

International Film Circuit and Shout Factory

present

Fired!

A Shout Factory/International Film Circuit release of
A Wherespetey?! International Orange Production

Written and Produced by Annabelle Gurwitch

2006 - Color - Digibeta - 71 mins

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Synopsis

If you spend any time at all in the workplace you're going to get laid off, down-sized, let go, out-sourced, axed, terminated, canned, cancelled, dismissed...FIRED!

When actress Annabelle Gurwitch was fired from a play by Woody Allen she wondered how she would cope with being fired by a cultural icon. Turning to friends in show business she was assured she was not alone. Once the subject had been broached, everyone she knew from her rabbi and gynecologists to her colleagues had advice and their own accounts of getting the boot to offer. This set her off on a journey to answer the question: was being fired going to be the best thing or worst thing that had happened in her working life.

Annabelle turned the wit and trauma of the "fired" experience into a book, which was recently published by Simon and Schuster. The book has received rave reviews and been featured on The Today Show, People Magazine, InStyle, CNN, NPR's Talk of the Nation and widely praised. The Washington Post called it, "a caustic but merry compendium of failure." The New York Times said, "Fired proves that sometimes losing well is the best revenge." The book has been number #1 on the New York Post Hot List and featured in Oprah's Anticipation list.

As she was writing the book she became interested in the downsizings occurring all over the country. She began researching and traveling the country, interviewing people as diverse as Tim Allen, Sarah Silverman, Jeff Garlin, Anne Meara, David Cross and GM workers in Lansing, Michigan whose perspectives ranged from the tragically comedic to proving that old adage when one door closes another door opens, to the just plain tragic. Annabelle attended job fairs, received "outplacement services", interviewed human resource directors, downsizers, and the downsized who were seeking new jobs.

Her journey took her to the office of Robert Reich, former Labor Secretary under President Clinton, and to economist Ben Stein who spoke to her of the growing insecurity the American worker faces today and the incredible inequities being created through corporate and government policies affecting every working or as the case may be, not working American. Fired! reminds us that her that all great success come out of failure and being fired can be a part of the growth process, that humor helps, and that if you're employed in America today your firing may be the best and the worst thing that can happen in your working life.

CAST

Tim Allen	Anne Meara
Andy Borowitz	Bob Odenkirk
David Cross	Robert Reich
Andy Dick	Jeffrey Ross
Tate Donovan	Harry Shearer
Illeana Douglas	Sarah Silverman
Jeff Garlin	Ben Stein
Judy Gold	Fisher Stevens
Stephen Adly Guirgis	Paul F. Thompkins
Annabelle Gurwitch	Fred Willard
Richard Kind	

CREDITS

Written & Produced by **ANNABELLE GURWITCH**

Executive Producer **RICHARD FOOS & SHOUT FACTORY**

Directed, Photographed & Edited by **CHRIS BRADLEY & KYLE LA BRACHE**

A Wherespetey?/ International Orange Production
Produced in association with Showtime Channel and Sundance Network

ADDITIONAL CAST

- Robert Reich** Labor secretary under President Clinton, now Professor of Public Policy at The Goldman School of Public Policy at UC-Berkeley. He was once fired from the Solicitor General's office during the Reagan administration.
- Ben Stein** Economist, former speechwriter for Richard Nixon, and former host of the Comedy Central game show *Win Ben Stein's Money*. He was fired during the Ford administration by Donald Rumsfeld.
- Virgil Bernero** Mayor of Lansing, Michigan, elected in November 2005; formerly a Michigan state senator
- Anita Epolito** Resident of Lansing, Michigan, fired by her insurance company employer for refusing to be tested for nicotine under "firing at will" laws
- Tiny Sherwood** President of United Auto Workers local 652, Lansing Michigan
- Walter Schieb** White House Chef, served both terms of the Clinton Administration, fired by Laura Bush after 1 term
- Beverly Kaye** Lecturer and author of *Love' Em or Lose 'Em*, an employee-retention guidebook. CEO of Career Systems, Inc.
- Bruce Cameron** former HR director, syndicated columnist and author of *8 Simple Rules for Dating my Teenage Daughter*
- Rabbi Mel Gottlieb** Dean of the Academy of Jewish Religion, Los Angeles, CA
- Robin Schlien** Licensed therapist and grief facilitator, The Wellness Center of Santa Monica
- Roz Clayton** Department of Pediatrics, Cedar Sinai Hospital, Los Angeles, CA. Fired and considered taking out a hit on former boss
- Sossee Gomar** therapist, fired for crying during a robbery

QUOTES FROM FIRED!

