

# Bitchin' & Moaning

## Sign Twirlers

By Judith A. Habert

There are some things that are just so "San Diego" that most of us who were originally from other parts of the country are sometimes flabbergasted at the phenomenon we find around us. The one that comes to mind first is the entire concept of "Sign Twirlers." In every other part of the world if a store or restaurant wants to advertise their services they do one (or more) of several things. Perhaps an ad in a great publication such as San Diego Woman, or a radio or TV spot, or maybe even a mobile billboard. It wasn't until I set foot in San Diego that I came across the concept of Sign Twirlers.

Not to say that I am not amazed at the abilities of these young - and sometimes not so young - professional twirlers, but I have to ask one major question; why not just add a post to the sign and leave it in a stationary position? Perhaps, place it in a pail full of concrete, or even more unique - affix it to your place of business? How does the addition of a person playing air guitar with a sign, twirling it around, throwing it up in the air, or mindlessly dancing around it while engrossed in the song playing on their iPod improve business to a local enterprise. First of all, as my daughter recently informed me, these sign twirlers are paid pretty well; usually making \$12-\$15 per hour! And if they are lucky enough to be working for a food establishment, lunch is usually part of the deal. The kids behind the counter at McDonald's don't see anywhere near that much money per hour for enduring annoying customers and greasy environments that cause more problems for their already problematic acne prone skin. Okay, don't get me wrong, the job of Sign Twirler is not easy. After all there is a course they must take. I believe it is entitled Sign Twirling 101 in which they learn how to properly twirl the sign, throw the sign in the air, and play air guitar with the sign. They must endure the possibility of sun stroke if not properly oiled with sun screen, and on those rare occasions, okay maybe not so rare during May Gray and June Gloom, the cold and rain. They must also learn how to stare down passing motorists, (how do they manage to look you in the eye while not losing a twirling beat?) and they are not allowed under any circumstances to sit down on the job. Personally, possibly due to my advancing age and deteriorating eyesight, I find it difficult to read what the signs say. Okay, I do admit that if it seems an intriguing message I may find the need to circle the block a second time to read what it says. If you think about it, Sign Twirlers can therefore be at fault for increased traffic flow, as I find it hard to believe that I am the only one who feels compelled to circle to read the message. What I truly want to know is how did the con-

cept start? Were there a bunch of local business men and women sitting around a chamber of commerce meeting discussing ways to improve their businesses? Was it one person who looked that group of impressive business people in the eye and said, "Hey, I have the perfect solution. Let's hire a 16 year old kid or an elderly person with no other job opportunities to hold a huge replica of our company name and throw it up in the air, catch it, twirl around and play air guitar with it and I guarantee more people will eat at our pizzeria, or buy a mattress from us." Of course that met with more



excitement than the thought of a direct mail campaign or a print advertisement, or maybe even reducing prices to draw customers in. I often wonder what happens to those who don't make the grade and don't end up graduating from Sign Twirling 101. Perhaps they become roulette wheel spinners, or are anxiously awaiting Vana White's retirement so they can turn the letters on Wheel of Fortune. My other concern involves whether or not there is a test for prospective candidates of the Sign Twirler academy. I have known (in my lifetime) some pretty uncoordinated individuals who might be a danger to society if given a sign to twirl. Well actually they might hurt themselves. Hopefully there is a screening method to help minimize self injury. In any event, I suppose sign twirling is a noble profession...It could be worse, they could be one of those annoying people in the kiosks at the mall trying to upgrade you to a new cell phone plan.