



Plum Lines

The quarterly journal of The Wodehouse Society

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Mr. Wodehouse Goes to Washington: A Capital! Capital! Binge

THEY CAME from around the country and around the world, disembarking from planes or trains or automobiles. Some arrived at the Hamilton Hotel early and explored the great city of Washington, D.C. Some stayed extra days after the glorious festivities of The Wodehouse Society's 2017 convention had concluded. Many have been to multiple conventions over the decades; quite a few were attending their first (and hopefully not last) convention. All brought their own sense of humor to add to the general good cheer.

Speakers educated and entertained, costumed attendees reveled, officers were elected or reaffirmed. Top-notch items were auctioned; extra copies of various novels were sold and bought. We raised a glass to each other and to members of the society who have passed. We caught up with our far-flung pals and made a few new friends along the way. Led by our hosts, Capital! Capital!, and majordomo Scott Daniels, we celebrated the humor of a man who has been deceased for over 42 years, but whose talent places him among the giants of English literature.

This is our commemorative issue—but there's more. We plan to follow the lead of our sister publication (the U.K. society's *Wooster Sauce*) and go full color for this and all future issues. Our first color spread of convention photographs was after the 2005 UCLA convention, and we've continued that tradition since. From now on, every issue will be in color throughout.

So, enjoy the reports and photographs from our jolly event. And start making plans for the 2019 convention in . . . well, you'll have to read on to find out yourself!



Jeff Peterson expresses a sentiment commonly found at TWS conventions.



Decidedly handsome: Peter Nieuwenhuizen (president of the Dutch Wodehouse society) and Ken Clevenger

And They're Off!

BY SUSAN COLLICOTT

THE DOORS OPENED and we gathered in the Hamilton Ballroom for the Friday night festivities. Thirsty Wodehouseans became friendly with the bartender, the piano tuner put the finishing touches on his work, and the actors warmed up. Exuberant greetings and loving hugs were exchanged (along with some apologies and name-tag viewing—"I know you, I just can't remember the name!"). We mused about how strong the feelings of friendship are with these people whom most of us see only once every two years—how easily the threads of these friendships are picked up again as we pour into the convention hotel. Conversations covered the gamut: which museums held which treats, restaurant recommendations, layers of security for different tours,

who was missing from this convention, and what aunts would be best suited for the D.C. environment.

We had a special guest in attendance (the Indian ambassador), though he did not have a chance to formally address us. As everyone took their seats, Lynn Vesley-Gross introduced the Scavenger Hunt app for use during the convention. I hope it returns next time; I'll be prepared to go hunting!

Next was a delicious treat: a tidbit of acting and singing from a potential new Wodehouse musical. What joy to hear the bright young folks giving us a sample of their musical adaptation of *A Damsel in Distress*. The level of talent was truly top-notch. Here are the cast and creators of the show who entertained us:

Alexandra Petri: Book and Lyrics

Jack Mitchell: Music and Additional Lyrics

(+Percy, Taxi Driver, Keggs)

Casey Reed: Pianist

Kyle Sherman: George Bevan

Hannah Shealy: Lady Maud Marshmoreton



The lead actors from the Friday night sample of A Damsel in Distress: Kyle Sherman as George Bevan and Hannah Shealy as Lady Maud Marshmoreton

I for one fell for George Bevan immediately and will make all haste to purchase tickets when it is announced they have a production and theater ready.

The next part of this lovely evening was a concert by Maria Jette and Dan Chouinard. As October was the 100th anniversary of the USA entering the Great War, we started out with a sing-along of WWI songs. Maria and Dan then gave us a sampling of Wodehouse songs from 1917 shows. It was so wonderful to be able to hear Wodehouse's words performed live by Wodehouse fans! Maria was perfection as always, and Dan is the consummate accompanist, with his own vocal flair for a

lyric or two. Where else will you find this? Nowhere but a TWS convention.

Tony Ring then presented TWS with a gift from Sir Edward Cazalet. Quite a gift it was—Plum's last address book! There were gems listed such as Agatha Christie's address, Guy Bolton's phone number, and much more. Reading it is like being a time traveler.

To finish off this thoroughly entertaining evening, a dapper gentleman named Zach Foreman arrived and led a brave group of conventioners as they learned the Charleston and other dances. A fun time was had cutting the rug!

Editor's note: The stars-in-the-making who entertained us with a snippet of their adaptation of A Damsel in Distress now have a website for their show, as they shop it to prospective theatres and producers. To stay in touch with developments, please visit www.damselmusical.com.

Saturday's Riveting Start

BY ELIN WOODGER

IT IS THE considered opinion of this reporter that the slate of speakers at this year's convocation was one of the best in TWS's convention history. The mixture of topics, the excellence of the presentations, and several new faces at the podium made Saturday's program of talks an undisputed highlight—kudos to **Scott Daniels** for that! And for good measure we had the wonderful **Ken Clevenger** as our emcee, introducing the speakers with humor and moving the proceedings along with easygoing confidence. His use of baseball analogies to describe the lineup and the hits each speaker made seemed entirely appropriate in view of the World Series running concurrently with our convention, so add Ken to Saturday's list of home-run champions.

Elliott Milstein led off the day with his presentation on "The Supercilious Sisters of Galahad Threepwood (and a long, lingering look at the best of them)"—a mouthful of a title but a bucketful of good stuff to enjoy. Elliott cast his knowledgeable eye over some of the better known of the ten—count 'em, ten—Threepwood sisters, of whom probably the best known is the proud and imperious Lady Constance Keeble (later Schoonmaker). Then there's Lady Hermione Wedge, the only one of the crew who is short, dumpy, and looks like a cook, but who is every bit as cunning and determined as her sisters. As for the one Elliott considers the "best" of the lot, I'm going to leave that for readers to discover

when his paper is printed in *Plum Lines*. I have to agree, though, that she is the most cunning and subtle of all the Threepwood siblings—a great character.

Our next speaker of the morning was **Dr. Constance Walker**, a professor of English and the Liberal Arts at Carleton College in Minnesota, where she just happens to teach a course called “Introduction to British Comedy.” The course covers Shakespeare, Fielding, Carroll, Wilde, Jerome, and others, finishing off with our own PGW (with a focus on the Jeeves and Wooster stories). Post-course reviews have shown that her students really, really liked Wodehouse, with such comments as “unbelievably funny” and “I’m buying a copy for my parents.” Connie has found that the millennial generation of students find much to attract them to Wodehouse, appreciating his language and his irony. It seems that Bertie Wooster, with his habit of abbreviating his sentences and indulging in verbal playfulness, would get along just fine in our modern world of texting, tweets, and funny Facebook posts.

Speaker number three in the morning lineup was **Chris Dueker**, whose approach to his topic of time in Wodehouse was brimming over with ironic, witty, and off-the-cuff remarks. In examining the problems with time that Wodehouse had to face while writing sagas over the many years of his life, Chris found a number of time travelers in the stories, including Angelica Briscoe, Tipton Plimsoll, Florence Craye, and Emerald Stoker. He also noted the problems in dealing with Bertie Wooster’s age, given the clues and settings in various stories. We can determine that Bertie was 24 when the Jeeves and Wooster saga began, but how old was he when it ended? To answer this question, Chris reached for help from works by J. H. C. Morris and Jane Austen.

The last speaker of the morning session was TWS’s vice president (and soon-to-be president), **Tom Smith**, who examined the FBI’s interest in Wodehouse as a possible spy with thoughtfulness and humor. This interest began not long after the Berlin broadcasts and included interception of materials that Wodehouse had intended to go to Paul Reynolds in the USA, as well as the idea that Plum was spying on his fellow guests at the Hotel Bristol in Paris. Even J. Edgar Hoover got involved, believing that a certain edition of *Piccadilly Jim* contained secret codes for the Germans. Tom imparted both the drama and the comedy of the investigation, as you will discover when you read his talk in a future *Plum Lines*.

In all, the morning proved to be filled to the eyeballs with fascinating facts and enjoyable tales that had those in attendance, including yours truly, eager to find out what lay ahead in the next inning.



Dr. Constance Walker, professor of English and Liberal Arts at Carleton College, demonstrated that millennials are ripe for enjoying Plum!

Business, Bah!

BY GARY HALL

LUNCH BEING OVER, brave Wodehouseans returned for the Dreaded Business Meeting. It was not all that dreadful, I’d say, having attended many of them. It sparked along under the steady hand of outgoing prez Bob Rains. Bob reported that, after many years without an increase in annual dues, the board recommended a \$10 bump, which will make the annual cost \$35. After a motion and a second, there was an acclamation “yea” vote. There was one “nay” vote by some rebel in the crowd, name available upon request.

Jennifer Smith, the social media rep of the unfunded International Wodehouse Association, spoke for the absent Jen Scheppers (aka Honoria Glossop, aka Mrs. Plum). The IWA is advocating any type of support and sites that makes digital information about Wodehouse easy to find, share, and use. For those of you who do such things, there are Facebook pages, Twitter accounts, Instagram, and more in the luminiferous ether.

Bob Rains nominated Thomas Smith to be the new president. After a second and a unanimous acclamation vote, Thomas became the new TWS president for a two-year term. The various official insignia that are held by the president were passed from Bob to Tom, including the presidential medallion, the 1924 Wembley Exhibition tea bell, and the new phone directory/address book that Edward Cazalet sent as gift to current and future TWS presidents.

