



Plum Lines

The quarterly journal of The Wodehouse Society

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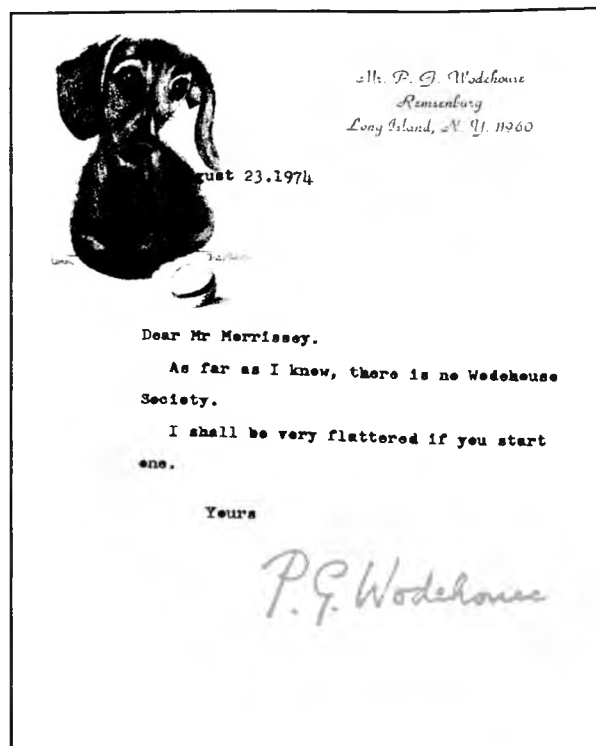
Our Royal Charter

By Anne Cotton

At our Toronto convention Anne Cotton presented two documents to the Society. Her remarks, explaining the special importance of one, follow.

Many of you will remember our NEWT friend and colleague, Richard Morrissey. Richard was an erudite scholar of literature from Wodehouse to Superman; he was an open and generous person, and when he had a question, he asked it. When Richard died in the summer of 2001, his modest goods and personal treasures passed into the hands of his good friend, fellow Welsh springer spaniel breeder, and more important the executor of his estate, Pat Floss. Pat felt that one treasure in particular belonged in the hands of The Wodehouse Society, as Richard would surely have wished it to be.

Now for some chronology. Back in the early to mid 1970's, Bill Blood had apparently corresponded with Plum about the possibility of there being a Wodehouse Society, but nothing formal was done about it—then. Some time in 1974, Richard, with a brilliant stroke of ESP, wrote to Plum asking him if there was a society in his honor. By 1980, the Society was finally formed; it started small, but like all good things, it has grown mightily since then. Much later, back in Massachusetts, Rich-



ard discovered the NEWTS and attended his first meeting of that group in March of 1995 as the Boston convention was being planned.

What has all this to do with anything, you ask? Well, among Richard's personal treasures were two documents which share one frame. On the right is the declaration signed by Boston Mayor Thomas M. Menino, declaring October 15, 1995, to be P. G. Wodehouse Day in Boston. But on the left—remember that letter Richard wrote to Plum back in 1974? Plum answered it. It's on notepaper featuring a slightly

cartoonish dachshund in the upper left corner, and is typed and signed by Plum. It is dated August 23, 1974, and reads, in full: "Dear Mr. Morrissey: As far as I know, there is no Wodehouse Society. I shall be very flattered if you start one. Yours P. G. Wodehouse."

I think we may assume that this letter is our Royal Charter, with full authorization from our shy monarch, for all our merriment over past years and at conventions yet to come.

With thanks to Richard for getting it, and Pat Floss for donating it to the Society when she could have cleaned up on ebay, I have the great honor of presenting these documents, to be kept among The Wodehouse Society's most valued treasures.

Right Ho, Toronto! Pronto!

By Elin and Norman Murphy

Thrills—spills—excitement—laughter—drama—cricket—browsing—sluicing—new chapters forming . . . the 12th International Convention of The Wodehouse Society had these and more when TWSers gathered in Toronto, Canada, on August 8–10, 2003. The discerning eye will perhaps wonder at that “Canada” location. Yes, folks, it was the first TWS convention to be held outside the United States—albeit hosted by Detroit’s Pickering Motor Company—and believe you us when we tell you it was one humdinger of a good time!

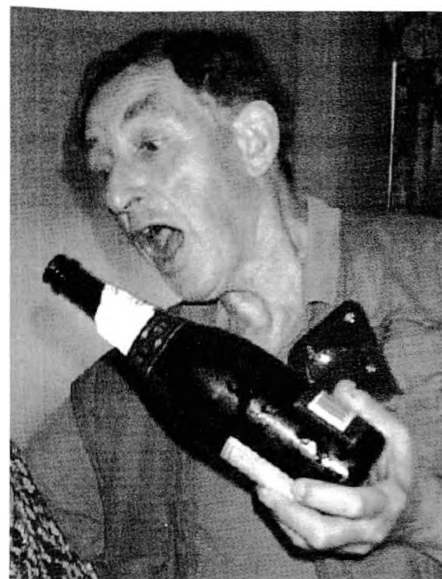
As has become habitual in recent years, although the convention officially started on Friday, August 8th, for many it actually began on Thursday the 7th. Our venue consisted of St. Michael’s College, University of Toronto, an oasis of splendid buildings, gardens, and walks in the middle of Toronto; and the nearby Sutton Place Hotel, which many claimed was the best convention hotel ever for price and quality. Some of us chose to stay in dorm rooms on campus, providing a convenient and affordable option for the weekend.

Those manning the registration desk in the John M. Kelly Reading Room on Thursday and Friday greeted old friends and welcomed new ones into the fold. Members coming for the first time included attendees from Nevada, Wyoming, Washington, and the United Kingdom, and most were quickly absorbed into the happy chaos that marks a TWS convention. This was helped along by Wodehouse videos in one corner (the superb *Wodehouse Playhouse* series with John Alderton and Pauline Collins); a bookseller’s table in another corner (Wilfred de Freitas of Montreal, who has exhibited at previous TWS conventions); a wonderful Wodehouse display containing items from conven-

tion organizer Elliott Milstein’s personal collection; and Chapter Tables displaying lots of information and goodies.

Speaking of goodies, the Stuff presented to attendees included an ingenious “Magic Bag”—a shoulder wallet that expands into a backpack or contracts into a waist pack. Inside of this was a lovely dark blue mug in-

scribed with the convention name (“Right Ho, Toronto!”), date (“TWS 2003”), and logo (a motor car, based on a photo of Plum behind the wheel of a car, and the CNtower); an elegant pen; and the traditional convention pin, which this year was a nifty silver oval with a dark-blue etching of the automobile logo as well as the inscriptions “TWS” and “Toronto 2003.” In addition to all this, Pickering had provided a wicked Wodehouse quiz—more on which later in this report—maps, and a guide to Toronto. There was also an excellent and colorful program that delighted the eye and provided a wealth of information on the weekend’s schedule, the speakers, the history of TWS conventions, and the Pickering Motor Company itself. Good Stuff!



Norman Murphy and the true, the blushful Hippocrene.



On with the dance! Let joy be unconfined! Elin Murphy and Jean Tillson.

On Thursday evening there was the usual cheerful argument, counter-argument, and heated rebuttal on where to eat, but, as always, everybody seemed to find the place they wanted and came back afterwards convinced they had found a better restaurant than anybody else. The evening concluded in the usual high spirits in the bar of the Windsor Arms, where the decibel level started the more sober regular drinkers wondering what had happened.

People booking in on Friday morning were promptly dispatched to watch the cricket—now a regular convention highlight—at the Trinity College playing field. Our version is played according to The Wodehouse Society Cricket Club (TWSCC) rules (for more information, see <http://www.wodehouse.org/TWSCC/>). English

Wodehousians walked to the ground explaining the finer points of the game to bemused Americans, escorted by Canadians who had no idea where the ground was but found themselves elected as guides because it was their country. A shortfall in members willing to play the noble game was solved by a splendid example of the serendipity that characterizes the Wodehouse world. Accosted by two Wodehousians looking for the ground, a Fellow of Trinity College (who was also a professor at another local college) noted their clothing, admitted to an interest in the game, further admitted that yes, he had actually played it himself, and promptly found himself at the crease to show us how it was done. As Ian Michaud reported to PGW-Net, "It was only later, after the professor had whacked several hits over the heads of the fielders and off the side of a nearby college building perilously close to the windows, that it was learned that he was a former Canadian International cricketer." His name, by the way, was Bill Westfall, and he and his wife attended the banquet on Saturday.

As for the match itself, for the fourth convention in a row (starting with Chicago 1997), the May Queens—led by that ace of cricket captains, Alekh (Gussie Fink-Nottle) Bhurke—defeated the Green Swizzles, captained by that prince among men, Shamim (Pongo Twistleton-Mohammed). The details of the game we are unable to report, since both of us were engaged elsewhere. But as Anne Bianchi noted to PGW-Net, "[TWSCC] cricket . . . has the wonderful motto, 'It's not how well Wodehousians play, but that they play at all.' And this is so true! The range of ability ranges from those who actually know, understand, and play the game to those who show up in cricket hats and whites and know just enough to get into trouble. . . Lots of excitement at the wicket where much activity was going on which is better explained by someone who knows. . . While the match was being played by the hale and hearty and foolish, the saner and less athletic contingent was back at the college library watching videos."

Jean Tillson comments: "I clean bowled Bill Franklin! (And caught somebody else out, but I can't remember who it was.) The cricket match was a roaring success. Lots of new players wide-eyed with joy and surprise at how well* they played despite their complete and utter conviction that they would make instant asses of themselves."

* = By TWSCC standards.

We also note parenthetically that Eileen Jones from Manchester, England, attending her first convention, sustained a nasty fall while playing cricket. A visit to a hospital was needed, and a walking stick proved necessary, but Wodehousian psychotherapy, not physiotherapy, worked wonders, especially the "fresh air treatment"—i.e., a ride in an open-top MG sports car. Ruinous for the hairdo, but the stick got lost along the way and proved not to be needed



New UK Society Chair Hillary Bruce and husband Robert, who actually knows how to play cricket.

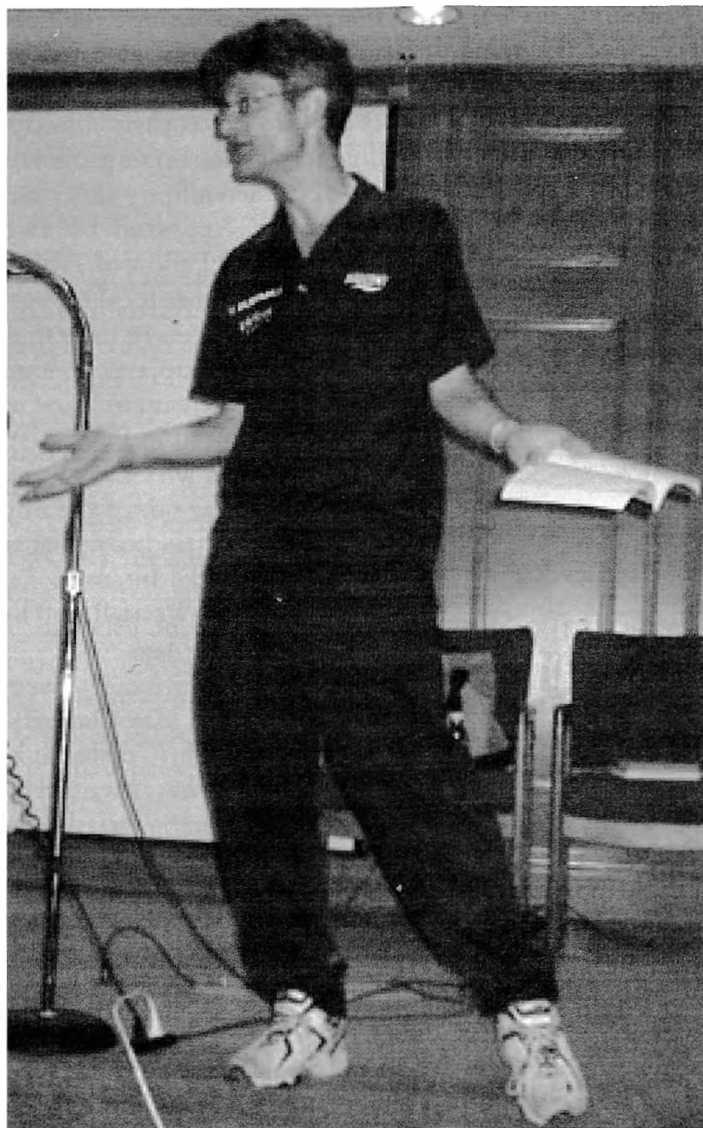
again anyway. Wendell Verrill subsequently reported that Eileen stayed in America for several days after the convention, "and found herself in the middle of the biggest blackout in American history. Fortunately, she was on a day trip to Long Island and was just about to board the city-bound train when the lights went out. By dint of forceful personality, she managed to meet a series of helpful men who found her a barbecue on the beach, lodgings for the night, protection on the city bus trip back, strong arms and back to carry her bag down 7 flights of YMCA stairs. . . She had some dandy stories when she got to Toronto and now she has many more."

But getting back to the convention: Friday evening witnessed the traditional convention reception, which was held at the Charbonnel Lounge on campus. It went splendidly, with much browsing and sluicing, and prizes for cricket were distributed to noisy applause, although the names of prize winners have been lost in our murky post-convention haze. Background music gave some of us a chance to show off our skill on the dance floor before people dispersed again for dinner. We assume everybody ate somewhere and many went along later to listen to NEWT Max Pokrivchak, a singer-songwriter known professionally as Terry Kitchen, who was appearing at The Free Times Cafe. Max's concerts are always terrific, but he must have been particularly good on this occasion, as the quality of his singing apparently kept many out of their beds till past one o'clock in the morning.

