



Plum Lines

The quarterly journal of The Wodehouse Society

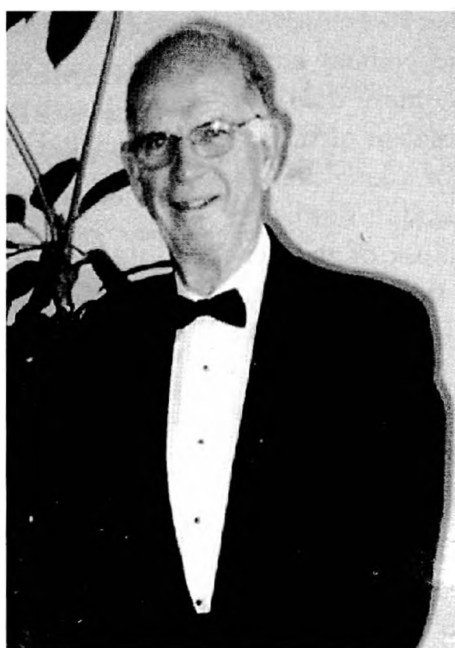
Volume 24 Number 4 Winter 2003

Pip, Pip to a Fine O.M.!

AS SOME sage person once said, all good things must come to an end—but how do we say farewell to somebody as good as Ed Ratcliffe? After almost 16 years as our Oldest Member, aka Editor in Chief of *Plum Lines*, Ed has decided to step down and take it easy. (A cry goes round the membership: “Oh, no! What do we do now?” Never fear: Dan Cohen is stepping up to the plate and taking over editorial duties as of this issue. See pages XX-XX to meet Dan and to learn about other changes in the organization.)

Ed took over as the editor of *Plum Lines* from The Wodehouse Society's founder, Bill Blood; his first issue as O.M. was published in February 1988. At that time The Wodehouse Society was just eight years old, with a small membership, and *Plum Lines* consisted of mimeographed pages stapled at the corner. Ed began working his magic at once, playing with fonts (one of his many passions) as well as design and layout, and adding more and more to the content as the newsletter gradually and subtly changed. A turning point came with the publication of the Summer 1994 issue. Handsomely produced and, for the first time, stapled down the center, *Plum Lines* was joining the ranks of the higher-class literary journals. Each issue brought new improvements. And as *Plum Lines* got better and better, the Society's numbers swelled.

It would not be exaggerating to say that Ed Ratcliffe has been largely responsible for TWS's current state of good health. As Tony Ring notes below, the Society's journal is its “external face”; it is what most of our members pay



Oldest Member Ed Ratcliffe

their subscriptions for. Many of us gather at the biennial conventions, and many of us talk to each other and share news via the Internet. However, the vast majority are connected through *Plum Lines*, brought together by the work of one man: Ed Ratcliffe. Ed eventually recruited people to help him with the journal. But all would agree that he and he alone made it what it is today. And because we have such a hard time letting go of him, Ed has been made Editor Emeritus of *Plum Lines*—a position he's stuck with for life!

Words can never do justice to a man who has made such a huge difference to The Wodehouse So-

ciet. Nevertheless, some of Ed's friends have weighed in with thoughts and memories that may provide some idea of the respect in which he is held.

Phil Ayers:

WHEN I THINK of Ed I always remember first the New York convention (1991). I attended a rehearsal by the Blandings Castle chapter of their skit. As they read their lines, Ed kept laughing. I know he must have read those Wodehouse gems many times and yet he laughed as if it were the first time. His laugh was so infectious that I found myself laughing with him. His laughter and the words of Plum filled that room plum full of joy.

Florence Cunningham and I recently attended

group of knowledgeable Wodehousians. Duke then said to Ed, "Oh, I heard your laugh," which seems to me a great distinction that out of a packed theatre audience he could single out the sound of one man's laughter. Ed's laugh also frequently occurs when he is reading to himself and comes across some particularly felicitous Wodehouse or Jane Austen phrase. We are indeed fortunate to have been able to share Ed's sense of humor, which has permeated *Plum Lines* for so many years.

David Landman:

AS ED'S SUBALTERN on *Plum Lines* for three years—though he always graciously insisted we were equals—I have had the opportunity to see the man "in house," as it were; that is, in the seething vortex that characterizes the inner workings of *Plum Lines*. I can report with admiration and respect that in moments of crisis, when all about him were broken and imperfect types, blind stamped and glazed as vellum, Ed retained his perfect binding and coolly emerged justified right and left. Hold Ed up to the light and you will see the watermark, Old Style Gentleman.

Part of my duties at *Plum Lines* was to receive submissions and engage in preliminary editorial correspondence with contributors. At those rare times when one was dealing with a "touchy" author (yes, there were some) or had to write a diplomatic revision request or, alas, on occasion, a benign rejection letter, I always turned the matter over to Ed. The inevitable result was sweetness and light all round. I stand in awe of the man's supreme tact, tolerance, and taste—in chocolate as well as literature.

I am grateful that working for *Plum Lines* enabled me to call myself the friend of this sweet-tempered and truly noble man.

Marilyn MacGregor:

KIND, GENEROUS, witty, editorially talented, fun, literarily learned, friendly, the most wonderful Lord Emsworth there could ever be, a true Wodehouse fan, and absolutely one of the finest friends anyone could ever have. That's Ed Ratcliffe!

Norman Murphy: "I Had Vision"

I HAVE KNOWN and liked Ed Ratcliffe for so long that I found it difficult to remember when we first met. I suppose it must have been on the famous

Wodehouse Pilgrimage of 1989. It was a splendid event, and Ed was one of those who made it so. His enjoyment of Wodehouse, his appreciation of the Wodehouse sites, his delight in looking at Wodehouse's England—all helped the success of the trip. We became friends; he came to stay with my family in Cumbria, and amongst other things he provided the services of his daughter Catherine to drive me all around Hollywood on my visit there in 1990.

The 1991 TWS convention was held in New York, and I wrote what I'm told was the first of the Wodehouse convention skits. In "The Rise of Minna Nordstrom," Mr. Schnellenhamer smiles quietly when asked about the discovery of Minna Nordstrom. "I had vision," he said. Well, I had vision too. In that immortal sketch, "Lord Emsworth and a Fate Worse than Death," I created a legend. While the outside world saw Ed as a scientist, husband, and father, I saw behind the facade to the man beneath: a man born to play Lord Emsworth. I was right, and he's been doing it ever since—and better and better every time. His editing isn't so bad either.

Tony Ring:

AS EDITOR of *Wooster Sauce*, the UK Society's equivalent of *Plum Lines*, I, more than most, know how difficult a job Ed has been faced with for the last sixteen years or so. The journal is the external face of the Society, the main reason why its members remain willing to pay an annual subscription. To be responsible for commissioning articles to be written, collating the material received, putting it into readable format, and finalizing publication details is a mammoth task, and Ed can be proud of what he has achieved.

Toni Rudersdorf:

I WAS in San Francisco sometime during the 1990s when Ed and Missy Ratcliffe were hosting a meeting of the Blandings Castle west chapter. I will never forget their inviting and friendly home, filled with colorful Blandings Westiens who were like a musical comedy act all day long. Everybody brought a potluck dish and after our first meal we all sat around reading from one of the books the Blandings chapter were planning to work up into a script. It was a pleasure-filled visit, made perfect by our host and hostess whose good cheer kept us all bouncing along as if we were at Blandings the original.

Jean Tillson:

THE THING I will always, always remember Ed for is his role as Lord Emsworth in the Blandings Castle chapter reading of "Pighooey!" at the Boston convention (1995). That reading was one of their best to begin with, but the sight of Ed trying to deliver his lines through his own tears of laughter made it absolutely priceless. Whenever I read a Blandings Castle story now I envision Ed as Lord Emsworth and my enjoyment is doubled.

Tom Wainwright:

I HAVE KNOWN Ed Ratcliffe since 1954, when we were both working in the trenches of the Cold War. I don't know when he first caught the PGW bug, but he didn't spread the infection to me till about 1970. For me Ed's most endearing quality is his tremendous capacity for enjoyment. A few of his passions past and present that I can list are Missy, Jane Austen, bicycles, dictionaries, typefaces, wood turning, Plum, maps of England, friends, marine life, and good wine. The pleasure he has taken in these and other pursuits is both palpable and contagious.

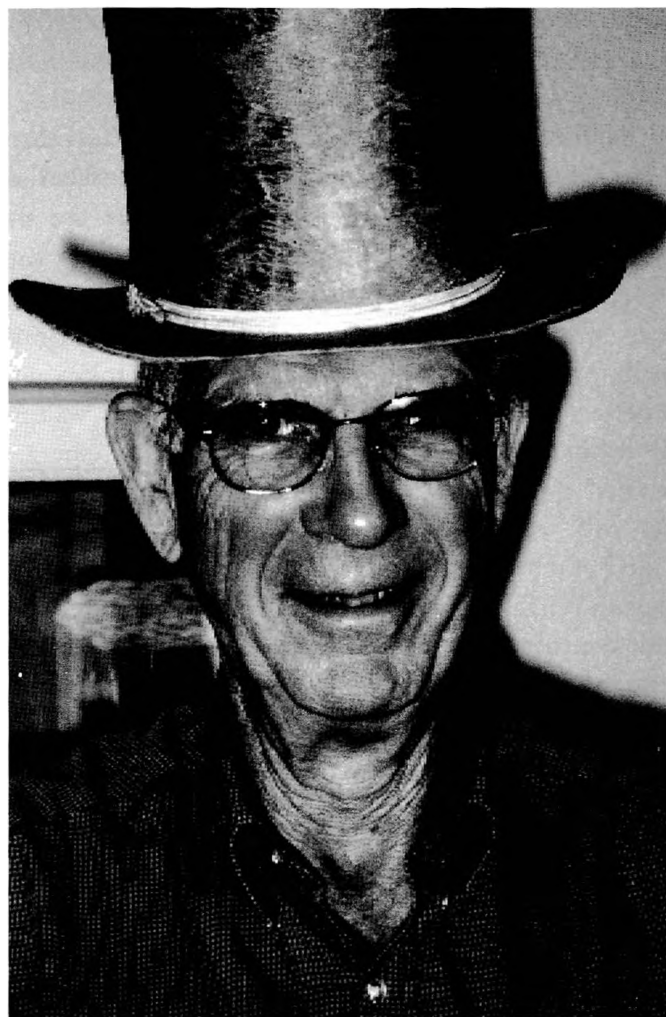
Elin Woodger:

JUST AFTER the 1995 Boston convention, Ed applied a soft twist to my arm, and I suddenly found I had agreed to help him edit *Plum Lines*. Such is the cunning of this gentle, kindhearted, and charming man! As I review the years of our friendship and our work together, I am struck time and again by his Wodehousian sense of humor, which added so much to *Plum Lines* as well as to my appreciation of Ed himself. Look at his introductions to articles and his editorial comments—the work of a man who not only knew his subject well but could often rival Wodehouse in his turn of a phrase. Look at how *Plum Lines* metamorphosed over time from a set of stapled, photocopied pages to an attractive, scholarly, and witty journal—clearly a labor of love. Look at his wife Missy and his two daughters, and it is easy to see how family has played such an important part in the success he has brought to *Plum Lines*. Ed Ratcliffe—you are one in a billion, and if Dan Cohen will excuse my saying so, *Plum Lines* isn't going to be the same without you!