There was a nomination and second from the floor to elect Bill Scrivener as the new vice president. No additional candidates were nominated. The nomination passed by acclamation.

Treasurer Indu Ravi offered to stay on, and this offer was met with unanimous approval. Membership secretary Ian Michaud was reelected by the same process.

The room then trembled with anticipation to learn the site of the 2019 TWS convention. And it will be—Cincinnati, home of the Flying Pigs chapter and more! Bill Scrivener and other members of the chapter made

the announcement and showed a video teaser. The host hotel will be the Hotel Cincinnati Netherland Plaza. Excitement and enlightenment in 2019 are guaranteed!

Thus concluded the not-so-dreadful session.



It's entirely possible that when the TWS convention is held in October 2019 in Cincinnati, there will be pig reference or two. Many details will be forthcoming in future issues of Plum Lines, and of course on the wodehouse.org website. Join old friends and make new in Ohio two years from now! (EW)

Scintillating Speakers

BY GARY HALL

KEN CLEVENGER continued his topping emcee form from the morn. He introduced first-time attendee (and first-time speaker) **Bruce Montgomery**, who spoke about 1917, Plum's great year of musical theatre, when Wodehouse had six shows open or running. Coincidentally, this was also the theme of Dan Chouinard and Maria Jette's smashing performance from the night before. Bruce gave us additional insights into how those several shows came together. He also shared many clips of songs from these shows. Bruce compared Plum's most famous stories to a high mountain range, with Bertie and Jeeves being the mightiest of twin peaks. He encouraged us to explore the foothills and the less-traveled valleys of Wodehouse's writings, including lyrics from the forty or so musicals in which Wodehouse was involved. In their time, Bruce



Bruce Montgomery kicked off the afternoon talks in style and stylishly!

said, Wodehouse's lyrics were fresh on the scene and humorously reflected real life rather than "Ruritarian twaddle."

Peter Nieuwenhuizen spoke next about a mysterious "hidden painter" in Wodehouse. Peter pointed out that Wodehouse mentioned many real painters, philosophers, and poets, and invented a few along the way. Plum had an odd reference, though, to the Dutch painter Han van Meegeren in *Something Fishy*. Apparently this artist felt ignored by the art community, and to prove his talent, he began to forge paintings of the masters, even creating alleged new works by (for example) Vermeer. It's rumored that he even sold a forgery to Hermann Göring. Ultimately, van Meegeren was brought to trial in 1947. Peter believes it's possible that Plum crossed paths with van Meegeren, or at least heard of him, while they were both in the south of France prior to the war.

Karen Shotting then expounded about the very popular writer George Ade, of whom Plum was a great fan. (You may also read Karen's article on different aspects of the same topic in the Spring 2016 *Plum Lines*.) Karen provided much additional new information and interesting anecdotes and insights.

Madelyn Shaw wrapped up the afternoon by explaining "What the Well-Dressed Man Was Wearing." She quoted a 1932 advertisement that said new clothes "make gloom impossible." While entertaining us with pictures and quotes about how clothes make the man ("Naked people have little or no influence in society," said Mark Twain), she educated us about the tuxedo (which was not originally considered formal wear for mixed company events), cummerbunds, spats, the arrival of the center crease in trousers, and the meaning of "bespoke." Fred Astaire was, of course, used in her presentation as the epitome of impeccable fashion. "If people turn to look at you on the street, you are not well-dressed!"



Madelyn Shaw kept the erudition and humor going to the end of the convention's talks. (EW)

Saturday Banquet

BY BILL SCRIVENER

ON SATURDAY EVENING, attendees at the convention turned out in full regalia to celebrate all things Wodehousian. There was a creative assemblage of Wodehouse characters—Jeeves with his morning pick-me-up, at least two Emperesses of Blandings, two Aunt Elizabeths, and the Heralds of the Red Dawn, to name a few—as well as period costumes and an assortment of tuxedos and full soup-and-fish. After an invigorating bit of sluicing, we took to our tables to dine and were first greeted, via recording, by Stephen Fry. While we would have loved to have him there in person, it was nonetheless heartening to hear his greetings to us and his appreciation for our community.

Just before dinner began, we were treated to a parade of those in costume, with appropriate commentary by past president Ken Clevenger.

We then turned our attention to remembering Norman Murphy. A lovely, warm tribute was offered by Hilary Bruce, chairman of The P G Wodehouse Society (UK). This was followed by the presentation of the first Norman Murphy Award. Actually, two were presented at this time. The first, fittingly, went to Elin Woodger Murphy, who was both surprised and overcome by the well-deserved recognition. All of us joined her in celebrating Norman's remarkable life and contributions to the world of Wodehouse. The second presentation was no less well-deserved and went to *Plum Lines* editor Gary Hall. I would say more about his many contributions, but since he is the editor, I suspect he would excise them out of a misplaced sense of modesty. All agreed that it was a most appropriate recognition.

We then remembered our Absent Friends, and Gary Hall paid tribute to the late Charles Gould. Finally, we tucked into dinner. The evening was capped off by a presentation from *Washington Post* columnist **Michael Dirda** entitled "Wodehouse and the Humorists." Mr. Dirda introduced us to a number of Wodehouse's contemporary authors, demonstrating the broader world of humorous writing.

It has often been noted that we Wodehousians know how to party, and this evening underscored that truth. Kudos to all who made it happen!



The fauna were out in force on Saturday night. Here is Allan Devitt doggedly doing his part.

And Then Came Brunch

BY WILL SADDLER

THE CONVENTION closed with the traditional Sunday brunch and theatrical production. The comestibles in prior years consisted of trencherman quantities of eggs & b., roasted potatoes, and other delicacies too numerous to mention; this year's table was more on the order of light grazing and tasty nibbles.

The play was clearly the thing—it was the highlight of the morning. This year's offering from the D.C. Players was an original production, penned and directed by Ken Ludwig, entitled *Jeeves and the American Revolution*. But first, I must say a word or two about the director. Ken Ludwig, the creative genius behind the piece, must certainly have a mantelpiece that is groaning in agony under the combined weight of his many writing and directing awards. His bio in the program book for the convention listed at least a dozen awards. I say "at least" because I stopped counting at twelve. I can only say that one marvels at the lengths to which some people will go to get decent seating at the finer restaurants.

This one-act show featured the ever-hapless Bertie Wooster (played by Jack Mitchell) and the redoubtable Jeeves (played by Scott Sedar). It featured one kidnapping, two resignations, and three engagements. I confess to being a bit muddled as to how the American Revolution worked into the thing, but the reference gave us that D.C. spirit. In the play, Bertie found himself engaged to and thrown over by not one, not two, but three different women, all in the space of a single afternoon. There was Florence Craye (played by Alexandra Petri, who also portrayed Aunt Dahlia), Madeline Bassett (played by Charlotte Easter Earl), and Honoria Glossop (played by Johanna Jacobsen). As Bertie would attest, they are fine women every one—but still the mind quails, the nerves quiver.

Rounding out the cast were Bruce Montgomery as Lord Worplesdon and James Howard as Anatole. Gumshoe Gertie and Oily Carlisle (Andrea Jacobsen and Bob Rains) lent their services as themselves and served to account for the one of the kidnappings mentioned earlier (a case of mistaken identity, don't you know).

The morning ended with heartfelt thanks to Capital! Capital! for having us all over, and with promises all around to gather again in a couple years to do our own brand of lighthearted silliness and warm camaraderie yet again. The 2017 convention of The Wodehouse Society ended on a happy and humorous note. See you in 2019 in Cincinnati!

Ramblings of a Conventioneer

BY DAVID LANDMAN

David, a longtime pillar of TWS, reflects on this and other conventions, and offers something of a postscript for our cheery and educational event.

BEFORE I became a Plummie, I had little interest in conventions. Or, for that matter, reunions, symposia, conclaves, synods, durbars, folkmoots, consistories (whatever they are), and powwows. And this despite my status as a founding father of numerous organizations which obliged me to attend events time and time again. They failed to grip. Like an indifferent clam at high tide, I shrugged my shoulders and let them wash over me. In a word (if it means what I hope it does and not an Indian princess), in re conventions, I was pococurantish.

Conventions, like robocalls and colonoscopies, have a way of coming up at too-frequent intervals. And the trouble is that these conventions, by their very nature, involve other people. I felt that, if I could find a convention that did not include other people, I might be induced to attend and might even pay attention to my talks. But as other people, like pismires on penuche, tend to swarm on these occasions, my indifference has remained firmly rooted.

And then I became a Plummie. And suddenly my attitude underwent a volte-face. To be for three days in the company of what the playwright Brome called “a jolly crew” and what I call a band of the best and brightest; to be able to have three days’ respite from the specter of *news* that, like Lovecraft’s Cthulhu, lumbers every night at six from its tomb to terrorize the populace; to greet old friends and to make new friends who vibrate in intellectual sympathy—these aspects of a TWS conventions make them real treats. And so, as a convert, it is to be expected that I am more zealous for conventions than even those born with the convention gene.

And yet, despite my enthusiasm, Wodehouse conventions did not come without a catch. For one thing, their biennial recurrence provides a poignantly accurate gauge of how much yolk has leaked from the old egg in the interim. This is most noticeable when total strangers turn out to be people I have known for decades. And as for names—forget it! Which is what I invariably do. Steeper and steeper becomes the declivity I must assume to read name tags.

