

The quarterly journal of The Wodehouse Society

Volume 26 Number 1 Spring 2005

Hooray for Hollywood!

Can it be 2005 is here already? Wasn't it just yesterday we were browsing, sluicing, and whooping it up in Toronto? Is the Los Angeles convention *really* only a few months away?

The answers to those questions are yes, no, and yes—and that final yes means it's time to fill out your registration form and send in your oof for what promises to be a dashed good time in the splendid environment UCLA will be providing for this year's gathering. Hold on to your hats as you look over this tantalizing schedule (please note that times in *italics* are tentative):

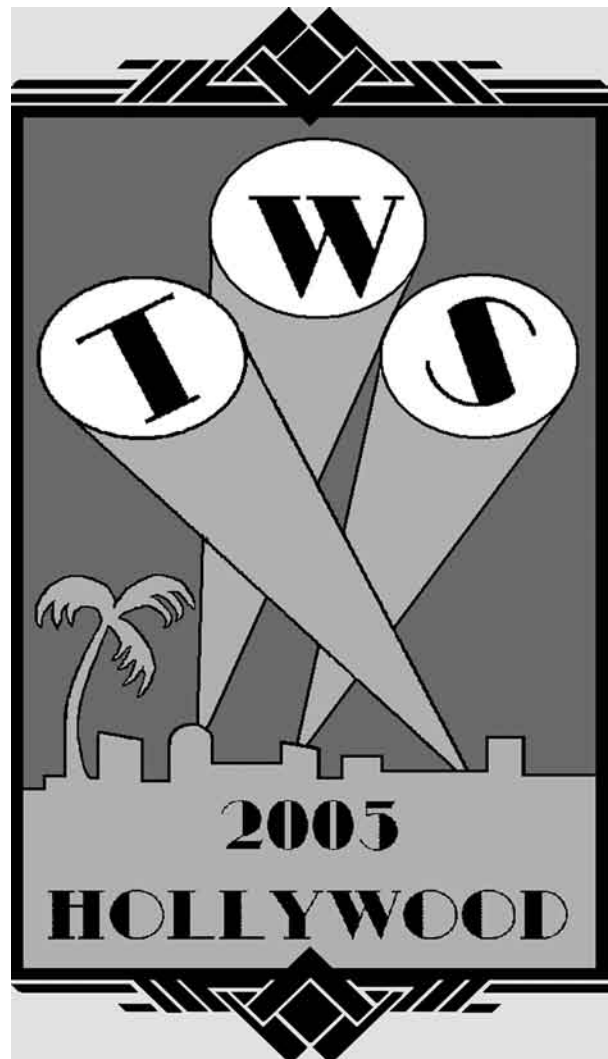
Thursday, August 11

1:00 P.M.–5:00 P.M.: Early registration
Evening free. Hit the town, or dine with other Wodehousians arriving early.

Friday, August 12

9:00 A.M.–5:00 P.M.: Registration, booksellers, chapters corner, etc.
10:00 A.M.–3:00 P.M.: Bus tour of Hollywood (including Paramount Studios tour)
5:00–6:00 P.M.: Clients of Adrian Mulliner meeting
6:00–8:00 P.M.: Barbecue on the terrace, with wine and beer included
8:00–11:30 P.M.: Clean Bright Entertainment, with wine and beer included, in the Grand Horizon Room (to which the terrace is attached)

- Max Pokrivchak: The Great Wodehouse Movie Pitch Challenge (see page 3 for details)
- The NEWTS: "Penny's from Hades" (skit)
- Music and other bits of fun guaranteed to keep all Wodehousians entertained well into the evening!



Saturday, August 13

Presentations (tentative; subject to change)

Brian Taves: Movies of PGW, post-1915

Hilary and Robert Bruce: TBA

Chris Dueker: Food Memories

Melissa Aaron: "The Art of the Banjolele"

Gary Hall, Linda Adam-Hall, David and Elizabeth

Landman: "Jeeves and the Kid Clementina"
(reading)

TWS business meeting: election of new president
and vice president, 2007 convention bids, etc.)

Tony Ring: "Published Works on Wodehouse"

Elin Woodger: Two Mysteries

Blandings Castle: "Hollywood Comes to Blandings"
(skit)

The Banquet (Grand Horizon Room)

6:00–7:00 P.M.: Reception on the terrace

7:00–11:00 P.M.: Dinner and program, with Blandings
Castle's Bill Franklin as our Master of Ceremonies.
Program to include costume and raffle prizes.

Sunday, August 14

8:30–10:30 A.M.: Brunch in the Grand Horizon Room

- Perfecto-Zizzbaum: "The Rise of Minna Nordstrom" (reading)

Ending with tearful au revoirs until we meet again in 2007

For those who mourn the lack of cricket, we apologize, but unfortunately the gods were not kind to us this year, and we were unable to get a field. However, we hope to make up for this by including a visit to the Hollywood Cricket Club on our Friday bus tour. And for those wondering about transportation arrangements, see the offer from Perfecto-Zizzbaum's Beth Miles on this page.

So what are you waiting for? The registration form is enclosed—send it in now, and look forward to having the time of your life in Hollywood!

"I have a plan. Shorty will accompany us to Dottyville-on-the-Pacific."

...

"Where is Dottyville-on-the-Pacific?" asked Lord Shortlands.

"A little west of Los Angeles," said Mike. "It is sometimes known as Hollywood. We shall be starting thither almost any day now. . . ."

Spring Fever, 1948

Getting Around in L.A.

BY BETH MILES

Do you find you can't walk as far as you used to? I do out here, but I remember last year in Le Touquet I used to do my seven miles without feeling it. I think it's mainly the California climate.

—P. G. Wodehouse, letter to
Bill Townend, 1937

From the Perfecto-Zizzbaum Transportation Department:

As Plummies begin to make their plans for Hollywood, we at PZMPCo feel it necessary to tug your sleeves with some friendly advice: Public transportation in Los Angeles is pretty bad. The climate in August is fairly hot. This is hardly news, but we can hear the whisper flying round the chapters: "Oh, surely, it's not THAT bad."

As one who has commuted by bus in L.A., please believe me when I say that it's not something that can be done easily on weekends. Regardless of how much we might wish otherwise, PZMPCo feels it will be necessary for some folks to rent cars.

And there is the nub. Similar to the roommate-matching services for this and previous conventions, we at PZMPCo are happy to offer a service to match up Plummies who wish to share a rental car for the weekend. We won't be responsible for their driving, but we will provide you with a new pal/s for the weekend to split the bill. Just contact Elizabeth Miles (elizabeth.miles@gmail.com; phone 626-577-3931) with inquiries about matching or any transportation questions you might have.

Still have questions about the convention?

Go to <http://www.wodehouse.org/TWSHollywood.html>. Also, find more information in this issue on pages 3, 12, and 23!

Reminder: New Dues Address



Amy Plofker, our membership manager and treasurer, would like to remind one and all Society members that you are always welcome to renew your membership for multiple years. This would reduce the frequency with which you receive those daunting yellow Dues Are Due sheets. *And remember that Amy has changed her address!* She's now at 111 Rice Ave Floor 1, Sleepy Hollow NY 10591-1937.

The Great Wodehouse Movie Pitch Challenge

BY MAX POKRIKVCHAK

As we know, Plum was misunderstood and underutilized by Hollywood. The Great Wodehouse Movie Pitch Challenge lets you experience firsthand those same feelings of neglect and ennui, only without Plum's exorbitant accompanying salary. Here's how it works:

1. Entrants must submit a one- to three-page movie "treatment" (a brief synopsis, including any relevant details—cast, location, key dialog—that will help sell the proposed movie). The treatment may be based on a work by Plum, be your own creation in the style of Plum, or be an adaptation of another work to Plum's style or characters (e.g., Bertie Wooster as James Bond). Remember, this is Hollywood, so originality does not count.
2. Judges will choose three finalists, whose treatments will be "pitched" at the upcoming Hollywood convention. Said pitch will consist of a five-minute presentation by the author of his or her treatment to a panel consisting of a studio head, a yes man, and a nodder. As in a Supreme Court hearing, the presenter may be interrupted at any time with

questions, comments, or observations about the weather.

3. Judges will pick a grand prize winner from among the three finalists, whose treatment will be subsequently bought and sold by various studios but never actually made into a picture.
4. Anyone unable to attend the convention (or unwilling to risk public humiliation by pitching their own treatment) may still enter a treatment, and if it is selected, a Hollywood agent will be appointed to pitch the story for you. The agent will then receive half your prize and 50 percent of all future prizes.

Send your entries to Max Pokrivchak at terrykit@aol.com or 60 Glendower Rd., Roslindale, MA 02131-4555. The deadline for entries is August 1, 2005. The three finalists will be chosen and notified prior to the convention, when they will need to decide if they will pitch their own treatment or have an agent do it for them. The grand prize winner will be decided based on audience response. Good luck!

My First Time

BY JEFF PORTEOUS

My first exposure to PGW occurred over the fall of 1976, during my Junior year at Michigan State University. Fellow greenhorn TWS member (but age-old PGW devotee) Todd Parkhurst receives full, incontestable credit for this primary immersion into Plum's realm.

It happened this way: the above-mentioned Todd, my trusted friend, loyal roomie, and fellow hapless member of the gargantuan MSU dorm population at the time—a man markedly more cognizant of the important things in life than my own limited perception generally allowed, I might add—would, in the bunk below mine, regularly ditch his studies to contentedly devour page after page of PGW instead. I mean, there he'd be down there, snickering unabashedly while I remained perched in the top bunk unsuccessfully trying to stay awake through such dreaded Third Year-assigned literary staples as *Madame Bovary* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*—or at least the Cliffs Notes thereto.

Periodically, a fist jammed into my mattress springs from below would jolt me from my tortured stupor—whereupon Todd, after simply announcing, "Listen to this," would deliver aloud a particularly delightful passage from whichever Plum classic was his *book du week* . . . these excerpts generally being examples of Aunt Dahlia's colorful invectives, if distant memory serves.

This was certainly an unforgettable way to discover Wodehousian magic—though I must admit an early-life prescient bent in PGW's direction by virtue of having actually kept newts as a boy. This became much to my mother's horror when the occasional escapee might be found days later brittle as a brickbat in the toe of someone's abandoned shoe. But that's another story for another day, which we shall certainly refrain from sharing with Gussie.



By the Way

BY JAN WILSON KAUFMAN

When Jan became President of TWS, she wanted very much to write a regular "By the Way" column for Plum Lines where she could talk about bits and pieces of the Wodehouse world that interested her. This was her final column. There were never enough of them. Jan will be sorely missed. —Ed.



Jan Wilson Kaufman

How good are you at figuring out who said what about Wodehouse? Can you match the name with the quotation? For once Evelyn Waugh is not cited. (Answers on the next page, so don't peek!)

