



Plum Lines

The quarterly newsletter of The Wodehouse Society

Vol. 17 No 3

Autumn 1997

BINGEING IN CAPE MAY

By **Susan Cohen** aka Rosie M. Banks

Among the leading participants of the Wodehouse Weekend binge, sponsored by Chapter One of Philadelphia, were the fat-headed sun and a full moon. The weather, in the town of Cape May, New Jersey, on June 20th-June 22nd, was so devoid of heaviness that there wasn't even a hint of summer lightning to worry about. Forty-five or so Plummies were therefore free to swim in the ocean and sun themselves on the beach; catch the cool breezes on the glorious verandah at the historic Chalfonte Hotel; and take pleasant strolls through Cape May, the Victorian B&B capital of the East Coast. The handsome pewter mug goes to Dan and Tina Garrison of Illinois for coming the greatest distance, our only TWS bingees to make the trek from the Mid-West.

For the weekend, Cape May posed as Bingley-On

Sea to accommodate the Drones Club Miniature Golf Tournament. Fortunately, Jeeves was not there to enforce sartorial elegance since Chapter One and the Newts dressed to show team spirit rather than what the well-dressed person would wear. Chapter One members wore nautical blue and white T-shirts with nom (as in nom de Plum) on front and Chapter name etched on back. The NEWTS looked even better, adorned as they were in vivid green T-shirts whose noms, chapter name, and logo added an aggressively amphibian air to the competition. Capital! Capital! members preferred a more individualistic style of dress, ranging from dashing elegance to "the wilted tourist in the Caribbean who has lost his luggage and been in the same clothes for five days" look.

The Miniature Golf Tournament was played with ruthless precision and hopeless ineptitude on a truly challenging course. Winner: Beanie Blum, who cheated by actually knowing how to play golf. Equally impressive was Hal Lynch who won the prize for being the biggest loser. Ten others gifted in failing at miniature golf won certificates making each an official member of the Wrecking Crew. The non-niblicky sports event of the day was a tough Wodehouse golf quiz created by Dave McDonough and won by Elin Woodger.

Since a goodly portion of the weekend was devoted to Plummies stuffing themselves on the delicious Southern cooking of the Chalfonte, we felt that the Empress of Blandings deserved to be with us. For this reason, Michel, a local French pastry chef known as the Anatole of Cape May, baked delicious Empress of Blandings cookies in our honor and provided us



Deviltry's afoot at Cape May: Egg-and-Spooners setting out.

with a fat Empress of Blandings bread as the centerpiece for our Saturday cocktail party on the Grassy Knoll. Please don't tell Clarence that we devoured every seed and crumb of that porcine tender goddess.

Prizes were showered upon Plummies playing games while sluicing before Saturday night dinner. Knock the Topper Off His Lordship's Head With a Crusty Roll, won by Gretchen Worden, and the Egg And Spoon Race, won by Murray Wilson, proved popular. Best Costume Prize went to John Baesch who went so far as to bring vintage luggage to the binge as well as wearing vintage clothes all weekend. The prize for best costume of the evening went to monocled Ed Whitaker and definitely Deco Karen Byrne. Kudos to all the runners-up whose dress was dandy. Jeeves would have been proud of you.

Evening festivities in the Chalfonte's Sawyer Room got off the ground, where, if you must know, a number of us were lying by this time, with an enthusiastic hard sell of the upcoming Chicago convention to shouts of "Hear! Hear!" from the populace. Professional illustrator Lou Glanzman displayed his sketches for a possible Wodehouse stamp. We gave David and Elizabeth Landman resounding applause for their performance of "Sonny Girl," and later led us in a spirited sing-along of Plum's songs, and of "Sonny Boy." A reading aloud of "The Clicking of Cuthbert" was the dramatic offering of the evening. All the participants were worthy of at least one SRO (no, that is not single room occupancy, as per Bowery flop house; it means standing room only) performance at The Princess Theatre. Extra roses to Richard Morrissey for playing Cuthbert with flair, and for putting up with a kiss from Daniel Cohen's Vladimir Brusiloff. A reporter was present, to record the rowdy activities of the evening in the Cape May Herald.

Sunday brought early morning pick-me-ups at the

side of the Chalfonte's Tin House, where liquor was stored during Prohibition. The generous individual providing the pick-me-ups was Peter Sinclair. At noon we enjoyed a delicious picnic at the Cape May home of

David Mackenzie and Hope Gaines. Two newt-shaped breads graced their table. Lobster and many other tasty and appropriately Wodehousian foods were served. They even had roly-poly pudding! The weather was too hot for the planned croquet game, rules according to Baxter, so we lolled about; browsing, sluicing, and chatting. By evening most Plummies were en route to their homes. Only a small band of us remained, to pig out one last time at the Chalfonte and spend the evening laughing and discussing the master.

I think I can safely say that a marvelous time was had by all, or, at the very least, most, and I hope we will have many more binges. Plummies need Plummies. Else we are but

lonely islands in a cold world full of people who have never heard of, or don't care about, Wodehouse. Now it's on to the Great Chicago Convention, the next mad frantic Wodehouse social round.



Susan Cohen and the bread Empress

Nothing so braces a young man in love as the consciousness of having resisted a Tempter who has tried to lure him into a course of action which the adored object would not approve; and as he recalled the splendid firmness with which he had tied the can to his Uncle Fred's suggestion of a pleasant and instructive afternoon in London, Pongo felt spiritually uplifted.

Uncle Dynamite, 1948

THE HEIRS OF LORD EMSWORTH

By Nigel Farnsworth

Francine Kitts found this “praise of the country house pig” in *Country Life* magazine of August 28, 1994. Francine remarks, “I found it amazing that Plum’s name wasn’t even mentioned! It is, however, a British publication, and maybe everyone in the UK is very well versed.”

Dogs look up to us, cats look down on us, but pigs treat us as equals. With this nicety Winston Churchill summed up the most subtle of relationships: that between a country gentleman and his pig. Each takes it for granted that the other understands his language. As the naturalist W. H. Hudson noted, the pig has about him a natural, pleasant, hail-fellow-well-met air, devoid of servility or insolence, which endears him to the English sensibility. And this reputation as a hearty democrat goes some way towards explaining why, down the centuries, the pig has figured large in the social fabric of the English country house.

If he were alive today, Lord Emsworth—whose devotion to Empress of Blandings, his champion sow, was legendary—would doubtless recognise some of the sentiments expressed by his spiritual legatees. The former Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord Runcie, for instance, rues the busy schedule that keeps him from his beloved Berkshires. “I wish that I could turn my attention to such things as tranquil as my interest in pigs,” he sighs. As the Duchess of Devonshire contemplates Primrose—a portly Gloucester Old Spot with a peppery disposition, who rules the farmyard at Chatsworth—she recalls her grandmother’s affection for a sow which would go everywhere with her: “She would even tie it up outside church, like a dog.”

From HRH the Princess Royal, who keeps Gloucester Old Spots at Gatcombe Park, to Sir Richard Body, General Sir Peter de la Billière, and the 21st Lady of Traquair, the pig has many friends in high places. Lord Lichfield suggests that one reason for this popularity is the pacific and restorative effect the pig can have. Nothing lifts his lordship’s spirits quite like the sight of Hamlet, a Tamworth boar who greets him by jumping on the wall of the Wyatt-designed sty at Shugborough, his ancestral home. And at Kentwell Hall, a fine, moated Elizabethan house in Suffolk, Judith Phillips takes great comfort in the society of Lucy, a genial, talking Tamworth sow, whose auburn hair complements the red Tudor brick of the hall.

That pigs are balm to the Englishman’s nerves is confirmed in Augustus Whiffle’s seminal work *The*

Care of the Pig. “The sight of pigs with their noses in the trough,” writes Whiffle, “does a man more good than any Methodist sermon.”

The Care of the Pig, it will be remembered, was Lord Emsworth’s favourite reading, and whenever life at Blandings Castle threatened to become too interesting he would retire to the library and lose himself in Whiffle’s prose. In *Lord Emsworth’s Annotated Whiffle*, judiciously edited by James Hogg, it suggests that you may discover all that is necessary of a man’s character from his attitude to pigs. “I have compared the advance of pig-rearing in this country to the rise of the nobility, so much do the two have in common,” Whiffle concludes. “Like the great families of the Shires, the aristocrats of the sty have qualities which have been the cause of comment throughout the world. Both speak volumes for the influence of breeding.”

Of the other great writers inspired by the pig—Thomas Hardy, Lewis Carroll and G. K. Chesterton among them—none comes closer than George Orwell in identifying what makes the pig the Corinthian of the farmyard. His political parable *Animal Farm* describes the natural hierarchy that evolves when animals take matters into their own hooves: “The work of teaching and organising the others naturally fell to the pigs, who were generally recognised as being the cleverest of animals.”

