

## COMMENTARY

## Land of opportunity



"Plus ça change, plus c'est meme chose," according to the rather world-weary French. The more things change, the more they remain the same.

But that isn't true, not here in America, and especially not here in Southwest Florida.

It can't be true, not when you can get work in the middle of a recession — relatively high-paying work, as much work as you want, for God's sake — dressing like a sandwich.

I kid you not, it has come to this (and this is nothing like I can remember, change or no change): Dress like a sandwich and you can make your dreams come true.

If you're a failed actor and you need a gig, if you need a second job or even a first one that pays a lot more than \$10 per hour, if you want to work up the \$1,000 down payment on a small foreclosed home faster than you can say "eviction" three times... well Jack, here's your chance.

Tired of the great gray north? Looking for some sunshine without too much ozone to get in the way of a good tan?

You need only to check out the job ads on craigslist.org to find this, posted just last week: "Must be willing to dress up like a \$5 foot-long sub while parading around on the sidewalk asking people if they would like extra mayo with it and

you have to RAISE your eyebrows or wink seductively."

No experience required, and probably none possible. What could ever prepare you for this?

Keep in mind, it may not be as easy as it sounds. Pay careful attention to the verbs in the ad. Your employer wants artistry, not a meatball. (Those glutinous gobs of ground animal snouts go ON the \$5 foot-long sub, not out in front of the shop, Jack, OK?) You have to go around "parading" and "asking." You have to "RAISE your eyebrows" and "wink seductively."

But here's the problem, as I see it. If you're dressed like a \$5 foot-long sandwich, you can't raise your eyebrows because \$5 foot-long sandwiches don't come garnished with eyebrows. Times aren't that tough — not yet, anyway.

And no way can you wink seductively. Can you? You can only wink like a \$5 foot-long sub, I suppose. And for \$5, it isn't going to be the Rolls Royce of subs — more like the 1995 Ford Escort of subs, and how seductive is that?

For this skill, though, if you have it, you will be paid \$14.75 every hour, which is \$118 for an eight-hour day, which amounts to \$590 per week in gross income. And depending on your affection for \$5 foot-long subs, I mean really gross.

But it gets better. And also more demanding.

"You can have all the hours you like during our business hours of 9 a.m. to 10 (p.m.)," according to the ad.

Do you realize what this means? It means you have a naked opportunity, a

very seductive (wink) chance right in the middle of a recession, to work yourself to death. That is, if you have the stamina to go along with your talent.

A chance like this in a recession — a chance to work "all the hours you like" — is akin to a chance to eat all the \$5 foot-long subs you like while you're starving to death.

Just say yes, and you can work 11 hours per day, at least six days per week, and probably seven.

So let's say you work six days a week for 11 hours (you can keep that seventh day for working on your tan). In that case, according to my accountant, you could gross almost \$1,000 per week (\$975.50, to be exact), which is about \$4,000 a month or — in a 52-week year — almost \$52,000 per annum.

It isn't the stuff of great wealth, but it's solidly middle class. It's get-ahead money. You can make the mortgage with it. You can eat twice a year in any restaurant on 5th Avenue South in Naples if you stick to the hors d'oeuvres menu only, or any restaurant in the River District in Fort Myers if you don't order a glass of wine or dessert.

But don't count on the job just yet — not unless you can sing, too.

The ad concludes by citing a final rather stringent job requirement: "When you come to apply you will be required to sing the \$5 foot-long sub song while entering our shop... The first one to do this will get the job. Good luck

"P.S. you have to be LOUD and OBNOXIOUS!!!!!"

Now what could the \$5 foot-long sub song be, anyway?

Maybe: "You can't always get what you want, you can't always get what you want,

"And for \$5, it isn't going to be the Rolls Royce of subs — more like the 1995 Ford Escort of subs..."

you can't always get what you want, but if you try sometimes, you just might find... you get a \$5 foot-long SUBeeeeee!" Naw.

How about: "Take me down to the Paradise City where the grass is green and the \$5 foot-long subs are not bitty..." Definitely not.

Nope, my son Googled it for me. Most of it goes like this: "5, \$5, 5, get a \$5 foot-long." And that's not good enough. So let's try this, instead:

"I'm built like a hammer and my name is Jack,

I'm a foot-long sub and I ain't no quack I'll do you up quick and I'll do you up right

My double-dose of MAYO is out of sight

'Cause I'm a \$5 hit man, a \$5 sub I'm a \$5 hit man, you know I'm good Grub!"

Yep, that's it, that's the real \$5 foot-long sub song. They just don't know it yet. It's got to be. And why?

Because we live in the land of opportunity, and you can seize it, right now. You can go in there, loud and obnoxious, and show 'em: The more things change around here, the different they get.

But that's what I love about this place. ■

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