

The quarterly journal of The Wodehouse Society

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Happy 130th Birthday, Plum!

THE WODEHOUSE SOCIETY celebrated the 130th anniversary of the birth of our celebrated Master in October in Dearborn, Michigan. If you were there, you must still be basking in the glow of the camaraderie you enjoyed, and you may be reliving the fresh memories through the photographs and memorabilia. If you were not there (and even if you were), you will find the following pages a thorough report of this wonderful event.

The Pickering Motor Company choreographed an amazing four-day convention, with plenty of food, fun, and friendship throughout. If the reports and full-color pictures aren't enough to thrill one and all, then let it be known that there's another convention coming your way in 2013, courtesy of the Chicago Accident Syndicate, in Chicago, of course. Thanks to the scribes and digital photographers who documented the Dearborn gathering, your holiday season may be

brighter than ever. Enjoy these tales of browsing and sluicing, costumes and cricket, erudition and humor, and most of all the inspiration of P. G. Wodehouse.



*Welcome to the celebration! Kate Andrew, Susan Brokaw, Dirk Wonnell, and Tim Andrew prepare to toast Plum in Dearborn.
(photo by Barbara Combs)*

The Henry Ford Museum, Greenfield Village, and the Rouge Plant Tour

BY KAREN SHOTTING

DO YOU KNOW," said a thoughtful Bean, "I'll bet that if all the girls Freddie Widgeon has loved and lost were placed end to end—not that I suppose one could do it—they would reach half-way down Piccadilly." "Further than that," said the Egg. "Some of them were pretty tall." On Thursday, October 13, as a group of congenial Plummies wandered about on the viewing deck overlooking the assembly room of "The Rouge," P. G. Wodehouse's words flitted about in my mind.

The Ford Motor Company's River Rouge Plant, like Wodehouse's most versatile heroes, operates under more than one alias: it is known as the Dearborn Truck Plant or, simply, the Rouge. It originally consisted of a massive conglomeration of buildings, shipyard, and iron works built by Henry Ford, to make the plant completely vertically integrated. Many of the former operations have been sold to other companies, but the remaining structures are still quite impressive. The



1932 V-8 at The Henry Ford
(photo by Karen Shotting)

plant was clean, light, and surprisingly quiet (and bore no resemblance to the famous Diego Rivera Detroit Industry murals at the Detroit Institute of the Arts—another delight I enjoyed courtesy of the Girl in the Blue Dress [Deb Bellew] and her rental car). We toured the final assembly room, the eco-friendly green roof, and the exhibit of historic cars, including a T-Bird, a Mustang, and a lovely 1932 V-8.

The connection between Freddie Widgeon's lost loves and an American manufacturing plant? Informative placards told us that the Rouge's weekly output, if placed bumper to bumper, would stretch from the Dearborn plant to Detroit. A further informative notice declared that the Dearborn Truck Plant's yearly output would stretch all the way from Dearborn to New York City (not that I suppose one could do it, at least not without creating a Carmageddon of a traffic jam). As Richard Dawkins has pointed out, "P. G. Wodehouse satirized this kind of calculation beautifully" in "Good-Bye to All Cats." Note, for example, Lord Uffenthorn's calculation in *Money in the Bank* where he states that he "could put the whole dashed human race into a pit half a mile wide by half a mile deep." But I digress.

Henry Ford did not skimp in supplying the Dearborn tourist with amusement. The Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village were practically in our backyard. The Dearborn Inn, our gracious host, offered shuttle service on demand to these attractions. I arrived a day early and meandered through The Henry Ford, thoroughly enjoying the presidential limousine exhibit, as well as its collections of clocks, dollhouses, old silver, and decorative arts. Although the automobile exhibit was closed for construction, I did catch an enticing

glimpse of some of the cars, including a fabulous 1931 Bugatti Royale Type 41, of which only six were sold.

I toured Greenfield Village on my final day in Dearborn—a lovely, sunny day, tailor-made for viewing this charming spot, with historic homes, vintage milliner shops, and jewelry and bicycle shops. Horse-drawn trolleys and carriages (mind your feet!) pass by on a regular basis, and Model T Fords run on the streets. For a small fee one can ride about the village in a Model T, which I certainly did.

The Detroit Tour

BY LUCY MERRILL

EARLY ON Friday morning, one-and-a-half busloads of Wodehousians set off for a grand tour of the Motor City. Guides for the excursion were Larry Nahigian and Michael Smith on Bus 1 and Robert Walter and David Warren on Bus A (like Mulliners, all Wodehousians are A1). Michael also created an excellent booklet of the tour highlights.

Journeying from Dearborn to the heart of Detroit, we got a quick brush-up on the history of the city. It was founded in 1701 as a fortified French outpost by explorer, trapper, and up-and-comer Antoine Laumet de la Mothe, who came to the New World and made himself a nobleman, *sieur de Cadillac*. The city's name means "strait" and refers to the Detroit River that connects Lake Huron and Lake St. Clair with Lake Erie.

Today's city began to take shape in 1805 when a devastating fire destroyed 299 of Detroit's 300 buildings. Territorial governor Augustus Woodward took the opportunity to make his own city plan, patterned after L'Enfant's plan for the national capital. The local padre, Father Gabriel Richard, put in his two cents with a bit of Latin that was adopted as the city's motto—*Speriamus meliora; resurget cineribus* ("We hope for better things; it will rise from the ashes").

Those of us on Bus A heard some more recent history with stories involving rannygazoo among the local judiciary, strip-club owners, a jailed former mayor, and an oofy fellow colorfully named Manny Maroon, who owns the Ambassador Bridge to Ontario and the deserted train station by which we stopped.

The tour took us past gracious historical homes, some restored and others awaiting their makeover, and such sites of note as the Motown Historical Museum, partially housed in Berry Gordy's former home and the location of his studio where the Motown sound first hit vinyl. Other sites included the Detroit Institute of Art (home to one of 20 full-size casts of Rodin's *The Thinker* and a massive fresco celebrating industry by muralist



1931 Bugatti
Royale Type 41
(photo by
Karen Shotting)

Diego Rivera) and the Garden Bowl, where Detroit's hipsters go for strikes (and spares).

We got a peek at Belle Isle, a huge park in the middle of the Detroit River. The bridge to the island was the site of a daring stunt by Houdini, who demonstrated his escape artistry when he was shackled and sent off the bridge into frigid river water. (Houdini died in Detroit, not on this chilly occasion but 20 years later, on Halloween, from a ruptured appendix.)

We made stops to get a peep at a couple of Jazz Age skyscrapers: the Fisher Building and the Guardian Building. Built in 1928, the Golden Tower of the Fisher Building, called "Detroit's largest art object," featured lots of bronze, gold, and marble and gleamed with the optimism of the booming Motor City. The Art Deco Guardian Building, built in 1929, is an exuberant tribute to industry, mixed with Native American motifs and color from around the world, from Italian travertine to deep red African marble.

Our guides called Detroit the "modern Pompeii—the buildings are still there, but the people are gone." We saw this aspect of the city touring through areas of decayed houses and empty lots, where homes and businesses have been swept away. Detroit's population was 2 million in 1950; it stands at 750,000 now, so there are a lot of abandoned structures. The city even has a farm program to allow residents to plant gardens on empty lots. It was heartening to hear that there are efforts to revitalize some of these areas, inspired, perhaps, by Father Richard's motto.

For refreshment from the rigors of tourism, we stopped at Hockeytown for a lunch of "coney"—hot dogs with chili, mustard, and onion that are a Detroit tradition. We returned to the Dearborn Inn with our minds bursting with excess knowledge and a renewed appreciation for the energy and optimism of the industrial movement that built the city. It was easy to imagine Plum in the go-go city, rubbing elbows with Dudley Pickering and Henry Ford.

Meanwhile, Back at the Hotel

BY ELIN WOODGER

WHILE A LARGE number of conventioners tootled off on the bus tour of Detroit, others chose to remain behind, whether to greet later arrivals, browse through the tables loaded with great stuff for sale, or perhaps amble down the road to The Henry Ford to visit the museum or Greenfield Village (or both). Outside the room where our talks would take place the next day, Elyse Milstein and Sherry Smith tended the registration

table while Elliott Milstein oversaw the rummage sale table and raffle. At another table nearby, Bob Rains and Andrea Jacobsen took donations for the Remsenburg Marker Fund. All was sweetness and light as folks came in to drop off items for the rummage sale, spend a little oof, and otherwise engage in Plummy chatter.

Many snapped up bargains in the rummage sale, which featured all sorts of wonderful items: books, audiobooks, articles of clothing, jewelry, notecards, and handmade delights (such as Tom Young's beer labels). Our second-youngest attendee, Haley Pfifer, managed to pick up a first edition! Profits from the rummage sale were donated to the Convention Reserve Fund. Bob and Andrea's table featured jars of homemade plum jam, donated by a friend; *A Guide to P. G. Wodehouse's New York City and Long Island*, written by Norman Murphy and Amy Plofker (see page 10 for further details); and copies of Bob's delightful book *True Tales of Trying Times*. Proceeds from the sale of these items benefited the Remsenburg Marker Fund (see page 9). Meanwhile, registration continued apace



Lovely and hard-working pillars of the Pickerings, Elyse Milstein and Sherry Smith (photo by Barbara Combs)

as Elyse and Sherry (and subsequently other Pickerings) handed out name tags and bags loaded with convention goodies, including the ubiquitous pin, a notepad and fountain pen inside a leather folder with the convention logo, a logo-inscribed soft cricket ball, the convention quizzes, and a number of informational sheets. Best of all, there was the superb convention program, a 16-page delight that was filled with not only particulars about the convention but all sorts of fascinating details regarding pertinent places in Detroit. A big bravo to the Pickerings for the best convention program ever!

The plan for Friday afternoon had been to hold TWS's traditional Cricket Experience on the lawn outside the hotel. Although the dreaded phrase "rain stopped play" meant this was not to be, the lovely folks at the Dearborn Inn came up with the perfect solution and provided a large room that enabled us to hold an indoor bowling championship. Under the critical eye of

Robert (Frank Chester) Bruce and Tony (Dickie Bird) Ring, and with Elaine Ring keeping score, some 33 Wodehouseans took turns at bowling at three stumps, a task which is surprisingly different from pitching at baseball. This proved to be quite a lot of fun for those taking part, and the surprising winner was—well, see the banquet report.