Cards, letters, and certificates good for redemption at his local pub may be sent to Ed's address, which you may find

on our membership roster. It's inevitable that we will tap that mighty Editor Emeritus brain from time to time, so gifts of fish may be apropos to keep the old cerebellum in tip-top shape. Fortunately, Ed was able to find a hat large enough to contain all of his accumulated wisdom.

Pip, pip, Oldest Member!



He was humming as he approached the terrace. He had his programme all mapped out. For perhaps an hour, till the day had cooled off a little, he would read a Pig book in the library. After that he would go and take a sniff at a rose or two and possibly do a bit of snailing. These mild pleasures were all his simple soul demanded. He wanted nothing more. Just the quiet life, with nobody to fuss him.

"The Crime Wave at Blandings," 1936

Six Degrees of P. G. Wodehouse

BY DAVID McDONOUGH

In the mid-1990s a game called Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon became a nationwide fad. It was based on the play *Six Degrees of Separation*. The idea was that we are all connected by six or fewer stages of circumstances or acquaintance. These can be pretty far-fetched—and that's the fun of the game. The always inventive David McDonough has played the game with Plum and the movies. Match wits and knowledge with him. —Ed.

WITH OSCAR season breathing down our necks again, it is important for Plummities of all ages to once again pause to pay tribute to P.G.'s contributions to the performing arts.

True, the shortsighted members of the Motion Picture Academy of Arts and Sciences never saw fit to honor the Master with one of their gold statuettes ("Gold-plated, I fear, sir"). Not that he would have been impressed with an Oscar—Plum probably would have used it to strike matches to light his pipe. But it is worth noting that Plum has an Academy Award connection, and not just the fact that Jerome Kern got one. Each winner in the Best Actress category, from 1927 on, can be connected to P. G. Wodehouse in no more than three degrees.

Give it a try. Think film, theater, and television—the more esoteric, the better. A big hint: When in doubt, think David Niven. If you come up with better links than we did, you are entitled to your choice of cigar or coconut. The answers can be found on pages 18–19.

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| 1. Janet Gaynor (1928) | 33. Julie Christie (1965) |
| 2. Mary Pickford (1929) | 34. Barbra Streisand (1968) |
| 3. Norma Shearer (1930) | 35. Maggie Smith (1969) |
| 4. Marie Dressler (1931) | 36. Glenda Jackson (1970, 1973) |
| 5. Helen Hayes (1932) | 37. Jane Fonda (1971, 1978) |
| 6. Katharine Hepburn (1933, 1967, 1968, 1981) | 38. Liza Minnelli (1972) |
| 7. Claudette Colbert (1934) | 39. Ellen Burstyn (1974) |
| 8. Bette Davis (1935) | 40. Louise Fletcher (1975) |
| 9. Luise Rainer (1936, 1937) | 41. Faye Dunaway (1976) |
| 10. Vivien Leigh (1939, 1951) | 42. Diane Keaton (1977) |
| 11. Ginger Rogers (1940) | 43. Sally Field (1979, 1984) |
| 12. Joan Fontaine (1941) | 44. Sissy Spacek (1980) |
| 13. Greer Garson (1942) | 45. Meryl Streep (1982) |
| 14. Jennifer Jones (1943) | 46. Shirley MacLaine (1983) |
| 15. Ingrid Bergman (1944, 1956) | 47. Geraldine Page (1985) |
| 16. Joan Crawford (1945) | 48. Marlee Matlin (1986) |
| 17. Olivia de Havilland (1946, 1949) | 49. Cher (1987) |
| 18. Loretta Young (1947) | 50. Jodie Foster (1988, 1991) |
| 19. Jane Wyman (1948) | 51. Jessica Tandy (1989) |
| 20. Judy Holliday (1950) | 52. Kathy Bates (1990) |
| 21. Shirley Booth (1952) | 53. Emma Thompson (1992) |
| 22. Audrey Hepburn (1953) | 54. Holly Hunter (1993) |
| 23. Grace Kelly (1954) | 55. Jessica Lange (1994) |
| 24. Anna Magnani (1955) | 56. Susan Sarandon (1995) |
| 25. Joanne Woodward (1957) | 57. Frances McDormand (1996) |
| 26. Susan Hayward (1958) | 58. Helen Hunt (1997) |
| 27. Simone Signoret (1959) | 59. Gwyneth Paltrow (1998) |
| 28. Elizabeth Taylor (1960, 1966) | 60. Hilary Swank (1999) |
| 29. Sophia Loren (1961) | 61. Julia Roberts (2000) |
| 30. Anne Bancroft (1962) | 62. Halle Berry (2001) |
| 31. Patricia Neal (1963) | 63. Nicole Kidman (2002) |
| 32. Julie Andrews (1964) | |



The Casting Couch

BY DAN COHEN

IF YOU HAVE ever run a TWS chapter, then you have probably come up against that moment of truth when you have to admit to yourself, "Ohmy-god we don't have a program for the next meeting." Here is a suggestion. Play the game where you allow your members to imagine that they are movie directors (or producers or studio heads or whatever) and are casting a film based on a P. G. Wodehouse book.

Plum spent a lot of time in Hollywood during Tinsel Town's most baroque period. His Hollywood stories are among the funniest he ever wrote, and some of the best stories ever written about Hollywood. But his work has not fared well on the Silver Screen. To date films based on Wodehouse works have ranged from disappointing to downright awful.

But Wodehouse fans are often film buffs, and we can't help playing the game of "what if" in our minds. Most of all we try to match Wodehouse characters with actors and actresses—a sort of fantasy football for Plummies. A few months ago we played this game at a meeting of Chapter One. Before the meeting, members were supplied with a list of Wodehouse characters and told to pick the actor or actress—from any era—they thought would best fit the role, and then defend the choice. The result was a surprising list of choices and a very animated discussion. There was then a general vote on the best choices. Following are some of the winners:

Jeeves: Orson Welles

Bertie: the young Ian Carmichael

Psmith: Noel Coward

Gussie Fink-Nottle: Harold Lloyd

Aunt Agatha: Judith Anderson

Aunt Dahlia: Marie Dressler

Lady Constance: Bette Davis

Bobbie Wickham: Carole Lombard

Who would you cast? Let us know!

"No, sir. It is on the upper lip. A dark stain like mulligatawny soup."



Orson Welles



Marie Dressler

"You really are an abysmal ass, young Bertie."

Wodehouse On Stage

BY AMY PLOFKER

AUTUMN 2003 saw the American premiere of the 1927 play *Good Morning, Bill* in New York, while May 2004 promises the American premiere of the 1922 musical *The Cabaret Girl* in San Francisco. We've also been blessed by not one but two productions of *The Play's the Thing* in Chicago, and productions of *Oh, Boy!* in New York and Houston.

This wealth of Wodehouse revivals has spawned a new feature, the "Wodehouse On Stage" page on the TWS website (<http://www.wodehouse.org/OnStage.html>). We will also give a brief listing in *Plum Lines* as space allows. We urge our readers to serve as our spies and send information on upcoming productions in the U.S. and Canada to Amy Plofker (information on back cover).

Upcoming productions:

The Cabaret Girl 1 May–16 May 2004

(previews April 28–30)

42nd Street Moon Theatre Company, Eureka Theatre

215 Jackson St. (between Battery & Front)

San Francisco, California

Call 415-978-2787 for tickets or visit

www.42ndstmoon.org for more information.

Have a Heart 4 May–16 May 2004

Musicals Tonight Company

Main Stage in Goldman 14th Street YMHA

344 E. 14th St. (between 1st & 2nd Aves.)

New York, New York

Performances Tues–Sat at 7:30 P.M., with matinees on Wednesday, Saturday, and Sunday at 2:30 P.M.

Book tickets (\$19) through www.smarttix.com

or phone 212-868-4444. For more information, visit <http://www.musicalstonight.org/previews.html>.

Collecting Wodehouse: 100 Years of School Stories

BY JOHN GRAHAM

BEFORE THEY close the book on 2003, I want to use this column to salute two works P. G. Wodehouse published 100 years ago—*A Prefect's Uncle* and *Tales of St Austin's*. Both books were published in England by A & C Black, who had issued his first novel, *The Pothunters*, the previous year. *A Prefect's Uncle* appeared on September 11, 1903, and *Tales of St Austin's* followed two months later. They sold for three and a half shillings each (or, if you prefer decimals, 0.175 pounds). In late December 2003 there were three copies of the 1903 edition of *A Prefect's Uncle* for sale on abebooks.com, ranging in price from \$2,000 to \$4,500. No first editions of *Tales of St Austin's* were listed (confirming my long-held suspicion that it is the rarer volume), but when copies do appear, they tend to sell in the same price range.

