

The quarterly journal of The Wodehouse Society

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At Last, a Wodehouse Stamp!

BY JEAN TILLSON

Mind how you hold this issue of Plum Lines, for it contains a very special gift in honor of P. G. Wodehouse's 130th birthday. Carefully locate the enclosed envelope, briefly gaze in wonder at its gorgeous exterior, then set it aside some place safe for a few minutes while Jean tells you the story of how it came to be.

TERRY PRATCHETT, in *Hogfather*, said that "Everything starts somewhere, although many physicists disagree." This is a particularly apt statement with which to preface this article about the creation of the extraordinary gift to TWS members contained

within this issue of *Plum Lines*. This is partly because it was through Terry Pratchett's books that Elin Woodger and I met the man who created it, but also because the quest for a Wodehouse stamp was initiated by so many people at so many different times that it is very difficult to tell where one effort ended and another began.

According to the Tome (the official record of TWS's history), the first of the Society's efforts to get the United States Postal Service to issue a Wodehouse stamp was already underway in December 1980, a mere six months after the formation of TWS. The project was spearheaded by Pauline Blanc (founder of our San



The stamp at last, and some other treasures, designed by Bernard Pearson. Thanks to Jean and others for making this happen!

Francisco chapter), who sought to have a stamp issued in honor of Plum's centennial birthday in 1981. Alas, post office officials informed the Society that stamp subjects are chosen much too far in advance to have made that possible, but apparently Pauline was not discouraged because Bill Blood, then editor of *Plum Lines*, was still encouraging members to write to the USPS in support of the project as late as 1984.

The Tome is then silent on the subject of Wodehouse stamps until the 1990s, when Susan Cohen (of Philadelphia's Chapter One) made another valiant effort to induce the Powers That Be to see reason. Another member of Chapter One, noted artist Lou Glanzman, even went so far as to paint a couple of excellent PGW portraits to help the USPS decide in favor of our hero. Unfortunately, they were never used, but Susan inspired Elliott Milstein to carry on fighting the good fight, and in 1996 he sent an official letter to the proper authorities invoking the awful majesty of his position as TWS president. This letter was so well-written and its arguments so persuasive that its failure to bring about the happy ending can only be explained by the existence of a secret anti-Wodehouse-stamp conspiracy deep within the USPS.

After that, the Society appeared to shelve its dream of a Wodehouse stamp, but the old longing was by no means extinguished; it merely lay dormant in the collective consciousness of its members until 2004, when Elin and I visited the shop of Bernard Pearson, an artist in Wincanton, Somerset, England. At that time Bernard was best known for his sculptures inspired by the books of Terry Pratchett, which Elin and I both enjoy. We had a lovely time with Bernard and his wife, Isobel, and as we sipped the tea Isobel had so graciously made for us, Bernard described his latest project designing stamps for Pratchett's forthcoming book, *Going Postal*. Well, both the book and the stamps were hugely successful, and now Bernard's "Cinderellas" (the term for stamps not issued by an actual postal authority) are collected by discerning philatelists all over the world, not to mention the British Museum.

On that first visit with him, it was established that Bernard was, of course, a fan of the Master. I can't remember when he first offered to create a stamp for TWS, but it was probably in 2006, when he showed us a commemorative envelope (or "cover") he had designed at the request of The Kipling Society to mark the 100th anniversary of the publication of *Puck of Pook's Hill*. Elin and I were thrilled with the offer, of course, but couldn't quite see what to do with it. And then there occurred another of those little beginnings that give physicists so much to argue about.

In 2007, Mr. Pete Steen sent a monetary donation to The Wodehouse Society in memory of his brother, Ray, a Seattle chapter member who had "gone to Blandings" in April that year. We were grateful, of course, but also a bit nonplussed, never having received such a thing before. I was TWS treasurer at the time, so I wrote and thanked Pete, telling him I would endeavor to see that the money was used for something Ray would have liked. Several ideas were discussed with TWS's Board of Directors, but somehow none of them ever panned out. Meanwhile, Pete continued to send us checks in honor of Ray now and again.

Then finally, in July 2010, all the little floating tendrils of beginnings seemed to knit together before our very eyes. Elin and I were staying on Long Island for a few days, and naturally we visited Remsenburg to pay our respects to Plum's old familiar places. At some point in our travels, I mentioned that Bernard had once again offered to make TWS a Wodehouse stamp, whereupon Elin reminded me that 2011 would be Plum's 130th birthday—and all of a sudden we knew what to do with the Ray Steen Bequest (as we had come to think of it). There quickly followed formal proposals to TWS's Board of Directors and Sir Edward Cazalet, all of whom graciously agreed to support our scheme. Meetings, discussions, and endless emails followed, and Norman Murphy's help was enlisted to track down some missing pages from Galahad Threepwood's *Reminiscences*. It is remarkably fortuitous that the extract he found concerns an episode at the Criterion, since that center for con artists features in the second of Norman's London Wodehouse Walks (and it is downright miraculous that one of the con artists mentioned in it is "Razor" Steen!).

The result of our labors is now in your hands: not only a gorgeous Wodehouse stamp at long last, but a painstaking recreation of an amazing bit of history previously thought to have been lost forever. Happy birthday to Plum! Happy birthday to us all!

Chi-iking for Love

IN THE NOVEMBER 2010 *Best of British Magazine*, Neil Patrick gave examples of local dialects. One of his writers (Vera Prendergast) asked about the peculiar use of the word *chi-iking* to describe banter between boys and girls, and Mr. Patrick stated that this word was made up by P. G. Wodehouse.

However, a greater authority must intervene. In *A Wodehouse Handbook, Volume 2* (Norman Murphy's definitive guide to the words of Wodehouse), we read that "chi-ike" or "chiyike" ("to make rude noises . . .") appears to have originated "from a Cockney term that began c. 1860." Mr. Patrick must stand corrected.

Last-Minute Details for Conventioneers

THE DEARBORN CONVENTION of The Wodehouse Society—Happy 130th Birthday, Plum—is right around the corner, so if you haven't made your plans to attend yet, now is the time to do it.

One of the most critical aspects of attending the 2011 convention will be planning your trip to The Henry Ford. As with any world-class museum, you can spend forever finding new things at which to marvel, but you should plan a minimum of two hours each at the Ford Museum and at Greenfield Village (a total of four hours). Details about this museum complex can be found at www.thehenryford.org.

After deciding when you will visit The Henry Ford, your next step is to figure out if you have any leftover unused items of Wodehousean interest that could fetch a shilling or two in our rummage sale (see p. 8). All proceeds go to the good cause of providing better conventions at lower prices, so if you have something to donate, bung it into the old suitcase and bring it along.

Most conventioneers will be arriving by air into the Detroit Metropolitan Airport. After gathering your luggage, proceed to the shuttle area, located in the parking structure. To get there, take the pedestrian bridge from level two of the terminal, across the street to the parking structure, then the elevator or escalator down to level one. All shuttles for rental cars pick up here as well. If not renting a car, grab a cab to the Dearborn Inn. This will set you back a modest \$30–35. Unless you enjoy the luxury of a limo, eschew the services of Metrocar, whose minions will be alert to snag you from the cab line; it's a nicer ride, but it will cost you nearly double the cab ride. Of course, if driving, consult Mapquest for your best way there.

The registration table (along with the rummage sale tables) will open on Thursday, October 13, at 10 A.M. and stay open until 5 P.M.

The first organized event is the Rouge Plant Tour, which leaves from the main entrance of The Henry Ford at 2 P.M. sharp. The hotel runs a shuttle to the museum, but it's best if you are in the lobby no later than 1:30 P.M. to get there in time. Of course, if you have arrived early enough, this is a great time to visit the museum, and then you are already there! We have scheduled the tour as being from 2 P.M. to 5 P.M., but it is a self-guided tour and you may find a mere hour or so enough, giving you plenty of time to return to the museum and see more.

Dinner that night is on your own, although the Pickerings as a group will be heading to Miller's Bar for dinner and will be glad to take any for whom there is room in our vehicles. Others may find other

transportation or, if not inclined to a burger and a beer for dinner, find other venues. The hotel has three restaurants, and there are other options in Dearborn as well, including Good Times Caffe (22810 Michigan Ave—a mere 1.73 miles from the hotel), where you can catch Terry Kitchen (TWS's own Max Pokrivchak) in concert while dining on sandwiches, wraps, paninis, etc. The concert kicks off at 8 P.M. For those who do not make the event, there will be the usual foregathering at the Inn's waterhole for sluicing and merriment.

Friday morning, those going on the Detroit tour should be in the hotel lobby no later than 8:15 A.M. to board the buses. Remember to bring your Jefferson (\$10 bill) to cover the bill of fare at Hockeytown. God willing, the buses will return at 2 P.M., just in time for the cricket game, which will be held on the front lawn. The area is a little cramped for a real cricket game, but it is well placed to gather in surprised gawkers, which is, of course, the main thing.

For those arriving on Friday, the registration table and rummage sale will have been moved to an area just outside the ballroom. There will be signs directing you.

Members of the Senior Bloodstain will meet at 4 P.M., and their meeting should conclude in plenty of time for Cocktail Time, our traditional reception, at 5:30 P.M. Around 7 P.M., we will begin the exodus to the buses to head down to the Greektown casino, where conventioneers can dine in the casino or just outside in Detroit's historic Greektown, a two-block area lined with restaurants. Gambling is, of course, optional, but why not take a flutter? Buses will be running all night back to the hotel, the last one leaving at midnight.

The Saturday lecture series in the Ballroom begins precisely at 9 A.M. Those who signed up for the BBQ lunch (noon to 1:30 P.M.) will enjoy that poolside. The cooking demo takes place just after the Dread Business Meeting (1:30–2 P.M.) in the Inn's Bake Shop. Lectures will break around 4:30; the pre-banquet reception commences at 6 P.M. outside the glorious Alexandria Ballroom, where the crowd will gather one hour later to begin Plum's Birthday Gala.

Sunday brunch begins at 9:30 A.M. in Salons 1 and 2 and will be punctuated by speeches and all forms of entertainment, not the least of which will be the NEWTS skit at 11:30 A.M. which will conclude the jam-packed, fun-filled weekend.

Looking forward to seeing you all there!

Wodehouse's Visits to Detroit

BY ROBERT WALTER

On the eve of TWS's biennial convention in Dearborn, Robert Walter has given us yet more cause to head that way. Read on!

IF YOU NEED a good reason to come to Detroit for the convention, consider this. Wodehouse himself visited Detroit on at least two occasions, liked it, and wrote about it in one of his novels.

The novel is *The Adventures of Sally*, published in 1922. In the novel, Sally has inherited some money and is using it to back a play written by her fiancé, Gerald. In chapters 6 through 8, Sally, Gerald, and a troupe of actors take the play to Detroit for a tryout run before taking it to Broadway. In chapter 8 Wodehouse states that Detroit had liked Gerald's play and referred to Detroit as "that city of amiable audiences."

When I read that passage, a light bulb clicked on over my head. We know that Wodehouse used events from his own life in his fiction. Could it be that he had brought one of his own plays or musicals to Detroit for a tryout run? Could it be that he liked my hometown? I resolved to find out.

The first question was: when did he come here? The novel itself gives a clue. When Sally arrives in Detroit, Gerald tells her that the play's opening has been postponed because all theaters have been closed due to the Spanish influenza epidemic. The Spanish influenza was a worldwide epidemic. A bit of historical research revealed that on October 18, 1918, the governor of Michigan ordered all theaters and other public gathering places closed for the duration of the epidemic.