The heirs of Lord Emsworth share an innate understanding that, in terms of dignity, personality and stature, the pig stands alone. Forget the sly Siamese sharpening its claws on the 17th-century tapestry, ignore the simpering Labrador clumsily knocking over the suit of armour; only a pig can do justice to a country-house setting. Finicky, stately, contrary, these omnivorous, even-toed ungulates, with their corkscrew tails, harmonious contours and curious snouts, know—just as the Empress of Blandings knew—that they, as much as their comrades and equals behind the columns of the big house next door, have a right to be there. Lords of all they survey, rare breeds with impeccable ancestry, the Tamworth, Gloucester Old Spot and Saddleback are confident in the knowledge that an English pig’s sty is his castle.



Lest the innocent be misled, I’ll point out that the author, in quoting from *The Care of the Pig* and *Lord Emsworth’s Annotated Whiffle*, is actually quoting from just one book: *Lord Emsworth’s Annotated Whiffle; The Care of the Pig*, “edited” (actually written) by James Hogg.

—OM

Wodehouse Convention Registrations

as of August 15, 1997

Tim Andrew	Chesham, Bucks	Daniel Love Glazer	Chicago, IL	George R. Paterson	Wilmette, IL
Rita Anton	Chicago, IL	Sandy Gleaves	Tipton, IA	Sushila Peterson	Kansas City, MO
Jamie Aramini	Evanston, IL	Paige Goettel	Wilmette, IL	Michael Petterson	Evanston, IL
John Baesch	Rodemont, PA	Jarlath J. Graham	Chicago, IL	John & Terri Phipps	Adamstown, MD
Douglas Bellew	Exton, PA	Bob & Christina Griffin	Mattawan, MI	Mani Pillai	Chicago, IL
Roma Benninghoven	Barrington, IL	Richard Hanson	Seattle, WA	Amy Plofker	Hamden, CT
Alekhs Bhurke	East Lansing, MI	Mary Harney	Chicago, IL	Carolyn M. Pokrivchak	Easton, PA
Anne Bianchi	Houston, TX	Mary Hartshorn	Glenview, IL	Max T.K. Pokrivshak	Watertown, MA
Ann & Leon Bishop	Chicago, IL	Helen E. Heinrich	Stony Brook, NY	Erik R. Quick	Alexandria, VA
Lorraine Bonecki	Oak Forest, IL	Al Hershner	Wilmette, IL	Ed & Helen Ratcliffe	Felton, CA
Harris T. Booker, Jr.	Palmyra, PA	Michael Hodge, MBE	Chicago, IL	Ann & Paul Richardson	Tucson, AZ
Susan Brokaw	Cincinnati, OH	Wilma Hodge	Chicago, IL	William F. Richardson	Auckland, NZ
Edward Bronstein	Daly City, CA	William B. Horn	Edina, MN	Tony & Elaine Ring	Great Missenden, Bucks, UK
Bob Brooks	Evanston, IL	Ann Jirousek	Chicago, IL		
Nancy & Randall Burkett	Worcester, MA	Jan Wilson Kaufman	Oakland, CA	Barbara & Ben Rooks	Evanston, IL
Jim & Sue Byham	Landenberg, PA	Barbara Kawa	Chicago, IL	James & Joan Rybarczyk	St. Joseph, MI
Karen Byrne	New Britain, PA	Merideth Kelley	Seattle, WA	William Saddler	Chicago, IL
Ralph Chermak	Des Plaines, IL	Linda Kessler	New York, NY	Britta & Sven Sahlin	Osterskar, Sweden
John Coats	Chicago, IL	John Ketcham	Elon College, NC	Ron Satterfield	Ft. L'dale, FL
Charlotte & Richard Cody	Chicago, IL	Marie & Damian King	Edmonds, WA	Carolyn Scheierhorn	Chicago, IL
Daniel & Susan Cohen	Cape May Court House, NJ	Kathryn E. Kopf	Philadelphia, PA	Peter & Antonia Schwed	New York, NY
		Len & Shirley Lawson	Livermore, CA	Carolyn Simons	Palatine, IL
Jerilyn Cohen	St. Louis, MO	Jon Lellenberg	Washington, DC	Shana Singerman	Oakton, VA
Karen & Louis Constan	Saginaw, MI	Nicholas Lellenberg	Washington, DC	Margaret Slythe	Faversham, Kent, UK
Anne Cotton	South Hadley, MA	Emelie & Pat Levenson	Culver City, CA		
Ann Coulson	San Mateo, CA	Frank Lewis	Davis, WV	Adrienne Smith	Vicksburg, MS
Allan T. Devitt	Bensenville, IL	Katherine Lewis	Chicago, IL	Alex & Irene Snead	Chicago, IL
Neal De Vos	Aptos, CA	Nina Lewis	Davis, WV	Jane & Randall Sprague	Woodland, CA
Susan Z. Diamond	Bensenville, IL	Marcia & William Libby	Ridgefield, CT	Jill Spriggs	Massillon, OH
Anne Dierbeck	Glenview, IL	Sheila M. Markley	Canton, OH	Bibby Starks	Des Plaines, IL
Joseph & Kate Dooley	Pebble Beach, CA	Marilyn MacGregor	Davis, CA	Don & Lou Stone	Dallas, TX
Winston L. Duke, Esq.	Barrington Hills, IL	Justine McKeon	Chicago, IL	Doug & Margaret Stow	1/2 Moon Bay, CA
		Charlotte Meloney	Daly City, CA	Martha Swift	Chicago, IL
Michael "Barmy" Evans	Brighton, MA	Dean Miller	Chicago, IL	Jay E. Taub	Fair Oaks, CA
John Fahey	Somerville, MA	Richard H. Morrissey	Framingham, MA	Jeannette G. Thomas	Bala-Cynwyd, PA
Sally Fairweather	Barrington, IL	Helen Murphy	London, UK	Craig Tighe	San Mateo, CA
Susan Fitzgibbon	St. Louis, MO	Per Mykland	Chicago, IL	Jean Tillson	Foxboro, MA
John Fletcher	Maidenhead, UK	Robert M. Nissenbaum	Bryn Mawr, PA	Rick & Natalie Trump	Fayetteville, NY
Mary Ellen Fornsel	Centereach, NY	Alicia & Andrea Olin	Chicago, IL	Gail Wagner-Miller	Chicago, IL
Deborah Fox	Exton, PA	Cathy Oliveri	Washington, DC	Beth & Tom Wainwright	Walnut Creek, CA
Norma R. Frank	Bryn Mawr, PA	Dick & Ruth Olson	Mexico, MO	Christina Wasson	Chicago, IL
Dan & Tina Garrison	Evanston, IL	Eric & Linda Otten	Ballwin, MO	Jay & Joan Weiss	Caldwell, NJ
Ann Gentile	Dublin, CA	Jelle Otten	Deventer, The Netherlands	Edward Whittaker	New Britain, PA
Johann George	Evanston, IL			Tina Woelke	Chicago, IL
Carla Gladstone	Washington, DC	M.A. Otten-Scholten	Deventer, NL	Elin Woodger	Everett, MA

TOTALS to date: 153 registered for the Convention 86 staying at the Inter-Continental
138 for the Saturday Banquet 115 signed up for the Sunday Brunch

YES! You can still register for the greatest omnium-gatherum since Boston! But you must act *now* lest the word go around the clubs that you are a spent force. The Chicago Accident Syndicate are working like pistons to give you the fun of being in heaven without all the trouble and expense of dying. Just use the form provided with this issue of *Plum Lines*, and don't forget to phone in your reservation to the Hotel Inter-Continental. For more information, visit the Chicago '97 website or contact Dan Garrison (847/475-2235, d-garrison@nwu.edu).

<http://www.stichicago.com/plum97.htm>

What Ho Chicago !

— and All That Jazz

Provisional Schedule of Events

Thursday, Oct. 2 — Uncle Fred's Day on the Town

The Chicago Accident Syndicate will maintain a Help Desk and Bail Bondsman at the Hotel Intercontinental. Recommended legal diversions include Chicago River tours, Navy Pier, the Art Institute, and cruising the Miracle Mile — all in easy walking distance of our hotel.

Friday, Oct. 3 — Doing the Inter-Continental

8:00 AM-4:00 PM	Registration and Exhibits
4:00-6:30 PM	Reception and Games: Scripture Knowledge Competition Round 1
6:30-8:00 PM	Browsing & Sluicing on the Town
8:00 PM	City Lit Wodehouse performance — a Jeeves double feature!
9:30-10:15	A Chat with Mark Richard, Chicago's own Bertie
10:15	Scripture Knowledge Competition Round 2
10:30-'till you drop	Party Time ...