Saturday morning saw us (well, most of us) assembled on time in the Alumni Hall to listen to as good a roster of speakers as any TWS convention has fielded—perhaps the best, according to some. Although the program listed Elliott Milstein and Susan Cohen as giving opening remarks, Elliott said a few words of welcome and then immediately launched into his scheduled talk, causing Susan to cheerfully introduce him after he had finished speaking. The title of Elliott’s talk was “St. Mike’s, Wodehouse, & Me: The Great Thesis Handicap.” It turned out that one reason for choosing St. Michael’s College as the convention venue was that Elliott, current president of the Pickering Motor Company and past president of TWS, had himself been a student there—and, as the title of his talk indicates, had written his Ph.D. thesis on Wodehouse. Elliott described in screamingly funny detail how he became “turned on” to Wodehouse and what he went through to get a Wodehouse-based thesis accepted by the college potentates. Common sense prevailed and Virtue was rewarded when Elliott’s thesis—entitled “The Growth of Sweetness and Light: A Study of the Novels of P. G. Wodehouse”—was accepted. The thesis divides the Wodehouse oeuvre into three periods—early, middle, and late—and Elliott gave us examples of each period, focusing on the differences between the middle and late periods. All in all, a superb talk.

Dennis Chitty, a retired professor of zoology at the University of British Columbia, then gave us an excursus on “The Maestro’s Amazing Memory” and Wodehouse’s ability to quote from innumerable sources—from the Bible and Homer through Catullus, Dante, Shakespeare, and Tennyson. Much of this stemmed from Wodehouse’s classical education and the influence of his old headmaster Gilkes. According to Dennis, Plum’s failure to consult Bartlett’s and rely solely on his memory resulted in numerous mistakes or variations from the original sources. Dennis also wondered whether people “get” all the allusions that Wodehouse uses and cited a few examples that would have been very familiar to those who, like Plum, were classically trained but would go completely over the heads of most of us. We note that Dennis’s talk brought a reassured smile to a certain colonel’s face, as the next Murphy book has a very long section on Wodehouse quotes and references.

After a coffee break, Tony Ring regaled us with “Wodehouse on the Boards,” a review of Plum’s writing for the stage. Tony reminded us of the large number of sketches and plays Wodehouse wrote or adapted in addition to the musicals he did with Guy Bolton and Jerome Kern. There were some real oddities, including the extraordinary 1950 play *Don’t Lose Your Head*, which featured Burmese headhunters coming to England to secure the head of a Yorkshire innkeeper’s wife. Tony also pointed out that Wodehouse did not shy away from bedroom scenes when



Richard Scrimger performing, and what a shame we didn’t make a video record.

adapting the work of others—for example, *The Play’s the Thing* and *Her Cardboard Lover*. We learned the backgrounds of many of Wodehouse’s plays and other interesting snippets, such as the fact that *Good Morning, Bill* has been revived in the United Kingdom more often than any other play. Tony left us with a dream—that perhaps one of us might be the next lucky person to come across a faded typescript of one of the dozen or more now-vanished plays which Wodehouse refers to in his letters of the 1940s-50s.

Jan Kaufman then spoke on the friendship between “Dr. Wodehouse and Mr. Waugh,” two very disparate writers and masters of the English language. With Tony Ring and Norman Murphy providing voice-overs, Jan described the many differences between Wodehouse and Evelyn Waugh, particularly in age and in temperament. However, Wodehouse and Waugh shared many similarities in background, and both were devoted to writing, with Waugh noting that he “grew up in the light of his [Wodehouse’s] genius.” Although they met only once, they corresponded

often from the 1950s onward, and both were the subject of biographies by Frances Donaldson. When Waugh had a row with *Daily Express* reporter Nancy Spain, who had invaded his privacy, Wodehouse parodied the incident in his poem "The Visitors." Waugh, of course, wrote one of the most widely quoted tributes to Wodehouse on the occasion of his 80th birthday, with which Jan ended her talk: "Mr. Wodehouse's idyllic world can never stale. He will continue to release future generations from captivity that may be more irksome than our own. He has made a world for us to live in and delight in."

The morning's final talk was unusual, to say the least. Richard Scrimger is an author and actor who, according to the program, spoke on "One Chump or Two: An Ontological Examination of the Master/Servant Relationship in Wodehouse." Whether the word ontological was ever explained is still a matter for debate, but with Richard's style of presentation—most of it completely off-the-cuff—it didn't really matter. As he made clear from the start, a more accurate title would have been "Me and P. G. Wodehouse"—with emphasis on the "Me." Richard made some interesting points about Wodehouse's plotting and writing technique and cited several wonderful similes and metaphors used by Plum and his fellow Old Alleynian, Raymond Chandler. Richard also demonstrated how he had borrowed from Wodehouse in his own work and at one point got the audience involved in acting out a chapter from one of his children's books. Richard didn't give a talk, he gave a performance, an entertainment, with lots of information packed into it, and the audience loved every minute. Too bad we didn't make a video. It was hard to say where Wodehouse left off and Scrimger began—or vice versa—but all of us were laughing heartily as we headed off to lunch.

The afternoon session began with the Society's business meeting, during which Susan Cohen, our retiring president, announced the sad news that Ed Ratcliffe was stepping down from the editorship of *Plum Lines* after 16 years of hard work as the Oldest Member. Susan paid a moving tribute to Ed, who made *Plum Lines* the splendid journal



"Ukridge's Accident Syndicate" presented by Curtis Armstrong, Elliott Milstein, Richard Scrimger, and David Warren.

is today, and noted that he will be staying on just until a successor could be found. He was also made a lifetime honorary member of TWS.

Anne Cotton, president of the NEWTS, then spoke about one of our deceased members, Richard Morrissey, a dedicated Wodehousian who had once written to Plum about the possibility of starting up a Wodehouse fan club. Plum had written back expressing his approval, and Richard had had his letter framed together with a proclamation by the mayor of Boston declaring a P. G. Wodehouse day during the 1995 Boston convention. This treasure had been donated by the executors of Richard's estate to The Wodehouse Society, and Anne duly presented it to Susan.

Hilary Bruce, Chairman of the P G Wodehouse Society (UK) then spoke about the British group, its membership and its activities. Following Hilary's talk, elections were held, and Jan Kaufman of Blandings Castle was—unanimously, of course—made TWS president. She nominated Jean Tillson of the NEWTS to be vice president, which also met with universal approval. Assisted by some spirited (and masked) members of the Blandings Castle chapter, Jan then announced the date and location of the next TWS convention: August 11-14, 2005, on the UCLA campus, Los Angeles, where the costs will be low and the amenities high. Mark it on your calendars now!



Audience enjoying the speakers.

The first speaker of the afternoon was to have been Helen Murphy on the subject of PGW as feminist, but she was unfortunately unable to make it to Toronto. In her absence, her talk—entitled "Wodehouse: A Male Thing?"—was read by Elin Woodger Murphy, with Wendell Verrill providing voice-overs. Helen contended that there are many misconceptions about Wodehouse; one is that he appeals only to men, and women cannot appreciate him. She maintained, however, that he "is one of the most consistently feminist writers of the 20th century." She demonstrated this by his depictions of women, especially in the

early books, and examples from his work showing his empathy for them, the work ethic and brain power of so many of his heroines, and his use of Platonism. For these reasons, as Helen noted, “he could not help his female characters being strong, memorable female characters.”

The next speaker was that star of stage and screen, Curtis Armstrong, who spoke on “Nodders I Have Known: Wodehouse’s Hollywood and Mine.” With a wonderful combination of understatement and gusto, Curtis showed us that Mr. Schnellenhamer and his like may have been replaced by anonymous corporations, but the Nodders of Hollywood are still very much with us. “In Mulliner’s Hollywood, as in mine now,” he said, “the lunatics are running the asylum.” Citing, for example, an audition where agreement with the big boss offering him the job was signified by a series of nods down a long table—a Pythonesque version of *The Last Supper*—he demonstrated that they still infest the studios, although the grades of Nodder, Senior Nodder, Yes-man, and Senior Yes-man have now been replaced by such titles as senior deputy assistant executive, associate producer, and development director, among others. Curtis saw no end to the system. As he said, Nodders were not a Wodehouse creation but in fact essential to the Hollywood machinery, and in his view there was no reason why the race of Nodders should not continue for ever, with Hollywood as the ideal habitat for “Nodder Fodder.”

In the final talk of the day—“From Ex-Sgt. Beale to Colonel Pashley-Drake: The Military Man in Wodehouse”—Major Thomas L. Smith used his experience in the U.S. Army to cast an expert eye on Wodehouse’s use of military characters. Tom reviewed the cast of soldiers Wodehouse used in his novels and made the excellent—and often overlooked—point that in Wodehouse’s day, just about every upper- and middle-class family had someone in the armed services. It was what younger sons did, and if they did well, then they could finish up with a knighthood and marry into one of the aristocratic County families. Implied throughout Tom’s talk was the strong feeling that British Army officers are the salt of the earth (which of course they are, as your reporters can testify)—except perhaps, for the caddish Captain Jack Fosdyke. Tom ended by telling us of the intrepid John Theodore Cuthbert Moore-Brabazon (first Lord Brabazon of Tara), the first Englishman to fly a heavier-than-air machine who, in 1910 or thereabouts, disproved the old adage by showing that pigs could fly when he took one up in an early flight.

The afternoon concluded with *The Pickering Players*—better known as Curtis Armstrong, Elliott Milstein, Richard Scrimger, and David Warren—performing a reading of “Ukridge’s Accident Syndicate.” We use the word “performing” advisedly. Richard, playing Ukridge, combined his words with so much activity, life, and realism, one forgot whether it was Wodehouse or Scrimger one was listening to. Elliott, playing the hapless Teddy Weeks, and



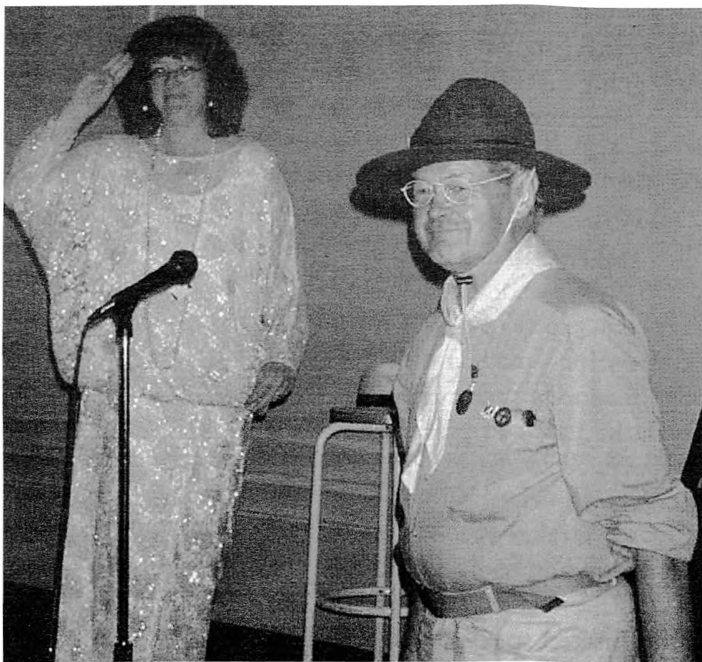
Banqueteers Alekh Burke and John and Elise Fahey, reveling a bit.

Curtis as Corky were hilarious foils; while David gamely played passers-by, voices off, friends, other friends, and friends of friends with such a variety of accents that only the audience’s applause and encouragement saved him from what was clearly a terminal attack of multiple schizophrenia. It was a splendid demonstration of how a familiar story can be enhanced and improved when read aloud with enthusiasm and humor.

After a brief rest in our rooms, it was time for the traditional and legendary Saturday evening banquet. At this point we shifted to the 33rd floor of the Sutton Place Hotel, offering a superb view over Toronto. As customary, many came in costume, whether period dress or as a Wodehouse character, while others simply dressed to the nines. In addition to flappers, bobbies, and princesses, we saw Missy Ratcliffe as Lady Bassett, Marilyn MacGregor in red velvet as Lord Emsworth’s Girl Friend, and Jacob Bagge as Clarence the Boy Scout. Norman Murphy took the coward’s way out by simply wearing his khaki drill jacket and hat from his service days in Egypt 50 years ago, but Tom Smith restored glamour to the occasion by turning up in his military ceremonial dining kit.

The place settings at the banquet included scrolled menus and souvenir booklets that had been specially created for the convention and hand-printed by Blandings Castle’s Doug Stow. Diners had a choice of Jasmine Glazed Filet of Atlantic Salmon or Roasted New York Striploin of Beef—both were mouth-wateringly delicious. There were a series of toasts—to the late Queen Mother (who had been an honorary member of TWS); to Plum himself, the founder of our feast; to Hal Cazalet, Wodehouse’s recently married great-grandson and a new father as well; and to departed members and friends, including Peter Schwed, Wodehouse’s New York publisher, who had passed away just the previous week.

The evening abounded with presentations, so many



Jacob Bagge as Clarence the Boy Scout, saluted by Jean Tillson, one of the costume judges.

that we cannot remember the order in which they occurred. We note, however, that Tony Ring and Elliott Milstein apparently thought they could hide the fact that Tony was celebrating his birthday that day and Elliott the next, but they didn't fool their friends and families for a second. A birthday cake was wheeled out, and a certain song was sung, creating a couple of red faces for the enjoyment of all.

