**How to lose your job!**

Always on Halloween

I had just transferred with TRW across the country to Virginia across the river from Washington, DC. I was working with the Defense Intelligence Agency in 1977. I got to visit their offices several times; the highlight was watching the bare spot next to the guard gate grow these huge plants and flowers during the course of the year. That snowy bared spot in winter turned into six foot high plants with flowers by October. I was giving a presentation on the effectiveness of a warning satellite to Brigadier General Temple. In the presentation, I stated that the infrared system would not support the resolution needed for the attack assessment project to meet its requirements. General Temple said that that was not his problem, the sensors should be improved. I pointed out that the Laws of Physics behind the system design would not allow that kind of resolution. The general then told my management that he did not want me on his project anymore. Since there were also no new projects to place me on, I was immediately reassigned from the project on Halloween, given a back office and told to do research. My request was to be laid off, but I was a highly ranked employee, so they could not do that. However, I got the message, and started looking for a new job. Three months later, Congress found out about the project deception and cancelled the funding. All the remaining TRW staff on the project were then terminated, including the manager who removed me from the project. He did not deserve it, as he supported my comments, but was forced by the general who was providing the funding.

I started working at Arete Associates in 1984, because Ken Nelson asked me to help them out on their project and was willing to provide moving expenses across the country back to Los Angeles. He then passed away suddenly 2 years later. In a staff meeting, the question was asked: “How did he die?” The company president stated that his heart stopped, and that there would be an investigation. I requested the autopsy report from the Los Angeles County Coroner Office. The cause of death was officially listed as suicide by asphyxiation. I gave a copy of the report to several co-workers who were Ken’s friends. Another error was that a head-hunter had submitted my job-seeking resume back to Arete. There was later a funding shortage, and most of the people who had the report were let go on Halloween morning at 9 AM on a Friday, given two weeks severance pay, and told to leave the premises by 9:30 AM. We were all requested to wear costumes for that day by the head of personnel, who was also unsuspectingly laid off. At 10 AM, I found myself (in costume) at the California Department of Employment filing for unemployment insurance. I took up golf that afternoon with my friend who also was laid off. I have played occasionally since then, but I am unsuccessful at breaking 144 for 18 holes.

In 1998, I was employed back at TRW in Redondo Beach. There was another funding shortage in October, as usual when working for the United States Government. My manager told me that no one that reports to her would be laid off the project. There was a Halloween costume contest that year judged by the higher company managers, all of whom were wearing nice business suits, which was the standard management attire at that time. I wore a business suit and shined shoes for the first (and last) time ever at the company, including the interview. I also wore a clown style multi-colored rainbow hair hat, and a large red clown nose. The bewildered judges asked me: “What are you?” My reply was: “I am manager, of course!” One judge said: “I do not understand”. My reply, in front of several watching co-workers: “I am a clown in a business suit”. A judge meekly said: “pretty close”, and they all shuffled off to the next contestant. My watching co-workers could not believe I actually said that! I was subsequently removed from the project. One co-worker said that was impossible, as the manager said that no one would be laid off from that group. She then went to see the manager to find out the reality. I could not be laid off from the company because I was again a highly-rated employee. However, several other highly-rated employees were also removed from the project at the same time since their assignments had been completed. We were reassigned to another project that was very glad to have us. This project was subsequently quite successful, completing within time and budget.