Saturday, Oct. 4 — At The Old Stand

8:30-9:00 AM	Bracing Beverages with Ukridge: Welcome to Chicago
9:00-9:15	Scripture Knowledge Competition Round 3
9:15	Michael Dirda: "Wodehouse and the Critics"
10:00	Will Richardson: "Wodehouse, Lyricist"
10:30	Helen Murphy: "Rosie M. Banks' Influence on Wodehouse"
11:15	The Ever-Popular Business Meeting
11:45	Scripture Knowledge Competition Round 4
12:00-1:30 PM	Lunch and A Few Quick Ones
1:30	Scripture Knowledge Competition Round 5
1:45	Jon Lellenberg: "Wodehouse Makes A Comeback"
2:30	Peter Sinclair: "The Wilberfloss File"
3:00	Marilyn McGregor: "Plumming Sherlock Holmes: Doyle's Influence on Wodehouse"
3:30	Peter Schwed: "On the Creation of 'Bill' "
4:15	Scripture Knowledge Competition Round 6
4:30	Break for baths, beads, bells, braids, and costumes
6:30 PM	Cocktail Time (with Toasts to Absent Friends)
7:30	Banquet
	☞ Toasts and Tributes; Money in the Street
	☞ Jan Kaufman's Fashion Show
	☞ Scripture Knowledge Competition: Final Wheeze
	☞ The Great Poetry Handicap
10:30	I Saw A Man Who Danced with His Wife — in Chicago!

Sunday, Oct. 5 — Browsing and Sluicing at the Sideboard, and All That Rot

9-11 AM	Tissue-Restoring Brunch: Blandings Castle Performance
11:00	The Convention Shimmies Down the Drainpipe and Flees

— As of August 15, 1997

STATUS OF PROPOSED CONSTITUTION

We enclosed a draft constitution for our society in the last *Plum Lines*, with certain loose ends (we called them options) hanging out conspicuously. President Elliott Milstein's letter accompanying the draft asked for responses to the proposal and was answered by an almost deafening silence. The dozen or so responses were mostly noncommittal, indicating, along with that deafening silence, an overwhelming lack of interest on the part of most members. It's an understandable attitude — most of us, I think, see our society as a loose association held together by the single thread of interest in Wodehouse and his writings, an association whose only activities are a quarterly newsletter and a biennial weekend party. It all seems to run along pretty smoothly, with almost no administrative machinery. Why do we need anything as formidable as a constitution?

Well, we almost don't. But we do need to provide authority for an officer (or officers) to make decisions between conventions in unforeseeable matters. (Example: that semi-crisis last spring, when we had to raise dues quickly or reduce *Plum Lines* drastically. Because we had no constitution, Elliott felt he lacked the authority to act alone to raise dues, so he asked for a vote.) And there are other concerns. We aren't a tiny group any more. With 800 members in sixteen countries, our dues income will amount to about \$16,000 per year, and our contacts with the Real World are many. We are growing, and the activities of a growing group tend to become diverse.

A number of us, mostly the officers, feel that for all these reasons our society needs a little structure. Nothing much, just a little something to hang our hats on. That's what the proposed constitution would provide. The differences between Options 1, 2, and 3 mostly concern the composition of the board of directors and the manner of choosing such functionaries as the editors of *Plum Lines*.

Any of the three options would give us a structure that works, but my own preference is for the smallest, simplest structure, provided by Option 2. It sets up a three-person board of directors (two elected at each convention), which appoints such people as the secretary, treasurer, and editors. What more do we need? Strictly my own opinion.

With so little response to the draft constitution, it's

not clear what steps to take next. Our convention agenda has no room for a constitutional discussion, and most members seem to have no interest in it anyway. But a number of us feel some action should be taken. Any proposals or comments?

— OM

WODEHOUSE AND RAYMOND CHANDLER

P. G. Wodehouse and Raymond Chandler, the writer of excellent, though hardboiled, detective stories, were almost classmates at Dulwich College, as many of us know. **Barry Phelps**, the latest biographer of Plum, says "Chandler went to Dulwich in the Autumn of 1900 missing Wodehouse by one term." Did these two prominent writers ever meet? There's no evidence of it as far as I know. But **Jay Weiss**, reading a 1976 Chandler biography by Frank McShane, found that they had a common friend in another Old Alleynian.

Chandler was American born but raised in Britain. He returned to America after leaving Dulwich and did not return to Britain for nearly 40 years. When he did, he found an old friend, William Townend, who was also Plum's close friend. Here's what McShane had to say about Chandler's return to England:

Chandler was nevertheless able to see one of his old Dulwich friends, William Townend, who came up to London for lunch; he also paid a visit to the Public Schools Club, of which he was an overseas member, just to have a look around. He was then sent a bill for a guinea, which prompted a strong letter of complaint addressed to the secretary. His meeting with Townend made him conscious of the difference between post-war [post World War II] England and the country he had known as a young man. On the whole, he found it "a much more amiable and attractive place" than he remembered.

CYRILLE TOUMANOFF

A Wodehousian knight from Tbilisi

Norman Murphy found this article in the London *Daily Telegraph* of February 24, 1997. It describes an extraordinary man with a delightful penchant for giving Wodehousian names to his friends.
—OM

Cyrille Toumanoff, who has died aged 83, was a Bailiff Grand Cross of Justice of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta and formerly Grand Prior of Bohemia.

Toumanoff's life was as exotic as his chosen academic subject, Byzantine culture in the Caucasus. He regarded himself as a Prince of Georgia, and joined the Order of Malta as a religious vocation, taking vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. His life's work was the *Manuel de généalogie et de chronologie pour l'histoire de la Caucasic Chrétienne*.

His Serene Highness Prince Fra Cyrille Léon Héraclius Toumanoff was born in St Petersburg on Oct 10 1913 and brought up in Tiflis (now Tbilisi), the capital of Georgia. During the Russian Revolution the young Cyrille heard the shots that killed his mother in the garden of their home. His father, a general in the Tsar's army, fled the country with the help of Gorky's wife. He went first to Britain and then to America. Young Cyrille was sent to school in France and Britain, and completed his education at Georgetown University, where he later found a post teaching Russian and Byzantine history.

After retiring from Georgetown he moved to Rome and became a professant of the Order of Malta, having turned from Orthodoxy to join the Roman Catholic Church as a young man.

Despite long years in America he retained his English accent. He also constantly referred back to the books he enjoyed as a youth: the novels of Scott, Saint Simon's memoirs, and the works of P G Wodehouse.

Toumanoff gave his friends Wodehousian nicknames, such as Aunt Connie or even Empress of Blandings. In later years his conversation, packed with references to the world of Wodehouse, was hard to comprehend except to close friends, such as the Grand Master of the Order, Fra Andrew Bertie.

P. G. WODEHOUSE ON THE WORLD WIDE WEB

What would Plum have made of the Internet? No doubt he would have ignored it, as it had no place in his world. However, the Internet has not ignored *him*. More and more sites in which Wodehouse plays a prominent role are popping up on the World Wide Web. The following list of sites to explore was put together by Michel Kuzmenko, a devoted Plummie located in Moscow. There are undoubtedly more, so please send 'em in, along with any corrections to this list. Michel's only notable omission is his own delightful home page, located at: <http://mech.math.msu.su/~gmk/>

<http://web.inter.NL.net/users/H.deCeuninckvanCapelle/>
Homepage of the P.G.Wodehouse Society (Holland)

<http://www.smart.net/~tak/wodehouse.html>
P. G. Wodehouse Appreciation Page by Tom Kreitzberg

<http://www.serv.net/~camel/>
The Junior Ganymede Club Book by Susan Collicott

http://www.hic.net/bssc/public_html/jeeves.html
The Jeeves and Wooster Information Pages by Mark Brady

<http://web.egr.msu.edu/~bhurkeal/>
Gussie Fink-Nottle page

<http://www.crl.com/~spm/tws.html>
The Wodehouse Society by Shamim Mohamed

<http://weber.u.washington.edu/~mlkelley/beevor.htm>
Lady Theresa "Terry" Cobbold's Home Page

<http://kekuxi.kek.jp/~marat/pgw.html>
Pelham Grenville Wodehouse (1881-1975) by Marat Khabibullin

<http://www.stichicago.com/tws.htm>
The Wodehouse Society

<http://www-rcf.usc.edu/~ddunn/jeeves.htm>
In Appreciation of P. G. Wodehouse by Deborah Dunn

<http://www.netaccess.on.ca/~erich/index.html>
The Junior Drones Club by Eric Hanson

<http://bewoner.dma.be/Jeeves36/>
The Drones Club (Belgium)

<http://home.netscape.com/people/thaths/wodehouse/>
P.G.Wodehouse and Songs by Sudhakar "Stephanie Bing" Chandrasekharan

NEW MEMBERS

A FEW QUICK ONES

Shamim Mohamed reports that all Drones Club ties and bowties have been mailed to those who placed orders for them. If you sent in an order and have not yet received your tie, or if you believe there is an error in your order, please notify Shamim at once!