Tony Blair
Lawrence Durrell
Hugh Laurie
Maureen O'Sullivan
Orson Welles

1. "If P. G. Wodehouse had never existed, neither would I."
2. When asked what he or she read most, the reply was, "You'll think me pompous, but P. G. Wodehouse. Imagine it! A benign comic artist in the twentieth century. Nothing about personal irritations, the stuff Benchley and Dorothy Parker wrote about—simply a perfect, impersonal, benevolent style."
3. "I envy those who have never read him before. The prospect of reams of unread Wodehouse stretching out in front of you is, to a long-standing admirer, something which is enticing to contemplate."

4. "The first thing you should know, and probably the last, too, is that P. G. Wodehouse is still the funniest writer to have ever put words on paper. Fact number two: with the Jeeves stories, Wodehouse created the best of the best. I speak as one whose first love was Blandings, and who later took immense pleasure from Psmith, but Jeeves is the jewel, and anyone who tries to tell you different can be shown the door, the mini-cab, the train station and Terminal 4, at Heathrow with a clear conscience. The world of Jeeves is complete and integral, every bit as structured, layered, ordered, complex and self-contained as King Lear and considerably funnier . . ."

5. "He was large and affable, very English and rather vague, quietly amusing rather than frighteningly witty—he was, in fact, lovable."

Stephen Fry's movie *Bright Young Things* is based on Evelyn Waugh's *Vile Bodies*, which, as Waugh wrote to the author Henry Green, is "rather like a P. G. Wodehouse novel, all about bright young people." This fast-paced movie has some particularly funny minor characters, with Peter O'Toole as Colonel Blount and Jim Broadbent as the drunken Major. The movie shows the bright young things using cocaine at parties, which is definitely not mentioned in the original book. Fry's credentials as a dedicated Wodehousian are impeccable, established by his memorable television Jeeves and his many written appreciations. Reviewing the Robert McCrum biography in the *Observer*, Fry described Wodehouse's "unassailable reputation as the greatest comic novelist of the 20th Century. The word 'reputation,' of course, does not begin to describe the adoration, admiration, addiction and deep, deep affection in which the works, and therefore the man, have been held by so many around the world."

Englishmen have a long tradition of betting on improbable subjects, as Wodehouse frequently told us about members of the Drones Club. This tradition is still flourishing, according to an August 31 article in *The New York Times* titled "Is Anything Sacred Here? Well, That's Worth a Wager" by Lizette Alvarez. She explains that it took just 69 seconds for a well-known sports commentator to utter one of his notorious clichés during a recent soccer match. When he said, "These are nervous moments," bookmakers had to pay out at least \$36,000 to the 50 people who correctly wagered on what his first cliché would be at the odds of 40 to 1.

Wagering in England and Ireland has become increasingly popular, and the Internet makes it easier than ever, with bookies offering odds on just about anything, including how many sips of water the chancellor will take on his next budget speech—certainly reminiscent of the classic Wodehouse story “The Great Sermon Handicap.” On television there is the dedicated gambling channel called Avago (as in “have a go”) where viewers can vote via their digital remote on shows such as *Squeal of Fortune*, which features a farmhand surrounded by piglets inside a hay-covered pen. Each piglet has a number on its belly from 1 to 9, and bettors have a flutter on which one the farmhand will grab. It is evocative of the Wodehouse world of the 1890s, with its Pelican Club, Romano’s Restaurant, and the sporting newspaper *The Pink ’Un*. Norman Murphy presents the scene so well in *In Search of Blandings* and *The Reminiscences of the Hon. Galahad Threepwood*.

Answers to the quotation test above are: 1. Lawrence Durrell; 2. Orson Welles; 3. Tony Blair; 4. Hugh Laurie; 5. Maureen O’Sullivan.

Treasurer’s Report for 2004

BY AMY PLOFKER, TREASURER

Balance as of Dec. 31, 2003:	\$13,049.17
Income:	
Dues and fees:	\$11,585.00
Return of advanced fund	
from 2003 Convention:	\$500.00
Excess funds from 2003 Convention:	\$411.40
Total Income:	\$12,496.40
Expenses:	
<i>Plum Lines</i> production & mailing:	\$13,395.37
Publicity materials:	\$316.75
Correspondence, supplies, other:	\$714.46
Advanced funds for 2005 Convention:	\$3,500.00
Total Expenses:	\$17,926.58
Balance as of Dec. 31, 2004:	\$7,618.99

Note 1: Plum Lines expenses were for five issues, rather than the usual four (Winter 2003 and four 2004 issues).

Note 2: Publicity materials are 4x6 cards placed in Overlook Books, Acorn videos, and various public places.

TWS 2007, Anyone?

BY JEAN TILLSON, ACTING PRESIDENT

It is not too soon (far from it, in fact) for regional chapters interested in hosting the next convention of The Wodehouse Society to be making the rounds of likely hotels, meeting with event coordinators, comparing room prices, and collecting information on amenities, nearby airports, local attractions, and all that sort of thing.

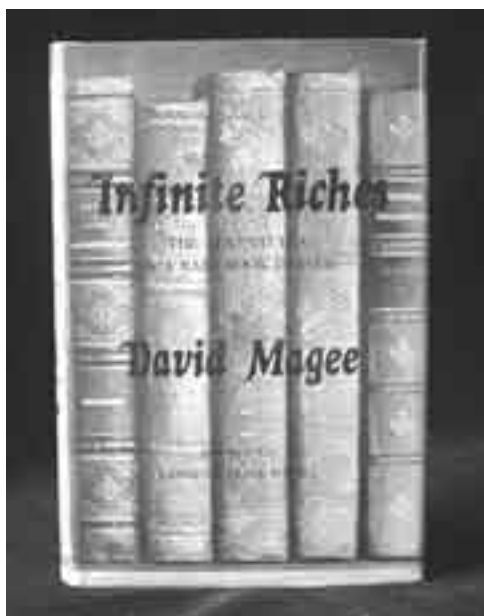
Traditionally, TWS chooses the location for its next convention during its current one—specifically, at the business meeting on Saturday. At this meeting, the chapter interested in hosting the next convention presents a bid for the privilege of doing so, said bid sometimes taking the form of a short skit to set the tone or highlight some special aspect of the proposed gathering. A skit is certainly not required, however. The important thing is to provide as much information as you can on the proposed convention city (is it served by a goodish-sized airport, can one walk around in it safely and easily, are there lots of good restaurants and shops?), accommodations (is it an historic hotel, how much are the rooms per night, do they have a comfortable bar and how late does it stay open?), and local attractions (are there sites of Wodehousian or general historical interest to visit, good used book stores to pillage, a handy ground on which to play cricket?). These, quite rightly, are the points upon which our convention decisions are based. The chapter who does the best job of presenting these facts usually wins the honor of hosting the next convention.

Alright, okay, so we’ve never actually had more than one chapter bidding for a convention at a time. That doesn’t mean it can’t happen. This year, for instance, the New England Wodehouse Thingummy Society (NEWTS) has let it be known members are researching a possible bid for hosting the 2007 convention in Providence, Rhode Island. At the same time, I fancy I have heard the distant sounds of other chapters discussing the pros and cons of hosting a convention in their necks of the woods (though it might just have been the cats denigrating a passing squirrel—it’s difficult to tell). If true, however, this is all to the good: Having choices is one of humankind’s fundamental joys in life. Therefore, if any of you are considering a bid for the 2007 convention (and the more the merrier), please let me know so I can schedule time for your chapter to make its presentation during the Saturday business meeting at the Hollywood convention. Write to: Jean Tillson, 246 Beaver Street, Franklin MA 02038-3002; e-mail: pighooley@mindspring.com.

Thank you, and good luck!

Collecting Wodehouse: Some Bibliographical Puzzles

BY JOHN GRAHAM



David Magee's *Infinite Riches*

In 1973 a San Francisco book dealer named David Magee published *Infinite Riches*, his reminiscences of five decades devoted to buying, selling, and collecting rare books. His story is still widely regarded today as one of the classic accounts of the antiquarian book world, but for Wodehouseans it holds an even greater appeal: David Magee, you see, collected P. G. Wodehouse. Toward the end of his book, Magee relates his now legendary tale (sure to bring out the green-eyed monster in every Wodehouse collector) of how he once traded two rather common first editions to the University of Edinburgh Law Library for their unwanted duplicate copy of *The Globe By the Way Book*.

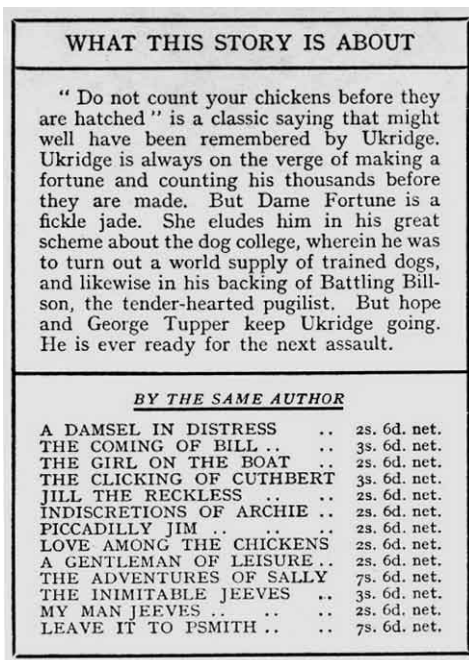
Rereading Magee's memoirs today, I find one of his observations frustratingly outdated: "Since the 1930s, I have been collecting the works of Mr. P. G. Wodehouse. To gather his first editions requires patience, but very little money." Was there ever a time when, as he claims, not one of Plum's two or three hundred English, American, and Continental editions cost "more than a couple of dollars each"? Certainly not in nearly two decades I've been buying Wodehouse! Prices may have skyrocketed since Magee wrote his story, but other aspects of collecting haven't changed very much. Magee puts it this way: "Collecting Wodehouse has been an exacting pastime, but it has given me vast amounts of pleasure. The search has rewarded me with friends, some of whom still remain unknown to me except by correspondence, and I have learned much

from them. Swapping bibliographical information is to me as reading detective fiction might be to others—an exciting adventure. I never tire of it. I never tire also of reading Mr. P. G. Wodehouse."

In my nearly 20 years of Wodehouse collecting, I too have made many friends (some still unknown to me except by e-mail) with whom I have swapped bibliographical discoveries. In this quarter's collecting column, I thought I'd share a few examples of some publishing errors, oddities, and other bits of fascinating trivia of absolutely no importance to anyone outside the world of Wodehouse.

One question neophyte book collectors often ask is: "How can I tell if this book is a first edition?" Some publishers make it easy—usually by saying "first edition" or "first printing" on the verso (short for *verso folio*, or from the turned leaf) of the title page. But other publishers are a bit more devious. For example, the American firm of George H. Doran, with whom Plum published 14 books between 1919 and 1927, used to place a black "GHD" design (which bibliophiles call a colophon) on the verso of the title page and then remove it from later printings. The only problem with this scheme is that it must have taken them a while to think it up, because it doesn't appear on any Wodehouse title until 1922. This means that all known copies of *A Damsel in Distress*, *The Little Warrior*, and *Indiscretions of Archie* lack the design, making it difficult to identify first editions. Fortunately, in the case of the first two books, it seems there was only one Doran printing—reprints were handled by another publisher, A. L. Burt. So, in the end, only *Archie* remains a problem child.

