



Plum Lines

The quarterly journal of The Wodehouse Society

Volume 40 Number 2 Summer 2019



Pigs Have Wings—October in Cincinnati!

BY BILL SCRIVENER

WHAT HO, fellow Wodehouseans! The time is rapidly drawing near for Pigs Have Wings, the 2019 TWS convention. The dates are October 17–20, to be precise. The Flying Pigs chapter has been working assiduously to make sure that this will be a suitably grand occasion for all. For starters, our convention will be held at the fabulous Netherland Hilton, an Art Deco gem that will provide just the right atmosphere for our festivities. If you haven't done so already, please check out their website at <https://tinyurl.com/ybqwg7e>.

Cincinnati is a wonderful city, with fine and funky dining, music of every kind, amazing museums (art, science, history, and more), and many opportunities for fun: sports, music, theater, entertainment, or just checking out the environs. With your registration, you will receive a full list of things to do in Cincinnati. Come early! Stay late! It will be worth your while.

The convention itself will offer many of the highlights that we've come to expect from these gatherings, and a few special treats as well. On Friday afternoon there will be an Ohio River cruise on BB Riverboats. We'll have an opening reception on Friday night. The Riveting Talks on Saturday will explore a wide range of topics, including "Wodehouse and the Nuptial Spirit" and "Wardrobe Guide for the Female Impostor at Blandings Castle." On Saturday evening you will be regally entertained at a lavish banquet. Plus there will be a special presentation from members of the U.K. Wodehouse Society that will absolutely warm your hearts. Of course we will offer the usual opportunities for conviviality, sluicing, browsing, and whatever other merriment that a pack of jolly Wodehouseans can stir up. If you're into costuming, it's the perfect time to begin planning your outfit as a Wodehouse character, cow creamer, or something appropriately elegant.

Fabulous prizes will be awarded for those costumes deemed most creative (or outlandish, or hysterical, or unique in some way). On Sunday, we'll conclude with a splendid brunch and light entertainment.

We have already received many registrations but there is still room for more. Don't delay! Send in your registration and reserve your room at the Netherland Hilton. Questions? Just email pgwcin@gmail.com.

We are very much looking forward to seeing you in Cincinnati!



Autumn colors at the Spring Grove Cemetery in Cincinnati



Wodehouseans will revel in the Cincy streets.

Rivals of P. G. Wodehouse: Don Marquis

BY BOB RAINS

*the main question is whether the stuff is literature
or not what difference does it make how a thing
is produced*

—Archy

DONALD ROBERT PERRY MARQUIS was born in Walnut, Illinois, in 1878. Marquis was, at various times, a newspaper columnist, poet, short-story writer, novelist, dramatist, and screenwriter. His formal education was limited: He attended Knox College in Illinois for some months in 1898 before dropping out.

Over the next several years Marquis held various jobs, including writing columns for newspapers in Atlanta, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C. He worked for Joel Chandler Harris on *Uncle Remus's Magazine* for a couple of years and then moved on to New York City. In 1912, he published a novel, *Danny's Own Story*, the first of some 26 books, mostly collections of short pieces. Critics began to compare Marquis to Mark Twain. Among his more successful works was *Hermione and Her Little Group of Serious Thinkers* (1917). *Hermione* is full of high ideals: "Nearly every night before I go to bed I ask myself, 'Have I vibrated in tune with the Infinite today, or have I failed?'" His book of *Prefaces* (1919) includes a "Foreword to a Literary Censor's Autobiography" wherein the author is praised in these high terms: "Censors are necessary, increasingly necessary, if America is to avoid having a vital literature."

The Old Soak (1921) is a collection of sketches about the travails of confirmed drinker Clem Hawley. Hawley warns of the many dangers of Prohibition, which he calls the Eighteenth Commandment. He notes that doctors had advised keeping in touch with outdoor sports, which he used to do by discussing them with his saloon mates. Sadly, "all that is taken away from me now the saloons is closed and I got no chance to get into touch with outdoor sports and I feel it in my health." Hawley explains that he "never went to church none. Because it ain't reasonable to suppose that a man could keep awake." Marquis dramatized *The Old Soak* in 1922, and it ran 423 performances on Broadway. It was later made first into a silent movie, then into a talkie with the title *Good Old Soak*. Unfortunately, Hollywood wrecked the central theme of *The Old Soak*, the reprobate Hawley cracking wise.

Marquis was himself an imbibor, although he sometimes fought the temptation. E. B. White reported



*Don Marquis
in his later
years*

that one day Marquis came downstairs in the Players Club after a month on the wagon and announced: "I've conquered that god-damn willpower of mine. Gimme a double scotch."