Susan and Dan Cohen continue to keep on top of Wodehouse references in print. Susan notes that Plum was mentioned in both *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* on the same day—June 14 to be exact. The *Post* ran an interview with Richard Kline (starring as Jeeves in *By Jeeves!* at the Kennedy Center's Terrace Theater), while the *Times* printed a column by Maureen Dowd entitled "Par for the Coarse," in which she wrote the following: "Even during my stint as a sports reporter my attitude was much like the Young Man in a P.G. Wodehouse story who dismissed 'gowf' as 'a pestilential pastime,' and as 'a blanked, infernal, fatheaded game.'" Susan further offers compliments to Capital! Capital!, noting that "it seems as if our TWS Washington D.C. chapter has recruited or, at the very least, influenced, the entire *Washington Post* staff." Dan offered further proof of this to PGW-Net a few weeks later, when he wrote, "Capital! Capital! either has good friends on the *Washington Post*, or someone has the goods on Kate Graham—but this week's Book World has done it again! David Streifeld has a very nice piece on Peter Schwed's *Plum to Peter* in his Book Report section."

Francine Swift attended a performance of *By Jeeves!* in Washington, D.C., and sent in a number of reviews of the production, all pretty favorable. Francine writes that "We thought it tighter and with more movement than we saw in London." Her husband also remarked, "Did it ever occur to you that Honoria grew up to be Aunt Dahlia?" By the time this *Plum Lines* arrives in mailboxes, *By Jeeves!* will have left D.C. No word at this date on where it is headed next.

Stephen Brown sent along some pages from *Golf Dreams: Writings on Golf by John Updike*. In the chapter entitled "Golf in Writing," Updike notes: "It was P.G. Wodehouse...who brought me resoundingly into the imaginary world of golf—his wonderful, comical golf

stories, scattered through a number of volumes on the shelves of the local public library and now conveniently collected in one volume, *The Golf Omnibus*. I had never held a golf club or been admitted to one, but I had no trouble, for some reason, in picturing the verdant scene as the Oldest Member sits on the terrace of the mythical Marvis Bay Golf and Country Club."

John Kareores provided a photocopy of a videocassette cover that has to be seen to be believed. It is not reproducible here unfortunately, but the title of the film is *Madhouse Mansion*, and on the cassette case is emblazoned the following endorsement from Cinema TV Today: "Like a vintage P.G. Wodehouse story as it might have been ghosted by Edgar Allen Poe." In which, we presume, not even Jeeves could prevent the fall of the house of Usher

Paul Sayles writes that a blush wine called Eye of Newt is available from Witch Creek Winery, 2906 Carlsbad Blvd., Carlsbad CA 92008, phone (619) 720-7499. With such a name, the winery surely also produces wines called Toe of Frog, Wool of Bat, and Tongue of Dog, to say nothing of the eighteen other ingredients that "make the gruel thick and slab."...Thank you, but I think I'll just have a glass of water.

Louise Collins and Beth Carroll were pleased to discover in a recent issue of *Town and Country* magazine that house guests at Chatsworth, one of the great English country houses, have Wodehouse as a bedside companion. Books for the guest bedrooms are personally selected by the Duke of Devonshire, but "each should have James's short stories, something by Wodehouse, and *The Oxford Book of English Verse*."

Beth Carroll came across a review of the new *Raymond Chandler: A Biography* (Atlantic Monthly Press, \$26). The reviewer notes that the author, Tom Hiney, made a digression we Wodehouse fans can only applaud. "When there doesn't seem to be enough information about Chandler's years at England's Dulwich College, Hiney resorts to talking about classmate P. G. Wodehouse and head master A. H. Gilkes—page after page on the latter..." [Actually, Wodehouse and Chandler weren't quite classmates, since Plum left the school just before Chandler entered.—OM] No information on what the author has to say about Wodehouse, but Gilkes may well be worth reading about. He was apparently one of the greatest public-school headmasters.

David McDonough and John Hannah have done their bit for world enlightenment by discovering in *Angela's Ashes*, the wonderful autobiography of impoverished boyhood in Ireland, a heartening passage. The author, when a ten-year-old boy hospitalized and deathly ill, is introduced to P. G. Wodehouse,

who makes me laugh over Ukridge and Bertie Wooster and Jeeves and all the Mulliners. Bertie Wooster is rich but he eats his egg every morning for fear of what Jeeves might say...At night I lie in bed thinking about...all the characters in P. G. Wodehouse.

Jay Weiss's wife recently came across a New Orleans hotel advertisement which included this quote: "The most agreeable service is that which efficiently fulfills our expectations without our notice." Its author? None other than "P. G. Wodehouse, Victorian authority on proper etiquette."

"The question is," notes Jay, "just where in his extensive writings did that foremost Victorian authority on proper etiquette make that pronouncement. Perhaps Richard Usborne could tell us."

Don't you wish we had all of Plum's writings on a CD-ROM? Then we wouldn't have to depend on Great Brains such as Richard to answer our questions. Even Great Brains can be stumped. It's been said that such a collection—Wodehouse on computer—might reduce sales of Wodehouse books. That's the last thing we want, and anyone who has had much computer experience knows it wouldn't happen. Any poor soul who tried to read a book displayed on a computer screen would find his eyes falling out of his head in thirty minutes. And no one would be foolish enough to print a book from a computer when a better printed, better bound version of the same book is available cheaper in bookstores. "Wodehouse on computer," if it ever came into being, would be extremely useful for text searches and similar scholarly activities, but for nothing else on earth. But what a job to produce it.

AD OM

Aunt Dahlia and The Oldest Member

HELEN (NELLA) WODEHOUSE

An obituary by Norman Murphy

Nella Wodehouse was as old as the century, born in January 1900. In 1919 she married Armine Wodehouse, Plum's elder brother, and accompanied him to India where he was Professor of English at a university. She enjoyed her time there and had a fund of stories about life in the Raj.

They came back to England in 1935 when Armine retired but their time here was short—Armine died in 1937 and Nella was a widow for the next 60 years. She worked in a Radar workshop during the war, moving to Kent in 1900. In the 1950s she visited her brother in Canada and paid a visit to Plum and Ethel on Long Island. Soon after this she went over to keep house for them, making many friends in the neighborhood. She returned to England in the 1970s.

She was always fun to talk to, always interested in what was going on, and always ready to talk about her brother-in-law. I and many others are sad to see her gone.

1999 CONVENTION SITE NEEDED

There is still time to put in your bid to host the 1999 convention of The Wodehouse Society. If you have willing volunteers and the perfect location for Plummies to do a bit of browsing, sluicing, and gabbing about Wodehouse, please let us know about it! Bids will be wine, dine, and otherwise entertained at the October 1997 convention in Chicago.

"When a studio executive charges you, look to the left but leap to the right. This baffles the simple creature."
Barmy in Wonderland, 1952

THE ORIGINAL OF ROSIE M. BANKS

By Murray Wilson

I have always supposed that Ethel M. Dell was the original of Rosie M. Banks. In my reading of the various biographies of PGW lately I was therefore most surprised to come across the statement in one of them that the model was Ruby M. Ayres. No supporting evidence was given and so I am supposing that this is the opinion of the author, and as such open to challenge.

I am not a student of PGW, but I did decide to go the quarter mile down the road today to the library of Swarthmore College and see what I could find out about the two competing ladies. It is a very fine library, as befits one of the top liberal arts colleges in the country, but even so the information about the two authors was meager and quite hard to find. The gist of it was as follows.

Ethel M. Dell, 1881-1939, had her first short stories published in 1901. Her cousins kept a score of how often the words "passion," "tremble," "pant," and "thrill" occurred in her stories. Her first novel was published in 1912 and was reprinted twenty-seven times between then and 1915. She was noted for her cliché-ridden style and for steamy hints about male sexuality. Nancy Mitford remembered being forbidden to read her stories.

Ruby M. Ayres, 1883-1955, was noted for "good, clean love stories," of which she wrote about 150. That was about all the biographical information there was on her.

Both authors wrote about pure, finely bred women and chivalrous men, so neither would have written *Only a Factory Girl*. Ruby was popular, but Ethel was notorious. Given the date at which Ethel achieved her early success I do not see that there can be much doubt that PGW with his penchant for popular fiction at that time was absorbing her writing.

It is perhaps worth noting a passage in *Bill the Conqueror* (1924):

The second mate of a tramp steamer or one of Miss Ethel M. Dell's more virile heroes might have attempted truculence with Mr. Slingsby and got away with it, but Bill, even as he spoke, knew that he was not the man to do it.

CHAPTERS CORNER

Kudos to **Chapter One** for putting together a weekend binge that had 45 Plummies clamoring for more. Everyone who journeyed to Cape May, New Jersey, this past June enjoyed a most splendid round of browsing, sluicing, golfing, and hobnobbing, all thanks to the good graces of Chapter One. Our gratitude and appreciation are especially due to Susan and Dan Cohen, the primary movers and shakers of the event. Susan's report of the festivities elsewhere in this issue simply can't do enough justice to the fun and joy and good times that pervaded the entire weekend. Bravo, Chapter One!

