

WHAT'S SO FUNNY?
Comedian Tim Conway on
life on the go during
the Depression **M16**



MANSION

*'As a remedy to life in society
I would suggest the big city. Nowadays,
it is the only desert within our means.'*

—Albert Camus

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THE \$200,000 BUTLER

Demand for the well-staffed home is on the rise, with owners shelling out for estate managers, live-in couples, teams of housekeepers and a chef for the summer house. A spike in requests for 'Downton Abbey'-type service.

BY SARAH TILTON

GOOD HELP IS HARD to find—especially when employers are creating job descriptions based on Downton Abbey and expecting a level of service associated with five-star resorts or Buckingham Palace.

Demand for the well-staffed home is on the rise, according to agencies and house managers alike. Clients are calling for live-in couples, live-out housekeepers, flight attendants for private jets, stewards for the yachts and chefs for the summer house. In San Francisco, Town and Country Resources, a staffing agency for domestic help, has seen demand for estate managers and trained housekeepers grow so fast the agency is going to offer its own training programs in subjects like laundry, ironing and spring cleaning starting in 2014.

Claudia Kahn, founder of The Help Company, a staffing agency based in Los Angeles, says she used to get one call a month for a butler but has gotten three in the past week alone. Some request old-fashioned "Downton Abbey"-type

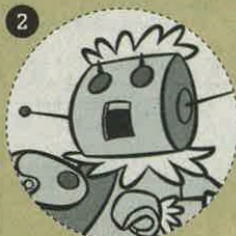
Help Yourself

Can you identify some of pop culture's best-known butlers and maids?

(Answers on M12)



CLUE: Ambivalent when a telephone joins the household.



CLUE: She was hired from U-RENT A MAID.



CLUE: Begrudgingly runs his master's bath.



CLUE: Raised on a cotton plantation in the 1920s.



CLUE: Has been the butler all of his master's life.



CLUE: Her boyfriend was Sam the butcher.

Clockwise from top left: Masterpiece/PBS/Everett Collection; Hanna-Barbera/Everett Collection; Warner Brothers/Everett Collection; ABC Photo Archives/Getty Images (2); The Weinstein Company

service," a phenomenon she attributes partly to the popularity of the television show and partly to clients yearning to match the lifestyle they experience at high-end resorts and on yachting trips.

As most homeowners know, a home's purchase price is just the beginning. And the bigger the house, the greater the number of dust bunnies. A good housekeeper earns \$60,000 to \$90,000 a year. A lady's maid can make \$75,000 a year. A butler may start at \$80,000 a year and can earn as much as \$200,000.

Vincent Minuto, founder of employment agency Hampton Domestic, based in Sag Harbor, N.Y., and with offices in Manhattan, Palm Beach and Miami Beach, recommends one person for every 3,000 square feet for housekeeping alone. He says clients spend anywhere from \$35,000 a year to over \$1 million a year on staff. (The larger number reflects clients with several homes that are staffed year-round.)

While some clients aspire to a Downton Abbey style, their day-to-day reality is often a bit different. Craig Johnstone is a

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The \$200,000 Butler

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butler who got his start at Buckingham Palace as a royal footman—someone who has training in the glass pantry, the silver pantry and the wine cellars, is trained as a professional valet and lays the table for breakfast, lunch and afternoon tea. He says the job has changed, reflecting modern life. "The houses can be very, very busy and one minute you might be driving the children around or shopping or walking the dog or serving at the table," says Mr. Johnstone, who currently does consulting and training of household staffs.

Some clients want help but worry about their image. While one family is fine having a staff of eight, others worry about looking pretentious, says Ms. Kahn of The Help Company.

Then there is living with the retinue. "People buy these big houses and then all of a sudden they're living with a lot of people, so the privacy thing is interesting," says Ms. Kahn. "I ask 'Are you OK having a chef and a server in the kitchen?'" She predicts that open floor plans will eventually fall out of favor with wives who have nowhere to go in their own homes.

A client called her once from a closet, since it was the only place she had privacy, Ms. Kahn says. Another just built a separate kitchen for the staff.

Yet another client is putting up walls on the first floor of their new house.

The care and maintenance of large homes isn't a new challenge. The Duchess of Rutland in 2001 moved into Belvoir Castle in England, a property that her husband's family has owned for almost a thousand years. Since then she has had a full-time job maintaining the more than 200-room home on approximately 16,000 acres.

The duchess says she has had to look at the house in a "business way," estimating that it costs half a million pounds (almost \$800,000 dollars) a year to live in the castle. So gone are the two chefs, the chauffeur and the four butlers she inherited. Now there is one butler and two part-time cleaners, though a bevy of volunteers help keep the house up as it's now open to the public. She adds that in today's world everyone has to multitask: "No one's just a butler." The founder of

clothing and accessories line Billionaire Mafia and star of the reality television show "Sin City Rules," Lana Fuchs recently up-sized from a 9,200-square-foot home in Las Vegas to an 11,600-square-foot Tuscan-influenced home with two kitchens, a wine cellar and multiple bars as the family likes to entertain. She will be bringing her housekeeping staff of three (two live in) and is considering adding a fourth person.

She will also be bringing with her the two animal trainers who come seven days a week to care for Prince Mikey, a white-faced capuchin monkey. Prince Mikey's trainers work with him five to six hours a day during the week and three hours a day on weekends. Mrs. Fuchs says Prince Mikey had become "spoiled rotten," especially compared with her college-age son and her high school-age daughter. The annual cost is in the six figures, but Mrs. Fuchs says it's worth it. "For the first eight years, he had me trained to

serve him," says Mrs. Fuchs, age 44. Among his new tricks, Prince Mikey now sits in a high chair and is learning to draw with crayons, says Mrs. Fuchs.

Michael Bruno, the founder of 1stdibs, a global online retail site for antiques, furniture and jewelry, has a 12,000-square-foot house in Tuxedo Park, N.Y., a boat house and two homes in Southampton, N.Y. His to-do list includes hand-washing the silver and certain sets of china. Glassware shouldn't touch when stored lest it chip. Towels should be folded in even thirds, using the first towel as a guide so all the towels in a stack are the same width.

"The pillows were never right on the bed," he says. "They were straight up and down."

To help keep everything straight, Mr. Bruno invented a multilingual app called the House Pad that will launch in December. His two part-time housekeepers log in when they get to work—it texts Mr. Bruno that they've arrived and tracks their hours. The app includes an image library with notes by room. Mr. Bruno has photographed every tabletop and pillow so the staff knows how they should look.

Now "my house is constantly flawless," says Mr. Bruno. The only change he's considering is possibly hiring a cook.

QUIZ ANSWERS

1. Mr. Charles Carson (Jim Carter) of "Downton Abbey"

2. Rosey the Robot of "The Jetsons"

3. Hobson (John Gielgud) of "Arthur" and "Arthur 2"

4. Cecil Gaines (Forest Whitaker) in "Lee Daniels' The Butler"

5. Alfred Pennyworth (Alan Napier) of the "Batman" TV series

6. Alice Nelson (Ann B. Davis) of "The Brady Bunch"