Jeff Garlin ,“I’ve been fired more than anybody.
I should wear a tshirt that says fire me at all times!!”

Anne Meara, “We were fired from the whole state of Ohio.”

Robert Reich, “ I’d love to be fired by Woody Allen!”

Tiny Sherwood, president of UAW local 652 in Lansing Michigan,
“We’re being used as a tool to appease Wall Street, maybe the company should design cars
people want to buy!”

Sarah Silverman (fired from SNL), “They faxed me, no, they faxed my agent.”

Fred Willard, “They said, we’re proceeding without you, where are they going? Can I go
too?”

Tim Allen on his failed career in tool and dye, “It caused a union insurrection!”

Robert Reich, “ Most people who lose their job can get a new job, but the new job
probably won’t be paying as much as the old job. We are seeing a workforce grappling
with more insecurity than any time over the last century. Most of the benefits of economic
growth are going to the people at the top one per cent of our society. We’re not talking
rocket science here. I mean, we’re not in a jungle, it’s not every man for himself, if you
believe in a national community, we need a well functioning government. “

Former White House Chef Walter Scheib, “ Never judge yourself by how close you stand
to the President.”

Jeffrey Ross, (on Annabelle’s firing), “You were fired from a play? You must have really
sucked!”

Judy Gold, “ Later it can be funny, comedy equals tragedy plus time.”

Ben Stein, “The real problem is an ethical problem which occurs when the workers are laid
off, their pensions and health care terminated, the management reorganizes the company in
bankruptcy and walks away with hundreds of millions of dollars and its happening all over
America and it’s sickening. It is disgusting that we have men and women laying down
their lives in Iraq and Afghanistan for a just and compassionate America while at home
the looters are running wild.”

IS THE ECONOMY REALLY FIRED UP?

Compiled by Annabelle Gurwitch

The summer of 2006 saw the first emailed pink slips: it started with a worker in England announcing she had been canned in a text message and on Aug. 29th 400 Radio Shack employees received emails reading: “your position is one that has been eliminated” becoming the first recorded emailed RIF (Reduction in Force by more than 50 employees).

Whose economy is it anyway? Jobless rate in America is the lowest since 2001; but since 2001, 95% of working people in America’s wages have been flat or falling. Only the top 5% have shared in the economic growth. Real wages and salaries makeup the lowest share of the GDP since 1947, corporate profits are the highest they’ve been since the 1960’s.

Revenge of the Fired!

Carly Fiorina’s book Tough Choices in which she claims her firing was due to “the dysfunctional board” came out just in time for her to enjoy a little schadenfreude as the HP “pretexting” scandal led to the resignation of Chairwoman Patricia Dunn.

Where’s my gold watch?

You won’t be receiving a gold watch if you were working for any of these companies:

AOL said so long to 5,000. Employees in Aug 06.

Intel cut its ties to 10,000 employees in Sept 06.

Ford offered 75,000 workers buyout packages in October, and announced that 14 plants will close by 2012 eliminating 30,000 jobs. GM also offered buyouts to 100,000 workers if they said goodbye to their jobs.

Dupont declared in the week before Labor Day that new workers will no longer receive defined benefit pension plans and more tenured employees’ pensions will be reduced. And uh, we’re not offering health care either - Happy Labor Day!

Ratio of average CEO salary to the average American worker is now 435 to 1

People who are unemployed stay unemployed fifty percent longer than they did in the seventies, and only about half as many receive unemployment insurance as did so in 1947.

Other recent firings in America that received media coverage:

Miller employee fired for Drinking Bud Light.

Christian Radio Host fired for wondering if Pope would go to Heaven.

Cop fired for playing sick so he could go to Superbowl.

First Fired defense plea?