How, then, can one identify a true first edition of *Indiscretions of Archie*? Copies have been reported in boards of various shades of brown, tan, grey, mustard, and white. I've been told that it was the late Walter White from Maryland who came up with an answer. Walter must have been a very careful reader—he used to record typographical errors in the back of his first editions. (I know because I own several books with his penciled annotations.) In one copy of *Archie*, on page 31, line 12, Walter noted: "Mr. Wheeler consumed eight friend potatoes in quick succession," while in another copy "friend" had been changed to "fried." Since publishers don't usually go out of their way to introduce new errors once the type has been set, it is a pretty good bet that if your copy says "friend potatoes" it's a first edition. A rather neat solution to the problem! But a little too neat as it turns out, because there happen



'Previous titles' page from Ukridge

to be two uncorrected printings with similar covers. Fortunately, there is one discernable difference between the two: In one copy, end pages 304–308 are blank; in the other, end pages 304–314 are blank. So which of the two is the true first edition? Jimmy Heineman resolved that puzzle: His copy with the additional blank pages still had its original dust jacket, and on the inside flap it read: “Second Large Printing.” So, to summarize, if your copy says “friend potatoes” and has only two blank pages at the end, you own a first edition. (And finally, before we leave *Archie*, let me correct one annoying mistake in the McIlvaine bibliography: Despite what it says there, “friend potatoes” does not appear in any Herbert Jenkins edition.)

Identifying English first editions can also be difficult at times. Herbert Jenkins, who published 65 Wodehouse titles between 1918 and 1969, only began including a “first printing” statement in 1927 with the publication of *Meet Mr. Mulliner*. For the 14 books issued prior to that, you have to rely on other information such as the color of the boards or the number of previously published titles listed on the verso of the half-title page. And even these methods are not always foolproof. There remains considerable controversy about the first printing of the 1921 reissue of *Love Among the Chickens*—so much so that I’ll save this for a future column. Instead, what I want to discuss here is the curious incident of the first edition of *Ukridge*.

According to both Eileen McIlvaine and David

Jason, the first edition of *Ukridge* is bound in green cloth with dark green lettering and lists 13 previous titles on the verso of the half-title page, beginning with *A Damsel in Distress* and ending with *Leave It To Psmith*. This is all fine, except for one thing: Jenkins had published only 12 Wodehouse books by this time (June 1924), so how could their list of previous titles total 13 books? The answer is that there on the list at number 12 is *My Man Jeeves*, first issued in 1919 by Newnes. I’ve always been puzzled by this. Jenkins was certainly not in the habit of advertising other publisher’s books, so what could this mean? Had they just acquired the rights to publish *My Man Jeeves*? If so, they never did, and it never again appears on any list of titles in subsequent first editions. (Did they continue to list it in any early reprints of *Ukridge*? If you have one, please let me know the answer.) Of course, the next book they did publish in October 1925 was *Carry On, Jeeves*, which, as you may recall, has five stories from *My Man Jeeves* that Wodehouse revised or, in the case of “Fixing It for Freddie,” completely rewrote. And that certainly put an end to any plans Jenkins might have had to publish *My Man Jeeves*!

There are many other interesting bibliographical puzzles and printing errors we could discuss, and I hope to continue the topic in some future columns. If you have any favorite examples or questions, e-mail me at jwgraham@rutgers.edu. For now, let me end with an addendum to last quarter’s homage to *William Tell Told Again*. Nick Townend wisely pointed out to me that the story was reprinted in England in 1938’s edition of *The Favourite Wonder Book*. What’s more, this book frequently appears on eBay and rarely sells for more than \$20, making it the cheapest way to acquire a copy of *William Tell*.



Ukridge first edition

Six Degrees of P. G. Wodehouse: The Supporting Actresses

BY DAVID MCDONOUGH

Following the success of “Six Degrees of P. G. Wodehouse: The Oscar-winning Actresses” and “The Oscar-winning Actors” in previous issues, we now offer a toast to the backbone of the industry: the supporting players, surpassed in our affection only by the Noddors. You know how the game is played. Connect the following actresses to a performer who appeared in Plum-related material. Answers are on page 14.

1. Gale Sondergaard
2. Alice Brady
3. Fay Bainter
4. Hattie McDaniel
5. Jane Darwell
6. Mary Astor
7. Teresa Wright
8. Katina Paxinou
9. Ethel Barrymore
10. Anne Revere
11. Anne Baxter
12. Celeste Holm
13. Claire Trevor
14. Mercedes McCambridge
15. Josephine Hull
16. Kim Hunter
17. Gloria Grahame
18. Donna Reed
19. Eva Marie Saint
20. Jo Van Fleet
21. Dorothy Malone
22. Miyoshi Umeki
23. Wendy Hiller
24. Shelley Winters
25. Shirley Jones
26. Rita Moreno
27. Patty Duke
28. Margaret Rutherford
29. Lila Kedrova
30. Sandy Dennis
31. Estelle Parsons
32. Ruth Gordon
33. Goldie Hawn
34. Helen Hayes
35. Cloris Leachman
36. Eileen Heckart
37. Tatum O’Neal
38. Lee Grant



Mary Astor



Shirley Jones



Helen Hayes

39. Beatrice Straight
40. Vanessa Redgrave
41. Mary Steenbergen
42. Maureen Stapleton
43. Linda Hunt
44. Peggy Ashcroft
45. Angelica Huston
46. Dianne Wiest
47. Olympia Dukakis
48. Geena Davis
49. Brenda Fricker
50. Whoopi Goldberg
51. Mercedes Ruehl
52. Marisa Tomei
53. Anna Paquin
54. Mira Sorvino
55. Juliette Binoche
56. Kim Basinger
57. Judi Dench
58. Angelina Jolie
59. Catherine Zeta-Jones
60. Renee Zellweger



Vanessa Redgrave



Eva Marie Saint

In addition, since we went to press before this year’s Oscars were awarded, we are adding in the two actresses most likely to win this year’s honors:

61. Cate Blanchett
62. Virginia Madsen

The Beauty Prize Premieres in New York

BY DAVID MCDONOUGH

This spring, Musicals Tonight! presents the American premiere of the P. G. Wodehouse–Jerome Kern musical *The Beauty Prize*.

American premiere, you say? That’s right. Although *The Beauty Prize* was produced in London in 1923 and ran 214 performances, for reasons that are lost in antiquity it never made its way across the Atlantic.

Musicals Tonight! is the brainchild of Mel Miller, a former chemical engineer and inventor who, in 1998, decided it would be much more fun to indulge his lifelong passion for the Broadway musical. “I’m the producer,” he tells us. “I pick the shows, I pick up the

trash—you name it, I pick it. We started in 1998, and it's a labor of love. Almost on a lark, I decided to do a particular show that I had never seen but owned the record of. I put up an extraordinarily obscure show, *Let It Ride*, an adorable show [a musicalization of the old farce *Three Men on a Horse*, it starred TV comic George Gobel and ran 68 performances in 1961]. I didn't know much about producing; I didn't know about getting a director, or auditions. But we put the show up, and it was a life-affirming experience. I didn't realize how many talented people are underutilized in the New York theater. So I formed a not-for-profit organization, and now this is what I do 24-7."



Mel Miller's poster for *The Beauty Prize*

It has been a smashing success. In 2004 Musicals Tonight! was awarded an Obie (the Off-Broadway theater award) for its productions.

Miller loves two kinds of shows—the ones that flopped the first time around but that he feels are worth a second look, and shows that have been out of the spotlight for awhile. The latter interest allows him to put on the early works of many noted composers; he has produced Cole Porter's *Gay Divorce*, Rodgers & Hart's *Chee-Chee*, and George & Ira Gershwin's *Girl Crazy*. Last year the company staged 1917's *Have a Heart*, the first exclusive collaboration of Bolton, Wodehouse, and Kern.

Miller cheerfully admits that his great rival is the

Encores! series at New York's City Center, productions also geared to reviving past masterworks, but on a much grander scale. Miller's shows are staged at the 99-seat 45th Street Theatre. Less than 100 seats allows him not to deal with certain labor practices which would put him out of business in a moment. "There are virtues in being small," he points out. "There are shows I can revive that bigger people can't, because I can live with just sheet music and piano vocals. Encores! can't, because to recreate the score for a 30-piece orchestra would cost the earth. And some of the stuff I put up, a larger audience wouldn't want to see anyhow. We are as a society over-stimulated. A lot of people who come to see our shows are pleasantly surprised that, having a small venue with just two pianos and having no mikes, you can really hear all the lyrics."

Not that Miller doesn't consider his audiences' tastes. "If I had a slavish following," he says wistfully, "I would do more British stuff. I would do Ivor Novello, for example." Unconsciously, he may have hit on why *The Beauty Prize* was never produced in New York. The show, according to Lee Davis's epic work *Bolton and Wodehouse and Kern*, was originally to be called *The First Prize* and was commissioned by English producer-writer-actor George Grossmith as a vehicle for himself and his chief comedian, Leslie Henson. Grossmith and Wodehouse collaborated on the book, and each contributed lyrics to Kern's music. Wodehouse's songs included "Non-Stop Dancing" and "You Can't Make Love by Wireless," both of which were included on the 2001 Hal Cazalet-Sylvia McNair CD *The Land Where the Good Songs Go*. (Incidentally, Miller was very intrigued by a description of Hal's career and made plans to meet with him on an upcoming trip to London.)

With all the input from Grossmith, the feeling may well have been that the show was too British for an American audience. It ran 214 performances at the Winter Garden Theatre in London, certainly a success, but very little has been written about it. The only mention in the four standard Wodehouse biographies is David Jansen's comment that it made use of the then-current craze for mah-jongg.

Let us give Mel Miller the last word: "I have looked at a lot of Wodehouse and Kern's stuff, and sometimes the book can be full of groaners, but when they're cooking on all cylinders, the result is sparkling."

The Beauty Prize runs April 26–May 8 at the 45th Street Theatre in Manhattan. All performances are at 8 P.M. Tickets are \$19 and are available at the box office (212-868-4444) and at www.smartix.com. More information on Musicals Tonight! can be found at www.musicalstonight.org.

Rivals of P. G. Wodehouse: Will Cuppy

BY DAN COHEN

Plum thought Will Cuppy was the author of the best thing ever said about Pekinese (a subject that interested him deeply): “I don’t see why they look so conceited. They’re no better than we are.”

Cuppy was known as “a humorist’s humorist.” He was admired by people like Thurber, Benchley, and (of course) Wodehouse, but he was not well known to the public. Even the name sounds made up, and it was rumored that he didn’t exist. But he did. William Jacob Cuppy was born in Auburn, Indiana, on August 23, 1884. His father was a traveling salesman who was away from home a lot and one day didn’t bother to come back. Cuppy and his sister were raised by their strong-willed, religious, and overprotective mother.