I then went to a library that has every edition of the *Detroit News* on microfilm and started in mid-October 1918, looking for an article or a review of the show. Elliott Milstein, our Pickering chapter president, advised me to consult Tony Ring as to which show it might have been. Tony thought it would be a musical called *Ask Dad*. He was right. *Ask Dad*, which was retitled *Oh, My Dear!* by the time it opened on Broadway, was a musical with book and lyrics by P. G. Wodehouse and Guy Bolton. Louis Hirsch wrote the music.

On October 16, 1918, the Garrick Theater in Detroit placed an ad in the *Detroit News* announcing that *Ask Dad* would open the following Monday. Two days later the paper published the governor's order closing the theaters; they remained closed until mid-November. On November 9, 1918, the paper had a short article about when the theaters would reopen. It stated that Wodehouse, Bolton, and Hirsch, along with



Detroit, "that city of amiable audiences"

the producers and cast, had arrived in Detroit the day after the theaters closed. They stayed in Detroit for two weeks, then gave up and took the show to a theater in Toronto. They brought the show back to Detroit for a week-long run starting on Sunday, November 10, 1918.

The next day the *Detroit News* had a review of *Ask Dad* on page 20. The first page had a long story about some sort of Armistice in Europe. (Where do these editors get their priorities?) The critic, one Russell Gore, liked the show, which was standing room only, and he specifically mentioned that Wodehouse had come back to Detroit for the opening. Gore called *Ask Dad* a work of enchantment, "aesthetically superior, gracefully charming, piquant, and pleasurable." He went on to say:

Lyrically, *Ask Dad* is considerably above the average. The principals do not join hands at the music cues and saunter to the footlights to warble rhymed irrelevancies. Instead, the songs have the Gilbert and Sullivan quality of being part of the story. They help the plot along. *Ask Dad* is a sophisticated delicacy for sophisticated people.

So Wodehouse's trip to Detroit was similar to the chapters in *The Adventures of Sally*. Like Sally and Gerald, he brought a new show to Detroit, had a good run, and got good reviews. In the novel, he mentions a few Detroit landmarks and states that Sally stayed at the Hotel Statler, which I remember well. The old building was torn down in the 1990s. Wodehouse describes Sally and Gerald taking a Sunday drive around Belle Isle, a public park on a large island in the Detroit River. The park was laid out by Frederick Law Olmstead, who also

designed Central Park in New York. Wodehouse must have gone there.

Wodehouse returned to Detroit in March 1924 for the opening of the Wodehouse, Bolton, and Kern musical *Sitting Pretty* at the Shubert Theater. The *Detroit News* wrote a very favorable review, most of which raved about the show's star, Queenie Smith. Apparently she had appeared in other shows in Detroit and the city loved her. The reviewer also praised the show's creators: "*Sitting Pretty* is a lovely play done in the best manner of three men who know what they are about when they set out to contrive a musical comedy. The book has the quality of sanity which practically all musical shows lack, the lyrics are both charming and gay, and Mr. Kern's music is always tuneful."

As an aside, the theater ads in the *Detroit News* included one for Guy Bolton's play *Polly Preferred*, which was running at the Garrick when *Sitting Pretty* was running at the Shubert. Hence, Bolton had two shows in Detroit simultaneously.

So Wodehouse came to Detroit and liked the city and its residents. We think you'll like it, too, and hope to see you in October at the convention!

Coward, Marx, and Plum?

BOOK REVIEWER Anna Mundow, in the March 23 *Washington Post*, described Simon Brett's new novel (*Blotto, Twinks and the Ex-King's Daughter*) as being "a rather hectic mixture of Noel Coward, P. G. Wodehouse, and, at times, the Marx Brothers."

Oxymoronica

LAURA LOEHR tells us of a book called *Oxymoronica: Paradoxical Wit and Wisdom From History's Greatest Wordsmiths* (2004) by Dr. Mardy Grothe. In this study, Dr. Grothe includes three Wodehouse lines. Laura says that, sadly, the Master did not make the "Oxymoronic Wit & Humor" chapter, but Plum is quoted in the Oxymoronic Advice chapter, without specifying the source story, as saying, "I always advise people never to give advice." Many readers will recognize the voice of the Oldest Member from the golf story "Tangled Hearts." In a chapter entitled "The Literary Life," Plum's humorous dedication in 1926 of *The Heart of a Goof* to Leonora, his stepdaughter, is quoted. Finally, in the chapter "Oxymoronic Insights from World Literature," Wodehouse is quoted from his 1923 novel *Leave It to Psmith*. The selected line is: "The door opened behind him, and Beach the butler entered, a dignified procession of one."

The Great Historical Marker Contest and Challenge: Your Chance to Make Your Mark(er)

BY BOB RAINS (OILY CARLISLE),

ANDREA JACOBSEN (SWEETIE CARLISLE),

AND THE BOARD OF TWS

FELLOW PLUMMIES, after the announcement in the Summer 2011 *Plum Lines* of the plan to erect a historical marker in Remsenburg, New York, to guide the weary pilgrim to the final resting place of Sir Pelham Grenville Wodehouse and to honor his memory, many of you opened your hearts—and your wallets—to the great cause. As we go to press, TWS has raised \$2,100 for this project. We have received individual contributions, as well as contributions from the Perfecto-Zizzbaum Motion Picture Corporation, the Los Angeles and Vicinity Chapter. (Other chapters, will you let this challenge go unanswered?)

Those who have already given may rightly pat themselves on the back and assume an air of smug superiority. But others need not despair and hang their heads in shame. TWS will still willingly accept your coin of the realm. Indeed, send us coin of any realm; we'll convert it into greenbacks.

But, you ask yourself, what else can I do to aid this noble cause? I have already happily diminished my little all to provide financial support. Now what?

Well, now is the time for you to come to the aid of the party. The design and composition of the marker are yet to be determined, and we are seeking your participation in this great endeavor.

The challenge is grand: How can we adequately identify and commemorate the link between the location and Plum? How will we succinctly sum up on a single sign the life and career of a novelist, poet, playwright, short-story writer, essayist, screenwriter, and lyricist, whose output spanned seven decades?

What, in short, ought the PGW Historical Marker actually say?

The task is daunting but is made even more, well, daunting by the unknown space available for the statement. The size and shape of the sign are still to be selected. The Committee knows of no legal constraints on the size of the proposed marker, though there is a relationship between the number of words and expense. Still, for the nonce, encouraged by initial fundraising

returns, we propose to ignore the affordability aspect and to focus attention on the aesthetic.

In true Wodehousian spirit, we propose a contest to select the winning language and design. We therefore urge you to proceed in the handicapping style of Bingo Little, unstymied by the financial uncertainty of the morrow. So, sit down. Eat some fish. Then, keeping the entrails safely away from your keyboard, send your suggestion for the wording and design of the Great Wodehouse Historical Marker to Gary Hall (contact info on p. 24).

It would be terrific if you also send a modest (or immodest) donation. Those go to our treasurer (not to Gary), so please send your check, payable to The Wodehouse Society, to Kris Fowler; be sure to note that your check is for the Historical Marker Fund. Or you can donate via PayPal to twstreasurer@wodehouse.org. Donations are NOT tax-deductible.

As the marker is an indicator of the nearby burial site, you may wish to consider the language on the actual gravestone, which reads:

**JEEVES
BLANDINGS CASTLE
LEAVE IT TO PSMITH
MEET MISTER MULLINER**

**SIR PELHAM GRENVILLE
WODEHOUSE**

**AUTHOR
1881–1975
BELOVED HUSBAND OF ETHEL
1884–1984
MOTHER OF LEONORA**

**HE GAVE JOY
TO COUNTLESS PEOPLE**

Please submit your entry by October 31, 2011. Entries will also be accepted (as will donations) at the Dearborn Convention.

You might wish to consult as a guide or inspiration the examples of historic markers on the Wikipedia site (tinyurl.com/3c7zwpk); or the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission's website, which gives the actual wording of the historical markers for writers in the Keystone State, at tinyurl.com/4yxfm56.

And what will you win if your contest entry is selected by our select panel of judges? Even more smug satisfaction. Let the contest begin!

Your Guide to Remsenburg

BY ELIN WOODGER

I WAS VERY young when my father introduced me to P. G. Wodehouse, and it was love at first read for me. My sisters were no different, and every summer we took along as many PGW books as we could on our vacations at Southold, Long Island. As we reveled in our reading, we were conscious that somewhere, not too far away, the great man himself lived and wrote. "Wouldn't it be jolly," we said to each other, "if we could find Remsenburg and go visit him?" But our parents discouraged this with talk of not invading people's privacy. Parents are like that, curse them.

The years flew by, and I remember feeling tremendous sadness when Wodehouse died in 1975. Part of me regretted never having tried to go see him, despite the parental injunctions. Fifteen years later, I discovered The Wodehouse Society, and in 1994 I became involved in plans for the dedication of the Wodehouse plaque at the Little Church Around the Corner (see *Plum Lines*, Spring 2011, p.17). We decided to make a pilgrimage to Remsenburg, and to that end I did some research to find out where it was.

Imagine my chagrin when I discovered that Southold was only 45 minutes from Remsenburg by car. All those years of reading his stories, laughing with my sisters, talking idly of going to see him—and he was only 45 minutes away! I still kick myself for that lost opportunity.

Since 1994 I have visited Remsenburg many times and have come to know it like an old friend. I have gone there alone, with Norman, and with friends, and I have taken Wodehouse pilgrims there to show them the sights. Even since moving to England, I have found excuses to go and revisit Remsenburg whenever I am in the States. That is why I consider myself something of an expert on the subject.

And that is why, a few years ago, I found a map of Remsenburg, marked it to show the Wodehouse sites, and wrote up directions for pilgrims. This was offered to members in the last issue of *Plum Lines*, and I was delighted to get several requests for it. But why keep it all to myself? For those who have not yet been to Remsenburg, I offer this map and guide to the sites. Note that the Bide-a-Wee pet cemetery can only be reached by car; otherwise, if you go to Remsenburg by train, everything is within walking distance.

Directions by car: From New York City, take the Long Island Expressway and continue east to Exit 70. Merge onto the Captain Daniel Roe Hwy./Rte. 111

South (toward Eastport). Follow this southeast, and after about a mile, take the right fork onto Eastport Manor Road/County Road 55. Follow this south, under the Sunrise Highway, to Eastport. At the T-junction in Eastport, turn left along Main Street (Montauk Highway). Stay to the right and continue straight on along what has now become South Country Road. Less than a mile along, you will see South Phillips Avenue on the left, and, immediately after, the Remsenburg Community Church (white) on the right. This is the corner of Basket Neck Lane and the start of your visit (as below).

Directions by train and foot: Take the Long Island Railroad to Speonk (A on the map). From there, refer to the map—it's a simple matter of walking down Phillips Ave. to the end, turn left, and you'll see the church on the corner immediately on the right.

B. Remsenburg Community Church: Go behind the church to find Plum and Ethel's grave (the gravestone

is so prominent you really can't miss it). While there, check to see if the Infant Samuel reading *The Best of P. G. Wodehouse* is still sitting on the gravestone where Jean Tillson and I left him last year (see *Plum Lines*, Autumn 2010).

C. From the church, walk or drive down Basket Neck Lane to Fish Creek Lane on the right. The Wodehouse home is the older one on the corner, surrounded by hedges—you can get a view of the house itself from Fish Creek Lane, but the hedges have grown over the years, so it's not as visible as it once was. Still, part of the house that you can see from Fish Creek Lane, on the ground floor, was the study where Wodehouse worked.

All the other houses on Fish Creek Lane are relatively new. The land once belonged to the Wodehouses but was divided up after they died; the first new houses weren't built until the early 1990s.