On October 16th a 63-year-old man who had lost his job was arrested for robbing banks. His defense: he couldn’t get a good job and was just trying to tide himself over until his social security kicks in. “The only jobs available to me (now) are minimum wage.”

Annabelle Gurwitch Tells How Getting Fired Got Her Fired Up

As I was collecting stories for the book *Fired!*, which I envisioned as a form of humor therapy, I began noticing firings all across the country and I set out to make this film to examine how people were coping with the massive amount of lay-offs. What I learned will not surprise you if you've ever "failed to meet expectations" or you're one of the thousands of people in the country who have been downsized to keep a company "competitive" or were laid off due to a bankruptcy restructuring. With Ford dropping 30,000 workers and offering 75,000 more buy outs, Hewlett-Packard cutting 14,000, GM to drop 30,000 and offer 100,000 more exit packages, Sony firing 20,000, American workers are finding themselves looking at vastly changed workplace which challenges our previously held notions about job security and what we can expect from the companies who employ us. Particularly troubling has been the failure of companies like Delphi. They originally proposed laying off 18,000 workers, cutting remaining workers' pay in half, while preserving 500 million dollars in bonuses for executives in their bankruptcy restructuring. As of now, the plan is still in contention. Of course, in the months since we've edited the film, even more disturbing news for working people has arrived as companies like Dupont have announced the end of defined benefit plans and are drastically cutting or eliminating health plans.

One of the things that was confirmed for me in doing this film is that misery loves company -- it can be cathartic to tell your story, and hearing the stories of others can really aid in the emotional healing process after a firing. Both Freud and Jung wrote about the palliative effects of humor on the wounded psyche and in my travels I have found this to be true. It helps to hear that Tim Allen once had a failed career in tool and dye and that you may not be the only person to get fired electronically, as the very talented Sarah Silverman was once fired by fax, and the other hilarious stories of crappy jobs that ended poorly.

It definitely lessens the stigma of being fired and that's important because, as Robert Reich told me, "We are seeing a workforce grappling with more job insecurity than ever before." When you lose your job, chances are your health care and pension are linked to that job, plus if a whole industry is shutting down, home values go down-- we are seeing whole cities grappling with this issue as I glimpsed in my visit to Lansing. My hope is that this film will give a face to these issues and add to the growing dialogue about our commitment as a nation to helping working people share in economic growth as well as raising people's spirits as they head back out in to the job market.

It was this combination of humor and social conscience that interested Richard Foos, founder of Rhino Records, now of The Shout Factory, who is the executive producer of this documentary. Richard became involved with the project after I interviewed him for the book about his own firing as a delivery person for a pharmacy. Richard is active in politics and humanitarian pursuits, and Shout has developed a great comedic library with the dvd release of things like "Freaks and Geeks" and their SCTV collections.

After shooting my friends and colleagues in the entertainment industry, I began contacting people all over the country whose diverse stories I began tracking in the media: Anita Epolito, whose firing from Weyco Company in Michigan received national coverage. She was deemed a health risk to her employers. Her story exemplifies that slippery slope of creating an unemployable class of people – a strategy that companies like Walmart are beginning to adopt. On the other hand, my investigations took me to the fired White House chef Walter Scheib, who felt it was time to make a change, and he welcomed the new challenge.

Eventually this journey took me to former labor secretary Robert Reich and economist Ben Stein who speak to the new oligarchy being created in this economy and to the inequities being created by policies adopted by numerous corporations and lax government oversight in the country today.

As I travel the country now, showing the film and doing book signing, people tell me their stories and I've heard it all ranging from a gentleman who passed me a note at a Washington screening which read, "Help! I'm trying to get fired from the World Bank, we don't fire anyone, that's our problem!" to an administrative assistant canned for refusal to trim her boss's nasal hairs to the UAW workers who are wondering what sort of devastation their communities will suffer as jobs dry up in the manufacturing sector. I have developed some advice for all of us who have to work for a living. I recommend the following:

Be ready to learn new skills. Being fired can be an opportunity to pursue the career you really want. The best revenge is success. Try not to live in one of the states in this country (there are 28) where you can legally be fired "at will" for no reason whatsoever. Always carry chocolate; I always carry it now in case of a random firing. Try to get others fired with you-- misery loves company, but if that doesn't work--keep your resume up to date, and for God's sake, if you're going to get fired in America today – be the CEO of a large corporation!