Cuppy attended the University of Chicago—then a new institution—for 12 years, though he was never sure why. He took part in school dramatics, wrote for the school paper, and finally graduated with a master’s degree in literature and the ambition to become a playwright. New York City was the place to be, and that is where Cuppy went to write his play, but he never got beyond the first draft of the first act. He spent a lot of time in the bars of Greenwich Village and supported himself writing occasional pieces for newspapers and advertising copy.

After a few years he decided there were too many distractions in Manhattan, and he needed a quieter place. What he found was a tarpaper-and-tin shack on a barrier beach called Jones Island in Long Island Sound. He became a self-described hermit, though he wasn’t entirely alone. There was a Coast Guard station just a few hundred yards away, and he went into Manhattan occasionally to meet with editors and pick up work.

Cuppy was still laboring ineffectually on his play and writing short articles for newspapers and magazines. The bulk of his meager income came from a weekly column of reviews of mystery novels for the New York *Herald Tribune*. Wodehouse called him “America’s leading reviewer of detective stories . . . though he has never actually murdered a Baronet in his library, he knows fifty-seven ways of doing it and throwing suspicion on the butler. Mystery writers may befog thousands, but they cannot befog Will Cuppy. He is the man who always guesses right at the end of Chapter Two.” Cuppy, who complained a lot about everything, insisted he hated mysteries, and reviewing

them was just a way of eking out a living.

After 10 years in a shack near the water, his life was turned upside down when New York City decided to turn isolated Jones Island into Jones Beach, destined to become the most crowded beach in the world. So in 1929 Will Cuppy moved back to Manhattan, rented a fourth-floor walkup on 11th Street in Greenwich Village, and became an urban hermit, sleeping during the day and working through the night when it was quieter. He might go weeks without leaving his apartment, but he met with his small circle of friends or talked with them frequently on the telephone. He often visited the Bronx Zoo, practically the only place, aside from his apartment, where he felt comfortable. He did more short humorous pieces, many about zoo animals, for publications like *The New Yorker* and *The Saturday Evening Post*, though editors found him difficult to deal with. He even had a weekly 15-minute radio show on which he delivered a comic monologue generally about things that irritated him—that was practically everything. The show was canceled after about six months. His attempts to go on the lecture circuit or become a screenwriter were disastrous.

Cuppy collected and polished some of his short animal pieces in a series of three small “How To” books. The first, *How To Tell Your Friends from the Apes*, was published in 1931, with an introduction by Wodehouse. The second, *How To Become Extinct*, came out in 1941. The third, *How To Attract the Wombat*, appeared in 1949. Cuppy wondered if he should have waited until 1951, just to make the dates come out even. “. . . but I felt I had things to say about the Wombat which needed to be said at this time.”

Will Cuppy was now in his 60s. His health was beginning to deteriorate. The world had changed. Many of his old friends had died. The editors he now had to work with he regarded as a bunch of kids. Perhaps the final straw for this inflexible and odd man was that he feared he was about to be evicted from the apartment where he had spent most of the last 20 years. On September 8, 1949, Will Cuppy took an overdose of sleeping pills. He died 11 days later without regaining consciousness.

There were a number of ironies connected with Cuppy’s death that he undoubtedly would have written funny things about. First, when the *Herald Tribune*, a paper for which he had written regularly for nearly 30 years, ran his obituary, it was accompanied by someone else’s photograph. Second, through a series of what has been described as “grotesque errors” his body was cremated and the ashes mailed to his hometown. His relatives were waiting at the train station with a hearse for the arrival of his body.

But the greatest irony was success. Cuppy once said that his luck was so bad that when they were lowering him into his grave scientists would announce “Eureka! We’ve got it—the secret to eternal life.” In the 1930s Cuppy had contracted to write a book of short sketches of historical figures, to be called *The Decline and Fall of Practically Everybody*. Cuppy-like, he researched, rewrote, polished, and procrastinated for years, and at the time of his death the book wasn’t finished. His friend and literary executor Fred Feldcamp gathered the material and prepared it for publication. It was published in 1950 and was an immediate success. *The Decline and Fall of Practically Everybody* spent four months on *The New York Times* best-seller list (at a time when the best-seller list actually meant something). It went through 18 printings and 10 foreign editions and is still in print in paperback today. The popularity triggered the reprinting of some of his earlier works, which are also still available. Had he lived he would have received the recognition and financial security he had always craved.

“Oh well,” Cuppy would probably have commented, “life is like that.”

Sartor Resartus is simply unreadable, and for me that always sort of spoils a book.

—Will Cuppy

Robert McCrum Flits By

BY PHILIP A. SHREFFLER

Robert McCrum, author of the recent biography *Wodehouse: A Life*, spoke on December 19, 2004, at the Untermeyer Poetry Center of the 92nd Street Y in Manhattan. The well-attended event included a sound contingent of Broadway Special members.

While many biographers become so immersed in their topic or so fanatical that they bore their audience with minutiae, Mr. McCrum struck a felicitous balance, in his 50-minute presentation, between general biographical information for the uninitiated and specific data calculated to stimulate the true Wodehousian’s cerebrum (without even the necessity of fish to do so). We found it interesting that, Arthur Conan Doyle being among Plum’s favorite authors, the Jeeves-Wooster relationship may have been based upon that of Holmes and Watson. But Mr. McCrum did point out later, in response to a question, that Wodehouse was classically educated and that a standard convention in Roman theater was the “cunning slave”

and the “foolish master.”

Naturally the issue of PGW’s wartime internment and subsequent radio broadcasts reared its ugly head, and Mr. McCrum defused this both during his presentation and yet again during the question-and-answer session. He made it quite clear that, for Plum, the internment, if not a merry game, was an experience better borne with humor and that his five broadcasts from Berlin were versions of lighthearted talks he gave to his fellow inmates in Upper Silesia. Quoting critic Malcolm Muggeridge, Mr. McCrum wisely noted that Plum was not “otherworldly” or “unworldly” but “aworldly.” This seemed to put into perspective and put to rest the “Nazi broadcast” business that has haunted Wodehouse’s reputation as unfairly as Sherlock Holmes’s alleged cocaine addiction has sullied his.

Following the formal presentation, the assembled company tucked into a sumptuous buffet brunch, while Mr. McCrum graciously permitted himself to be surrounded by The Broadway Special, whose number included Mr. David Jasen, our generation’s only other serious Wodehouse biographer. Agreeable conversation with the author and among members of the Special continued apace until Mr. McCrum had to shimmer away with his wife for a Broadway musical and the dimming lights in the Untermeyer Center indicated that it was time for us all to ooze out as well.

Robert McCrum’s biography has spawned a lively (to say the least) discussion among Plummies. In the last issue of Plum Lines we promised to air some of those views in this issue. However, due to a great deal of time-related material, particularly about the Hollywood convention, those items had to be put aside until the next issue. Rest assured your views will be heard. And we welcome additional contributions from others out there who have now read the biography!

—Ed.



Robert McCrum and David Jasen, pillars of Plumography

About Hearst Castle

BY ED RATCLIFFE

A note from the Los Angeles convention organizers: Our late president, Jan Wilson Kaufman, had hoped to arrange a special bus trip to Hearst Castle during the Hooray for Hollywood convention in August. Alas, this won't be possible, but we encourage all who are planning to go to Los Angeles to build some extra time into your schedule to visit the Castle. As Ed Ratcliffe tells us here, it is really worth seeing!

Hearst Castle, on a hilltop overlooking the Pacific Ocean, is a magnificent estate of 165 rooms and 127 acres of gardens, terraces, pools, and walkways. Its rooms are furnished with an impressive collection of Spanish and Italian antiques and art. Its name is La Cuesta Encantada—The Enchanted Hill—and it was once the home of the publisher William Randolph Hearst. Today it is the most popular state park in California, drawing a million visitors a year from all over the world.

The Castle, built by Hearst from 1919 to 1947, consists of a main building, three large guesthouses, and many smaller structures. Rich and luxurious seen close up, from a distance the group evokes the feeling of an old hilltop town in southern Spain. Plum and his wife were guests at the Castle during his Hollywood period. Although it never appeared in his stories, he described their visit amusingly in letters to friends. In a February 25, 1931, letter to Bill Townend (quoted in part in *Author! Author!*, p. 80, and in its entirety in Frances Donaldson's *Yours, Plum*), PGW wrote:

There are always at least fifty guests staying here. All the furniture is period, mostly with the sales tags still attached, and you probably sleep in a bed originally occupied by Napoleon or somebody. . . . Meals take place in an enormous room hung with banners, and are served at a long table, with Hearst sitting in the middle of one side and Marion Davies in the middle of the other. The longer you're there, the further you get from the middle. I sat on Marion's right the first night, then found myself getting edged further and further away, till I got to the extreme end, when I thought it time to leave. Another day and I should have been sitting on the floor.

The Castle is located more than 250 miles north of our convention site, on the Pacific coast. Allow two days for the trip, with five to six hours driving time each way—the scenery is often spectacular. Once out of the clutter of Los Angeles suburbs, Highway 101 follows the coastline for many miles, then turns inland through rugged hills. You will pass some excellent wineries near Buellton—do stop for winetasting. At San Luis Obispo turn off to Highway 1. It will take you along the water's edge past miles of remote ranching country, until you arrive at the Castle on the 128-square-mile Hearst Ranch.



Hearst Castle, awaiting the August Conventioners

The Castle can be visited only on daily guided tours, and tour reservations well in advance are necessary, given the time of our August convention. Much more information is available at www.hearstcastle.org, and reservations may be made there or by phone: call MISTIK at 1-800-444-4445. Four guided tours are offered, covering different parts of the buildings and grounds. Information on other local attractions and lodging is available at www.sansimeonsbest.com, at www.sanluisobispo.com, or at 1-800-342-5613. Of course, early lodging reservations are essential.

Looking Back at a Special Visit

In 1998 the Blandings Castle chapter made their own pilgrimage to Hearst Castle, and Jan Kaufman wrote about it for Plum Lines. Following are some excerpts from her report.

Although we found no Gutenberg Bible in the library, and nothing in the grounds to compare with the well-known three-time silver medal winner of the Shropshire Agricultural Fair, our group conceded that Hearst Castle did have some redeeming features. The outdoor swimming pool (not to be confused with the indoor) would awe a self-indulgent Roman emperor. Hearst insisted on calling the place a ranch, and despite the magnificence of the dining room, paper napkins were used at every meal.