Ed Ratcliffe was again saluted for being the Good Egg and Superior Editor that he is, as Hilary Bruce presented him with a silver pig matchbox from the U.K. Society, and Jan Kaufman gave him a specially created album of photos commemorating his years as editor of *Plum Lines*. Susan Cohen was also given a photo album in recognition of her service as president. The announcement that a group of Torontonians had decided to form a new chapter was greeted with cheers.

The members of the Pickering Motor Company—Elliott and Elyse Milstein, David and Luann Warren, Richard Scrimger, Bridget Campion, Michael and Sherry Smith, and Dicron Mahakian—were saluted for the splendid job they had done in putting together such an enjoyable convention. While all deserved praise, it was only right that Elyse Milstein should be singled out for her untiring attention to detail and all her work in ensuring that the right people did the right things at the right time. She was rewarded with a well-deserved standing ovation.

Then it was prize-giving time. Several people had had the courage to enter the P. G. Wodehouse Trivia Contest, which included such questions as "What is Jimmy Schoonmaker's address and what is so special about it?" To call this quiz devilishly difficult would be understating the matter. But Ian Michaud met the challenge and won

easily, without even bothering to name any of Mr. Mulliner's drinking companions. Runners-up were Laura Woodger Loehr and Kristine Fowler. The quiz winners were applauded for their erudition, and someone who had forborne from entering himself but who, full of whiskey, had given a few ideas to his sister-in-law attending her first convention looked sickeningly smug when she got second prize.

The atmosphere when Richard Scrimger announced the winner of the great poetry competition (a poem to follow on the immortal words "Across the pale parabola of joy") can only be likened to the Oscar ceremonies. Suspense, drama, hope, fear—all were there. After equivocal comment on the quality of most of the poems submitted, Richard announced that second place had been awarded to Dennis Chitty, while the grand prize had been won by Cecilia M. Etheridge—who, as it turned out, had been unable to attend the convention. After tantalizing us for some time, Richard finally put us out of our suspense by reading Cecillia's poem to frantic applause. It was without question the finest parody/imitation/replica of 1920s poetic rubbish/genius (choose which you prefer) that we have ever heard.

Although cricket prizes had been handed out the night before, Bill Westfall—the Canadian professor-cum-cricket player mentioned earlier in this report—was saluted and given a special prize for best exemplifying the Spirit of Cricket. In addition, Dan Cohen led the raffle drawings in which several lucky members won DVDs of *Wodehouse Playhouse*.

This year's costume competition saw many original and hilarious creations. There were a lot of prizes to hand out, which had led to some unusual categories ingeniously created by the judges (Jean Tillson, Alekh Bhurke, and Kristine Fowler). Kristine announced the winners with a deadpan panache, her delivery matched only by the laughter at the categories she announced:

Non-costume prize #1: to the person whose ordinary clothes other people think is a costume—Dick Heyman (in yellow trousers, a sports jacket striped in red, blue, and green, etc.).

Non-costume prize #2: to the person in a costume that other people don't realize is a costume—Tony Ring, who cleverly chose the nom de plum Bill, Just Bill, so he could dress as an ordinary man.

Best Lord Emsworth: Ed Ratcliffe, who needed no costume [but I did wear clothes.—OM].

Best Hollywood Character: Anne Bianchi as Lottie Blossom, complete with alligator on her shoulder.

Best Aunt: Eleanor Dial.

Best Mulliner Character: Lt. Col. N. T. P. Murphy as Lester Mapledurham (pronounced "Mum").

Funniest Costume: Jacob Bagge as Clarence the Boy Scout (short pants, hiking boots, yellow kerchief, proper

brown-felt boy-scout hat).

Most Elaborate Costume: Missy Ratcliffe as Lady Bassett (in safari kit, with various snakes, monkeys, and lions about her person, not to mention a cigar and a book labeled *Strychnine in the Soup*).

Best Couple: Will Sadler as Chief of the Lower Isisi (magnanimously overlooking having been shot in the leg), and Missy Ratcliffe as Lady Bassett.

Best Off-Stage Character: Tom Smith (U.S. Army Maj. Ret.) as Major Plug Basham.

Best Accessory: Susan Collicott, whose cigarette holder held a patent cigarette that blew smoke and glowed at the end.

Most in Character: Patricia Levinson as Dolly Molloy.

Best Below-Stairs Character: Carolyn Pokrivchak as Mrs. Heavenly Rest Johnson.

Most Elegant Table: Susan, Cindy, Carrie, Sarah, Laura, Eileen, Wendell, and Max (last names not included because we couldn't remember them all).

When the prize-giving had ended and the last speech given, Melissa Aaron of the Perfecto-Zizzbaum Corporation pulled out her banjolele and, with her friend Pat accompanying on his accordion, regaled the audience with songs and music. Dancing and chattering continued late into the evening, and for some in the group—we fearlessly refuse to name names—it continued until very, very late indeed (5 o'clock in the morning, or so we hear) until they finally decided that night must end some time.

The brunch on Sunday morning was fully attended, except by some of those fearlessly not named who had gone to bed only a couple of hours before. Sympathetic telephone calls to their rooms resulted in long, ringing tones, followed by slow, reluctant grunts of acknowledgement—but they eventually joined us as well. They were just in time to hear Dennis Chitty read his runners-up prize poem to loud cheers of appreciation, and to enjoy the traditional Blandings Castle short-story reading. This year it was the Mulliner Hollywood story "The Castaways," hilariously performed by Tom Wainwright, Jan Kaufman, Bill Franklin, Marilyn MacGregor, Ed Ratcliffe, Missy Ratcliffe, and Dave Smeltzer. The laughter ringing throughout the room brought the convention to a happy conclusion.

We said our goodbyes—hugging, exchanging addresses, speaking longingly of Los Angeles in 2005, and seeking out Elliott and Elyse Milstein to let them know what a great time we had all had. It had been a weekend filled with fun and excitement, creating an abundance of memories to carry home with us. Some folks lingered on for an extra day or two, reluctant to go home to face work and domestic responsibilities, and on Sunday night decided on one last dinner together.

It should come as no surprise to anybody that the party just happened to choose a restaurant with a noisy dinner going on behind the drawn curtain beside them. Vague thoughts ripened into strong suspicions, which were confirmed when the curtain was eventually pulled back to reveal Elliott and Elyse Milstein, the convention's primary perpetrators, relaxing after their efforts with friends who had gathered to celebrate Elliott's birthday.

We end with one last memory. On Saturday night a certain group of diehards—five ladies attending their first convention—made it clear they were not going to go leave the banqueting room until they were thrown out. The last remarks heard in passing were firm plans to meet at the airport at Los Angeles in 2005. Now, that is the sign of a good convention!

It takes a lot of people to make a good convention. Here are the people and some of their work:

Elliott and Elyse Milstein were the Chief Perpetrators: Invited speakers, wrote program, handled finances, made arrangements with Sutton Place Hotel and St. Michaels College, much more.

Michael Smith: Layout and printing of program, design of city map.

Sherry Smith: Designed welcome packet, made chocolate pigs.

LuAnn Warren: Designed logo, purchased all loot.

David Warren: Obtained tourist and restaurant information.

Richard Scrimger and Bridget Campion: Continuing on-the-spot information about Toronto.

Dicron Mahakian: Helping hand in many ways, provider of chocolate chip cookies.

We are grateful to everyone who contributed to the weekend. Above all we are grateful to our beloved P. G. Wodehouse, whose life and work we meet to celebrate.



Elyse and Elliott Milstein and others of the Pickering Motor Company, convention perpetrators all.



A fearsome bobby—sorry, we lost his name.



Tony Ring and the Ring-Milstein birthday cake



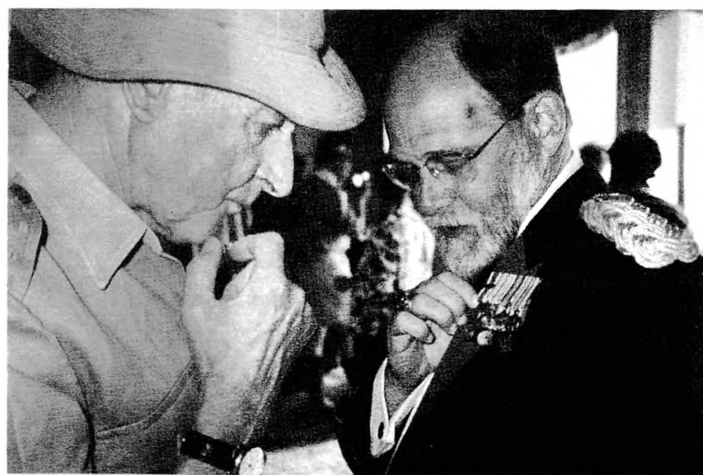
Margaret Slythe, Tom Wainwright, Ed and Missy Ratcliffe.



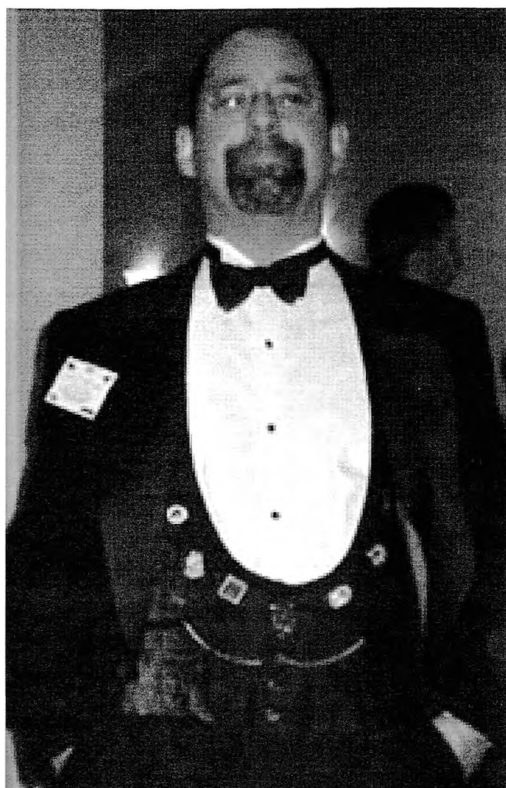
New TWS President Jan Kaufman, Elin Murphy



Brian Taves and Jean Tillson, reveling mightily.



Norman Murphy and Major Tom Smith



Elliott Milstein and Plum's actual plum-colored vest.



Max Pokrivchak and Jean Tillson



Susan Garrett of the Drone Rangers



Blandings Castle reading "The Castaways" at brunch.



Princess of the Outer Isles Elin Murphy and Anne (Lady Bassett) Cotton.



Melissa Aaron and Perfecto-Zizzbaum friend Pat, who entertained us after the banquet.



Will Sadler (Chief of the Lower Issi), and Missy Ratcliffe (Lady Bassett) are reconciled. Will limps only slightly.

After the Convention; or, Over the Greyhound Pass at 12,000 Feet

By Ray Steen

This article began life as a letter from Ray Steen to David Landman, describing his trip from Toronto through WaWa, Ontario, to his home in Walla Walla, Washington—and how a man from Walla Walla can make fun of a town called WaWa is beyond me.

—OM

We had a fine convention. It's a pity attendance was somewhat diminished because of SARS. I heard some Europeans stayed home because of higher seasonal airfares. After the convention I retrieved the good old Greyhound Pass from my wallet, and resumed my journey across the pale parabola of joy.

Montreal exceeded expectations. Eight years ago, while driving across Ontario, I tuned across the dial to see what there was to hear. What I heard was hilarious—Country & Western music sung in French. Since then I have hunted, fruitlessly, for it. I hoped Montreal would be the end of the search. But while the bi-lingual sales clerks—tattooed and bodypierced; experts on rap and acid—tried to be helpful, they didn't know any more about C&W than I do. I got five CDs and hoped for the best. They have a few tracks of approximately what I want, but mostly they disappoint. Next time I shall take an interpreter to a French language C&W radio station and interview a dj.

Next stop was Sault Ste. Marie. I liked it so much that I wanted to stay another day or two. But, I had a vision that a blackout was about to strike, so I grabbed the last bus out of town before it hit. You must concede that my prescience was unusual. But, not quite unusual enough. Thunder Bay was not blacked out, but its hotels/motels were packed. Although the airports in Ontario continued to operate on their backup systems, Air Canada's backup system failed at the critical hour, and its flights into the affected area were grounded. Planes were jammed in at Thunder Bay; their stranded passengers bussed into town. By the time I got there, six hours into the blackout, the overflow was being taken to Lake View University for a night in its airless, un-airconditioned dormitory, which is where the taxi driver took me. As I got into line at Registration, the guy ahead of me mused, "The last time I was in a place like this, I flunked out." Well, you can't get the better of a Steen. I said, "The last time I was in a place like this, I was expelled."

Winnipeg gets my vote as North America's finest city. The trip around the Canadian side of Lake Superior lived up to my hopes. For a lot longer than I have wanted to get Country & Western in French, I have yearned to see the

Canadian Shield. It's more rugged than I imagined. All broken hills, granite outcroppings, little waterfalls, lakes and forest. Almost as soon as we left Sault Ste. Marie an unexpected motif insistently intruded—moose. My seat-mate was going to the next town, WaWa, which, world-famous, needs no introduction. His conversation kept reverting to the world's largest deer. Auto insurance in WaWa is significantly higher than in Sault Ste. Marie because of the moose hazard. They are especially dangerous at night because then you can't see them. Their eyes don't reflect the headlights. He won't drive at night. The junkyard in town is filled with moose-smashed cars. At a cigarette stop before WaWa he pointed one out. The roof was caved in where the beast had toppled on it. And as he ventilated his subject, moose-warning signs appeared at intervals. They are the standard yellow, diamond-shaped warning signs, but instead of the familiar leaping stag, they show a bull moose in full charge. I suddenly knew that what I wanted most in this world was a picture of a sign. Since it was out of the question that the driver would stop to let me take one, I placed my hopes on getting one on a postcard. At White River (the next town after WaWa; the farthest west the blackout went—we must have left minutes before it lost power), the woman at the souvenir shop said she used to carry them. That was as near to one as I got. Next time, if I have to, I'll rent a car at Sault Ste. Marie and go on a photo-safari.

