



Plum Lines

The quarterly journal of The Wodehouse Society

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The world—at least that portion of it which still honors grace, duty, and a sense of fun—was saddened by the recent passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother. Wodehouse lovers everywhere feel the loss, as we had cherished her not only as a fellow fan but also as a link to the England of the Victorian/Edwardian era which Plum celebrated in his writings. The Queen Mother had been a longtime friend of the Wodehouse-Cazalet family and had honored The Wodehouse Society with her membership and enthusiasm. Lt. Col. Norman Murphy, chairman of the P. G. Wodehouse Society (UK), tells us about a memorable occasion.

A Smile on Her Face

The Day I Met Her Majesty the Queen Mother

BY NORMAN MURPHY

I HAVE the invitation in front of me now. It requested the pleasure of my company at the unveiling by Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother of a commemorative plaque to P. G. Wodehouse at 17 Dunraven Street (formerly Norfolk Street) on Friday, 3rd June 1988.

The 3rd of June saw me in best suit, broly (it was a lovely day, but in England you can't tell, and a broly becomes a habit), and bowler hat marching down Park Lane where I overtook Margaret Slythe and we went on together. There was quite a crowd in front of the house when we arrived. As the social columns used to say, "among those present we noticed" Patrick and Nancy Wodehouse, Dick Osborne, Tom Sharpe, Benny Green, Kingsley Amis, Woodrow Wyatt, and Frank Muir. The names may not mean much in the US, but this was big stuff in the UK, and Benny Green beckoned me over to join him and Frank Muir. (For those who don't know, Frank Muir was one of the best radio comedy writers in the UK, became a TV personality, and was a splendid and amusing chap.) Benny and I exchanged greetings and, as always in this country, said how lucky we were with the weather, after which Benny turned to Frank Muir: "Oh, Frank. This is Colonel Norman Murphy." Frank Muir put his hand out, paused and said: "Hang on. Murphy? Murphy? You're the chap who wrote that

book! [*In Search Of Blandings*] Marvellous book—none of us had any idea. Fascinating! Actually, I wrote about you last night in a book I'm doing on English humour. Hope you don't mind."

Heady stuff! And that was my tag for the day. I was "the chap who wrote that book." Somebody grabbed him so I went and talked to Patrick and Nancy Wodehouse, met their son Nigel, and Tom Sharpe joined us.



Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, with Edward Cazalet at the Dunraven Street ceremony

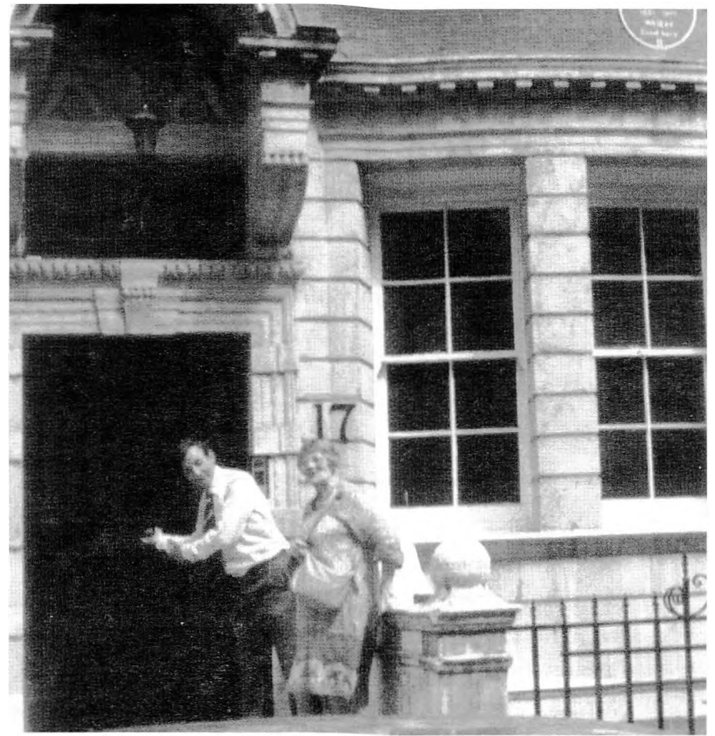
We all chatted happily till the car came round the corner and out stepped Her Majesty. (One of the advantages of always wearing a hat is that you can do something when Royalty arrives—you can come to attention and take it off in a smart and soldierly manner while the hatless men around you just have to stand there.)

Her Majesty was greeted by Edward and Camilla Cazalet and then Edward gave an opening speech after which she spoke. I have good cause to remember one thing she said—she was proud that Wodehouse's first book [*The Pothunters*] was dedicated to members of her family. Then she unveiled the plaque, we all clapped, and followed her into the house for drinks in the courtyard at the back.

On a more formal occasion, we would have been taken up to be presented in turn, but this was definitely not a formal occasion. I have forgotten who I was chatting to when suddenly there was Edward with Her Majesty. I was presented by Edward with the words (again!) "May I present Colonel Murphy, who wrote that book."

She knew exactly what he was talking about. "Ah yes," she said. "I did enjoy it. By the way, I hope you noticed I mentioned his first book was dedicated to my cousins. I never knew that till I read your book." And then she went on to say nice things about the book. How long it must have taken me and how many places I must have visited. Encouraged by all this, I ventured to ask a question that had been bothering me for years. I knew that Wodehouse had sent copies of *The Captain* to Glamis Castle when the three little girls spent their holidays there. Was it they who had started her reading Wodehouse? "Ah, no. It wasn't them. It was my brothers who used to read it to me." I'd had my question answered, so I stepped back and Edward took her on to somebody else. Lunch was excellent; small tables all squashed together, six people at each, cosy and comfortable. I recall having a tremendous discussion with Tony Whittome and Joseph Connolly on some abstruse point, Wodehouse's funniest misquotation or something like that, until we realised how rude we were being to the three non-Wodehouseans at the table and stopped. Well, temporarily anyway.

We had Wodehouse songs after lunch and then Frank Muir, as M.C., announced that various people had things to say, and I remember he said that no one, NO ONE, would be allowed to speak for more than three minutes (or something like it). It worked too. We heard some splendid anecdotes ranging from how useful a working knowledge of Wodehouse is if you are an ambassador in Washington and why Jimmy Heineman gave the Queen Mother a false name forty years before. We had been told Her Majesty would leave at 2.30. She left, reluctantly, at about 3.30 and Tom Sharpe, Margaret Slythe, and I felt we didn't want to go home yet. So we took a taxi down to Wimbledon and joined Patrick and Nancy Wodehouse in telling Nella



*Col. Murphy and Pauline Blanc at 17 Dunraven Street.
Note the round (blue) plaque at upper right.*

Wodehouse all about it. A splendid day.

And the title of this piece? It was something Edward Cazalet said in his opening remarks and I've never forgotten it. He said that the Queen Mother had told him once that she always liked to read Wodehouse last thing at night because it meant that, no matter how bad a day she had had, she went to sleep with a smile on her face.

And that's the way I remember her—with a smile on her face.

TWS President Susan Cohen notes our gratitude to Norman Murphy for his assistance in this time of mourning:

I sent a telegram in the name of TWS to Sir Alistair Aird, the Queen Mother's private secretary, offering our condolences upon her death. Norman came up with the words for me to say. And fine words they are! I couldn't improve upon them and didn't try.

Norman also signed the Queen Mother's Condolence book in my name, adding "President, The Wodehouse Society, with deepest sympathy and great respect." Or something similar. It was very gracious of Norman to do this kind and important deed for us, and I thanked him for all of us.

The telegram and the official reply are reproduced on the following pages.



'The Telegram Company'

Telegram

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SUSAN L COHEN

FILE COPY

SIR ALISTAIR AIRD

AS PRESIDENT OF THE WODEHOUSE SOCIETY U.S. MAY I EXPRESS THE DEEP SORROW OF MYSELF AND ALL MEMBERS OF OUR SOCIETY AT THE DEATH OF A GREAT LADY. QUEEN ELIZABETH THE QUEEN MOTHER WAS MUCH BELOVED BY ALL WHO KNEW HER, AND SHE HONORED US BY BEING AN HONORARY MEMBER OF OUR SOCIETY AS WELL AS A FELLOW ADMIRER OF A GREAT WRITER. THIS IS SAD NEWS FOR SOCIETY MEMBERS AND THE MANY OTHER AMERICANS WHO ADMIRERED HER.

SUSAN COHEN
PRESIDENT
THE WODEHOUSE SOCIETY

TO REPLY BY TELEGRAM 1-800-343-7363



CLARENCE HOUSE
S. W. 1

3rd April 2002

Dear Mrs. Cohen,

Your kind message of sympathy was received with deep appreciation and I would be grateful if you would convey to all members of The Wodehouse Society our warmest thanks.

Yours sincerely,

Nikolaus Aschmann

Treasurer

Mrs Susan Cohen
President
The Wodehouse Society

The American Wodehouse

BY ROBERT MCCRUM

Regular readers of *Plum Lines* have been eagerly awaiting Robert McCrum's forthcoming Wodehouse biography. Here are further details to heighten our anticipation.

P. G. WODEHOUSE is seen as a quintessentially English comic writer. Like his hero Bertie Wooster, his English ancestry dates back to the 15th century. In the leafy English counties of Shropshire and Hampshire, and also in Edwardian London, a parade of impassive butlers, dotty earls and Mayfair lounge lizards pass through his plays, stories and novels in scene after scene of comic mayhem. Critics continue to hold up his writing as a model of English prose.

Yet the truth about Wodehouse is that he was, professionally speaking, just as much an American, with a sharp eye on his American audience. He first came to New York in 1904 (aged twenty-two) to watch a boxing match and spent more than half his working life in the USA. Many of his greatest artistic successes were achieved there, particularly on Broadway in 1917. It was to America that he returned after the debacle of the Berlin broadcasts; it was while living in Remsenburg, Long Island, that he took American citizenship in 1955, in the first decade of his long retirement from the world. And it was here, aged ninety-three, just knighted by Queen Elizabeth II, that he died and was buried.

In his lifetime, Wodehouse was an elusive figure and posthumously, too, he has managed to evade serious scrutiny. One of the most surprising things about his long career is how comparatively under-explored his American life has been, despite the mountain of exegesis by his fans across the world. In the last authorized life, published as long ago as 1982, Frances Donaldson devoted barely a hundred pages (out of four hundred) to his American work. One of the simple ambitions for my forthcoming biography, due for publication in 2004, is that it should properly explore Wodehouse's American life from the day he stepped off the *SS St Louis* on the Manhattan quayside in the spring of 1904 to the blustery wet afternoon on which he was laid to rest on the south shore of Long Island in February 1975.