The twenty-one Blandings pilgrims took the special evening tour, which stresses the heyday of Hearst's Castle in the early Thirties, so we saw an approximation of the life the Wodehouses saw there. We looked with interest at Hearst's heavily ornamented interiors with their strong ecclesiastical feeling, due to all the religious paintings and sculpture. Docents dressed in clothes of the early Thirties added period verisimilitude. In the most elaborate of the guest houses a lovely brunette in a peach silk peignoir sat primping at a dressing table as we closely observed the details of bedrooms and bathrooms. Clothes actually worn by Hearst were laid out on the bed as if he were going to appear at any moment. In the vast assembly room, formally dressed docents played bridge, read newspapers and chatted before dinner.

Besides the Hearst tour, the Blandings Castle group also enjoyed looking at the stars by the light of blazing bonfires on the nearby beach. . . . In the charming nearby village of Cambria, we poked about in stores full of 20th-century objects generally called "collectibles," which would not have been old enough to interest W. R. Hearst, but amused us. Our most serendipitous find was the Friends of the Cambria Library Sale, where a good selection of hardbound books were sold at the exorbitant price of 75 cents per inch. Even though we found no Wodehouse books, most of us still managed to carry off boxes of lesser authors. One of the Cambria Library volunteers, George Wilson, who learned about our group from TWS Past President Florence Cunningham, showed his qualifications as a potential member by saying that his favorite Wodehouse opening question was "How do you feel about human sacrifices?" We felt he had the heart of the matter in him.

The Infant Samuel at Prayer

BY JOSEPH F. WILKINSON

The most frequently mentioned artwork in the Wodehouse canon is a statue of The Infant Samuel at Prayer. Like so many things Wodehouse wrote about humorously, figures of young Samuel (aka the Prophet Samuel) existed. At least I've found one and I think others must have been frequent mantel ornaments in Victorian and Edwardian days.

The concrete that is so much part of our lives is made from Portland cement, which was patented by

Joseph Aspdin, a Leeds, England, brick mason in 1824. His sons inherited the cement production business and grew rich. One of them, James, in about 1850, commissioned a life-sized statue of the Infant Samuel to be cast in concrete. The statue spent the next 124 years in the gardens of various Aspdin descendants.

In 1974, the 150th anniversary of the invention of Portland cement, the Department of Civil Engineering of Leeds University unveiled a plaque honoring Aspdin. As part of the occasion, Mrs. Margaret Dixon, a great-great niece of Joseph Aspdin, offered the statue to the department from the garden of her Doncaster home.

"I remember that mother used to stretch our jumpers on it when we were children," said Mrs. Dixon. "It stood in the garden beneath a window and we found it very useful to climb up to get on the window sill. I guess it must have been in various gardens for 100 years."

Note from Norman Murphy: Thanks for confirming my suspicions about the origins of this artifact. The big question is, which model did Mr. Aspdin copy? He did not get the idea from thin air, and I'm betting that the original pottery version of the Infant Samuel was one of many of hundreds of objects which came to fame and popularity in London's Great Exhibition of 1851—along with lavatory pans! This would fit very well with the concrete version, perhaps in the following year (1852?). Can anybody help?



The Infant Samuel at Prayer

INSIDE: P.G. WODEHOUSE'S 'LEAVE IT TO JEEVES,' PAGE 10

Today's News
TODAY

The Evening Bulletin

25¢

OL. II No. 1

RECEIVED

A well-spent quarter dollar, by any standard!

Plum in the Papers

In January a new Philadelphia daily newspaper (weekdays anyway) called *The Evening Bulletin* began serializing some of the early Jeeves stories. They started with "Leave it to Jeeves." There are two obvious reasons for this choice. First, it is the story that really introduces the reader to Jeeves and Bertie. Second, it was first published in the *Saturday Evening Post* in 1916, the U.S. copyright has run out, the story is in the public domain, and it can be reprinted for free. That's a huge boon for small publications that do not have large budgets.

Both *Bulletin* publisher Thomas Rice and features editor Jeff Quick are Plum fans, but Quick admitted that getting the material free was a big help. At one time Wodehouse's works and those of most other popular writers were regularly serialized in newspapers and magazines. Up until World War II, paperback books barely existed, hardback books were expensive, and there was a waiting list at the library for whatever was new. Most people first got their stories in weekly magazines or daily newspapers.

Today the book is the thing. Unfortunately, most people don't read books unless they are written by a celebrity who has appeared on television. Seeing Jeeves out there with the headlines, the sports, and the daily weather report may introduce him to people who had otherwise barely heard of him, or (and there are such people) who had never heard of him at all.

At the risk of sounding like Comrade Butt—Wodehouse wrote for the masses, and the masses would benefit greatly from reading Wodehouse in their daily paper. —Ed.

Answers to the Six Degrees Quiz

1. Gale Sondergaard was in *Anna and the King of Siam* with Rex Harrison, who was in *My Fair Lady* with Stanley Holloway, who played Beach in *Blandings Castle*.
2. Alice Brady was in *The Gay Divorcee* with Fred Astaire, who starred in *A Damsel in Distress*.
3. Fay Bainter was in *June Bride* with Robert Montgomery, who played Jimmy Crocker in *Piccadilly Jim*.
4. Hattie McDaniel was in *Saratoga* with Frank Morgan, who played Jimmy Crocker Sr. in *Piccadilly Jim*.
5. Jane Darwell was in *Mary Poppins* with Arthur Treacher, who played Jeeves in *Thank You, Jeeves*.
6. Mary Astor was in *The Prisoner of Zenda* with David Niven, who played Bertie in *Thank You, Jeeves*.
7. Teresa Wright was in *Pride of the Yankees* with Walter Brennan, who was in *The Story of Vernon and Irene Castle* with Fred Astaire.
8. Katina Paxinou was in *The Miracle* with Roger Moore, who was in *Escape to Athena* with David Niven.
9. Ethel Barrymore was in *None But the Lonely Heart* with Barry Fitzgerald, who was in *Dawn Patrol* with David Niven.
10. Anne Revere was in *National Velvet* with Arthur Treacher.
11. Anne Baxter was in *All About Eve* with George Sanders, who was in *Rebecca* with Joan Fontaine, who played Lady Anne in *A Damsel in Distress*.
12. Celeste Holm was in *High Society* with Bing Crosby, who played Billy in *Anything Goes*.
13. Claire Trevor was in *How To Murder Your Wife* with Jack Lemmon, who was in *The Notorious Landlady* with Fred Astaire.
14. Mercedes McCambridge was in *Johnny Guitar* with Joan Crawford, who was in *Dancing Lady* with Fred Astaire.
15. Josephine Hull was in *Arsenic & Old Lace* with Cary Grant, who was in *Suspicion* with Joan Fontaine.
16. Kim Hunter was in *Stairway to Heaven* with David Niven.

17. Gloria Grahame was in *The Bad and the Beautiful* with Walter Pidgeon, who was in *Soldiers Three* with David Niven.
18. Donna Reed was in *They Were Expendable* with Robert Montgomery.
19. Eva Marie Saint was in *That Certain Feeling* with George Sanders, who was in *Rebecca* with Joan Fontaine.
20. Jo Van Fleet was in *Cool Hand Luke* with Paul Newman, who was in *The Towering Inferno* with Fred Astaire.
21. Dorothy Malone was in *Warlock* with Anthony Quinn, who was in *The Guns of Navarone* with David Niven.
22. Miyoshi Umeki was in *Sayonara* with Marlon Brando, who was in *Bedtime Story* with David Niven.
23. Wendy Hiller was in *Separate Tables* with David Niven.
24. Shelley Winters was in *The Diary of Anne Frank* with Ed Wynn, who was in *Mary Poppins* with Arthur Treacher.
25. Shirley Jones was in *Bedtime Story* with David Niven.
26. Rita Moreno was in *The King and I* with Deborah Kerr, who was in *Separate Tables* with David Niven.
27. Patty Duke was in *Me, Natalie* with Bob Balaban, who was in *Gosford Park* with Stephen Fry, who played Jeeves in *Jeeves & Wooster*.
28. Margaret Rutherford was in *Passport to Pimlico* with Stanley Holloway.
29. Lila Kedrova was in *Zorba the Greek* with Anthony Quinn, who was in *The Guns of Navarone* with David Niven.
30. Sandy Dennis was in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* with Richard Burton, who was in *Becket* with Peter O'Toole.
31. Estelle Parsons was in *I Never Sang For My Father* with Melvyn Douglas, who was in *Ghost Story* with Fred Astaire.
32. Ruth Gordon was in *Lord Love a Duck* with Roddy McDowell, who was in *The Midas Run* with Fred Astaire.
33. Goldie Hawn was in *Cactus Flower* with Walter Matthau, who was in *IQ* with Stephen Fry.
34. Helen Hayes was in *Night Flight* with Robert Montgomery.
35. Cloris Leachman was in *Scavenger Hunt* with Roddy McDowell, who was in *The Midas Run* with Fred Astaire.
36. Eileen Heckart was in *Picnic* with William Holden, who was in *The Towering Inferno* with Fred Astaire.
37. Tatum O'Neal was in *The Bad News Bears* with Walter Matthau, who was in *IQ* with Stephen Fry.
38. Lee Grant was in *Detective Story* with Joseph Wiseman, who was in *Masala* with Peter O'Toole.
39. Beatrice Straight was in *Network* with William Holden, who was in *The Towering Inferno* with Fred Astaire.
40. Vanessa Redgrave was in *Murder on the Orient Express* with Wendy Hiller, who was in *Separate Tables* with David Niven.
41. Mary Steenbergen was in *Parenthood* with Keanu Reeves, who was in *Much Ado about Nothing* with Richard Briers, who played Gally Threepwood in *Heavy Weather*.
42. Maureen Stapleton was in *Airport* with Helen Hayes, who was in *Night Flight* with Robert Montgomery.
43. Linda Hunt was in *Prêt-à-Porter* with Sophia Loren, who was in *Man of La Mancha* with Peter O'Toole.
44. Peggy Ashcroft was in *A Passage to India* with Alec Guinness, who was in *Lawrence of Arabia* with Peter O'Toole, who played Lord Emsworth in *Heavy Weather*.
45. Angelica Huston was in *A Handful of Dust* with Stephen Fry.
46. Dianne Wiest was in *Parenthood* with Keanu Reeves, who was in *Much Ado About Nothing* with Richard Briers.
47. Olympia Dukakis was in *Mighty Aphrodite* with Woody Allen, who was in *What's New Pussycat?* with Peter O'Toole.
48. Geena Davis was in *Stuart Little* with Hugh Laurie, who played Bertie Wooster in *Jeeves & Wooster*.
49. Brenda Fricker was in *Mary Swann* with Miranda Richardson, who was in *Blackadder* with Stephen Fry.
50. Whoopi Goldberg was in *Sister Act* with Maggie Smith, who was in *Gosford Park* with Stephen Fry.
51. Mercedes Ruehl was in *The Fisher King* with Robin Williams, who was in *Hamlet* with Richard Briers.
52. Marisa Tomei was in *The Perez Family* with Angelica Huston, who was in *A Handful of Dust* with Stephen Fry.
53. Anna Paquin was in *The Piano* with Holly Hunter, who was in *Sevengali* with Peter O'Toole.
54. Mira Sorvino was in *The Final Cut* with Robin Williams, who was in *Hamlet* with Richard Briers.
55. Juliette Binoche was in *Wuthering Heights* with Simon Ward, who was in *Supergirl* with Peter O'Toole.
56. Kim Basinger was in *Prêt-à-Porter* with Sophia Loren, who was in *Man of La Mancha* with Peter O'Toole.
57. Judi Dench was in *Shakespeare in Love* with Tom Wilkinson, who is in the new *Piccadilly Jim*.
58. Angelina Jolie was in *Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow* with Gwyneth Paltrow, who was in *Shakespeare in Love* with Tom Wilkinson.
59. Catherine Zeta-Jones was in *Zorro* with Anthony Hopkins, who was in *The Lion in Winter* with Peter O'Toole.
60. Renee Zellweger was in *Bridget Jones's Diary* with Hugh Grant, who was in *Sense and Sensibility* with Hugh Laurie.
61. Cate Blanchett was in *The Gift* with Keanu Reeves, who was in *Much Ado About Nothing* with Richard Briers.
62. Virginia Madsen was in *Dune* with Siân Phillips, who was in *Murphy's War* with Peter O'Toole.