Rhubarb milkshakes were sold at a rest stop in North Dakota. Try one sometime.

Wodehouse Playhouse, Series Two

Richard Nielsen sends along the very welcome news that Series Two of the excellent *Wodehouse Playhouse* is finally available on DVD from Borders and of course from other sources as well. The *Playhouse* was a 1975 BBC TV series that many of us think is the best dramatization of Wodehouse yet produced. Series Two includes six short stories, all of them about the multitudinous Mulliners: "Anselm Gets His Chance," "Mr. Potter Takes a Rest Cure," "Strychnine in the Soup," "Feet of Clay," "The Nodder," and "The Code of the Mulliners." —OM

Nodders I Have Known: Wodehouse's Hollywood and Mine

By Curtis Armstrong

A talk delivered at the Toronto convention of The Wodehouse Society, August 2003. This is the first of a number of convention talks we expect to print.

When it was first proposed I present a paper analyzing the Mulliner Hollywood stories to the convention this year, I considered the idea an interesting challenge. I could present my paper from the perspective of an insider of today's Hollywood, looking back on the Hollywood of yesteryear. I could go into the publishing history of the Mulliners of Hollywood, studying each of the stories in turn, revealing the real history behind the fiction, stripping away Wodehouse's brilliant artifice to show the real people behind the masks of Izzy Schnellenhamer or Isadore Levitsky. I could discuss Minna Nordstrom and a time when it seemed people in Hollywood would do anything to be an actor and compare it the Hollywood of "reality" programming, in which people will do anything *not* to be an actor. I thought it was a great idea. Shortly after embarking on my project, I opened the new *Plum Lines* and realized I wasn't the only one who thought highly of it. Brian Taves' exhaustive and excellent analysis of Mulliner's Hollywood left me with little to add. So I decided to skew my focus less on the Hollywood of the Mulliners and more on the Hollywood of Wodehouse's and mine.

But first, a few words on what we in Hollywood would call "the source material." The Mulliner stories are an example of Wodehouse achieving perfection of form, that form being the short double-fiction, or frame story, as popularized by the late Geoffrey Chaucer, to whose *Canterbury Tales* Wodehouse owed some little debt. Mulliner is a taproom Munchausen and his fabulous embellishments allowed Wodehouse free reign with his literary structures. In no other series of stories did Wodehouse allow himself such dazzling messing about with surrealism. The golf stories were similar in structure and also gave Wodehouse outlets for literary loopiness, yet they remained firmly rooted within the milieu of the links and clubhouses. The Mulliner stories ranged far and wide and their *mis en scene* was unimprovable: what better setting than the Anglers' Rest—as fishermen are famous for being habitual liars themselves. But Mulliner's fish stories eclipsed them all. There was no class, gender, profession, or country, it seems, that could not be infested by one of Mr. Mulliner's countless relations. A Mulliner could be a banker, a poet, a pastor, or a private detective; he could be independently wealthy or as poor as a church-mouse, it didn't matter. The presence of a Mulliner in a Wodehouse story often as not guar-

anteed the bizarre and unexpected.

The surrealism in the early Mulliner stories was particularly noticeable because of their setting in traditional Wodehouse country. It was only after fate sent him to Hollywood—and circumstances hastened his departure from it—that the Mulliners of Hollywood made their appearance. Suddenly, Mulliner had a backdrop for his tales that was as fantastic as the stories he was making up as he went along. Previously, it had been a Mulliner whose personality or circumstance brought a kind of heightened lunacy to normal surroundings. In the Hollywood stories, the Mulliners are the sane ones. In Mulliner's Hollywood then—as in mine now—the lunatics are running the asylum and we—the actors and writers—are on the inside looking out, waiting pathetically for someone to come along and shove a bit of lettuce into our hutch.

Immediately following his first visit to Hollywood, Wodehouse set about fulfilling a commitment to write a series of short stories for *The American Magazine*, whose editor had specified American characters in an American setting. There are many who would question whether Hollywood qualifies as an American setting, but Plum used this opportunity to get a little boot in. In Wodehouse's satiric depiction of Hollywood, the romantic spotlight was, as always, on the assistants, the secretaries, the nodders, the fellow in the monkey-suit—the little people. (And in the case of Little Johnny Bingley, *The Idol of American Motherhood*, I mean little people in its most literal sense.) But the big shots—especially the stars and studio heads—were obvious targets. These were the people then considered to be America's Royalty. We laugh now at the idea of Hollywood being anybody's idea of royalty until we remember what England's royalty is like these days. Hollywood would prove to be a perfect "stand-in" for Plum's native land. England had its earls, dukes, and second and third sons of dukes, and daughters of a hundred earls, valets, gentlemen's clubs, a rich vein to tap. America had nothing similar to point to with reverent pride other than Hollywood. Wealth, privilege, nepotism, inbreeding—Hollywood had it all, plus golf-courses and perfect weather. Despite its protestations to the contrary, America was no less a class society than England then, and no more so then than today, but within this class structure there were few

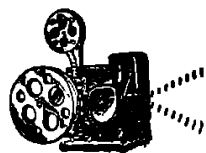
cities which were built upon a single universally renowned industry which was itself as rigidly class conscious as Hollywood. The lowest of these classes included the Nodder. The Nodder was not, as might be supposed, entirely a Wodehouse creation. Noddors, under various names, were essential cogs in the wheels of the movie business, without whose wordless affirmations titans like Louis B. Mayer or the Warner Brothers would be paralyzed into inaction. Noddors sprang, not full-formed from the brow of Plum, but from Earlier Giants of Industry from New York and Boston to Detroit and Cincinnati who felt naked without five or six Yes-Men on the company payroll.

One of the most interesting evolutions from the dawn of the Hollywood system to the present day has involved the Nodder. At some point, possibly during the early talkies, the Noddors and the Yes-Men evolved into a marginally more advanced animal that became known as an associate producer, assistant director, or development executive, or really any studio or network drone who operates in any capacity under the ultimate decision-making level. Hence, as American society has grown increasingly complex and polarized, the Noddors have gone from being the "untouchables" of the traditional Hollywood caste system to a caste system of their own, in which all Noddors are not created equal. Noddors today have many names and positions, but for the sake of simplicity, we will still just refer to them as Noddors, for they function in much the same way that Wodehouse's noddors did. Screenwriters, or scenarists, also play an important role in these stories and were included because Wodehouse knew from experience that screenwriters were always good for a laugh. We tend to think of screenwriters as nearly mythic characters, commanding mind-boggling amounts of money, marrying beautiful actresses and owning second homes in Colorado. This was not always the case, certainly not in Wodehouse's day. Screenwriters ranked slightly below noddors on the totem pole, as Mulliner explains in "The Nodder": "It [the nodder] is a position which you might say, roughly, lies socially somewhere between that of the man who works the wind machine and that of a writer of additional dialogue." The noddors and the screenwriters in Wodehouse's Hollywood stories represent the bottom-feeders in the studio pond. To put it as delicately as possible, part of their job description involved dining off the excretion of their superiors. I've been a screenwriter and I know. "It is not easy," Mr. Mulliner says, "to explain to the lay mind the extremely intricate ramifications of the personnel of a Hollywood motion picture organization. Putting it as briefly as possible, a Nodder is something like a Yes-Man, only lower in the social scale. A Yes-Man's duty is to attend conferences and say 'Yes.' A Nodder's, as the name implies, is to nod. The chief executive throws out some statement of opinion, and looks about him expectantly. This is the cue for the se-

nior Yes-Man to say 'Yes.' He is followed, in order of precedence by the second Yes-Man—or Vice-Yesser, as he is sometimes called—and the junior Yes-Man. Only when all the Yes-Men have yessed, do the Noddors begin to function. They nod." Essentially talent-free and just intelligent enough to know which side his bread was buttered on, the Nodder was usually a relative of someone slightly higher up in the industry food chain. This is a matter of perspective, as even those at the top of Hollywood's evolutionary ladder at that time were themselves more like those fish that grow up in caves than anything human. They may've been blind, but they were capable of generating sufficient light to lure in dimmer organisms and devour them. (That much, at least, hasn't changed.)

The flood of Noddors of both sexes in the Hollywood system had, of course, predictable results: Noddors tended to intermarry, producing new generations of noddors, with progressively diminishing intellectual capabilities. As their parents and grandparents did before them did, these hapless hopefuls with production deals in their eyes head for the San Fernando Valley and points west in search of studio heads to be brutalized by. This modern class is known in the industry as "nodder fodder." I have had personally many nodder encounters in a career spanning over a quarter of a century, but one stands out particularly. This occurred back in the mid eighties, during the last great nodder boom in Hollywood. Those were the days when noddors were noddors, when you couldn't swing a cat within half a mile of Studio City without hitting one. This was an audition encounter, as opposed to a pitch encounter, but the experience was similar. I had auditioned for a guest appearance on a television series, *Moonlighting*, which would ultimately become a long-running job for me. Having passed the first test, I was brought in to read for the people who really mattered. On entering the room I was faced with a kind of Pythonesque parody of the Last Supper: A long table, with staff writers, co-executive producers, and story editors arrayed along either side of Christ, or in this case, series creator Glen Gordon Caron. On the completion of my audition, Caron looked down the table, first to his right then to his left and nodded silently. All present nodded back at him. Caron then delivered sentence: two and a half seasons without the option.

Young people often ask me—well, one did the other day—how does one go about becoming a nodder? There are no academies teaching nodder technique. Universities don't offer degrees in nodding, at least not intentionally. Well, let us examine him: Who is the nodder? The nodder often started off as a troubled youth, possibly from a broken home, who had fallen in with a bad element and had probably had several brushes with the law. If he had a future, it was either in the studio sys-



tem, or in jail. Of course, as Wodehouse pointed out, that added up to essentially the same thing. The Nodder's position may have been negligible but it gave him a sense of community—even if it was a community no right-minded person would want to be caught dead in. In Hollywood nowadays, coming from a broken home, consorting with criminals, and having multiple arrests on drug charges are considered good career moves, but in Plum's day it was still frowned upon, at least officially. A job as a nodder may have been a young loser's last best chance to turn his life around. You can see a similar system at work these days in the White House.

Some seventy years after their introduction in Wodehouse's fiction, Noddies are still an essential part of Hollywood machinery, even in these tough times. Like their forefathers at Perfecto-Zizzbaum and similar companies, they are keenly aware that their jobs depend on committing to no project verbally until after it has been completed successfully. During the "development process" which can last, literally, generations, a nodder will be called upon to nod with head-spinning regularity. It is interesting to note that it was when silent film found its voice that the nodder found his as well. This is, perhaps, to be expected. As films became more complicated, nodding no longer was considered a sufficient or adequate means of communication, if you can call the development process "communication." Today's modern nodder is allowed to speak. Some, indeed, can be said to do little else. Speaking, though, is not the same thing as committing verbally to anything. Today's noddies, like the go-getters of Wodehouse's world, are buzzers—as full of monologue as a nut is full of meat, to use an advised metaphor. But it seldom amounts to more than a kind of white noise, like those rain tapes people listen to help them fall asleep. Some writers, in fact, find note sessions to be a foolproof soporific. I have had several meetings with noddies, which lulled me into a dreamless slumber, from which I awoke much refreshed. In *Performing Flea* Wodehouse tells a memorable story of this sort of thing in his letter of October 28th, 1930. "MGM," he wrote to Bill Townend, "bought that musical comedy, *Rosalie* . . . for Marion Davies. Everyone at the studio had a go at it, and then they told me to try. After I had messed about with it with no success, Irving Thalberg, the big boss . . . worked out a story on his own and summoned me to Santa Barbara, where he was spending a few days, to hear it. I drove down there with a stenographer from the studio, and he dictated an entire scenario. When he was finished, he leaned back and mopped his brow and asked me if I wanted to have it read over to me. I was about to say yes (just to make the party go), when I suddenly caught the stenographer's eye and was startled to see a look of agonized entreaty in it. I couldn't imagine what was wrong, but I gathered for some reason she wanted me

to say No, so I said No. When we were driving home, she told me she had had a latish night the night before and had fallen asleep at the outset of the proceedings and slept peacefully throughout, not having heard or taken down a word." There are some who suggest that some of the letters Wodehouse printed in *Performing Flea* were rewritten and are sometimes of questionable veracity. But no one who has spent any time in a script meeting would have trouble believing that one.