D. Walk to the end of Fish Creek Lane and continue on the path between the houses there (it looks like

Village of Remsenburg, including the church

A. Speonk Railroad Station

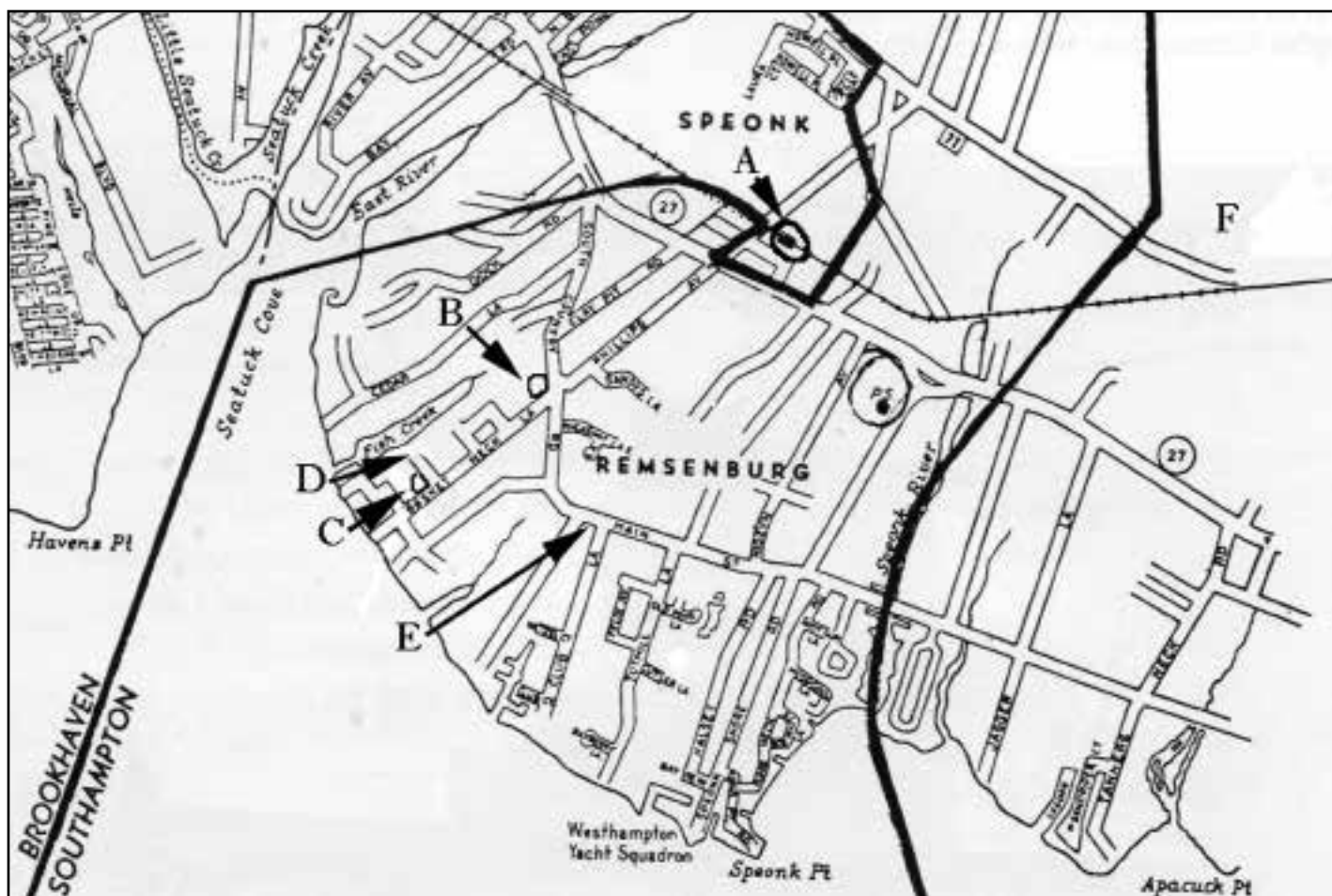
B. Remsenburg Community Church and cemetery

C. House where the Wodehouses lived

D. Path to Fish Creek

E. Remsenburg Post Office

F. Bide-a-Wee animal cemetery and shelter



private property, but in fact it's a public path). This will bring you to Fish Creek, where Plum used to go for a swim. In his day it would get so muddy at times that Ethel wouldn't let him back in the house until he had showered (in an outside shower).

E. This is the site of the Remsenburg Post Office, which has been here since 1967. Previously, from 1958 to 1967, the Post Office was located just across the street, at 130 S. Country Road (marked Main Street on the map). So this is where Plum walked to collect his mail every day.

F. Finally, if you're driving, then go back to Phillips Avenue, turn right, and follow it through Speonk and on up to County Road 71 (aka Old Country Road). Turn right and keep driving until you see the sign for Bide-a-Wee on the left. Stay to the left as you enter and continue straight into the pet cemetery. After passing a building on the left, you'll see a very short row of trees on the right. Pull over and park here, then walk up the hill a very short way—you should see the long, narrow gravestone marking the resting place for a number of Wodehouse pets.

If you proceed straight ahead on the road, you'll reach the animal shelter and veterinary clinic. The original building was the shelter that Plum and Ethel founded; it has since been expanded tremendously.

So there you are—Remsenburg in a nutshell. I hope you enjoy it as much as I have—and don't forget to make a donation to the Remsenburg Historical Marker Fund (see pp. 5–6).

Rummaging for a Good Cause

FOUR YEARS AGO, a rummage sale in aid of The Wodehouse Society Convention Reserve Fund (CRF) was introduced with great success at the Divine Providence convention. The sale was profitable again in St. Paul two years ago, and now the Dearborn convention will also feature rummaging opportunities. The CRF helps to cover expenses at our conventions, in addition to underwriting costs of special events or treats. This allows convention hosts to keep fees down and thus provide a jolly good time for all.

Fundraising for the CRF has become a regular feature at our biennial gatherings. We rely on donations to supply the highly desirable items in our raffles and auctions, but the rummage sale relies on you. The rummage table is the perfect place to find the used PGW book that will fill out your library, purchase a lorgnette for those moments you want to be Aunt Agatha, or make a great addition to your cow creamer collection.

Donations are now being sought for the rummage

sale. The only thing we ask is that they be connected to Wodehouse—his books, his life, his world. In addition to PGW's own works (in print or audio form), this can include period clothing and jewelry, books by other writers (from Wodehouse rivals to those you may particularly admire), cassettes and CDs of contemporary music, statuettes of the Infant Samuel and of pigs (Berkshires preferred, of course), and even objets d'art with a Wodehousean connection.

For those planning to attend the convention, please bring your items for the rummage sale with you to Dearborn. If that is not possible (e.g., you may have more spare books to donate than can fit in your luggage), or if you cannot attend the convention but still want to contribute, then mail your donations to Elliott Milstein.

Please email Elliott to forewarn him that your donations for the rummage sale are on the way to him. Note that unsold contributions will be forwarded to the planning committee of the next TWS convention to provide "seed items" for the rummage sale there.

What? You have nothing to donate? It matters not: just bring plenty of oof with you to Dearborn and spend a chunk of it on what is sure to be a table full of terrific items—all in support of our conventions!

Reprise of "Wodehouse in the Comics"



Peter Nieuwenhuizen, president of the Dutch P. G. Wodehouse Society, shows off some of his Top Spot collection.

As you recall from the Spring issue of Plum Lines, Peter Nieuwenhuizen, chairman of the Dutch P. G. Wodehouse Society, revealed through his research the name of the illustrator (Cecil Orr) who produced two comics in the magazine *Top Spot* in 1959. On the following page, for your enjoyment, is the first page of the second of those two comics.

THE WORM THAT TURNED — AND CAUGHT THE EARLY BIRD !

P. G. WODEHOUSE'S

The Heroic Chump

THE YEAR IS 1906
THE LINER SLIPPED
THROUGH THE GOLDEN
GATE AT THE
ENTRANCE TO SAN
FRANCISCO HARBOUR.
AT THAT MOMENT,
WILLIAM MULLINER
PROPOSED TO MYRTLE
BANKS



THE ONLY FLY IN THE OINTMENT WAS DESMOND
FRANKLYN, A FELLOW PASSENGER

MR. FRANKLYN IS
VERY GLAMOROUS
A GIRL CANNOT HELP
RESPECTING A MAN
WHO ONCE KILLED
THREE SHARKS WITH
A BOY SCOUT POCKET
KNIFE!

THAT'S
WHAT HE
SAYS!



ANOTHER TIME
HE BROUGHT DOWN
TWO LIONS WITH
ONE SHOT.

BUT DIDN'T YOU
SEE ME WIN THE
EGG AND SPOON RACE?
THE MAN WHO CAN CARRY
AN EGG ROUND THE DECK
IN A SMALL SPOON IS
JUST THE MAN TO MAKE
A GOOD HUSBAND—
ONE OF UNASSUMING
COURAGE AND ALWAYS
TO BE TRUSTED.



THE QUALITIES REQUIRED IN WINNING A SHIP'S
SPORTS EGG AND SPOON RACE DID NOT MAKE
MUCH IMPRESSION ON MYRTLE—BUT SHE DID
PROMISE TO SEE WILLIAM AGAIN.

AND IF—I MEAN
TO SAY, WHATEVER
HAPPENS, I SHALL
ALWAYS THINK OF
YOU AS A DEAR,
DEAR FRIEND.

MY YES!



BUT FOR THREE DAYS WILLIAM'S STAY IN SAN
FRANCISCO WAS AS PLEASANT AS COULD BE
EXPECTED. HE SPENT MANY HAPPY HOURS WITH
MYRTLE. THEN THE BLOW FELL.

WHEN DID
YOU DECIDE TO
MARRY HIM?

ABOUT AN
HOUR AGO. HE TOLD
ME HOW HE WAS CHASED
UP A TREE BY A RHINOCEROS.
HE ESCAPED BY THROWING
PEPPER IN THE
BRUTE'S EYES



PERSONALLY, I THINK
YOUR STORIES ABOUT FRANKLYN
SHOW HIM UP—IN A SINISTER
LIGHT. IF YOUR MARRIAGE IS
BLESSED WITH CHILDREN—THEY
WILL BE THE SORT WHO KICK
CATS AND TIE TIN CANS TO
DOG'S TAILS.



MYRTLE WAS INDIGNANT. WILLIAM HAD GONE TOO FAR. HE
FOLLOWED AS SHE PACED PROUDLY THROUGH THE HOTEL
LOBBY, AND STAMMERED INCOHERENT APOLOGIES. IT WAS
NO USE.

I WANT
NOTHING MORE
TO DO WITH YOU.
LEAVE ME, MR.
MULLINER!



WILLIAM LEFT, AS DIRECTED, SO CONFUSED
WAS HE THAT HE GOT NO FURTHER THAN
THE REVOLVING DOORS...



... AND WAS ON THE ELEVENTH CIRCUIT

Letter from England

BY ELIN WOODGER

I AM FEELING very oojah-cum-spiff as I write this letter, for on July 9 I swore my allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Yes, I am now a British citizen, almost ten years after making the move to the country I now call home. Of course, I still come to attention whenever I hear “The Star-Spangled Banner”—the U. S. of A. does not lose my allegiance now or ever. Like P. G. Wodehouse, I have become a citizen of two countries with a shared language (more or less), and that’s something that brings a glow of pride.