As for my own name—which it is only proper I advance to those unable to bend—I find that my brain

seizes up like the engine of a NASCAR wreck. I panic and introduce myself by the first name that comes to mind. In the past I have claimed to be Millard Fillmore, the Infant Samuel, Charlotte Corday, Gregor Samsa, Admiral Tojo, and Prince. Something had to be done, and recently I hit upon the expedient of wearing my name tag upside-down. A furtive glance as I execute a bow enables me to remember what I am called.

I do not partake in the costume contest. Not that I have it in for those folks sufficiently secure in *amour propre* to permit the world to see them in plus fours. I do not like the costume contest for purely humanitarian reasons. My heart bleeds for the many Baxter-on-the-Terrace impersonators who have to eat their dinner clad in gamboge pajamas. That is humiliation enough, but how much more distressing to have to eat so clad in the company of the fair sex—which nowadays can be anybody. And for those who come dressed as Schopenhauer, having confused him with Jeeves’s idol, Spinoza, I have only the deepest pity.

I do not understand why, while women rise to the occasion of a convention to dress in stunning gowns splendidly accessorized with long loops of pearl, sparkling tiaras, and ostrich feathers, fewer and fewer of the men are running to the Schwarz Krawatte und Smoking. Business suits and dress jeans, the harbingers of the collapse of civilization, plague the premises.

Personally, I find the tux an extremely practical garment. Worn for only a few hours every two years, it is thus disintitled to dry cleaning. And when after two years it is exhumed from its cedar crypt, whatever slops there may have been from the previous banquet have petrified sufficiently to be scraped off with a fingernail.

Getting down to specifics, this year’s convention was one of the fruitiest. The talks were universally top hole. The affair ran on oiled rails thanks to the splendid work of the Capital! Capital! chapter. Having participated in the parturition of two conventions myself, I know firsthand how much blood, sweat, and Red Bull is involved.



The Sphinx Grand Ballroom in the Almas Temple, an enlightened spot, indeed, for our Saturday banquet (PN)

Dressed to the Tens

REPORTED BY ANDREA JACOBSEN

EXPECTATIONS FOR the costume contest were high but they were more than realized. The sharp-penciled judges were Amy Plofker, Joan Clevenger, Ken Clevenger, and Jeff Peterson. The roaring times of Wodehouse were represented by elegantly attired flappers and escorts, ladies in blue, men in spats. A variety of animals, characters, and allusions were in attendance: free-range sows, chickens, rabbits, newts, and more. The judges' selections were limited by the number of prizes available, but they endeavored to base them on the criteria of originality, style, creativity of execution, and effectiveness of presentation.

Honorable Mention—The Elegant Aunts: Diana Van Horn (Lady Diana Phipps), Donna Myers (Lady Hermione Wedge), Marcy Downes (Lady Charlotte Threepwood)

Honorable Unmentionables—The Underdressed Pair of Madame Eulalie's Models: Susan Jordan and Katherine Jordan

Most Obscure Canon Reference—The Gainsborough-Inspired Outfit of the Girl in Green: Janet Nickerson

Most Decorated Sow—The Empress: Susan Bellamore

Best Seasonal Costume—The Vibrant Orange Newt: Diane Madlon-Kay

Best Namesakes—The Aunts Elizabeth: Shirley Sampson (Ukridge's Aunt Elizabeth), Laura Loehr (The Chicken Named Aunt Elizabeth)

Most Pet-Friendly—Uncle Henry Wooster Who Kept Eleven Rabbits: Arthur Malestian

Most Avid Traveler—Stout Cortez: Lucy Merrill

Most Restorative—Jeeves and His Pick-Me-Upper Morning-After Cure: Anita Avery

Pluckiest Working Girl—The Consistent Character Presentation of Mabel Potter: Jill Singer

Grand Prize and Most Revolutionary Couple: The banner-bearing Heralds of the Red Dawn: Lenny and Sandra Goldstein as Comrades Bingo Little and Charlotte Corday Rowbotham

Credit Where Credit Is Due

BY GARY HALL

IMAGINE IF they handed out Oscars without warning the potential recipients of their nominations. Scrambling for the right words in real time, the honoree might need to seek a later forum to amend a woefully inadequate thank-you speech. Thus it is for me.

My stints as membership secretary, treasurer, and president of TWS have all been great fun and great privilege. But the bulk of my work for the society has been as *Plum Lines* layout editor (2004–2006) and then editor in chief (2007—who knows?). It's been incredibly educational, exciting, and productive. I've spent countless hours learning the process, collecting articles, editing photos, and perfecting the issues.

Despite that investment in volunteer time, I was entirely unprepared to find out that I was a recipient of one of the two inaugural Norman Murphy Awards at the recent TWS convention. (Elin Woodger, of course, the supremely obvious and deserving candidate, won the first award.)

Knocked off my game and without time to prep the speech in the moment, I now must say clearly that the terrific global team that creates the *Plum Lines* product deserves to share in the accolades and the award. Elin Woodger has been a steadfast and patient partner and mentor, and a dedicated proofer, for these fourteen years. And then there's Neil Midkiff, who (and this will come as no surprise to those who know Neil) goes the extra light year or two in proofreading. His eagle eyes and deep knowledge of grammar, style, and Wodehouse help us identify references and clarify history. He'll find a comma in the wrong font. Perfection R Us with Elin and Neil on board. I've learned much about participles, pluperfects, and placement of commas and more from this mighty pair of master proofers.

There have been many more who have been instrumental in creating the journal: Ed Ratcliffe, who talked me into this; Jan Kaufman, who applauded my first work with so much vigor; Dan Cohen, who held the editor-in-chief post during my first layout years; Norman Murphy, the final authority on most anything; and innumerable columnists, treasurers, contributors, first-timers, commentators, and readers.

It's been a rich experience for me, and I appreciate that you read the fruits of our efforts. I get to enjoy being the hub of this good work, and that helps me remember the humor at the heart of our labor. I will forever be grateful for the tremendous honor of the Norman Murphy Award—but I could not have done this alone.

Rivals of P. G. Wodehouse: Dorothy Parker

BY BOB RAINS

*As Dorothy Parker once said to her boyfriend,
"Fare thee well."*

Cole Porter

IT IS A SIGN of Dorothy Parker's fame that when Cole Porter wrote "Just One of Those Things" in 1935 for the musical *Jubilee*, her name, with no explanation needed, started the song, coming ahead of the likes of Columbus, Romeo, and Juliet. Not even Wodehouse himself, who sometimes collaborated with Porter, merited a mention. Although there were some parallels between the lives of Parker and Wodehouse, the differences between the two writers were like "Night and Day."

Considered at one time the height of New York sophistication, Dorothy Rothschild was born in West End, New Jersey, on August 22, 1893, to a Jewish father and a Presbyterian mother. Her mother died when Dorothy was five years and was replaced, after a somewhat brief interval, by a strict Presbyterian stepmother whom she hated. Oddly, Dorothy was sent to a Catholic convent school in New York, followed by a stint at an Episcopalian school in New Jersey which she left at age fourteen, ending her formal education. When Dorothy was twenty, her father died, and she pretty much had to fend for herself.

Among other odd jobs, Dorothy played the piano at a dancing school. Like Wodehouse, she saw writing as a way to escape disagreeable work. Also like Wodehouse, she was skilled at writing metrical, rhymed verse. She began sending her verses to various magazines, and she found relatively early success. In 1915, *Vogue* not only bought one of her poems but also hired her to write captions for fashion illustrations. "Brevity," she famously noted in one, "is the Soul of Lingerie."

In 1917, Dorothy married Edwin Parker, later claiming she had done so in order to acquire a new last name. Thereafter, her personal life was as chaotic as Wodehouse's was tranquil. She and Edwin endured many separations before the final one. He appears to have been abusive, he taught her to become a serious drinker, and he drank and used drugs (from which he ultimately died). During one of their separations, Dorothy became pregnant by a married man who was likewise separated from his spouse, and she opted to have an abortion. It is unclear how many men she took



Dorothy Parker

to bed over the years, but the total seems to have been rather high. It is likewise unclear how many abortions she had. At times she was a serious alcoholic, and she made multiple suicide attempts: slashing her wrists, taking an overdose of Veronal, and drinking shoe polish, among other methods. Each time, however, she contrived to make sure she would be discovered before it was too late.

She divorced Parker in 1928, but always thereafter insisted on being known as Mrs. Parker. She married Alan Campbell, eleven years her junior, in 1934, but the marriage was often rocky and they divorced in 1947. Three years later, they remarried, but they had violent quarrels and he walked out in 1951. A decade later, she moved back into his house (if not his bedroom), but their heavy drinking and his use of drugs took a toll on both of them. She found him dead in their house in 1963. The coroner reported "acute barbiturate poisoning due to ingestion of an overdose" and listed him as a probable suicide. Dorothy Parker died, childless, of a heart attack four years later.

At the end of 1917, Dorothy (now Mrs. Parker) transferred to *Vanity Fair* and replaced a certain P. G. Wodehouse as its drama critic. She was often scathing in her reviews. She recommended one show as an excellent place to do knitting, thoughtfully adding, "If you don't knit, bring a book."