The **Drone Rangers** are keeping as busy as ever with frequent and informative meetings. Their June 20 gathering featured a presentation by one Beverly Maurice, concerning *The Small Bachelor*. As reprinted in *Dronestar*, I submit to you the following opening line from Ms. Maurice's sparkling pen: "Funny how those Wodehouse books lead you on! Pick one up and time stands still. Better yet... time goes backward. The street noises cease... somehow even the light in the room changes, and you are in a dimly lit prohibition cafe in New York. You are in the heart of Greenwich Village when silk-clad flappers were still doing the Charleston, the custom of the cocktail hour was only a few minutes old, and the chic way to distance yourself from tobacco was to buy a long cigarette holder." Ah, she puts these things so well!

The *Argus Intelligencer* and *Wheat Growers Gazette* of **Blandings Castle** is continuing its series on some of its chapter's stars, the latest being Len and Shirley Lawson. Len is well known to many of us as a former president of TWS and a devoted historian of the Wodehouse canon, not to mention an impressive collector. Jan Kaufman's article describes Len's formidable collection of PGW books, magazines, and sheet music, and includes some nifty graphics from stories and articles in early 20th century magazines. Len and Shirley have been mainstays of the Society since its inception, and Jan's tribute to them is highly deserved.

Finally, the **NEWTs** have engaged in a number of Nottles recently, and paid a return visit to the zoo in Boston to check on the newt exhibit they have sponsored there. Although some newts were lost over the winter, the remainder look very sprightly and quite contented in their realistic surroundings. After paying homage to the newts—including a ceremony to place a small bit of dirt from Plum's grave into the tank (don't ask)—the group adjourned to a picnic on the zoo grounds. A fine time was had by all! —AD

"SHUFFLIN' SAM" GOES TO CANADA

ASSIGNMENT OF CANADIAN COPYRIGHT.

Know All Men by these Presents, That for and in consideration of the sum of ONE DOLLAR and other good and valuable considerations received, of **P. G. Wodehouse**, Company Street, New York City, N. Y., U. S. A., hereinafter called the Assignee, I/we, the undersigned, hereinafter called the Assignor(s), do hereby bargain, sell, assign, set over and transfer to and unto the said Assignee, its successors and assigns, a certain title, song, words, music and musical work entitled:

"SHUFFLIN' SAM"

and the exclusive right to have and obtain copyright therein in its own name in Canada, and all of the Canadian copyright therein, subject, however, to the provisions of Section 11, Sub-section 2, of the Copyright Law, 1921, the author(s) of said words being **P. G. Wodehouse** Citizen (or subject) of **Great Britain** Resident of **London** City **England** State **Great Britain** and **Jerome Kern** Citizen (or subject) of **United States of America** Resident of **Bronxville** City **New York** State **New York** when the aforesaid words were written and composed; the composer(s) of the music being **Jerome Kern** Citizen (or subject) of **United States of America** Resident of **Bronxville** City **New York** State **New York** when the aforesaid music was written and composed.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I/we have hereunto set my/our hand(s) and seal(s) this **27** day of **April** 1924 at **New York** U. S. A.

Witness **Mary Sarah** Author **P. G. Wodehouse**

Witness **Mary Sarah** Composer **Jerome Kern**

(NOTE—To be made and executed IN DUPLICATE, and BOTH copies forwarded, with Fee of \$1 to Commissioner of Patents, Copyright Office, Ottawa, Canada, for Registration.)

AN ACROSTIC

Way back in March Elin and I received identical notes and copies of a *New York Times Magazine* acrostic from **Peter Schwed**, Plum's long-time editor and publisher in America. The note read in part as follows:

I happen to be an old friend of Tom Middleton, the man whose genius creates these puzzles, and sent him a copy of *Plum to Peter* as a Christmas present. He telephoned to thank me, and said he had long wanted to use a good Wodehouse excerpt in an Acrostic, but he wasn't familiar enough with his work to be able to leap at one. Could I help?

Well, could I indeed! Take one look at the answer I worked out and you will see that Schwed is never a man to miss the obvious!

I've also received correct solutions from **Carol Adele Bane** and **Jay Weiss**.

This acrostic may be difficult to solve, so Elin and I are offering a little prize for the first correct answer we receive: a full-size hand-knitted replica of the Eiffel Tower, done in several lovely shades of blue wool (no synthetics!). The tower will be shipped to the winner in sections and some assembly is required. Batteries not included. We'll print the solution and the names of all successful puzzle solvers in the next issue.

The acrostic is reprinted here by permission of *The New York Times*.
—OM

Very few of us, I suppose, have ever seen a legal document that transferred the copyright of a song. **Jean Tillson** provided this assignment of the Canadian copyright of a P. G. Wodehouse – Jerome Kern song. It was given to her by her friend, J. Banks Hankins.

Jasen's biography lists "Shufflin' Sam" among the songs of the Bolton-Wodehouse-Kern *Sitting Pretty* of 1924. The song is a brisk, cheerful prescription from "an old man back in Clayville" for curing the blues.

The musical ran for only 95 performances. It's surprising that such delights as "Bongo on the Congo" and "The Enchanted Train" couldn't keep the doors open longer.
—AD, OM

ACROSTIC (on facing page)

By Thomas H. Middleton

Guess the words defined in the clues and write them over their numbered dashes. Then transfer each letter to the correspondingly numbered square in the pattern. Black squares indicate word endings. The filled pattern will contain a quotation reading from left to right. The first letters of the guessed words will form an acrostic giving author's name and title of work.

				1	N	2	Q	3	D	4	J			5	K	6	P	7	D			8	O	9	L	10	A	11	F			12	N	13	I			14	K	15	X	16	D			17	F	18	E	19	C		
20	O	21	G			22	E	23	U	24	G			25	F	26	Q	27	B			28	N	29	B	30	P			31	N	32	G			33	X	34	U	35	T			36	T	37	S	38	Q	39	M	40	E
41	C	42	J			43	W	44	L			45	L	46	Y	47	O			48	G	49	F	50	Y	51	D	52	W			53	N	54	J	55	X	56	P	57	W	58	E	59	R	60	L	61	K	62	I		
63	B	64	I			65	G	66	C	67	W	68	R	69	Q	70	N			71	T	72	O	73	R	74	K	75	D			76	D	77	V	78	U			79	K	80	B	81	V	82	A	83	Y			84	A
		85	L	86	T	87	I	88	M			89	P	90	E			91	X	92	G	93	T	94	S	95	O	96	N	97	L			98	A	99	M	100	L	101	H	102	Y			103	D	104	E	105	A		
106	H	107	W	108	N	109	U	110	A	111	D			112	F	113	H	114	X	115	O	116	C	117	Q	118	G			119	R	120	Q	121	I	122	M			123	A	124	B	125	G	126	L	127	C			128	W
129	I	130	G	131	U	132	L	133	E	134	H	135	K	136	Y			137	R	138	A	139	F	140	O			141	G	142	F			143	W	144	V	145	P	146	Y	147	A	148	U	149	K	150	Q	151	M	152	N
		153	X	154	I			155	C	156	S	157	M	158	Y	159	F			160	J	161	X			162	R	163	L	164	J	165	V			166	U	167	P	168	R	169	S	170	O	171	J						

- A. Sights in a turbulent sea 123 138 147 110 105 10 84 82 98
- B. U.S. writer (1905-70; "Pal Joey") 27 124 29 80 63
- C. Bavarian city known for a Nazi concentration camp 116 66 41 127 155 19
- D. Biting canines 75 111 51 3 16 7 103 76
- E. U.S. writer (1806-84; "Lays of the Hudson") 104 18 58 90 22 40 133
- F. En route (3 wds.) 49 142 159 112 11 25 139 17
- G. Stable 92 130 65 48 141 24 118 125 32 21
- H. Swindle 106 134 113 101
- I. Forthwith, once 62 13 64 154 121 87 129
- J. Detest 164 4 54 160 171 42
- K. Province, central Netherlands 61 14 74 135 79 149 5
- L. Raised structure on which a body lies in state 126 100 45 163 44 9 85 60 132 97
- M. Former Ukrainian capital 122 99 151 39 88 157 96
- N. Lapse; negligence 31 53 108 70 28 1 12 152
- O. Getting; charming 8 47 140 170 72 95 20 115
- P. Crowd; multitude 30 6 167 89 56 145
- Q. Thyroxine or cortisol, e.g. 26 117 38 150 120 2 69
- R. Give a right or claim to 168 68 162 59 137 119 73
- S. Bowed; tendency; proclivity 156 37 169 94
- T. Aquatic, furbearing mammal 86 36 71 35 93
- U. Leave (2 wds.) 78 23 148 34 131 166 109
- V. English actor Edmund (1787-1833) ... 165 81 77 144
- W. Broke; straitened (3 wds.) 57 67 128 107 43 52 143
- X. "A — memories and of sighs" (2 wds.; Landor, "Rose Aylmer") 114 153 55 15 33 161 91
- Y. Move to and fro 136 46 158 83 50 146 102

CURSES! FOILED AGAIN!