To see a nodder at his best, you need to see him in a meeting at which he is, as they say, "giving notes." A "note meeting" or "note session" is what happens after a screenwriter has handed in the script that he or she has been laboring over with sweat and sleeplessness for weeks, months, or even years. At this point, the script is handed to a nodder—often one young enough to be the screenwriter's child—who then, based on a lifetime of experience and vast knowledge of filmmaking, tells the writer what's wrong with it. A good example of the modern nodder's contribution was when a writer handed in a screenplay, based upon a true story, about the unlikely friendship that developed between a dog and a whale. The nodder, after expressing the studio's enthusiasm for the project, then asked if the writer would consider changing the whale to a cop. Something like this happened to my former writing partner, John Doolittle, and me during a note session involving our first sold screenplay, which was interestingly enough based on a Wodehouse story, "Honeysuckle Cottage." As you all know, this famous if atypical Mulliner story involved James Rodman, a writer of hard-boiled detective stories who must spend a stipulated amount of time in his recently deceased aunt's house in order to inherit her wealth. This aunt was a much-despised author of goopy romance novels, and her aura seems to have infested the house so that everyone who enters it becomes a character from her books. This first experience as a professional screenwriter was a dream come true for a while. The movie was cast—Val Kilmer was to play Rodman, Penelope Ann Miller was Rose, and the late great J. T. Walsh was Andrew MacKinnon, Leila's agent. Our director was Christopher Guest, at the time still best known for *This Is Spinal Tap*. As the son of a peer in the House of Lords, Chris knew Wodehouse and the whole milieu. Our take on this film was that the actors playing Rodman, Rose, and all the other characters in the main story would also play characters in fantasy sequences based on Leila Pinckney's romance novels and on Rodman's noir stuff. Our first niggling concern regarding it all came when one of our producers objected to a joke in the script referring to the great English actor Ronald Colman. His objection seemed arbitrary and capricious. When pressed as to why we should change the line, he turned vague and unresponsive, finally admitting he had never heard of Ronald Colman. "Couldn't you," he suggested helpfully, "put in an English actor people have heard of? How about Sean

Connery?" Sean Connery, we pointed out, was Scottish, not English and there the matter lay, but the whole exchange could've been written for Izzy Schnellenhamer and no questions asked. That producer, by the way, has gone on to a highly successful career in Hollywood, producing films such as *Not Another Teenage Sex Comedy* and *The Fast and the Furious* among other productions not based on Wodehouse stories. Worse was when it was decided that the film noir genre wouldn't attract enough of the coveted young male audience to the film and it was suggested that we change Rodman's hard-boiled detective stories to animated Japanese graphic novels. "But Rodman isn't Japanese," I said, putting my finger on the flaw in his argument at once. Again, a minor cultural victory, but we lost our foreign financing shortly afterwards, so the point was moot. These suggestions underline both the similarities and differences between the nodder of yore and the ones who infest Hollywood these days. The silent nodder committed to nothing unless his superior has indicated it is all right to commit to it. The modern nodder keeps insisting on changes in a script—thereby avoiding commitment to the script as written—until his boss finally reads the final draft and pulls the plug on the project. Wodehouse's nodder kept his job by not making mistakes; the modern nodder keeps his by making his mistakes look like the mistakes of a screenwriter who, despite the nodder's best efforts, can't write a coherent script. Both noddors will take credit for a successful film—at least in letters home. In fact, the primary difference between the two noddors is that today's nodder is actively capable of preventing films from being made at all, which is, I guess, progress of a sort.



Remarkable as they are in their surrealism, the Hollywood stories startle us with their bitterness. These are not the work of Plum, purveyor of sweetness and light. While undeniably funny, these tales are as close to mordant and cynical as Wodehouse would ever get in his career. This is all the more evident when one compares the fictional Hollywood tales to their closest literary sibling—Wodehouse's account of his spell in a Nazi internment camp. There is a certain bizarre irony to the fact that Wodehouse spent part of his first internment in a mental hospital and his second in a town that has frequently been mistaken for one. Whatever the similarities between these two significant events in Wodehouse's life, there were differences, the most obvious being the relative cheeriness of the camp diary as compared to his recollections of his stretch at MGM and Paramount. For example, Plum complained to Bill Townsend about his inability to get any work done in Hollywood, while at Tost and Huy he seemed to be churning the stuff out. This beaver-like industry may well have had something to do with not having Ethel around

throwing parties every ten minutes, but for whatever reason he produced, among others, *Money in the Bank* and *Joy in the Morning*. Even the titles sound bright with optimism. By contrast, the best-known novel to come out of his time in Hollywood was *Hot Water*. Interestingly enough, the time spent in Nazi internment and in the Hollywood studio system resulted in the only two times that Wodehouse, that most uncontroversial of men, found himself embroiled in controversy. The broadcasts from Berlin resulted in his estrangement from England for the remainder of his life, while his famous interview in the *Los Angeles Times* revealing the amount of money he was being paid to loll around Marion Davies' swimming pool and play with Maureen O'Sullivan's Pekingese ended with Plum effectively banned from Hollywood forever—or at least until they needed him again and figured everyone had forgotten about the whole thing.

Hollywood's response to Wodehouse's naïve revelation of reckless studio spending was of the sort of outraged indignation we remember from Captain Renault in *Casablanca*: They were "shocked, shocked to find there was gambling going on here."

Wodehouse would find a very different environment these days. What reckless spending there is now tends to go into the extensive computer-generated destruction of the planet or morphing actual actors into something even less appealing. But Wodehouse's mistakes stemmed not just from a generally conceded mutton-headedness when it came to dealing with the press. Nor should blame necessarily be laid on Wodehouse's naiveté, though that was considerable. Regarding his *Los Angeles Times* fiasco, he wrote, apparently without irony, "It was a casual remark I happened to drop off the record—though, like an ass, I didn't say it was off the record." No, in Plum's defense it should be remembered that any extended period spent in a Hollywood studio, surrounded by Hollywood people, in that relentlessly charming climate, can lead to a dislocation from reality in even the shrewdest and most worldly of people. Your apparent ability to think and move about freely is a highly deceptive thing in Hollywood. If you're not very careful, your reality becomes Hollywood's reality, which has nothing to do with what's happening in the real world, as Plum learned to his cost.

It is intriguing, if pointless, to speculate what would have happened had Wodehouse succeeded as a screenwriter in Hollywood. As Hollywood's product evolved from the romantic and musical comedies of the thirties (a genre which, we must not forget, Wodehouse helped create) to more "serious," less stage-based fare in the forties and beyond, would Plum have evolved with it? Can we imagine Jack Warner, in this alternate universe, putting down the first draft of Raymond Chandler's *The Big Sleep* and bark-

ing, "Put Wodehouse on it. They went to the same school. Maybe he'll understand it." Or Billy Wilder reading Wodehouse's draft of *Double Indemnity*, in which the Barbara Stanwyck character blackmails Fred MacMurray into sneaking into her husband's room in the dead of night and puncturing his hot water bottle with a darning needle? Not really the same, is it? More chilling than what cinema might've have gained in this scenario, though, is what would've been lost to literature: *Louder and Funnier*, *Thank You, Jeeves*, *Blandings Castle*, *Young Men in Spats*, *The Code of the Woosters*, and *Uncle Fred in the Springtime* might never have been written. *Anything Goes* might not have.

By the fifties, of course, Hollywood waters would have become so culturally muddy—what with juvenile delinquents, giant insects, invaders from Mars, rock and roll, and beach movies—that Plum would've seen the writing on the wall. The work would've dried up. Without the nearly unbroken chain of Wodehouse books through the war years, the popular taste for them might have diminished, had he even been able to write them at all. His well of creativity may have gone dry after years of writing screenplays in Hollywood. Faced with this sort of calamity, Wodehouse may have even become one of those tragic statistics too common at the time and been driven to commit an unthinkable act: He might have gone into television. But there's no point in getting morbid about it.

It is safe to say that Hollywood has changed much in the years since Plum walked six miles a day from his home in Beverly Hills to his office in Culver City. For one thing, anyone caught walking in Beverly Hills these days would be courting arrest and imprisonment. Indeed, in most respects, he would find the City of Angels unrecognizable. But I will leave you with one true story as an example of how much has stayed the same. The story is set in one of the great Hollywood studios, not far from the studio where Plum had labored over *Rosalie*. It was the morning after the Academy Awards a few years back, when *Shakespeare in Love* had won the Best Picture award, beating out a film produced by this organization. The top executive was in a staff meeting, surrounded by his top noddies, everyone licking their wounds. The bitter silence which had fallen upon the room was shattered when the studio head burst out in frustration, "Who the hell is this Merchant Ivory guy anyway?!" It was a cry from the soul that Izzy Schnellenhamer would've understood and a moment Wodehouse would've savored.

She had a sort of ethereal beauty; but then every girl you see in Hollywood has either ethereal beauty or roguish gaminerie or a dark, slumberous face that hints at hidden passion.

"The Rise of Minna Nordstrom"
Blandings Castle and Elsewhere, 1935

Across the Pale Parabola of Joy

By Ralston McTodd

Across the pale parabola of Joy
My infinite dream rabbit
Eaten tenderly, oh, as first lettuce

First let us in memory go
Ten petal soft, two hyacinth blue
The delicate outline of your Moose Jaw
Garden

White secant seeking single white secant
For long walks and physical quadratics
The camellia nickers
Of the ultimate horses ask
What is it comes over parting flesh

Head Gardener
Alpha and Omega
Savagely green tendrils parted

Oh bitter
Hyperbola of despair
Gravely seen, snow
Underneath gray Canadian prairie sky
Like no other gray prairie sky

Rising in infinite phallus of sublimation
Writing driven in the cold Saskatchewan dawn
Like no other cold dawn
My Muse
God save the Queen

Typed by Cecilia M. Etheridge. Cecilia's poem won First Place in our Great Ralston McTodd Poetry Contest at the Toronto convention. It is such a splendid parody of the esoteric poetry of McTodd's time that I had to read it all the way to the end to be sure it had no meaning at all. McTodd would probably love it. I wonder what Lady Constance would think of it.

Dennis Chitty's poem won Second Place, but it rhymes, scans, makes sense, and does other dreadful things like Poetry of the Past, so we won't print it until somewhere later in the issue.

—OM

Letter to the Editor

With this issue we inaugurate a "Letters to the Editor" column. Please don't mind if we occasionally edit for clarity or brevity. Write to us!
—OM

Dear Sir,

As an attendee of the last six conventions, I feel the duty to point out an alarming trend: the growing number of players in the TWS cricket match who can actually play cricket. Given that the matches were intended to allow us middle-aged bookworms a chance to relive our youth (when, as young bookworms, we routinely cut gym class to spend more time in the library), this is a disturbing trend indeed.

In 1993 in San Francisco we watched a real cricket match and then tentatively bowled a few balls ourselves. In 1995 in Boston Sean Harmon modeled his white flannels for us while Tony Ring patiently attempted to explain the rules of the game. In Chicago and Houston we took over city parks and with ball and bat played something vaguely resembling the noble sport. In 2001 in Philadelphia we had the honor of posing as cricketers at an exclusive club with beautifully manicured grounds (where, warned about our level of play, they wisely covered the pitch with protective plastic). So far, so good: we had two captains, Gussie and Pongo, who understood the game, and one umpire, Tony, who understood that we couldn't possibly play it and bent the rules accordingly.

Then a curious thing happened in Toronto. While we divided up into teams, expecting another pleasant morning of daydreaming in the sun while our captains yelled, "Stay awake out there!" the May Queens pulled a fast one, slipping into the roster not only Mr. Curtis Armstrong, who, after he had bowled me out, told me he had played cricket as a boy in Switzerland, where they limbered up for matches by running up and down local Alps, but also Bill Westfall, who after nearly shattering windows with his repeated long fly balls, confessed that he had once been a member of the Canadian national team. (He is also a Fellow of Trinity College.)

I mean to say, what!?! We Green Swizzles placed our bets in good faith, only to find the game was rigged like a clipper ship. While we all hope for a fair rematch in Hollywood, the Green Swizzles have already opened negotiations with certain members of the Los Angeles Dodgers just in case.

Respectfully,

Max Pokrivchak

Ode to Parabolic Joy

By Ralston McTodd

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan,
The city where my life began;
The city where I wrote (for fun)
"The Prairie's Eerie Midnight Sun;"
The city whence I've sallied forth
To find a care-free life up north
At
Putanak, Wapuska Bay,
Tazin, or Misinipé.

But
Across the pale palabora
Of joy I found Nekweaga,
Where, in Kamischawie Sound,
Palaboras of joy abound.
They have swept my cares away;
So here I am and here I'll stay.
Nothing could be better, eh?

Typed by Dennis Chitty, who believes Ralston McTodd had a sense of humor. Dennis's reading of his poem at our Sunday brunch won him rousing applause—a standing ovation, I believe. All the place names are real, proving that geographers, too, have a sense of humor. —OM

Perfecto-Zizzbaum Lives!



Jan Kaufman met recently with members of our Perfecto-Zizzbaum Motion Picture Corporation chapter in Los Angeles, preparing for our convention there in 2005. From left to right they are: Melissa Aaron, president, Walter Nelson, Missy Ratcliffe (visiting from Blandings Castle), Ian Whitcomb, Regina Whitcomb, Doug Kendrick, Beth Miles, Karen Shottling, Shelia Murphy-Nelson, and Bonnie Beland.
—OM

Letter from England

By Elin Woodger

This letter is being written a bit early, as Norman and I are preparing to head over to the New World for The Wodehouse Society's 12th International Convention. It will, of course, will be the best part of 2003 for us, and we are looking forward to getting together with old friends, meeting new ones, and whooping it up like the Drones we are at heart.

This is not to say that the year thus far has been dull and uninteresting—far from it! In fact, a very significant Event took place in late May. Norman having attained the magical age of 70, he had decided to step down as Chairman of the P G Wodehouse Society (U.K.), and his Committee honored him by throwing a bash at Boodle's, that very exclusive club in London's Mayfair district. And quite a bash it was, too! Along with the Committee members and their spouses, the attendees included David Cazalet, Murray Hedgcock, and Richard Briers, the latter two of whom said some Very Nice Things about my blushing spouse. The highlight of the evening, though, came when Sir Edward Cazalet got up and, after a few words of tribute regarding Norman's scholarship (he isn't called The Man Who Knows Almost Everything for nothing, after all), began comparing his pipe-smoking habits to those of Wodehouse. Edward referred specifically to Plum's way of tamping down his tobacco with a corner of an engraved silver matchbox that had been given to him as a gift—and then pulled that very matchbox out of his pocket and presented it to Norman on behalf of the Committee.