A Prefect's Uncle is unique among Plum's school stories in that it is the only one not to have appeared previously in a magazine. The first edition is bound in red cloth, with drawings in gray, red, pink, and black on the front cover and spine. The front cover (which reproduces the black and white frontispiece) shows school prefect Alan Gethryn, hands on hips, staring down at Beckford College's newest arrival, Reginald Farnie, who is four years his junior and happens to be his uncle. Reginald, in top hat and tails, has both hands in his pockets as he stares glumly back at his nephew—or as Wodehouse describes it: "His face wore a bored, supercilious look, as if he had seen the hollowness of things."

Tales of St Austin's is Plum's first book of short stories. It contains 12 public school stories (all set, quite naturally, at St Austin's) and four short essays, including one in which Wodehouse wrestles with the "Homeric Question" of who really wrote *Tom Brown's Schooldays*. Like its predecessor, the first edition book is bound in red cloth with color illustrations on the front cover and spine. There is also an early (and quite scarce) reissue with the same cover illustrations in olive green cloth. There are also red cloth reissues of both *Tales of St Austin's* and *A Prefect's Uncle*, distinguishable from true firsts only by the addition of a glossy advertising insert at the back. These inserts are easily removed, which has tended to increase the supply of first editions over time as their prices have risen.

It is quite likely that both first editions were issued in dust jackets, but don't count on uncovering jacketed copies today. In her Wodehouse bibliography, Eileen McIlvaine describes the yellow dust jacket for *A Prefect's Uncle* and even includes a photograph of one on the first page of her book's color plates. Several years ago the U.K.'s foremost Wodehouse bookseller, Nigel Williams, offered a copy of a 1912 reprint in dust jacket for £2,500. As far as I know, no one has ever seen a first-edition dust jacket for *Tales of St Austin's*. If you own one, please let me know—and do send a picture.

Between 1922 and 1924, Black reissued Plum's first six school books (*The Pothunters* through *The White Feather*) in a uniform series with red boards and vivid multicolor dust jackets, and reprinted most of them several times into the early 1930s. After that, *A Prefect's Uncle* and *Tales of St Austin's* (along with their other school mates) remained out of print until 1972 when London's Souvenir Press reissued them with a five-page afterword by Colin MacInnes. (MacInnes shows a surprising affection for Plum's naïve school stories—given that the subject matter of his own fiction has been described by Joseph Connolly as "teenage rebellion, pop music, the plight of blacks in Britain, and the drug scene." It may be interesting to know that he was the son of Angela Thirkell, whose own satirical stories of English country life have much more in common with the world of Wodehouse.) Copies of all six Souvenir Press volumes in dust jacket are easy to find on the internet and list for \$20 to \$50, depending on condition and the bookseller's whim. Jacketless copies of the 1920s Black volumes sell for just slightly more; copies in dust jacket are rarely seen.

As far as I know, no American book firm has ever published either *A Prefect's Uncle* or *Tales of St Austin's* (although Macmillan New York is alleged to have issued both books from imported sheets in 1903 and to have reprinted them from imported plates in the 1920s). Both books made it to paperback in 1986 when Penguin issued *The Pothunters and Other Stories*, an omnibus volume of the first three school books. And finally, 100 years after they were written, both books made it to computer disk, along with 55 other early Wodehouse gems (on a CD with the overly ambitious title of *Collected Works*) thanks to spinsmart.com, which offers its wares on eBay.

If you want to read even more bibliographic details about these books, I highly recommend you seek out the November 2003 issue of *Book and Magazine Collector*, published in the U.K. In it, TWS members Tony Ring and Nick Townend have written a splendid 15-page article entitled “The School Stories of PG Wodehouse.” The article covers all the school stories (up to 1913’s *The Little Nugget*) and includes a checklist and price guide to both book and magazine appearances.

The pulp-sized *Book and Magazine Collector* may not be up to the production standards of its U.S. equivalent, *Firsts* (which, as you may recall, featured Wodehouse in its January 2003 issue), but for us Wodehousians, what BMC lacks in quality it certainly makes up for in quantity. The November 2003 article represents the 10th time in the magazine’s 20-year history it has featured an article on Wodehouse—indeed, by my count, no other author has appeared more frequently. If you want to get hold of all 10 articles, look for issues number 6, 48, 76, 108, 146, 170, 191, 209, 220, and 236, the last five of which have been choreographed by Tony Ring. Back issues of the magazine frequently surface on eBay. You can also order directly from the publisher, although unfortunately, they do not have a website. Instead, you can e-mail the magazine for purchasing details at Janice.mayne@dpgsubs.co.uk.

Speaking of websites, it was inevitable that someone would finally develop an online Wodehouse bibliography. The honors go to Rod Collins and Shane Chapman of U.K.-based Goldeneye Rare Books, who have created PGWodehouseBooks.com. On it, they offer Wodehouse first editions, reprints, and paperbacks for sale. But best of all, they have created a splendid online Wodehouse bibliography, with full-color illustrations of U.S. and U.K. first-edition book covers, as well as many rare dust jackets, including several not pictured in McIlvaine. If you haven’t “Googled” your way to their website already, it is definitely worth a visit.

And so it’s on to 2004, in which we’ll celebrate the centenary of Wodehouse’s only book written primarily for children, the 75th anniversary of a popular entry in the Blandings Castle saga, and the 50th of a Jeeves novel which debuted on Plum’s own 73rd birthday.

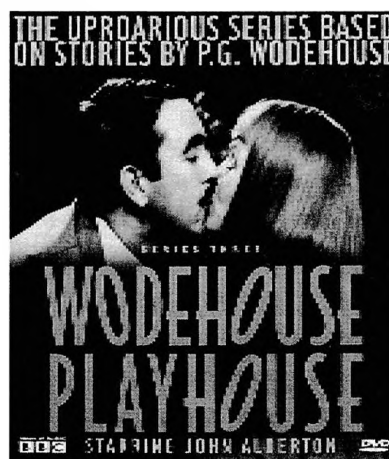
Bad Company?

IN A 1993 INTERVIEW, British/American writer and contrarian Christopher Hitchens identified P. G. Wodehouse as possibly his favorite author and went on to say, “You get into terrifically bad company some of the time if you’re a fan of Wodehouse . . . P. G. Wodehouse is the author of the most imperishable double act in fictional history: Bertie Wooster and his manservant Jeeves. Of course, a joke is never a joke if it has to be explained, so to those who haven’t found and discovered and immersed themselves in this, I can only say they should start today. It sounds a bit ‘cultish,’ but those who have already done it will already know what I’m talking about.”

Thanks to Viscount Bosham for locating this most interesting interview.

Wodehouse Playhouse Series Three

Acorn Media has released the third and final series of the 1970s BBC production *Wodehouse Playhouse*. These seven episodes were not shown in the United States. Among the stories dramatized are classics like “The Smile that Wins” and “Mulliner’s Buck-U-Uppo.” The two-DVD set is available directly from Acorn Media (www.acorn-media.com) and from a variety of DVD and video catalogs. Prices vary.



From Ex-Sgt. Beale to Colonel Pashley-Drake: The Military Man in Wodehouse

BY MAJOR THOMAS L. SMITH,
USA (Retired), M.S.Sc.

A paper presented at the August 2003 convention of The Wodehouse Society, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

AS A RETIRED SOLDIER and Old Antarctic Explorer, I must say that I feel a certain affinity for the military men who show up in the works of Wodehouse. However, I often felt Wodehouse just didn't use enough of us in his stories. When embarking on this research, I thought I might be able to come up with maybe a half dozen characters in the collected works of Wodehouse who were military men. Off the top of my head I could name Majors Brabazon-Plank and "Plug" Basham. And I vaguely recalled a few retired soldiers appearing as boxing coaches, disciplinarians, and sweet-shop owners in the school stories. But I was surprised to learn, after going through Dan Garrison's *Who's Who in Wodehouse*, that there are at least 55 characters with military titles or a reference to military service in the entry.¹

For the most part, the military man in Wodehouse is a minor character, a member of the supporting cast—a walk-on. Many don't even have speaking parts and some don't even walk on at all, but are merely referred to in the story. Even so, there are two main characters in the world of Wodehouse who are military men and there is at least one story with a military theme: *The Swoop*. I will cover the main characters a bit later, but first I would like to review how these military men break out. In keeping with my current profession as an econometrician, I've accumulated some statistics: There are one admiral, five generals, three major generals, 18 colonels, one lieutenant colonel, nine majors, seven captains, one second lieutenant, one sergeant major, two sergeants, and one corporal. There are a handful of characters whose ranks are not mentioned.

While the most common rank held by these military men is colonel, the "average" rank is major. Needless to say, the vast majority of these military men are officers. Many have had distinguished military careers and eight

of the characters have earned titles. In addition to Sir Agravaire, we find Admiral Sir George Biffen, General Sir Hector Bloodenough, General Sir Frederick Featherstone, Major General Sir Wilfred Boshier, Major General Sir Masterman Petherick-Soames, Major General Sir Edward Venables, and Colonel Sir Francis Pashley-Drake. There are also two princes and one count, although these men inherited their titles rather than earned them through military service. Nevertheless, they still served in the military or in military operations. One prince commanded the German invasion force in *The Swoop*; the other, Prince John, led loyalist troops in a counter-revolution in *The Prince and Betty*. There are indications that one or two of the military men in Wodehouse left the service under questionable circumstances, and quite a few are inept. We find among the soldiers handsome guard officers, daring adventurers, and men's men.

IN MOST CASES, when these soldiers appear in the world of Wodehouse, they are retired, no longer in active service, or engaged in nonmilitary pursuits. Many of these characters are "gentlemen": They are squires, maintain country homes, and have vicarages to bestow on promising rugby players. In *Stiff Upper Lip*, Jeeves, Major "Barmy" Plank sets out to build the best village football team around and offers a vicarage to Stinker Pinker in return for Stinker's services on the team.² We also find among these military country gentlemen a chief magistrate and a chief constable. One of the most popular professions, off the battlefield, among these men is great white hunter or explorer. There are three explorers: Captain Jack Fosdyke, Major Brabazon-Plank, and Major Barmy Plank. Colonel Sir Francis Pashley-Drake and Captain Cuthbert Brabazon-Biggare are both described as great white hunters. In the short story "A Good Cigar is a Smoke," Sir Francis entitles his memoirs *My Life with Rod and Gun*.³

As I mentioned earlier, at least two major characters had a background of military service. Archibald Moffam of *Indiscretions of Archie* had served as a second lieutenant and machine gun platoon leader during the Great War. However, in the chapter "Strange Experience of an

Artist's Model," Archie finds himself a handsome, dashing, artist's model.