Annabelle Gurwitch
Writer/Producer
Biography

Actress and humorist Annabelle Gurwitch, is best known to television audiences for her many years as the co-host of the cult favorite “Dinner and a Movie” on TBS. She appears opposite Tim Allen in this year’s Shaggy Dog for Disney and is currently a contributing writer and commentator on “Day to Day” on NPR. She has written for The Los Angeles Times Magazine, Glamour, Cooking Light, and Child. Annabelle’s first comedic book came out this year from Simon and Schuster. Fired! Tales of the Canned, Canceled, Downsized and Dismissed, was published this year by Simon and Schuster. Fired! carries the message of turning your crappy experiences in the workplace into opportunities for growth through humor, perspective and a little imagination. The book has spawned contests all over the country. In addition, she has personal appearances lined up across the country through 2007.

Annabelle has hosted series on ABC, The Style Channel, Sci-Fi, Style, E and Game Show Network. She stars in the indie “Melvin Goes to Dinner” with Jack Black playing now on Showtime, and she appears opposite Tim Allen in the recently released “The Shaggy Dog” for Disney. On TV : she has twice been nominated for Ace Awards: for “Dinner and a Movie,” and for anchoring two seasons of “Not Necessarily the News” on HBO, she has been featured on “Boston Legal”, “Charmed,” “Seinfeld,” and over 40 other episodics, and movies-of-the-week. Other films include: “Daddy Day Care,” “Mouse Hunt” and the just completed “Searching for Mickey Fish.”

Annabelle is from a large southern family in Alabama, grew up in Miami Beach, attended NYU and lives in Los Angeles with her husband Emmy Award winning writer Jeff Kahn and their eight year old son.

Richard Foos

Executive Producer

Biography

Richard Foos, founder of Rhino Records and currently CEO of Shout! Factory, became involved with the documentary “Fired!” when Annabelle Gurwitch was interviewing him for her book. She simply asked him if he would be willing to finance a documentary on the subject. He agreed to do it right away.

Referring to his own extraordinary career, he confesses, “I just kind of made it up as I went along. What we’ve accomplished has only been partly the result of having a vision; a lot of it’s just been an instinctive sensibility about what entertains people.”

Foos has dedicated more than three decades to preserving and purveying his own favorite forms of entertainment, approaching his work with the gusto of a lifelong collector. “I’ve always been a pop-culture fanatic,” he attests. “I’m passionate about it, and I’m always on the lookout for things that are interesting, edgy or just fun.”

Starting with his incredible achievements at Rhino Entertainment and extending to his current success with Shout! Factory, Foos has also maintained a commitment to philanthropy and community outreach.

Born in New York and raised in various East Coast locales, Foos cut his teeth on the pop music of the early ’60s. The wild variety of musical genres that preceded the British Invasion would forever be imprinted on Foos. “There was unbelievable eclecticism on the radio then,” he says.

He moved to Los Angeles with his family just before his last year of high school, later attending California State University at Northridge, where he majored in sociology. In 1973, he began by selling records out of a yellow Ford van, shuttling between swap meets and used record stores. Next came a vinyl concession in an electronics store owned by a friend’s family. With virtually no overhead, he learned to run his business on the fly. “I did that for a year or two,” Foos reports, “then I opened Rhino Records.”

In short order, Rhino established itself as one of Southern California’s hippest and best-known record outlets. Eventually it became a label, specializing in brilliantly repackaged classic recordings and setting the industry standard for reissued music.

Thanks to what Foos describes as a “loose and informal” environment that encouraged employee self-expression and public service, Rhino gained a reputation as one of the most progressive workplaces in the entertainment sphere. Foos himself serves on Rock the Vote, The Rhythm and Blues Foundation, Rock the Classroom and Chrysalis, among others – all have in common a mission of social justice and equality.

By the time the label was purchased by Time Warner, it had created an indelible brand identity. When Foos departed in 2002, Rhino Entertainment was responsible for more than \$100 million in revenues.