At this point something happened which is, believe me, an extremely rare event in this world. Norman, that voluble chap who is never at a loss for words, became utterly speechless. But words returned when Edward mentioned that nobody knew who had given the matchbox to Plum, or when. Rising from the emotional depths, Norman cried, "I'll find out!" (Alas, he has not done so yet. Plum was so fond of the matchbox that constant use wore away the marks that would have revealed its maker.) He then talked about how many committees he has worked on over the years, but of them all, the U.K. Society's committee was the only one he thoroughly enjoyed working with.

Speeches and presentations continued as Tony Ring presented Norman with a hot-off-the-presses copy of *A Prince for Hire*; and the new Chairman, Hilary Bruce, gave him a framed poster bearing the words "Keep Calm and Carry On"—advice that Norman immediately threw right back at her. Hilary tried her best to say how difficult it was going to be to follow in Norman's footsteps, but as anyone who knows her is bound to point out, this is utter

balderdash. Norman leaves the chairmanship knowing that he is passing his responsibilities into the best and most capable pair of Wodehousian hands in the country. And by the way, his service to the Society has not ended. He will continue to conduct Wodehouse Walks, and he has taken on the title of Remembrancer.

Just a few weeks after this most excellent bash, the new Chairman oversaw a winning season (2–0) for the U.K. Society's cricket team, the Gold Bats, who thoroughly trounced their opponents. Well, all right, the first match, on June 20 against the Dulwich Dusters, was actually a squeaker—we won by one run after thinking we had lost by a run (our scorekeeper, Stephen Fullom, lately discovering a slight error in addition which made all the difference). But the second game, on June 29 against the Sherlock Holmes Society, proved a bit of a rout, which the Sherlockians took with their usual good-natured grace. And to be fair, they thoroughly trounced us in the costumes department. A highlight of that warm and sunny day was Blandings Castle's Bill Franklin, come all the way from California just to join the spectators. Oh, yes, he made some feeble noises about being in town on business, but we all knew better.

Then there was the pig racing. On July 26 a group of about 35 pig-minded Wodehousians gathered at Bockett's Farm in Leatherhead, primarily to witness six color-coded piglets race to be first to a pile of food at the finish line. There were two races that day, and just for us the Bockett's Farm folks had renamed their piglets: Empress of Blandings (of course), Pride of Matchingham, Queen of Matchingham, Lord Blicester, Lord Yaxley, and Buckingham Big Boy. It was Lord Blicester, with a smart splash of green on his back, who won the 12:45 race that day, although how they determined this is beyond me, since it seemed like a six-way tie to me. The second race at 3:45, though, was a clear win for the Pride of Matchingham, sporting red (the Empress came in second). All in all, most exciting.

Between races, we wandered around the farm, gawking at all sorts of animals, and also gathered in the "schoolroom" for a presentation on Fred Patzel and pig calling, as given by the Society's Remembrancer. This included snippets from a tape of hog calls recorded by Nebraska's Gary and Linda Hall, as well as some of the reading of "Pig-hoo-o-o-ey!" that was performed by the Blandings Castle group at the 1995 Boston convention. (Appropriately, Marilyn MacGregor, who was a narrator at that reading, was with us for the pig racing and so got to hear herself on tape.) The group was then encouraged to perform pig calls, with prizes to the best callers. After some initial feet-shuffling, several folks entered into the spirit of the thing, and in the end the winners were Rona Topaz, whose ear-splitting "Pighooey!" earned everybody's respect (including that of the nearby pigs); and Alexandra Wips, a Swiss woman who gave us a superb "Komm Schwein!"

By the way, for more thorough reports of all these U.K. Society events, see their website: www.eclipse.co.uk/wodehouse.

I shall end this letter on a personal note, being pleased to report that your correspondent has passed her U.K. driving test. This is no mean feat, let me tell you. The British have incredibly tough driving standards, and though I have been driving for 30 years, I still had to unlearn what were termed my “bad habits” and learn to do it right, i.e., the British way. To say that I accepted this state of affairs in a dignified manner would be to tell an untruth—I expressed my displeasure far and wide. But eventually I made it through the written test (a video part of which tested my ability to spot developing hazards on the road—most of which are other drivers, something the British have in common with Americans) and then the practical road test (quite an accomplishment in London). So now I can truly consider myself an ambidextrous driver.

On a related note, as I have spoken before about the language barriers I have encountered here, it should come as no surprise that during my driving-license nightmare I had to learn some terminology that fairly made my head spin. One question on the written test, for example, began, “You are following a large articulated vehicle . . .” I mean to say, what? And oh, the things I could tell you about pelican crossings, puffin crossings, and toucan crossings . . .

Well, well, I can never say that life in England isn’t interesting.

Wodehouse Books Offered

Charles Manclark is offering for sale 45 books by Wodehouse and two Wodehouse biographies. As a matter of convenience he wishes to sell them in one lot, not as individual volumes. No reasonable offer will be refused. Send SASE to obtain a list of titles, dates, editions, dust jackets, etc.

“The idea of being united to [Madeline Bassett] in the bonds of holy wedlock is one that freezes the gizzard. There are certain females whom one respects, admires, reveres, but only from a distance. If they show any signs of attempting to come closer, one is prepared to fight them off with a blackjack. It is to this group that your cousin Madeline belongs.”

The Code of the Woosters, 1938

My First Time

Conducted by Dan Cohen

While I have not actually been overwhelmed by submissions to this column, I have been very pleasantly whelmed (yes, there is such a word).

Here is what Bill Bruce, a lifelong Texan recalls:

Let me set the stage. I grew up in the small (pop. 2,500) West Texas town of Crowell, and my mother (God rest her soul!) was a strict Methodist in the days when Methodists were Methodists (before *I’m OK, You’re OK*). She prohibited smoking, drinking, gambling, picture shows on Sunday, and any cursing stronger than “Goodness gracious!” We lived across the street from the church, and she was president of the Missionary Society and for 35 years taught the Co-Laborers Class. My father was church treasurer for 40 years and chairman of the Board of Stewards for three. At one vacation Bible school, I, like Bertie, won a prize for scriptural knowledge. Every summer when the fire-breathing, Elmer Gantry-style evangelist came to town, he joined our table for a fried chicken dinner. He would reinforce my parents’ draconian strictures with a few pre-emptive strikes to my head and buttocks.

Now in 1938 I had a paper route for the *Abilene Reporter News*, and as an eager entrepreneur, the addition of *The Saturday Evening Post* was for me the work of a moment. I made very little cash from selling subscriptions and delivering the magazine, but the *Post* gave me a free copy each week. In almost the first such issue I discovered Wodehouse. Wow! Stories about wild young men in spats and racy women . . . smoking and drinking and gambling, and occasionally a bad word . . . like “Hell!”

Making things better, my mother assumed the *Satevepost* (founded, after all, by Ben Franklin!) was character building—fitting right in with my *Boy’s Life*, the official magazine of the Boy Scouts. She just didn’t know. I thought I perhaps should read it under the covers with a flashlight, but fortunately the Norman Rockwell covers served as a “plain brown paper wrapper.”

In the Summer 2003 issue of *Plum Lines* Thomas H. Rogers says, “There’s nothing in Wodehouse capable of producing the kind of huge emotional and mental effects that great writers or enormously original writers can have when you first read them.” Au contraire, Tom.

Immediately after reading my first Wodehouse, I wanted to roll over and, while breathing heavily, ask, “Was it as good for you as it was for me?” I didn’t feel that urge with Dostoyevsky.

I'm now 77, and about 20 years or so ago I quit reading new fiction. Most of it I thought should be mailed in a plain brown paper wrapper along with an upper pill to stave off the tedium and boredom. I am now quite happy to re-read all my favorites, and I find that for me, at least, Wodehouse, Austen, and Dickens bear up better on re-reading than Tolstoy (300 pages of freemasonry?!), Dostoyevsky, and Carroll.

*This from **Barbara C. Bowen**:*

How I wish I had Dan Cohen's total recall!! I know I became interested in Wodehouse in high school, because my father was a fan, but the first book I can remember loving was *Hot Water*, which I certainly read as a student at Oxford, i.e., between 1955 and 1958. I still think it is one of his best, and looking back from my great age I wonder if I was not hooked because the man was essentially a linguist, which I would become. All the main characters speak different languages: pseudo-high class English, colloquial gangster American, French-fractured American, and so on. Perhaps the fact that I was unhappy at the time, and that this was a story where everything turned out well at the end, was also a factor. Anyway, I went on to be an avid reader and collector (at one point, my uncle in Australia picked up a couple of first editions for a few dollars), so that I now have an almost complete collection including a number of first editions. I look forward to reading other people's more specific memories in *Plum Lines*.

You are quite right Barbara, I do have total recall, but only for the dear and distant past. Right now I can't recall where I put my glasses, fifteen minutes ago.

***Emelie Levinson** also has a bit of a memory problem:*

Well, I am finally divulging the first time I read Wodehouse. Actually, I am so old that I cannot recall the book I read but needless to say, I was hooked. I was about 16 years old, which as I am now 85, you realize is a looong time ago so failure to remember anything can be forgiven. All I know is that I started collecting and laughing and collecting and laughing and collecting hardback Wodehouse books (there were no paperbacks that I recall). I had so many books that when I married I had quite a large library to bring to my bridal home. However, I actually thought I was the only person who read Wodehouse.

Of course, I figured that someone else must read him or the bookshops would not carry his books, but I

never met another lover of Plum until I was in Japan in the 1980's and met two young women who said they read him. To backtrack, I have four children and one of my daughters turned out to be a Wodehouse lover, and she and I are members of the Wodehouse Society.

Now, the sad part. Since I knew no one else who read PGW I thought it was foolish to clutter my home with his books and got rid of ALL the hardback copies. My daughter Pat now collects his books and has almost all of them.

I attribute my long and sort of healthy life to the hours of joy Wodehouse has brought me and continues to bring me. I still laugh when I think of George on the train (in "The Truth about George") offering the woman across from him a drink and hissing like a steam engine and making her jump so high she could have won the sitting broad jump, if there had been such a category in the Olympics.

I know several people who will doubtless break down and cry reading the line "... got rid of ALL the hardback copies." Indeed my keyboard is stained with tears.

*From the wild West (Vancouver) **Dennis Chitty** recalls:*

My earliest memory of reading Wodehouse is similar to that of Sheran Hornby, Plum's granddaughter, as described by Richard Osborne. When reading the Jeeves/ Wooster stories in the room where Plum was trying to write she "would scream with the uncontrolled laughter only an eighteen-year-old can produce. 'Darling, can't you be a little quieter?' 'But Plum, you wrote it didn't you?' seemed to [her] at the time an unanswerable excuse."

I must have been about fourteen years old when I was a cause of similar annoyance to my family. For in those far-off-days we lacked the intellectual feasts TV now spreads before us, nor were we as beholden to radio as we became. Instead, incredible as it may seem to today's youth, families used to spend their evenings sitting around reading books. I don't know which were the stories that convulsed me; all I remember is being told to read any author but Wodehouse or else retire to another room.

*And from **Suzanne Geissler Bowles**:*

This isn't an earthshaking story, but it changed my reading habits—my fiction reading habits, anyway—forever. It was the spring of 1975 and I was a graduate student in history at Syracuse University. Wodehouse had recently died (or "handed in his dinner pail," as I would later learn to say). I had never heard of him but an article

about him—in *Newsweek*, I think—caught my eye and piqued my interest. Not long after that I was in the Syracuse Public Library looking over a cart of new novels. My memory is vague on this, but I must have passed my comprehensive exams by this point or I never would have had the time to be looking for, or reading, novels. In any case, *The Cat-Nappers* by P. G. Wodehouse caught my eye and I decided to give it a try.

It took only one page to get me hooked and after finishing this gem I was totally committed to reading everything by Plum I could get my hands on. And I've been doing that with pleasure ever since. As a professional academic one thing I particularly enjoy is Plum's skewering of intellectual pretentiousness. Some of what passes today for historical scholarship could easily rival *Types of Ethical Theory* for incomprehensibility.

The dust jacket of the Simon and Schuster edition of The Cat-Nappers contains this added note: "P.G. Wodehouse died in his sleep on February 14, 1975. He will be greatly missed."

OK—keep 'em coming folks. I would really like to hear the experiences of some of the younger fans. I know you're out there. I've seen you. I know some of your names. Get in touch with me before I get in touch with you and then send 'Erb around to collect.

"Don't blame me, [Pongo," said Lord Ickenham,] "if Lady Constance takes her lorgnette to you. God bless my soul, though, you can't compare the lorgnettes of to-day with the ones I used to know as a boy. I remember walking one day in Grosvenor Square with my aunt Brenda and her pug dog Jabberwocky, and a policeman came up and said that the latter ought to be wearing a muzzle. My aunt made no verbal reply. She merely whipped her lorgnette from its holster and looked at the man, who gave one choking gasp and fell back against the railings, without a mark on him but with an awful look of horror in his staring eyes, as if they had seen some dreadful sight. A doctor was sent for, and they managed to bring him around, but he was never the same again. He had to leave the Force, and eventually drifted into the grocery business. And that is how Sir Thomas Lipton got his start."

Uncle Fred in the Springtime, 1939

Big Money: Collecting First Editions

By John Graham

P. G. Wodehouse spent more than half of his life outside England, became an American citizen in 1955, and took up permanent residence in Remsenburg, Long Island, but he will always be known to the world as an English humorist—or humourist, if you prefer. I think it is for this reason that the English first editions of his books are prized above all others by collectors on both sides of the Atlantic. For many Americans, there may be another reason for this decidedly English preference. Until recently, virtually the only new editions of Plum's books for sale in the US were imported UK Penguins. As a result, it was by the English titles that most of us learned our Wodehouse. After all, who ever heard of *He Rather Enjoyed It*, *The Little Warrior*, or *Three Men and a Maid*? Now *Ukridge*, *Jill the Reckless*, and *The Girl on the Boat* are another story—or in point of fact, the same stories!