To this end, I have been following in his American footsteps. I have crossed the Atlantic (on the *QE2*). In the company of the knowledgeable and delightful Lee Davis, author of *Bolton and Wodehouse and Kern: The Men who Made Musical Comedy*, I have visited his former residence in Basket Neck Lane, Remsenburg. In New York, I have been to the Little Church Around the Corner, on Madison Avenue, in which he was married to Ethel Rowley Newton on 30th September 1914. On his wedding certificate he

describes himself, properly, as as "Author." The bride, who signed with her maiden name Ethel May Wayman, admitted to two previous husbands (both deceased) but shaved a year off her age. She was actually twenty-nine. None of this sleuthing is a substitute for a complete trawl through the archives (I have been doing that, too) but it does add colour and detail to the otherwise meaningless addresses that adorn his voluminous correspondence.

So I have also visited the addresses at which Wodehouse is known to have stayed in New York, from the once bohemian Hotel Earle on the northwest corner of Washington Square, to the "hotel residence" at 14 E 60th Street he and his beloved daughter Leonora frequented in the 1930s, to the penthouse apartment at 1000 Park Avenue he occupied on his return to New York in the late 1940s. Most of this will be familiar to many Wodehousians. Recently, however, I have begun to break new ground. For instance, I have just completed a trip to Hollywood, a fascinating month of research into PGW's two (quite brief) forays into the world of the movies in 1930–31 and 1936–37.

Once again, it was the houses that were the immediate revelation. Anyone who has dipped into *Yours*, *Plum* (Donaldson's selection of Wodehouse letters, published in 1990) or *Performing Flea* (Wodehouse's lifelong correspondence with his old school friend Bill Townend) will remember 1005 Benedict Canyon Drive and 1315 Angelo Drive. It might surprise them to know that the former is a magnificent Spanish villa barely four hundred yards from the Beverly Hills Hotel (*i.e.*, in the very heart of thirties Hollywood), while the latter, several miles up into the hills, and still troubled by rattlesnakes and coyotes, is an English-style house (formerly the property of Gayelord Hauser, a very close friend of Greta Garbo, celebrated for his diet-book bestsellers such as *Look Younger, Live Longer*) perched on the side of a canyon and commanding a magnificent view of the city of angels, with Santa Monica and the shimmering Pacific beyond.

All at once the reality of the staggering amount of money (some \$2,000 a week) Wodehouse was earning at this time falls into place. Even a glimpse of these properties was enough to confirm what the archives had already suggested: that the Wodehouse who came to work for MGM in 1930 was an internationally celebrated writer at the peak of wordly fame, recognition and success, a writer whose movements were reported by the *New York Times*, and



P. G. Wodehouse with daughter Leonora arriving in Los Angeles May 9, 1930 for a spell in Hollywood

whose books were the favourite reading of New York magazine editors, prime ministers and studio tycoons.

But I did not go to Hollywood just to cruise around Beverly Hills with a camera in a rental car. Amazingly, there are still one or two people alive today who actually remember Wodehouse in his Hollywood years, and even more amazingly they have been in touch with me after I placed a notice about my biography in the American press, including *Plum Lines*. Mrs Frances Ershler (née Mayer) was a young temp secretary working in and around Beverly Hills. Early in 1937 as a young woman of twenty she found herself taken on as a secretary by Ethel Wodehouse initially during her convalescence from some “major surgery.”

Ershler quickly became devoted to “Mr Wodehouse,” driving him on afternoon trips to the library. Fran (as she is now) is a cosy grandmother in her 80s, with some vivid and precious memories of life in the house on Angelo Drive, and some absolutely priceless signed first editions.

Her testimony confirms what the archives at USC, UCLA and the Margaret Herrick Library at the incomparable Center for Motion Picture Study suggest: that Wodehouse was more deeply involved in movie-making and studio life than he liked to pretend to friends. No doubt the Hollywood script-writing system was undemanding. But then, by his prodigious standards of daily writing, almost everyone was an amateur.

Previous Wodehouse biographies have made much of the interview he gave to the *Los Angeles Times* in June 1931, disparaging the time-wasting, spendthrift ways of the studios. Closer examination of his remarks and the reaction that followed indicates that his comments caused rather less of a sensation than has been claimed. It is certainly quite wrong to imagine that because Wodehouse said the Hollywood work ethic was synonymous with slacking, he himself was idle. Far from it. As well as making a rather more extensive contribution, credited and uncredited, to a wider range of movies than has previously been noticed, he himself made good use of his Californian sojourn, as novels like *The Luck of the Bodkins* and *Laughing Gas* or stories like “The Nodder” and “The Castaways” suggest. The Mr Mulliner who so often narrates these Hollywood tales may be sitting thousands of miles away “in the bar-parlour of The Anglers’ Rest” but, like his creator, he is much better versed in the American way of life than he lets on.

The Hollywood Cricket Club

BY MURRAY HEDGCOCK

The March issue of the monthly magazine *The Cricketer International* (founded in 1921 by that other Plum—the old England captain Pelham Warner), has a special on the Hollywood Cricket Club, celebrating its 70th birthday in May next year.

Under the title, “Caught Niven Bowled Flynn,” it looks into Charles Aubrey Smith days, with the perhaps imaginative comment that in the early Thirties, “P. G. Wodehouse took notes from the boundary.”

Well, he did take notes at the inaugural meeting, and contributed useful donations from the big money MGM was paying him, so maybe this is correct. The writer, Christopher Sandford, is incidentally recorded as the biographer of Steve McQueen, whom I believe to have had little to do with either PGW or cricket.

Pickering travels to Canada, eh?

BY ELLIOTT MILSTEIN

WELL, friends, TWS Convention 2003 is beginning to shape up. This issue of *Plum Lines* is just a shade too early for a sign-up sheet, but some details can be revealed at this time and plans laid. Full costs and a registration form will be available with the next issue.

The Convention will be held August 8–10, 2003 at St. Michael's College in the University of Toronto (which just happens to be my alma mater—but that had NOTHING to do with the choice). St. Mike's is situated on the eastern edge of the University campus in the heart of downtown Toronto, minutes away from funky Yonge Street, fashionable Bloor Street, and hip Yorkville. Toronto is not particularly historic or folkloric (unless you count Casa Loma, a giant medieval castle in the heart of the city), but its many museums, theatres, restaurants, underground malls, and ethnic centers are all accessible by one of the best, most extensive public transit systems in North America.

The Pickering Motor Company's goal for this convention is to keep all the aspects of a TWS Convention we all love so much, but at a reduced cost so that all members can afford to come and take part. We currently estimate that the convention and lodging can cost as little as US\$300 per person, not counting transportation to Toronto.

We are able to impart housing information at this time. We have arranged for accommodations in two different places: the lovely Sutton Place Hotel and the St. Mike's campus itself.

The standard room at the Sutton Place is all you would expect from a fine hotel—comfortable rooms with lots of amenities like in-room coffee, in-room movies, mini-bar, terry-cloth robes—you know the kind of place. Excellent service, nice lobby, and a small restaurant with excellent fare. Cost per night is CA\$179 (about US\$117). We have set aside only 50 rooms here (due to the horrendous penalties imposed by not taking all the rooms reserved), so please book early. If you find later on that you are coming in early or staying later, there will be no difficulty in extending your stay.

St. Mike's offers clean, affordable housing on campus. These rooms are a little better than dorm rooms, but if you think dorm room, you're on the right track. Restrooms and showers are down the hall. Everything was obsessively clean when I was there—and that was while students were living in it! Cost per night is CA\$45 (about US\$30). The rooms can accommodate two people, but there is no price break for doubling up—it's \$45 per person. The number of rooms to set aside is still being discussed (as this is a new feature in the TWS Convention we weren't sure how to go) so again, please book early.

Convention events will be held in both places.

If you are doing your budgeting right now, please note that hotel rooms (like everything else in Toronto) have two taxes, the PST (Provincial Sales Tax) which is 5% for hotel rooms (and 8% on most retail items) and 7% GST (Goods and Services Tax). The GST, however, is refunded to you when you leave the country (if you have your receipt with you and are willing to stand in line at the airport or border crossing).

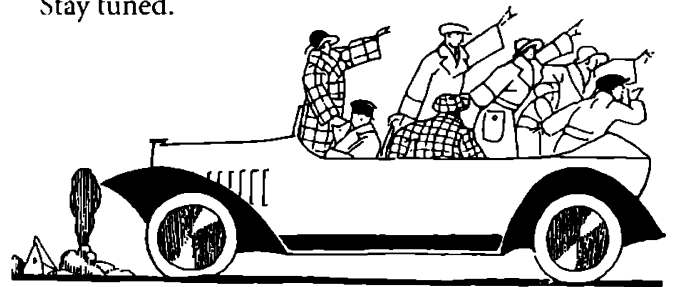
Contacts:

Sutton Place: 1-416-324-5621 or 1-800-268-3790 — Mention "The Wodehouse Society."

St. Mike's: 1-416-926-7296 or sumhousing.stmikes@utoronto.ca — Mention "The Wodehouse Society."

Any questions or problems: 1-248-661-1944 or Elliott@emilstein.com — Mention anything you like.

Stay tuned.



Terrific Loot for Sale!

Katherine Lewis writes: "Newfound treasures! Not many available. We have found in the attic a Reserve Supply of loot from the Chicago Convention, 'Chicago and All That Jazz' of 1997. Included are handsome British Air travel bags filled with much of the loot Treasures of 1997: a classic PGW notepad, a purple prose pen, a lapel pin specially designed and produced for the convention, an unusual 'Ask me about P G Wodehouse' license plate holder, PGW keychain, etc. All yours for \$50, including postage. Some individual travel bags without loot at \$35. Only 10 royal blue coffee mugs left, \$10 each. All are collectors' items.

Plum and the Songs of Songs

BY DAVID McDONOUGH

THOSE in the Wodehouse Society who have not yet explored Plum's work in the world of musical comedy owe it to themselves to do so. Some of us had a golden opportunity to delve into the theatrical side of the Master recently. On February 28, 2002, the New York Festival of Song presented "P. G.'s Other Profession" at the Kaye Playhouse at Hunter College in New York City. The concert was part of a subscription series, which had the desired effect of exposing a new audience to Wodehouse's work, but a few Wodehouseans managed to squeeze into the throng: myself, John Graham, Barbara Van Hook, Jay Weiss, and Carolyn Pokrivchak. We were also pleased to have the chance to chat with Sir Edward Cazalet, Plum's grandson, and his wife, who came to see their boy Hal at work.

Plum's work as a lyricist has become more familiar to most of us in recent years through the 2001 CD "The Land Where the Good Songs Go: The Lyrics of P. G. Wodehouse." That CD was the work of two singers, tenor Hal Cazalet (who is, of course, the great-grandson of P. G. Wodehouse) and classical soprano Sylvia McNair. Special mention should be made, also, of Steven Blier, the pianist on the CD. Blier is one of the artistic directors of the New York Festival of Song, and was instrumental (fittingly for a musician) in making this concert a part of the Festival. He also claims, with justifiable pride, to have been one of Hal Cazalet's teachers at Juilliard.

