduction. The conditions that caused my predicament existed, before *it* did.

I represent the American worker that feels the "fell clutch of circumstance," to quote *Invictus*, at or around forty years of age. I bare witness to the fact that despite past performance, college preparation, individual contribution, teamwork, no one is immune to the Leviathan called the global economy and its dictates to save on costs: the largest being employees and benefits. I am an example of the human toll of NAFTA and CAFTA. These are not programs

of one party or the other: these are programs that affect the many and enrich the few. If I were to smile and disappear like a “good Cheshire cat” ala “Alice in Wonderland,” what has happened to me, what has happened to many, what is and will, in the foreseeable future, *still* happen, will not be corrected

There is no lack of blogs from the unemployed. The experience and the pain is worldwide. The book that follows is my journey, documented on my blog and shared by many that have become outsourced Americans. What I will share with you is a walk of faith that is real, that is true.

Sincerely,

***Reginald L. Goodwin***  
***Outsourced American***

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## Introduction

“Take this kiss upon the brow!  
And, in parting from you now,  
Thus much let me avow--  
You are not wrong who deem  
That my days have been a dream;  
Yet if hope has flown away  
In a night, or in a day,  
In a vision, or in none,  
Is it therefore the less gone?  
All that we see or seem  
Is but a dream within a dream.”

*Edgar Allen Poe, “Dream Within a Dream”*

Posted 12/22/2004:

I share an e-mail log I've had with a major technology company:

***11/16/2004***

Hi-I'd like to schedule a phone screen with you regarding the position that you applied for at (name of company blanked out). At the moment, my schedule is open: Tuesday Nov 16, 2 - 5 Central time, Wednesday Nov 17, 8:30 to 2 and 3 to 5 CST Friday Nov 19, 8 to 5 CST. Please let me know if there is a 30-minute window in there that would work for you, what number I should call, or if you would prefer to contact me. I look forward to hearing from you,

(Name blanked out) Technical Recruiting  
(Name of company blanked out)

\*\*\*\*\*

Reply:

Hello:

How about either 17 November at 10:00 AM or 19 November, same time?

Best regards,  
Reggie Goodwin

Home: (number blanked out)  
Cell: (number blanked out)

*11/17/2004*

Reggie-

I'm booked today at that time, so I have you on my calendar for Friday at 10AM. Would you like me to call you at home or on your cell? Also, the resume I have has your last position at (name of previous company blanked out) in 2003. If you have more recent work experience and would like to submit another resume I can replace this version.

thanks-

(Name blanked out)

\*\*\*\*\*

My reply:

(Name blanked out):

I enjoyed speaking with you on the phone this morning. I hope to progress successfully in the next phone interview with the hiring manager, and eventually (everything going positively) the position at (name of company blanked out).

My work experience has been as a self-employed person. The (name of company blanked out) position I just recently picked up for seasonal work. If you think both are relevant, I will update the resume.

Reggie

***11/19/2004***

Reggie-

I think the version we have is fine. I forwarded it onto the hiring manager, and I think he is checking around here for people who might have known you at (name of previous company blanked out). Nothing like an inside reference :)

Talk to you soon-  
(Name blanked out)

\*\*\*\*\*

***11/22/2004***

(Name blanked out),

Any updates?

Reggie

\*\*\*\*\*

***11/23/2004***

HR's reply:

You are on the hiring managers list of calls to make - I looked at the tracking sheet this AM.

(name blanked out)

**11/30/2004**

(Name blanked out):

(Name of hiring manager blanked out) - (forgive me: I believe that is the name of the hiring manager you mentioned in our phone interview) hasn't called me. Has the position been filled?

Regards,  
Reggie Goodwin

(Number blanked out) (H): best after 9:00 AM  
(Number blanked out) (M): anytime, VM

\*\*\*\*\*

**12/1/2004**

HRs reply:

Not yet. We have 2 interviews scheduled for Friday, so my guess is that he is waiting to see what the outcome is of those before spending time wooing anyone else :) I'll try to follow up with you next T or W and let you know what happened.