The other major character with a military past is Jefferson, Comte d'Auguste, the major character of the novel *French Leave*. Jefferson held the rank of captain in the Maquis, a Free French underground unit during World War II. This is one of the few references Wodehouse made to the Second World War in his stories. Other than that reference, we learn little about Jefferson's military exploits and learn only that Jefferson is a writer.

ONE MAY ASK why Wodehouse used military characters in his books, particularly when his stories are rarely on military topics? We know that Wodehouse had no military experience himself. He was rejected for military service during the Great War for poor eyesight. So what was the attraction? Considering the subject matter of Wodehouse's world, the military man was a regular component of the English society Wodehouse writes about. At a typical country-house weekend, you couldn't swing a dead cat without hitting an officer. The British military, like the law and priesthood, was one of the careers suitable for the younger sons of British aristocracy. An upper-class younger son could go into the military and earn a title of his own, and through military service the upper middle classes could also rise to the ranks of nobility. We can be sure that Wodehouse had plenty of opportunities to become acquainted with military men, and there were more than a few illustrious soldiers in the family. Plum was even named after his godfather, an army colonel. His cousin, Captain Philip George Wodehouse, commanded England's first aircraft carrier and his son-in-law served as an officer in the British Army during World War II. A Major Wodehouse was instrumental in preventing a war between the United States and Great Britain at the end of the 19th century over oil rights in Venezuela.

But that still doesn't answer why Wodehouse would use so many military men in his stories. To answer that question, we must turn to Kristin Thompson. In her work *Wooster Proposes, Jeeves Disposes; or Le Mot Juste*, Thompson points out that "Wodehouse's originality lies, paradoxically, in his systematic dependence on previous works and in his insistence on convention and cliché."⁴ By using a military title or attributing a military background to a character, Wodehouse economizes

in building the character and then can proceed with the story at hand. Readers, with their preconceived notions of soldiers and the military will provide much of the character's background themselves. Introduce a colonel into the story, and most of us imagine a no-nonsense, tough, gruff older fellow. A Colonel Murphy, for example. When Plum needs a competitor for a major character's love interest, all he needs to do is introduce a Guards officer. Someone knowledgeable of the British military of the time now knows a lot about the competition. Guards officers came from the best families, and Guards commissions were expensive and hard to come by. A Guards officer didn't expect to live off of his military pay; in fact the cost of uniforms and mess fees usually exceeded the pay of the officer. While younger sons were sent into the British Army to get them off the family payroll, the families of Guards officers were expected to supplement their earnings for most of the time the soldier served on active duty. Their families had to have the financial wherewithal to keep a Guard officer on the active rolls. Guards units were the elite soldiers and were "the King's Own." So by introducing a competitor who is a Guards officer, Wodehouse is giving our hero stiff competition indeed.

Part of Wodehouse's humor, though—the paradox that Thompson mentions—is that he introduces the military character in a story and then proceeds to show how the old soldier isn't the tough man's man we expect to find. Colonel Sir Pashley-Drake, great white hunter, magistrate, and country squire, lives in fear that his cook will leave him if she catches him smoking cigars. In the school stories, gruff old ex-sergeants are among the most sympathetic characters in the stories.

As is usually the case with Wodehouse, some of the characters, or at least their names, are tributes or references to real people. In the list of military characters, we find two characters who pay homage to a real person, who was a contemporary of Plum's. Major Brabazon-Plank and Captain Cuthbert Brabazon-Biggar both refer to the historical person Lord Brabazon of Tara. Who was this Lord Brabazon and what was his connection to Wodehouse? I'll answer the first question but must let the second go, for now. Perhaps the connection, if there is any, can form the basis of a future article. Lord Brabazon was born John Theodore Cuthbert Moore-Brabazon in 1884, a member of an Anglo-Irish aristocratic family. With great wealth at his disposal, John Moore-Brabazon became England's aviation pioneer and racked up many

firsts in English aviation history. Among his firsts was the first sustained flight in England and the first circular mile flown in England. He may have been England's first licensed pilot. There is some dispute over this, but he was the founding member of the British Air Club. In addition to flying airplanes, he became an associate of Charles Rolls and designed and built airplanes.

He entered the House of Lords in 1910 and made a reputation for himself as a proponent of aviation and technology. He was rewarded for his work in aviation by being appointed Minister of Transport and Minister of Aircraft Production during World War II. He was made the first Minister of Civilian Aviation shortly after World War II. He was tasked with making Britain more competitive in the world of civilian aviation and modernizing British aviation. Apparently his work here was questionable at best. His term as minister was dogged by accusations of bribery, graft, and ineptitude. While he allowed others to run amok in his department, he concentrated on the development of the largest aircraft built in Britain, the Bristol 167 Brabazon. While a prototype aircraft did make it off the ground, the plane never went into production, the project was plagued by cost overruns, and Brabazon quietly left public life. Brabazon took up other interests in his retirement: he began driving racecars and took up golf. At the age of 70, he made the bobsled run at St. Moritz. He died in London in 1964.

TO ME, THOUGH, his most notable achievement was an event that Plum must surely have read and chuckled about. In 1909, the year before he ascended to his title, Moore-Brabazon set out to prove a long-held personal belief. He tied a wastepaper basket to the wing strut of his airplane, and using this as a "cargo hold," Moore-Brabazon placed a small pig in the basket. Moore-Brabazon and pig then made history with the first live cargo flight, proving his pet theory that pigs could fly.⁵

Footnotes

1. Garrison, Daniel H. *Who's Who in Wodehouse*, 2nd ed. (New York: International Polygons, 1989).
2. Wodehouse, P. G. *Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves* (London: Everyman Publishers, LTD, 2000), p. 90.
3. Garrison, pp. 138–39; Wodehouse, "A Good Cigar is a Smoke," *Plum Pie* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1966), pp. 183–206; Wodehouse, "A Good Cigar is a Smoke," *Plum Pie* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1966), pp. 161–81. (Originally appeared in *Playboy*.)

4. Thompson, Kristin. *Wooster Proposes, Jeeves Disposes; or Le Mot Juste* (New York: Heineman, 1992), p. 120.

5. "Hargrave: The Pioneers: Saluting the Men and Women of Aviation History." URL: <http://www.ctie.monash.edu.au/hargrave/brabazon.html>



Note from the Editor: Are you wondering about that "Old Antarctic Explorer" title in the first line of the paper? I asked Tom Smith about it and discovered that it is a real if perhaps informal title. It is bestowed, as Tom writes, on "those of us who actually made it on the Antarctic continent as opposed to those support personnel who merely stayed in McMurdo on Ross Island." Tom earned the title as a member of the Naval Force Support Antarctica from 1987 to 1989, when he made trips as far as the South Pole.



The Empress lived in a bijou residence not far from the kitchen garden, and when Lord Emsworth arrived at her boudoir she was engaged, as pretty nearly always when you dropped in on her, in hoisting into her vast interior those fifty-seven thousand and eight hundred calories on which Whiffle insists.

Pigs Have Wings, 1952

Dan Cohen, Our New *Plum Lines* Editor

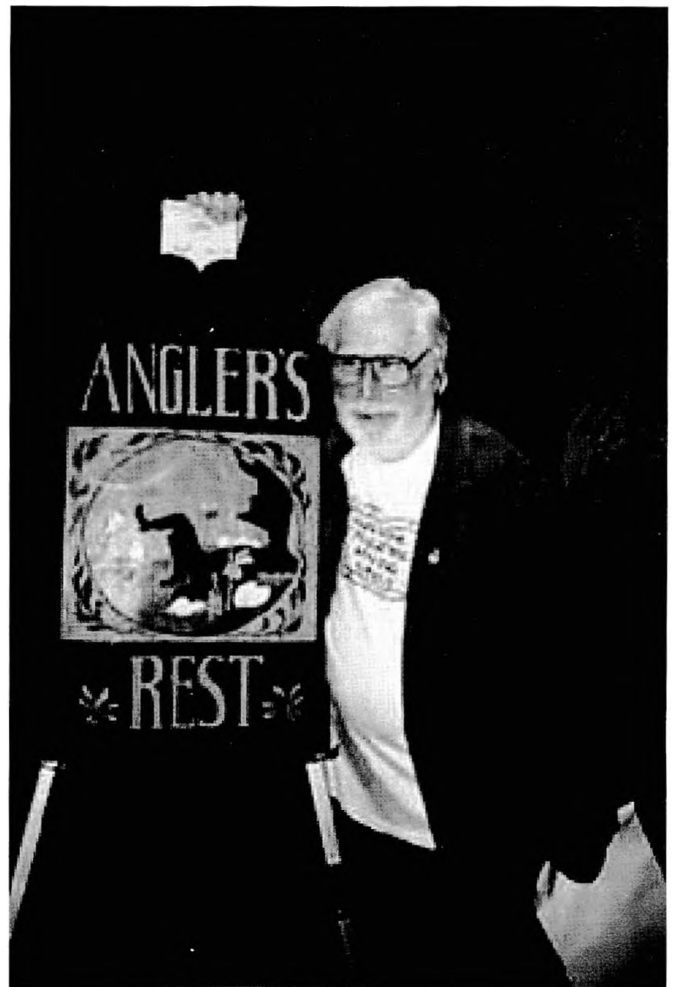
A note from TWS President Jan Wilson Kaufman: Dan Cohen, who is going to tackle the very demanding job of editing Plum Lines, is a professional writer whose life has been very like Plum's in some ways. His wife Susan, who is also a writer, has just completed a two-year term as The Wodehouse Society's president. Together they founded Philadelphia's Chapter One, and they both worked very hard on organizing the fine TWS convention in Philadelphia (2001). Dan gave a very entertaining talk and demonstration on mixed drinks called "Wodehouse at the Bar" at the Houston convention (1999). Who's Who in America lists over 190 books that he has written on a wide variety of topics, starting with *Myths of the Space Age* in 1967 and most recently a series for kids on dinosaurs with jaw-breaking names like *Pachycephalosaurus*. Before that he and Susan collaborated on *Haunting and Horrors: The Ultimate Guide to Spooky America*. Dan's own words follow, in answer to my innumerable questions.