On rare occasions, however, she could be effusive in her praise. Reviewing *Oh, Lady! Lady!!*, she gushed, "Well, Wodehouse and Bolton and Kern have done it again. . . . If you ask me, I will tell you, in low, throbbing tones, that it has it all over any other musical comedy in town. . . . Wodehouse and Bolton and Kern are my favorite indoor sport." (It does not appear that the admiration was mutual. Wodehouse did not see fit to include any of her writings in either his *The Best of Modern Humor* or *A Century of Humour*. In a letter in January 1931, he wrote, "I don't like her stuff much,"

although later that year he did say of Parker's *Laments for the Living*, "I think it pretty good.")

In 1919, Dorothy and her literary and artistic friends, including Alexander Woollcott, Robert Benchley, and Robert Sherwood, began lunching regularly at the Algonquin Hotel, where they ultimately were provided with a round table. The members of the Algonquin Round Table were known as great wits, and the greatest—and deadliest—of them all was Dorothy Parker. Tallulah Bankhead called her "the mistress of the verbal hand grenade." Parker herself said, "At my birth the Devil touched my tongue." She did not mince words: "I'd rather flunk my Wassermann test than read a poem by Edgar Guest." Her aphorisms became legendary: "A girl's best friend is her mutter"; "You can lead a horticulture but you can't make her think."

In 1922, Parker sold her first story, "Such a Pretty Little Picture," to a literary magazine called *The Smart Set*, coedited by H. L. Mencken. In 1925, her friend Harold Ross brought out the first edition of *The New Yorker*, and Parker contributed drama reviews to the first two issues under the byline "Last Night." Later she took over its "Recent Books" column under the pseudonym "Constant Reader." Thereafter she contributed poems regularly to *The New Yorker* and other magazines until she stopped writing poetry in 1944. She also contributed stories to *The New Yorker* until 1957.

Parker published four successful collections of poetry: *Enough Rope*, *Sunset Gun*, *Death and Taxes*, and *Not So Deep as a Well*. Viking Press published three collections of her short fiction: *Laments for the Living*, *After Such Pleasures*, and *Here Lies*. Parker's efforts at playwriting met with limited success. Her few attempts at lyrics were generally failures, and despite trying from time to time, Parker was never able to complete a novel.

Like Wodehouse, Parker tried her hand at Hollywood, but, unlike Wodehouse, she was successful there. With her sometimes-husband Alan Campbell and another collaborator, she was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Screenplay for *A Star Is Born* (1937). Ten years later, she and Frank Cavett were nominated for Best Story for *Smash Up: The Story of a Woman*. She had a cameo appearance in Alfred Hitchcock's 1942 movie *Saboteur*, which she cowrote. But Parker was as political as Wodehouse was apolitical, and her left-wing politics landed her briefly in jail and on Hollywood's blacklist for a number of years. (Despite its best efforts, the FBI was never able to prove that Parker was an actual member of the Communist Party, but there can be little doubt as to her sympathies.)

Here's what I believe to be the supreme irony of Parker and Wodehouse. Parker was the life and soul of

every party, the wittiest of the wits, a real A-list guest, but she generally wrote the most depressing stories and poems. Wodehouse, on the other hand, was a famous shrinking violet, happy to leave the entertaining to Ethel, happy to go hide away from the guests at the first possible opportunity, sometimes described as dull, yet he wrote some of the most brilliant, side-splittingly funny works in the annals of literature. It was as if each of these two talented writers underwent a Dr. Jekyll/Mr. Hyde transformation when seated in front of a typewriter.

Parker was a depressed person, and her poems, admittedly witty, are self-revelatory. She wore her heart on her sleeve, and it bled copiously. The "constant reader" would be well-advised to "pop an Elavil™ or two" before digging in. The poems are a litany of pain, heartbreak, despair, and death. Indeed, one of her famous epigrams—"Men seldom make passes at girls who wear glasses"—smacks of the autobiographical: Parker wore horn-rimmed glasses which she would immediately remove when a man entered the room.

Even Parker's lighter verse is marked by a dark or negative tone, as in the often anthologized "Resumé":

Razors pain you;
Rivers are damp;
Acids stain you;
And drugs cause cramp.
Guns aren't lawful;
Nooses give;
Gas smells awful;
You might as well live.

There is an implicit or even explicit sexuality in much of Parker's work, which is of course notably absent in Wodehouse. In "Unfortunate Coincidence," Parker warns the unwary female:

By the time you swear you're his,
Shivering and sighing,
And he vows his passion is
Infinite, undying—
Lady, make a note of this:
One of you is lying.

Similarly, in "General Review of the Sex Situation," Parker opines:

Woman wants monogamy;
Man delights in novelty.
Love is woman's moon and sun;
Man has other forms of fun.

Woman lives but for her lord;
Count to ten, and man is bored.
With this the gist and sum of it,
What earthly good can come of it?

Amongst all this existential angst is one puppy poem that Plum might have penned. "Verse for a Certain Dog" ends as follows:

"Whatever is, is good"—your gracious creed.
You wear your joy of living like a crown.
Love lights your simplest act, your every deed.
(Drop it, I tell you—put that kitten down!)
You are God's kindest gift of all—a friend.
Your shining loyalty unflecked by doubt,
You ask but leave to follow to the end.
(Couldn't you wait until I took you out?)

Most of Parker's short stories are no cheerier than her verses. It is almost always as easy to open to any page and immediately tell a Parker story from a Wodehouse story as it is "to distinguish between a Scotsman with a grievance and a ray of sunshine." Recurrent themes in Parker's stories include overdrinking, misunderstandings between couples, break-ups, women pining for men, women abandoned by men, and women getting pregnant and being abandoned by men. Her best known story, "Big Blonde," winner of the O. Henry Award in 1929 (an accolade never accorded a Wodehouse story), has the additional jolly note of a botched suicide attempt, clearly based on one of her own.

Another aspect of some Parker stories, notably absent from those of Wodehouse, is a social/racial consciousness. Parker had a lifelong commitment to racial justice. In fact, she bequeathed her estate to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and, upon his death, to the NAACP. (When she died, King was quite surprised to learn of the bequest; they had never even met. Today Parker's ashes are interred in a memorial garden on the grounds of the NAACP's headquarters in Baltimore.)

Only very occasionally might one be fooled into confusing Parker's prose with that of Wodehouse, but there are such times. Consider the imbibing woman in Parker's "Just a Little One," who warns:

Don't let me take any horses home with me.
It doesn't matter so much about stray dogs
and kittens, but elevator boys get awfully
stuffy when you try to bring in a horse. . . .
You can always tell when the crash is coming
when I start getting tender about Our Dumb

Friends. Three highballs, and I think I'm St.
Francis of Assisi.

One of the few truly droll tales in Parker's *Collected Short Stories*, "The Little Hours," is narrated by an insomniac woman who seems to be channeling Bertie Wooster. When she is not quoting or misquoting La Rochefoucauld, she is obsessing about Thomas Carlyle: "I'm not going to start fretting about Carlyle at this stage of the game. What did he ever do that was so great, besides founding a college for Indians?" (Methinks that Scottish writer Thomas Carlyle [1795–1881] did not really have too much to do with the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Carlisle, Pennsylvania [1879–1918], actually founded by Captain Richard Henry Pratt.)

But these are, frankly, the exceptions. Don't read Parker in search of lightening your mood. Read her for excellent writing, almost on a par with Wodehouse himself.

Dorothy Parker died fifty years ago, but fortunately her work remains alive. The Dorothy Parker Society was founded in 1999 and clearly has the right stuff. Its mission is to promote her work, be nonacademic, and "to have as much fun as possible." In July 2017, a production of *Nights at the Algonquin Round Table* was extended in Los Angeles, and the Capital Fringe Festival in Washington, D.C., put on *Wit and Wrath: the Life and Times of Dorothy Parker*. If these productions, and others, lead readers back to Dorothy Parker's writing, that is all to the good. She was an American original and is well worth reading or rereading.

Parker Praises Plum

Alyn Hertzbach sent along a bit more of the Dorothy Parker 1918 *Vanity Fair* review of *Oh, Lady! Lady!!*:

Every time [Bolton and Wodehouse and Kern] gather together, the Princess Theatre is sold out for months in advance. You can get a seat for *Oh, Lady! Lady!!* somewhere around the middle of August for just about the price of one on the stock exchange. . . . I like the way they go about a musical comedy . . . I like the way the action slides casually into the songs . . . I like the deft rhyming of the song that is always sung in the last act by two comedians and a comedienne. And oh, how I do like Jerome Kern's music!

Mr. Wodehouse Goes to Washington

All photos by Barbara Combs, except:
 EW = Elin Woodger CE = Charlotte Easter Earl
 DB = Debbie Bellew PN = Peter Nieuwenhuizen



The cast of Jeeves and the American Revolution from the Sunday brunch



Navtej Sarna, the Indian ambassador to the U.S., with his wife and Tony Ring



Bertie is surrounded by his three simultaneous fiancées, from the brunch skit. (EW)



The First Lady of The Wodehouse Society, Kathy Smith



Terry Kitchen performs at the Vinyl Lounge. (DB)



Jim Hawking and a couple of girl friends (EW)



Wendell Verrill, Tom Smith, and Lynn Vesley-Gross relax in the lobby of the Hamilton Hotel in D.C.



Shana Singerman and Susan Collicott make merry.



Debbie Bellew, Susan Bellamore, and Max Pokrivchak—note Max's resemblance to Terry Kitchen, above



Maria Jette, the very definition of sparkling virtuosity



Who says all of the members of TWS are on the retired end of the spectrum?