In Memoriam: Jan Wilson Kaufman

Jan Wilson Kaufman, who died last December, was an important part of The Wodehouse Society from its early days. Her tenure as president, a position she both desired and deserved, was far too brief. And she will not be able to attend the Hollywood Convention which she had organized. Jan would never have wanted her friends to weep for her. She was far too good-natured for that. But she would have wanted us to remember her, and that's what we are doing here. We will drink a toast or two (or more) to her memory when we gather in Los Angeles in August. I like to think that Jan will be there in spirit, taking pictures of us acting silly. —Dan Cohen

The UK Society is greatly saddened by Jan's death; we mourn her as a member, as a fine President of our sister Society, and, for those of us who knew her, as a friend of wit and charm.

Jan visited England [in October 2004]; it was a demanding trip for her, but we are so very glad she came. She was determined to make the most of it and packed her time with Wodehouse: Jan explored Wodehouse's London, guided by her chum Norman; she dined with Wodehouse biographer Robert McCrum and enjoyed his Reminiscences; she saw many of her British friends in their natural habitat. Jan was in her element at the Society's biannual celebration of Wodehouse, the formal dinner, fraternising with Wodehouseans from all over the world and delighting in Wodehouse's words and music. It was an ambition achieved, and it made us very happy to see her enjoying it so much.

I first met Jan at the Philadelphia Convention [1999], and liked her immensely. She struck me as a wonderfully warm and witty individual and someone I could pretty well immediately count as a friend. Her humour, her humanity, and her true Wodehouse spirit are what I will miss, and also what I choose to remember about her.

I know Jan had enthusiastically embraced the master plan for the 2005 convention, and looked forward to introducing her friends to Wodehouse's Hollywood. It will still be a great convention, but we will have to enjoy it in her memory, Jan presiding in spirit with charm, humour, and goodwill.

—Hilary Bruce
Chairman, The P G Wodehouse Society (UK)

Please convey to Jan's family our profound sympathy and condolences. Jan was an inspiration to the PGW Society USA and despite ill health she did so much for

the organisation. How brave she was when she came over to England on her last visit. So many have happy memories of her enthusiasm and courage. Plum would have wanted me to send his appreciation for all that she did.

—Edward Cazalet and all the Wodehouse family

When I was president of The Wodehouse Society from 2001 to 2003 Jan was my vice president. I didn't know her very well before then because she was West Coast and I was East Coast. We'd met at Wodehouse conventions, of course, where Jan was always lots of fun. She was a very warm, friendly person with a great sense of humor. Everyone liked her, and she liked everyone. I never heard her say a mean thing about anybody, which may be partly what drew her to P. G. Wodehouse. His was a kindly laughter, and so was hers.

The vice president of TWS always becomes the next president. When I asked Jan to be my vice president because of all she'd done for the Society she gave the perfect answer: "Sure. We'll have lots of fun." No hesitation. No complaints about how much work it would be. As so much of life was for Jan, this was an opportunity to enjoy herself. I got to know Jan during the two years of my TWS presidency despite that infernal three-hour East Coast/West Coast time difference. I can't tell you how many times I phoned her at 8:00 A.M. California time when she was running off to work, and how many times she phoned me at 10:00 P.M. my time, when I was drifting off to sleep. Didn't matter. Somehow we always found time to talk things over, work out a knotty TWS problem, and still find a few minutes to enjoy a good chat.

Jan became president of the Society at the Toronto convention in 2003. At the banquet that evening she gave me a wonderful souvenir in honor of my having been president, a photo scrapbook full of pictures of TWS members at conventions over the years, many of them very amusing. They were pictures Jan had taken herself. And Jan, as you all know, was a very good photographer. I treasure her precious gift of memories. It was so thoughtful. So considerate. So just plain nice. In short, it was so Jan. What will The Wodehouse Society do without her?

—Susan Cohen

After pondering the last few days for adequate words to describe the magic of Jan Kaufman, it dawned on me that one word did it: Jan was like Christmas. She

transferred her talents into beauty, humor, comfort, generosity, and warm friendships. These are for all of us to remember with pleasure.

—Florence Cunningham

I had the privilege—and it was truly a privilege—of sitting next to Jan Kaufman at the UK Wodehouse dinner [in October 2004], and can confirm how much she enjoyed it. She did not say a great deal—while readily entering into debate on any topic that came her way—but immersed herself in the very special occasion with obvious relish, and spoke most happily of the many things she was doing on her London visit. It is so sad that she has gone, and that she had to struggle for so long before losing that last battle, but she made the most of every moment. She is much missed even by those of us who knew her only briefly.

—Murray Hedcock

The members of the Angela Thirkell Society were saddened to hear of the death of Jan Wilson Kaufman on December 5, 2004. Jan was a member of the Society and a good friend. She spoke at our North American Branch meeting in Los Angeles in March 1998 on the topic “Clothes in the Barsetshire Era 1933–1961.” She gave a scholarly and engaging presentation with appropriate slides. Jan was a forceful and dynamic speaker, and the topic was well-researched and intriguing. Jan teamed up visual images of characters from Angela Thirkell’s novels, like Rose Birkett, with pictures from then-current magazines. The Dior “New Look” was a point of interest, as after the war women wanted a change from the frugality and the rationing and the skimpy clothes, so in came wasp waists and huge skirts. The Thirties and Forties also had a distinct look, and Jan’s presentation nailed down a lot of the characters from Mrs. Thirkell’s Barsetshire novels much more deeply and richly in our imagination.

—Edith Jeude

Angela Thirkell Society
www.angelathirkell.org

Jan and I became good friends from the moment we first met. We both enjoyed Wodehouse tremendously as well as all the Wodehousean activities we could indulge in. We were often together at TWS conventions and of course at Blandings Castle events. [Recently] I’ve been going through various Wodehouse tomes looking for the proper quotation. The most apt I’ve found is this: “. . . the club of which Ukridge’s Aunt Julia was the popular and energetic president . . .” and: “. . . a dear soul . . .” All the same, what we’d have quoted

to each other are the wonderful humorous bits. Jan was such a splendid person and friend—kind, witty, generous, effervescent, artistic, talented, an excellent photographer, having a keen sense of humor, and, all in all, such a fine person that I haven’t enough words to express the great joy her friendship brought me. I know I shall continue to miss her and continue to be grateful for having known her, and I know that’s true also for all [who were] able to be present at her memorial. Hers is indeed a memory to be cherished.

—Marilyn MacGregor

Since the Kalamazoo convention, whenever I have thought of Jan, besides her breezy bonhomie, her generous personality, and her great photos, I think of her wonderful talks at our conventions. I am not sure if anyone has officially determined who is the most frequent speaker at a TWS convention, but I would be willing to bet that Jan holds that title. In addition to quantity, her talks have always been of the highest quality as well: well-researched, well-presented (usually with fabulous slides) and providing new information and insights. When I was preparing the speakers’ list for Right Ho, Toronto, my goal was to have the best Saturday program in TWS history. I knew that in order to achieve that goal, I had to get Jan. I did, and she did not let me down. Her lecture on Wodehouse and Waugh was a truly fitting swan song from a great Wodehousean and a beautiful human being. For me, no TWS convention from now on will be complete.

—Elliott Milstein

I met Jan first back in July 1989 when she came to the UK with others of the American and Dutch Wodehouse Societies on the first Wodehouse Pilgrimage. Because it was the first international Wodehouse event, we had the Press and television companies interviewing us wherever we went. But we soon fell into a routine—walking to somewhere, talking about it, Pauline Blanc sketching it, and Jan photographing it. But I don’t think any of us realised what that week would lead to.

Some of us in the UK were members of the American Society, but we had never met them. The 1989 Pilgrimage changed all that. We became friends; friends close enough to visit each other, to have our children staying with them (my daughter Helen had a splendid time staying with Jan) and their children stopping with us. Americans join us at our biennial dinners, and we add our bit to the American Conventions. And Jan was always there to photograph the goings-on.

It was poignant but, I think, particularly fitting that Jan’s last Wodehouse event should have been a

trip to London, where she thoroughly enjoyed our Wodehouse dinner and came on the walk round Bertie Wooster's London the next day. I shall miss her.

—Norman Murphy

One of my most treasured memories of Jan is the time I spent as her guest when I was visiting San Francisco back in 1998. We were already friends but became closer during that visit and stayed up into the wee hours of the morning, talking and laughing up a storm. This past October we talked and laughed even more when she visited London and, despite her illness, enjoyed herself thoroughly, squeezing as much as she could into her few weeks abroad. I had the chance to repay her previous hospitality in part when she and her sister Nancy came to a dinner party at our home, along with Ed and Missy Ratcliffe and Dan and Tina Garrison. Such was the good time we all had that it took considerable effort to push everybody out the door at 11:00 that night, to ensure that they got back to their hotels before the Underground closed down. The next night Jan came to the U.K. Wodehouse Society's formal dinner, looking absolutely radiant and proudly wearing her TWS presidential medallion. It was evident that she was in her element, happy among her Wodehousian friends and clearly delighted that she had made the trip. And we were all so happy to have her there. Like so many, I am going to miss her very much—and I'm honored and proud that she was my friend.

—Elin Woodger Murphy

"A remarkable woman!" "An amazing woman!" These words were spoken over and over at Jan's memorial service. She was more than that. A truer friend you couldn't find. She was smart, she was wise, she was warm and compassionate and kind. She loved life and lived every minute of it. "I've had fun every day of my life," she said. She was funny and fun to be with. We will never know another Jan.

—Ed and Missy Ratcliffe

Tony first met Jan at the New York convention in 1991; Elaine two years later. Her personality always shone through, her fine photographic skills sometimes masked by almost excessive modesty. We stayed with her once and enjoyed a visit to the Botanical Gardens at Berkeley, and were pleased to have been able to receive her and Nancy at our house [in October 2004]. The UK Society is proud that, when she realised that she would not make the convention, she came to attend our biennial Wodehouse dinner and visit many UK friends. The forthcoming Hollywood convention was

dear to her heart, and although she will be truly missed, we hope that it can nevertheless be her true memorial.