SINCE I HAVE SPENT my entire career as a professional writer and editor, I think I look at Wodehouse differently than most TWS members would. Fans look for him in a world of public schools, London clubs, and country houses. But he was an amazingly hardworking professional writer, and he spent most of his life in a small room with a manual typewriter and a sheet of paper. He didn't spend time hobnobbing with peers or butlers; what hobnobbing he did would have been mostly with editors, agents, publishers, and (when necessary) other writers.

So much of Wodehouse's real world, the world of the writer, can be found in his books. I have never actually tried to count them, but I would place a small bet that there are more writers, editors, and publishers among the characters created by Wodehouse than there are peers or butlers. Just look at the numbers of them: Rosie M. Banks, Vladimir Brusiloff, Lady Florence Craye, Rodney Spelvin, Lady Wickham, Boko Fittleworth, Blair Eggleston, Ashe Marson, Viscount Tilbury, Julia Ukridge, "Corky" (Ukridge's Boswell), James Rodman, Ralston McTodd—the list goes on and on. And these are just the full-timers. Psmith was a journalist, at least for one book. When not betting, Bingo is editor of *Wee Tots*. Aunt Dahlia is editor of the famously money-losing publication *Milady's Boudoir*. Before he became a detective, Percy Pilbeam

edited *Society Spice*. Gally is the author of the greatest book never published. Again the list goes on and on.

Plum's correspondence reveals a man who is not interested in discussing the great issues of the day or higher spiritual matters. He talks about royalties and rights and deadlines and the state of the "market" for humorous fiction and plays. These are the subjects that are of interest to the hardworking professional writer. Though Plum was a genius, and I am a mere journeyman, I am just egotistical enough to regard him as a colleague. In terms of "six degrees of separation," my longtime agent began his career in the office of Scott Meredith, Plum's longtime agent. I am quite old enough to remember the manual typewriter, strikeovers, galley proofs, and the three-martini New York publishing lunch. Granted, I don't remember those lunches too clearly, but no one ever did—that was the point. During the 1960s Plum's world and mine, the world of New York pub-



lishing, overlapped. Unfortunately, I never met him.

In describing Wodehouse as a genius, I have a particular meaning. When I come across an unusually well-turned phrase or plot twist, I will often tell myself, "Oh, you could have done that." Well, of course, in most cases I couldn't have. What I am really saying is, "I know how that was done. I know how the trick was worked." But then there are the moments when you look at the words and say, "How did he do that?" I can't even pretend I could have done it. It's magic; it's my definition of genius. When Wodehouse was in his prime, he was producing three or four moments like that on every page. I would be satisfied if I could produce three or four moments like that in my life! Hell, I would be satisfied with one.

One of my favorite Wodehouse quotes about writing is: "Poets as a class are business men. Shakespeare describes the poet's eye as rolling in a fine frenzy from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven, and giving airy nothingness a local habitation and a name, but in practice you will find that one corner of that eye is generally glued on the royalty returns." And this one also: "I could see by the way she sniffed that she was about to become critical. There had always been a strong strain of book-reviewer blood in her."

It is impossible for me to pick a favorite Wodehouse character, but I suppose that the older I get the more I like the Earl of Emsworth. Or perhaps I just identify with him more. I picked the nom Cyril Waddesley-Davenport because he was a gorilla imitator who went to Balliol. I like gorillas and am just enough of a snob to pretend that I went to Balliol. Actually I went to the University of Illinois journalism school. But I do have a Balliol school tie, which I wear with my gorilla suit on formal occasions.

Susan and I started Chapter One together, almost exactly 10 years ago. She did most of the work. Though she is no longer TWS president, she remains the chatelaine of Chapter One. Susan and I had been Wodehouse fans for many years (I confess I introduced her to the habit) when a friend told us she had read something about an upcoming TWS convention in New York City. We joined TWS and attended the convention—and every one since. One convention moment I remember most fondly was in New York, where I knocked a cut-glass ornament off one of the dining room chandeliers with a bread roll. I think I am chiefly responsible for having

bread throwing banned at conventions.

Now, more than two years later, we are beginning to look back fondly at the Philadelphia convention. At the time we were too harassed and tired to realize what a really good convention it was. My idea of a good convention now is one where someone else does the work, and I can just sit back and enjoy it. I enjoyed the Toronto convention enormously and managed to get through the entire cricket game without catching or hitting anything. The speeches literally had me choking with laughter. Great fun.

I am eagerly looking forward to the Hollywood convention in 2005. Plum's Hollywood stories are among my favorites, and I have a special reason for wanting to take a side trip to the Hearst Castle. I worked for the Hearst Corporation in New York and scattered around the building were pieces of heavy and very ornate furniture. These were items purchased by old man Hearst himself, but they never quite made it to San Simeon. I want to see what did. I'm also going to try and find as much of Raymond Chandler's Los Angeles as I can.

In addition to the Dan's ascension to the Editorial Throne, there are other duties being shuffled in the ranks of The Wodehouse Society. Amy Plofker has accepted the duties of Membership Manager from Gary Hall and Linda Adam-Hall, effective January 1, 2004. So, all your dues payments, address and other changes, new member inquiries, etc., will now go to Amy. But Gary and Linda aren't off the hook! Far from it, since they've taken on the Plum Lines layout duties. See the back page of this issue for complete contact information for all of the volunteer officers of The Wodehouse Society.

My First Time

CONDUCTED BY DAN COHEN

Former Plum Lines Contributions Editor and still valued consultant, David Landman, recalls his first Wodehouse experience:

IF THE PREVIOUS accounts in this column are representative, the first Wodehouse of most Plummies was unadulterated booms-a-daisy. Now I appear in this

space in my familiar role as the death's head at the feast, for my proto-Wodehouse was bitter-sweet (mostly the former); an oxymel, which is that medical combination of vinegar and honey that the ancient Greeks, in their wisdom, held to be the flavor of existence.

Demobbed at the end of the Korean conflict and at loose ends, what could it have been but a ray of blessing shot from above that led me to idle into Harold J. Isaacson's classroom at The New School on New York's 12th Street? I had enrolled in a course in 17th-century English literature as a killtime, but from his first words, I knew I had met what a Tibetan sage calls "my perfect teacher." HJI, as his students referred to him, was, in my experience—and I ask you to remember that I spent my adult life in graduate schools and universities—the most erudite humanist of our time. I offer as a solitary example his mastery of language. He knew a multitude of tongues western and eastern, modern and ancient, and I am told he taught Buddhist sutras with a Sanskrit, a Pali, and a Chinese version before him, translating extempore what he considered to be the most accurate text—often the Chinese. He once apologized to me for not knowing Gaelic. "I'm terribly sorry, Mr. Landman, but somehow one never found the time." He had, of course, read and remembered everything. But it would be untrue to the man if I left the impression that HJI had a brain too tightly farced with mere encyclopedia stuff, even though that vast erudition was totally integrated into a cogent overview of human endeavor and history; more importantly, he was, in a spiritual sense—and I can say no more—a sage. That is to say, an enlightened being. Of this I am sure.

Soon I was included in the inner circle of his scholars, some studying language, some music, some philosophy, some history, some Japanese drama and poetry, some mythology, some art, and entered into an ambitious program of studies in English literature which required that I read *everything* of importance starting from the very beginnings. He estimated that, if I applied myself, it would take 15 years. Of course, I did not live up to this ideal, but I did my best and when, after 12 years of study, I wearied of the literary chaos of our times, I gave over. It was about this time that HJI left America for fresh fields and took up residence in an abandoned, run-down *zendo* in an isolated part of western Japan. Five of his students gave up everything and followed him; I, to paraphrase Luke (14:20), had married a wife

and therefore did not go.

For 10 years or so we corresponded; I persistently asking tiresome questions, he patiently answering them in such a way that, while it solved one dilemma, posed another. And then I heard he was returning to America to tend his ailing mother. By that time I had settled in New England. We arranged to meet, and as I sat in my car on a gay and animated East Side thoroughfare, I was not prepared for the shock I experienced when a gaunt and barely recognizable figure, supported by the doorman and elevator operator, shuffled onto the sidewalk. He had been feeling slightly peaky, he said, in his off-hand way, but assured me it was of little consequence. At the restaurant he ate only flakes of crust scraped from a pancake, about as much as would cover a four-bit piece, and I recalled sadly how he had been fond of joking that "there are two things that validate the [modern] world; New York Chinese restaurants and P. G. Wodehouse." To my shame, I had not read Wodehouse up to then. I drove home that night determined to do something for him.

I remembered that many years before he had been a passenger in an auto smash-up and had been taken, unconscious, to the Mayo Clinic where he remained in a coma for a week. When he was released, blinded in one eye (he wore a black patch thereafter), he grudgingly admitted that "perhaps the doctors at the Mayo knew what they were doing." I played that card. It happened that my wife was distantly related to a leading surgeon at the Lahey Clinic, and the good doctor agreed to see HJI if and when I could lure him to Boston. I telephoned HJI and spared no effort to convince him that the Lahey was every bit as good as the Mayo; to my surprise he agreed to come.

Shortly thereafter we were at the clinic, which was on Commonwealth Avenue just down the block from Boston University. I said I would wait while he was examined, and it was then that he suggested, with the characteristic skillful nonchalance that cloaked ceaseless concern, that I pass the time with a Wodehouse. I bought the only Wodehouse available at the B.U. bookstore, *Psmith in the City*, settled into it for the long wait, and had just finished when he reappeared. There was some sort of intestinal blockage. An operation had been arranged for the next day. As we drove away, he asked how I liked the book. I said, "It makes you feel wacky." "You've got it," he said approvingly. That's the sweet part.

