

# Looking for work

BY REBECCA ZISCH

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I keep reading about the steady reduction in Las Vegas' unemployment. In fact, the U.S. Department of Labor reported our local percentage as a comfortable 4.6 percent in February 2004, down from 6.5 percent in February 2002. It's nice to think of so many people having a safe, happy place to go to work. Everyone whistling, carrying lunch boxes and punching in at the time clock. Everyone but me, that is.

Being unemployed, or more accurately partially employed, at a time when unemployment isn't common is strangely pleasant. Despite the bureaucratic, Kafka-esque ramblings of the letters and reports I receive from the Department of Unemployment, I have had only ridiculously amiable experiences with its employees. In fact, I have never had to wait on hold more than five minutes to speak to an actual, affable person.

Of course, reduced unemployment statistics means two things: There are more people working at the unemployment office and less people needing their services. It is easier to be consistently congenial if your work load is manageable.

It occurred to me that since the unemployment rate in Las Vegas is down, perhaps the key to finding a fulfilling new job would be to focus on employment that is particularly needed in our community. Valet parking immediately came to mind. But then I remembered that I've never truly mastered the art of the manual transmission. I don't think hotel guests would appreciate me grinding their gears.

Unfortunately, I'm right at that awkward age when I'm too old to be an exotic dancer and too young to be a strip club house mother.

I think I'd enjoy driving a cab or a limousine. But I'm afraid I would just have impossibly glamorous expectations because of the brilliant tourist specimens featured on HBO's "Taxicab Confessions." I actually did interview to be a wedding coordinator. What job could be more locally appropriate than helping people get married in the wedding capital of the world? The owner of the wedding chapel told me that she thought I would be an asset to the company and do extremely well with the clients. On the other hand, she thought the rest of the wedding coordinators would drive me crazy.

Now, this may very well be true. But how could she tell by looking at me?

Despite any apparent lunatic tendencies, I have managed to retain the countenance and composure of a hard worker. Recently, I received a notice to appear at Nevada Job Connect to prove I was indeed the person I claim to be. Upon arrival, the extremely pleasant woman who handled my paperwork smiled at me with the camaraderie and spunk of a Girl Scout leader and said: "Whew! Aren't you glad it's Friday? Hasn't it been a really long week?"

Clearly she had momentarily forgotten that her profession mandates that she speak to unemployed people all day. But at the same time, I thought to myself: "Yes, I am glad it's Friday. It has been a long, hard week rethinking my life's ambitions while succeeding at my current full-time appointment: looking for a job." **CL**