—Tony and Elaine Ring

I first met Jan at the Boston convention in 1995. She impressed me no end with her knowledge of period dress and her own wonderful outfits. As I got to know her better over the years, I found a much more important reason to be impressed by her. Jan was a truly Wodehousian spirit; as cheerful and sanguine about the goodness and enjoyability of life as a character from one of Plum's books. That's easy enough when all's right with the world, but Jan's bonhomie seemed to grow brighter and stronger as her health waned. I could tell she was unwell even in Toronto, but she never stopped smiling and there was never an indication that it was any kind of effort for her. Her peacefulness and innate ability to keep the upper lip stiffened in times of crisis were reminiscent of Wodehouse himself. He would have loved her as much as we did.

—Jean Tillson

Acting President, TWS



Wodehouse Is Not Shakespeare

BY RAY STEEN

Last year was the year that, rightly or wrongly, I finally began reading Shakespeare's plays. In my defense, before I am drummed out of The Wodehouse Society, I just want to say that Shakespeare has much in common with Wodehouse.

1. They both got rich writing for the market. Shakespeare left Stratford-upon-Avon for the theaters of London with the shirt on his back. When, a quarter-century later, he retired back to Stratford, he was the town's second largest property owner.
2. Neither went to the university because both fathers fell on hard times.
3. They were workaholics with little inclination to socialize.
4. Both were consummate wordsmiths.
5. They pinched shamelessly from other authors.

In comparing him to the Bard I do not mean to diminish Wodehouse's stature. Certainly not. They had their differences too.



Chapters Corner

CONDUCTED BY SUSAN COHEN



It's fun being with other fans, and it's fun reading about what other fans are doing. So please use this column to tell the world—the Wodehouse world, that is—about your chapter's activities, zany and otherwise. Representatives of chapters, please send all info to me, Rosie M. Banks, otherwise known as Susan Cohen (address/fax number on the back page). Anyone reading this who is not a member of a local chapter but would like to attend a meeting or become a member can get in touch with the contact person listed.

We have another new chapter! See The Spink Bottle Supper Club for details.

Anglers' Rest

(Seattle and vicinity)
Contact: Susan Collicott
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Seattle WA 98117-6102
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E-mail: camel@drizzle.com

This winter members of the Anglers' Rest were busy making plans to attend the Paramount Theater's "Silent Movie Series" film *Piccadilly*, which was scheduled to be shown on February 28. Dinner beforehand—carousing afterwards. *Piccadilly* should not be confused with the 1936 movie *Piccadilly Jim*. Released in 1929, *Piccadilly* stars Anna May Wong and Gilda Gray, the actress who popularized the shimmy dance. It is a melodrama about passion, jealousy, and murder. Hot stuff, very different from Wodehouse's approach to life and writing, but a good excuse for getting together and having a wonderful time. Also a very nice run up to the Hollywood convention next summer. And even with no Jim there you've at least got the *Piccadilly*.

The Anglers' Rest meets every other month (aside from holiday madness months when all bets are off) at various locales in the Puget Sound area. Much discussion of any topic in any way associated with Wodehouse takes place—and then everything else, too. We attend local arts events and try new restaurants, pubs, and teahouses. We read passages from favorite Wodehouse books out loud; trade interesting Wodehouse-related items; and lend books, tapes, CDs, and DVDs to one another with abandonment. Join us for a relaxing or invigorating time with folks of like mind and attitude.

Blandings Castle Chapter

(greater San Francisco Bay Area)
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Phone: 831-335-2445
E-mail: oldmem@cruzio.com

The chapter is working feverishly but joyously on next summer's Hollywood convention. No drones here. We'll see you in August.

The Broadway Special

(New York City and vicinity)
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92 Main Street, Apt. 409
Deep River CT 06417-1841
E-mail: carfaxhope@comcast.net

A report of the Special's encounter with author Robert McCrum is printed on page 11 of this issue. And quite an interesting encounter it was! On the agenda for February 26: cocktails, followed by an excursion to MOMA [the Museum of Modern Art] to see the 1937 musical *A Damsel In Distress*, starring Fred Astaire and Joan Fontaine. Though anything may happen spontaneously, The Special's next scheduled event is on Saturday, May 7, when we will attend the Wodehouse-Kern musical *The Beauty Prize*, to be preceded by a luncheon meeting. (For more on *The Beauty Prize*, see page 8.)

Buck-U-Uppo Bottling Company

(Seaside, Oregon, and vicinity)
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Seaside OR 971138-6220
Phone: 503-738-3103
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Capital! Capital!

(Washington, D.C., and vicinity)
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Phone: 703-319-0429
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In December some 27 members of Capital! Capital! gathered at a Washington, D.C., restaurant for good food, good fellowship, and the chance to swap their favorite Wodehouse similes—Wodehouse being, of course, the undisputed heavyweight champion of the genre. Special recognition was given to members who found similes involving Old Testament prophets and gentlemen of the cloth. Though there were winners, actually all attendees were winners in that enjoyable friendly exchange. Next up is a dinner scheduled for February 20, when Capital! Capital! plans to discuss the new McCrum biography of our man Plum and to watch a video episode of *Wodehouse Playhouse*, a BBC production of some years ago.

Chapter One

(greater Philadelphia area)

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Chapter One prepares for a day with Robert McCrum

Chapter One meets on a Sunday afternoon once every two months except in the summer. Place: The Dark Horse Restaurant, Headhouse Square, Philadelphia. New members welcome. The winter of 2004–05 was the season of McCrum. Dan Cohen made a presentation about the new biography of Wodehouse at our November meeting. On December 16 Robert McCrum spoke at the Free Library of Philadelphia. A group of Chaps met for dinner before Mr. McCrum's talk, and when the Chaps meet it's always time for laughter and browsing and sluicing. Afterwards, we walked around the corner en masse to the library, met Mr. McCrum, heard his talk, asked our questions, bought copies of his book, and had them autographed. Then we took him to a restaurant called the Rose

Tattoo, where he browsed while we continued sluicing. Yes, I said the Rose Tattoo. That means the spirit of Tennessee Williams hovered over the evening, as well as the spirit of Wodehouse. Each spirit was probably startled to see the other there.

Spending time chatting informally with Robert McCrum was very interesting and useful. It was also just plain pleasant. He told us anecdotes about his research into the Master's life, and he told us a bit about himself. One of the things he told us about himself was that he once taught at the University of Pennsylvania, which, as you may know, is in the city of brotherly love.

Let's get back to the November meeting, because there were aspects to it other than discussing McCrum's book. Herb Moskovitz, who represented TWS at Gretchen Worden's memorial service, gave us a copy of the program from the memorial, to be included in our Chapter One scrapbook along with a copy of Herb's eulogy to Gretchen, given at the memorial service for all of us in Chapter One. Carolyn Pokrivchak did a brief presentation on the 1984 version of "Sir Agravaire," illustrations by Rodger McPhail. David Ruef told us about his trip to Lambert's Cafe in Bramson, Missouri, a restaurant that specializes in bunging rolls at its customers. Our January meeting was postponed due to ghastly weather and traffic nightmares made worse by the big Eagles/Falcons game held in Philadelphia that afternoon. We have rescheduled our next meeting for February 13, weather permitting. As you know, Wodehouse died on Valentine's Day, so each Chap will bring an appropriate toast to honor him, and we will also toast Ed Whittaker, our Gally Threepwood, who died on Valentine's Day 2003.

The Chicago Accident Syndicate

(Chicago and thereabouts)

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Evanston IL 60201-2642

Phone: 847-475-2235

E-mail: d-garrison@northwestern.edu

The chapter holds bimonthly meetings with a wide range of activities. Sometimes members of the Syndicate meet in each other's homes to enjoy a pot-luck supper and read Wodehouse. Sometimes they meet in an Irish pub where there's good browsing and sluicing. They enjoy theater outings followed by dinner at a restaurant, and every time City Lit does a Wodehouse production they are in the audience. They go to the Chicago Botanical Gardens to stroll through the English garden there, while reading excerpts from

Wodehouse. They play miniature golf together and have one grand croquet game every year.

The Clients of Adrian Mulliner

(For enthusiasts of both PGW and Sherlock Holmes)

Contact: Marilyn MacGregor

1515 Shasta Drive, #4210

Davis CA 95616-6692

Phone: 530-747-6110

Senior Bloodstains are held at Wodehouse Society conventions. Junior Bloodstains are held every January, part of the big annual Sherlock Holmes celebration in New York. The meetings are always great fun. A Junior Bloodstain was held on January 8 at the Algonquin Hotel, during the latest Sherlock Holmes weekend. We began with a contest to see who could do the best “Smile That Wins,” as Adrian himself would have rendered it. The winner was Scott Monty, whose dreadful grin was accompanied by one eyebrow several inches above its normal place and the other brow about down to the top of the nose. You had to see it to believe it. He won the role of Adrian in the reading of the day, a small playlet by Anne Cotton entitled “Sherlock Holmes and the Unsettling Smile.” Don’t worry if you missed it; we may reprise the piece at the Senior Bloodstain in August. Can anyone out there smile as dreadfully as Scott Monty? We shall see.

The Drone Rangers

(Houston and vicinity)

Newsletter: *DroneStar*, edited by Carey Tynan

Contact: Toni Rudersdorf

Phone: 713-522-6220

E-mail: trudersdorf@mindspring.com

The musical *Anything Goes* was scheduled to be performed in Houston over the winter, and the Drone Rangers were planning to see the February 12 show. It was to be our “Remember Plum” event, with dinner before show. As always, if you happen to be in Houston on any of the dates events are planned, please let Toni Rudersdorf know and join us.

The Mottled Oyster Club

(San Antonio and South Texas)

Contact: James P. Robinson III

PO Box 6501

San Antonio TX 78209-6501

Phone: 210-824-1565

Fax: 210-826-7621

E-mail: jprobins@ix.netcom.com

The Mottled Oyster Club of San Antonio and South Texas is now meeting on a more or less stable schedule, on the second Thursday of each month. However, every other month, under its nom de guerre of the Jellied Eels, the group meets at a restaurant for dinner. On the second Thursday in March, the Mottled Oysters will gather at the Barnes & Noble on Loop 410. Interested or traveling Wodehousians are always welcome.