Blier, who again accompanied the singers on this evening, also wrote a very fine essay in the program notes, in which he details Plum's career in musical comedy. Some excerpts:

What's the magic of Wodehouse's lyrics? They span two worlds: the elegant pre-World War I times and the sassy Roaring Twenties. The wit of the wordplay brings W.S. Gilbert to mind....In a certain way he inhabits the same emotional world as Ira Gershwin. Both authors come from the tradition of light verse, and both color their love songs with a witty sweetness....But Wodehouse's writing is naturally more mature, more courtly, more experienced than Ira's puppyish persona in the 1920's. His wit is more pervasive, more upper-crust, perhaps more detached than any of his American colleagues. He elevated the comic music hall song and the virginal love ballads to new heights....Wodehouse was not one to bring the popular song into the shrink's office or pore over the thrills of illicit loves. He left those endeavors to writers like Lorenz Hart, the poet of isolation and irony, or Cole Porter, the painter of furtive, sometimes dark sexual urges.

Blier's observations were amply illustrated by the concert we saw. Mr. Cazalet and Miss McNair were joined for the evening by two other fine performers, soprano Christianne Tisdale and baritone David Costabile, both of whom bring with them impressive musical comedy credits.

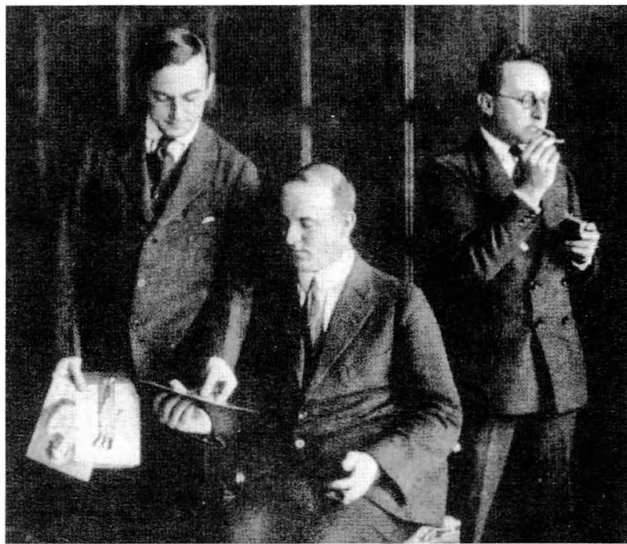
It is always a pleasure to watch true professionals go through their paces, and this night was no exception. There is no doubt that Plum's lyrics are very much of their time, and I was delighted to note that performers did not shy away from the fact. Rather, they embraced it, updating the songs only in the sense of being aware that they, along with the audience, know that we are listening to the past with a modern sensibility. But they remained at all times committed to the material. Mindful, also, that four bodies perched on four stools for two hours is not enough, they did a fine job of staging the concert under the direction of Lawrence Maslon. The effect was that of attending a musical revue, with enough horseplay and comedy (this is Wodehouse, after all), and some nifty, low-key footwork.

In an evening of gems, it is difficult to pick out highlights. Certainly, the opening number, the comic "Sir Galahad" ("For them was the days when a lady was a lady, and a gent was a perfect gent"), sung by all four performers, set the tone for the evening. The music for "Sir Galahad" is by Plum's most frequent songwriting partner, Jerome Kern, as were almost all the songs in the evening. Most of the material, in fact, came from the celebrated Princess Theatre shows, which featured librettos by Plum and Guy Bolton, Wodehouse's lyrics, and Mr. Kern's marvelous music.

Other moments that stand out include the charmingly gauche "Tell Me All Your Troubles, Cutie," sung by Mr. Cazalet and Miss McNair, who later illustrated that she is more than just a pretty voice by flirting outrageously with the men in the audience on "Rolled Into One," (but alas, not with me, and don't think I won't write an indignant letter to the *Times* about it). Miss McNair also let her hair down in Act Two when teaching the comically inept Mr. Costabile to "Shimmy With Me." That talented gentleman was given more opportunity to amuse the audience in his duet with Mr. Cazalet "We're Crooks" and his show-stopping solo "Napoleon" ("He was five feet high, but he was one tough guy, and I take after Nap!").

Meanwhile, the delicious Miss Tisdale defined that most dangerous of attitudes, the comically sultry, with an outstanding turn at "The Siren's Song" and with her "wibbly, wobbly, wiggly dance" as "Cleopatterer."

There is nothing more pleasurable than realizing that a



The trio of musical fame: Bolton, Wodehouse, and Kern, during the Princess Theatre years

cast is enjoying itself quite as much as an audience is, and that spirit was evident in this program, perhaps no more so than when the four singers threw caution to the wind in the first-act finale, "Non-Stop Dancing."

Still, as great as the liveliest numbers are, what stands out most in my mind are the ballads, the wistful, simple moments. Miss McNair did a lovely job with the original lyrics of "Bill," and Mr. Cazalet provided a highlight with what might be his great-grandfather's signature song as a lyricist, "The Land Where the Good Songs Go." Fittingly, Hal Cazalet sings Wodehouse better than anyone, and he sang the poignant number towards the end of the show, just before the whole cast crashed into that hymn to modernity, "Anything Goes," featuring the lyrics which Plum contributed to the London production of the Cole Porter show.

An encore was, of course, demanded, and the cast obliged with the high-spirited Gershwin-Wodehouse-Gershwin tune "Oh, Gee! Oh Joy!" expressing perfectly our feelings on having spent such a pleasurable evening out.

Determined members of the Wodehouse Society, led by the intrepid Carolyn Pokrivchak, then forced their way backstage, and, by dint of a combination of stubbornness and threatening to hold our collective breaths, succeeded in forcing interviews with the cast. All cast members pronounced themselves delighted to have had the opportunity to sing Plum's lyrics. Hal Cazalet, markedly pleased to see representatives of the Society in attendance, was off shortly to play Macheath in a London production of *The Threepenny Opera*, and has expressed interest, should his schedule allow it, in joining us for our 2003 Toronto convention.

As for myself, I was soon off on the train back to New Jersey, alternately reading my program and the sports page

of the local paper, with reports from spring training. There drifted into my mind a verse about baseball, written for the *New York Globe* in 1908 by Franklin P. Adams. It is called "Baseball's Sad Lexicon":

These are the saddest of possible words,
Tinker-to-Evers-to-Chance.
Trio of Bear Cubs fleetier than birds,
Tinker-to-Evers-to-Chance.
Ruthlessly pricking our gonfalon bubble,
Making a Giant hit into a double,
Words that are weighty with nothing but trouble,
Tinker-to-Evers-to-Chance.

And I wondered why that particular poem had popped into my mind. And then I remembered. It was because a parody of that vignette appeared about ten years later in the *New York Times*, unsigned, possibly written by George S. Kaufman:

This is the trio of musical fame,
Bolton and Wodehouse and Kern:
Better than anyone else you can name,
Bolton and Wodehouse and Kern.
Nobody knows what on earth they've been bitten by:
All I can say is I mean to get lit an' buy
Orchestra seats for the next one that's written by
Bolton and Wodehouse and Kern.

Adams's verse is said to have been instrumental in getting Joe Tinker, Johnny Evers and Frank Chance elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame.

Is there a Broadway Hall of Fame? I have three names to submit to them.

For more on the poem attributed to Kaufman, see David Landman's article "Ditty or Didn't He?" in *Plum Lines*, vol. 16, no. 1, Spring 1995, p. 20.

Twistletons on the loose again

Homebody/Kabul, a new play by Tony Kushner, author of the popular *Angels in America*, recently closed a run at the New York Theatre Workshop. Among its cast of characters is one Quango Twistleton, a man reviewer Robert Brustein (*The New Republic*: 3/18/02) describes as "a self-hating drugged-out sexual opportunist" whose "mind has been blown by...cheap drugs." We recognize the man behind the thinly disguised name, and our sympathies go out to him. Is it any wonder the poor fish ended up like this considering the ordeals his Uncle Fred put him through?

—SS

What Ho! Woosterfest!

BY SUSAN COHEN

IT WAS Murray Hedgcock who first came up with the idea. In 1999 he wrote:

"What The P. G. Wodehouse Society (UK) needs is a Woosterfest—a celebration of all that is best, bonniest, brightest and bravest about Bertie and his clan. And ahead of the raised eyebrows or the curled lip, it should be recorded that yes, Virginia, there IS a Woosterfest already in existence, and it is only those with no romance in their soul who would say otherwise."

Now it must be admitted that the real Woosterfest is more Middle America than Mayfair.

Said Hedgcock, "It is confession time. Woosterfest is observed not in Plummish country, but in what might be more appropriately termed Amish country—in the city of Wooster, Ohio. This blessed realm, bearing the name of PGW's sunniest—if most perpetually harassed—creation is a city of 22,427 inhabitants, the county seat of Wayne County..."

Hedgcock notes that he was not the first Plummie attracted by the name of the county seat of Wayne County, Ohio.

"It was the omniscient Barry Phelps who in his address, 'Two Little Known East Anglian Authors' (comparing the writings of Sir Pelham Wodehouse with those of Mr Bertram Wooster), delivered at the 1993 Convention of The Wodehouse Society, pointed out that 'Wooster, Ohio, once part of the Crown's American territories, was incorporated as the capital of Wayne County in 1817, and, obviously named as a graceful compliment to the Earl of Yaxley of the time' (the Woosters being Earls of Yaxley).

"Having persuaded himself—if not his listeners—that Mr Wooster was a far superior author to Sir Pelham, Barry Phelps summed up in a fine rhetorical flourish: 'I fear, Ladies and Gentlemen, you are going to have to change your name to the Wooster Society and move your headquarters to Wayne County, Ohio.'"

While there are Worcestershires (pronounced Wooster) aplenty, the small city in Ohio is, as far as I can determine, the only place in the whole wide world with the proper spelling. It is actually named after a Revolutionary War hero, General David Wooster of Connecticut. The genealogical connection between David and Bertie is a subject yet to be explored. But the truly unique name of the city is something that can not be ignored.

Hedgcock felt that actually changing the name of the Wodehouse Society and moving to Ohio as Phelps suggested was a little extreme. But he did suggest an expedition to Wooster by those attending the 1999 Convention in

Houston. That didn't happen—but it's going to happen this fall. Wooster holds an annual Woosterfest (Bertie Woosterfest to us) at the end of September, and a group of TWS members are going to invade the town and hold our own "Bertie Binge" on the weekend of September 27–29. We hope you'll join us. The NEWTS' very own Lady Bassett's parents graduated from the College of Wooster, and she has relatives there. So we'll have an expert on Wooster in our midst.