The rest is bitter. The surgeons discovered an ad-

vanced stage of a virulent and inoperable form of pancreatic cancer. He was stitched up and returned to the hospital to die. I was with him at the end, which came soon after.

And that is the bitter-sweet story of my first Wodehouse, courtesy of my revered teacher. As Ben Jonson said of Shakespeare, "I loved the man, and do honour to his memory, on this side of idolatry." I, the epigone, made a career from the corners of his wisdom. I grew to think so much like him that, when I experienced what was for me one of teaching's greatest thrills—astonishment at one's own spontaneous eloquence—it often seemed as if he was speaking through me. I even grew a goatee because he wore one. HIJ's life was teaching, and at the very end, on the brink of death, he completed my education by leading me to what I had previously neglected in my studies: in his words, "the one titanic force to emerge in the English literature of this century," P. G. Wodehouse.

In his foreword to the collection Wodehouse is the Best Medicine (International Polygonics, Ltd., 1992), London H. Smith, M.D., wrote, "When we laugh, the endorphins (our own private morphine-like substance) in our brain flow and make us feel good . . . If you think free-floating laughing is too silly, just read a little Wodehouse every hour for a few minutes. Your endorphins will flow and you will be a better, healthier person for it."

Kaumil Parghi was born in Visnager City, Gujarat State, India, and lived in Ahmedabad City, Gujarat State, India. He now lives and works in Phoenix, and I first met him at the Toronto convention. He is a fellow who laughs a lot. He has great endorphins. At the end of the convention he and I were among a group of Plummies who spent several hours at the airport waiting for our respective flights. We all laughed a lot. The endorphins flowed freely. And that was the most pleasant way to spend time waiting in an airport that I can imagine. Here is a note from Kaumil about his first time:

MY PARENTS NEVER read Wodehouse, so we did not have any Wodehouse books at my home. However, when I was 16, a buddy of mine at school told me about a really funny book that his dad had showed him in his home library. He told me he had never before laughed out loud all the way through a book he was reading.

I told him I would like to check out such a book. After about a week or so, he brought the book for me to read. It was called *Joy in the Morning*. Life was never the same after that. I practically lived in the world of Wodehouse. I went through engineering school, but its pain was not too much for someone who was constantly in the Wodehouse world.

At first it was almost entirely the world of Jeeves. Only in the last few years have I dared to read some of PGW's non-Jeeves books, and they have been tons of fun. But somehow they are not as good as the Jeeves books. I have read all of the Jeeves books at least three times, with *Joy in the Morning* and *The Code of the Woosters* at least five times. Each time I experience a new flavor. And, whenever I refer a new friend to Wodehouse, I give them either *Joy in the Morning* or *Code of the Woosters* first.

Gary Hall, one of the overworked, unpaid TWS (and now Plum Lines) volunteers, blames his mother and golf:

MY MOTHER had a habit of tossing literary gems my way. She turned me on to many books as a child: the Narnia series, the Baum stories, Mark Twain, and others. I remember the Penrod stories distinctly and I know the first one was cast in my direction from my mother. Perhaps she just intended to whack me with it, but nonetheless it became part of my reading heritage. My dear mother also had well-documented Anglophilic tendencies, which was good not only for the Wodehouse connection but for my very existence, since my father's ancestors popped over the pond from the British Isles in the 1790s or so.

In my very early teens I took up golf, somehow intuiting that it's best to start playing at an age when one is too young to realize what a foolhardy pursuit it is. I totally immersed myself in the game, playing from dawn to dusk at the local course and sometimes returning after dark to wade barefoot through the shallow lakes to fish out the balls. My mother, perhaps realizing the humor of it all, heaved a copy of *The Golf Omnibus* my way. I caught it before it knocked me over, casually opened it, and started reading "The Clicking of Cuthbert." I nearly perished laughing at the climactic scene, complete with the self-referential Wodehousian moment courtesy of Vladimir Brusiloff. At the same time, I was also a great reader of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, so the humorous flaying of Russian authors sat well with me.

I sucked the entire book into my brain as quickly as

possible and have since reread "Cuthbert" and most of the other golf stories many times. I think it may still be my favorite Plum story, although "Jeeves and the Impending Doom," "The Metropolitan Touch," and "The Truth About George" are way up there.

If everyone on the planet read at least one Wodehouse a month, even a short story, the world would be overflowing with peace and joy.

For Lucian Endicott, an unremembered encounter blossomed into a lifelong love affair:

I DO NOT REMEMBER my first time for a lot of things, including the first time I read PGW. My memory has never been good, and at 70 it is not improving. I remember a fair amount, but correspondence with reality is open to question.

I grew up in a home with few books. My parents were book readers but not book buyers. They read library books. My dad was a major fan of PGW. My mother read the KJV, Kipling, Scott, Sydney Lanier, and similar, both to herself and to me. They, with PGW, remain among my favorites.

One of the books we did own was *The Small Bachelor*, probably given to my dad as a gift. It is most likely the first PGW book I read. I recall reading it a number of times before I was 10. Then I gained access to the adult section of the local library.

The neighborhood library within walking distance of our house had only a half-dozen or so PGW books. I do not recall all of them, but two I do recall are *Young Men in Spats* and *Eggs, Beans and Crumpets*. Later, at about age 12, I was old enough to ride the trolley to the downtown Carnegie. It had a couple dozen PGW books and I read them numerous times. I do not recall any titles in particular.

During the next 55-plus years, I read many PGW items many times each (some more than 20 times), mainly the short stories (golf, Mulliner, Drones), but also Jeeves and Wooster (I have the folio 11-volume set now and use it for the novels, *The World of Jeeves* for the short stories), Blandings, Uncle Fred, and the Valley Fields novels. Two of my favorite PGW novels are *Sam the Sudden* and *Quick Service*.

Keep 'em coming folks. Send your recollections to Daniel Cohen, 877 Hand Ave., Cape May Court House, NJ

08210. Fax: (609) 465-4367; e-mail: BlndgsCast@aol.com. Be sure to mark everything **FIRST TIME**. There is a lot of stuff coming in now, and I am easily confused.



Trouble with the Six Degrees quiz? See pages 18-19!

Not the Feudal Spirit

Late last year, the guilty pleasure of a large segment of the English-speaking world was reading the seemingly endless revelations of Paul Burrell, former butler to the late Diana, Princess of Wales. Burrell's act of "telling all," after having sworn he never would, also became the subject of a lively discussion on PGWnet. The question was, "What would Jeeves have done?" The consensus was that he would never have acted as Burrell did. That is more the style of someone like the venal Chaffinch of *Laughing Gas*.

The question also attracted the attention of the British satirical magazine *Private Eye*, which ran the following item (graciously supplied by émigré Elin Woodger).

Outrage as Butler Sells Story *by our Valet Staff P. G. Woofster*

The butler at the centre of a 'tell-all book' was branded a disgrace yesterday by his former employer, Mr. Bertie Wooster, who was depicted in the best-selling book *What-Ho, Jeeves!* as an upper-class twit incapable of forming attachments with women and terrified of his elderly relatives.

Said Bertie Windsor, "It's a pretty poor show when a chap can't grow a moustache or buy a hat without his bally butler telling the whole world about it."

Continued Mr. Windsor, "I mean, I'm made to look like a complete nincompoop who can't even chose his own socks, let alone a wife, without the assistance of Jeeves."

When asked for a comment Jeeves remarked, "Very good, Sir."

Tomorrow: The night that Mr. Wooster stole a silver cow creamer and I had to cover it all up.

Last Chance to Get Toronto Convention Loot!

Grab some memories from the great 2003 Toronto convention (even if you missed it—you can pretend you were there). The following items are for sale:

- An ingenious “Magic Bag”—a shoulder wallet that expands into a backpack or contracts into a waist pack.
- A lovely blue mug inscribed with convention name (“Right Ho, Toronto”) and date (“TWS 2003”) and logo (motor car, based on photo of Plum behind the wheel of a car, and the CN Tower).
- A elegant pen.
- The traditional pin, which this year was a nifty silver oval with a dark blue etching of the logo and inscriptions “TWS” and “Toronto 2003”.
- The first 5 orders will also receive the last 5 programs available, which, besides being quite nicely done and containing full information about the convention and speakers, has a wonderful article by Elin Woodger Murphy on the history of the TWS convention.

All available for only \$40 (shipping included)!!



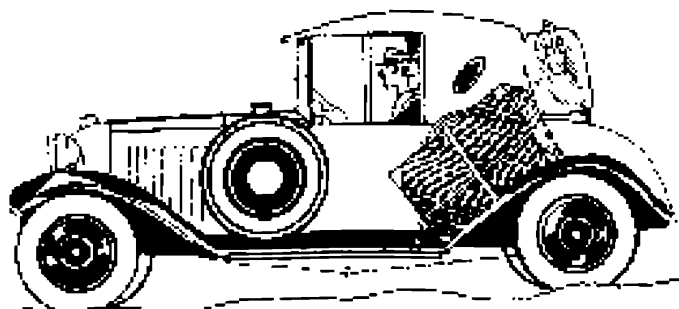
What Will the Wrecking Crew Do?

It has happened finally—Nemesis has visited the hubris of the go-slow golfers. WHAT will the Wrecking Crew do now?

Go-Slow Golfers Will Face Rough Justice (from *The Scotsman*, January 4, 2004)

NOW UP TO four million golfers are to be issued with a new set of rules aimed at speeding up the pace of play. The Royal and Ancient Golf Club at St Andrews, the game's governing body, has published its first new set of revised rules in 20 years. And the new version, to be handed free to golfers worldwide, links etiquette with the strict rules of the game for the first time. Golf clubs are recommended to take “disciplinary action” against offenders by banning them temporarily from their home courses or from competitions. Julie Otto, assistant secretary (rules) of the R&A, which has had 3.7 million copies of the new rule book printed with the help of sponsors Rolex, said: “Everyone is affected by slow play which has become a major problem in the modern game.”