Richard Foos, along with his brother Garson Foos and Bob Emmer, both former key Rhino executives, soon set to work on a new company. Foos' infectious enthusiasm for the propagation of pop-culture products was embodied in the new company's name. "We came up with 'Shout!' because we love the old song [first recorded by the Isley Brothers in 1959]." The name Shout! Factory, he and his cohorts decided, perfectly captured the idea of an enterprise devoted to whatever they felt like shouting about.

Shout! Factory proceeded to release not only people-pleasing music but also TV shows, documentaries, spoken word recordings and any other entertainment the founders deemed worthy of celebration – as long as it fit under the rubric of pop culture. "It has to be something with real pop appeal," Foos reiterates. "For instance, I've always idolized Groucho Marx, and the first thing we did was the *You Bet Your Life* DVD. I don't think you'll ever find us putting out orchestral music or exercise videos."

Shout! Factory's eclectic slate of releases testifies to the free-ranging proclivities of its founders. The company has issued DVD boxed sets compiling beloved TV series such as *SCTV* and *Freaks and Geeks*; new music from soul legend Solomon Burke; a Herb Alpert and the Tijuana Brass anthology; highlights from Major League Baseball, the World Poker Tour and the numerous films of winter-sports wizard Warren Miller; and documentaries on Howard Hughes, the 2000 Presidential election and alternative-rock gods The Flaming Lips, among many other projects.

Chris Bradley & Kyle LaBrache

Co-directors/photographers/editors

Chris Bradley and Kyle LaBrache are award-winning filmmakers and partners in the Los Angeles-based production company, International Orange.

They met and became involved in creative projects together while playing in a rock band together at UCLA. Post-college, they were contracted to make large-scale nightclub projections and art installations in New York and Los Angeles. This led to directing music videos, promos, and tour films for numerous artists.

They directed 13 episodes of the hit Nickelodeon show, *The Nick Canon Show*, a docu-style teen comedy with guest stars Britney Spears, P Diddy, Eddie Murphy, Mary J. Blige, Master P, Kenan Thompson, and Will Smith.

Chris and Kyle then traveled the world making feature-length documentary films that have been hits on the film festival circuit the past few years. They include “*The Spaceman In Cuba*,” about a team of retired American baseball players on a road trip through Cuba. “*A Day In The Light*,” a critically acclaimed profile of enlightened Hindu saint, Pujya Muniji, and “*Jon E. Edwards Is In Love*,” the story of a struggling soul singer who still lives with his mother.

Recently Chris and Kyle directed “*Illeanarama*,” a scripted comedy pilot for New Line Television about an alternate universe where famous actors are resigned to working in a supermarket.

Chris and Kyle have recently completed post-production on “*Pittsburgh*,” a comedic feature film starring Jeff Goldblum, Illeana Douglas, Ed Begley, Jr., and Moby.

Praise for FIRED! the Book

“Sometimes the best revenge is losing well.”- *New York Times*

“Trump may have popularized the phrase “You’re fired,” but he certainly hasn’t made it any easier to hear..[Gurwitch] is making the saying a little more tolerable with her new book, *Fired!*” --*Jane* magazine

“Been canned lately? Take solace from others who’ve been there in *Fired!*”
--*New York Post*--#1 on the Hot list

“Annabelle Gurwitch’s new book will make you think twice about getting fired. Seriously...Gurwitch created *Fired!*, a hilarious and often inspiring collection of stories...the punch line is that failure never stopped anyone from having success. And if that makes you feel warm and gooey inside, then so be it.” --*Zink* magazine

“Huffman and various other well known names -including Andy Borowitz, Larry David and Patricia Heaton - share stories of their humiliation in this comic compendium.”
--*Daily News* (New York)

“People need to hear these stories. It’s the best kind of comedy -- rooted in empathy and with a serious point.” --*Cox News Service*

“A frank and funny look at job loss and downsizing”. --The Associated Press

“She has turned her misfortune into an entertainment most of us can identify with.” --Hollywood Reporter

“A comedic twist –to all those who have been advised by a boss that their services are no longer required.” --*The Aspen Times*

“Droll humor with a dash of celebrity; the cream of that crop is gathered in this star-studded collection of misery.” --*Publishers Weekly*