As of this writing plans for all activities are not yet complete, but one of the highlights will be a photographic scavenger hunt. We will divide into two teams, one to be called Claude, the other, Eustace, each team armed with a camera. We will imitate The Seekers, and what we seek are photos of ourselves in front of any place with a sign saying Wooster, such as a Wooster Diner or Wooster Street. There will be a prize for the group that finds the most Woosters. There will also be a prize given for the best or most original Wooster souvenir. Maybe we'll find a Wooster cow creamer. There may be a "Without the Option" dinner at the old city jail, which has been converted into a very nice restaurant.

We are wanted in Wooster. A couple of teachers from Wooster College might join us. The tourism bureau says they will give us the equivalent of the keys to the city. We will ask the local library to display Wodehouse books, and the local newspaper, the *Wooster Record*, to write us up. Maybe the Cleveland and Akron papers will cover us as well. There are two local bookstores which stock Wodehouse books, and one of them has copies of Murray Hedgcock's *Wodehouse at the Wicket*—one of the very few bookstores in the country to stock this wonderful, but esoteric (cricket ain't baseball) volume.

Wooster is a pretty town in a bucolic area with a pretty college. It has world-class ice cream and a fascinating store that has a huge selection of non-electrical appliances, chiefly for the local Amish. So if you want a wind-up radio or a wood stove, this is the place. And there will, of course, be Woosterfest itself, and whatever activities it has to offer the visitor.

The closest airport is Cleveland, about 40 miles away. The town has a number of hotels and motels which range in price from moderate to downright cheap. The area is small and uncrowded and there will be cars available, so it won't make any difference where you stay. However, because the fest is a big weekend in Wooster you should book a hotel room early, even if you have to cancel later.

I'll keep you posted on the net regarding further developments. In the meantime contact me ASAP if you are interested in this once-in-a-lifetime chance to visit Wooster and celebrate Bertie.

Daniel Love Glazer told PGWnet recently: "Due to his test scores, our 15-year-old son is getting letters of solicitation from various colleges—several a day. Yesterday he got one from Wooster College in Wooster, Ohio. On the envelope is printed the pitch, 'Puzzled? Maybe Wooster's Your Answer.' For more, see www.wooster.edu."

A Master Stroke

BY DAVID LANDMAN

WHEN Jeeves, in his wisdom, found it expedient to brain Oliver Randolph Sipperley in order to render him unconscious and thereby a fit object of the sympathy of Gwendolen Moon (*vide* "The Inferiority Complex of Old Sippy"), his club of choice was a putter. In this—as well as in the matter of socks, ties, waistcoats, shirt fronts, and spring suiting—I have always considered that Great Man's taste beyond cavil. It was therefore my unwavering policy that whenever the welfare of a friend required he be granted a temporary quietus, the putter was with me the *ne plus ultra*. That is, until my confidence was shaken by this item in the morning paper:

Golf club used in N. H. bar heist

NASHUA — Police say a man wielding a pitching wedge held up the Sky Meadow Golf Course bartender Tuesday night as she was closing for the night and made off with an undisclosed sum of money. Authorities say no arrests have been made but they have a suspect. (AP)

Could it be, I wondered, that the felon's choice of a pitching wedge was a tacit criticism of Jeeves in the matter of club selection? After all, intimidating a barmaid out of her day's receipts is one of golf's most difficult shots. Envision our felon's dilemma as he contemplates his bag. For a moment he fondles a wood. But no, it is too long. The club must be wieldy enough to yerk a barmaid in the tight

quarters of the club lounge where there is little allowance for follow-through. He contemplates the putter. An improvement, but still not quite the thing. Putters tend toward the frivolous and the *outré*. Many of today's putters appear to have been modeled on the structure of the praying mantis or Señor Wences's hand and conduce more to risibility than to terror as Aristotle (a scratch player) well knew. Threaten to slosh a country club Hebe with one of these bizarre instruments, and you are likely to find yourself playing the old course at Sing Sing with a handicap of ten years. But then his eye lights on the pitching wedge. Eureka! Short enough for that quick compact stroke with the merest bit of wristy follow-through that makes all the difference. And, to complete the picture, our felon cannot but rejoice in the pugnacious yet malapert tilt of the club face. A barmaid able to stand up to a putter must, inevitably, quail before the wedge. Yes, the wedge is indubitably the club of choice, and for a moment, I must admit, my faith in Jeeves tottered.

But then I realized that I had neglected to take into account the nature of the lie in each case. Jeeves, you will recall, took his shot from behind. The comic aspect of the putter was out of play. All that was required was your basic slosh. A classic shot. The felon, on the other hand, approached his object from the front; hence, the additional need for the wedge's menace.

Regrettably, we are not told what grip was used in either case, but since Jeeves's stroke had its desired effect and the barmaid conceded the whole without demur, can we doubt that they too were flawless?

A final note. There are some who will, I doubt not, cavil at the suggestion of immorality that clings to incidents such as those which took place at 3A Berkeley Mansions and Sky Meadow, but I suggest that by taking the large view, one cannot but stand in awe of these twin paragons of sound club selection. I should enjoy watching them compete in match play.

P. G. Wodehouse: Master Spy?

BY THOMAS L. SMITH (MAJOR, U. S. ARMY, RETIRED)

MOST of us familiar with the Master's life know about his imprisonment by the Germans during World War II. Detained by the Germans as an enemy national during their invasion of France in 1940, Plum was held in sites that included prisons at Liège, Huy, and Tost. Most of us are also familiar with the controversial broadcasts about his incarceration that Plum made in the summer of 1941. What many of us are not familiar with, though, is that Wodehouse was the subject of several investigations conducted by the American Federal Bureau of Investigation and was under the watchful eye of American agents during his stay in Paris at the end of the War. For reasons unknown and still classified, J. Edgar Hoover believed that Wodehouse was the author of a secret codebook used in the "Alto" case, one of the FBI's investigations into Soviet espionage.

Plum's first encounter with the FBI is related to us in Paul Reynolds's autobiography, *The Middle Man: The Adventures of A Literary Agent*. Reynolds was Wodehouse's American agent and, in addition to finding publishers and magazines for Wodehouse's output, took care of a wide array of personal business for the author. One morning, two FBI agents arrived at Reynolds's office. A letter that Wodehouse had sent to Reynolds had passed through the US Army's censor. In the letter, Plum asked Reynolds to transfer a small sum of money from Plum's account in New York to the account of E. D. Ward in Chicago. Since Reynolds handled quite a few transactions for Wodehouse and other authors, this particular request was not immediately recalled, so Reynolds had to check his files. Reynolds found the letter and his notes on the letter. It turns out that Reynolds failed to carry through on Plum's request. Reynolds discovered that Ward was not in Chicago. In fact, E. D. Ward was none other than Edward Delaney, who, Reynolds found out, was also in Germany under the watchful eye of Werner Plack, a German actor who had befriended Wodehouse in Hollywood, and who now was working for the German Foreign Office.¹

Delaney had been an unsuccessful silent movie actor and also had an unsuccessful career as a Hollywood producer. He even worked for MGM at the same time that Wodehouse was employed there. While Wodehouse was working on movie scripts, Delaney was traveling around the United States chaperoning the Little Rascals on publicity tours. Delaney also wrote second-rate detective novels. Being a failure at acting, producing, writing, and publicity tours, Delaney turned to journalism. Delaney traveled to Hitler's Germany in the years before the War and began

broadcasting to America about the virtues of the Reich. As a so-called "American radio broadcaster," Delaney worked under the supervision of Werner Plack. Yet when America entered the War, it became important for Plack to portray Delaney as an independent journalist. Plack needed to find a way to pay Delaney without it appearing that he was in the German's employ. Plack decided to launder money through Wodehouse and asked him to write to Reynolds to transfer the funds. According to Reynolds's notes, the transaction was not made.²

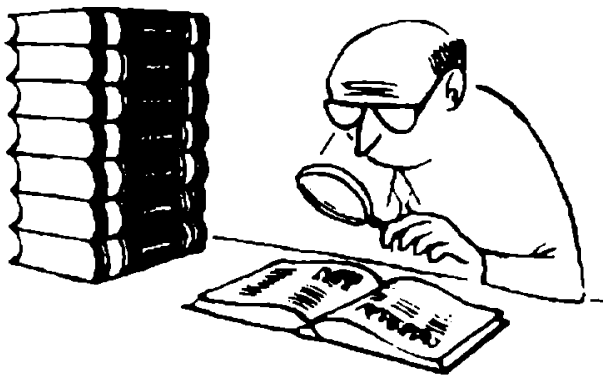
Plum's second encounter with the FBI was over the release of the novels *Joy in the Morning* and *Money in the Bank*; two short stories, "Excelsior" and "Tangled Hearts"; and some private correspondence. In May 1942, Wodehouse arranged for these materials to be delivered to Paul Reynolds.³ Apparently, the novels, stories, and letters were given to Plack, who sent the material to the American Embassy in Berlin. The Embassy was in the process of being shut down and the papers were sent on to Lisbon. In Lisbon, they were handed to George F. Kennan, an American Foreign Service Officer assigned to the Berlin Embassy on his way back to the United States. Kennan would later gain fame as the author of "The Long Telegram" and the "Mr. X" article that outlined American cold war strategy from 1948 until the fall of the Berlin Wall, and as the architect of the Marshall Plan. On arrival in New York, Kennan transferred the package to the FBI. The material was examined "for the presence of secret ink by those methods which would not alter the appearance of the specimens."⁴ It was also examined for secret codes. The only finding of this examination and testing was that prior to turning the documents over to the US Embassy, the Germans had tested the papers for codes and secret inks. The papers were sent on to Paul Reynolds and a report was made to an agent in "Division Five."⁵

Wodehouse was investigated again by the FBI in 1945, but from the time of Wodehouse's release from internment, American intelligence agents kept an eye on Plum. The FBI files have a number of newspaper clippings that report Wodehouse's comings and goings. An American agent operating in Paris under the supervision of the Intelligence Section of the American Embassy in Madrid reported on Plum from time to time. The earliest American report on Wodehouse came from the Berlin Embassy. In a six-page memorandum to the Secretary of State, the Second Secretary of the Embassy gives a complete report on the broadcasts. According to the Second Secretary, Wodehouse found dealing with the Germans distasteful. The

Americans at the Embassy also concluded that the affair was pretty innocent.⁶

The FBI conducted its final investigation of Wodehouse at the end of the war. For some reason known only to J. Edgar Hoover, Hoover had a notion that Wodehouse's novel *Piccadilly Jim* was a secret codebook being used by Soviet agents. The FBI had a list of sixteen books they believed were used as secret codes. The Tauchnitz edition (a paperback published in Leipzig, Germany) was number six on the list.⁷ Apparently, agents all over the world scoured libraries and bookstores for the cipher. One agent checked the Library of Congress. The two copies in the Library of Congress, the Dodd, Mead and Company edition of 1917 and the Herbert Jenkins 14th printing of 1928, were missing with no record of being checked out. The agent returned six times before he concluded that the books were "possibly lost."⁸ The FBI called on their agents in London and Paris to find the books.⁹

Agents searched for months. Finally, in January 1946, a used copy of the Tauchnitz edition was found by a State Department employee in a bookstore in Paris and sent on to the FBI in the United States.¹⁰ As with the earlier investigations, this investigation turned up nothing. The codebook was merely a novel. The FBI kept the book for their library.¹¹



Found on the Internet

Dave Lull rings the bell and is entitled to a cigar or cocoanut for outstanding work in spotting Wodehouse-related items and reporting them to PGWnet. (If you have Internet access and wish to join in the email discussion list, visit <http://www.wodehouse.org/PGWnet.html> for details on how to subscribe to this free service.)