(Name blanked out)

\*\*\*\*\*

**12/2/2004**

(Name blanked out):

I've established (number blanked out) with voice mail through Call Notes (again). Any calls for telephone and/or scheduling of personal interviews can now be left there.

Best regards,  
Reggie Goodwin

**12/7/2004**

(Name blanked out),

I look forward to your reply.

Best regards,  
Reggie Goodwin

(Number blanked out) (VM)  
(Number blanked out) (Mobile)

\*\*\*\*\*

HR's reply:

Reggie-

I am sorry to report than an offer was made yesterday, although it has not yet been accepted. We should know 12/17, if you want to email me after that for status.

(Name blanked out)

\*\*\*\*\*

My reply:

(Name blanked out),

I've been out of work since 26 August 2003 (ironically, the anniversary of my father's death). If you can tell me what defeated my chances to even get a face-to-face interview I'd greatly appreciate it. If not with <name>, the information would be valuable with some other company.

I'd also like to know if it's worth my time (or -----'s) to continue my posting on the job site. Thank you.

Reggie

*12/21/2004*

The follow-up referred to my calling the HR rep directly on 12/17/2004:

Reggie-

I promised that I would follow up with you as soon as I knew something. We made an offer yesterday to a candidate that we interviewed back in early November, and he accepted. The position is considered filled and will be officially closed once I get his paperwork back.

I'm sorry - I know you are disappointed. I hope you will continue to watch the (name of company blanked out) job board and apply for other positions you are qualified for.

Best Regards-  
(Name blanked out)

\*\*\*\*\*

My reply:

(Name blanked out),

I'm a little confused in your interview procedure: why was I phone interviewed if you already had (now I'm counting) three candidates with the 2 the previous Friday and now the November candidate?

Forgive me. This answer doesn't change my current employment prospects. I need something with a little more substance.

Sunday, December 26, 2004 will be 1 year and four months to the date I've been unemployed; underemployed working odd jobs I'm severely overqualified for (like UPS).

Reggie

As of 12/27/2004, no reply from the HR Technical Recruiter (I think she's on Christmas vacation)...

Many would say I've "burned my bridges." They'd say I should have held my tongue and applied for as many jobs on the web site as possible.

Some points to make here:

1. I posted to this site about a month after my lay off, redoing and polishing my resume at Drake, Beam, Morin and Associates (they'd advise me to hold my peace as well).
2. Up until the phone call - generated by her - I'd receive e-mails about job matches that I apparently qualified for. I'd answer yes, of course, and then would hear nothing back or that the job has been filled and the rec closed. OK.
3. This is the first REAL person I've talked to in over a year on this site. This company could have made it easier for me to stay in Austin, Texas. I'm trying to maintain stability for my youngest son to finish high school (currently in the seventh grade). I've gotten offers to leave and if I didn't own a local business or have a family, I would have been GONE a long time ago.
4. She stated, "You are on the hiring managers list of calls to make - I looked at the tracking sheet this AM" on November 23.
5. I recall in a phone conversation, the hiring manager was walking my resume around to "see if anyone knew me at my former company." Since it had about 13,000 workers at one time of my employment, there was a fair chance the manager wasn't successful. If anything derogatory (can't think of anything) was said, I believe I have LEGAL rights against slander.

Trust me. I'm trying to stay positive.

I'm working in shipping in a warehouse larger than 10 football fields; on a production floor of conveyer belts, full of cursing workers, and

a delicate ballet between the forces of static and kinetic friction I can only refer to as “a controlled avalanche!”

The physicality is the only thing I appreciate. It allows me to beat the *snot* out of cardboard boxes, sling them through space, yell a little myself and vent any frustrations about my circumstances at inanimate, unfeeling objects.