By **Anne Cotton** (Lady Bassett)

We all know, deep down in some terrified corner of our souls, what it means to incur the wrath of an Aunt. You know about aunts, of course, and so, obviously, did Wodehouse. He described them this way in *The Mating Season*: "It is bad to be trapped in a den of slaving aunts, lashing their tails and glaring at you out of their red eyes."

He also referred, in *The Inimitable Jeeves*, to those ...occasions when Aunt is calling to Aunt like mastodons belching across primeval swamps...

Yes indeed, one might say that the Wodehouse view of Aunts, even through an unpolished monocle, was what one might definitely describe as jaundiced. The last thing one might wish to do in life is to incur an Aunt's Curse, which is undoubtedly what our ancestors really meant by that fine old phrase, "a fate worse than death." Here is a sample of one of the best, as spoken by Dahlia in *The Code of the Woosters*:

"Bertie," she said, "I wish to begin by saying a few words about Sir Watkyn Bassett, C.B.E. May green fly attack his roses. May his cook get tight on the night of the big dinner party. May all his hens get the staggers."

"Does he keep hens?" I said, putting in a point.

"May his cistern start leaking, and may white ants, if there are any in England, gnaw away the foundations of Totleigh Towers. And when he walks down the aisle with his daughter Madeline, to give her away to that ass Spink-Bottle, may he get a sneezing fit and find that he has come out without a pocket handkerchief."

And she added, in a similar fit of pique (in *Right Ho, Jeeves*):

"Curse all dancing chauffeurs... Damn all dancing butlers."

Of course, sometimes the nephews got their own licks in. As Oliver Randolph Sipperley said of his Aunt Vera (in "Without the Option"),

"...may a nephew's curse blister every bulb in her garden."

Wodehouse seems to have been quite taken with curses. He refers happily to that variety known as the Family Curse (but was it George or Freddie, do you suppose?) in "Lord Emsworth Acts for the Best" (found in *Blandings Castle and Elsewhere*):

Years before, when a boy, and romantic as most boys are, his Lordship had sometimes regretted that the Emsworths, though an ancient clan, did not possess a Family Curse. How little he

had suspected that he was shortly about to become the father of it.

But back to Dahlia, she of the magnificent mouth. She did not confine herself to uttering outright straight curses; she often came up with passing remarks which bore the same direct intensity of ill will. For example, she unleashed this blast at Bertie in *Aunts Aren't Gentlemen*:

"Hell's bells! Ye gods! Angels and ministers of grace defend us!... Letting the side down! Failing me in my hour of need! Bringing my gray hairs in sorrow to the grave! And after all I've done for you, you miserable ungrateful worm. Do you remember me telling you that when you were a babe and suckling and looking, I may add in passing, like a badly poached egg, you nearly swallowed your rubber comforter, and if I hadn't jerked it out in time, you would have choked to death? It would go hard for you if you swallowed your rubber comforter now. I wouldn't stir a finger."

And here, from *Right Ho, Jeeves*, is another of her remarks to poor Bertie, who got more than his share of her soothing comments (though Heaven knows what she said to her husband Tom, whenever he brought home yet another cow creamer):

"You know the pond at the end of the kitchen garden?" said Aunt Dahlia. "Get a good, stout piece of rope or cord and look about till you find a nice, heavy stone. Or a fairly large brick would do. Then fasten the rope to the brick and tie it round your damned neck and jump into the pond and drown yourself. In a few days I will send and have you fished up and buried because I shall need to dance on your grave."

Others of Wodehouse's magnificent gallery of rogues could deliver themselves of the withering riposte, when occasion demanded. Here, from *Uncle Fred in the Springtime*, is a remark that leaves little doubt of Ricky Gilpin's intentions:

"If ever there was a pot-bellied little human louse who needed to have the stuffing knocked out of him and his remains jumped on by strong men in hobnailed boots, it is you, Mr. Pott. The next time I see a mob in the street setting on you, I shall offer to hold their coats and stand by and cheer."

And when Beach remarked to Hugo, in *Summer Lightning*, that he kept an album of "items of interest relating to the Family," Hugo replied at once:

"What that album needs is an eye-witness's description of Lady Constance Keeble falling out of a window and breaking her neck."

But we need not confine ourselves to the Canon when considering the spirited content of a Wodehousean curse. We can, indeed, come up with some of our own, directed at particularly susceptible targets. Inventing curses could become a favorite parlor game, or a way to enliven pgw-net on an otherwise

dull afternoon. For example, one might address a Drone who has uncivilly withheld a small loan of a few pounds with any of the following remarks:

May your breadroll forever fail to find its mark.

May Oofy Prosser never cross your path again, so that he and his wallet will be perpetually beyond your touch.

At the next Goodwood may your horse cross the finish line three races after it starts.

Should Bertie (Heaven forfend) go so far as to refuse to put up one's favorite relative for the night simply because said relative is second cousin to a warthog, one might find some of these remarks a bit useful:

May Jeeves forswear fish, and may his mighty brain fail when next you find yourself in need of becoming disengaged from the likes of Florence Craye or Madeline Bassett.

May Claude and Eustace become your permanent flat-mates.

May Aunt Agatha come to live with you and spend the rest of her days attempting to reform you.

And when Gussie Fink-Nottle drivels on just an hour too long about his newts, which he has insisted on placing in your bathtub on one of those days that would melt steel bars in the sun, when eggs would not simply fry but bum to ashes on the sidewalk, and when the humidity exceeds that of a swamp along the Amazon river, one might dredge up something along these lines:

May your life be one long uninterrupted Sunday School treat.

May you live next door to a road company of Macbeth that favors the use of live props.

(Surely you remember the infamous recipe of the Three Witches, which contained "Eye of newt" among its other vile ingredients.)

For Bingo Little, this has a certain appropriate ring:
May all your fiancées have little brothers who are Boy Scouts.

When Mr. Mulliner drones on about one too many nephews, becoming unforgivably dull in the process, one can think of nothing worse than this:

May the Angler's Rest close down for lack of customers.

Clarence, Lord Emsworth, would surely quail before this evil spell:

May Sir Gregory Parsloe-Parsloe succeed in slipping a dose of Slimmo to the Empress, just days before the agricultural fair.

For Mr. Mulliner's detective-nephew Adrian, who theorized in his last story that Sherlock Holmes was

also the villainous Moriarty, there is a special curse:

May Moriarty/Holmes come calling to settle old scores, and stay long enough to close your gossipy mouth for keeps.

And for my own favorite character, Lady Bassett (and any of our kindred souls), one might invoke this dreadful fate:

May you leave on a train every mystery novel you ever read when you are only halfway through it, and never discover whodunit.

We must not forget Plum himself. This would suit him to a perfect T:

May you discover that the afterlife is one long recitation of Christopher Robin verses.

Along the same lines, here is one for all of us:

May you get to heaven and find that the only song the Heavenly Choir knows how to sing is one endless chorus of "Sonny Boy."

Back to the Aunts. Since they began all this, it's only fair to end with a present for two of our favorites. Here's a mild one for Dahlia (after all, she is a fine old sport):

May you find yourself with severe laryngitis at the next hunt of the Quorn and Pytchley, just as you are about to deliver the first ringing "Tally-Ho!"

And here's a bit stronger one for Agatha, who is more than a bit of a pill, and who has few if any socially redeeming features:

May Bertie find out about your one youthful indiscretion, and threaten to tell all in *Milady's Boudoir* unless you stay out of his life forever; and may you never again be able to commission him with such onerous tasks as watching over his irrepressible cousins or marrying some nice, dull, "respectable" girl.

And now you are invited to come up with additional specimens of your own. The curse may be elegant or simple, long or short; but it must come from the heart if it is to be of any use. Having said more than enough on the subject, I shall raise my glass and emulate the aunt referred to in *Right Ho, Jeeves*:

For some moments there was nothing to be heard but the sloshing sound of an aunt restoring her tissues.



OUR MAN IN AMERICA

By Robert Persing

P.G. Wodehouse's writing has been thoroughly collected over the years, and there are few substantial pieces of his writing not readily available. However, one significant body of his work has never been reprinted. This body consists of two irregular columns, "America Day By Day" and "Our Man In America," that Wodehouse wrote for *Punch* between 1956 and 1963.

Wodehouse began writing his column in April of 1956, when he was nearly seventy five years old. The columns started on a biweekly schedule, but only vaguely stuck to it. In late 1958 there was a hiatus, followed by one column in December without a title; the column then disappeared for a year. It reappeared as "America Day by Day" for two issues in January 1960, and then resumed a once-or-twice-a-month schedule in April 1960, under the new title "Our Man In America." This second series of columns was in fact Plum's final significant contribution to *Punch*; after it ended in June 1963, he contributed only two more articles.¹

The two columns together come to nearly 70,000 words, yet few of them have ever appeared in book form. Eight of the seventy columns were included in English editions of *Plum Pie* in 1966, but were excised from the 1967 American edition. (The publisher presumably thought Americans already knew enough about America.) One column each appeared in the *Pick of Punch* annual volumes for 1956-1959, and a few in a couple of other *Punch* anthologies. Otherwise, the columns remain only available in library stacks.