For those not cricketing, there was continued browsing among the tables in the registration area, and the Senior Bloodstain of the Clients of Adrian Mulliner took place in the late afternoon, apparently well attended. Then, before we knew it, it was time for the traditional Friday evening reception, which included not only a cash bar but plenty of excellent noshing. Old friends and new had a superb time prattling, taking photos of each other, and otherwise making merry. The Dearborn Inn has probably never heard so much laughter!

Finally, two buses rolled up to the hotel to take our merrymakers to Greektown in Detroit, there to eat at any one of a number of fine restaurants, Greek or otherwise, and, if desired, to engage in a little gambling at the Greektown Casino. There was only one downside to the latter experience: Smoking was allowed inside the casino, which prevented many from even entering, much less gambling. But several intrepid souls were seen sidling in through the doors, and it is rumored that at least one Plummy came out with heavier pockets. Bingo Little and Freddie Widgeon would have been very jealous indeed.

Scintillating Talks and Dreaded Business

BY GARY HALL

SATURDAY MORNING and afternoon are traditionally devoted to presentations, academic and not-so-academic. Elliott Milstein made it clear before the Dearborn convention that he believed the lineup of speakers was as good as had ever taken the floor at past conventions of TWS. We will not debate that claim, for we were highly entertained and enlightened throughout the day. Many of the papers will be presented in the next few issues of *Plum Lines* for your pleasure.

After a bit of hobnobbing over the sweet rolls and coffee, the attendees settled in to the comfortable lecture room. Elliott leaped to the podium for the preliminary announcements, and then child psychiatrist Dr. Paul Abrinko presented a psychological study detailing how Wodehouse may have been affected for life by his very absent parents. The information was intense, and we

felt rather melancholy as we contemplated the sense of unwantedness that PGW may have experienced. Yet from that possibly sad beginning emerged the greatest humorist of the 20th century—a testament, indeed, to the power of human optimism.

In his talk on “Courting the Muse,” Tony Ring, ably assisted by Bob Rains as a variety of magistrates, told us that PGW was as much a crime novelist as a humorist. Many of the judicial run-ins of the Wodehouse canon were discussed and, in part, enacted.

“Collecting Wodehouse” columnist John Graham then delighted us with his well-illustrated talk entitled “Picturing Jeeves,” a selective look at some of the more important Wodehouse illustrators. John’s deadpan dry humor kept our interest high while educating us.

Chief Pickering Elliott returned to regale us with his “Wodehouse on Wheels” paper, starting with a fictional reworking of Randolph Olds’s contribution to the Detroit automotive colossus.

Maria Jette and Dan Chouinard then performed a short set of songs from their new recording *In Our Little Paradise* (see page 7). Maria provided some interesting and humorous background material about the tunes, including “Two to Tooting,” “Cleopatterer,” and “Yale.”

After lunch, the crowd suffered politely through the Dreaded (but brief!) Business Meeting. Highlights included the announcement of the 2013 Chicago convention by Bonnie Jones and Tina Woelke; information about several new publications (which you can find elsewhere in this journal); a hearty cheer for the terrific job the Pickerings were doing; and, finally, the election of officers for their next two-year terms. Ian Michaud agreed to reprise his role as Membership Secretary, Kris Fowler will stay on as Treasurer, Karen Shotting was elected to the position of Vice President, and Ken Clevenger took the chains of office from yours truly and became our new President, leaving me to concentrate on Editor in Chief duties. All of this was done according to a Wodehousean variation of Robert’s Rules, so the proceedings are now a matter of history.

Such business being concluded, the talks resumed. Elin Woodger spoke to us about “The Anglo-American Angle,” the intriguing combination of American and English characters that Wodehouse brought to life. Movie and television star Curtis Armstrong gave a strong and inspiring speech about “Wodehouse in a Changing World.” After a little break to replenish the tissues in one fashion or another, we gathered back together for Tom Smith to tell us all about “Jeeves, the Model of Servant Leadership.” Tom was followed by the perpetually upbeat Norman Murphy, who was up to his usual revelatory tricks with “The Last Puzzle.”

To end the afternoon, we had a bit of a treat, as the Hands Across the Sea Touring Company presented two short skits: “Lord Emsworth and the Fate Worse than Death” and “Bertie at Blandings.”

Relaxed and wiser, our company applauded all speakers and actors roundly, and then proceeded back to our respective corners to transform into the spiffing group—some black tie, some costumed, some somewhere in-between—for our banquet and birthday bash that would continue well into Saturday night.



The Hands Across the Sea Touring Company: Elin Woodger, Tim Andrew, Ed Ratcliffe, Robert Bruce, Norman Murphy, Hilary Bruce (not shown) (photo by Barbara Combs)

A Banquet to Remember

BY NORMAN MURPHY

THE BANQUET on Saturday evening was, as always, the highlight of the convention, and a major factor was, as always, the number of people who take the opportunity to express themselves in costume. I don't remember when the tradition of dressing up as Wodehouse characters or representing the titles of Wodehouse books began, but the ingenuity displayed is nothing short of remarkable, and this year was no exception. The list of prizewinners below gives some idea of the variety, and cameras were flashing at a furious rate during the pre-dinner reception.

It was therefore a very happy gathering that trooped into the banquet room, which was splendidly decorated in celebration of Wodehouse's 130th birthday, complete with multicolored balloons. Thanks to the Pickerings, who know that without balloons, no birthday party is complete. The icing on the cake (even before the cake was served) was the quality champagne glasses bearing the convention logo—these were the final, and perhaps the best, of the mementoes we took home from a wonderful convention.

The evening began with three toasts: The new president, Ken Clevenger, gave the toast to P. G. Wodehouse; Ed Ratcliffe gave the toast to Bill Blood, who founded The Wodehouse Society; and Gary Hall gave the toast to absent friends who had left us in the two and a half years since the last convention. The dinner itself

was excellent and was followed by the reading aloud of proclamations from the cities of Detroit and Dearborn officially recognizing the occasion and of letters from Edward Cazalet (Wodehouse's grandson) and Sophie Ratcliffe, editor of *P. G. Wodehouse: A Life in Letters* (see page 7). Then it was time to announce the winners of the various competitions. Elliott Milstein awarded the prize for the Cookery Competition to Sam Paris, while Lynn Vesley-Gross and Ian Michaud oversaw the prize-giving for the Scripture Knowledge quizzes. Leonard Goldstein won the beginners' quiz, Kris Fowler won the medium-level quiz, while the president of the Dutch Wodehouse Society, Peter Nieuwenhuizen, won the expert level. (As a result, lucky Peter gets to set the quiz for the next convention.)

Next, Tony Ring and Robert Bruce presented the prizes for Friday's Cricket Experience, which the rain forced to become a very successful indoor bowling championship. To her surprise and huge delight, Barbara Jacobitti was the winner of the Bowling Championship, earning her a genuine Lord's cricket practice ball. Raja Srinivasan won the award for the Spirit of Cricket—a copy of Murray Hedgcock's *Wodehouse at the Wicket*—while Shamim “Pongo” Mohamed took the prize for Best and Most Stylishly Dressed Cricketer. Pongo received a genuine English Cricket Board St. George's Cross handkerchief, which he knotted into a hat (to provide protection from the sun, of course) and wore for the rest of the evening.

The awards for the best costumes once again reflected great credit on the judges, whose selection of categories was as ingenious as the costumes to which they gave prizes. It was noted, and acknowledged with great applause, that three categories were won by people attending their first convention. These were Jim Hughes dressed as Roderick Spode (Best Aspiring Dictator), young Haley Pfifer dressed as Psmith (Best Cross-Dresser), and even younger Annie Gribbon as the rose presented to Lady Celia in *Mervyn Keene, Clubman* (Best Reference to a Story Within a Story).

Then we had John Graham as Uncle Fred's Great Sponge “Joyeuse” (Best Inanimate Object from the Canon); Bob Rains and Andrea Jacobsen as The Amazing Hat Mystery (Best Short Story Title); and Kris Fowler and her sister, Karen Fowler Latterell, as the Trent Sisters in *French Leave* (Best Master-Servant Duo). Your correspondent has to say here that he became increasingly confused by these two since they changed costumes (lady and lady's maid) three times during the evening, and he was beginning to think that the California Merlot he was drinking had a certain something that other Merlots did not have.

Tamaki Morimura, as a newt in a vivid scarlet Mephistopheles costume, won as Second Worst Nightmare, aka Gussie's Nightmare, while the winner in the Jeeves's Nightmare category was Leonard Goldstein in a Tyrolean cap, mauve soft-fronted shirt, white mess jacket, crimson cummerbund, and turquoise spats!

Somewhere during the evening's proceedings, we sang "Happy Birthday" to Plum, and a delightful cake—again displaying the convention logo—was cut and served. It seemed impossible to find room for more delicious food, but many of us managed it.

The last formal event was an all-too-short reappearance of Maria Jette and Dan Chouinard, who once again gave us songs from Wodehouse and Kern and made them sound as fresh and delightful as the day they were written. A terrific finish to a splendid evening—though the party carried on a long time after that. Or so I have heard.



Dapper quintet: Robert Bruce, Tim Andrew, Pongo, David Smeltzer, John Fahey (photo by Elin Woodger)

A Brunch in Dearborn, Just the Thing for a Lad with a Morning Head

BY BOB RAINS (OILY CARLISLE)

THAT STERN TASKMASTER, Elliott Milstein, had us all up at the crack of dawn on Sunday morning for brunch at 9:30 A.M. That's 9:30 A.M., mind you, after a night of browsing and sluicing that has been reported on elsewhere in these annals. I had done my homework in advance and had learned from the venerable OED that *brunch* is a portmanteau word which dates back to 1895, having been introduced by Guy Beringer in the now defunct *Hunter's Weekly*. But you probably knew that already.