David McGrann chose a blazer to match the scenery in the Hamilton Hotel watering hole. (DB)



Betty and Tom Hooker



Susan Bellamore and Anita Avery toast the occasion.



Editors' Corner? Elin Woodger, Neil Midkiff, Gary Hall, Linda Adam-Hall



Rick Arnest makes the grade.



Anita Avery as Jeeves's pick-me-up



Merrily we Plum along: Gary Hall and Linda Adam-Hall (EW)

Dan Chouinard trips the keys fantastic.



Master Dutch Wodehousean translator Leonard Beuger and his wife, Hilde



Sandra Goldstein and a congress of aunts: Marcy Downes, Diana Van Horn, Donna Myers



The masses gathered. Here we are now, entertain us!



Arthur Malestian and eleven rabbits



All of us could appreciate the ironic graffiti. (EW)



Chris and David Dueker make the convention a family reunion. (EW)



Masterful costume creator Susan Bellamore as The Empress



Leonard and Sandra Goldstein share a calm moment.



Elliott Milstein maintains a healthy skepticism.



Hilary Bruce

Michael and Clairone Delaney



Alexander Hamilton watches over the proceedings. (CE)

Bob Rains passes the reins—well, technically, the tea bell—and the presidency to Tom Smith.





Catch the glow: Elin Woodger, Barbara Combs, and Maria Jette



Gus and Ann Caywood with Elaine Ring and Bob Rains (EW)



Lucy and Noel Merrill as stout Cortez and a cricketer



Elin Woodger and Gary Hall proudly wear their newly awarded Norman Murphy medals.



Pretty in pink: an Empress of a different color



Elizabeth Hamilton (right) and friends (EW)



Proper attire for taking one's chicken to dinner (Shirley Sampson and Laura Loehr) (EW)



Dan Chouinard points and all but Bill Franklin blissfully ignore the pointee.



Janet Nickerson in full regalia



Robert Bruce seems pleased with the proceedings.



A spontaneous nottle of NEWTS: David and Elizabeth Landman, Cindy McKeown, Elise and John Fahey



Chris Dueker, Ian Michaud, Lynn Vesley-Gross (standing) and Tina and Dan Garrison (seated) (EW)



The Heralds of the Red Dawn make their case. That's Lenny "Sting" Goldstein behind the shrubbery, aided by his wife, Sandra.



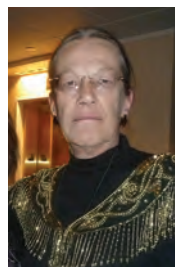
Hal Brayman and his wife show off their loot.



Ninad Wagle and Karen Shotting with oversized drinks



The brunch was a time to share thoughts of the convention and to consider the future. (EW)



A regal shot of Katherine Zupan (EW)

The man who made it all happen: Scott Daniels, mastermind of the convention



Andrea Jacobsen (CE)





A properly labelled newt, aka Diane Madlon-Kay

2019 TWS convention hosts Bill Scrivener and Susan Pace enjoy the summery D.C. night.



TWS members learn the Charleston from expert Zach Foreman, assisted by Charlotte Easter Earl.



Jill Singer (center) and Alison Thompson (right) and friend keep the party going.



A jolly crew partakes of the brunch while Charlotte Easter Earl keeps on dancing. (EW)

The Chicago Accident Syndicate chapter was out in force: Susan Diamond, Daniel Love Glazer, Will Saddler.



A host of luminaries gather to make merry yet again at the TWS 2017 convention. (EW)



Longtime TWS member and multiple convention attendee Katherine Jordan brightens the room.



Past and current presidents of TWS: Tom Smith, Bob Rains, Karen Shotting, Ken Clevenger, Gary Hall, Kris Fowler, Elin Woodger, Dan Garrison, Elliott Milstein (EW)



Acclaimed playwright and director Ken Ludwig graced our convention and directed the actors to sterling performances. (PN)

Convention staples Karen and David Ruef join Janet and Bruce Montgomery.



Deb Bellew and Nancy Arnest (DB)

And the 2019 TWS convention will be held in . . . Cincinnati! The Flying Pigs will host our madcap adventures then. More information to come in future issues of Plum Lines and on our website. (CE)



R. Pepper: The Missing Link Between Holmes and Wooster

BY MAX T. K. POKRIVCHAK

OTHERS MORE learned than I have noted the many similarities between the Sherlock Holmes stories of Arthur Conan Doyle (written from 1887 to 1927) and the Wooster and Jeeves stories of P. G. Wodehouse. I do not question this literary anthropology. I only propose to have found the missing link, which I humbly present to you here.

Reggie Pepper is the narrator of seven early Wodehouse short stories that were first published in various magazines from 1911 through 1915 and then collected in *My Man Jeeves* (1919) and in the 1933 U.S. edition of *The Man with Two Left Feet*. He's important historically because he's the first recurring short-story character on whom Plum based a series. Wodehouse always wrote with one eye on his bank balance, and a successful series would both grow his audience and help pre-sales for the next installment. Plum, born in 1881, had grown up reading Sherlock Holmes in the *Strand*, and he recognized a good thing when he saw one.

Reggie Pepper is young, rich (courtesy of a late uncle), and idle, except for pals and ex-fiancées who are always after him to do them favors. As in the Sherlock Holmes stories, it's not Reggie's problems that need solving but the problems of his clients. Does this setup sound familiar? Reggie is, of course, the direct progenitor of one Bertram Wilberforce Wooster. In fact, Bertie first appeared in "Extricating Young Gussie" in the September 18, 1915, *Saturday Evening Post*, three months before the final Reggie Pepper story, "The Test Case." After that, Wooster stocks rose, resulting in a 59-year run of stories and novels up to and including 1974's *Aunts Aren't Gentlemen*, while Pepper stocks plummeted and, aside from the book collections, Reggie was never heard from again.

It was the literary equivalent of the Cro-Magnons meeting the Neanderthals outside Lascaux Cave and saying, "Thanks, we'll take it from here." Adding insult to injury, Plum even turned two Reggie Pepper stories into Bertie stories: "Helping Freddie" (1911) (aka "Lines and Business," 1912) became "Fixing It for Freddie" (*Carry On, Jeeves*, 1925), and some 44 years later, "Rallying Round Clarence" (1914) became "Jeeves Makes an Omelette" (1958, *The Toronto Star*, and included in *A Few Quick Ones*, 1959).

So the anthropological question is, if Holmes provided the initial DNA, what did the Cro-Magnon Wooster have that the Neanderthal Reggie Pepper lacked?

Let us glance at "Absent Treatment," from 1911, the first Reggie Pepper story. Reggie's pal Bobbie Cardew is cursed with a rotten memory. Says Reggie:

[I]f I wanted him to dine with me, I used to post him a letter at the beginning of the week, and then the day before send him a telegram, and a phone-call on the day itself, and—half an hour before the time we'd fixed—a messenger in a taxi, whose business it was to see that he got in and that the chauffeur had the address all correct. By doing that I generally managed to get him, unless he had left town before my messenger arrived.

Good Wodehouse stuff. Well, Bobbie soon falls in love and manages to marry Mary Anthony. The next year he runs into Reggie at Piccadilly and invites Reggie to join them for dinner, forgetting it's their anniversary. Mary puts up a good show, but on the inside, if not actually nonplussed, she is far from plussed. Other incidents occur and she eventually leaves Bobbie, promising to return only if he can tell her when her birthday is. Bobbie and Reggie do some amateur detective work and narrow it down. Bobbie remembers what show they'd seen on her last birthday and finally arrive at the proper date. Reggie calls Mary with the good news and it comes out that Reggie had in fact given Mary the idea to make Bobbie remember her birthday. Mary points out that Reggie could have ended Bobbie's suffering at any moment, and she vents her womanly wrath on Reggie. It's a twist, and there's the Wodehousian observation in there that a woman's love will outweigh her hurt, as long as she's given a suitable substitute target. But the reader—at least this reader—is left feeling a bit tricked, because the character—and the author—withheld some key information to make the story work.

But what if the same story was told by a narrator who was not clever enough to leave out key information? Wodehouse's "The Rummy Affair of Old Biffy" (1924) is narrated by Bertie Wooster. Biffy's memory makes Bobbie Cardew look like Einstein. Biffy, too, falls in love, proposes, and is accepted, but he forgets what hotel his fiancée is staying at and, more importantly, her last name. Needless to say, he misses their rendezvous. Through circumstances beyond his control, he ends up engaged instead to Honoria Glossop, daughter of the famed loony doctor. As Bertie had also been engaged to

Ms. Glossop, Biffy asks Bertie for advice. Bertie suggests Biffy squirt Sir Roderick in the face with a fake flower, but at the key moment Biffy loses his nerve. Bertie confides in a higher power—that would be Jeeves, of course—who is unsympathetic until he learns that Biffy still loves Mabel, his original fiancée, and only stood her up because he had forgotten her name and address. Jeeves engineers a reunion in the Palace of Beauty, where Mabel is play-acting Queen Elizabeth. Biffy's behavior (breaking the glass between them) convinces Sir Roderick that Biffy is as loony as they come and unfit for Honoria. Biffy gets his girl, and the reader feels good about Bertie because he was willing to endure lunch and an afternoon with Sir Roderick in the name of helping a pal. We forgive Jeeves initially being cold to Biffy because Jeeves is being loyal to Mabel, his niece. This twist works because our narrator, Bertie, only learns it at the same moment the reader does.