Trust me. I’m trying to stay positive. But when you’re making 1/5 of what you made as a professional engineer per hour, when you’re up at 3 AM when the rest of the world is sleeping, when you’ve seen your retirement and investments dwindle to dust, that can make you a little testy. I probably need a time out!



# Chapter 1

## Great Games of Cat and Mouse

“This is the way the world ends  
This is the way the world ends  
This is the way the world ends  
Not with a bang but a whimper.”

*T.S. Eliot, “The Hollow Men”*

In the syndicated cartoon strip, Dilbert (R) ([www.dilbert.com](http://www.dilbert.com)), Dilbert's cat, ubiquitously named *Catbert* is the "Evil HR director." One of Catbert's favorite games was playing with employees - as a cat, the employees likened unto mice - before informing them of their severance from the unnamed corporation where Dilbert and his coworkers were employed.

The funny thing about corporations is their preoccupation with making money. I say funny because the last thing anyone in the upper echelons would think of cutting are spiffs, bonuses and "accelerators" (never understood this compensation) that management, from directors to the CEO get regardless of the companies or stock's performance. This is usually the same management that made the decisions, greased the palms and caused us all to execute the company vision on these same decisions that now had us in a deficit (oops).

The Senior Vice Presidents, Vice Presidents and Directors like us received performance reviews, which I can only assume were glowing. The CEO's review was presumably from the stockholders of the corporation. His performance was rated on the performance of the company. Depending on his/her employment contract, firing him/her could be easy or costly. That's easy if you happen to be part of a debacle like Enron (a no-brainer there).

Also costly, in light of the recent report of Fannie Mae's former CEO Franklin Raines and their former CFO J. Timothy Howard. Raines will receive \$1.4 million dollars per year for life (he's a spry 55) and the former CFO Howard will only get \$432,852 per year. Howard is 56. See [http://www.usatoday.com/money/companies/management/2004-12-28-fannie-usat\\_x.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/money/companies/management/2004-12-28-fannie-usat_x.htm).

The underlings (I was one of them) would get a performance review that was supposedly, a reflection of our job performance. Then we were ranked alongside persons of the same engineering grade. In a quarterly review, I was told everything was going fine and that my score was well above the midrange.

Around the end of the first quarter and the beginning of the second quarter of 2003, we lost our Vice President, if you want to call it losing him. We were informed he was finding “other opportunities within the company.” Loose translation: find a job before we sever you! I hope he was successful.

Our new director was German. For fun and not to his face, we called him “Colonel Clink” (from Hogan’s Heroes, I’m dating myself). He had a forewarned reputation as a “hatchet man.” I never witnessed a smile on his face. He was always very serious, very grim. Hence, if you’re a student of history, my reference to the Great Game in the title.

Our great game of cat and mouse began with so-called *Communications Meetings*. I recall knowing LESS after the communications meeting than I knew before walking in. One brilliant engineer decided to break the silence with a carefully coded question for the Colonel:

“Do you think the organization is of an efficient size to be managed effectively?”

The Colonel’s reply:

“Every change in an organization takes some... pain to accomplish the greater good!”

I thought: *List this man for the 2003 Darwin Award for the DUMBEST question a human being could say during an economic downturn!*

And the great game would continue with our *communications meetings*, an oxymoron. After one and a half hours of Power Point charts and heavy German accents, your eyes glazed over. If any important information was communicated, you usually compared notes in the cafeteria later. What you didn’t get, your fellow worker probably caught.

Since we weren't getting anything from the meetings, we circulated our own rumors: "I heard they're going to get us in the auditorium and lay us all off from there! Our division is getting dissolved." Most of us had street contacts with former employees of the Colonel or current secretaries that couldn't keep their mouths shut around the lunch table. If you've ever played the game in elementary school of giving the first person a note and having them whisper it to the next person, then checking the accuracy of the information with the last person in the whisper line, you can understand the distortions when intentions were not communicated clearly. Any bolder questions regarding downsizing, lay offs or division dissolving was parried with the "necessary pain for the greater good" proverb analogy.