Always a lad for field research, I ascertained in advance at the front desk that our Anatole would be Chief Chef Phil Semak. I arrived promptly and primed at 9:29 to survey the scene. As expected, I was

confronted with a cornucopia of comestibles. Like the lad with an angel on one shoulder and a devil on the other, I had a choice between the healthy stuff like fresh fruit and such and the good old eggs and b. But then I realized that a *preux chevalier* owes a duty to his readers to sample all offerings in order to give a full and complete report. I was most certainly full and complete by the time I had finished my repast. And I can report that Chef Semak was in midseason form.

Naturally our tablemates were a jolly lot, ranging from young Annie Gribbon (Lady Celia's rose), her doting Aunt Maggie (Emily Wooster, mother of Claude and Eustace), Dean Bob of the Wayne State University School of Law and his helpmeet Janis, and Masha Lebedeva, who had come halfway across the world from Mother Russia to join us. Various Plummies, domestic and foreign, dropped by from time to time to say pip-pip and chat a spell. One of our servers, Renay Duffy, informed us that she had helped with the cooking and that she teaches writing locally; of course, we put her on to the Master.

Had we only brunched and chatted, that would have been enough. But there was more to come. The lights dimmed, and suddenly before us came what I believe to be the world premiere of *The Invention of Gasohol*, scripted by Max Pokrivchak, aka Terry Kitchen. What a cast! What a blast! What a crew! What to-do!

Your humble reporter cannot possibly do justice to the script and performance. The plot had more twists and turns than an Ouled Nail dancer. Let me just say that the story began in an obscure pub by the name of Anglers' Rest, where a certain Mr. Mulliner is explaining how his second cousin Whittaker did important research for Mr. Pickering on alternative fuels for his motor cars in order that Mr. P. might do down John D. Rockefeller. This was during Prohibition, when obtaining hooch carried the risk of a raid by the Feds. Mr. Pickering's daughter, Mercedes, is threatening to call off her wedding to Jimmy DeSoto if she can't have



The birthday bash continues: Brunchers brunching. (photo by Elin Woodger)

champagne. Whittaker and Mr. P's secretary, Marjorie, are another pair of star-crossed lovers. There's a strike at the gas tank plant in Windsor. The Canadians want hockey uniforms and skates, no less. Did I mention that Elliott (Milstein) Ness had occasion to jump out of an exploding wedding cake, tommygun in hand? Did I mention that goodness, truth, and love prevailed in the end? Or that the show brought down the house?

Like I said, you had to be there. And, if you weren't there, all I can say is, "See you in Chicago in 2013!"

Cast List: *The Invention of Gasohol*

IN ADDITION to the fine performances of the actors listed below, we must make special mention of dedicated stage manager Lynn Vesley-Gross, who drove the NEWTS's props (including John Fahey's broom) all the way from Vermont, and Jean Tillson, who made the incredible exploding wedding cake.

John Fahey: Whittaker Mulliner

Amy Plofker: Marjorie (Mr. Pickering's secretary)

Elin Woodger: Mr. Pickering

Anne Cotton: Mrs. (Claire) Pickering

Max Pokrivchak: Gin and Ginger Beer, Scientist, Striker, skit author

Jagannathan Ravi: Rum Toddy, Scientist, Striker

Indumathi Ravi: Pint of Bitters, Scientist, Striker

Wendell Verrill: Mr. Mulliner, Minister

Elliott Milstein: Elliott Ness

Roberta Towner: Mercedes Pickering

Shamin "Pongo" Mohamed: Jimmy DeSoto

Jean Tillson: Miss Postlethwaite



Dr. Sophie Ratcliffe's

P. G. Wodehouse: A Life in Letters

AT THE DEARBORN convention, attendees were informed of the imminent publication of Professor Ratcliffe's important new work, *P. G. Wodehouse: A Life in Letters*. An earlier collection of selected Wodehouse letters (*Yours, Plum*, edited by Frances Donaldson) was thematically arranged and limited to letters in the Wodehouse archive. The new work, says Sophie, "is a much larger book, some 600 pages of letters." She goes on to describe it more fully:

Sourcing a wide variety of public and private archives worldwide, the book offers a chronological journey through Wodehouse's life. As a result, the reader will encounter a substantial tranche of unseen early correspondence from Wodehouse's time at Dulwich, his time as a journalist in London, and the letters he wrote as he found his way in America. . . . Having discovered [friend and correspondent Leslie Havergal] Bradshaw's letters to his fiancée Olive, I was able to offer a newly detailed and enlarged picture of these important New York years. The book is also distinctive as it contains many letters written by Wodehouse during the war years. . . . My own favorites are his heartbreakingly touching love letters to Ethel.

The work is generously illustrated with photographs of Wodehouse's headed notepaper, his sheet music, his favorite newspaper clippings, theatrical postcards, and doodles. Sophie goes on to say how enormously grateful she is to both Tony Ring and Norman Murphy for the help they gave her in getting the book done.

The book is published by Hutchinson, and it is currently only available in the U.K. through the British amazon.co.uk site. Plans for an American publication are in the early stages.

Jette and Chouinard's New CD!

THE NEW CD *In Our Little Paradise*, by Maria Jette and Dan Chouinard, is a treasure trove of Wodehouse tunes. Maria and Dan presented several of the tunes on the Saturday of the recent Dearborn convention, and they were in much demand for encores for the rest of the weekend. Now everyone can get a copy of this CD. You can order this delightful CD by going to Maria's website link at <http://tinyurl.com/cd26tr7>. To see much more information about Maria (performances, history, etc.), go to her main website at www.mariajette.net.

You can see some of the convention performances on YouTube, thanks to Jean Tillson's technological savvy. While the fidelity is not, of course, at the level of the CD, it's truly delightful to see and hear Maria and Dan in any context. You may go to YouTube and search for Maria Jette, or go to <http://youtu.be/nfZd1mMUEpQ>.



Terrific Overlook Press Offer

BY AMY PLOFKER

OVERLOOK PRESS, those purveyors of attractive hardcover Wodehouse books in the U.S., are offering Wodehousians a steal through December 31: 40% off any Wodehouse title. This lowers the price from \$20 to \$12, making it much more attractive to fill in those gaps in your collection or to present all and sundry with Wodehouse gifts this season.

This all came about through the kind offices of Tom Willshire, an Overlook Press employee who is also a member of the Broadway Special. Originally this discount was only for Broadway Special members, but Overlook has now expanded it to all lovers of Wodehouse, whether TWS members or not. In honor of its origins, they're still calling it "the Broadway Special Offer." Tom has moved on to a job at an academic press, but his colleague Sasha Karlins is willing to carry on the good work.

There are three ways you can avail yourself of this wonderful offer:

1) Go to Overlook Press's website (<http://www.overlookpress.com/p-g-wodehouse.html>) and use the discount code "Tusk4040" when you check out online by December 31, 2011.

2) Fill out the order form enclosed in this issue; mail or fax this form to Sasha Karlins at Overlook Press by December 31, 2011 (see the third page of the form). Please note that checks will not be accepted—you must pay by credit card. (For those who picked up an Overlook order form in Dearborn, it's fine to still use that version, but the enclosed form is a slightly updated version.)

3) Fill out electronically the Excel order form which I can send you now (email me), then e-mail it to Sasha Karlins at Overlook Press by December 31, 2011.

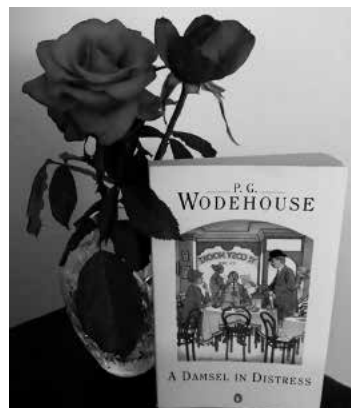
While Option #1 is perhaps more convenient, Options #2 and #3 give you an extra bonus—you pay only 50 cents shipping per book within the U.S.! And sales tax will not be assessed up front when using the order forms (what your conscience and the IRS decide you should pay next April on your state tax return will be up to you).

If a book is marked "Temporarily Unavailable" on the order form, check the website to see if it's available again, or contact Sasha.

If a book is marked "Available November 2011" on the order form, again you may wish to check online or contact Sasha to make sure it has rolled off the presses at the time you're ordering.

Still Life with Wodehouse

BY KAREN SHOTTING



HERE, FOR YOUR viewing pleasure, is a photo in my "Still Life with Wodehouse" series. Of late I have been brooding to a certain extent about Lord Marshmoreton and his Belper Castle roses and have been feeling a certain amount of empathy with that simple soul. Not, I hasten to add, because of any affinity with his sartorial taste (I imagine that my opinion of corduroy trousers would coincide with those of Lady Caroline or, for that matter, were he to be consulted, Jeeves), nor because of any aspiration on my part to win gardening prizes (I can only stand in awe of a man who has been awarded first prize for Hybrid Teas).

It is rather in his guise as the scourge of the thrips that my admiration soars for this otherwise mild and pleasant peer. In *A Damsel in Distress* we are told that thrips "feed on the underside of rose leaves, sucking their juice and causing them to turn yellow." As some of my own roses seem to be suffering from a similar affliction, I salute Lord Marshmoreton's rigid views regarding the annihilation of the pests that wantonly wreak such unsightly and noxious havoc. In a whimsical moment I did, at one point, consider the efficacy of applying his cure-all (whale-oil solution) to my distressed flora. I am prevented, however, from doing so with at least some of the Marshmoretonian zeal because I have no idea where one might obtain whale oil. (Sigh.)

I am told that there are modern sprays and things to ameliorate my roses' difficulties, but where is the romance in that?

[The gods] had given her back Geoffrey, and with a careless generosity they had given her twice as much of him as she had expected. She had asked for the slim Apollo whom she had loved in Wales, and this colossal changeling had arrived in his stead.

A Damsel in Distress (1919)

Wodehouse On Stage

BY AMY PLOFKER



Sitting Pretty

April 17–29, 2012

Musicals Tonight! at the Lion Theatre

410 West 42nd Street

New York, New York

Tickets are \$29 and can be booked through Telecharge

(<http://www.telecharge.com/homepage.aspx>)

or at 212-239-6200 or 800-432-7250.