Let's get back to Reggie. In "Disentangling Old Duggie" (1912), Reggie's pal Douglas Craye gets engaged to a palm reader that Reggie had recommended to him. Duggie's older sister Florence (more on her later) is not pleased and wants to break the engagement. Reggie gives Florence the idea of inviting the palmist to the family home, pretending to be welcoming but really showing her how the match would be unsuitable. It works—the palmist breaks the engagement to Duggie. However, she ends up engaged to his brother Edwin. In desperation, Florence writes to her father in Europe, who comes as summoned. She sends Reggie to talk to him, but to Florence's displeasure, her father is not against the match. Reggie legs it for Europe rather than face Florence. He runs into Edwin, and then the palmist, at a casino in Nice, and assumes they are married, but he learns the palmist in fact married the father, Lord Worplesdon.

So, it's yet another twist at the end, and to this reader, again the twist is not fully justified by the story as told. What we authors all strive for in our little efforts is the surprise that, in hindsight, feels inevitable. Plum used a similar plot a few years later in the story "Leave It to Jeeves" (*Saturday Evening Post*, February 5, 1916), with Jeeves supplying the idea of having Muriel (Corky's love interest) write a children's bird book that gushingly praises Corky's uncle Alexander's adult-bird book. Bertie is surprised when Muriel marries the uncle instead of Corky, but in hindsight we're not, because Bertie, even as he narrates the story, can't keep up with Jeeves's real intentions, and we readers sense this and say, "Oh, ah" as the true destination is revealed. But Reggie, as both narrator and main idea contributor, can't quite achieve the same satisfactory

outcome for the reader. And again, in giving Florence his help in breaking Duggie's engagement, Reggie is not as sympathetic to the reader as Bertie, who would never side against a pal.

But for all its warts, "Disentangling Old Duggie" does introduce us to the Craye clan, most importantly Florence, who will become, in a few short years, Bertie Wooster's first of many fiancées. She is introduced to us by Reggie as follows:

I got a telegram: "Call Madison Avenue immediately—Florence Craye."

She needn't have signed her name. I should have known who it was from by the wording. Ever since I was a kid, Duggie's sister Florence has oppressed me to the most fearful extent. Not that I'm the only one.

And a paragraph later we meet her father, as Reggie recounts:

[O]ne morning he came down to breakfast, lifted the first cover on the sideboard, said in a sort of despairing way, "Eggs! Eggs! Eggs! Curse all eggs!" and walked out of the room. Nobody thought much of it till about an hour afterward, when they found that he had packed a grip, left the house, and caught the train to New York. Next day they got a letter from him, saying that he was off to Europe, never to return, and that all communications were to be addressed to his lawyers.

This is classic Wodehouse, recounted many times (though with the location returned to England). Even Edwin appears here, though both he and Florence are a decade or so older than in the Bertie canon. Plum is clearly onto a good thing, and knows it. Florence reappears, already Bertie Wooster's fiancée, in "Jeeves Takes Charge" (*Saturday Evening Post*, November 18, 1916, the earliest story in which Jeeves is an essential character). She makes Bertie read "Types of Ethical Theory," which is sorely lacking in both plot and character. Jeeves effectively breaks the engagement when he posts Bertie's Uncle Willoughby's reminiscences rather than destroy them as per Florence's wishes. Bertie sacks Jeeves but then, picking up *Types of Ethical Theory* again, sees the error of his ways.

Florence, however, remains a constant matrimonial threat. She appears again in *Joy in the Morning* (1947) as the author of *Spindrift* and as Stilton Cheesewright's fiancée (and then Bertie's, and then Stilton's again) and

she appears yet again in *Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit* (1954) as Stilton Cheesewright's fiancée (and then Bertie's, and then Percy Gorrings's). Edwin reappears as a Boy Scout whose acts of kindness cause Bertie no end of trouble. In "Jeeves Takes Charge" he fingers Bertie as the manuscript thief, and in *Joy in the Morning* he burns down Bertie's cottage, Wee Nooke. Lord Worplesdon reappears in *Joy in the Morning* not just as Florence's father but as the second husband of Bertie's Aunt Agatha, completing the noose, er, circle around Bertie. If only for introducing us to Florence and the Crayes, Reggie Pepper should be remembered fondly, much as Einstein is fondly remembered for, or in despite of, the atom bomb.

So let's glance briefly at the two Pepper stories Plum bequeathed to Bertie. In "Helping Freddie," Reggie attempts to repair his pal Freddie Meadowes's romance with Angela West by kidnapping her young cousin so Freddie can reunite them. However, the kid is no relation and can't go home because of a mumps outbreak, so Reggie must babysit. A playwright friend suggests the kid's cuteness factor can still work in Freddie's favor, and they teach him to say "Kiss Fweddle!" Despite some missed cues, a happy ending ensues.

In "Fixing It for Freddie," Plum eliminates the playwright character and has Jeeves supply the "Kiss Freddie" idea after seeing a motion picture with a similar plot. In both versions the happy ending doesn't come until Reggie/Bertie confesses the whole set-up to the girl, who laughs at all the trouble they went to. Reggie and Bertie are sympathetic to the reader because of the trouble they go to help their pal.

In our final story, "Rallying Round Clarence," Reggie visits the home of his ex-fiancée, Elizabeth Shoolbred, now Yeardsley. Her husband, Clarence, a sensitive artist, is tormented by a painting his father, also an artist, has given them as a wedding present. Elizabeth asks Reggie to destroy it, but he steals the wrong painting and flees via the milk train rather than face her wrath. The story contains a nice Wodehousian observation:

Have you ever been turned down by a girl who afterwards married and then been introduced to her husband? . . . First of all, when you hear about the marriage you say to yourself, I wonder what he's like. Then you meet him, and think, "There must be some mistake. She can't have preferred this to me!"

But the story also includes another character, Elizabeth's brother Bill, a college friend of Reggie, who is mostly there so Reggie has someone to bounce ideas

off. In "Jeeves Makes an Omelette," Aunt Dahlia is the one making Bertie steal the painting, and Jeeves is on hand for Bertie to confer with. Bertie still steals the wrong painting, of course, proving he shares DNA with his predecessor Reggie Pepper.

But Bertie has Jeeves, in the way Sherlock Holmes had Watson, as a built-in ally and confidant. Reggie Pepper has no such support system and so has to do too much heavy lifting as narrator as well as prime idea and plot-twist generator. Additionally, Plum has to create other non-recurring characters to fill out the plot and give Reggie company. It's too much work for not enough payoff. This is why Wodehouse chose to move on to Bertie and Jeeves; aunts Agatha and Dahlia; pals Bingo Little, Boko Fittleworth, and Gussie Fink-Nottle; and fiancées far too numerous to mention. Reggie Pepper is consigned to the dust bin of literary history, but he's the first recurring character created by Wodehouse who solves problems for his friends. His flaws—or, rather, those of the Pepper stories—then gave way to the more natural plot developments in the Bertie and Jeeves stories. Still, Reggie took that first evolutionary step until Wodehouse developed the evolved version of Reggie—Bertie—with Jeeves as his Holmes.

All of the original magazine editions of the Reggie Pepper stories are now available online at <https://tinyurl.com/reg-pep>. Also, all seven Reggie Pepper stories are collected in *Enter Jeeves*, Dover Publications, 1997, edited and with an introduction by David Jasen,

Reggie Pepper Stories

"Absent Treatment," *The Strand*, March 1911 (U.K.) / *Collier's Weekly*, August 26, 1911 (U.S.).

"Rallying Round Old George," *The Strand*, December 1912 and "Brother Alfred," *Collier's Weekly*, September 27, 1913.

"Helping Freddie" [aka "Lines and Business"], *Pictorial Review*, 1912 [adapted into the Bertie and Jeeves story "Fixing It for Freddie," *Carry On, Jeeves*, 1925].

"Disentangling Old Duggie," *Collier's Weekly*, March 30, 1912 (set in New York) and "Disentangling Old Percy," *The Strand*, August 1912 (set in London).

"Brother Alfred," *Collier's Weekly*, 1913.

"Rallying Round Clarence," *Pictorial Review*, April 1914 (U.S.) [became Bertie and Jeeves story "Jeeves Makes an Omelette," *A Few Quick Ones*, 1959].

"Concealed Art," *The Strand*, February 1915.

"The Test Case," *Illustrated Sunday Magazine*, December 12, 1915 (U.S.).

Max presented this paper to the NEWTS at their 25th anniversary celebration on April 23, 2017.

Chapters Corner

WHAT IS YOUR chapter up to these days? Tell the Wodehouse world about your chapter's activities! Chapter representatives, please send all info to the editor, Gary Hall (see back page).

Please note that our webmaster, Noel Merrill, tries to keep chapter activities posted on the society website at www.wodehouse.org. So it's a good idea to send information about upcoming events to Noel on a timely basis. His contact information is on the last page of this issue.

Anglers' Rest

(Seattle and vicinity)

Contact: Susan Collicott



Birmingham Banjolele Band

(Birmingham, Alabama, and vicinity)

Contact: Caralyn McDaniel



Blandings Castle Chapter

(Greater San Francisco Bay area)

Contact: Bill Franklin



The Broadway Special

(New York City and vicinity)

Contact: Amy Plofker



THE BROADWAY SPECIAL will gather to go see the probably-even-better-than-the-2008-version, updated production of John Lithgow's *Stories By Heart*, in which he portrays characters from short stories by Wodehouse and Ring Lardner. The show will run in January 2018 at NYC's Roundabout Theatre. This will coincide with a Special meal en masse and (possibly) discounted group tickets. If you're interested in attending either the meal or the show, please email Amy Plofker (amyplf@verizon.net) to be kept up to date on this event. Previews start December 21 and the website is <https://tinyurl.com/ybzeo44s>.