What to write about?

The column was at first called "America Day By Day," which sounds like a current-affairs, diary-type column—perhaps a counterpart of the column about Parliament which was a staple of *Punch* for years. In fact, the topical content of the Wodehouse columns was always very limited. As Wodehouse says at the beginning of the very first column:

Down where I live, on the south shore of Long Island, things have been pretty quiet of late ... but elsewhere in America there has been quite a bit of stir and excitement.

Thus is set the tone of the column, and is revealed Wodehouse's singular handicap as a journalist. Though Wodehouse had lived in America on and off for nearly forty years by 1956, his personal interaction with American life was very circumscribed. He rarely left his hometown of Remsenburg, New York, and never if he could help it. Even his trips into New York City were infrequent by then. He was not involved in political life, his connection with the theater world had dwindled considerably, and he avoided literary society like the plague. In short, Wodehouse lived in America, but saw almost nothing of America.

Living a quiet, secluded life is a major obstacle for any reporter, even a comic one. Wodehouse overcame it in his own unique fashion. First, he fashioned his column as a collection of news items (four or five per column), so that no one item would have to be analyzed in depth. So an outline of a typical column² would read:

1. An item on the Congressional restaurant in Washington (1 paragraph)
2. Praising your own novel in its Introduction (two paragraphs)
3. Delays on the Long Island Railroad (two paragraphs)
4. Walls collapsing at a Fargo, North Dakota, church (one paragraph)
5. A letter to Greta Garbo returned to sender (one sentence)
6. A man whose TV was stolen (one sentence)

The actual columns were of course funnier than the outline. They were written in the same dry yet amiable voice that Wodehouse used in *Over Seventy* and his other nonfiction of the period.

Second, he avoided almost all topical subjects. Politics only is mentioned peripherally, as in the discussion of the Congressional restaurant, or later in a discussion of President Kennedy's appearing in public without a hat³. Discussion of films or shows was usually general, though Wodehouse does specifically note the opening of *West Side Story*, which he wryly describes as a "musical comedy" in a discussion of violence onstage⁴. Occasionally a major event earns an oblique mention, such as advice to Khrushchev's visit to the UN⁵, or a few slighting references to Castro after the Cuban missile crisis.⁶ But there is never any direct analysis of politics or of the "American people" as a whole. Almost everything he reports deals with specific people, not the multitude. On the late columns, the *Punch* editors teased him for this, adding subheads like "More Exclusives from the ever-alert pen of P. G. Wode-

house” or describing his “uncanny ability to get the big story”⁸.

One of the few topical items to appear in more than one column was the New York newspaper strike of 1963. This one affected Wodehouse very personally, on account of the third way Wodehouse dealt with his isolation from American life. A significant portion of the *Punch* columns consists of news items from the New York newspapers, expanded and annotated by Wodehouse. In some cases, Wodehouse would acknowledge the source specifically, through nods like “The sports editor of the *New York Herald-Tribune* reminded us the other day” or some similar lead-in. More often, though, the news items are not credited, but simply used. There are dozens of columns entries like these:

“This brings us to a rather horrible experiment that is being tried by the Federal Trade Commission, whereby...”⁹

Or

“Well, sir, about that business up Rosendale, N.Y., way. It seems that a horse belonging to Kenneth Muller, a farmer of those parts...”¹⁰

Or

“The police in Grand Rapids, Michigan are spreading a dragnet for a night club entertainer who recently skipped out of town...”¹¹

Though many of them are phrased like the opening lines to a long joke, most of them are clearly real stories, which have been taken from newspapers and TV newscasts and Wodehouseized. (Once in a while, to fill out a short column, Wodehouse did resort to pure joke-writing. The difference was easy to tell: he would use jokes that were old chestnuts, and give them a vaudevilian buildup like, “Nothing much more of interest this week, except perhaps the story of two Madison Avenue advertising men...”¹)

It may not be a coincidence that Wodehouse’s column stopped running shortly after the aforementioned New York newspaper strike. He himself comments that “newspaper reading is, after all, just a habit, and if you have had to more than four difficult to re-Apparently, at Wodehouse difficult.



break it for months, it is sume it.”¹² his age, found it too

All the news that’s fit...

Having discovered Wodehouse’s method of compiling his column, can we deduce (as Adrian Mulliner would say)¹³ anything more? Indeed we can: it is possible to guess which sections of the papers most interested Wodehouse. He was not a front page man, certainly. Probably his first step was to read the theater reviews (he was still working on several theatrical projects in this period). The New York theater scene is mentioned in over a dozen columns, and specific shows and even reviewers sometimes are discussed¹⁴. (The shows which get mentioned most are *My Fair Lady* and a now-forgotten Ethel Merman vehicle called *Happy Hunting*.) The later columns have fewer theatrical references, and Wodehouse talks of his interest waning in the age of “serious” musicals like *West Side Story*.

Stories about TV were also a frequent source of inspiration, with almost two dozen columns touching on some aspect of the relatively new medium. Wodehouse’s personal interest in TV (he was a soap opera addict) is well documented. But many of his TV-inspired segments seem to come not from watching TV, but from reading about TV shows. His comments are less likely to tell you what he watched last night than to report a conversation Dave Garroway had with his staff¹⁵ or that some TV writer had with his director and sponsor¹⁶—pieces of information gleaned from a newspaper or magazine. In fact, Wodehouse even once announces that he has “gone off television” and prefers to “curl up with a good book,”¹⁷ a sentiment many of his readers can appreciate.

The sports section of the paper was another frequent stop for Wodehouse. Several of his columns deal with baseball. The migration of the Dodgers and Giants to California¹⁸ earns a mention, as does the creation of the hapless early Mets.¹⁹ (Curiously, Wodehouse’s favorite baseball image is of fans pelting the players and umpires with thrown fruit and soda cans—was baseball really that much wilder back then?) Boxing is also frequently discussed, with Joe Louis’s income tax problem spoken of more than once.²⁰ Often he is able to combine two of his favorite subjects, by discussing such items as boxers appearing on TV game shows.²¹

The criminal element

But by far the most common topic Wodehouse tackles, over and over again, is crime. Wodehouse seemingly could not get enough of America’s criminals, especially the less successful ones. More than thirty of the seventy columns discuss some sort of lawbreaking.

We are witnesses to robberies, swindles, jailbreaks, gangsters (and their mothers) with guns, and innumerable traffic violations. We also meet people who steal dinosaur eggs²², church pews, and bridges over rivers.

This particular concentration on the criminal element, when Wodehouse admittedly lived in a quiet, crime-free neighborhood, highlights again the author's method of gathering material. Newspapers tend to focus on crime and criminals. Since papers were Plum's primary sources for the column, a focus on crime news is not surprising. Since Plum gave up driving himself years earlier, even the many columns on traffic violations carry the air of a dispassionate observer, not of a member of the injured class (motorists). Had Wodehouse received more speeding tickets in his life, he might not have found them quite as funny.

Given Wodehouse's proclivity for writing novels about impostors, minor-league jewel- and pig-thieves, and young men who steal policemen's helmets, perhaps this focus on the unlawful is not so surprising. More unexpected, though, is the inclusion of a strong element of retribution, via the courtroom. Almost every described crime in the column is followed by a scene of the criminal standing before the bar, receiving a juicy reprimand from the judge. A typical example runs like this:

It is not lightly that one describes anyone as belonging to the old bulldog breed, but surely George Clemons of Riverhead N.Y. is entitled to the accolade. He is fond of motoring, and the other day this led him to appearing in the Riverside court before Justice of the Peace Otis J. Pike.

"H'm," said Mr. Pike. "Driving without a license, eh? Anything to say?"

George had... He had been driving without a license for twenty years.

"Reckless driving? Speeding? Improper turns? Going through seven red lights and refusing to stop when ordered to by a policeman? Looks bad, George."

Mr. Clemons admitted that superficially his actions might seem to call for comment, but not if you examined them more closely and got the full story.

"It wasn't really my fault, your honour," he said. "I was drunk at the time."²³

Here we have the Wodehouse court scene in a nutshell: slightly potty defendant, mildly censorious judge, nonviolent crime. The scenes often end with the passing of sentence, as well as a phrase commenting on the impending incarceration of the miscreant.

The court scenes here did give Wodehouse one opportunity he lacked in his novels: the chance to show true criminals as the defendants. In most of his fiction, the defendant standing before Sir Watkyn Bassett or

his ilk is a Drone. Not only do readers usually look favorably on such defendants, we usually know why the accused did what he did (there's a girl involved somewhere), and can sympathize with his plight. While the criminals Wodehouse describes in his columns are not usually murderers or violent offenders, they are at least professionals. The reader can take more pleasure from seeing them get fourteen days without the option of a fine than if the defendant were a young friend of Galahad Threepwood's.

