

Odd Jobs

Do you ever wonder whose job it is to do some of the less desirable things in life? If you think about it, there's a job doing almost anything, no matter how exciting, disgusting or just plain weird it may seem.

For example, remember when you stuck your wad of gum underneath the seat of a roller coaster so you wouldn't choke? That sticky mess didn't just disappear -- a gum buster scraped it off, using a special steaming tool that removes gum stuck to various surfaces.

Think about all those times your golf ball didn't make it over the water. Did you think the fish ate them? Nope, a golf ball diver, who scours the depths of bodies of water on golf courses to find lost golf balls to refinish and resell, got it.

Many Americans dominate the corporate working world, but don't forget about those who took the road less traveled. Through photography in her books, "Odd Jobs" and "Odder Jobs," Nancy Rica Schiff portrays people working jobs you probably won't find in the Sunday classifieds.

They aren't your run-of-the-mill doctors, lawyers and the like. Some are simple, some complex; some are common, some one in a million -- but one thing's for sure -- they are all (extremely) unusual.

Here are 20 odd jobs portrayed in Rica Schiff's books.

1. Breath odor evaluator

What they do: Odor judges smell nasty morning breath or breath "insulted" with strong scents, like garlic or coffee. They rate the breath on a scale from one to nine, one being the worst. To test odor-reducing products like gum or mouthwash, they smell the breath again and assign it a new rating.

2. Diener

What they do: Prepare cadavers for the pathologist before autopsies are performed in hospitals.

3. Ribbon candy puller

What they do: After a heated combination of sugar, corn syrup, water and coloring agent has cooled, batches of different colors are laid out side by side. Someone then pulls the candy thin until it's about an inch wide. The final product is a multicolored hard candy.

4. Ocularist

What they do: In short, they paint artificial eyes. It sounds easier than it is, since as with real eyes, no two are exactly the same.

5. Flatulence smell-reduction underwear maker

What they do: Create underwear that protect against bad human gas for people who suffer from gastrointestinal problems. The underwear is made with various materials and filters to help remedy hydrogen sulfide gases, the main offender in foul smells.

6. Beer tester

What they do: Taste -- and spit out -- beer all day to approve new and existing flavors.

7. Crack filler

What they do: Using a silicone sealant, they repair the wear and tear inflicted on monumental structures, like Mount Rushmore.

8. Ball tester

What they do: Assess basketballs, footballs, volleyballs and soccer balls for air-retention, inflation, roundness, weight and reboundability.

9. Video game tester

What they do: For eight hours a day, five days a week, a group of males and females of all ages play video games. They repeat levels, games and characters, looking for any bugs and/or glitches in the software.

10. Tampon tester

What they do: Check all sizes of tampons for absorbency and cord strength in accordance with FDA standards. Most testers check up to 125 pieces per day.

11. Gold reclaimer

What they do: Scour old teeth for fillings, melting the gold from them with broken gold jewelry into tiny gold pellets, which is then re-sold to jewelers.

12. Dog sniffer

What they do: Once a week, they analyze the odor of dog's breath to test the effect of their diet on their teeth. Breath is graded on a scale of zero to 10 and is categorized as sweaty, salty, musty, fungal or decaying.

13. Potato chip inspector

What they do: Search for over-cooked or clumped chips to discard as they come down the assembly line.

14. Porta-potty servicer

What they do: Like regular restrooms, portable toilets need maintenance, too. Once a week, service workers clean these single-stall facilities to achieve certain standards of sanitation.

15. Barbie dress designer

What they do: Fashion designers at Mattel Toys, the company behind Barbie, create hundreds of new styles for Barbie and her ever-expanding entourage.

16. Wax figure maker

What they do: Mold wax to create figures, often for, but not limited to, the human form. Figures are often made in the likeness of people who have achieved historical or celebrity recognition.

17. Safe cracker

What they do: When combinations are lost or forgotten, safe crackers use their ears and fingers to open the safe.

18. Wig maker

What they do: Put simply, they make wigs, but the process is anything but simple. First, wig makers create a plastic model of the wearer's head and hairline, and then they transfer the mold onto a padded canvas similar to the client's general head size, covering it with wig lace. Using a needle, they knot and pull thousands of hairs, one by one, through the mesh cap. Once all the hairs are in place, the wig is styled to the wearer's preference.

19. Paper towel sniffer

What they do: Paper towel manufacturers prefer their products to be odorless before, during and after their use. Naturally, paper towel sniffers ensure that once a paper towel is used, there is no noticeable scent.

20. Foley artist

What they do: Use whatever they can find to create and record the noises used to make the sound effects in films, like heavy footsteps, rolling thunder or creaking doors.

-from Career Builder and CNN