Dave reported in February to the electronic forum that the Newsweek/MSNBC Internet website featured a Wodehouse appreciation (no longer online) sparked by the issuance of the Everyman/Outlook Press hardcover editions:

Yes, author P. G. Wodehouse created the famous butler. But he also crafted works brimming with immense humor and incredible language. With new editions of Wodehouse's novels in stores, NEWSWEEK's Malcolm Jones pays tribute to his talents...

Notes

¹ Paul R Reynolds, *The Middle Man: The Adventures of A Literary Agent* (New York: William Morrow & Company, Inc., 1972.), 107-8; John Carver Edwards, *Berlin Calling: American Broadcasters in Service to the Third Reich* (New York: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1991).

² Edwards.

³ Federal Bureau of Investigation Memorandum August 24, 1942, Re: Examination of manuscript prepared by Mr. P. G. Wodehouse, File: 40-HQ-82394.

⁴ Federal Bureau of Investigation Memorandum, September 18, 1942, Re: Examination of manuscript prepared by Mr. P. G. Wodehouse, File: 40-HQ-82394.

⁵ Ibid. The agent's name has been blacked out of the FBI memorandum.

⁶ State Department Memorandum, July 28, 1941, from The American Embassy Berlin to the Secretary of State. Subject: Release from Internment of Mr. P. G. Wodehouse, British Subject, and His Subsequent Broadcasting Activities; State Department Memorandum, December 21, 1944, from The American Embassy Madrid. Subject: Transmitting Material from Informant PEP.

⁷ John Edgar Hoover, Federal Bureau of Investigation Memorandum to Special Agent in Charge, New York, January 24, 1945. File: 40-HQ-82394.

⁸ Federal Bureau of Investigation Memorandum, April 21, 1945. File: 40-HQ-82394.

⁹ Ibid; John Edgar Hoover, Federal Bureau of Investigation Memorandum, March 21, 1945, to Mr. Frederick Ayer, Special Agent in Charge, Paris. File: 40-HQ-82394.

¹⁰ Office of the Attaché, United States Embassy, Paris, to Director, FBI, January 11, 1946.

¹¹ Federal Bureau of Investigation Memorandum, January 25, 1946, Laboratory Report Re: Books, purchasing of, in connection with 100-203581. File: 40-HQ-82394.

Dave also spotted an appreciation of the golf stories in *Forbes FYI*, the “lifestyle” supplement to the financial magazine, for March 4. At press time, this was still on line at <http://www.forbes.com/fyi/2002/0304/035.html>.

Remembering the Oldest Member
by Patrick Cooke

If your handicap is no longer funny, maybe it's time you read the forgotten golf stories of P. G. Wodehouse.

“I wish to goodness I knew the man who invented this infernal game. I'd strangle him. But I suppose he's been dead for ages. Still, I could go and jump on his grave.”

—*The Heart of a Goof*

Dave found a comparison between Olympic speed-skater Apolo Ohno and Jeeves in *Salon* magazine: “Oh yes! Ohno!” by Gary Kamiya: <http://www.salon.com/news/sports/olympics/2002/02/21/skate/index.html>

Then, with only a short distance to go, Ohno pulled this weird winged-heel-and-caduceus stunt and without seeming to actually move, simply *appeared* in front of three skaters he'd been chasing an instant before. I would describe his move to you, but a neuron in my brain misfired and while the electrical impulse was moving from axon to dendrite I missed it. It was something he must have learned from P. G. Wodehouse's Jeeves, who on hangover mornings is given to “oozing” into Bertie Wooster's bedroom.

Dave discovered in *Book* magazine, March/April 2002, a list of the “100 Best Characters in Fiction Since 1900” on which we find listed at #35, “Jeeves, *My Man Jeeves*, P. G. Wodehouse, 1919.”

The complete list is at <http://www.npr.org/programs/totn/features/2002/mar/020319.characters.html>

For a list of the panelists polled:
<http://www.bookmagazine.com/issue21/100best.shtml>

Dave also forwarded us the first three paragraphs of a recording review by Don Shirley, “Sometimes, the Good Songs Are Preserved” in the *Los Angeles Times* of March 3:

In 1917, lyricist P. G. Wodehouse outlined the journey taken by old songs after “they had their day and then we threw them away.” The heavenly ditties flew to a land “on the other side of the moon,” where “they're always loved and they're always new,” wrote Wodehouse. These lines were part of “The Land Where the Good Songs Go,” a number from the musical *Miss 1917*, for which Jerome Kern wrote the music.

Nowadays, of course, songs don't have to leave the planet to remain alive...the fracturing of the music mar-

ket has led to the proliferation of boutique labels—in theater music as well as in other genres. Witness “The Land Where the Good Songs Go” itself. It's now available on a new double CD, “Jerome Kern: Life Upon the Wicked Stage,” from LML Music. Sung by Pamela Myers in the piercing style of a Broadway diva and arranged by Ron Abel so that the song picks up a catchy beat and swells into a grand finale, the once-demure little tune has become a glamour queen, worthy of closing a first act in some multimillion-dollar musical.

The Kern set is one of five collections of old theater songs—three of them double CDs—recently released. If only Wodehouse could hear them now....

David Ruef asked PGWnet: “While this may be a bit ‘edgy’ reading for most of our distinguished members, I know that at least a few colleagues are also fans of ‘The Simpsons’ (I do so love quotation marks!) and may be familiar with creator Matt Groening's earlier cartoon work, ‘Life in Hell.’ In *The Huge Book of Hell* (1997), a cartoon on page 124 shows a bookshelf of books by authors Benchley, Thurber, Lardner, Vonnegut, and—you guessed it—Wodehouse. Could Plum have shaped the tortured genius mind that created Homer, Marge, Bart *et al.*? Maybe we should see if he wants to join the Society!” Not surprisingly, it was **Dave Lull** who found the corroboration on The Simpsons Archive:

<http://www.snpp.com/other/interviews/groening93.html>

“Explaining Groening: One on one with the sultan of fun” by Jamie Angell, *Simpsons Illustrated*, Volume 1, Number 9, Summer 1993, pp. 22–30

SI: What books influenced you when you were a kid?

MG: As a little kid I loved Dr. Seuss. Later I got into Mark Twain, *Catcher in the Rye*, by J. Edgar Hoover, I mean J. D. Salinger. *Catch-22*, by Joseph Heller. Who else? P. G. Wodehouse, James Thurber, S. J. Perelman, Robert Benchley, Jean Shepard.

Neil Midkiff notes that Wodehouse references pop up in unexpected places in electronic forums:

In a discussion on on the Internet newsgroup “alt.movies.silent” touching on the 1925 film version of *The Phantom of the Opera*, William Hooper wrote: “...the Universal horror movie universe has always been sort of like classical Greek mythology in several fun ways, not the least is the fact that the same landscape is inhabited at different times in different stories by different characters who sometimes do & sometimes do not bump into each other. (P. G. Wodehouse stories are that way, too.)”

Seriously Funny Business

The Comic Fiction of P. G. Wodehouse

BY C. A. WOLSKI

IF ART is man's spiritual nourishment, then the luminous comic fiction of P. G. Wodehouse is spiritual champagne. In more than 300 stories and 74 novels, Wodehouse presents a bright never-never world where there was no fall of man—a comic universe that emphasizes life's benevolence.

For a Wodehouse hero, life is about enjoying oneself—eating good food, drinking good drink (always of the alcoholic sort), and smoking good tobacco. Life is meant to be enjoyed and savored. And although he never faces a truly malevolent threat, a Wodehouse hero is always in danger of having his pursuit of enjoyment—his core spiritual value—thwarted by some dour, non-fun-loving antagonist.

One typical Wodehouse hero is an Edwardian aristocrat of the idle-rich set who is surrounded by nuptial-mad girlfriends, domineering aunts, soft-headed friends, and phlegmatic manservants—whom they rely on to get out of the jams caused by the girlfriends, aunts, and friends. Plots revolve around the hero trying to extricate himself from an engagement to some horrible young thing, being blackmailed by an aunt into petty (but harmless) larceny, or helping a friend get out of an engagement. In some cases, a bit like a comic Job, the hero is set upon by all three situations at the same time—while never losing his verve or wit.

It is easy to dismiss Wodehouse's work as fluff, considering that the plots revolve around characters stealing cow creamers and prize pigs and trying to escape the clutches of soft-headed girls and menacing, officious romantic rivals. Wodehouse himself described the way he wrote as “making a sort of musical comedy without music and ignoring real life altogether.”

But there is more to Wodehouse than meets the eye.

Though the reader can't take Wodehouse's plots literally, his absentminded baronets and young men in spats are, in their own way, serious about the values they're pursuing. The comedy comes as much from the trivial values being pursued (cow creamers, prize-winning pigs, antique golf clubs) as the wrong-headed ways in which they are pursued (petty larceny, blackmailing by means of embarrassingly ridiculous secrets, kidnapping of willing victims and prize pigs). But these characters, for all their lunacy, are serious about what they want and what drives them.

In our normal, everyday universe, both these characters' values and the way they pursue them would result in visits to a psychiatrist's couch or a jailer's cell. But Wodehouse's universe exists, as it were, in a parallel comic

universe—and in that world, these values seem completely obvious and the pursuit of them is a harmless adventure.

Explaining Ayn Rand's approach to her comic story “Good Copy” (in *The Early Ayn Rand*), Leonard Peikoff writes “she concluded [that] a story written specifically to project pure ‘benevolent universe’ should be written as though all problems have already been answered and all big issues solved, and now there is nothing to focus on but . . . unobstructed excitement, romance, adventure.”

Similarly, Wodehouse's characters face a world in which there are no big problems to be solved—but there is a constant string of small problems to launch their comic adventures.

In *The Code of the Woosters*, for instance, Bertie Wooster is blackmailed by his Aunt Dahlia into stealing an antique cow creamer. In the real world, blackmail is a serious threat to one's values. But in Bertie's world, the “blackmail” consists of the threat of being cut off from the gourmet meals served by Dahlia's cook, the legendary Anatole. Wodehouse's uncanny ability to make the reader understand why Anatole is an important value to Bertie sets both the comic tone and the stakes for the hero.