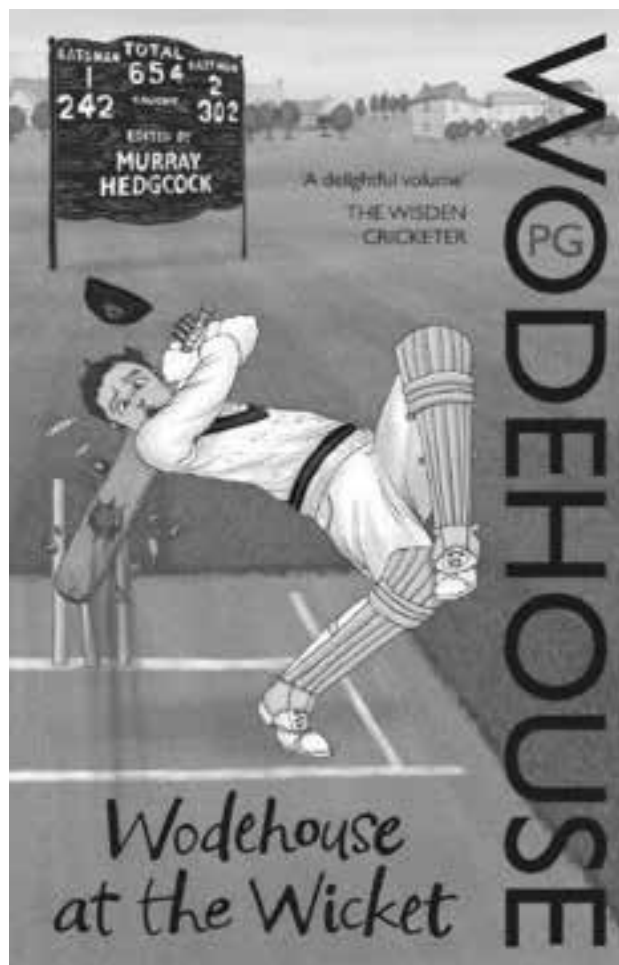
Another source of pride is the two referees who supported my application for naturalization and vouched for my character: Robert Bruce, highly respected journalist and the U.K. Society Chairman’s Consort and Accompanying Person; and Sir Edward Cazalet, retired high court judge and (she said with girlish glee) Wodehouse’s grandson. With Wodehouseans like these in my corner, how could I go wrong?

But enough of this idle boasting as I must jump abruptly from happy news to sad tidings. Just two months after Patrick Wodehouse died, his widow, Nancy Kominsky Wodehouse, passed away on March 11. Born in Philadelphia in 1915, Nancy was a vibrant, talented, and thoroughly delightful individual. She became well known in the 1970s through her television series *Paint Along with Nancy*, which was broadcast in both Great Britain and the United States. At the time of that series she was living in Rome, where she met the widowed Patrick, whom she married in 1983. They settled in Wimbledon, London, and when I moved over late in 2001, they were the first to invite Norman and me to dinner, a kindness I shall never forget. In 2008 we attended their 25th anniversary celebration, an event filled with great warmth and humor, the hallmarks of Patrick and Nancy’s marriage. Two years ago Nancy published her autobiography *How I Did It*, a riveting and racy account of a remarkable life. It can be purchased on Amazon and is well worth buying, if only to read the story of how she and Patrick met and married. Nancy is survived by her son and daughter from her first marriage.

From Nancy Wodehouse I move to Sir Terry Wogan. For my American readers, the Irish-born Sir Terry is a very well-known and well-loved radio and television personality over here. He is also a Wodehouse fan, and among the projects he has taken on since retiring from the daily radio program he hosted for 16 years is a documentary on our beloved Plum. Among

the highlights in said documentary will be a section in which he goes on part of a Wodehouse Walk with Norman, and of course I had to toddle along on the day of the filming in June, taking dozens of pictures of Norman with Sir Terry, who is considered to be one of Britain’s national treasures. How much of Norman’s stuff will appear in the program remains to be seen, but we hear it will be aired on the BBC sometime in this fall. Let’s hope it makes the journey over to the States in due course.

Speaking of Norman, this has been some year for him. Despite the recession, people are still coming to London from all over the world, and they all want a Wodehouse Walk—or so it seems. Since February, Norman has done two regularly scheduled walks and six “one-offs” to oblige visiting Wodehouseans, not to mention two other London walks he did for non-Wodehouseans. This state of affairs continues into September, with nothing scheduled for October—yet. Fortunately, he loves doing them (always at no charge), and it keeps him fit.



The Murray Hedgcock classic Wodehouse at the Wicket, now republished and available at Amazon.co.uk

The U.K. Society continues to bounce along nicely, and the most recent meeting featured the wonderful Murray Hedgcock, who spoke about the republication of his classic work *Wodehouse at the Wicket* in paperback. I note that Amazon.com says the book has “limited availability,” but it is easily obtained on Amazon.co.uk and well worth the price—wait no longer and order your copy now.

Following Murray, there was a special treat in store for lovers of pub quizzes—the Society’s very first annual Wodehouse Pub Quiz, and it proved highly successful as people formed into teams and battled each other through five rounds of five questions each, ranging from elementary to scholarly. There was some room for debate—the question on which Oxbridge college Bertie attended was possibly the most contentious—but the evening passed pleasurably, with a team of five calling themselves “The Cabinet” emerging triumphant. It was quite clear a new tradition had been born—and that’s all right by me.

England, I like you!

Rannygazoo Review Reply

AS MENTIONED in our Spring issue of *Plum Lines*, Ken Clevenger, prolific contributor to these pages, has compiled many of his works into a single volume, called *Rannygazoo*. When we reviewed that collection last issue, we asked one specific question about a St. Rocque reference. Ken has kindly written to provide the explanation. Ken says: “My Dear Book-Reviewing Critic, bless you! P. S. At the risk of explaining a joke (someone famous, or just ballsy, once said: ‘Never apologize and never explain!’): St. Rocque is, in the religious calendar, the patron saint of those suffering or hoping to avoid suffering from the medieval plague or pestilence.” Ken pointed out that he had naturally assumed readers’ intimate knowledge of the saints and their special attributes, and his assumption was affirmed by seeing the terrific scripture prize article by Jill Cooper-Robinson in the Summer issue of *Plum Lines*. We might expect that readers of *PL* scored well in the running for their old school’s Scripture Knowledge Prize!

Yet More Rannygazoo

IN THE OCTOBER 23, 2010, *Daily Telegraph*, Jeremy Noel-Tod pointed out that some of the readings for *Green’s Dictionary of Slang* (Jonathan Green) included “a pile of early P. G. Wodehouse novels.” He then discussed Psmith’s use of “rannygazoo” and other Plum originals.

Collecting 1911 Wodehouse

BY JOHN GRAHAM

THIS COLLECTING COLUMN likes to celebrate Wodehouse anniversaries. The current year is the 100th anniversary of two significant events in Plum’s publishing career, one of them notable for what did not happen and the other for what did. What did not take place in 1911 was the publication of a new Wodehouse book. This makes 1911 almost unique in Plum’s lifetime. Apart from several years during WWII when he was in captivity, Wodehouse published a new book (or two) in either the U.K. or U.S. (or both) every year from 1902 (*The Pothunters*) to 1975 (*Aunts Aren’t Gentlemen*, or *The Catnappers*).

The absence of a new Wodehouse title in 1911, therefore, is rather unsettling. So, you might ask, what was Plum up to that year—loafing? My answer is this: 1911 is the year Wodehouse began inventing Bertie Wooster! The creative process took a while—the first Bertie and Jeeves story did not appear in print until 1915. Even still, we can trace Bertie’s (and Jeeves’s) conception back to 1911, for that was the year Wodehouse published his first two stories about Reggie Pepper.

More on the connection between Reggie and Bertie anon; let’s start with a publishing history of the Reggie Pepper stories themselves. Plum’s first story, called “Absent Treatment,” appeared in the U.K. in March 1911 in the *Strand* magazine and in the U.S. in the August 26 issue of *Collier’s*. In September, the *Strand* followed up with “Helping Freddie,” which was retitled “Lines and Business” when it appeared in the U.S. magazine *Pictorial Review* in March 1912. In all, Wodehouse published a total of seven Reggie Pepper stories. Going by their U.K. magazine titles and dates, the other five were: “Disentangling Old Percy” and “Rallying Round Old George” in 1912; “Doing Clarence a Bit of Good” in 1913; and “Concealed Art” and “The Test Case” in 1915. In the U.K., the *Strand* published all but the last story, which appeared in *Pearson’s*. In the U.S., *Collier’s* published the first, third, and fourth; the *Pictorial Review* published the second, fifth, and sixth; and the *Illustrated Sunday Magazine* published the last one.

Not all of the Reggie Pepper stories appeared in book form in Plum’s lifetime. In the U.K., four of them (“Absent Treatment,” “Helping Freddie,” “Rallying Round Old George,” and “Doing Clarence a Bit of Good”) were published in 1919 in *My Man Jeeves* along with four Bertie and Jeeves stories. Although not well known, a fifth story (“Disentangling Old Percy”) also appeared in book form in 1929. It was Wodehouse’s

contribution to *The Legion Book*, issued by Cassell to raise funds for war veterans of the British Legion. The book also had stories by 32 other well-known English writers, including Kipling and Churchill. Copies can still be found for sale today on many internet book sites.¹ In the U.S., no Reggie Pepper story appeared in book form until 1933, when three of them (“Absent Treatment,” “Rallying Round Old George,” and “Doing Clarence a Bit of Good”) were included in A. L. Burt’s edition of *The Man with Two Left Feet*.

The remaining Reggie Pepper stories did not appear until the 1990s, when Nigel Williams Rare Books (using the imprint “Galahad Books”) published 12 short booklets called *Plum Stones*, edited by Tony Ring. Volume 2 in the series reprinted the three Reggie Pepper stories unpublished in *My Man Jeeves*. In 1997, Dover Publications in the U.S., under the guidance of David Jasen, reprinted all seven stories along with the first eight Bertie and Jeeves stories in a volume called *Enter Jeeves*. Although *Plum Stones* was a limited edition and can be hard to find today, *Enter Jeeves* is an inexpensive paperback still in print.

There were differences between the U.K. and U.S. magazine versions of the Reggie Pepper stories, and as far as I know, none of the American texts has ever appeared in book form. In the U.S., four of the stories were given new titles; what is more important is that Wodehouse rewrote many of them to suit his American market. To cite but one example, when *Collier’s* republished “Rallying Round Old George” in 1913, the story appeared as “Brother Alfred” and was totally rewritten. Reggie is now an American playboy who employs a British valet, wonderfully described as “an Englishman who had spent most of his time valeting earls, and looked it.” David Jasen has told me that when Dover first agreed to publish the stories, the plan was to use U.S. magazines as the sources. In the end, Dover did use the American titles but stuck with the more familiar U.K. texts. To my mind, this really was a missed opportunity; and David has no explanation why the editors at Dover changed their minds.

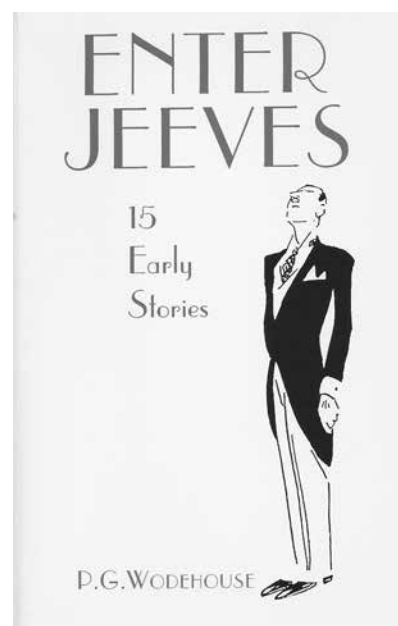
If you don’t own all of the Reggie Pepper stories, I have good news for you. Thanks to a wonderful website called Madame Eulalie (<http://www.madameeulalie.org/index.html>), you can now find them for free online. The website is devoted to pre-1923 Wodehouse material, all of which is in the public domain in the United States. Building the site has been an ongoing effort by an international group of Wodehouse fans, now headed by Raja Srinivasan in California and Charles Stone-Tolcher in Australia. Madame Eulalie currently offers Wodehouse stories (often with original illustrations)



Illustration by Alfred Leete from “Disentangling Old Percy”
in the Strand magazine, August 1912

from more than 30 periodicals, and these postings continue to expand as Raja and Charles obtain new material. The U.K. magazine versions of all seven Reggie Pepper stories are there now; none of the U.S. versions are available, but look for that to change soon.