Submitted by Viscount Bosham



Answers to “Six Degrees” quiz on page 5:

1. Janet Gaynor was Nancy in *Three Loves with Robert Montgomery*, who starred in the film version of *Piccadilly Jim*.
2. Mary Pickford was in *The Taming of the Shrew* with Douglas Fairbanks, who played the lead in Plum's *A Gentleman of Leisure* in NYC in 1911.
3. Norma Shearer was in *Her Cardboard Lover* (1942), adapted by PGW.
4. Marie Dressler was in *Emma* with Myrna Loy, who was in *Night Flight* with Robert Montgomery, who played Jimmy in *Piccadilly Jim*.
5. Helen Hayes was in *Candlehoe* with David Niven, who played Bertie Wooster in *Thank You, Jeeves*.
6. Katharine Hepburn was in *The Lion in Winter* with Peter O'Toole, who played Lord Emsworth in *Heavy Weather*.
7. Bette Davis was in *Of Human Bondage* with Leslie Howard, who starred in the London production of *Her Cardboard Lover*.
8. Claudette Colbert was in *Cleopatra* with David Niven.
9. Luise Rainer was in *The Great Ziegfeld* with Frank Morgan, who played Jimmy Crocker, Sr., in *Piccadilly Jim*.
10. Vivien Leigh was in *Gone with the Wind* with Leslie Howard.
11. Ginger Rogers was in *Bachelor Mother* with David Niven.
12. Joan Fontaine starred in Plum's *A Damsel in Distress*.
13. Greer Garson was in *Mrs. Miniver* with Walter Pidgeon, who was in *Soldiers Three* with David Niven.
14. Jennifer Jones was in *The Towering Inferno* with Fred Astaire, who starred in *A Damsel in Distress*.
15. Ingrid Bergman was in *Rage in Heaven* with Robert Montgomery.
16. Joan Crawford was in *Dancing Lady* with Fred Astaire.
17. Olivia de Havilland was in *The Heiress* with Ralph Richardson, who played Lord Emsworth in the BBC series *Blandings Castle*.
18. Loretta Young was in *The Bishop's Wife* with David Niven.
19. Jane Wyman was in *The Yearling* with Gregory Peck, who was in *The Guns of Navarone* with David Niven.
20. Judy Holliday was in *The Solid Gold Cadillac* with George Burns, who costarred in *A Damsel in Distress*.
21. Shirley Booth was in *Hot Spell* with Shirley MacLaine, who was in *Ask Any Girl* with David Niven.
22. Audrey Hepburn was in *The Lavender Hill Mob* with Stanley Holloway, who played Beach in *Blandings Castle*.
23. Grace Kelly was in *The Country Girl* with Bing Crosby, who was in both the 1936 and 1950 versions of *Anything Goes*.
24. Anna Magnani was in *The Fugitive Kind* with Marlon Brando, who was in *Bedtime Story* with David Niven.
25. Joanne Woodward was in *A Fine Madness* with Sean Connery, who was in *Zardoz* with John Alderton, who starred in *Wodehouse Playhouse*.
26. Susan Hayward was in *The Saxon Charm* with Robert Montgomery.
27. Simone Signoret was in *Room at the Top* with Hermione Baddeley, who was in *Mary Poppins* with Arthur Treacher, who played Jeeves in *Thank You, Jeeves*.
28. Elizabeth Taylor was in *Jane Eyre* with Joan Fontaine.
29. Sophia Loren was in *Operation Crossbow* with Richard Johnson, who played Lord Tilbury in *Heavy Weather*.
30. Anne Bancroft was in *Gorilla at Large* with Lee J. Cobb, who was in *Exodus* with Ralph Richardson.
31. Patricia Neal was in *In Harm's Way* with Stanley Holloway.
32. Julie Andrews was in *Mary Poppins* with Arthur Treacher.
33. Julie Christie was in *Dr. Zhivago* with Ralph Richardson.
34. Barbra Streisand was in *Funny Girl* with Walter Pidgeon, who was in *Soldiers Three* with David Niven.
35. Maggie Smith was in *Gosford Park* with Stephen Fry, who played Jeeves in the series *Jeeves and Wooster*.
36. Glenda Jackson was in *Elizabeth R* with Julian Holloway, who played Corky in the BBC series *Ukridge*.
37. Jane Fonda was in *The Chase* with Marlon Brando, who was in *Bedtime Story* with David Niven.
38. Liza Minnelli was in *Arthur* with Dudley Moore, who was in *The Wrong Box* with Ralph Richardson.

39. Ellen Burstyn was in *The Exorcist* with Lee J. Cobb, who was in *Exodus* with Ralph Richardson.

40. Louise Fletcher was in *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* with Jack Nicholson, who was in *The Raven* with Boris Karloff, who was in the 1919 film *The Prince and Betty*.

41. Faye Dunaway was in *The Towering Inferno* with Fred Astaire.

42. Diane Keaton was in *Annie Hall* with Woody Allen, who was in *What's New Pussycat* with Peter O'Toole.

43. Sally Field was in *Absence of Malice* with Paul Newman, who was in *The Towering Inferno* with Fred Astaire.

44. Sissy Spacek was in *Carrie* with Piper Laurie, who was in *The Milkman* with Donald O'Connor, who starred in the 1956 version of *Anything Goes*.

45. Meryl Streep was in *Postcards from the Edge* with Shirley MacLaine, who was in *Around the World in Eighty Days* with David Niven.

46. Shirley MacLaine was in *Ask Any Girl* with David Niven.

47. Geraldine Page was in *Hondo* with John Wayne, who was in *They Were Expendable* with Robert Montgomery.

48. Marlee Matlin was in *Children of a Lesser God* with Piper Laurie, who was in *The Milkman* with Donald O'Connor.

49. Cher was in *Suspect* with Dennis Quaid, who was in *Innerspace* with Meg Ryan, who was in *IQ* with Stephen Fry.

50. Jodie Foster was in *Svengali* with Peter O'Toole.

51. Jessica Tandy was in *September Affair* with Joan Fontaine.

52. Kathy Bates was in *Uncommon Love* with Richard Briers, who played Gally Threepwood in *Heavy Weather*.

53. Emma Thompson was in *Peter's Friends* with Hugh Laurie, who played Bertie in the series *Jeeves & Wooster*.

54. Holly Hunter was in *Svengali* with Peter O'Toole.

55. Jessica Lange was in *Cousin Bette* with Hugh Laurie.

56. Susan Sarandon was in *Bull Durham* with Tim Robbins, who was in *IQ* with Stephen Fry.

57. Frances McDormand was in *Paradise Road* with Pauline Collins, who starred in *Wodehouse Playhouse*.

58. Helen Hunt was in *As Good as It Gets* with Jack Nicholson, who was in *The Raven* with Boris Karloff.

59. Gwyneth Paltrow was in *Shakespeare in Love* with Tom Wilkinson, who is in the soon-to-be-released production of *Piccadilly Jim*.

60. Hilary Swank was in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* with Donald Sutherland, who was in *Die, Die My Darling* with Tallulah Bankhead, who was in the 1928 London production of *Her Cardboard Lover*.

61. Julia Roberts was in *Notting Hill* with Tim McInnerny, who was in *101 Dalmatians* with Hugh Laurie.

62. Halle Berry was in *Monsters Ball* with Billy Bob Thornton, who was in *Primary Colors* with Emma Thompson, who was in *Peter's Friends* with Stephen Fry. Halle Berry was also in *Die Another Day* with John Cleese, whose father, Reg Cleese, once roomed with Armine Wodehouse.

63. Nicole Kidman was in *Malice* with Gwyneth Paltrow who was in *Shakespeare in Love* with Tom Wilkinson.

Chapters Corner

CONDUCTED BY SUSAN COHEN

IT'S FUN being with other fans and it's fun reading about what other fans are doing. So please use this column to tell the world—the Wodehouse world, that is—about your chapter's activities, zany and otherwise. I

Anglers' Rest

(Seattle and vicinity)

Contact: Susan Collicott

On November 17 the members of Anglers' Rest attended a play at the Seattle Repertory Theater. *Over the Moon* was based on Plum's novel *The Small Bachelor*, which was based on the musical *Oh, Lady! Lady!* The

play was enjoyed by one and all. Afterwards the intrepid chapter members managed to find their way to the Speakeasy in the theater, and, knowing the password (swordfish!), we shoved our way into the dimly lit room. Live music, dancing, food, drink, and Wodehouse—what a wonderful evening! Members came from far and wide and included Barbara Combs; Stu Shiffman; Ron Louie and daughter; Susan Collicott; and, from over the border, Ian Michaud of Vancouver in Canada.

We will be meeting on February 7 at noon in Kell's Irish Restaurant and Pub (1916 Post Alley in downtown Seattle), a grand old Irish pub. It has a long history of welcoming Irish footballers, British soccer fans, cricketers of all nations ... and now Plummies. We gather to talk Plum, to trade items of interest, to quaff a few with like-minded folks, have a day out, and revel in all-around fun and frivolity.

Blandings Castle Chapter

(Greater San Francisco Bay Area)

Newsletter: *The Argus Intelligencer and Wheat Growers Gazette*

Contact: Jan Kaufman, president

Some of the vast Mulliner family will come to glorious life as we watch the newest *Wodehouse Playhouse* DVDs, starring the versatile John Alderton. The Franklins have the great distinction of living where there is easy street parking in San Francisco. Call Jan for a map.

The Cabaret Girl, the 1922 musical Wodehouse wrote with George Grossmith, (music by Jerome Kern, lyrics by Wodehouse) will be performed by San Francisco's 42nd Street Moon theater, so save the date of Saturday, May 8, for a special evening. Tony and Elaine Ring, from England, will be there, so we'll probably have dinner somewhere in the neighborhood and will also plan some other festivities to honor this popular couple. Tony is one of the great Wodehouse collectors as well as editor of the delightful *Wooster Sauce*. No details of prices, times, or restaurants are known as this time, so just keep your calendars clear.