This was not the first time she had displayed the velvet hand beneath the iron glove—or, rather, the other way about—in this manner. For this ruthless relative has one all-powerful weapon which she holds constantly over my head like the sword of—who was the chap?—Jeeves would know—and by means of which she can always bend me to her will—viz., the threat that if I don't kick in she will bar me from her board and wipe Anatole's cooking from my lips. I shall not lightly forget the time when she placed sanctions on me for a whole month—right in the middle of the pheasant season, when this superman is at his incomparable best.

The convoluted way Bertie attempts to solve his problem—going from point A to point B by way of point Z—sets up the comic tension, but the reader roots for Bertie no matter how soft-headed he appears, because the reader has his own “Anatoles” he fears losing.

Bertie values his access to Anatole's cooking, his bachelor status, and his nights out at the Drones Club. Unfortunately, as a consequence of his easy, Dionysian life, his ability to defend his values is limited. Enter his manservant, Jeeves.

Jeeves is the real hero of the Wooster stories. He is the

thinking, Apollonian complement to Bertie. An honest fellow, Bertie knows that he does not have the brainpower to extricate himself from his messes. He admits as much in the story "Jeeves Takes Charge":

Lots of people think I'm much too dependent on him. My Aunt Agatha, in fact, has even gone so far as to call him my keeper. Well, what I say is: Why not? The man's a genius. From the collar upward he stands alone. I gave up trying to run my own affairs within a week of his coming to me.

In this story, Jeeves proves his worth by helping Bertie escape the clutches of his current fiancée, Florence Craye, who is bent on forcing Bertie to give up nights at the Drones Club and to master books like *Types of Ethical Theory* (a real book, by the way) and its chapter on "Idiopsychological Ethics." In other words, Jeeves literally saves Bertie's life and everything he holds dear—namely, his bachelor lifestyle—by causing the break-up of his engagement to the diabolical Craye.

The comic pairing of Jeeves and Bertie is an artistic necessity. Wodehouse had experimented with a composite Jeeves-Wooster character, Psmith (the "p" is silent, as in ptomaine), but it was an artistic dead end, as Wilfrid Sheed notes in his introduction to *Leave It to Psmith*. Psmith was, on the one hand, too smart to get into comic jams, and on the other hand, not smart enough to stay out of trouble. Wodehouse solved the problem by splitting Psmith in two. Bertie epitomizes the good-natured gadabout, a fellow rich enough, and in a world benevolent enough, to accommodate him. Jeeves, Bertie's keeper-servant, epitomizes the thinking-working man. Jeeves is a hero who, no matter how put upon, can always solve any problem and teach his "master" a lesson at the same time (such as why a confirmed bachelor should not adopt a child—as chronicled in the story "Bertie Changes His Mind").

If Bertie is the consummate playboy, Jeeves is the consummate professional. He is efficient, loyal, and ambitious. Jeeves values his job and sees Bertie as the ultimate challenge—sort of the manservant's Mount Everest. And as trying as Bertie can be, Jeeves has a real affection for his employer, as Bertie has for his employee.

Ironically, it is this affection and Jeeves's professionalism that usually ignites the comic tension of the Jeeves and Wooster stories. For instance, in *Right Ho, Jeeves*, Bertie returns from a trip to Cannes (without Jeeves) with a white mess jacket. Jeeves reluctantly concedes that the jacket may be appropriate for Cannes but insists it is not appropriate for London—causing a rift between the duo.

In the matter of evening costumes, you see, Jeeves is hidebound and reactionary. I had had trouble with him before about soft-bosomed shirts. And while these mess

jackets had, as I say, been all the rage—*tout ce qu'il y a du chic*—on the Cote d'Azur, I had never concealed it from myself, even when treading the measure at the Palm Beach Casino in the one I had hastened to buy, that there might be something of an upheaval about it on my return.

Jeeves is doing his job, trying to preserve what dignity Bertie has. Unfortunately, Bertie's independent spirit gets the better of him, and the inseparable duo spend most of the novel working at cross purposes. The mess jacket incident fuels the comedy and the plot. Bertie, in a fit of pique, decides to take into his own hands the matter of Gussie Fink-Nottle's engagement and his Aunt Dahlia's gambling debts, among other problems—all with disastrous outcomes. Yet the forthright optimism Bertie exhibits throughout his setbacks keeps the story's tone and sense of life from turning malevolent.

Many Wodehouse protagonists are in Bertie's mold, such as Clarence, ninth Earl of Emsworth, the absent-minded lord of Blandings Castle, who only wants to be left in peace to raise his prize pig, the Empress of Blandings. Of course, he is rarely successful, and most Blandings stories center on the threat of pig-napping.

But other Wodehouse heroes are working men and women who know what they want and how to get it—though they also have a light heart and a quick tongue. In *Piccadilly Jim*, the hero is a former newspaper reporter with a sullied reputation who leaves England for New York to become respectable—only to find he must impersonate himself and continue his disreputable ways, in spite of himself. In *Psmith Journalist*, Psmith comes to the aid of Billy Windsor, a would-be muckraker working on a dubious New York newspaper. Psmith helps the energetic Billy turn the vapid tabloid into a hard-hitting journal. A *Damsel in Distress* finds the American musical-comedy composer George Bevan enamored of Lady Patricia and embroiled in the affairs of her scatter-brained family. Like the other go-to heroes, George goes on the offensive both to win Patricia's hand and to set the insulated world of her family on the right track.

Considering how many of his most memorable female creations are antagonists in the novels and stories, Wodehouse, at first glance, might be considered a misogynist. Bertie's fiancées typically fall into two camps, the Florence Crayes and the Madeline Bassetts. Craye wears the pants in the relationship. She is hard-driven, enjoys beating her boyfriends at sporting events, and is generally bossy. Bassett is a wide-eyed, empty-headed innocent prone to emotional gushing. But Wodehouse's prolific body of work contains many other types of women, from spunky barmaids to level-headed Americans. Americans generally and American women in particular come off well

in Wodehouse's stories. *Piccadilly Jim's* Ann Chester is typical of his American women: level-headed, independent, clear of mind, and fun—the perfect partner for the hapless baronets and suspense writers populating Wodehouse's universe.

Despite their differences, all of Wodehouse's characters share a common sense of life. They are the sort of men and women who rise above the petty and the mundane, and who regard everything—except good food, good drink, friends to have fun with, and a Jeeves (or a good American woman) to look after you—as unimportant. But those who focus on the insignificant and the petty, those whose sense of self-importance is unearned—making them ripe to have an Emsworth justly shoot them in the seat of the pants with an air rifle—are the butt of his humor.

PGW in the *National Review*

BY DANIEL LOVE GLAZER

I found this letter in the December 3 issue of *National Review*, in "Notes & Asides," a page devoted to letters to William F. Buckley (often relating to English usage), and his replies.

Dear Mr. Buckley: I agree with you and your correspondent Mr. Lucas (Sept. 17) that "apparently died of a heart attack" is more accurate than the journalistic cliché, "died of an apparent heart attack," but why be accurate when you can be peculiarly English? The use of an adjective where an adverb would be more logically correct was a favorite device of P. G. Wodehouse. For examples:

I balanced a thoughtful lump of sugar on the teaspoon.

He waved a concerned cigar.

His eyes widened and an astonished piece of toast fell from his grasp.

As I sat in the bath tub, soaping a meditative foot....

Horace was flicking a languid feather duster over an antique chair.

Sometimes Wodehouse pulls the converse over on you. You expect an adjective (the fat butler) but get an adverb:

The butler was standing mountainously beside the tea table, staring in a sort of trance at a plateful of anchovy sandwiches....

The adverbial adjective is part of the spoken language, not just a literary invention. Here is a football play-by-play announcer on TV, remarking on a quarterback who had to call a time-out at an inopportune time:

Not all readers will be able to sympathize with Wodehouse's heroes, and some may regard them as too flighty and ineffectual. But the light, breezy way Wodehouse writes can mask the serious side of his fiction.

Wodehouse shows a world where heroes cannot be touched by the misfortunes of everyday living. It is a world where men might value strange and trivial things, but they pursue those values with all the tenacity of which they are capable—and, against a comic series of adversities, they always triumph. And that makes Wodehouse's fiction seriously funny business.

Christopher A. Wolski is a writer based in Los Angeles. A version of this article originally appeared in *The Intellectual Activist* for June 2001.

"And he calls a disgusted time out."

Isn't it a wonderful language?

Prof. Richard L. Leed
Cornell University
Ithaca, N. Y.

Dear Professor Leed: It is indeed, and your resourcefulness in making your point is also wonderful.

Cordially, WFB

The issue was followed up in the March 25 issue of *National Review*. Prof. J. R. Hall of the University of Mississippi begins his letter:

Dear Mr. Buckley: In the Dec. 3 issue, Prof. Richard Leed of Cornell University writes to celebrate a trick of language that he calls "the adverbial adjective" and pleasingly illustrates some from the writing of P. G. Wodehouse....

But the figure, although admirably suited to English is not "peculiarly English." It dates back to the classics and goes by the Greek term "hypallage," meaning "transferred epithet."

And so on for a couple of more paragraphs. I wonder whether Wodehouse, in the course of his classics studies at Dulwich College, was ever exposed to this trope.

Anne Cotton comments: *We know Plum regularly got stuck translating Thucydides in vast chunks. Anyone steeped in Greek to that extent must surely have been on to every grammatical wheeze those chaps employed. I would bet the farm that he knew "hypallage" by its first name.*

A Few Quick Ones

Steve Brown quotes film critic Roger Ebert: “*The Royal Tenenbaums* is at heart profoundly silly, and loving. That’s why it made me think of Wodehouse. It stands in amazement as the Tenenbaums and their extended family unveil one strategy after another to get attention, carve out space, and find love.”

Gary Hall writes: “Linda and I have been taking in the Oscar-nominated movies, as is our wont before the awards ceremony, and Linda noticed the entertaining rhythms and lyrics of one of the songs performed in Robert Altman’s *Gosford Park*. Sure enough, in the credits, the song was listed as “Nuts in May,” and P. G. Wodehouse was one of the lyricists credited. Unfortunately, the credits went past too fast, so we were unable to read the other names, and unable to see where/when the song originated. Should *Gosford Park* win on Oscar night, we’ll be able to listen between the lines of the acceptance speeches, and know that some fraction of the award must be claimed by the spirit of Plum as a contributor to the humor of the film.” PGW contributed the lyrics of “Nuts in May,” as well as the lyrics of nine other songs, to *The Golden Moth*, which opened in October 1921 at the Adelphi Theatre in London and ran for 281 performances. Plum co-wrote the book with Fred Thompson, and Ivor Novello (who is apparently the one real person among the otherwise fictional cast of characters in *Gosford Park*) wrote the music. The sheet music for all the songs was published in the same year.

Steve Brown found this quotation from the Oct. 28th London *Times*, author unknown. “We knew that Gerry Adams was a short-story writer of some talent, but not that his favourite authors (alongside the more predictable Steinbeck and Garcia Marquez) include such improbable childhood idols as Richmal Crompton, P G Wodehouse and Enid Blyton.” David Landman asks, “What could they have meant by labeling P. G. Wodehouse an ‘improbable childhood idol?’”