Any fan of Bertie Wooster who reads a Reggie Pepper story for the first time is likely to be struck by the many similarities between the two characters. Both were well off, thanks to large inheritances from rich uncles (Edward in Reggie’s case and Willoughby



The Dover
Publications 1997
paperback of
Enter Jeeves

in Bertie's). Both were young, idle, and by their own admission not overly bright. Both were happily single but had some near misses with the opposite sex. Both had male friends who kept slipping into the soup and needed their help getting back out. Through it all, both Reggie and Bertie told their tales in the first person and told them rather well, even as they belittled their own writing talents.

But, of course, the connection between Reggie and Bertie is deeper than that. In 1925, Wodehouse finally made it explicit. One of the new stories in *Carry On, Jeeves* was called "Fixing It for Freddie." It was nothing less than Reggie's "Helping Freddie," rewritten by Bertie. Interestingly, it is the only Bertie and Jeeves short story never to have been published in a magazine prior to its book appearance. Many years later, Wodehouse used another of Reggie's tales, "Doing Clarence a Bit of Good" as the basis for Bertie's penultimate short story, "Jeeves Makes an Omelette." It first appeared in the magazine section of the *Toronto Star* in 1958 and in book form in *A Few Quick Ones* the following year.

Ultimately, what makes the Reggie Pepper stories so fascinating is that in reading them we can see the idea of Bertie (and Jeeves) starting to germinate in Wodehouse's mind. To give but one example, in "Concealed Art" Reggie has a valet named Wilberforce (good name!) with whom he has some familiar trouble. As Reggie tells the story: "He asked me one morning which suit I would wear that day, and, by Jove, I said, 'Oh, any of them. I don't mind.' There was the most frightful silence and I woke up to find him looking at me with such a dashed wounded expression in his eyes that I had to tip him a couple of quid to bring him round again."

Endnotes

¹Many years ago, at a book fair in New York City, I was offered the chance to buy a leather-bound copy of *The Legion Book* signed by all 33 contributors. The asking price was \$12,000. I declined the offer.



Here, I mean to say, was one of those solid business men who are America's pride, whose lives are as regular and placid as that of a bug in a rug. On my visits to New York I had met dozens of them, so I could envisage without difficulty a typical Clam day.

Joy in the Morning (1946)

Her/The Cardboard Lover

BY BRIAN TAVES

Film historian Brian Taves, a member of Capital! Capital!, invited the chapter to a July 16 showing of MGM's 1928 silent movie The Cardboard Lover. The film was shown at the film archives and theater of the Library of Congress facilities in Culpeper, Virginia. Here, Brian presents his introduction from that night in his best Robert Osborne style.

GOOD EVENING. As you watch this evening's feature film, you may find yourself thinking, "I've seen this before, haven't I?" And you'll be right.

If you're a follower of TCM—and aren't we all?—you've probably seen the 1942 movie *Her Cardboard Lover*. Despite the impressive lineup of Norma Shearer, Robert Taylor, and George Sanders, the results are more awkward than comedic, leaving a sense of disappointment that prompted *Her Cardboard Lover* to become Shearer's last movie.

The film was derived originally from a 1926 French stage play by Jacques Deval. The initial adaptation for English-speaking audiences failed in its tryout, and P. G. Wodehouse was brought in to quickly revamp the play. At the time, Wodehouse was best known as a musical comedy librettist who also adapted foreign theatrical farces—only in later years would he be remembered more as a novelist and short-story writer.

After his work on *Her Cardboard Lover*, Wodehouse was so confident it would succeed that he bought out a one-third share for \$10,000—and was soon pocketing \$2,500 a week. *Her Cardboard Lover* opened on Broadway in March 1927, running 152 performances with Jeanne Eagels and Leslie Howard.

Such a popular property was instantly bought for the screen, although for contractual reasons only the Deval original, not the adaptation, was noted in the credits. In the movie, the gender base was switched: instead of two men fighting over a woman susceptible to the charms of each, it is two women dueling for a champion tennis player. Probably this was the reason for the title modification from *Her Cardboard Lover* to *The Cardboard Lover*.

In the male role is Nils Asther, a Dane who had arrived from Europe only a year before—where, by coincidence, he had just finished starring in an Austrian movie of a Wodehouse short story. And, by further coincidence, Asther would star in another film of a Wodehouse stage play, *By Candlelight*, in 1933, just before Asther's own career began a precipitous decline.



A bit of a negligee problem from 1928's The Cardboard Lover

Marion Davies, as a flapper on tour in Monte Carlo, turns in a riotous performance that fully justifies her reputation as a skilled comedienne. Dutch-born Jetta Goudal is a “vamp,” in one of her last movies. When Cecil DeMille accused her of delaying a production, she sued and won her case, earning a reputation as a pioneer of the rights of performers against producers. Yet the struggle also helped end her career.

Fortunately, the Library of Congress has benefitted from the generosity of both Goudal and Davies: Goudal left us her papers, and Davies bequeathed a major collection of silent films.

With the coming of sound, studios were looking for dialogue writers. Given Wodehouse’s theatrical experience and the success of *The Cardboard Lover*, he was hired by MGM at \$2,000 a week and headed to Hollywood. The salary seemed commensurate with his worth: by this time, 22 short and feature films had been based on Wodehouse stories or plays, and cinematic rights to his work had advanced from \$1,500 for a novel in 1918 to \$15,000 a decade later.

At MGM, Wodehouse’s luck would turn. While he was laboring over a musical for Davies, *Rosalie*, it was cancelled. Wodehouse’s adaptation of *By Candlelight* was sold to Universal. Although he was involved with scripting many other films over a year, ultimately he earned only two on-screen credits.

At the termination of Wodehouse’s contract, he joked to a reporter that he had been generously paid for accomplishing little. The next day his so-called admission of guilt was a widely reprinted headline. His time in Hollywood would prompt Wodehouse to begin a series of satirical stories of the studio system, which he would continue writing almost until his death in 1975.

The most absurd outcome of Wodehouse’s tenure at MGM was the 1932 sound remake of *Her Cardboard Lover*. Retitled *The Passionate Plumber*, it is among

those films that TCM is not quite too embarrassed to show. The gender roles revert to the original pattern, with the single feminine lead opposite Buster Keaton as the cardboard lover, saving her from a cad played by Gilbert Roland. Jimmy Durante is added for further antics. Keaton was well aware that he was miscast, but he also had to star in a separate French-language version that was produced simultaneously.

Meanwhile, in the 1928 British stage presentation of *Her Cardboard Lover*, the lead role opposite Leslie Howard had been taken by Tallulah Bankhead. A scene from the play, of Bankhead undressing while talking on the telephone, was made into a five-minute short film in 1929—which, in fact, was the first sound version of *Her Cardboard Lover*.

In 1941 Bankhead returned to the role in a popular summer stock revival of the play in the United States. Recalling it owned the property, MGM decided to film it again, with Norma Shearer. And that brings us back to where my remarks began.

Yes, you may have seen cardboard lovers before. Tonight, however, you will see the best cardboard lover.

Reviews: *By Jeeves* and *Anything Goes*

JOHAN BAESCH AND EYV HERZOG sent along a review from the February 9 *Times* (London) of the then-current production of *By Jeeves* at the Landor Theatre. While contending that the advertising blurb for the show (“Time to break out those tap shoes!”) is inaccurate (“not much tap dancing”), they praised the show as a “pleasant enough evening.” The virtues included “some spirited playing [and] an engaging use of a compact space”; the problems were that the plot was “so thick with farcical twists that it becomes increasingly hard to care.” But it has a funny finale “to end the show on a high.” (The show ended on its final high on March 12.)

The April 7 *New York Times* reviewed the successful run of *Anything Goes* at the Stephen Sondheim Theater in New York City. Much of the success was due to Sutton Foster in the role of nightclub evangelist Reno Sweeney. The reviewer, Ben Brantley, pointed out that Ms. Foster “has the voice of a trumpet and a big, gleaming presence that floods the house,” which was just as well since she was playing a part originated by “the all-time musical-comedy queen of brass, Ethel Merman.” While not a perfect production (there is “much strutting of assorted, sometimes tedious, comic styles”), Ms. Foster combined an “aw-shucks kind of casualness [with] a dizzy exhibitionist’s delight.”

By Jeeves Review #2

BY OILY CARLISLE (BOB RAINS)

THIS IS BY WAY of being a mini-review of the 1st Stage (McLean, Virginia) production of *By Jeeves*. It was the first show Sweetie and I have seen at that venue.

1st Stage is a very nice space, if you can find it. It's nestled more or less in the back of something like a strip mall. Seats are comfortable and well-tiered; there seem to be no bad seats in the house. The atmosphere was clement and the bar for the halftime break was more than adequate for our limited purposes. I would not hesitate to make the 250-mile round trip for another show on the premises.

By now you are asking yourself, when will he stop babbling and talk about the show itself? Here, I shall measure my words. *By Jeeves* is, as I believe you all know, not the best representation of Wodehouse's work. But it does provide a quite diverting evening in the theater. It is serviceable. Many of our old friends make appearances: Stinker Pinker, Honoria Glossop, Bingo Little, Sir Watkyn and Madeline Bassett, Stiffy Byng, and, of course, Gussie Fink-Nottle. The plot has several standard Wodehousean themes, lifted quite specifically from *The Code of the Woosters*, with said code being frequently alluded to by the hapless Bertie. Various characters impersonate other characters, then other characters, then unimpersonate them at dizzying speed. Sweetie was rather put off by the deus ex machina nature of the denouement, which in her view was not worthy of the Master.

While the songs may not live on like those of, say, *Oklahoma* or *Anything Goes*, one or two were quite good. The show's title number, "By Jeeves," caught my fancy, and Sweetie favored a love song between Stiffy and Stinker in which they persuaded Bertie to conduct a fake burglary.

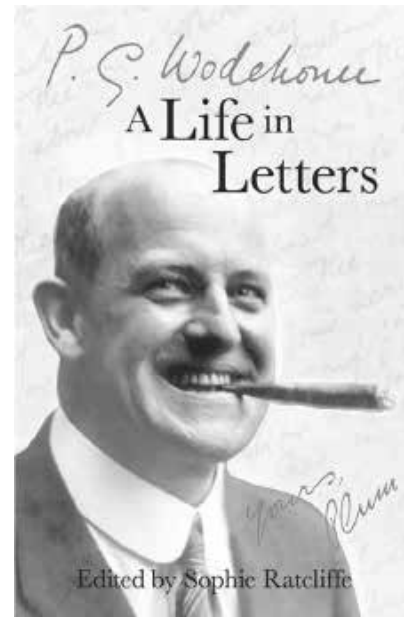
As to the actors, my hat is off to Matt Dewberry, who was spot-on as Jeeves and sang a fabulous patter song (à la Gilbert and Sullivan) near the end of the second act. Without detracting from the others, I give kudos to Katie Nigsch-Fairfax, whose lung power almost matches Ethel Merman in her youth. Edward Nagel, as Bertie, proved a likeable dolt, just what the doctor ordered.