For more information, visit <http://www.musicalstonight.org/previews.html>

This 1924 musical (the final Bolton-Wodehouse-Kern collaboration at the Princess Theatre) is an undervalued gem. It involves a family inheritance, the romantic prospects of a pair of orphans, and a “New Yoik” con artist with plans to abscond with the family jewels. Wodehouse songs include “Tulip Time in Sing Sing,” “All You Need is a Girl,” and “Sitting Pretty.” Part of the Musicals Tonight! series, these are concert performances with almost no sets or scenery, just great acting and singing.

To report other professional productions of Wodehouse musicals, plays, book adaptations, or songs, please e-mail or write to Amy Plofker.

You may also submit information regarding public Wodehouse seminars, screenings of Wodehouse films, and museum exhibits. Events should be at least one month in the future; please include as many details as you can. Events should be professional; no community theatre, please.



Remsenburg Historical Marker Dedication, April 22

A GREAT EVENT is coming on April 22, 2012. We have received permission from the Remsenburg Community Church to dedicate the new Wodehouse historical marker that day! We expect a good turnout at the dedication ceremony, since several members of TWS will be coming to New York City for the showing of *Sitting Pretty* that weekend, and the hit new production of *Anything Goes* is also still playing on Broadway. We

are working on the possibility of arranging transport from New York City to Remsenburg (and back) on the 22nd for those who wish to participate.

The historical marker project has been a hit with Wodehouseans everywhere, and we’ve raised the money to create a permanent tribute to Plum. The design process is under way, and the Historical Marker Committee and TWS board are considering various options for an image of Wodehouse and for text that will properly convey the spirit, humor, and historical significance of his work.

We hope to make the dedication a festive occasion, so we’d love to see you there. If you can bring your banjolele along, even better.

Full details will be published in the March issue of *Plum Lines*, or you can certainly check with any of the officers (listed on page 24), or with Bob Rains and Andrea Jacobsen (aka Oily and Sweetie Carlisle). We must give great credit to Bob and Andrea for the concept of the marker, and for all the diplomatic tactics by which they gained the proper permissions and motivated the fundraising efforts.

Remember that we published directions to Remsenburg, and a map of the local area, in the Autumn issue of *Plum Lines* (“Your Guide to Remsenburg,” by Elin Woodger). If you don’t have a copy of that, feel free to write to your friendly editor for another copy of that article. In addition, if you will be in the area, this would be a terrific time to get a copy of the newly published guide to Wodehouse’s New York, created by Norman Murphy and Amy Plofker. See page 10 for complete details on how to get a copy of that. See you in April in beautiful downtown Remsenburg!

Proud NEWT

MAX POKRIVCHAK WRITES: In a belated effort to better myself, I was perusing Richard Dawkins’s *The Ancestor’s Tale* (evolution told in the style of Chaucer’s *The Canterbury Tales*, with species joining along the way). I was flipping through the chapter on amphibians when this hit me: “The various species of salamander colloquially called ‘newts’ have an especially revealing life history.” Though I usually avoid footnotes like one avoids the landlord on the first of the month, this one interested me strangely. A quick glance to the bottom of the page revealed the author’s academic source: “*A. Fink-Nottle, in litt.” I mean to say, if having a character be cited in a book on actual DNA isn’t evidence of Plum’s entering our cultural DNA, I don’t know what is.

Tony Ring and Wodehouse's "Straight" Theatre

TONY RING tells us that he has virtually completed the text for a reference book on Wodehouse's involvement with the non-musical ("straight") theatre—and he promises the disclosure of a lot of new information.

The first part of the book provides a number of extracts from Wodehouse's journalistic writings about the straight theatre; offers an opinion on how his achievements as a playwright will be viewed in the long term; examines in detail the surprising impact that the existence of censorship had on two of his plays in particular and more generally on the work of some of his contemporary writers of comedy drama; and, using his own feelings and frustrations as expressed in correspondence, follows his progress as he tried desperately to bring two post-World War II plays to the stage in the very different conditions which then prevailed.

The second part looks in detail at Wodehouse's own career in the straight theatre which, had he not been such a successful fiction writer and lyricist, would itself have been regarded as pretty successful. Almost always writing in collaboration (such as with George S. Kaufman), he had ten plays on London's West End stage and five on Broadway—and a total of 20 different plays performed somewhere in the U.K. or U.S. With the exception of three for which (so far) no script has been traced, the book summarizes the plots, provides a concordance of the characters in the cast, and offers examples of dialogue from each play. Details of opening night casts, extracts from contemporary reviews, and a selection of the dates and venues for later productions are also given.

An additional ten unperformed plays (for which the scripts exist, including some which seem never to have been mentioned previously in any studies of Wodehouse's life or work) are analysed in a similar manner, and shorter notes are provided in respect of eight projects that were either never completed or, if completed, were unperformed with no script now available.

The book closes with shorter notes about adaptations of Wodehouse's work (especially posthumous productions) with which he had no involvement. The book touches briefly on some of the productions in translation—such as German, Swedish, and Dutch—and refers to a dramatic adaptation in French of a novel that still has not been dramatized in English!

Tony's plan is to have the book published by about September 2012. Recognizing that it is unlikely

to achieve overwhelming commercial success, he is investigating the options for private publication, one aspect of which is the length of the initial print run. He has asked us to let you know that any TWS members who register an interest in the book before March 31, 2012 will be offered the chance to buy a copy at a reduced price.

A Guide to P. G. Wodehouse's New York City and Long Island

HAVE YOU EVER found yourself wandering through the streets of New York or driving out on Long Island and saying to yourself, "I wonder where the Wodehouse sites are"? Well, wonder no longer! Thanks to Norman Murphy and Amy Plofker, The Wodehouse Society now has a handy guide in convenient booklet size that tells you all you want to know about the places—and some of the people—in the New York/Long Island area associated with Wodehouse's life and work.

Norman originally sketched out a guide to the PGW sites in New York City several years ago and sent his ideas to the Broadway Special's Amy Plofker, who conducted further local research and added to Norman's work. There the matter stood until earlier this year, when Norman updated and revised the combined notes, added a section on Long Island, and then donated the work to TWS for fund-raising purposes. Thanks are due to Neil Midkiff for overseeing the printing of *A Guide to P. G. Wodehouse's New York City and Long Island* in time for sale at the Dearborn convention. And it is now available to all members who would like to have this invaluable resource.

The proceeds from the sale of the 36-page guide will benefit the Remsenburg Historical Marker Fund (see page 9 for further details on the progress of the marker). The cost is a mere \$10 plus shipping—\$1.50 per copy to addresses in the United States and Canada, \$3 per copy for overseas orders. Make your check payable to The Wodehouse Society and send your order to Neil Midkiff. If you wish to order via PayPal, send payment in U.S. dollars to twstreasurer@wodehouse.org and be sure to include your name and mailing address in the notes field. Overseas members who wish to pay in British pounds sterling should write to Elin Murphy for instructions.



We defy you to find a happier couple than Paul Abrinko and Monica Eckfield. (EW)



Elliott Milstein, our Pickering host, proudly displays his plum Plum vest. (BC)



"Collecting Wodehouse" columnist John Graham expresses the sentiment of the weekend. (EW)



The event poster; our prime honoree (BC)



Oldest Member Ed Ratcliffe and his Girl Friend/wife, Missy (BC)



Joan and freshly anointed TWS President Ken Clevenger in their Wodehousean colors (BC)



Ex-First Lady Linda Adam-Hall and Editor in Chief Gary Hall (EW)



Amazing Hat Mystery costume winners Sweetie and Oily Carlisle (Andrea Jacobsen and Bob Rains) (BC)



Elaine and Tony Ring (BC)



A cheerful bevy of Barbaras: Jacobitti and Combs (BC)



Susan Garrett in full sluicing mode (BC)



Jean Tillson, Tom Hooker, Betty Hooker (BC)



Sam Paris and Bonnie Jones from the Chicago Accident Syndicate (BC)



The Hughes Family (Suzan, Jim, Stacey) (BC)

'57 Chevy at The Henry Ford (GH)



Mephistopheles (Tamaki Morimura) meets the Reverend Bill Scrivener. (BC)



Marjanne and Jelle Otten, members of TWS and the Dutch Wodehouse Society (BC)



Photographer Key

BC = Barbara Combs

EW = Elin Woodger

IM = Ian Michaud

KS = Karen Shotting

TH = Tom Hooker

LAH = Linda Adam-Hall

JT = Jean Tillson



Maggie Wynne and the convention's Youngest Member, Annie Gribbon (EW)



Peaceful Greenfield Village (KS)



Katherine (disguised) and Susan Jordan (TH)



Young Member, first-time conventioneer, and costume winner Haley Pfifer (as Psmith) (BC)



Mr. Pickering (Elin Woodger) and Anne Cotton in the smoking section (BC)



Maria Jette prepares to bowl. (BC)



Robert Bruce, indoor cricketer deluxe (EW)



Terry Kitchen brings his tuneful stories to Dearborn. (IM)



Pickering members celebrate the highly successful fruits of their labor: Robert Walter, Larry Nahigian, Ann Harpe, Sherry Smith. (BC)



Indu and J. Ravi while the Wodehousean night away. (EW)



Dirk Wonnell and Kate Andrew (EW)



Leonard Goldstein as Jeeves's nightmare (JT)



The NEWTS (and special guest stars) present The Invention of Gasohol. (TH)



Linda Adam-Hall demonstrates her athletic cricket form. (BC)



Jean Tillson adorns the lobby of The Dearborn Inn. (BC)



Leonard and Sandra Goldstein on the bus. (LAH)



Stu Shiffman, Joseph Coppola, Elaine Coppola, and Wendell Verrill are ready for their close-up. (BC)



Artist and PGW beer-label meister Thomas Young (Young Thos) (EW)



Peter Niewenhuizen, president of the Dutch Wodehouse Society (EW)