In my last column, I made the case for specializing in Plum's American firsts. (If you missed that column, it can be summarized in two words: lower prices.) This time around I'll focus on Wodehouse's English firsts, including my own assessment of relative scarcity and current market prices, based on catalogue data I have been compiling for the past fifteen years. I'll assume only post-war books still have their original dust jackets. Prewar jackets in collectible condition (with the all-important 7'6 green price oval on the spine) are rare, expensive, and much sought after—we'll take them up in a future column.

Let me begin with the same caveat as last time. If you follow an English-only strategy, you will never have a complete collection of true first editions since thirty percent of Plum's output appeared first in America. In addition, Barry Phelps (see page 316 of his 1992 Wodehouse biography) lists eleven American titles never published in the UK, although only four of these books make Eileen McIlvaine's A-list (that is, first appearances in book form). And then there are the short story collections to add to the confusion. US and UK publishers often included different selections even when they gave the book the same title. Consider *Eggs, Beans and Crumpets*: the US edition has four stories not in the UK edition which in turn has two stories not in the US one. Usually these differences are not critical, since the missing stories do resurface in other volumes. In at least one case, however, this did not happen: "Unpleasantness at Kozy Kot" (which admittedly has a familiar ring, even by Wodehouse standards) appears only in

the US edition of *A Few Quick Ones* and has never been published in the UK. (There is also a UK story missing from the US edition—"A Tithe for Charity"—but long-time collectors of *Playboy* will find it in their April 1955 issue.)

Sidestepping the always thorny question of exactly how many books Wodehouse published in his lifetime, we can say with greater certainty that Plum divided his English output among nine different publishers (or ten, if like McIlvaine, your A-list includes Hodder and Stoughton's reprint of "The Great Sermon Handicap"). Between 1902 and 1932, he published ten titles with A. & C. Black, two each with Newnes and Alston Rivers, and one each with Cassell, The Globe, Mills & Boon, and Faber & Faber. In truth, very few of these eighteen titles would make anyone's list of "My Favorite Wodehouse" and perhaps as a result, many of them rank today among the rarest and most expensive of his first editions.

Plum's remaining two publishers are also his most important ones. In 1913 Methuen published *The Little Nugget*, the first of nine Wodehouse books to carry their imprint, including the debuts of both Jeeves (in the short story collection *The Man with Two Left Feet*) and Blandings Castle (in *Something Fresh*). Then, in 1918, Herbert Jenkins (himself a writer and publisher of such memorable works as *Malcolm Sage, Detective*, and *Patricia Bent, Spinster*) gave us *Piccadilly Jim*. In all, Herbert Jenkins (or its successor, Barrie & Jenkins) first published seventy Wodehouse works.¹ In later years, Jenkins also acquired the rights to the nine Methuen titles and republished eight of them (all but *Doctor Sally*) with brand new Wodehouse prefaces between 1969 and 1975. (These editions—sometimes labeled "first thus"—are highly affordable and definitely worth acquiring, as the new introductions were not always used in subsequent reprints.)

How difficult and expensive is it these days to assemble a complete collection of English firsts? I think the internet has made the task easier and less expensive (and perhaps less fun) than it was when I started out fifteen years ago. It took me ten years to get anywhere close to holding a full house. (And I still have a few reprints masquerading as firsts and several dozen pre-war books missing their jackets). If you play your cards right, you could probably do it in half that time today. I am willing to bet that on any given day almost all of the seventy Jenkins' firsts are offered for sale somewhere on the world wide web (try abebooks.com for starters). Most post-war titles in near fine condition sell for less than \$150, although the early 1950's books (especially *Nothing Serious*) can be somewhat elusive and more expensive (up to \$350 in dust jacket). The only pre-war titles that are consistently hard to find are a few of the earliest ones—*Piccadilly Jim*, *A Damsel in Distress*, *Indiscretions of Archie*, and the 1921 rewrite of *Love Among the Chickens* (in either green or blue boards—take your pick, the experts can't agree). By contrast, the nine

Methuen titles are much more difficult to find, and at least three of them (see below) make my list of the five rarest English firsts. Thanks to Maryland booksellers Quill & Brush, we even know how many copies of each first edition Methuen printed—prior to 1924, print runs never exceeded 1,500. (By comparison the first US printing of *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* was widely reported to be 6.8 million.)

It is not so easy to generalize about the other eighteen Wodehouse titles. I'll focus on some of the A. & C. Black school stories in my next column. These books tend to be highly prized by many collectors (not least of all for their colorful covers) and can be priced up to \$4,000 depending on condition, but none of them would rank among the very rarest Wodehouse. It may take you several years to find acceptable copies of all ten of the Black books, but it will take even longer to locate all six titles published by Alston Rivers, Newnes, Cassell, and Mills & Boon. (Fortunately, Faber & Faber's *Louder and Funnier* is not especially rare or expensive—it is only the famous Rex Whistler dust jacket that makes it so.) Without a doubt, the most over-priced English first edition in this group is *My Man Jeeves*. Some dealers will ask \$2,000 for this obviously desirable book, but you should refuse to pay more than \$500-600, since there are always at least ten copies listed for sale on abebooks.com.

The most expensive first edition (without a dust jacket) is and always has been *The Globe By the Way Book*, fetching \$7,500 and up. But don't despair—the facsimile edition (courtesy of Jimmy Heineman circa 1985) can usually be found for under \$200. In the past dozen years, at least three copies of the genuine first have been advertised for sale. By my count four other books seem to appear on the market almost as infrequently as *The Globe By the Way Book* does, and these titles round out my list of the five rarest English first editions. In no particular order, they are *Not George Washington*, *The Man with Two Left Feet*, *Something Fresh*, and *Uneasy Money*. When copies do appear, expect to pay \$3,000 and up. If you come across one of them in dust jacket, be sure to let me know.

1 A careful reader will notice I have just argued that Plum wrote 97 books.

Writers through the ages have made a good many derogatory remarks about money, and one gets the impression that it is a thing best steered clear of, but every now and then one finds people who like the stuff and one of these was Jane. It seemed to her to fill a long-felt want.

The Girl in Blue, 1970.

Horrible Heresy Halted

By Norman Murphy

Ann Nicholson first drew my attention to a widely published news article of September 6, saying that two university students had identified Apley Park in Shropshire as the original of Blandings Castle. In their search they restricted themselves to the use of a computer program that considered nothing but location. When Norman Murphy, in his *In Search of Blandings*, chose Weston Park as the original of Blandings, he considered not only location but many other factors as well. Here's Norman's entertaining response to what his biographers will probably call the Apley Park Horror. —OM

Years ago, someone wrote of Raymond Chandler (I think it was Chandler) that you could not beat the opening line in one of his stories: "A gun spat in the darkness." My experience was similar. In the middle of the night, the telephone rang. Well, it was really 7:10 in the morning but I like my sleep and I normally greet the world at 8:30 on the dot. It was the "Today" morning programme of the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation), who cheerfully informed me that two PhD students had decided that Apley Park in Shropshire was the origin of Blandings—and did I have any comment to make? With incredible self-control, I managed to groan the words, "Oh, no! Not again! That's rubbish!" The breezy female sadist on the other end was delighted: "Oh, good! Would you please say that again in half an hour's time on air?"

I was fuming. Here we go again—Apley flaming Park! Why are people so stupid? I was sure the students had never been there. I knew they were wrong and I was expected to provide a scholarly, authoritative, comprehensive rebuff inside ninety seconds, and I wasn't properly awake. And I hadn't even had my coffee yet.

Then the BBC came back on the line. The four major English broadsheets—*The Times*, *Telegraph*, *Independent*, and *Guardian*—had all given prominence to the findings of two PhD students who had fed in information to their computer which showed that Blandings was really Apley Park in Shropshire. Would I please give my comments to the X million eager listeners?

I did. I pointed out I had walked the ground and been through the building. It was 300 years too young, there was nothing in the grounds that resembled anything that Wodehouse had mentioned. Furthermore, the River Severn is not, as Wodehouse said, a "silver bar on the horizon" but so near the house you could fall into it. The whole idea was nonsense. Anybody who had walked the grounds of Weston Park, some ten miles away, saw every feature of the Blandings estate, and it was a pity PhD students had nothing better to do with their time, etc. etc. etc.

Imagine my embarrassment therefore when one of the students concerned turned up on a Wodehouse Walk a few days later. As always, at the beginning of the Walk, I asked if anybody had read *In Search of Blandings*? He was the only one who had. Daryl Lloyd, a delightful young man, was, as Bertie Wooster said often, "fully conscious of his position." He and a colleague had decided it would be fun to see where their computer reckoned Blandings was. They fed in data (nearness to the River Severn, to Bridgenorth, to Shrewsbury etc.) and it gave them Apley Park. They knew it wasn't the right place and lots of essential details were missing, but they published the findings as a bit of fun, and no one was more surprised than they were when the Press leapt on it with a glad cry. So that was all right.

The whole Apley Park heresy began years ago (1981) with Ann Wood, who wrote a piece for Jimmy Heineman's *Centenary Celebration*. Visiting the U.K. from America, she had driven up to Shropshire and met a couple of local historians in Bridgnorth who had taken her to the nearest large country house—Apley Park. They knew their local history—but they didn't know their Wodehouse.

Now, if you are a visitor to England, one Stately Home is like another. Large park, big house, the River Severn nearby—what more do you want? But if you are someone who lives here and has some knowledge of English social history and a good local map, you know there are half a dozen more Great Houses within a few miles, and they should be looked at too. And you would also know that castellations (the little up-and-down bits you see on castle battlements) do NOT make a castle.

Well, it is now time to settle the matter. Apley Park was built about 1811 (300 years too late), and the battlements were put on as a Gothic revival/affectation of the time. It stands so close to the River Severn that you are liable to fall down the bank into it. And there is no lake, no boathouse, no cottage in the wood, no kitchen garden with a pond, no road to Shrewsbury so near a motorbike can wake Lord Emsworth, no village at the gates (Blandings Parva/ Weston-under-Lizard in real life), no cedar tree, no terraces, no rose gardens.

The Great Houses at nearby Morville, Chillington, Patshull, and Quatford each have some of these features—but only Weston Park has them all. And only Weston Park had amongst its regular visitors the Reverend Frederick Wodehouse which meant, following the strict etiquette of the time, his relatives, PGW's parents, Armine, and PGW would certainly have been invited to lunches and dinners.

And only at Weston Park will you find EVERY feature but one of the Blandings estate (the yew-alley is at Sudeley Castle)—and all of them in the right place. (Sudeley Castle is the original of the castle itself; Weston Park is the original of the estate. As Wodehouse said, it was a mixture of places he remembered.) Only at Weston Park can you

retrace Sue Brown's steps yard for yard as recounted at Chapter Three of *Heavy Weather*. The clump of rhododendrons still hides a car as it drives away from the front door, and if you turn back and walk along the terrace as Sue did, you do indeed look past the shrubbery to the cedar-shaded lawn before "descending the broad stone steps and turning westward" to the little meadow where the Empress was housed. This is now the deer enclosure.

So let us hear no more of Apley Park, please.

Peter Schwed

We note with sadness the death of Peter Schwed on August 7, 2003, in New York City at the age of 92. Peter was Plum's editor at Simon and Schuster from *The Return of Jeeves* (1954) to *Sunset at Blandings* (1977), and retired as Chairman Emeritus of the Editorial Board. Peter and Plum became good friends and for years, while Plum lived in New York, he delivered his annual novel to Peter in person—an event always followed by lunch at a good restaurant. When Plum received his knighthood in 1975, Peter and Plum's agent, Scott Meredith, traveled to Remsenburg and held a mock "knighting" ceremony, Peter wielding the sword. Four Wodehouse books are dedicated to Peter: *Bertie Wooster Sees It Through*, *Author, Author*, *The Purloined Paperweight*, and *Bachelors Anonymous*. He received at least a mention in three other PGW books. His *Plum to Peter: Letters of P. G. Wodehouse to his editor Peter Schwed*, opens thus:

Dedicated to
The Members of the Wodehouse Society
May their tribe increase

Peter was a member of our Society and he and his wife Antonia (Toni) attended several of our conventions. Jan Kaufman remembers the Chicago convention: "I had the honor to sit next to him and he threw bread rolls with enthusiasm. While his wife was talking with someone else, he quietly asked me to ask her about a striking enameled pin she was wearing. I asked her, and discovered she had made it herself and was a jewelry designer. His request seemed to me the act of a loving husband who wanted to give his wife pleasure." His 1998 autobiography, *Say, Could That Lad Be I?*, includes this touching line: "To this day I often read Wodehouse aloud to my wife. . . ." —OM

In fairness to Neil Midkiff, who usually prepares the layout for *Plum Lines*, I must report that I prepared the layout for this issue myself when Neil was temporarily unable to do so. —OM

Chapters Corner

Conducted by Neil Midkiff

As always, we appreciate hearing regularly from each of the chapters.

Our usual introductory map of the chapter locations is in need of some significant redrafting, a task necessitated by some welcome news. The New York chapter whose formation was announced in the last issue now has been christened "The Broadway Special." The Toronto convention spurred the local inhabitants to gather as "The Pale Parabolites." Details of each are in the listings below.