And now, a negative word. The uninitiated would probably never know that some fellow named Wodehouse had anything to do with this show. The cover of the program credits music by Andrew Lloyd Webber and lyrics by Alan Ayckbourne. (I supposed that no one wrote the book, but inside the program

Ayckbourne received credit for it.) PGW doesn't get a mention on the cover. The first printed page inside the program lists 17 people involved with the production, but Wodehouse doesn't merit even a footnote. The two-page spread entitled "The Creators" discusses Webber, Ayckbourne, the director, and the chap in charge of musical direction. Apparently these are the folk who created Bertie and Jeeves and all the rest. It is true that if you take out and polish your pince-nez, you can find two fleeting references to the Master buried in the program, the first hidden on (unnumbered) page 7 and the second in the Director's Note on page 12.

This production ran through June 19.

Stop the Presses!



AS THIS ISSUE of *Plum Lines* was being prepared, word arrived of the imminent publication of a new book of Wodehouse letters. *P. G. Wodehouse: A Life in Letters*, edited by Oxford don Sophie Ratcliffe, will probably be issued in late October, just after PGW's 130th birthday—what a great birthday present for us all! As the title implies, the book will follow Our Hero's life through his letters, many of them never before seen in print. At present the book can be pre-ordered only through Random House's U.K. website (see bit.ly/qYXczX) or through Amazon.co.uk. However, the scuttlebutt is that *A Life in Letters* will eventually also be published in the United States—keep your fingers crossed, and stay tuned for further developments, to be revealed in the next issue of *Plum Lines*.

Arriving early for
the Dearborn convention?

Come and see award-winning

contemporary

folk singer/songwriter

**TERRY
KITCHEN**

(aka the NEWTS' own Max Pokrivchak)

Thursday, October 13, 2011

8:00–10:00 p.m.

The Good Times Caffe

22180 Michigan Avenue, Dearborn, Michigan

313-908-1090

(check out their Facebook page)

*The Good Times Caffe offers a good menu
of sandwiches, wraps, and paninis,
as well as coffees and desserts*

THOSE OF YOU who have attended recent conventions know that there are some special traditions at these events. One terrific tradition is Terry Kitchen's performance (typically on the Thursday night leading into the convention) at some local hot spot.

In Dearborn, once again, we'll get the goods from Terry. This time, you'll want to be at the Good Times Caffe at 22810 Michigan Avenue, at around 8 P.M. This venue is about two miles from the convention hotel. The Good Times Caffe has a good menu of sandwiches, wraps, and paninis, as well as coffees and desserts.

Terry (aka Max Pokrivchak) has been named "one of New England's best songwriters" by the *Boston Globe*, and his latest CD, *Summer to Snowflakes*, is available at www.terrykitchen.com and on iTunes. [If you haven't heard Terry before, his material ranges from gentle to fierce, is at once humorous and poignant, and tells stories that touch us all.—Ed.]

It's even possible that, for a tune or two, Terry may have a guest star who strongly resembles your humble *Plum Lines* editor. We hope to see you there; Terry will have CDs available for sale at the event.

The Queen Mother and Wodehouse: A Follow-up

BY NORMAN MURPHY

IN TODD MORNING's scholarly article in the Summer issue of *Plum Lines*, he concludes with the speech the Queen Mother made when she unveiled the blue plaque to Wodehouse at 17 Dunraven Street in 1988. I was fortunate enough to have been invited to the ceremony and to the lunch afterward—and was even more fortunate to find the answer to a question that had bothered me for years: When did the Queen Mother start reading Wodehouse?

About 1979, when I was writing *In Search of Blandings*, I was puzzled by the dedication of Wodehouse's first book, *The Pothunters* (1902), to Joan, Effie, and Ernestine Bowes-Lyon, granddaughters of the 13th Earl of Strathmore. I was lucky enough to find Effie—Lady Winter as she later became—who told me that they had met Wodehouse in Shropshire around 1898 or '99. When he came to London to work at the bank, he became a regular visitor at their house in Ovington Square (he used the address later in *Jill the Reckless* / *The Little Warrior*) and used to take nursery tea with the three girls, then ages 14, 13, and 11. (I suspect that they were the origin of some of the teenage heroines of his early stories.)

I sent a copy of *In Search of Blandings* to the Queen Mother in 1981, and when, in 1988, I was presented to her at Dunraven Street, she remembered it and said she had not known about the dedication of *The Pothunters* to her cousins till she read my book. She hoped I didn't mind her quoting my book when she unveiled the plaque! I told her I didn't mind a bit and took the opportunity to ask the question I had wondered about for years. Was it her cousins who had introduced her to Wodehouse's writing all those years ago? She smiled and said no, her brothers had used to read stories from *The Captain* to her, and she still remembered how much she enjoyed them.

It's impossible to be certain, but that takes us back to 1905–07, to *Tales of Wrykyn* and *Jackson Junior*. Since, over 80 years later, the Queen Mother still remembered *The Captain*, then I am not a bit surprised she looked forward to her 13th birthday with "What Ho! Pip Pip!"



Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon
(later Queen Elizabeth,
the Queen Mother)

A Few Quick Ones

In his review of Max Davidson's new book, *Sorry*—a study of the art of apologizing—Tom Fort cited a well-known Wodehouse line that Davidson quotes in the book: "It's a good rule in life never to apologise. The right sort of people do not want apologies, and the wrong sort take mean advantage of them."

In the "Lives Remembered" column of the *Times* (London) on March 2, U.K. Society president Hilary Bruce wrote about Trevor Bailey, the great English cricketer who had died a few weeks previously. Bailey had a special connection with Wodehouse, who had seen him play at Dulwich and commented on his play in a report of the game: "Bailey awoke from an apparent coma to strike a boundary." Hilary pointed out that Bailey had no hard feelings about the comment, and in fact relished watching the cricket team of the Society, the Gold Bats. According to Hilary, Bailey was "a wonderful amiable presence, dispensing advice and enthusiasms in equal proportion."

Carol Kinnaird sent in this from NPR's *All Things Considered*, of May 26: "Writer Gary Shteyngart won the 2011 Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse Prize for comic fiction. He is the first American to win this 11-year-old prize with his *Super Sad True Love Story*." One of the prizes he will receive will be to have a pig named after his book. The May 25 *Washington Post* described the book as "a wild, dystopian blast in which a 'Russian Jewish nebbish' guy . . . and his much younger Korean-American girlfriend . . . try to negotiate the pitfalls of love, bunions, American social disorder, and e-mail exchanges."

Joan Roberts, Laura Loehr, and Ed Bowen all sent along references to a *Smithsonian* article (June 2011) by Lance Morrow, entitled "Don't Sniff the Antlers." In the article, Morrow mentioned four writers he finds to be stabilizing presences: Kenko, a 14th-century Japanese essayist; Dante; Montaigne; and Wodehouse: "A person's sense of balance depends upon the inner ear; it is to the inner ear that such writers speak. Sometimes I get the effect by taking a dip in the Bertie Wooster stories of P. G. Wodehouse, who wrote such wonderful sentences as this description of a solemn young clergyman: 'He had the face of a sheep with a secret sorrow.' Wodehouse . . . composed a Bertie Wooster Neverland—the Oz of the twit. The Wizard, more or less, was the butler (*sic*) Jeeves."

Beth Carroll and Quick Ones specialists John Baesch and Evy Herzog found a book review in the May 28 *Wall Street Journal* that described Charles McGrath's challenge ("a nearly impossible task") when he "went about making his selections for Everyman's Library collection of golf stories: Pick just one from P. G. Wodehouse." He eventually settled on "The Salvation of George Mackintosh." The writer also makes the interesting contention that the "one golf story that can rival a Wodehouse romp for pleasure is . . . James Bond's tense encounter with Auric Goldfinger."

Lynne Truss, in her article "Who's That Girl?" in the April 11 *Times* (London), complained that Kate Middleton (Prince William's wife) has "deliberately made herself so innocuous that we don't feel a connection . . . and it was done by brilliantly infiltrating the obnoxious young-toff scene, which is only funny or interesting to outsiders when it appears in the pages of P. G. Wodehouse." Later, in the article, Ms. Truss stated that it had been a trial for her "to take an interest in the princely social scene, with those young descendants of Catsmeat Potter-Pirbright, Honoria Glossop, and so on."

The *Sunday Telegraph* asked Nigel Farndale to compile a happiness quiz for readers. One of the questions included the PGW statement that it is never difficult to distinguish between a Scotsman with a grievance and a ray of sunshine; Farndale used this to ask readers "with what meteorological condition would you compare yourself?"

The April 20 issue of *Country Life* included a plea from Amphibian and Reptile Conservation that asked pond owners to "spare a few minutes . . . counting the smooth and palmate newts in their pond for a survey." The survey ended in May; you can check out the results at www.newthunt.org.

Bill Horn sent along a very entertaining article from the June 8–14 issue of the *Weekly Telegraph* about the upsurge in ukulele sales. In fact, uke sales are rising faster than that of any other instrument in Britain. The article gives credit to George Formby for championing the ukulele in the U.K. "in the 1930s and 1940s, with his comic music-hall songs such as 'When I'm Cleaning Windows.'" The writer, Harry Wallop, points out that Formby's instrument is actually a banjo ukulele. There are over 100 ukulele clubs in Britain.

Chapters Corner

IT'S FUN BEING with other Wodehouse fans and reading about what others are doing. So please use this column to tell the Wodehouse world about your chapter's activities. Chapter representatives, please send all info to the editor, Gary Hall (see back page). If you're not a member of a local chapter but would like to attend a meeting or become a member, please get in touch with the contact person listed.

Anglers' Rest

(Seattle and vicinity)
Contact: Susan Collicott
Phone:
E-mail:



Birmingham Banjolele Band

(Birmingham, Alabama, and vicinity)
Contact: Caralyn Campbell
Phone:
E-mail:



Blandings Castle Chapter

(Greater San Francisco Bay area)
Contact: Ed and Missy Ratcliffe
Phone:
E-mail:



THE BLANDINGS CASTLE CHAPTER, the oldest and one of the finest—and also one of the most inactive—finally met after years of inactivity.

With all the California sun, fine food, wine, and fantastic things to distract us from attending to the Master's words, we have not met, as the memory of the Oldest Member recalls, for more than two years. With the Dearborn Convention coming up, and with our chapter members not wanting to have to hang our heads lower than we did in Saint Paul when asked about when we had last met, we had the motivation, meaning lack of distractions, required to organize a chapter meeting.

The gathering was held at the home of William "Mulliner" Franklin, in San Francisco. We broke bread—or, in this case, Pad Thai, pizza, and desserts—at noon. A grand time was had by all, yet no one played the piano. We spoke of past members who are no longer with us, chatted about why we have not done this in years, and looked at images from the past ten years of Wodehouse conferences, U.K. society dinners, U.K. and U.S. society cricket matches, and all sorts of other rannygazoo.

We discussed, debated, argued, connived, contrived, and ultimately decided to attend the 42nd Street Moon's production of *Oh, Kay!* on Sunday, November 6, at 3 P.M. (<http://www.42ndstmoon.org/>).

Future meetings of the Blandings Castle chapter? Who knows? With it snowing less than 150 miles away as this reporter penned his story, we may not have sufficient distractions to keep us from meeting one more time before the November meeting.

The Broadway Special

(New York City and vicinity)
Contact: Amy Plofker
Phone:
E-mail:



NOTES FOR OUR Friday the 13th of May meeting reveal that we began discourse at 6:31 P.M.—a new record! But since we were discussing the endearing *Heavy Weather*, can anyone blame us for wanting to get right in the thick of it?