French Leave: Costume award winners Karen Fowler-Latterell and Kris Fowler (EW)



Pongo (Shamim Mohamed), Michelle Grisat, and John Fahey in a festive mood (EW)



Our fair dessert at the banquet (JT)



The changing of the guard: Gary Hall passes on the prezzy regalia to Ken Clevenger. (EW)



Tamaki Morimura as Gussie's worst nightmare (BC)



The smiles of Toni Oliver and Carey Tynan brighten the night. (EW)



Elin and Norman Murphy bring in the sheaves. (JT)



Maria Jette and Dan Chouinard's CD (see page 7 for ordering details)



Eileen Jones (BC)



Sandra Goldstein (BC)



David Ruef as Monty Bodkin (BC)



Edmund and Barbara Jacobitti (EW)

Prepare to banquet: John Baesch, Evelyn Herzog, xxxx, Karen Ruef (BC)





Masha Lebedeva, the host of the Russian Wodehouse tour (EW)



Lynn Vesley-Gross sports the well-traveled horns of Gussie's nightmare. (JT)



Vice President Karen Shotting looking decidedly presidential, with a bit of vice mixed in. (BC)



Barbara Combs and Curtis Armstrong (BC)



Norman and Elin (Woodger) Murphy (LAH)



Sandra Goldstein and Gloria Nakamura (EW)



Susanna Smart and David Smeltzer toast Plum's health. (BC)



Dan Chouinard at his grand (EW)



Casual Clevengers (Joan and Ken) (EW)



Hilary Bruce and Kate Andrew amidst the balloons (BC)



Anne Cotton and Susan Collicott (BC)



Tim Kearley beams a pleasant glow for the photographer. (BC)



Elizabeth Pheasant and Susan Pierce (BC)



Susan Pace and Bill Scrivener relax at the brunch. (BC)



Blandings Castle, one of Young Thos's watercolors (courtesy of Thomas Young)

Chapters Corner

WHAT IS YOUR chapter up to these days? We welcome you to 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:



FIFTEEN WODEHOUSEANS (including a welcome visitor, Karen Shotting of PZMPCo) converged on San Francisco's 42nd Street Moon theater on November 6 for a performance of *Oh, Kay!*, the 1926 musical comedy with book by Guy Bolton and P. G. Wodehouse and songs by George and Ira Gershwin. Those who enjoyed the recent Ken Burns PBS series on Prohibition felt well-prepared for this tale of rum runners evading the law (and evading rival bootleggers) by hiding their cache of liquor in a vacant Long Island beachfront home. Of course it isn't vacant very long—its owner is bringing his new bride to it for their honeymoon. We won't try to summarize the complications of the plot, other than to say that it's far more risqué than any of Wodehouse's novels, and the cast and director brought out the sexiness with enthusiasm.

42nd Street Moon has grown from its semi-staged-concert-with-piano roots to become one of the niftiest little intimate theater companies around, and it's always a joy when they revive and refresh these classic musicals with the kind of care and enthusiasm that is their specialty.

The Broadway Special

(New York City and vicinity)

Contact: Amy Plofker

Phone:

E-mail:



THE BROADWAY SPECIAL was very, very special on the night of October 18, 2011, when we were invited to attend the St. George's Society of New York's evening entertainment at our usual haunt, The Players on Gramercy Park South. Not only did 20 of us sidle in to join the saintly throng, but we were met by Hilary and Robert Bruce (en route back to England from TWS's convention in Michigan) and treated to what was billed (in our honor, no doubt) as a "Special Entertainment: Maria Jette and Dan Chouinard performing Songs from The Princess Theatre Musicals by Guy Bolton, Jerome Kern, and P. G. Wodehouse." And to add sagacious sauce to the selections, our own Professor David Jasen provided commentary and a twinkle to the proceedings. Amy Plofker received special mention, having acted as intermediary between the Saints and the Specials and pointing the way to David, Maria, and Dan. It was a lovely evening, and we were lucky indeed to share it with such august company.

Our November 4 meeting was devoted to the early novel *A Gentleman of Leisure* (aka *The Intrusion of Jimmy*). Perhaps I mislead: we tend to indulge in what may be termed stream-of-consciousness repartee, and topics seem to fall overboard and then clamber back in again at the rap of a gavel. If only we had a gavel.

Not all of us enjoyed the story. Philip Shreffler was astonished to discover that this particular plot seemed to be unique in its resolution: Instead of the usual sweetness and light, each character's dilemma concludes only when blackmail is threatened! And Luceil Carroll, a native New Yorker, was not amused by Plum's attempt at conveying Brooklynese. The aforementioned stream of consciousness wafted us into Local Dialects We Have Known, with a mention of Twain's various dialects in *Huckleberry Finn*, including five from Pike County, Missouri, alone. Then we were on to St. Louis's peculiar pronunciation of the vowel and consonant *or* as *ar*, and finally to Philip's recollection of a friend's clever definition of demonstrative pronouns as those that begin with the letter D: Dese, Dem, and Dose.

Back on topic, we agreed that the plot foreshadowed elements of *Piccadilly Jim*, *The Small Bachelor*, and others which—um—we couldn't quite recall. After a

few more detours into chapter business and coming events, we finished the evening by planning to reunite at Luceil's salon on January 14 for our annual songfest and feast, with perhaps a song or twa of the Poet Burns on the program. Then, as is our wont, we headed back down to the Player's Grill Room for some sustenance and supplementary sluicing.

Capital! Capital!

(Washington, D.C., and vicinity)

Contact: Jeff Peterson

Phone:

E-mail:



Chapter One

(Greater Philadelphia area)

Contact: Herb Moskowitz

Phone:

E-mail:



THE SEEMINGLY continuous rains took a break for the Chaps to start the 2011–12 season at the Dark Horse on September 25. After greeting new members Tom and Betty Hooker (The Rev. Aubrey Upjohn and Miss Mapleton), the Chaps introduced themselves to the couple by calling out their own names, their noms de Plum, and their favorite story. Not surprisingly, all of their favorite stories had been written by Wodehouse.

Herb Moskowitz (Vladimir Brusiloff) passed around his treasured Wodehouse stamp for any members who may not subscribe to *Plum Lines* to see. Bob Rains (Oily Carlisle) spoke of the campaign to put up a historical marker in Remsenburg near Plum's grave. He then literally passed the hat and collected \$170 for the worthy cause. Larry Dugan (Alpine Joe) told us how he came to write his fascinating essay, "Worcestershirewards: Wodehouse and the Baroque" and how it came to be published by *Connotations*.

When Norma Frank (The Bishop of Bongo Bongo) had been asked at the last meeting to lead a discussion on a story for the September meeting, she decided to choose a golf story, and had a lot of fun rereading them all before deciding on "The Salvation of George Macintosh." Norma led a spirited reading and discussion that engendered a lot of questions, and the Chaps were even able to provide a few answers.

We met again for lunch on November 13 at the Dark Horse. We received word that Dan Cohen, husband of our erstwhile fearless leader Susan Cohen, is recuperating nicely. We hope he may be well enough soon to attend meetings.

Several members attended TWS's convention in Dearborn. Those in attendance at the Dark Horse reported favorably that all went well, and a good time was had by all.

Bob Rains reported that the committee to establish a marker at the Remsenberg Community Church chapel graveyard (where Plum is buried) has raised such considerable oof that it is likely a dedication will take place on April 22, 2012. When fundraising has reached its goal, the plaque will be ordered to stand in front of the chapel. Presently there is nothing to guide the tourist or wanderer to the site; it can only be found with a knowledgeable guide or prior research.

Oily also told us that a trip to the dedication of the marker may be combined with a visit to a Broadway show. Both *Sitting Pretty* and *Anything Goes* will be playing.

A discussion followed of our featured Mr. Mulliner story, "The Smile That Wins." Guided by Janet Nickerson (Zenobia [Nobby] Hopwood), we began with everyone present demonstrating their version of an Adrian Mulliner smile! The consensus of the voting was that Herb Moskowitz's and David Ruef's (Monty Bodkin's) smiles were the best. This was followed by a script-in-hand reading of selected portions of the story and a short discussion of the text and its deep meaning.

The next meeting will be January 15, 2012, at 1 P.M. in the Dark Horse's Pickwick Room. Larry Dugan will moderate a discussion about a Wodehouse story to be announced.

The Chicago Accident Syndicate

(Chicago and thereabouts)

Contact: Daniel & Tina Garrison

Phone:

E-mail:



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 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 Texas)

Contact: Lynette Poss

Phone:

E-mail:



THE MOTTLED EEL/JELLIED OYSTER—er, that is, the Mottled Jellies and—well, anyway, the gang of Wodehouse lovers out Texas way have not been idle. No, indeed. Our fall festivities tend to include an interlude chez Clark Adams on or near October 15, to eat a bite and raise glasses to toast Plum's birthday. This year, however, the celebration was held on November 5 so that we could remember Guy Fawkes. Saturday fell on the exact date to revisit his errant ways, so we came together at the abode of your humble servant to browse and sluice and roast poor old Guy over the coals on the barbecue.

The usual suspects were in attendance, minus a dearly cherished member or two who were unable to join us. Clarence, Lord Emsworth (aka Bryan Lilius) was there, as well as the Oldest Member (my 97-year-old dad, Bob Adams) in fine form, having recovered from his latest cold. Clark came and apologized for the absence of his wife, who, along with working toward adding a Ph.D. to her two master's degrees, had been tending to an ill relative. Jan Ford and Randy Anderson were there to help chant the traditional rhyme, and Jan brought along sparklers to add to the festive air as we burned the evil creature's image, fresh off the internet. Cecilia Etheridge supplied us with cake, decorated with an image of Guy with a gunpowder keg bursting into explosive flames. A former member, my sister Noelle, and spouses Aubrey and Joe (her spouse and mine, not her two spouses) were there, along with three guests who had never seen a Guy Fawkes Night done up right before. Name tags identified each guest as either Great Guy ____ (Bob) or Fawkesy Lady ____ (Jan).