Dean Miller notes that he “was more than agreeably surprised when a waiter in a Chicago restaurant, without being prompted, gave us his opinion that the Cazalet and McNair CD, ‘The Land Where the Good Songs Go,’ was the cat’s pajamas and the vicar’s nightshirt. Possibly he had been influenced by Wodehouse in a process of osmosis, for the restaurant where he labors is situated kitty-corner from the headquarters of City Lit Theatre. City Lit, as noted in the Winter 2001 *Plum Lines*, produced a rollicking and popular staged version of *Uncle Fred in the Springtime*, directed by Page Hearn.”

Kristine Fowler writes: “In the *New York Times* Crossword no. 0103, which appeared in my paper February 14, clue 33 Across, ‘Author-turned-physician’ is

‘GPWodehouse.’” (Apparently the game involved reversing the initials of famous names to provide imaginary alternate occupations.)

Sushmita Sen Gupta writes: “The *Times* (London) crossword appears here in Delhi in *The Statesman* and I’m addicted to it. A recent clue was ‘Bertie Wooster, say, was a boring speaker.’ The answer, of course, is DRONE.”

Elliott Milstein ponders: I’ve often wondered about the origin of the name ‘Monty Python.’ Is it too fanciful to think it comes from this passage from *The Luck of the Bodkins*?

Monty did not take them all, but he took enough of them to send him to the boat deck greatly refreshed and in a mood of extreme sentimentality. He felt like a loving python.

Edmund Burton found an article by Dennis Drabelle called “The Art of Darkness” in the *Washington Post* for February 22:

Is there some compound in the British water supply that grows novelists of great talent mixed with prodigious industry, able to write at a high level, year after year, decade after decade? Examples of such indefatigable productivity include Anthony Trollope, P. G. Wodehouse, Iris Murdoch, and, still working at a torrid pace, Ruth Rendell....

EB says: “I always figured it was the whiskey.” He also sends the following note: “His Honour Christopher Beaumont, known affectionately to habitués of the Old Bailey as ‘Basher,’ died at age 88, according to the *Telegraph*. After finally retiring at age 84, he devoted himself to gardening, and reading Tolstoy, Solzhenitsyn, Evelyn Waugh and P. G. Wodehouse.”

Jan Wilson Kaufman reports: “In P. D. James’s new Adam Dalgliesh mystery, *Death in Holy Orders*, set in a small theological college, she describes the dinners: ‘...the first and main courses were eaten in silence while one of the ordinands read from a high desk....The choice was left to the ordinand and the readings were not necessarily expected to be from the Bible or from religious texts. During her visit Emma heard...*The Waste Land*, a lively reading of a P. G. Wodehouse Mulliner short story, and *The Diary of a Nobody*.’ I wonder if the story was ‘Anselm Gets His Chance’ or ‘Mulliner’s Buck-U-Up?’” **Jan** also notes that in *Reading Lyrics*, an anthology listing the authors’ one thousand favorite songs from 1900 to 1975, Irving Berlin leads with thirty-nine lyrics, but Plum is quite respectably represented by eleven.

OM SS GW

The Oldest Member Society Spice Glow Worm

Character Sketches: Rupert Baxter

BY TONY RING

This is the second in an occasional series of pen-portraits based on articles from *The Millennium Wodehouse Concordance*, by Tony Ring and the late Geoffrey Jaggard.

IN A letter explaining why Rupert Psmith had had to become Ronald Psmith, Wodehouse explained that “Rupert *Baxter* seemed so right.” We bow to his judgment in so naming one of the slitheriest snakes in his entire oeuvre, the principal resident serpent in the man-made Garden of Eden we know as Blandings Castle.

A swarthy, thickset, young man with the supercilious expression and vaguely grubby appearance typical of young men of bad complexion, Baxter had flashing spectacles which tended to concentrate on the owner of any guilty conscience within a hundred yard radius. He was superficially efficient of mind and habit, though less so of application; austere of outlook; impatient of half-measures; referred to by those who knew as “Nosey Parker”; and intolerant of all but perfection in the way others performed their duties (though less intolerant of his own failings). The following paragraphs will show clearly just how imperfect were his own actions.

Baxter was a most formidable (though hypocritical) puritan who loved the power he exercised successively as secretary to Dillingworth, Jevons, and particularly (as he was a snob) Lord Emsworth and the Duke of Dunstable. He thought he knew how to seize power, and to wield, maintain and extend it. His supporters may argue that he was sometimes unwarrantedly discomfited, misunderstood, maltreated, humiliated and put to shame and ridicule. But then it was his choice to bob up again and again, as determined as ever to court at Fate’s hands worse ignominies than were reserved even for Malvolio by Sir Toby Belch (Alaric, Duke of Dunstable, who used eggs instead of a stone-bow to hit him in the eye), Maria (Penny Donaldson *et al*) and Sir Andrew Aguecheek (as edited by Galahad Threepwood). He even wrote what he later regarded as an incriminating note to one he had identified as the future Mrs Baxter: the sixty-million-dollar heiress Miss Schoonmaker, played for one performance only by the chorus girl Sue Brown.

He was sacked by the Duke of Dunstable for blatant dishonesty, lying to his employer about his reasons for staying in London instead of accompanying him to Blandings. All along his intentions were to attend the Bohemian Ball as a Corsican brigand, and he compounded his offence by continuing to lie when later challenged by the Duke.

In other ways he was more cautious—he resigned from service with Horace Jevons rather than travel to the

USA (though he was later reported to be 3,000 miles away in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in the employment of an anonymous American millionaire)—but he nevertheless caused deep suspicion in those who met him. He also suspected anything that moved, starting with the Marson-Valentine and Psmith-Halliday combinations, and to be fair it must be conceded that on occasion some of his suspicions were justified.

Baxter seems to have kept his early *faux pas* sufficiently quiet to be described once (by those who did not know him properly) as having no vices. But retribution was at hand. He was to be embarrassed by being discovered on all fours at the foot of the main Castle staircase, cuddling a cold tongue. He was shot at by Lord Emsworth using a



The Efficient Baxter, as depicted by Peter van Straaten

variety of weapons. He was ridiculed (for the benefit of his American readers of *Something New* only, in a scene omitted from *Something Fresh*) by a combination of Ashe Marson and Lord Emsworth when he thought that he had found a feminine shoe with a flash of red paint, which he expected to lead him to the person who stole the scarab. He was allowed to break open a cupboard in Beach's pantry to no effect in pursuit of the same goal. And his attempts at amateur detection were no more successful when he investigated the disappearance of Lady Constance Keeble's diamonds and the curious phenomenon of the disappearing flowerpot.

He later reappeared at Blandings as an impostor, when he responded to Lady Constance's call for help by disguising himself in a caravan and claiming to be a passing tourist. Furthermore, he breached all the ethical principles of hospitality by jumping out of windows, making unwarranted accusations of theft, and hiding under beds in vulnerable girls' bedrooms. He went on to breach *all* principles, whether moral, ethical or merely those he himself preached when, out of motives of pure self-interest, he stole the Empress on behalf of his then employer, the half-mad Duke of Dunstable.

Indeed, in the version of *Uncle Fred in the Springtime* which appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post*, Baxter played a role of such culpability as few would have expected even him of being capable. It was *Baxter* who took dancing lessons from Ricky Gilpin's fiancée Polly Halliday; it was *Baxter* who stabbed Marie Antoinette; it was *Baxter* who was pinched and fined at Marlborough Street Court the next morning; and it was *Baxter* who sent a telegram to Blandings Castle warning the family that alcoholic stimulation was bad for the Duke of Dunstable and that all the wine and port should be served watered down.

More accurate and comprehensive descriptions of anyone in five words or less than that provided by Lord Emsworth's twelve-year-old grandson, George Threepwood, when he summed up Rupert Baxter alternatively as 'A bit of a blister' and (in the *Saturday Evening Post*) 'A bit of a gobshite' have yet to be written.

Baxter had major roles in four Blandings novels: *Something Fresh/Something New*; *Leave It To Psmith*; *Summer Lightning*, and *Uncle Fred in the Springtime*, was referred to significantly in two others, and had the starring part in the short story *The Crime Wave at Blandings*.

Bad News/Good News Department

The bad news first, from **Murray Hedcock**:

A melancholy note for PGW people with a special interest in Plum's magazine involvement: *Punch*, the very British humorous periodical which first published him in 1902, has closed after more than 160 years.

It had a chequered recent career in a changing world, and shut down for four years until 1992, when it was revived by the controversial owner of Harrod's, Mohamed Fayed.

Punch chopped and changed, but never found a niche.

The name is now (says Mr Fayed) to "live on through the website with its archive and library of 500,000 cartoons."

The significance of *Punch* in the Wodehouse world is underlined by the fact that the McIlvaine bibliography fills five pages listing his contributions, the last being in 1975.



The good news, from **Norman Murphy**:

I am delighted to announce some very good news accompanied by a most embarrassed apology—especially to John Graham.*

When I took John and Paul on a special Wodehouse Walk earlier this year, I took them to Bertie Wooster's old flat in Berkeley Street and found it had been demolished! I tasked John with announcing the sad news to the world.

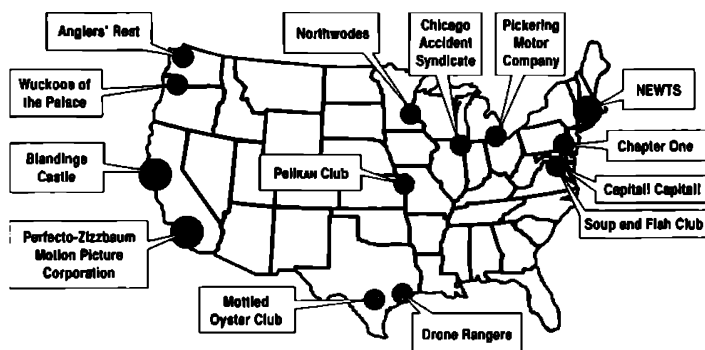
The good news is: It's back again!

The embarrassing bit is that, as always, there was a van in front of the building, hiding the number 15, and I got the wrong one. What can I say?

Will I ever be forgiven? When Elin and I took a couple of NEWTS named Swanson on the walk, my loving wife said, "The scales have fallen from my eyes! You ARE wrong sometimes! Am I living a lie?? Do my eyes deceive me, Norman, or isn't that Number 15 still there, alongside the gap?"

My apologies to all Wodehouseans, but all husbands will appreciate how reliant even the cleverest of us are on a kindly, percipient spouse to put one right occasionally.

* See "Farewell to 15 Berkeley Street" in the last issue.