The Broadway Special

(New York City and vicinity)

Contact: Philip Shreffler

On Saturday, October 18, about 20 members of the Broadway Special met at the Pig & Whistle pub in midtown Manhattan for a meeting and toothsome brunch. Proceeding on to the Theatre of St. Peter's, we were joined by more New York Wodehousians for a matinee of *Oh, Boy!* The "Musicals in Mufti" troupe performed a great concert version of this Bolton-Wodehouse-Kern musical, acting and singing unhampered by the open scripts in their hands. Afterwards, the cast participated in a discussion with the audience, and the inner meanings of snippets like "Excelsior!" and "dynamiting the larder" were bandied back and forth.

On Tuesday, December 2, a handful of the Broadway Special gathered at the Players Club in Gramercy Park for a special evening of Wodehouse & Kern music, organized and produced by Barry Day. Most of us weren't Players members but were included as guests in honor of the evening's theme. When, during cocktails and dinner, we saw the club's magnificent 19th-century decor filled with theatrical memorabilia, we weren't sure the show could compete, but it certainly did! Simon Jones, Lorna Dallas, and Eric Comstock did a terrific job putting Wodehouse into context for the rest of the Players Club attendees, and then putting over the songs with a whoop and a holler (or a sweet, sentimental murmur, as the case may be).

The next meeting of the Broadway Special will be Saturday, January 31, to celebrate a Wodehousian version of Burns Night, which we shall call, in honor of Jeeves, "The Poet Burns" Night. Wodehousians will gather at Étoile Restaurant, 109 East 56 Street in Manhattan, at 6:00 P.M., for cocktails, with dinner and the program at 7:00 P.M. As well as the usual browsing, sluicing, and revelry, the evening will feature a presentation on collecting Wodehouse, toasts, and contests. Advance reservations required—e-mail Philip Shreffler if you want to attend.

Capital! Capital!

(Washington, D. C., and vicinity)

Contact: Jeff Peterson

Chapter One

(Greater Philadelphia area)

Contact: Susan Cohen

At our November meeting Denise Nordheimer gave a presentation on that great chef Monsieur Anatole, aided and abetted by Debbie Bellew, who brought Anatole's menus. Denise gave us a quiz, the best kind of quiz, since everyone won an edible prize. And we all deserved those prizes for our quiz answers sparkled like champagne, or at least bubbled like seltzer water. From Denise we learned which works Anatole appears in. His history. The origins of his peculiar accent. Anatole's nervous habits and extreme sensitivity to people making faces at him. Anatole's culinary genius. Anatole's taste in pajamas. All were revealed.

Chapter One will meet again on Sunday, January 25, 1:00 p.m., The Dark Horse Restaurant, Philly. January 25 is the poet Robert Burns's birthday. Dan Cohen will discuss Wodehouse's use of the quotations from "the poet Burns" and many many others. If you'd like to attend this meeting or any meeting, just let me know.

The Chicago Accident Syndicate

(Chicago and thereabouts)

Contact: Daniel & Tina Garrison

The chapter holds bimonthly meetings with a wide range of activities. Sometimes members of the Syndicate meet in each other's homes to enjoy a pot-luck supper and read Wodehouse. Sometimes they meet in an Irish

pub where there's good browsing and sluicing. They enjoy theater outings followed by dinner at a restaurant, and every time City Lit does a Wodehouse production they are in the audience. They go to the Chicago Botanical Gardens to stroll through the English garden there, while reading excerpts from Wodehouse. They play miniature golf together and have one grand croquet game every year.

The Clients of Adrian Mulliner

(for enthusiasts of both PGW and Sherlock Holmes)

Contact: Marilyn MacGregor

The Clients held their traditional Senior Bloodstain at the Toronto convention of TWS last August, and they will hold their Junior Bloodstain on Saturday, January 17, as part of the great Sherlock Holmes celebration which occurs annually in New York. They will meet in the lobby of the Algonquin at 12:30 p.m. on Saturday and cluster together somewhere to read *The Adventure of the Odd Lotteries*, by Robert L. Fish. According to Anne Cotton, Clients of Adrian Mulliner activist, they will try to palm off a few of their pins, and terrific pins they are, for pin money to keep the Clients going. They will then wallop off to the Saturday reception for Holmes addicts. Oh, yes, they will glom onto anyone who drifts by and wants to join the group. So if you plan to be around, do drift by.

The Drone Rangers

(Houston and vicinity)

Newsletter: *DroneStar*, edited by Carey Tynan

Contact: Toni Rudersdorf

On December 31 several members went to see *Oh! Boy!* at Main Street Theater in Houston. This was preceded by dinner at a local restaurant and followed by seeing in the New Year at a night spot. We had such a good time we plan to do something similar next year.

The year 2004 will unfold in this manner for Drone Rangers: Every other month, beginning with January, we plan to meet and discuss a Wodehouse book we have all read. These "Book meetings" will be at the Barnes and

St. Bernards to send out into the wilds looking for lost
NEWTS.

The Northwodes

Contact: Kristine Fowler

(San Antonio and South Texas)

•
•
•
•
•
•
•
•
•

(Boston and elsewhere in New England)

Great events are stirring for the Northwodes. We marked our fourth anniversary this summer (founding member Comrade Parry remarks, "Tempus whasit, what?") and are happy to report that we continue to add members. As happens so often with Organizations of Influence, we have begun to wax expansive and philanthropic, seeking to bring the joy of Wodehouse to the unenlightened. Rashly, we selected a project that involves actual work and expense, viz., ensuring that our local public libraries have a decent representation of new Wodehouse books. The Northwodes were up to the test, both in staffing the letter-writing and envelope-stamping summer work party and in letting themselves be touched for generous amounts.

The first target of what we intend to be an annual donation is the St. Paul Public Library system, which we provided with the wherewithal to acquire approximately four sets of the ten titles we defined as the Basic Wodehouse Library. Some Overlook editions have already appeared on branch library shelves sporting a bookplate with our chapter name and the URL for TWS's website. The formal gift presentation will be on February 14, that significant date, with a program featuring actors' readings of "Pighooey!" and a Jeeves and Bertie excerpt. Thanks go to Comrade Angie Meyer, who has been giving us the benefit of her experience as a public librarian by coordinating things on the Northwodes' end. We're looking forward to a successful event, sharing the good word about Wodehouse, and possibly recruiting more members as a result—then on to another library next year! Meanwhile, we have managed at least a little frivolity as a respite from this fearful sweat, gathering on the Master's birthday for drinks at Comrade Fritz's club; no cards were flipped into hats, but we did play a game of match-the-Wodehouse-character-with-his/her-club. If you want details of, or have suggestions for, future frivolity and/or serious projects, contact Kris Fowler.

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

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

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

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

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

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

PZMPCo meets the second Sunday of every month at Vroma's Bookstore (695 E. Colorado Blvd., Pasadena) at 12:30 P.M. 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

Treasurer's Report, 2003

BY GARY HALL, TREASURER

BALANCE as of December 31, 2002: \$9,403.86

INCOME:

Dues and fees:	\$13,705.00
U.K. Society membership offsetting	\$490.00
Total Income:	\$14,195.00

EXPENSES:

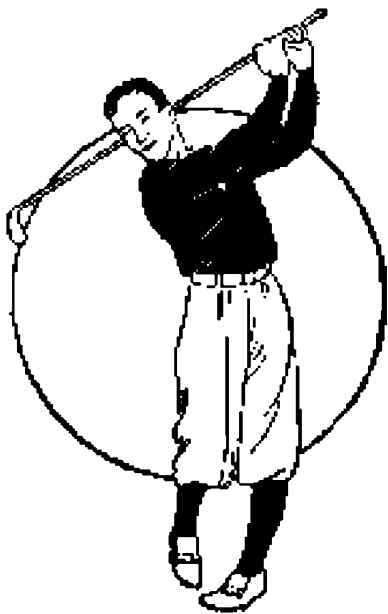
Plum Lines production & mailing:	\$8,563.76
Correspondence, supplies, other:	\$1,985.93
Total Expenses:	\$10,549.69

BALANCE as of December 31, 2003: \$13,049.17



Contents

- 1 Pip, Pip, to a Fine O.M.!
- 5 Six Degrees of P. G. Wodehouse
- 6 The Casting Couch
- 6 Wodehouse On Stage
- 7 Collecting Wodehouse: 100 Years of School Stories
- 8 Bad Company
- 8 Wodehouse Playhouse Series
- 9 From Ex-Sgt. Beale to Colonel Pashley-Drake:
The Military Man in Wodehouse
- 12 Dan Cohen, Our New *Plum Lines* Editor
- 13 "My First Time"
- 16 Not the Feudal Spirit
- 17 Last Chance to Get Toronto Convention Loot!
- 17 What Will the Wrecking Crew Do?
- 18 Answers to "Six Degrees of P. G. Wodehouse"
- 19 Answers to "The Maestro's Amazing Memory"
- 20 Chapters Corner
- 23 Treasurer's Report, 2003



Volunteer Officers

President of The Wodehouse Society:
Jan Kaufman

**Information, new-member inquiries, dues payment,
and changes in contact information:**
Amy Plofker

Contributions to Plum Lines:
Dan Cohen

Chapter News:
Susan Cohen

**Layout, design, photos, illustrations, proofs, and, oh
yes, Treasury duties:**
Gary Hall and Linda Adam-Hall

*Thanks to Philip A. Shreffler for the Pig Crossing picture.
Thanks to Jan Kaufman for the pictures of Ed Ratcliffe, and all
the convention photos in the prior issue!
Huge thanks to Neil Midkiff, Jean Tillson, and Elin
Woodger for their contributions, editing, proofing, and sympathy!
All quotations from P. G. Wodehouse are reprinted by permission
of the Copyright Owner, the Trustees of the Wodehouse Estate.*

I attribute the insane arrogance of the later Roman emperors almost entirely to the fact that, never having played golf, they never knew that strange chastening humility which is engendered by a topped chip-shot. If Cleopatra had been ousted in the first round of the Ladies' Singles, we should have heard a lot less of her proud imperiousness.

"The Magic Plus-Fours," 1926