The traditional fish slice was not in attendance, alas. Nor were Janet Lilius and Liz Davenport, who

were sorely missed. The neighbors may be wondering what kind of Satanic rituals were going on, what with the fires and chanting, but let them wonder. If they ask, I'll be more than happy to inform them of the fun they missed!

The New England Wodehouse Thingummy Society (NEWTS)

(Boston and New England)

Contact: David Landman

Phone:

E-mail:



IN LATE AUGUST, not long after the tornado and in the brief respite between the earthquake and the hurricane, the New England Wodehouse Thingummy Society held their back-to-school nottle (meeting) at the home of Lisa (Granquist) Dorward and Tom Dorward. A smiling sky mottled the lawns with patches of sunlight as we convened outdoors on the sturdy deck. Mindful of the forbearance she exhibited in giving us a sunny day before unleashing a fresh disaster, the first order of business was, by way of grateful propitiation, to grant Mother Nature honorary membership in the NEWTS.

The theatrical NEWTS rehearsed their convention play. Written by Max Pokrivchak (aka Terry Kitchen), it bid fair to be a spectacle that would make Broadway's *Spiderman* look like a fourth-grade Christmas pageant.

We welcomed new friends Jennifer and Matt Standfield, formerly of Dallas and now residents of Somerville, Massachusetts.

On Saturday, October 2, the Newts Players gathered at the home of Roberta Towner (aka auto heiress Mercedes Pickering) for an out-of-town tryout of *The Invention of Gasohol* before opening night (well, morning) in Dearborn. Through mouths stuffed with Roberta's homemade pumpkin pie, we ran lines and took turns jumping through Jean Tillson's incredible exploding wedding cake. Special honorable mention for our ingenue love interest Amy Plofker (aka Marjorie Majors), who came all the way from New York for the run-through. Those onstage had a boffo time, and we invite offers to bring the show to New York, London, Dubai, and Pocatello, Idaho.

The Northwodes

(St. Paul, Minneapolis, and vicinity)

Contact: Kristine Fowler

Phone:

E-mail:



The Perfecto-Zizzbaum Motion Picture Corporation

(Los Angeles and vicinity)

Contact: Karen Shotting

Phone:

E-mail:



IN OCTOBER The Perfecto-Zizzbaum Motion Picture Corporation completed its inquiry into Monty Bodkin's illustrious career with our rival, Ivor Llewellyn, head of the Superba-Llewellyn film studio. Based on Sir Pelham Grenville Wodehouse's contemporaneous account in *Pearls, Girls and Monty Bodkin*, the Company's board of directors concluded that Mr. Bodkin's tenure at the SL studio was not deleterious to PZMPCo's interests but, rather, provided many amusing points of interest.

Our genial hosts at Book Alley provided coffee and bagels for a bit of browsing and sluicing, always a welcome accompaniment to our investigations. The board also took note that Gloria Nakamura and Karen Shotting would be PZMPCo's representatives to The Wodehouse Society convention in Dearborn, Michigan, and instructed them to report back to the board with a full account of their mission.

In November the board listened with rapt attention and awe to Ms. Shotting's gripping account of the delights experienced by the attendees of the 2011 convention—riveting talks, city tours, musical entertainment, and costume prizes all featured prominently in the narrative. This soliloquy was followed by our discussions of that perennial favorite, *The Code of the Woosters*. We marveled anew at the Master's consummate skill in weaving an intricate plot and his pitch-perfect characterizations of Bertie, Gussie, Madeline, Aunt Dahlia, Stiffy, Sir Watkyn Bassett, et al., all leading inevitably to the eminently satisfactory conclusion. A particular favorite for our group (among many favorites) was the successive destruction of Sir Watkyn's property within the confines of the Wooster boudoir.

The board also determined the locale for PZMPCo's annual holiday tea (Sunday, December 11, 2011, at 3:00 p.m.), with the Pacific Dining Car, 1310 West 6th Street, Los Angeles, getting the nod as well as a few resounding "yesses." We are looking forward to this binge, as we have it on competent authority that this historic restaurant in beautiful downtown Los Angeles has a definite old-school charm and that the decor is rather reminiscent of the Orient Express. A rumor is circulating that, in addition to scones, cookies, sandwiches, petits fours, and choice of tea, there may be a Zizzbaum or two quaffed by our members.

The Pacific Dining Car, which opened in the 1920s, was in existence during Wodehouse's day, but we are not aware of any evidence that he ever ate there during his sojourns in Hollywood. The PDC's website does state that George Raft (who is mentioned in *Do Butlers Burgle Banks?*) "frequently stopped in for dinner," so we do have a link, albeit tenuous, to the Master.

We meet the second Sunday of each month at 12:30 p.m. Generally you will find us at Book Alley, 1252 East Colorado Blvd, Pasadena, California. For more information, contact Karen Shotting or join our Yahoo! Group at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/PZMPCo/>.

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

Phone:

E-mail:

ON AUGUST 12, 2011, several Knights of Sir Philip Sidney, along with members of the Dutch P. G. Wodehouse Society, had the sad obligation to remember our Oldest Knight, Rob Kooy, who has gone to "Eternal Blandings." On his coffin was a copy of *Mister Mulliner Speaking*. Rob passed away on August 6; he was one of the founding members of The Netherlands chapter of TWS. He was always very enthusiastic. It was his suggestion to call our chapter the Right Honorable Knights of Sir Philip Sidney. Rob was for many years our membership secretary and editor of the newsletter of the PGW Society of the Netherlands, *Nothing Serious*. He was also a man of great merit for the international Wodehouse community. We may quote from Norman Murphy's *A Wodehouse Handbook* (London, 2006). One of the reasons Norman chose to write the second volume of this work was, in his words, that "I have never forgotten the comment made by my Dutch friend Rob Kooy, who attended the first Wodehouse Pilgrimage in 1989. He said that unless one was a native-born English speaker, one missed ninety per cent of Wodehouse's

references. I am sure he was right.” Rob will be missed by all of us.

At the regular meeting of our Amsterdam chapter, Tony Roodnat gave us useful information about the dinner the Dutch P. G. Wodehouse Society was to have on November 26 in Leiden in the Zijlpoort (Canal Tower), commemorating Plum’s 130th birthday. Jelle Otten gave a report of the 2011 convention of The Wodehouse Society in Dearborn, Michigan, in October. Peter Nieuwenhuizen’s victory in the Motor City Madness 2011 TWS Convention Quiz impressed us all.

Jelle also showed the Knights a copy of *P. G. Wodehouse: A Life in Letters*, edited by Dr. Sophie Ratcliffe. Although the publication date was to have been November 3, Jelle saw the book was already for sale at Waterstone’s Booksellers in Amsterdam. Peter Nieuwenhuizen announced that at the same Waterstone’s, Pauline Konink of Hutchinson Publishing Company would present the first copy in The Netherlands of this same book to our society. The Knights were very honored to be informed of it.

The meeting concluded with an auction of books and an etching of Dulwich College, managed by auctioneer Herman van Riel.

The next meeting of the Hon. Knights will be on Saturday, February 18, at 1:00 P.M. in Mulliner’s Wijnlokaal, Lijnbaansgracht 266–267, Amsterdam, The Netherlands. The schedule of the event is not yet known, but traditionally the annual cock-and-bull stories contest is featured in the February program.

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



The Drone Rangers Waltz across Texas

BY JOHN MOORE WITH CAREY TYNAN

YEARS AGO, when I was visiting a girlfriend in Dallas, her grandmother gave me a summary of all the Texas cities. Among them was Fort Worth. “They’re hicks,” she sniffed. “Nice people, but hicks. The women wear dime store perfume and the men don’t know not to wear cowboy boots with a suit.” Three decades have passed since then, but the image of Fort Worth remains stuck in my head—dime store perfume and cowboy boots with suits.

None of these were in evidence when the Drone Rangers made a trek across the prairie to Stage West. From the west, Karen Shottling flew in from California to join her sister, Mary Jo Wilen, and her friend Yon Jorden. Brad Frank drove from Oklahoma; Toni Oliver from Arkansas; and from Houston came Carey Tynan, Sylvia Bernicchi, Fran Knight, and Susan Garrett. I drove north, 260 miles of grassland and big sky, all of us staying in Dallas before proceeding to Fort Worth.

An icy margarita from the bar restored nerves frayed from the long drives. We had a light dinner at the Old Vic Café, where we greeted Vijay and Anna Barnabus from the Dallas Wodehouse fan group. And then we took our seats in the adjoining theatre. It was the closing weekend of *Jeeves in the Morning*.

This was our third trip in five years to Stage West to see a Jeeves play, the other two being *The Code of the Woosters* and *Thank You, Jeeves*. All three were adapted by Mark Richard. Previous shows had been at the Community Arts Center, but now Stage West was back in a real theatre with a real stage.

And they made good use of it. *Jeeves in the Morning* was an excellent adaption of the novel and my personal favorite of the three plays. In Richard’s adaptations, Bertie breaks the fourth wall and speaks directly to the audience. This allows the play to keep Wodehouse’s marvelous constructions and turns of phrase. Chuck Huber played Bertie, and while we all enjoyed his performance, the consensus among the Drone Rangers was that he portrayed our favorite man about town as more “swishy” than we conceived him.

Jeff McGee played Stilton Cheesewright and Sherry Hopkins portrayed Florence Craye, each with the right amount of intimidation—you could understand Bertie’s desire to avoid getting between these two. Mikaela Krantz stole the hearts of the male audience as Nobby, and Andrew Gentry, in his first appearance at Stage West, was totally convincing as the annoying Edwin. Mark Shum, who had previously played Gussie Fink-Nottle in *The Code of the Woosters*, returned as Boko.

And, of course, there was Jeeves. Veteran actor Jim Covault returned to play Jeeves for the third time. I loved his performance. Some of us prefer a younger Jeeves, more Stephen Fryish Jeeves, but my taste runs to an older, more stolid, Arthur Treacherish sort. This was the type played by Covault, greeting every crisis with a quote from the bard and a sagacious eyebrow raised beneath his bowler hat.

After the play, the various attendees scattered to various beds and breakfasts. All in all, a delightful experience, and we can only hope that Mr. Richard and Stage West continue to adapt and present Wodehouse!