Chapters Corner

CONDUCTED BY NEIL MIDKIFF

THE illustration above is symbolic of both good news and bad. The bad news first: the Pdrones, in St. Louis, have gone on the inactive list for now, with no meetings scheduled. The good news is that many of our other chapters are more active than ever, and that it's increasingly easy for our members to find out about a chapter near them. The Wodehouse Society website now boasts an improved Chapters page, on which this map appears in color and fully programmed so that clicking on a location immediately brings up the chapter contact information. See <http://www.wodehouse.org/TWSchapters.html> for the real thing. (Thanks to Pongo for helping me get this going.) The website also hosts individual pages for some chapters, and provides links to some other chapters who maintain their own websites. Let us know if your chapter would like to have increased Internet visibility in one of these ways.

Thanks are also due to Sandy Morris for her work superintending the last few Chapters Corners for *Plum Lines*. In the future, I'll be coordinating this column, and would appreciate hearing regularly from each of the chapters.

As always, the officers of TWS stand ready to encourage the formation of new chapters—perhaps mostly by acting as a cheering section while spirited local volunteers do the actual work. We do, of course, make initial contacts easier by supplying local membership rosters sorted by ZIP code when requested. It was a joy to see this process resulting in the formation last year of the Pelikan Club in my native Kansas City.

It always surprises us that no one has yet stepped up to organize a New York City and vicinity chapter, for instance, since we have well over forty members in the area. Rumors of volunteering efforts in the regions of Dallas-Fort Worth and Austin, Texas have not yet produced new chapters there. Those of us who are lucky enough to live in regions with active chapters are eager to

see other TWS members share that joy in their own vicinities. Perhaps the best incentive to forming new chapters will be your continuing reports of the fun that the present chapters are having. So keep the news flowing to this column!

All chapters are listed in alphabetical order below. The lack of a news report may not indicate an inactive chapter, but perhaps may serve to spur chapters to appoint a special correspondent to keep *Plum Lines* readers informed of their activities.

Anglers' Rest

(Seattle and vicinity)

Contact: Susan Collicott

The Anglers' Rest is meeting for High Tea at the Queen Mary Teahouse in Seattle on June 8th. The Queen Mary is one of Seattle's favorite tea houses, with walls swathed in rich fabrics and tables covered with linen tablecloths and glass tops. Chairs are cozy, benches well-stuffed, and the decorations are monarchical and historical. The Queen Mary has a nice selection of loose teas, wonderful lunch and breakfast, delicious nibbles, and an amazing variety of teapots and teacups. Listen to the doves cooing while you sit and enjoy a peaceful, tranquil moment (before the breadrolls start flying).

Combined Tea with the Ladies Tea Guild: June 23rd at the "Dutch Treat" in Ballard, WA. \$6.00 The Dutch Treat is owned by Adrianna van Elswuk, who has operated the sandwich and dessert bakery café in historical Ballard since 1995. Bolstered by childhood memories of afternoon tea, Dutch-American van Elswuk has recently expanded her business to include a tea room. Ballard, homesteaded from 1850–1870, was annexed into Seattle in 1907 in order to gain a supply of fresh water for residents. The Ladies Tea Guild is an association of women from around the world who are interested in the Victorian Era and the world of tea.

July: "Shrimping Vacation"—picnic at a Puget Sound beach. Possibly combined with other literary groups.

August: "A Pint at the Village Pub"—local brewpub visits/tours and private tastings.

September: Friends of Seattle Public Library Book Sale, Sand Point (former Naval Station). To join FoSPL and preview the sale the night before the public sale, visit the following url, print and fill out the form, include a check, and mail. <http://www.spl.org/friends/frform.html>

October: Northwest Bookfest, October 19–20, Sand Point.

Blandings Castle Chapter

(greater San Francisco Bay Area)

Newsletter: *The Argus Intelligencer and Wheat Growers Gazette*

Contact: Jan Kaufman, president

Phone: 847/475-2235

E-mail: d-garrison@nwu.edu

The Clients of Adrian Mulliner

(for enthusiasts of both PGW and Sherlock Holmes)

Contact: Marilyn MacGregor

The Blandings Castle Chapter met on March 3 at Rhoda Robinson's charming cottage on Telegraph Hill in San Francisco for a potluck lunch and a strategy session. (It's all a hush-hush secret; rumors that the year 2005 was mentioned are just that—rumors.) Ed and Missy Ratcliffe will host the upcoming meeting on June 16th on the new deck of their Felton home among the redwoods.

Capital! Capital!

(Washington, D.C. and vicinity)

Contact: Erik R. Quick, president

Chapter One

(greater Philadelphia area)

Contact: Susan and Daniel Cohen

Chapter One's January get-together welcomed three new members and featured a brief parody of "The Lord of the Rings" with Bertie as Frodo and Jeeves as Sam. The March meeting was enlivened by a reading of "The Awakening of Rollo Podmarsh," magnificently organized by Roz Kushner. The most recent chapter meeting on May 19 featured a discussion of horse racing in Wodehouse's works, spurred by a name change for the restaurant where they regularly meet. The Dickens Inn (which several of us who attended the 2001 Convention visited for lunch, not far from the convention hotel) is now doing business as The Dark Horse. David Ruef ("Monty Bodkin") and Beanie Blum are planning a June 16 trip to the Philadelphia Zoo to visit the newt exhibit sponsored by Chapter One, including a new Mandarin Newt adopted by the Chapter this year.

The Chicago Accident Syndicate

(Chicago and thereabouts)

Contact: Daniel & Tina Garrison

The Drone Rangers

(Houston and vicinity)

Newsletter: *Dronestar*, edited by Toni & Bill Rudersdorf

Contact: Toni Rudersdorf

The Drone Rangers may well be our most active chapter; their December newsletter lists the dates of eleven meetings scheduled for 2002. They started the year with a discussion of the *Wodehouse Bestiary*, a collection of stories featuring animals. They continued with their annual **Remember Plum** party and a group trip to the film *Gosford Park*. Their meeting plan alternates between primarily social gatherings, usually restaurant dinners, and programs such as book discussions and Wodehouse-related talks. The chapter newsletter *Dronestar* is required reading for anyone within hailing distance of Houston, as no one should miss these convivial get-togethers.

The New England Wodehouse Thingummy Society (NEWTS)

(Boston and elsewhere in New England)

Contact: Anne Cotton, president

The next Nottle will be held on June 22. David Nolan and Rosemary Roman, who have a new house in East Brookfield, MA, are having a grand midsummer bash that day, beginning at noon and ending when the cows come home or the guests drop of exhaustion, whichever comes later.

Randall and Nancy Burkett have invited us to a Nottle at their house in Worcester for an afternoon of our usual sluicing, browsing, chatting, etc., and a game or three of croquet (Randall is a mean croqueter). This bash will take place on Saturday, July 27—unless rain forces a delay, in which case it will be held on the next day, Sunday, July 28.

On Sunday, October 20, there will be a Nottle at Anne Cotton's place in South Hadley; our Holiday Nottle is scheduled for Sunday afternoon, December 8.

The Northwodes

(St. Paul, Minneapolis, and vicinity)

Contact: Kristine Fowler

At the end of September, the Northwodes met over coffee—until we moved across the street for a beer—to discuss *The Luck of the Bodkins*, a welcome cheery reading at that time. For our December holiday gathering, members contributed appropriate dishes to form an elegant five-course dinner, after which we inelegantly laughed our way through a reading of “The Metropolitan Touch.” March found us consuming a sumptuous tea and listening to a radio dramatization of a golf story. Unfortunately we are losing our hosts on that occasion, Peter and Christina Schnarsky, to Connecticut; we trust the NEWTS appreciate their windfall. We were delighted to find that a university theatre was staging *Anything Goes* in April, a production that met with our unanimous approval: just the kind of lovely silly story one would expect from Wodehouse on an ocean liner, good comedic leads, a respectable on-stage jazz combo, and the requisite line of tap-dancing chorus girls and guys. As luck would have it, we’re getting a second opportunity to see this musical in June, done by a professional touring company.

The Perfecto-Zizzbaum Motion Picture Corporation

(Los Angeles, California, and vicinity)

Contact: Melissa D. Aaron

The Perfecto-Zizzbaum meets on the second Sunday of each month at Vroman’s Museum Collection, 340 S. Lake Avenue, Pasadena. They also maintain their own website at <http://www.lahacal.org/wodehouse.html> to announce their scheduled events.

The Mottled Oyster Club

(San Antonio and South Texas)

Contact: James P. Robinson III

The Pelikan Club

(Kansas City and vicinity)

Contact: Sallie Hobbs

This chapter resulted from nearly-simultaneous proposals by Andrew Williams and Sallie Hobbs for a local group. The Pelikans first met in November 2001 as a

chance for the local members who had attended the Philadelphia Convention to share their stories and photos with those who couldn’t attend. I recall announcements of later meetings, so I trust the Club is getting into its meeting momentum and will have more to report in the next issue.

The Pickering Motor Company

(Detroit and vicinity)

Contact: Elliott Milstein

Our newest chapter has been making TWS news by volunteering to host the 2003 Convention, as reported in the Spring issue and on page 7 of this edition of *Plum Lines*.

The Soup & Fish Club

(Virginia area)

Contact: Deborah Dillard

The Wuckoos of the Palace

(greater Portland, Oregon area)

President: Dennis McDougall

Apologies to all for the lateness of this issue, which may make parts of these announcements “old news.” I lost some time and data in a computer malfunction. I promise to do better on backing up data if you chapter members promise to keep Chapters Corner up-to-date! —GW

Belated Glory

Dean Miller writes: "I hope that *Plum Lines* will, in some issue in the near future, acknowledge that the prize for Best Male Character Costume (at the Philadelphia beano) was won not by Arthur Miller nor Dean Martin nor any other concatenation of first and last names, but by Dean Miller, disguised as Alexander (Alasdair) or Sandy McHoots, the Pro. of Pros. I have been harassing David Landman, poor devil, about this gaffe, and he has mumbled something about a West Coast Mafia over whose actions he has no control."

We Mafiosi occasionally try to do Right, against our mother's earnest advice, and hereby regret our thuggish treatment of Dean.

Sandy was, among other things, Vincent Jopp's golf teacher in the 1921 story "The Heel of Achilles," and the author of a book on golf in the 1927 "Those in Peril on the Tee."

—OM



Dean Miller, disguised as Sandy McHoots, receiving his prize at the Philadelphia Convention banquet.

Volunteer Officers

Information and new-member inquiries:

Amy Plofker

Dues payments and changes in contact information:

Gary Hall and Linda Adam-Hall

<http://www.wodehouse.org/membership/>

Original contributions to *Plum Lines*:

David Landman, SS

Other contributions to *Plum Lines*:

Ed Ratcliffe, OM

Photos, illustrations, chapter news for *Plum Lines*:

Neil Midkiff, GW

Dues are \$20 per year, payable to The Wodehouse Society.

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Peter van Straaten drawing on p. 19 courtesy of James Heineman.