Capital! Capital!

(Washington, D.C., and vicinity)

Contact: Scott Daniels

Chapter One

(Greater Philadelphia area)

Contact: Herb Moskowitz



THE CHAPS of Chapter One met on September 17 at the usual sluicing spot in Philadelphia, Cavanaugh's at Head House Square. Eighteen sat down for lunch, including guest Marc Britton, a local artist and photographer (famed for the photo he took a while back of our sponsored newt at the local zoo, Gussie).

We'll look for a later report from the Plum Crazies, who were planning an outing to the Oyster Mill Playhouse's November production of *Jeeves Intervenes*.

After lunch, Rebecca Reber presented an admirable talk on racism in Wodehouse. She focused on two works: *The Swoop* (featuring Moroccans and Bollygollans) and *Thank You, Jeeves*, with a background on the history of minstrel shows in England. She placed Wodehouse's works featuring people of color in the time they were written, as the "N" word was used fairly casually by him and other writers of the 1920s–1940s. (Recall the original title of Agatha Christie's *And Then There Were None*.) As Wodehouse was very apolitical, Rebecca felt that the use of blackface in *Thank You, Jeeves* was done more to make Bertie and Sir Roderick Glossop look ridiculous than to make fun of people of color.

THE CHAPS met on November 12. We welcomed new member Brady McGuire. Bob Rains (Oily Carlisle) and Bob Nissenbaum (Anthony, Lord Droitwich) spoke about the October convention in Washington, which was a rousing success. Debbie Bellew's photos of the convention can be found on the Facebook group "Mr. Wodehouse Goes to Washington." Barbara Combs's photos are on Flickr, also under "Mr. Wodehouse Goes to Washington."

Oily reported that Michael Dirda spoke at the convention and, in his talk, presented a list of humorous books to read when one is not reading Wodehouse.

Oily showed the Chaps a special gift he received from Sir Edward Cazalet—a first-edition Nero Wolfe mystery that was once owned by P. G. Wodehouse and which has Plum's book label in it.

Steve Wieland and Ben Wieland led a reading of "The Clicking of Cuthbert." They did an outstanding job, preparing scripts for every Chap attending. Herb

Moskovitz (nom de Plum Vladimir Brusiloff) was naturally assigned the part of Vladimir Brusiloff. Herb suspected he might be cast in that role and had come prepared with a fake beard and a Russian fur hat. New member Marc Britton was cast as Cuthbert and Dotty Hoffman was Adeline.

The next meeting will be held on January 7 at noon at Cavanaugh's.



The Chaps at play: Herb Moskowitz, Steve Wieland, and Ben Wieland

Chicago Accident Syndicate

(Chicago and thereabouts)

Contact: Daniel & Tina Garrison



The Clients of Adrian Mulliner

(For enthusiasts of both PGW and Sherlock Holmes)

Contact: Elaine Coppola

ON FRIDAY, October 20, 2017, a Senior Bloodstain was held at 4 PM in the Hamilton Hotel, during The Wodehouse Society's Washington, D.C., convention. Susan Diamond, BSI, ASH, ably pinch-hit as leader Elaine Coppola was absent due to Joe's unexpected hospitalization. Aficionados of Sherlock Holmes and P. G. Wodehouse heard remarks by Peter Blau of the local Sherlockian group, the Red Circle, and participated in a dramatic reading of "The Bayswater Boarding-House" by Francis Edward Grainger, adapted and dramatized by William Hyder.

The Den(ver) of the Secret Nine

(Denver and vicinity)

Contact: Jennifer Petkus



THE DEN(VER) of the Secret Nine wished Plum a belated happy birthday on Sunday, October 22, with tea, scones, and a lot of talk of Sherlock Holmes.

Doctor Watson's Neglected Patients and the Secret Nine share many members, and since Wodehouse and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle were friends, it's natural that we talk of Holmes at Wodehouse meetings and Lord Emsworth at our Sherlockian gatherings.

We also talked of Ben Schott's forthcoming new Jeeves and Wooster book (*Jeeves and the King of Clubs*), the A. A. Milne/Wodehouse feud in light of the "Goodbye Christopher Robin" movie, and whether Jeeves shimmers or shimmies into view (the latter recalling Cab Calloway and Minnie the Moocher). In other words, a typical gathering of Wodehouseans.

We were happy to have two new members, Fred and Jennie, who came to us by way of the Neglected Patients. (It goes the other way as well.)

We also gathered together on Sunday, November 12, at Pints Pub in downtown Denver, to discuss *A Pelican at Blandings*, a welcome return to the Shropshire countryside.



The Secret Niners raise a glass or two in Denver.

The Drone Rangers

(Houston and vicinity)

Contact: Carey Tynan



The Flying Pigs

(Cincinnati area and elsewhere)

Contact: Susan Pace or Bill Scrivener



THE FLYING PIGS are thrilled to announce that the 2019 TWS Convention will be held in our fair city! We were about to burst with anticipation of the announcement, but fortunately we did not burst. We are already hard at work making preparations to show off the Queen City in fine style. Aside from our furious preparations for the unveiling of our successful bid, we've not been doing much except keeping our mouths closed. We will be mute no more. Make your plans, mark your calendars, and we will see you in October 2019!

Friends of the Fifth Earl of Ickenham
(Buffalo, New York, and vicinity)
Contact: Laura Loehr



The Melonsquashville (TN) Literary Society
(Tennessee)
Contact: Ken Clevenger



FROM JANUARY 24 to February 18, the NC Stage Company will present *Jeeves Takes a Bow*, a Wodehouse adaptation by Margaret Raether. This small, talented company in downtown Asheville, North Carolina, has already successfully staged two plays in a series of four by the adept Ms. Raether.

Of particular interest to TWS members is that, on February 17, a coterie of Wodehousians from the local area and from as far away as New York City will grace Asheville with their presence, to browse, sluice, and be seen at the intimate theatre on Stage Lane. General information and tickets may be obtained at NCStage.org.

The Mottled Oyster Club / Jellied Eels
(San Antonio and South Texas)
Contact: Lynette Poss



SOME MOTTLED OYSTERS spent the summer on the road and others stayed close to home. Several sought higher ground to stay cool. The Lili, in an RV to accommodate themselves and their grandchildren, trekked to Boston for a family wedding. Jan Ford and Randy Anderson needed nothing that large for a great-nephew's nuptials in San Antonio. Liz Davenport

and Craig Hardwick motored to Troy, Kansas, for the solar eclipse. In their view, it was "totally awesome." Craig reported to us later that it was a great trip: "Two thousand miles of driving, and we're still friends!" Lynette and Joe Poss cruised New England and Canada in early October for fall color and thundering waterfalls. Niagara from the Canadian side is best, eh? Clark Adams followed his wife to El Paso for medical conferences. Jim Thompson will fill us in when next we see him. New member Deepa Ramani (from Austin), almost made it to her first meeting. So far, she emails us Wodehouse-in-the-news items.

In October, we discussed books shortlisted for the Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse Prize. This may have puzzled Karen, a newcomer that night. Karen expected Wodehouse, not *Bridget Jones's Baby*. She had done her homework on Plum, even his war years. We were impressed, and hope she returns.

The November book was *Summer Moonshine*, an apt title given this summer's eclipse. December is the Christmas potluck.

The Mottled Oysters/Jellied Eels of South Texas meet on the first Thursday of each month, around 7:30 PM at La Cantera's Barnes & Noble, second-floor history section, or first-floor media area. If you are a Wodehouse fan living in or near San Antonio, or just visiting, we'd love to see you. Food and drink not being far from our minds, we are usually at a nearby Emsworth Arms (Cheesecake Factory) at 6-ish.

The New England Wodehouse Thingummy Society (NEWTS)
(Boston and New England)
Contact: Lynn Vesley-Gross



THERE WAS A swarming of NEWTS near Medford, Massachusetts, in mid-July. Browsing and sluicing were up to the usual high standard, with particular emphasis on pie. An inspirational exercise—otherwise known as a trivia game—was proposed for the D.C. convention, and was tested by enthusiastic NEWTS. Details of this possibly questionable activity were highly confidential before the convention, but by the time you read this report, the pig will be out of the sty and the hunt will be over.

David Landman gave a most scholarly talk comparing the late nineteenth-century English writer Barry Pain to PGW, elevating the intellectual pressure of the conversation considerably over our usual contented Drone level.

The meeting adjourned on a surprise announcement that our revered president, His Newtness John Fahey, will be resigning to move on to other opportunities and to spend more time with his dog, Molly. He's resigning only from the presidency, of course, and will still be seen about the place in all the best company.

THE NOTTLE of September was held, suprisingly enough, in September at David and Elizabeth Landman's stately home in Lexington. An attempt was made to keep us out by blocking the driveway with a neighbor's delivery truck, but it was unsuccessful and the NEWTS swarmed in. Election of the new officers was held:

President: Roberta Towner
 Treasurer: Max Pokrivchak
 Corresponding Secretary: Lynn Vesley-Gross

The comestibles that were offered were excellent as usual. We lost the Landmans' cat outdoors only three or four times, and she was safely back in by the time we adjourned.