Jeeves, a Reappraisal

BY BOB "OILY CARLISLE" RAINS

IT IS A TRUTH universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of superhuman powers must inevitably choose between using those powers for good or for evil. The world rejoiced when Clark Kent, a mild-mannered reporter for the *Daily Planet*, assumed the role of Superman and ran faster than a speeding bullet in his pursuit of evildoers. Ditto for shy high-school student Peter Parker, who, after being bitten by a radioactive spider, began to spin webs on which to hurtle from building to building to fight the bad guys.

Unfortunately, some individuals blessed with super powers have taken advantage of their good fortune to steal fortunes from others and generally act in an antisocial manner. Consider the example of industrialist Norman Osborn, who took a serum that enhanced his physical abilities and intellect and then became the arch-villain Green Goblin.

There are, of course, tragic parallels between the metamorphosis of Norman Osborn and that of the man known to us as Reginald Jeeves. Osborn took a serum; Jeeves, we are told, ate a lot of fish. Both attained enhanced intellects.

Sadly, the corollaries between Jeeves and other well-known miscreants do not end there. We know that many villains have tried to fool the world into thinking that they are in fact benefactors of mankind. Lex Luthor comes to mind. Jeeves, too, has somehow—amazingly—gotten such good press that otherwise well-informed individuals have expressed the view that they wish they had a Jeeves in their lives to take care of them. But, I submit, they should thank their lucky stars that they have avoided such a calamity. Let us examine the facts.

When this Jeeves first comes into the employ of the rather naïve Bertram Wilberforce Wooster, in "Jeeves Takes Charge," young Wooster innocently says to him, "You're engaged!" Anyone with the slightest knowledge of employment law would know that this undertaking meant that the man Jeeves owed Wooster a fiduciary duty of loyalty. But how does Jeeves repay the man who gave him employment, foolishly without even insisting on references? With no authority, no warning, and apparently no remorse, he purloins his employer's check suit and gives it to the under-gardener! This despicable act, of course, is more than disloyalty; it is quite literally the crime of theft.

Unbelievably, Wooster continues to employ the man. No wonder Jeeves dismissively refers to his master as "mentally negligible."

Throughout the long saga of Jeeves and the oddly unsuspecting Wooster, Jeeves's crime spree continues more or less unabated. Poor Bertie is often his victim of choice. In "Startling Dressiness of a Lift Attendant," Bertie finds that Jeeves has stolen, yes stolen, his purple socks and given them to said lift attendant. This pattern of theft from his employer is a recurring theme.

Jeeves's criminality does not stop at theft. In "Bertie Changes His Mind," Jeeves purposely obstructs his master's normal and humanitarian impulse to provide a home for his sister and her three little girls upon their return from India. After setting Bertie up to give an unplanned talk to the students at Miss Tomlinson's girls' school, Jeeves disables Bertie's car to prevent a getaway (or lies to Bertie, saying that the car is disabled). Thus he adds vandalism and criminal mischief to his long list of offences.

Jeeves's duplicity toward Bertie, and often his pals, is simply boundless. In "The Great Sermon Handicap," Jeeves twice declines the opportunity to take a sporting flutter on which member of the clergy will preach the longest sermon on a certain Sunday. He knows that Bertie and his syndicate are backing the Rev. Heppenstall, whose oration on Brotherly Love is a clear favorite. What he fails to tell the lads is that on Saturday evening he learned from Heppenstall's butler, Brookfield, that Heppenstall is out of the running for the next day and has provided his sermon on Brotherly Love to his nephew, Rev. Bates, who will preach it himself. Not only does Jeeves keep this inside info from Bertie and his fellow Drones until it is too late for them to act upon it, he invests a tenner against them on Rev. Bates. Is there no limit to the man's perfidy?

Nor do other law-abiding citizens escape Jeeves's criminality. No one is safe from his devilish machinations, not even officers of the law. In *Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves*, the scoundrel impersonates Chief Inspector Witherspoon of Scotland Yard. Admittedly, this time his malfeasance is carried out in order to help the hapless Bertie for a change, rather than to knife him in the back. But that would hardly be a defense in the Boshier Street Police Court, nor any other juridical venue for that matter.

In *Joy in the Morning*, while the good and honest G. D'Arcy Cheesewright is taking a refreshing swim in the river, who steals his entire policeman's uniform? Need I say? Surely this act is far more heinous than the mere boyish peccadillo of the pinching of a police constable's helmet on Boat Race Night.

Degenerating from an assault on the dignity of the constabulary to an assault on the very person of the law, Jeeves physically attacks and disables Constable Ernest

Dobbs in *The Mating Season* while that worthy is doing his duty attempting to apprehend the green-bearded Gussie Fink-Nottle. Jeeves carries out this felonious act in a most cowardly fashion, striking his victim from behind with a “small but serviceable” cosh (blackjack).

Bribery, too, numbers among the man’s malefactions. In the aforementioned “Startling Dressiness of a Lift Attendant,” young Master Blumenfield upsets would-be thespian Cyril Bassington-Bassington by calling him (not inaccurately) “Fish-face.” The young Blumenfield, exiting rapidly after receiving a couple of tolerably juicy buffets from Cyril, yells out that Jeeves had promised him a dollar for this name-calling. One can hardly label Jeeves’s conduct in this regard as either *comme il faut* or, for that matter, legal.

Space does not permit me to relate here a complete litany of Jeeves’s criminal activities. Suffice it to say that he must rank among the underworld’s top recidivists.

Beyond the stealing, the lying, the disabling of automobiles, the self-dealing, beyond the various misdemeanors and felonies, one act of this evil genius stands out for its sheer infamy. In “Jeeves Exerts the Old Cerebellum,” the career criminal reveals to Bertie that he has an “understanding” with Bingo Little’s uncle’s cook, a certain Miss Watson, that they are “on terms of some intimacy.” In fact, you could say that they are engaged. But then, in “No Wedding Bells for Bingo,” when the uncle announces that he is going to marry Miss Watson, Jeeves is not surprised. Indeed, it appears that he has engineered the alliance because he desired to throw her over for his other fiancée, a waitress named Mabel who had won the easily won heart of Bingo Little. In fact, while purporting to help poor Bingo with his desire to marry Mabel, Jeeves was working against Bingo’s interests and furthering his own.

It is one thing to move in on the object of another man’s affections; perhaps this may be forgiven where affairs of the heart are concerned. But having understandings with two pure, sweet English girls at the same time? Trifling with their innocence? Surely such depravity, defilement, and debauchery is deserving of the most severe censure.

A gentleman’s personal gentleman, indeed!

Lord Ickenham and Time Travel

STU SHIFFMAN mentions that he has a time-travel/alternate-history short story coming out this fall in an anthology called *Dr. Omega and the Shadowmen*. According to Stu, his story has a “large feature role for Lord Ickenham as a young man circa 1876 during his American sojourn as a cowboy out West.” You can find

more information at <http://www.blackcoatpress.com/doctoromegashadowmen.htm>. In addition, Stu has a story in the Black Coat Press anthology *The Nyctalope Steps In*. The Nyctalope is, of course, France’s premier pulp-fiction hero of the 1920s and ’30s. Stu, in true Wodehousean fashion, sends the Nyctalope on a New York adventure.

Creating Life: Wodehouse’s Golf Stories and God

BY KEN CLEVENGER

IN REVIEWING *Golf Stories*, as edited by Charles McGrath, Eric Felten of the *Wall Street Journal* wrote: “The stories with a supernatural touch illustrate that golf, like life, is a mystery.” His obvious close knowledge of P. G. Wodehouse’s golf stories is reflected in that prescient comment. In the short story “The Heart of a Goof,” Plum wrote, “golf is the Great Mystery.” In “The Coming of Gowf” we vividly see the game drawn by Plum as a religious institution. In “Excelsior” Wodehouse writes of “almost religious fervour which comes upon a twenty-four handicap man when he sees a chance of winning his first cup.”

Obviously, Wodehouse saw golf as a metaphor for life and its spiritual side: the Oldest Member’s omnipresence, the length and layout of the links, the rabbits and the pros, the water, the bunkers, the rough, and the smooth, rolling greens. They all reflect the tribulations as well as the full cups of life. We learn in “There’s Always Golf” that there is “a Providence which watches over all pious golfers.” But it is distinctly Old Testament as we read in that same story that the “gods of golf lie in wait to chasten the presumptuous.” Or even the unassuming. (Recall that the Bible tells us that Job was “perfect and upright.”) Yet we learn in “Keeping in with Vosper” that “there can be little doubt that one of Job’s chief trials was that his wife insisted on playing golf with him.”

One Sunday I was in church, not on the links, and the priest hit a rough patch of close analytical reasoning concerning the false claims of the supralapsarianists. I let my mind and eye wander through the Psalter, or the Psalms of David, in the Book of Common Prayer. Almost immediately I realized that golf was very much in the psalmist’s heart and mind, and that here was the inspiration for Wodehouse’s own insight. Obviously, Plum was in church and under the power of some higher inspiration when the golf story ideas clicked. Right there in Psalm 1 was the Biblical direction to a man seeking health and fortune in life: “he exercise

himself day and night.” In Psalm 2 we are positively exhorted to take a full swing: “Thou shalt bruise them with a rod of iron.”

The priest droned on like he was trying to win the Great Sermon Handicap, and so I fed my soul more Psalms. There are a lot of Psalms (150 if you ever want to win a bet at the 19th hole), and they are repetitious, not unlike golf lessons. The Psalms address form: Psalm 10 asks “why standest so far off.” Psalm 17 enjoins “let thine eyes look upon the thing.” In Psalm 66 a firm stance is posited: “sufferest not our feet to slip.” We are cautioned against our errors as in Psalm 38, “thy hand presseth,” though modern golf theology now favors the frankly Presbyterian formulation “dinna press.” Like most golfers, David had trouble seeing his faults. In Psalm 3 he complains to God that “thou art . . . the lifter up of my head.” Plum wrote of a similar high-handicap golfer who, in “Keeping in with Vosper,” “glanced involuntarily up at the summer sky, as if preparing to dodge the lightning bolt which could scarcely fail to punish such blasphemy.”