The Special enjoyed reacquainting itself with fellows from other Wodehouse stories who here have a chance to show up at Blandings Castle: Monty Bodkin, Hugo Carmody, the odious P. Frobisher Pilbeam, and the only slightly less odious Lord Tilbury.

Novel insights into butling were provided by Beach, a genial fellow not averse to fraternizing—or perhaps nepotizing is the word we want—with young Master Fish, when Ronnie was still young enough to enjoy fishing, and who, as an undergrad in need of a fiver, had no problem obtaining same from the Blandings major domo. Beach is a devoted butler; he'll do his utmost when called into the fray. But Beach does not initiate or intervene when problems arise, though he willingly follows orders, no matter how outré or dodgy. The Special prefers the action-hero type of butler, the unique, the inimitable Jeeves. Still, Beach is a sentimental favourite for the Silver Medal, edging out both Uncle Charlie and Swordfish.

We were intrigued by the glimpses of verifiably human behaviour, hitherto unsuspected, in Aunt Constance, who displays exasperated determination rather than merciless hauteur, while Aunt Julia evinces an agreeably sardonic sophistication that is especially appealing to the Broadway Special. (We are, after all, New Yorkers, who can appreciate a handsome, middle-aged woman of breezy good humour and a history of childhood wickedness.) Some speculation ensued as to

the difficult situation of these Aunts, who shouldered the responsibilities of managing ancestral estates, scrutinizing the activities of wayward relations and upholding dynastic reputations under very, very, very trying circumstances. Born into the gentry, but denied the opportunities inherited by their brothers, nephews, and husbands, they could perhaps be more pitied than scorned. Then again, maybe not.

The evening's attendees were astonished and amused when Laurie Manifold presented us with two delightful artistic renderings inspired by *Heavy Weather*: a letterhead designed for *Tiny Tots* stationery featuring a border of a sprightly sunrise surrounded by childrens' playthings, and a set of character illustrations which can be pasted onto heavy stock and cut out for reenacting scenes. What a treat! Come October, the Broadway Special expects a line out the door of the Dearborn Inn as eager Plummies fork over oodles of oof for their very own set of Laurie's oeuvre!

Capital! Capital!

(Washington, D.C., and vicinity)

Contact: Jeff Peterson

Phone:

E-mail:



TWENTY EAGER CapCap members gathered in downtown Washington, D.C., on May 22 for fine dining, friendship, and a presentation by Annabelle Stone on the theme of horse racing in the Wodehouse canon. Ann recalled Plum's description of that era's rural horse racing milieu, complete with track touts, turf agents, and pickpockets, and also the full cast of Wodehouse characters, sportsmen all. At one time or another, Bertie, Bingo Little, Bertie's loathsome little cousins, Jeeves, young Lords and Ladies, and even Aunt Dahlia all wagered sums, sometimes successfully, usually disastrously, but always for us—and, thanks to Plum's (and Ann's) inimitable style—humorously.

CapCappers also gathered up on June 12 to attend en masse a matinee performance of the musical comedy *By Jeeves*, originally written, with Plum's blessing, by Alan Ayckbourn and music by Andrew Lloyd Webber. This production was by 1st Stage, an off-Broadway (way, way off-Broadway) venue in the D.C. suburb of McLean, Virginia. CapCap attendees were uniformly enthusiastic in their comments about the play and deemed that the acting company did very creditable jobs portraying the usual cast of Wodehouse characters.

Also, CapCap's own Brian Taves invited our chapter to the July 16 showing of MGM's 1928 silent movie *The Cardboard Lover*. The movie was the film adaptation of

a Wodehouse romantic comedy play. In the film, Sally, a flighty American tourist in Europe, falls for French tennis champion Andre, who already has a girlfriend. Well, you can guess the ensuing romp. The film was shown at the film archives and theater of the Library of Congress facilities in Culpeper, Virginia.

Chapter One

(Greater Philadelphia area)

Contact: Herb Moskowitz

Phone:

E-mail:



THE CHAPS OF Chapter One met on May 22 at the Dark Horse Tavern in Old Philadelphia. The room was filled almost to bursting thanks to the addition of a number of new Plummies, and we welcomed them all. Any fan of Plum who comes to our meeting is a friend of ours. We were also graced by the presence of two guests to these shores from Sweden. Three cheers for the Swedish Wodehouse Society!

Bob Rains (Oily Carlisle) reported on the extensive and praiseworthy efforts to establish a mechanism by which TWS can fund and construct a memorial/historical marker to Plum in the cemetery in Remsenburg, New York. [*In fact, the Summer Plum Lines had the full story, and more details are printed in this issue.*—Ed.]

Herb Moskowitz (Vladimir Brusiloff) reported that we have received a new certificate from the Philadelphia Zoo stating that we have provided funds again this year for the maintenance of our newt, Gussie. They included a picture of our adopted foundling.

Hope Gaines (Anabell Sprockett-Sprockett, Smattering Hall) proposed a "bash" for our chapter this summer in Cape May.

During lunch, a general discussion ensued on many topics, including Norman Murphy's famous "walks" through London and his great efforts to determine the original locations on which Plum based the locales of his stories.

Herb had several "Plum in the News" stories. First, a few days before, the *Philadelphia Inquirer's* Michael Schaffer had recommended reading *The Code of the Woosters* before the May 21 rapture. ("Can't face the end? Then escape into P. G. Wodehouse's 1938 comic masterpiece, in which the cerebral valet Jeeves guides the mentally negligible Bertie Wooster through a world of genteel lunacy.")

Second, an article by Lance Morrow in the June issue of *Smithsonian* brings together Kenko, a 14th-century Japanese monk, Dante, Montaigne, and Plum:

"He composed a Bertie Wooster Neverland—the Oz of the twit. The Wizard, more or less, was . . . Jeeves."

Herb also told us about Bonham's auction of two original illustrations by John Rea Neill from *A Man of Means*, a series of PGW stories written in collaboration with C. H. Bovill. The series was originally published in 1914 in the *Strand* magazine, but was published with the Neill illustrations in 1916 in *Pictorial Review*. The second illustration somewhat resembled our gathering, with the exception of top hats being tossed. Too bad we can't touch Oofy Prosser for a loan, as the estimated price for each illustration is between \$3,000 and \$4,000.

After a fine repast, we did a dramatic reading of the 1910 short story "Providence and the Butler." Janet Nickerson (Zenobia "Nobby" Hopwood) played Lord Drexdale brilliantly, and Bob Rains played Keeling the butler in an excellent butlery manner. Our presenter, David Mackenzie (Angus McAllister), noted that it was a "good story, but not a great one." Some thought the transition in the butler's demeanor from early in the story to close to the denouement strained credibility. The members discussed the final section of the story and whether the Lord Drexdale at the end was the original old lord or if it was the son.

Our meeting ran smoothly thanks to the ministrations of our "waiter," Josh, who is to waiterdom what Beach is to butlery, with the addition of Jeevesian intelligence and Bunterish skill. We have begun to appreciate and depend on him ("appreciate," that's another word for tip).

Our next meeting at the Dark Horse Tavern will be held on September 25. Norma Frank will moderate one of the golf stories, but she hasn't chosen which one yet. She reports she is having a lot of fun rereading them.

The Chicago Accident Syndicate

(Chicago and thereabouts)

Contact: Daniel & Tina Garrison

Phone:

E-mail:



THE CHICAGO Accident Syndicate met August 13 at Falling Trees, the gracious and celebrated home of Dan and Tina "May Queen" Garrison in Evanston. We welcomed our newest member and official brewer, Thos Young, who brought samples of recent brews. We were privileged to try Young Thos's Anglers' Rest Special Bitter, Empress of Blandings Best Bitter, and Wilfred Mulliner's Patent Buck-U-Uppo Grade B. (You'll recall that this latter grade is designed primarily to encourage elephants in India to conduct themselves with an easy

nonchalance during tiger hunts.) The meeting ended with more than the usual confusion when a tree fell on the Widgeon 7 driven by Alan Devitt and Susan Diamond. There were no injuries or hard feelings.

The Clients of Adrian Mulliner

(For enthusiasts of both PGW

and Sherlock Holmes)

Contact: Marilyn MacGregor

Phone:



The Drone Rangers

(Houston and vicinity)

Contact: Carey Tynan

Phone:

E-mail:



THE DRONE RANGERS July meeting was held on Friday, July 29, at the Barnes & Noble on West Gray. The short-story theme for July was "Plum's Peaches," stories with a plucky Wodehouse heroine. For future reference, there are several Wodehouse books on Project Gutenberg as well as free Kindle books on Amazon. (You do NOT have to have a Kindle, just the software for your phone, computer, iPad, whatever.)

The August dinner meeting was to have occurred on Saturday, August 27.

The road trip to Fort Worth to see *Jeeves in the Morning* at Stage West will be the weekend of September 24–25. Details to be announced. This trip was publicized in the Summer issue of *Plum Lines*, so PGW fans from other chapters are going to try to join us.

The Flying Pigs

(Cincinnati area and elsewhere)

Contact: Susan Brokaw

Phone:

E-mail:



Friends of the Fifth Earl of Ickenham

(Buffalo, New York, and vicinity)

Contact: Laura Loehr

Phone:

E-mail:



The Mottled Oyster Club / Jellied Eels

(San Antonio and South T

Contact: Lynette Poss

Phone:

E-mail:



The New England Wodehouse Thingummy Society (NEWTS)

(Boston and New England)

Contact: David Landman

Phone:

E-mail:



PERHAPS IT WAS the single-line, hook-caught wild salmon, hand-cut and filleted, caught on Thursday in Scotland, flown in on Friday, and served to the NEWTS on Saturday. Perhaps it was the black caviar. Perhaps it was the sight of both gleaming on the sideboard. But whatever it was, the NEWTS June meeting was a corker.

And much of that cork-a-tude was owed to the provider of those imported delicacies, the NEWTS's very own Psmith doppelgänger, John Kareores. As vehemently as Psmith refused to have anything to do with fish, Kareores is never happier than when he is awash in what an 18th-century poet called "the finny tribe." John is our resident piscatorial expert and, at the drop of sinker, will enlighten you about the cosmetic chicanery performed on spoiled swordfish so it can be fobbed off as kebabs as well as how one can tell if the mackerel one is dining off died happily or if that downcast mouth was a reproach frozen in extremis.

John is but one of many erudite NEWTS, each a specialist in his or her field and each a gourmand to boot, who make our noddles such a feast of spirit, flow of soul, and efflorescence of savories.

If your summer plans include a patriotic visit to the "Birthplace of America," you are invited to notify our lower-case president [*David Landman*] who will spare no effort to arrange a beano in your honor. He can't promise caviar, but he can guarantee you'll meet some great people.

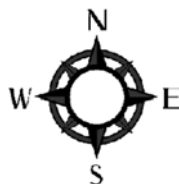
The Northwodes

(St. Paul, Minneapolis, and vicinity)

Contact: Kristine Fowler

Phone:

E-mail:



THE NORTHWODES played a doubleheader in June, if two events a week apart qualify as such. The June 28 book discussion had been on the calendar for some time, modified only slightly by our usual haunt, the Wilde Roast Cafe, moving to new digs near the Stone Arch Bridge. The riverfront venue was an appropriate setting for *Mr. Mulliner Speaking*, although the erudite and efficient Miss Postlethwaite was conspicuous by her absence; perhaps we'll find a worthy substitute by the time we get to the last Mulliner volume. (The

casual observer might think that our reading schedule is completely random, but it's nothing of the sort. While embracing a healthy variety, a guiding principle is that the books in each separate saga are read in order.) The bonus gathering on June 19 welcomed TWS member Prem Rao, on a U.S. tour from Bangalore. Over a sumptuous dinner at Terry d'Souza's home, Prem's Minnesota cousin discovered she'd gone to school in India with her host's sister, and it was the work of a moment to connect them again via telephone. Other entertainment came from viewing a Mulliner story à la *Wodehouse Playhouse*, which was new to several of those present; luckily, there are more where that came from.