Anglers' Rest

(Seattle and vicinity)

Contact: Susan Collicott

Blandings Castle Chapter

(greater San Francisco Bay Area)

Newsletter: *The Argus Intelligencer and Wheat Growers Gazette*

Contact: Jan Kaufman, president

The Broadway Special

(New York City and vicinity)

Contact: Amy Plofker

The lovely 21st of September was one of Wodehouse's specials: sunny, dry weather and two dozen members of TWS's New York chapter contentedly browsing and sluicing at the Perbacco Café in the East Village. Beyond question, all was right with the world. Especially at this second meeting of New York-area Plummies, when our chapter got its name (The Broadway Special) which in the Wodehouse canon is a hat, but is also redolent of The Theatre. And after extracting ourselves from the nosebags, that's just where we went. We staggered into the Connelly Theatre next door to join still more Wodehousians and watch as, only seventy-six years after its English premiere, PGW's adaptation of Ladislaus Fodor's *Good Morning, Bill* started its first American run. To a packed house, what's more!

The Keen Company, under the able direction of Carl Forsman, presented an extremely sound cast, headed by Heidi Armbruster as a stern, independent, but ultimately-pliant Dr. Sally; Jeremiah Wiggins, the love-struck and therefore often-prostrated Bill; Nick Toren as the classic Drones Club tippler; Bridget Ann White, the thoroughly alluring gold-digging flapper; and John Vennema as the archetypal Wodehouse uncle, obsessed with golf. The fine performances were rounded out by Jenny Merein and David Standish (as the Maid and the Page).

Nathan Heverin's beautiful sets, though cunningly simple in design, so evoked the Master's verbal world that they drew enthusiastic applause. Carl Forsman was able to do what few directors have managed to do—either in the theatre or on television—bring to life the rarified magic and sheer fun of Wodehouse's world.

Following the performance, the audience was treated to an intimate panel discussion on Wodehouse and the theatre, featuring Tony Ring, David Jasen, and Mr. Forsman. And as a special treat, Tony Ring supplied several pages of spicy dialogue which had been excised from the original production by those guardians of our morals, The British Censors. These snippets were performed by the cast, evoking not only our laughter but theirs as well!

Alas, this delightful production was a limited run extending only to October 12th. But The Broadway Special of New York is off to an auspicious start owing to the Keen Company's truly enjoyable production of *Good Morning, Bill*.

—reported by David A. Jasen

Capital! Capital!

(Washington, D.C. and vicinity)

Contact: Jeff Peterson

On Sunday 14 September Capital! Capital! met at the Army-Navy Country Club. John Baesch presented a most interesting talk on the parallels between the Wodehousian canon and the 60 Sherlock Holmes stories by Arthur Conan Doyle. John posited that the three generally agreed upon assessments of the Sherlock Holmes stories could also characterize the Wodehousian stories, namely, that the personal and efficacious professional relationship of Holmes and Watson was a textbook in friendship as was also with Mike Jackson and Rupert Psmith and Jeeves and Wooster; that Doyle introduced us to a world of fog and gaslight that we never knew but wish we did and Wodehouse brought us the world of Blandings Castle, Totleigh Towers, and the Drones Club; and that the "good triumphs over evil" outcomes of the Sherlock Holmes stories can be paralleled in

the happy, or at least satisfactory outcomes, of Wodehouse's stories.

John, whose day job involves transportation planning for a consulting firm, is a member of both the UK and US Wodehouse Societies, and has been known to support local Wodehouse chapters all along the East Coast from the Newts to Capital! Capital! He is also a Baker Street Irregular and was recently married to another TWS member, Evelyn Herzog.

The next gathering will be Sunday, 9 November, 6PM (please note the time) at La Madelaine French Bakery and Cafe, 7607 Old Georgetown Road (a block off Wisconsin Ave.), Bethesda. The cafe is very close to the Bethesda Metro station, on the red line.

Chapter member Soma Kumar has agreed to present some of Plum's early writings and tell us about the development of his craft. Soma also plans to say something about Plum the man, illustrating the presentation with some anecdotes that he has found interesting.

Chapter One

(greater Philadelphia area)

Contact: Susan and Daniel Cohen

Chapter One's tenth anniversary is in February. How and where we should celebrate this anniversary in style next spring was the question of the day at our last meeting on September 28. Several chaps volunteered to come up with the right place for this banner event. The main topic of discussion at the meeting was the Toronto convention. Everyone who was there agreed it was a doozy. Most memorable: the outstanding speeches.

Convention pictures helped us reminisce about the lighter side of the convention. Many Chaps attended the special performance of *Good Morning Bill*, in New York. With great enthusiasm they described the show, the panel discussion afterwards, the reception for TWS after that, and the delights of meeting the cast.

Our next meeting will be the Sunday after Thanksgiving, November 30th, when Anatole's secrets will be revealed.

—Rosie M. Banks

The Chicago Accident Syndicate

(Chicago and thereabouts)

Contact: Daniel & Tina Garrison

The Clients of Adrian Mulliner
(for enthusiasts of both PGW and Sherlock Holmes)
Contact: Marilyn MacGregor

The Clients of Adrian Mulliner held their traditional Senior Bloodstain at the recent Toronto convention of TWS in a very appropriate location: perhaps the largest collection of Conan Doyle materials and Sherlockiana this side of the Atlantic, in the Arthur Conan Doyle Room of the Toronto Reference Library. The curator, Victoria Gill, treated the Clients to a "tour" (seated, as the room is small) of the collection, including a few old issues of *Punch* in which Wodehouse had written articles associated with Holmes. On display in the Library's main entrance area was the 1903 *Punch* in which Wodehouse first advanced the theory that Holmes and Moriarty were one and the same ("From a Detective's Notebook").

The meeting included a reading of a brief play entitled "Sherlock Holmes and the Gentleman's Gentleman," by Anne Cotton. It chronicles the first (so far) meeting between Reginald Jeeves and Sherlock Holmes, undoubtedly the two greatest brains of their era(s).

The Drone Rangers
(Houston and vicinity)

Newsletter: *DroneStar*, edited by Toni & Bill Rudersdorf
Contact: Toni Rudersdorf

The Mottled Oyster Club
(San Antonio and South Texas)
Contact: James P. Robinson III

The New England Wodehouse Thingummy Society
(NEWTS)
(Boston and elsewhere in New England)
Contact: Anne Cotton, president

The Northwodes

(St. Paul, Minneapolis, and vicinity)
Contact: Kristine Fowler

The Pale Parabolites
(Toronto and vicinity)
Contact: Peter M. Nixon

Now that Toronto has had the honor to serve as the venue for the 12th International Convention of The Wodehouse Society, the only thing missing was the formation of a local chapter. The chapter was launched at a binge on October 5th, attended by 15 Wodehouse aficionados, including Bill Westfall, the star cricketer, a renegade member from the Capital! Capital! chapter, and the youngest member, 10 year old Hannah.

The packed agenda included a reading of the "Ode to Parabolic Joy" written by the esteemed Dennis Chitty expressly for the Convention poetry contest, milling around, drinking tea and eating cucumber sandwiches, viewing Convention memorabilia, and more milling around.

The most important agenda item was the much anticipated announcement of the name for our chapter. After much deliberation and reviewing the many suggestions both from chapter members and members of TWS at large, we agreed on a clear winner. The winner, proposed by Amy Plofker, celebrating the most famous Canadian Wodehouse character, Ralston McTodd and his poetry, is...

The Pale Parabolites...those who are seeking the Pale Parabola of Joy...whatever that may be.

Dennis Chitty proposed a Chapter motto, drawing inspiration from *Uncle Fred in the Springtime*: "The Empress of Blandings was a pig who took things as they came. Her motto, like Horace's, was nil admirari." The Pale Parabolites' motto is nil admirari. Like the Empress of Blandings, The Pale Parabolites take things as they come and marvel at nothing.

The Pelikan Club
(Kansas City and vicinity)
Contact: Sallie Hobbs

The Perfecto-Zizzbaum Motion Picture Corporation
(Los Angeles, California, and vicinity)
Contact: Melissa D. Aaron

PZMPCo meets the second Sunday of every month at Vroman's Bookstore (695 E. Colorado Blvd., Pasadena) at 12:30. We have selected our readings for the rest of 2003, as follows:

November: *Pearls, Girls, and Monty Bodkin (The Plot that Thickened)*

December: Two Mulliner stories, the sequels to the ever-popular "Buck-U-Uppo": "The Bishop's Move" and "Gala Night."

In December, Vroman's generally slings us out to shift for ourselves to make room for holiday shoppers, and that is when we generally have our annual Holiday Tea at the house of a PZMPCo member. Banjoleles optional.

If you want to be kept informed, check our web page at <http://www.lahacal.org>, under P. G. Wodehouse Society, and subscribe to our emailing list.

The Pickering Motor Company
(Detroit and vicinity)
Contact: Elliott Milstein

The Size 14 Hat Club
(Halifax, Nova Scotia)
Contact: Jill Robinson

The Soup & Fish Club
(northern Virginia area)
Contact: Deborah Dillard

Jubilee Watering Troughs

Suzanne Bowles writes:

A number of times in Wodehouse's novels reference is made to that ubiquitous village landmark, the Jubilee Watering Trough. I confess I had always thought that Plum invented this concept. But no, I was wrong. Upon reading Robert Lacey's *Monarch: The Life and Reign of Elizabeth II* (Free Press, 2002), I learned on page 35, in a reference to Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, that "a proliferation of drinking troughs reflected the queen's well-known love of animals." I stand corrected.

We might ask what will be the modern equivalent for the present queen's jubilee in 2028. A proliferation of petrol stations? Or fuel cell stations?

Wodehouse and Dickens

By Helen Murphy

The article that follows is a much abbreviated version of an article Helen published in a recent issue of *The Dickens Magazine*. That article necessarily included much biographical information about Plum already well known to *Plum Lines* readers. She has graciously given us permission to excise that material, and include here only her comparisons and contrasts of the two writers. —OM

Dickens and Plum differed in terms of class. The Victorians were much more mobile in this respect than they are often given credit for, but Plum had the inestimable advantage of an almost entirely classical education at Dulwich College. As he himself pointed out, it was very much a public school for middle class boys, although capable of achieving the first rank in academic and sporting fields. He put it best himself: Ukridge might have attended Dulwich, Bertie Wooster wouldn't have. The boys there expected to earn their livings. All his life PGW would remember Dulwich as bliss and absolute Heaven, continuing to return to report their matches if he could, and to follow their prowess in the press if he could not.

Here we reach the first point of convergence between the two writers' careers. Charles Dickens' dreadful hardships are well known, but PGW had his disappointments too. When Plum was a Dulwich student, his father was dependant on a pension paid in the rupee, which sharply declined in value, and the optimistic Plum, a member of the first XI, a person of some standing at Dulwich, hoping for an Oxford scholarship, had his hopes dashed: his future was to be in the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank. This scenario recurs more than once in his early school stories, most notably to the eponymous Mike. After his father has broken the news, and Mike has accepted it with outward stoicism, his father tells him, "You're a sportsman, Mike." Dickens wrote out his own disappointments in *Great Expectations* and *David Copperfield*—Wodehouse did the same in *Mike and Psmith in the City*.

Other similarities with Dickens: Having taken the leap of faith when very young and left the bank for a full time writing career, almost all PGW's work in his early years of writing appeared in serial form in magazines such as *Chums* and *The Public School Magazine*, or particularly after he visited America, *The Saturday Evening Post*, the foremost magazine market in those days. Both Dickens and PGW had to learn to write in chunks of a certain length, with the requisite suspenseful ending. Plum planned his intricate plots far more thoroughly before he started, though.

Plum had certainly read a good deal of Dickens and many other well known authors, though he also admitted to extensive use of Bartlett's *Familiar Quotations*. Any be-

nevolent person was likely to be referred to as a Cheeryble brother, and a noble, self sacrificing one as a Sydney Carton. In fact PGW made a very rare error in *The Girl in Blue* in putting the Cheeryble brothers in *Oliver Twist*. He wrote once that Dickens overdid the grotesque and was at times too elaborate, e.g., the surgeon Mr. Badger's extravagant praise of his wife's first husband in *Bleak House*.

Wodehouse takes up and elaborates upon the Orphan Wegg's practice of inserting interpolations in his quotations. In *Joy in the Morning* Jeeves says to Bertie Wooster:

"For know, rash youth—if you will pardon me, sir—the expression is Mr. Bernard Shaw's, not my own . . . For know, rash youth, that in this starcrossed world fate drives us all to find our chiefest good in what we can, and not in what we would."

If we are looking for correspondence between characters, Mr. Micawber and Stanley Featherstonehaugh Ukridge spring to mind. Perhaps Steerforth and some of the members of the Drones Club. But to my mind there is one character who could walk straight into the Drones Club with no questions asked: Mr. Toots. Compare these two passages:

"You see," said Mr. Toots, "what I wanted in a wife was—in short—was sense. Money, Feeder, I had. Sense I—I had not, particularly."

And from a female character speaking to the heroine in *The Adventures of Sally*:

"Chumps always make the best husbands. When you marry, Sally, marry a chump. Tap his forehead first, and if it rings solid, don't hesitate. All the unhappy marriages come from the husbands having brains. What good are brains to a man? They only unsettle him."

Perhaps the final similarity between these two great English novelists is the way they saw their craft. Dickens, in a tribute to Tracery, stated that every writer of fiction, though he may not adopt the dramatic form, writes in effect for the stage. And Plum, writing to Townend again, stated, "The principle I always go on in writing a long story is to think of the characters as if they were living, salaried actors; I believe this isn't vanity but is based on an instinctive knowledge of stagecraft."

Very different writers, though with striking similarities—the sheer volume, quality, and universal appeal of their stories ensure their immortality.

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