Plum’s golf stories often reflect the conventionality of Christian belief. In “Chester Forgets Himself” we read that “he had been aware all the time that he had been putting chancily. They had gone in, yes, but he had uttered a prayer per putt.” The Psalmist praises this basic golf stroke, the putt, in Psalm 84: “Blessed is the man that putteth.” The blessing is conferred in Psalm 23 as “my cup shall be full.” But putting is only one part of the game. Psalm 23 speaks of the whole game: “He shall feed me in a green pasture, and lead me forth beside the waters.” Lest you think this “pasture” passage is not about golf, remember that in “Up From the Depths” golf is termed “cow-pasture pool.” The canard may be cruel, but a golfer, like the Psalmist, knows life to be stern and earnest.

It is the beauty of the Psalms that in the midst of life’s lost balls and shanks, we are comforted. In Psalm 84 David speaks well of birdies, and Psalm 103 identifies an eagle as a desirable thing. Though not every round is blessed with low scores! The stroke count is often as described in Psalm 139: “If I tell them, they are more in number than the sand” and “O, how great is the sum of them!” Still, with the quiet confidence of a Christian, we must have faith in our long game as Psalm 44 asks hopefully, “How thou hast driven?” And there is a wonderful description in Psalm 68 for our work off the tees: “Like as the smoke vanisheth, so shall thou drive them away.”

Thus, slow back, eye on the ball, let the club head lead, and remember the injunction of Psalm 141: “Keep me . . . from the traps.” Being bunkered is part of golf and

life. In Psalm 88 we find a non-scratch golfer describing himself: “I am counted as one of them that go down into the pit.” And the rough is no picnic in the Psalms. One out-of-bounds description, in Psalm 69 states that “I stick fast in the deep mire, where no ground is.” One telling verse of Psalm 41 sums up the problem of missing the fairways and landing in the rough or out-of-bounds: “And now that he lieth, he shall rise up no more.”

But be of good cheer! Golf is the essence of life, and the Psalmist assures us in Psalm 121 that “the Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in.” Yes, a round of golf offers ample opportunity for chastening, rather like the trials of Job. Golfers may occasionally feel as the Psalmist did in 73: “All the day long have I been punished, and chastened every morning.” The Old Testament God is rather like a Wodehouse caddy, likely to cough, sneeze, chomp a crisp apple, or suddenly start to whistle show tunes as we tee off. Still, for each errant golf swing, there is an equal hope for salvation. Psalm 118 reveals that, like a good teaching pro, “The Lord hath chastened and corrected me.”

Wodehouse describes a wavering golfer, Archibald Mealing, in “Archibald’s Benefit.” His “progress from hole to hole” (due to his tendency to alternately slice and hook) “was generally a majestic zigzag.” In Psalm 119 we read the prayer “O that my ways were made so direct.” Yet there remains the hint of Old Testament punishment: Psalm 104 clearly says, “Thou hast set them bounds, which they shall not pass.” So we read in “The Rough Stuff” of George Perkins, “scared to the depths of his craven soul” as he stood on the tee. But his heartfelt prayer, albeit in the somewhat irregular form of a few bars from “the hymn for those in peril on the deep,” would help anyone’s game.

As Wodehouse’s fiction reveals, golf has abiding links to the great mystery of life. Are we not told in Psalm 104 that “He bringeth forth grass . . . for the service of men”? It is seen, too, in “The Salvation of George Mackintosh,” wherein the Oldest Member describes the horror of a talking golfer on the course (a wicked sin): “The feeling he gave me resembled the self-conscious panic which I used to experience in my childhood when informed that there was One Awful Eye that watched my every movement and saw my every act.” The most we ought to expect is the gift mentioned in Psalm 94 “that thou mayest give him patience in time of adversity.”

Wodehouse depicts some soulless characters in his stories whose self-reported stroke counts ought to be audited. Besides the lawyer reported in “Ordeal By Golf,” Jacob Schnellenhamer in “The Juice of an Orange,” a Mulliner/Hollywood tale, comes to mind.

However, in “Ordeal by Golf” Plum also encapsulated the potential nobility of man’s soul as revealed by golf: “The man who can go into a patch of rough alone, with the knowledge that only God is watching him, and play his ball where it lies is the man who will serve you faithfully and well.” But we all know of some golfers as described in Psalm 59: “Their talk is of cursing and lies.” It is especially vexing if there is some small sum of money at issue when one is victimized as reported in Psalm 109: “And they have spoken against me with false tongues.”

To play just for the joy of the game, and not base reward, will make both the round and this earthly plane a place of comfort. Psalm 131 captures the right golfer’s attitude: “Lord, I am not high-minded, I have no proud looks. I do not exercise myself in great matters which are too high for me. But I refrain my soul, and keep it low.” Specifically, as to golf, Psalm 73 puts it in a nutshell: “Then thought I to understand this; but it was too hard for me.” Life is stern and earnest, but golf should be just a pleasant interlude. “Like a dome of many-colored glass to stain the white radiance of Eternity” about sums it up, as we read in “Farewell to Legs.”

And just in case you may be skeptical of my premise, if that’s the word I want, that Plum plunged into the Psalms for his insights on golf, I will mention Agnes Flack’s biblical action (in addition to cleaving to a man) reported in “Those in Peril on the Tee.” You will recall that on the 18th tee she “skipped in a manner extraordinarily reminiscent of the high hills mentioned in Sacred Writ.” A perusal of said writ in Psalms 104 and 114 will show the links clearly.



Additional Thoughts on the Psalms and Golf

BY JEFF PETERSON

KEN CLEVENGER has written a small but insightful hermeneutic on the passages within the Book of Psalms relating to that most spiritual of all earthly endeavors, the game—surely it is more than a game—of golf. It is a welcome addition to the growing library of scholarship dedicated to bringing new understanding to the Psalm writer’s simple and pious prayers, poems,

and songs. The author, as revealed by certain technical and spiritual errors that need not detain us, is not a golfer himself. This all-too-human shortcoming may be forgiven. He is nonetheless sympathetic with the deep, hidden mysteries and secret wisdom contained in those venerable verses. He has focused on the *res* of the Psalms as a life guide. Naysayers who quibble and cavil will certainly aver that he misses the overall message and the higher instructions in the Book of Psalms by his singular focus on the clearly golf-related passages. Ah, but there is a greater mystery than golf to be explicated!

The author stands firmly in the mainstream of historical and current biblical exegeses. Early second- and third-century gnostics scoured the writings of Paul of Tarsus and the individual gospel writers (no texts had yet been canonized) searching for secret or cryptic teachings that would illuminate and validate the gnostic Christian interpretation of our sacred writ. Church fathers, like Augustine of Hippo, who provide the basis for later, orthodox Christian positions, will complain that such specific readings only amount to words taken out of context. But gnostics of all eras admire original interpretations of scriptural writings as signs of spiritual insight and enlightenment. Certainly they now nod with appreciation and approbation of the author’s revelations as to the wider meaning in the Book of Psalms, which might be subtitled “David on the Mental Game of Golf.”

The many cited passages provide the golf pilgrim (all of whom are forever pursuing the chimera of healing their game) with a scriptural road map to the kingdom and cup. Clerics and scholars through the centuries continue to examine the now agreed-upon biblical canon, searching for new and eternal verities like a lost ball. And the golf messages are there for the fully aware true believers. Although orthodox interpretations of scripture are largely silent on the subject, there can be but little doubt that the Book of Psalms, and possibly other biblical texts, speak to the chosen and fully initiated members of the community of golf who have, as apparently Wodehouse had, a transformed consciousness and the insight to see illuminated the golfing guidance otherwise obscured throughout the Psalms. All of the golfing experience is there for the eye to see: the quest, the vicissitudes, the suffering, the self-reproach, the solitary inner spiritual journey, and, hopefully, the mysterious spark within the soul which produces—as we are forever challenged anew—some temporal evidence of redemption and perfection. Future readers can only hope that the author will continue his inquiry into divine texts to save mankind from, well, missing three-foot putts.

Call for TWS Logo

THE TWS Board of Directors is seeking artistic input for a Society logo. We use the David Low caricature of Wodehouse for *Plum Lines*, but we do not have an official Society logo. It has been remembered that our founder, Captain Blood, originally used a "TWS" monogram of various designs, and we think that is an excellent starting point, but all ideas are welcome. Please submit your drawings, scribbles, or doodles to President Ken Clevenger with the subject line TWS LOGO, or at his USPS mail address (shown immediately to the right on this page).

The atmosphere was redolent of substantial bank balances. Solvency shone from the closely shaven faces of the men and reflected itself in the dresses of the women.

Piccadilly Jim (1917)

Contents

- 1 Happy 130th Birthday, Plum!
- 1 The Henry Ford Museum, Greenfield Village, and the Rouge Plant Tour
- 2 The Detroit Tour
- 3 Meanwhile, Back at the Hotel
- 4 Scintillating Talks and Dreaded Business
- 5 A Banquet to Remember
- 6 A Brunch in Dearborn, Just the Thing for a Lad with a Morning Head
- 7 Cast List: *The Invention of Gasohol*
- 7 Dr. Sophie Ratcliffe's *P. G. Wodehouse: A Life in Letters*
- 7 Jette and Chouinard's New CD!
- 8 Terrific Overlook Press Offer
- 8 Still Life with Wodehouse
- 9 Wodehouse On Stage
- 9 Remsenburg Historical Marker Dedication, April 22
- 9 Proud NEWT
- 10 Tony Ring and Wodehouse's "Straight" Theatre
- 10 *A Guide to P. G. Wodehouse's New York City and Long Island*
- 11–14 Special Full-Color Convention Photo Section
- 15 Chapters Corner
- 19 The Drone Rangers Waltz across Texas
- 20 Jeeves, a Reappraisal
- 21 Lord Ickenham and Time Travel
- 21 Creating Life: Wodehouse's Golf Stories and God
- 23 Additional Thoughts on the Psalms and Golf
- 24 Call for TWS Logo

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