August presented another doubleheader, starting with a "concertlette" of Wodehouse songs by Maria Jette and Dan Chouinard on August 7. Building on the sensation they made at the 2009 convention, this SRO performance previewed even more songs from their upcoming CD, due to be presented in October at the Dearborn convention. Conventioneers everywhere can join the Northwodes in tapping their toes and socking away a bit of the needful in anticipation. Meanwhile, any passing Plummie is encouraged to join us in person; the Northwodes's activities may be followed at <http://northwodes.org/>

The Perfecto-Zizzbaum Motion Picture Corporation

(Los Angeles and vicinity)

Contact: Karen Shotting

Phone:

E-mail:



ELEVEN YEARS AGO, after lying dormant for untold years, PZMPCo reinvented itself in June 2000. We mark this auspicious occasion each year in June with a reading of "The Rise of Minna Nordstrom" (wherein our namesake, the Perfecto-Zizzbaum Corporation, is formed in the historic merger of three legendary Hollywood studios). This year, in a slight departure from tradition, we added two other Hollywood stories, featuring Perfecto-Zizzbaum employees Mabel Potter and Montrose Mulliner: "The Nodder" and "The Juice of an Orange." We particularly enjoyed "The Juice of an Orange" and its send-up of fad diets, and, for the Wodehouse connoisseur, a minor walk-on role for the hapless writer Eustiss Vanderleigh. Mr. Vanderleigh's resigned attitude toward the cavalier treatment of his "rarest scenes and subtlest lines" reminds us of PGW's similar experiences with the studios in our fair city.

In July, we chatted over bagels and coffee about *Sam the Sudden/Sam in the Suburbs*. As usual, we

laughed and marveled over our favorite quotes, veered from topic frequently, and had a delightful time. Sam Shotter's categorical lack of qualifications for tenure at the Mammoth Publishing Co. inspired us to seek further particulars as to other Drones who have ornamented the Mammoth's hallowed halls and blighted the life of its proprietor, George Pyke (now going about under the alias Lord Tilbury). We have therefore decided that a study of the adventures of Montague Bodkin will provide us with enlightenment on the subject. Our readings over the next three months will be the books that feature young Monty: *Heavy Weather* in August (with the added benefit that it is a Blandings story); *The Luck of the Bodkins* in September (with another Hollywood connection, Ivor Llewellyn and his studio the Superba-Llewellyn); and *Pearl, Girls and Monty Bodkin* (aka *The Plot That Thickened*) in October.

We also discussed the Wodehouse gravesite memorial marker fund and made a contribution in the name of the LA chapter.

Our group meets the second Sunday of each month (except May, when we meet on the third Sunday) at 12:30 P.M. at Book Alley in Pasadena. We hope to see you there!

The Pickering Motor Company

(Detroit and vicinity)
Contact: Elliott Milstein
Phone:
E-mail:



The Portland Greater Wodehouse Society (PGWs)

(Portland, Oregon and vicinity)
Contact: Carol James
Phone:
E-mail:



The Right Honorable Knights of Sir Philip Sidney

(Amsterdam, The Netherlands)
Contact: Jelle Otten

THE RIGHT HONORABLE KNIGHTS assembled in sunny Amsterdam on June 4. Our meeting took place at "that gracious hour of a summer afternoon, midway between luncheon and tea, when Nature seems to unbutton its waistcoat and put its feet up" (*Summer Lightning*). Although Francis, innkeeper of Mulliner's Wijnlokaal, would not allow to put your feet up on his furniture, he provided us with food, snacks, and drinks. All ingredients were at hand for a pleasant afternoon.

Tony Roodnat, prominent member of the board of the (Dutch) P. G. Wodehouse Society, informed

us exhaustively about the jubilee dinner to be held on November 26, 2011, on the occasion of its 30th anniversary. Because all Right Hon. Knights are also members of this Dutch PGW Society, the Knights nodded their assent intensely.

Leonard Beuger has translated several Wodehouse stories and novels from English into Dutch. In May 2011 he was invited to give a lecture at the Art of Translation Symposium in Leiden, organized by Stedenband Oxford-Leiden, a collaborative effort between Oxford and Leiden. Oxford has the oldest English university within its city walls, whereas Leiden has the oldest one in the Netherlands. The subject of Leonard's lecture was the art of translating P. G. Wodehouse into Dutch language. He stated that translations of Wodehouse are susceptible to aging, while Wodehouse's English versions are not. The result is that the Dutch people urgently need recent translations, because translations made in the first half of the 20th century are hardly understood by readers of today.

Leonard said he comes across several problems while translating Wodehouse, including plays on words, the sheer number of jokes, and the mixture of jargons. One example that he provided of the latter was of Bertie Wooster regularly mixing university English with Cockney.

After the lecture, on on the wharf of Lijnbaansgracht, there was a sticky-peanut-rock-cake-throwing contest. A contest of what? For more information, please reread *Money in the Bank*, especially chapter 5. You'll read of J. G. "Jeff" Miller hurling a plate with rock cakes, baked by Ma Balsam, across the courtyard. The fifth and last of the jagged delicacies hits J. Sheringham Adair, Private Investigator, between the eyes.

We were invited by the Dutch Society president Peter Nieuwenhuizen, who was managing the contest, to throw sticky peanut rocks into one of three available tins. One tin showed a picture of J. Sheringham Adair (5 points), another held a portrait of Anne Benedick (3 points), and the last was decorated with a drawing of Ma Balsam (1 point). The winner was young Menno van Eesteren, while Gerard Leijdsman was second best.

It was a day of great weather and much fun.

The next meeting of the Right Honorable Knights will be on Saturday, October 22, 2011, at 1 P.M. in Mulliner's Wijnlokaal, Lijnbaansgracht 266-267, Amsterdam.

The Size 14 Hat Club

(Halifax, Nova Scotia)
Contact: Jill Robinson
E-mail:



Show Boat in East Haddam—and a Call for Plummy Action

BY M. E. RICH

A SMALL BUT DEVOTED cluster of The Broadway Special attended a preview matinee of *Show Boat* on July 10 and it was a particularly fond return to the Goodspeed Opera House (East Haddam, Connecticut) for me. I made my professional acting debut there many years ago, and, knowing the tiny stage and its backstage environs, I wondered how the sprawling, epic show would fit.

Two other reasons made this a bit of a pilgrimage: in 1970, Norma Terris, the Magnolia of *Show Boat*'s premiere in 1927, came out of retirement in nearby Lyme to appear in Goodspeed's *Little Mary Sunshine*. She was quite a dame, and I was her dresser. (A revealing side note: Miss Terris was not fond of undergarments.) And my father's Uncle Jack, a Broadway character actor, was in that original 1927 production as a "Gentleman Reveller."

So, did Goodspeed launch a show worthy of Kern, Ferber, Hammerstein? Indubitably. They've overcome daunting technical difficulties, and the result is a transcendent transformation of the theater itself. The audience itself is aboard the *Show Boat* when the overture segues into the opening number, and the double-decker *Cotton Blossom* glides forth to dock on the stage. An overflowing cast of 25 actors in an ever-changing variety of costumes reflect the story's 50-year sweep of action. Director Rob Ruggiero uses the entire theater to place his players strategically in the orchestra and balcony.

The Rodgers and Hammerstein Organization has six possible scripts that can be used or adapted for the narrative, but the essence of *Show Boat* remains of immense historical importance. It is definitively the first modern musical play, in that it forswore formulae derived from European operetta and musical comedies that consisted of sketch story lines and revue-type musical interludes filled with pleasant but cookie-cutter characters, contrived and superficial plots, and songs that were scarcely more than ditties. Kern and Hammerstein undertook to dramatize a contemporary work of fiction that dealt with issues seldom addressed in public or personal lives, let alone used as sources of entertainment. They explored the sorrow of divorce and abandonment, the addictive dangers of gambling and alcohol, the dissolute hedonism of Prohibition, and the racial divide that haunts us to this day. It was the first production to give black characters depth and humanity on stage with whites, and to present a musical panoply

of Americana, from the cakewalk of "Can't Help Lovin' Dat Man" to the soaring duets of "Make Believe" and "Why Do I Love You", to the crowd-pleasing variety numbers "Ballyhoo" and "Life Upon the Wicked Stage."

Of course the emotional heart of the play is "Ol' Man River"; the melody is especially moving as the theme is quoted throughout the show in instrumental arrangements and in underscored humming by the chorus. Then, early in the first act, there is the still shocking display of hatred and bigotry which results in the casting out of mulatto Julie La Verne and her white husband, despite the anguished entreaties of the *Cotton Blossom*'s Captain. The black men and women watch and grieve from above in the balcony and within the audience, as the couple is driven into misfortune and eventual ruin. It is Julie who sings "Bill" late in the second act, and it is "Bill" that brings Wodehousians to *Show Boat*.

P. G. Wodehouse's lyrics for "Bill" were written for 1918's *Oh, Lady! Lady!!*, but the song was cut just before opening night. Kern retrieved it from his archives and popped it into *Show Boat* for Helen Morgan as the fading, addled Julie. Hammerstein, who revised several verses, always gave full credit to Plum as its lyricist. Later productions cut some other numbers, but "Bill" has always been a part of the show. However, you won't find Wodehouse's name in the program in East Haddam or on the website for the R & H Organization. The Wodehouse Society has nothing as serious as a mission statement, but we do espouse keeping green the mem'r'y of Plum, and I propose a modest writing campaign to the R & H Organization, suggesting that they reinstate the proper authorship of "Bill" as found in the original playbill. Mr. Ted Chapin is the president of said organization (though it is apparently owned by an Engulf & Devour type mega-entity) and is a delightful and intelligent individual who is probably unaware of this unfortunate lapse. What say you, Plummys?

Swan's Way?

THE MARCH 31 *Times* (London) printed an article by Charles Bremner about new defensive shields used by French bodyguards: umbrellas. These devices are "tough enough to stop a flying petanque ball and a 100 mph blast." When he submitted the article to *Plum Lines*, John Baesch asked the question in all Plummy minds: "But is it swan-tested?"

W. W. Norton's New Paperback Woosters

PUBLISHER W. W. NORTON has announced the publication of five Jeeves and Wooster books for the first time in Norton paperback. They sent your *PL* editor a copy of all five (perks of the job) and stated that these editions “appeal to first-time readers as the perfect introduction to P. G. Wodehouse and also to dedicated Wodehouse fans as a great addition to their collections.” While many of the readers of this journal probably have one or more copies of these books from other publishers or in Norton hardcover, these are a pleasant paperback version. The titles printed are *Joy in the Morning*; *Right Ho, Jeeves*; *The Code of the Woosters*; *Very Good, Jeeves!*; and *The Inimitable Jeeves*. The book design is by Judith Abbate, and the cover art is appropriate to the time period of the stories and sufficiently referential of the content. All in all, good stuff from the good folks at Norton, who obviously have their hearts in the right place!

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We appreciate your articles, research, Quick Ones, My First Time tales, and other observations. Send them to Gary Hall via e-mail or snail mail at the addresses above! Deadlines are February 1, May 1, August 1, November 1. If you have something that might miss the deadline, let me know and we'll work something out!

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And at the back, where I was, we came down with a jerk in the social scale, this end of the hall being given up almost entirely to a collection of frankly Tough Eggs, who had rolled up not so much for any love of the drama as because there was a free tea after the show.

“The Metropolitan Touch” (1922)