Jean Tillson brought along some items from the closet of the late Norman Murphy. Several genuine collars were gratefully appropriated by some members, and a handsome pair of plus fours was admired.



John Fahey's modeling career starts with plus fours

The Northwodes

(St. Paul, Minneapolis, and vicinity)
 Contact: Mike Eckman



THE NORTHWODES book salon discussed Plum's *Money in the Bank* on September 24. This is one of the works PGW produced during his period of incarceration. Wodehouse clearly had spare time on his hands when composing this. Virtually all of the major characters are flying under false flags at Shipley Hall, and the plot has a lot of moving parts. We found Uffenham wonderfully fuzzy and yet brilliant. Although his thought process is eccentric and disruptive, he sees immediately that Jeff is smitten with Anne. A favorite

passage has him on the steps of his London club expounding about supralapsarianism to a flustered and besieged bishop. Joan Rabe noted that Plum wrote of the love interest that "nature, in assembling Anne Benedick, had done a nice bit of work."

The question of just what a viscount is and where one would rank in the peerage required the use of a smartphone to search the internet for the answer. After the thirsty work of parsing out sentences and finding character motivations, the rock cakes (baked by the multitasking Maria Jette) emerged from a brown-paper bag. The delicious objects were tossed around (served) with hardly any injuries.

On Friday, October 6, a few Northwodes and many other music fans met at the home of Janna Kysilko and Joe Dolson on Saint Paul's West Side to hear the clear-throated songbird Maria Jette and the talented ivory tickler Dan Chouinard present "WWI and P. G. Wodehouse—1917 In Song." Marie described it as a preview of the performance she and Dan were planning for the upcoming D.C. convention. One hundred years ago, at the time the U.S. entered the Great War, Wodehouse was Broadway's lyric-writing king, with five hits that year (most of them running concurrently). The first half of the program included generous helpings of Tin Pan Alley songs with opportunities for singing along. After an intermission, which allowed the Northwodes to evangelize the music fans who were attending, Marie and Dan performed the Wodehouse numbers, concluding with "Bill" as the second encore.



Book cover, rock cake, and Liffey menu



Mike Engstrom receiving a rock cake.

The Orange Plums

(Orange County, California)
 Contact: Lia Hansen



IT IS WITH a heavy heart that I report that our mascot Daphne, our "silver" cow creamer, has had a shattering experience. Although she was lovingly tended to with gentle hands and a pot of glue, it has been determined

that she is just not able to continue her schedule of public appearances. She will retire and spend the rest of her days dreaming of sunny green pastures from her shelf in the commodore's study. A new mascot will be presented to the Orange Plums at our Christmas party. Here is a photo of Daphne in happier times, when she was in her train compartment on her way to Seattle for the 2015 TWS convention.



The Orange Plums' creamer before the fall

The Pale Parabolites

(Toronto and vicinity)

Contact: George Vanderburgh



The PeliKans

(Kansas City and vicinity)

Contact: Bob Clark



The Perfecto-Zizzbaum Motion Picture Corporation

(Los Angeles and vicinity)

Contact: Doug Kendrick



The Pickering Motor Company

(Detroit and vicinity)

Contact: Elliott Milstein



The Pittsburgh Millionaires Club

(Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania)



The Plum Crazyes

(Harrisburg, Pennsylvania and vicinity)

Contact: Betty Hooker



The Plum Crazyes attended *Jeeves Intervenes* at the Oyster Mill Playhouse on Sunday, November 19. Report to follow.

The Plum Street Plummies

(Olympia, Washington and vicinity)

Contact: Thomas L. R. Smith



The Right Honourable Knights of Sir Philip Sidney

(Amsterdam, The Netherlands)

Contact: Jelle Otten



FROM TIME to time Wodehouse friends visit us from faraway lands. It is always a great pleasure for the Knights to meet those friends.

On July 26, a naturally splendid night, seven of us assembled at the door of Mulliner's Wijnlokaal to meet Bob Rains, then president of The (U.S.) Wodehouse Society. The group went to Restaurant Dubbel on Lijnbaansgracht. Discussion covered many topics, including remembrance of the 2012 historical marker ceremony in Remsenburg. (Bob Rains and Andrea Jacobsen were prime movers of the marker project.)

Peter Nieuwenhuizen, president of the Dutch P. G. Wodehouse Society, presented Bob with a copy of the official group photo of the Dutch Wodehouseans, which Peter had presented earlier to HRH Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall. In return, Bob presented his book as a gift to us: *True Tales of Trying Times—Legal Fables for Today*.

On August 3, Jennifer Scheppers (aka Honoria Glossop) and her family came to town and met with six Knights, also at Restaurant Dubbel. Jennifer told us about her visit to the Cazalets and the Wodehouse Library. Other subjects of discussion were the Wodehouse motion pictures and television serials, the role of drinks in Wodehouse's books, and many other items of interest. It was a delightful and memorable evening.

The next regular meeting of The Knights will be on February 17, 2018, in Restaurant Szmulewicz, Bakkerstraat 12 (off Rembrandtplein) in Amsterdam.

PETER NIEUWENHUIZEN, the president of the Dutch P. G. Wodehouse Society, reported that the new Wodehouse translation *Jeeves and Love* was launched on October 1 on "Modern Dutch—The Dutch P. G. Wodehouse Podcast." On that weekly podcast,

translator Leonard Beuger reads a Wodehouse story or chapter. The site is online so you can check it out at <http://moderndutch.nl/wp/>. Enjoy!

Rugby in All Its Niceties
(Rugby, Tennessee Region)
Contact: Donna Heffner



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



The West Texas Wooster
(West Texas)
Contact: Troy Gregory





Famed actor and longtime TWS member Curtis Armstrong has penned a memoir full of humor and a few mentions of PGW. The book is available through all the usual sites.

We Fought the Law and . . .

BY BOB RAINS

WHEN I achieved the high honor of the presidency of TWS, it did not occur to me that among my many duties would be fighting with the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad. A lack of imagination and foresight on my part, no doubt. Here's the story, omitting no detail, however slight.

As you will have read elsewhere in this issue of *PL*, Plummies from all over (well, almost all over) gathered in Washington, D.C., for our nineteenth international convention in October. We had visitors from the Netherlands, the U.K., even Australia, but none, I fear, from Pakistan. But this was not for lack of trying. New TWS member Syed Muhammad Haider Zaman Gardezi, resident of Multan, Pakistan, was most eager to attend. Haider would appear to have all the bona fides and more, being a visiting professor of American

literature at Bahauddin Zakariya University in Multan. Indeed, through our correspondence it became clear that Haider knows more about American and English literature than your poor scribe ever will. His emails to me have been regularly sprinkled with quotes from and allusions to Longfellow, Whitman, Emerson, Hawthorne, etc. His erudition is reminiscent of Jeeves himself.

So, armed with a written invitation from convention majordomo Scott Daniels, Professor Gardezi travelled some 300 miles from Multan to Islamabad for his September 7 interview at the American Embassy, seeking a visa to enter the USA for the sole purpose of being amongst those present and accounted for. The embassy interviewer said that he had never heard of this "Sir Pelham Grenville Wodehouse," much less our society, and brusquely denied the visa application without even looking at the Daniels invitation letter. Can you credit it? What does this say about the vetting process for embassy employees? Are they our best and brightest?

Upon returning disconsolately to Multan, Haider expressed his dismay and frustration to TWS, and we jumped into action at the very highest levels. At the suggestion of First Lady Sweetie, I contacted the offices of Pennsylvania senior Senator Bob Casey. His right-hand man, Thadeus Abramowich (Tad), joined battle with us. Then I drafted an even more formal and flowery invitation letter for Professor Gardezi, setting forth the history and many accomplishments of TWS. It took some urging after Haider's first unpleasant encounter with the Islamabad Embassy, but Tad and I jointly persuaded the good professor to reapply for the visa and fill out a "Case Information and Privacy Act Form" which Sen. Casey's office duly forwarded to our men in Islamabad. With misgivings but high hopes, the professor again made the long trek to Islamabad, this time armed with all sorts of documentation, for a second interview with the embassy.

You will have already surmised the rest. With no explanation, a second guardian of the gate rejected Professor Gardezi's renewed visa application.

At this point, we can only wish Professor Gardezi well and hope he can somehow manage to attend a future TWS convention, perhaps after our current collective xenophobia has subsided. My brief exchanges with Haider convince me that he would be a wonderful addition to our gatherings. He has been uniformly gracious throughout his ordeal and effusive in his gratitude for all efforts made on his behalf. His absence from the D.C. convention was our loss at least as much as his.

Charles Gould

A profile of Charles Gould—author, teacher, Wodehouse collector and scholar—appeared in the Autumn 2017 issue of Plum Lines.

FOR A PLUMMIE, I believe the best way to have known Charles Gould (1944–2017) was to be enrolled among his regular correspondents. His letters scintillated with elegant prose and lustrous wit. How his students must have relished his classes! I was fortunate to be his friend and a recipient of those brilliant and stylish letters in which he displayed, like Wodehouse whom he so loved, a keenly observant yet carefree manner above the petty world. We have suffered a terrible loss.

—David Landman



Susan Collicott and Barbara Saari Combs stop for a moment on the steps of the Almas Temple, site of the TWS convention banquet.

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We appreciate your articles, research, Quick Ones, tales of My First Time, 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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