It was during this time I wrote in my analog journal (which I've kept since college). I composed some thoughts about the stress I was going through at not knowing what the future held for my family and me. I'll share those thoughts with you now:

### Code Orange

I stare  
At another "Tableau Rasa"  
Purchased at Barnes and Noble  
For \$4.95 (plus tax)  
Taking respite once  
Again on a porcelain  
God listening  
To the accounts  
Of the original  
Tejas inhabitants:  
One of the fellow's  
Wife is due soon.

Yet  
The rest I swoon  
From is not the result of a  
Blown-up pager:

It is the stranger  
Silence... that  
Allows you to hear  
The rumors about your  
Performance and intercept  
All stares as broken  
Conversations about you...

The elation  
Of a job well done  
Flits by  
In nanoseconds  
That “flip-flop”  
Registers on  
Computer chip  
Architecture  
Couldn't keep pace with.

You've just spent time:  
Talking to a young mother  
And her two-year-old boy  
(She has another) and  
Looks like she's too young  
To have the one  
Slaughtering his pizza  
As he smiles  
At you in Schlotsky's...  
Gave her my wife's number  
Since she and her hubby are  
Looking for a home  
In Wimberley  
(Wife's a real estate agent);

Finding the last  
Anthology of the  
Austin International Poetry Festival  
Barnes and Noble had  
Of Di-Verse-City

Where you FINALLY  
Appear on page 100  
(Perks of being a board member -  
Bought it for my mother for  
Mother's Day)...

Assaulted by WORDS  
Of Whitman, Hughes, Saul Williams, Beau Sea, Regie Gilson  
As decisions become as clouded as the  
Overcast skies viewed.

Enraptured by a fellow  
Artist - Adrienne - young  
Enough to be your daughter,  
Yet by her neo 70s dress  
And quiet demeanor  
Stressed you to ask:  
"Are you a poet?"  
(Yes, and an artist, too!)  
Her surreal exhibit sounds  
Intriguing and will go  
Up soon. She quips its  
The "please help Adrienne  
With her bills exhibit."  
I promise to stop by  
Again and look.)

Mailing the anthology  
With one of several  
Mother's Day cards  
Purchased at  
Barnes and Noble,  
Sending it priority  
Mail and walking  
Out proud: I usually  
Have to do Federal Express!

Driving back, I catch

A fat, almost tooth-less  
Cat with a sign saying:

“This just in: homeless  
Consumers invade Iraq.”

It makes me laugh, but not as the MBA in my old piece:

### **The Other Foot**

Because I don't have to descend to his level:  
His is the terror of day-to-day,  
    Staying alive,  
While mine is Al Jolson  
On a downsizing Silicon stage  
Beveled at the corners to make  
    The transition look smooth,  
While grandsons of founders  
Make spiffs and accelerators  
    Incalculable over  
    The corpses of an  
    “Asset lite” rage...

The only difference is the space between us and the 4-runner steed  
beneath me:

He is my left foot,  
I am his right.



## Chapter 2

### Denouement

*From [www.m-w.com](http://www.m-w.com):*

Denouement - Function: noun

Etymology: French dénouement, literally, untying, from Middle French desnouement, from desnouer to untie, from Old French desnoer, from des- de- + noer to tie, from Latin nodare, from nodus knot -- more at NODE

- 1: the final outcome of the main dramatic complication in a literary work
- 2: the outcome of a complex sequence of events

I named this chapter denouement. A testament to my tenth grade English teacher, Velma Williamson, I recall her simplified version of the above definition as “a falling action”; “the story climax.” You get the whole point of the tale after hanging on breathlessly page after page. Some authors, even more dramatically, describe it and the conclusion of a story as “a little death”: an appropriate metaphor.