The New England Wodehouse Thingummy Society (NEWTS – Boston and elsewhere in New England)

Contact: Anne Cotton, president

12 Hollywood Street

South Hadley MA 01075-3012

Phone: 413-532-4147

E-mail: ladybassett@comcast.net

The NEWTS had their traditional Christmas bash chez Bud and Dotty Swanson, in Westford, Massachusetts. As usual, we excelled at eating and drinking the goodies provided by the whole assemblage, and, as usual, we had our traditional gift exchange. We had a surprise visit from our NEWTS abroad (Elin and Norman Murphy), which pleased Max Pokrivchak, author of our skit in rehearsal for the Hollywood convention, as Elin has a major role in one scene, and Max did not think she would be able to rehearse with the rest of the cast until everyone was in Los Angeles next summer. The presence of Norman and Elin made the party complete. Our next bash will be in mid-March at the home of Bill and Jo Claghorn. This location, too, is fast becoming a tradition to end our winter hiatus.

The Northwodes

(St. Paul, Minneapolis, and vicinity)

Contact: Kristine Fowler

1388 Wellesley Avenue

St. Paul MN 55105-2417

Phone: 651-602-9464

E-mail: fowler@math.umn.edu

The Northwodes invaded Comrade D’Souza’s house on December 5 for our holiday dinner, but at least this time we didn’t make him cook all the food, as he had before. We did call upon him to round up torches for the reading of “The Metropolitan Touch,” so we could turn out the lights in the appropriate spots. Comrade McDonald provided inspired “Richard Little Productions” signs and also efficiently counted the little orange ping-pong balls retrieved once the flinging was over so that no hazards were left on the walkways—Drones wouldn’t think to do this, but we might like to

be invited back sometime.

The January book discussion finished up the *Summer Lightning/Heavy Weather* duo and set a spring schedule that samples several other sagas: February 21, *Meet Mr Mulliner*; March 21, *Right Ho, Jeeves* (aka *Brinkley Manor*); April 18, *Leave It to Psmith*; May 16, tba. March will also include a gathering (probably on the 13th) that doesn't involve homework, although there is an item of business to be sandwiched in among the tea biscuits, viz., the next round of our library donation project. Any visitors who might be in the area at the right times (or even the wrong ones) are encouraged to give a holler or just show up. For book discussions: 7:30 p.m. at Wilde Roast Cafe in northeast Minneapolis. For social gatherings: Times and locations vary, so check with Kris Fowler.

The Pale Parabolites

(Toronto and vicinity)

Contact: Peter M. Nixon

E-mail: petermnixon@sympatico.ca

The Pale Parabolites . . . those who are seeking the Pale Parabola of Joy . . . whatever that may be. The Pale Parabolites' motto is *nil admirari*. Like the Empress of Blandings the Pale Parabolites take things as they come and marvel at nothing.

The Pelikan Club

(Kansas City and vicinity)

Contact: Sallie Hobbs

319 Water Street

Liberty MO 64068-1740

The Perfecto-Zizzbaum Motion Picture Corporation

(Los Angeles and vicinity)

Contact: Melissa D. Aaron

Phone: 909-869-3839

E-mail: maaron@csupomona.edu

We are looking forward to the convention next summer and hope that all the Wodehousians who come will learn to love dear Dottyville-on-the-Pacific as much as we do. We meet the second Sunday of every month at 12:30 p.m. at Vroman's Bookstore, 695 E. Colorado, Pasadena. The readings change every month and can be found by checking our calendar or subscribing to our mailing list. We also occasionally attend events of interest in the area. Subscribers to our e-mail list can be kept abreast of such local amusements. Information about our mailing list and important links can be found at our website: www.lahacal.org/wodehouse.

The Pickering Motor Company

(Detroit and vicinity)

Contact: Elliott Milstein

30802 Knighton Drive

Farmington Hills MI 48331-5969

E-mail: ellmilstein@yahoo.com

Dull, stout, elderly, and not very bright, president and founder of the Pickering Motor Company, Dudley Pickering, was more or less a mere piece of flotsam tossed upon a sea of circumstances far beyond his understanding, let alone his control. The same could be said of the current president of Detroit's chapter of TWS.

The Pickering Motor Company met many months ago, and, after much pleasant banter—Wodehousean and non-Wodehousean—the meeting broke with many promises of future gatherings and trips. But, alas, the chapter's president allowed all such dreams to fade, never calling another meeting, despite the desperate cries of some members. Why, you ask. Well, when we hear him mutter something about catching up on his Kafka and Proust, we know there is no good reason.

But there is a light at the end of the tunnel. A meeting has been arranged and will shortly take place as the Pickering brush the dust from their sleeves, the cobwebs from their hair, and the mist from their eyes, and climb slowly and carefully from their long hibernation. Let the cry go forth, from Novi to Birmingham: "The Pickering are coming! The Pickering are still alive!"

Plummies, all: Watch this space!

Rocky Mountain Plums

(Rocky Mountain Area)

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2704 Sunrise Court

Estes Park CO 80517-7044

Phone: 970-586-4908

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The Size 14 Hat Club

(Halifax, Nova Scotia)

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E-mail: jillcr@ns.sympatico.ca

The Soup & Fish Club

(northern Virginia area)

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PO Box 194

Clifton VA 20124-0194

Phone: 703-815-7541

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The Spink Bottle Supper Club
(Southern East Coast)
Contact: Lara James
Rose Tree Cottage
18 West Bayshore Blvd.
Jacksonville NC 28540-5302
E-mail: Rnljames@aol.com

The Spink Bottle Supper Club is tired of being left out! We hereby announce our debut onto TWS's scene. Devotees of Plum will recognize our name, deriving from Aunt Dahlia's nickname for Gussie Fink-Nottle. Since our members live in separate states, unfortunately, and none live near a bally chapter, we have decided to create our own. East Coasters without a chapter are welcome to join at any time.

At the first annual Plum-by-the-Bay getaway on November 12, chapter president Moke Carmody Pemberly (aka Monica Freire) flew from Ferny Grove in Fort Lauderdale to Jacksonville, North Carolina's own Rose Tree Cottage, a charming old place somewhat resembling Wee Nooke before Edwin the Boy Scout burned it down in commission of his good deed for the day. During the week-long inaugural bash we adored four-month-old Rosa Lila James (christened the Youngest Member) and inducted her into our comparatively august society. Chapter VP Penelope Grainger Wentworth (aka Lara James) hosted the great events, which, among other things, consisted of writing exercises at local haunts of varying levels of distinction, reading PGW aloud, singing songs to a crying baby, and eating of the toothsome best, which Anatole (Penelope's other hat) dished up for us.

The next Spink Bottle Supper Club meeting will take place in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, some time in April. Members are reading *Spring Fever* in advance. Traveling Wodehousians are urged to contact Lara for further details, then stop by and join the festivities. Those desiring to be a preux chevalier, please keep to our dress code by reading "What the Well Dressed Man Is Wearing" from *Milady's Boudoir* before arrival. The success and rannygazoo of the first meeting of the SBSC guarantees we will have many more. Until then Penelope continues to coach the Youngest Member, hoping her first words will be "Pip pip!"

"Good heavens, laddie, you don't have to be invited to go to people's parties in Hollywood. You just saunter along till you see the coloured lanterns and walk in."

Laughing Gas, 1936

Convention Reminders

In the interest of keeping members up to date about the convention, we are providing these few helpful reminders.

Transportation matching: Because Los Angeles is not a walking city, we strongly recommend that you either bring or rent a car, cadge a seat in somebody else's coupe, or take advantage of Perfecto-Zizzbaum's special transportation-matching service—see page 2.

Roommate matching: As noted in the last issue of *Plum Lines*, accommodations on-campus will be both convenient and inexpensive. Many Plummies will want to take advantage of the double-room rate, which comes to only \$72 a night if split with someone else. If you don't have a roomie yet and want to get one, you can take advantage of our roommate-matching system by subscribing to our special mailing list. Just send a message to majordomo@wodehouse.org with the message: subscribe roommates. Once subscribed, you can write to the address roommates@wodehouse.org to reach others who are looking for roommates. In your message indicate that you need a roommate and what your specifics are (e.g., male or female, smoking or nonsmoking, etc.). Once roommates have "found" each other and agreed on how to pay for their rooms, they can unsubscribe from the list. For those who don't have e-mail but still need a roommate, please write to Anne Cotton, who will be subscribed to the mailing list and can find roomies for anyone not computer-accessible. Anne's address is 12 Hollywood Street, South Hadley MA 01075-3012; phone: 413-532-4147. Along with your name and address, your letter should provide your phone number and best time to call, which Anne will pass along to any potential roomies.

Reserving a table: Further to our notice on page 10 in the last *Plum Lines*, we must advise folks that **there will be only four tables available** at the convention for selling or displaying your wares. This includes booksellers, chapters, and members looking to put on a special display. Tables will therefore be available on a first-come, first-served basis. **Booksellers:** To reserve a table, send a check for \$25, payable to The Wodehouse Society, to Gary Hall (address below). **Chapters and members wanting to mount a display:** No fee is necessary, but we *must* be advised if you plan to sell anything at your table. To reserve a table or part of a table, write to: Missy Ratcliffe, 538 San Lorenzo Ave., Felton CA 95018-9280.

A Gastronomic Note

Zut alors! Monsieur Anatole has just announced that he will prepare one—yes, only one—main entrée for our Saturday night banquet. This will be Chicken Castro Villa—and if you deduce that this is herbed breast of chicken with a confetti of artichoke hearts and plum tomatoes, then your trained senses do not deceive you.

However, chicken not being to everybody's taste, we have wheedled M. Anatole into agreeing also to prepare a vegetarian dish for the banquet. What will that be, you ask? We cannot say. M. Anatole declares he needs inspiration before making up his mind, and this will probably not occur until the day of the banquet.

So—if you wish to choose the surprise vegetarian option for your meal, please write this in on your registration form. If you have already mailed in your registration, please let Gary Hall know by mail or e-mail (addresses below) that you want “Vegetarian Surprise.” Otherwise, Chicken Castro Villa it will be!

Brian Taves's New Book Is Coming!

Brian Taves's important new book about P. G. Wodehouse in Hollywood will be coming out this year. Full information about the book will appear in the next issue; and, for our listening pleasure, Brian will be speaking at the convention!

Volunteer Officers

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The Beauty Prize photo courtesy of Musicals Tonight!

Contents

- 1 Hooray for Hollywood!
- 2 Getting Around in L.A.
- 2 New Dues Address!
- 3 The Great Wodehouse Movie Pitch Challenge
- 3 My First Time
- 4 By the Way
- 5 Treasurer's Report for 2004
- 5 TWS 2007, Anyone?
- 6 Collecting Wodehouse: Some Biographical Puzzles
- 8 Six Degrees of P. G. Wodehouse:
 The Supporting Actresses
- 8 *The Beauty Prize* Premieres in New York
- 10 Rivals of P. G. Wodehouse: Will Cuppy
- 11 Robert McCrum Flits By
- 12 About Hearst Castle
- 13 The Infant Samuel at Prayer
- 14 Plum in the Papers
- 14 Answer to Six Degrees quiz
- 16 In Memoriam: Jan Wilson Kaufman
- 18 Wodehouse Is Not Shakespeare
- 19 Chapters Corner
- 23 Convention Reminders
- 24 Brian Taves's New Book Is Coming!

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