One might think this focus on criminality might weigh down a column, make it more earthy and realistic. But Wodehouse is still Wodehouse: the *Punch* columns instead have a breezy charm to them that brightens even the heaviest subject matter. Not only are the columns easy to read, they give the impression of having been effortless to write.

Some (though by no means all) Wodehouse fans feel his fiction writing was beginning a slow decline in quality during the late 1950s and early 1960s. His nonfiction voice, by contrast, showed no decrease in vigor during this time. This has been visible for years in the memoirs he wrote in this period (*Over Seventy*, *Bring on the Girls*), and the *Punch* columns carry that same charm and humor.

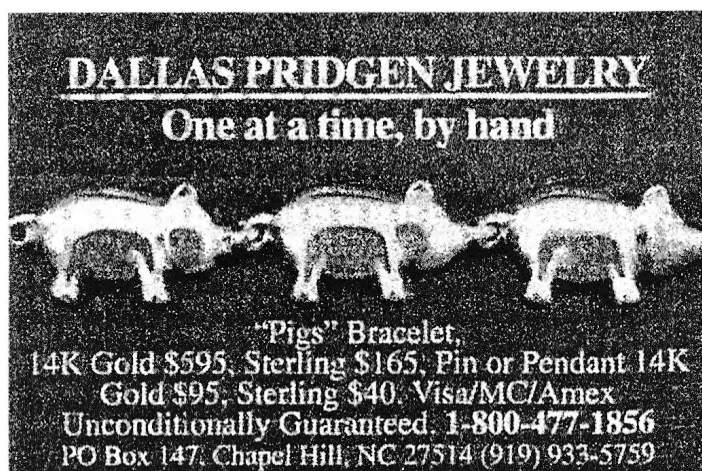
I am sure many of Plum's fans, having bought all the Penguin editions and looted their local used bookstores, have wished there were more quality Plum works waiting to be rediscovered. The *Punch* columns fit the bill admirably. They are well worth the effort to find among the back volumes of large libraries, or wherever a back run of *Punch* can be found.

Endnotes:

- 1 Wodehouse was not forgotten by *Punch* after 1963, though. For several years in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the magazine's financial page carried the title "Oofy Prosser's Money Column," and sometimes contained first-person references to the Drones Club, etc.
- 2 "America Day By Day," 8/8/56.
- 3 "Our Man in America," 2/2/61
- 4 "America Day by Day," 11/20/57
- 5 "Our Man in America," 9/26/62
- 6 For instance, "Our Man in America," 3/22/61, 6/26/63.
- 7 "Our Man in America," 6/26/63.
- 8 "Our Man in America," 3/27/63.
- 9 "Our Man in America," 4/20/60.
- 10 "Our Man in America," 7/6/60.
- 11 "Our Man in America," 1/11/61.
- 12 "Our Man in America," 5/22/63.

- 13 Wodehouse's Sherlockian Mulliner story, "From a Detective's Notebook," was first published in *Punch*, between numbers of the first series (5/20/59).
- 14 For example, Walter Kerr of the *New York Herald-Tribune* is discussed in the "America Day by Day" column of 8/28/57.
- 15 "America Day by Day," 3/12/58.
- 16 "Our Man in America," 8/8/62
- 17 "America Day by Day," 1/20/60.
- 18 "America Day by Day," 6/4/58.
- 19 "Our Man in America," 6/26/63.
- 20 "America Day by Day," 4/17/57,
- 21 "America Day by Day," 12/11/57. This article also contains what is probably Plum's only reference to Dr. Joyce Brothers.
- 22 "America Day by Day," 4/17/57
- 23 "Our Man in America," 6/15/60.

THE EMPRESS LIVES!



Francine Kitts found this snazzy jewelry in a recent *New Yorker*. Serious pig lovers will, of course, buy their bracelets in solid gold.

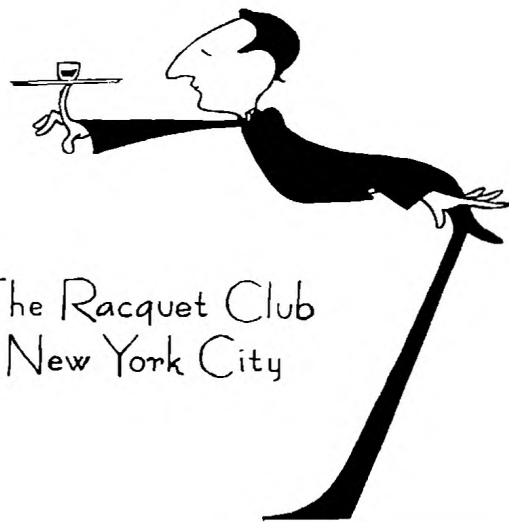
The [Peke] followed him. It appeared to have no legs, but to move by faith alone.

"Lord Emsworth Acts for the Best,"
Blandings Castle and Elsewhere, 1935

WODEHOUSIAN PLEASANTRY

Second Annual
Wodehouse
Awards Dinner

January 6, 1997



The Racquet Club
New York City

David Landman sent this invitation to a special dinner held in New York City on January 6 of this year. The invitation reads:

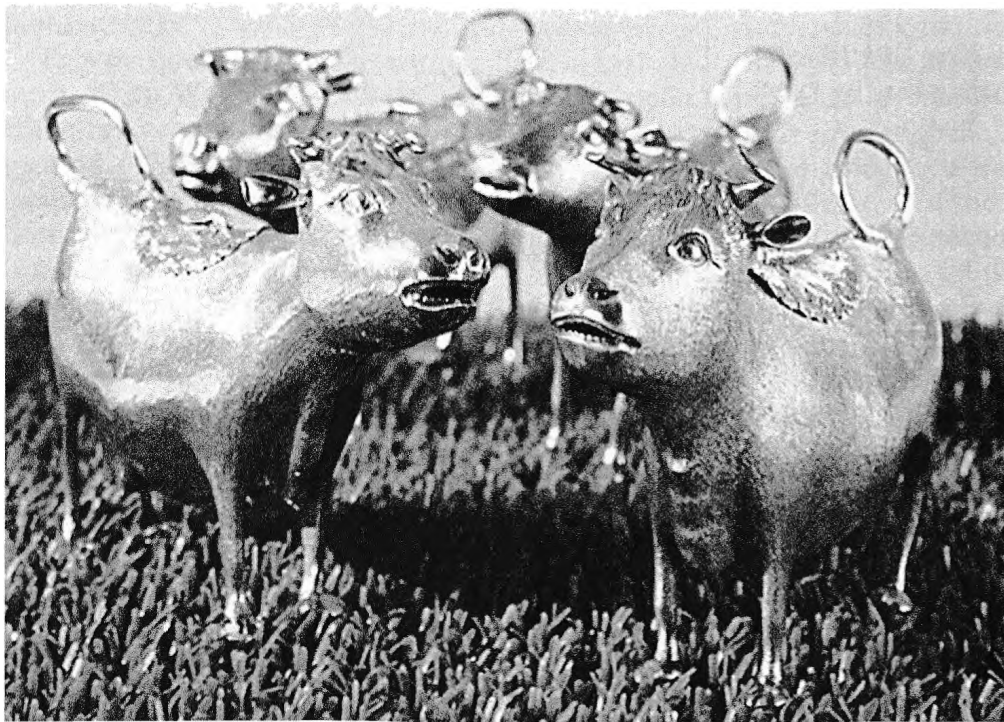
An Evening of Wodehousian Pleasantry

Please join us for a merry evening honoring exemplary individuals whose talents and contributions have encouraged and sustained Catholics of good cheer throughout the years.

The "Jeeves" Award, celebrating the achievement of those who contributed joy and insight to our public life, will be presented to James P. McFadden of the *Human Life Review* and *Catholic Eye*.

The black-tie event was co-sponsored by *Crisis Magazine* and the Wethersfield Institute, at a cost of \$100 per person. I'm delighted to see one more example of how Wodehouse gives joy to the world. —OM

OUTSTANDING IN THEIR FIELD



Marilyn writes, "Obviously Uncle Tom Travers bequeathed his collection to the Victoria and Albert Museum. Here's part of it. Another silver cow creamer on display has a 'textured' skin (shallow markings on the silver surface) and a not-so-sappy expression on its face."

It isn't easy to guess what these cows are staring at in such glassy-eyed amazement. Flying saucers, maybe? At any rate, I rejoice to see that the V&A has nothing to do with the modern Dutch upstarts of the 19th century.

—OM

Marilyn MacGregor and Elizabeth Hamilton both encountered this extraordinary photograph on postcards at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, and sent them to Elin. On the other side of the postcard is printed "Herd of cow creamers. Silver and silver-gilt, mid 18th century. Made in London. All mark of John Schuppe."

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VOLUNTEER OFFICERS

Information and new memberships
Marilyn MacGregor

Dues payments and address changes
Tom Wainwright

Contributions to *Plum Lines*
Ed Ratcliffe, OM

Elin Woodger, AD

Dues are \$20 per year

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