The Colonel continued with his non-communications meetings, glazed eyes and all from March through August of 2003. We missed one meeting in June due to his having to go to a meeting at our corporate headquarters. He - that is, his secretary - sent an apologetic e-mail stating he was sorry we’d have to miss the June meeting. Hallelujah.

By July, we all got bulk e-mail from corporate communications. There would be a reorganization of the business units and an involuntary severance before the end of the third quarter. Since July is the beginning of most companies third quarters, you can’t plan vacations to conveniently fall on the fated day. Our street contacts were mum. Now, the secrecy of the corporate animus rivaled that of the White House or the Central Intelligence Agency. The attitude from most workers was heavy with despair. That became the central theme of conversations around lunch, either on or off campus. Actually, off campus lunches, though more expensive became more frequent to say things outside of the company that were not quite “PC.”

“How are they making this decision?”

“My last review... I mean, I think I scored OK and all.”

“You know what p----s me off? I notice they never lay *themselves* off, and many times it was their dumb decisions that caused the problems!”

“On top of that, they get bonuses. Do you know how long it’s been since I’ve seen a bonus? Centuries. And I haven’t lived THAT long!”

They. Them.

I watched a friend become one. He'd started out as a decent engineer. Then the dreaded thing happened: he was promoted to Section Manager.

After a succession of promotions and accolades, he became an Operations Manager of one of our factories. During process yield meetings, I'd watch him grill engineer after engineer, pestering them and hammering them until he could catch them in a technical faux pas, an "aha" moment that he'd ride until the engineer felt about two inches tall leaving the podium. It makes my skin crawl recalling some of his comments:

"What the HELL did you think you were doing?"

"Am I paying you for incompetence, or results?"

"Sit down. Those results are absolute bull----! Come back when you have something of merit to report. Come to my office after this meeting!"

"You were abusing your lab time!" The hapless engineer explained he wasn't and used the time to solve a yield problem that BENEFITED the company. "Did anyone else get in the lab while you were overusing your time? Well, then I still say you abused your lab time!"

Needless to say, my former friend/monster had a lot of professional turnover.

"...Reorganization of the business units and an involuntary severance before the end of the third quarter."

August...

All of my engineering projects dried up like a sunflower wilting in the Texas summer heat. I logged as much time as I could on the

test floor. I attended meetings and tried to insert myself into new projects, new platforms.

I was so distraught, I went to our business unit's HR manager. She was a petite woman, swarthy and lovely, obviously of Hispanic ancestry despite her married Christian name. I made an appointment to talk with her. I wanted answers and I asked her for them. "Am I on this list?" "Why didn't you give us a choice of voluntary severance?" "Don't you realize you're playing with peoples lives and incomes here?" Her face - I'd seen it before - on my cat: an armor-piercing stare of determination. I'd usually see it on my cat before... she'd kill a mouse.

"I know how you must feel. I'm afraid I can't answer that." She said it with a staccato reminiscent of a dutiful Stepford/Android wife.

Before the end, as with my father's death four years prior (the anniversary of his demise coming soon on the twenty-sixth of the month of August) humans I feel, have premonitions of the end of things. This verse chronicled my feelings at that time:

**Horizon R.O.A.D**  
*(Retired On Active Duty)*

On the road going to nowhere  
There is static on every channel,  
No frantic gestures from road-raged drivers spouting nonsense.

The only relent and belief  
Is that you are the only driver  
Gazing at a horizon without event or relief.

On the road going to nowhere  
Dark, gray cliffs line the side  
Of empty streets;  
No accidents to avoid,  
No pedestrians (to miss) or meet.  
A world void of color, inhabited by no one other than you...

On the road going to nowhere  
Is the stark-raving terror of reflection:  
Remembering life's other goals and directions  
Requiring risk and FAITH.  
Somewhere, you lost your courage and did what was SAFE.

As you sweat in SUV expectations  
Not reaching for Porches or Vet,  
Will you stay on this road out of fear and despair?  
Desperately clinging to the gray color-void  
Surety  
Of  
The road going to nowhere?