Another notable work was *The Almost Perfect State* (1927). The humorist Will Cuppy wrote, "The problem with most Utopias is that they aren't funny enough . . . and probably the only one fit to live in is Don Marquis's *Almost Perfect State*."

In 1912 Marquis began writing a column titled "The Sun Dial" for the *New York Evening Sun*. Just as Jeeves appeared almost magically one day in Bertie's flat, Marquis's most enduring character had a startling introduction. In the Sun Dial column of March 29, 1916, Marquis related that he came into his office early one morning and discovered a gigantic cockroach jumping about on his typewriter's keys. "He did not see us, and we watched him. He would climb painfully upon the framework of the machine and cast himself with all his force upon a key, head downward, and his weight and the impact of the blow were just sufficient to operate the machine, one slow letter after another. He could not work the capital letters, and he had a great deal of difficulty operating the mechanism that shifts the pages so that a fresh line may be started." According to Marquis, the cockroach avoided lower-case punctuation since typing was so painful for him. His first words were "expression is the need of my soul[.]" Given his agonizing process for composing, this was an understatement. He signed off that first effort with "you can call me archy[.]"

In that first installment, Archy explained that he had once been a *vers libre* poet whose soul had been

transmigrated into the body of a cockroach. Archy promised to write Marquis a series of poems showing how things look to a cockroach. All he asked for in return, at least initially, was for Marquis to leave him some crumbs to eat and a piece of paper in the typewriter.

The relationship that developed between Marquis and Archy was highly complex and sometimes contentious. Marquis was often part of the narrative, either actively or passively, and was not always shown in the best of lights. Over the years, certain labor/management disputes arose. Archy considered himself to be an employee, or perhaps an independent contractor, and he was often dissatisfied with his “boss.” At one point, Archy went on strike, demanding that his poetry be printed in larger type (minion or brevier) instead of the nonpareil type in which it appeared. Marquis refused. Later, Archy wanted a leave of absence because his head hurt so much from his method of typing; he also wanted a “head harness” like football players wear. Marquis again refused, not wishing to encourage contributors to his column to think they could obtain material recompense. Archy disappeared for a while, causing great distress and alarm among readers of the *Sun Dial*. Nevertheless, despite these and other contretemps, Archy generally kept his word and continued writing *vers libre*—and sometimes metrical, rhymed poetry—to Marquis more or less regularly through 1922 and occasionally thereafter.

Archy had a lot to say, and he said it well. For example, anyone familiar with our government’s varying assessments of our military efforts in such diverse theatres of operations as Vietnam or Iraq or Afghanistan should appreciate Archy’s report from Washington on August 1, 1917:

well boss from official
circles here I learn
that things could not well be worse
with regard to the war situation and that
this is no time for
pessimism as we have
the enemy licked to a
frazzle everything
is gloom and america
is about to save the
world

Despite such understandable confusion as Archy may have suffered about our military situation, nevertheless, as narrated in “A German Periscope,” that plucky little guy single-handedly (if cockroaches

may be said to have hands) thwarted a German U-boat attack on an American convoy. In another heroic act, Archy defused a German mine that was intended to sink the USS *George Washington* as it carried President Wilson to the postwar peace conference. Some two decades later, during World War II (the War after the War to End All Wars), and no doubt in recognition of the animating spirit behind Archy’s patriotic actions, the U.S. Navy christened a Liberty ship the USS *Don Marquis*.

Some of Archy’s adventures and perceptions are reminiscent of the works of certain other authors. Like Conan Doyle, at one point Don Marquis apparently killed off his most famous creation. In “We Rushed Forward and Swatted,” Marquis explained that he was sitting on his veranda on a Sunday with his trusty fly swatter in hand, wishing that a fly or insect of some sort would come along. Up the driveway trudged a brown insect, and Marquis struck. “He died, and as he was dying we recognized him. He strove to speak, his lips moved feebly: we hope that they moved with a murmur of forgiveness, for it was Archy.” Marquis was grief-stricken and buried his little friend among the roots of a rosebush. But, like Sherlock Holmes, Archy simply would not remain dead. As Archy later explained in “My Naked Soul,” he had hoped that his soul would now transmigrate higher on the scale of life into the body of a butterfly or a dog or a bird and not sink any lower and go into the carcass of a poison spider or a politician. But instead, to his chagrin and disappointment, it simply transmigrated into the body of another cockroach.

In “Interest in Science,” Archy has overheard a couple of entomologists discussing a new kind of bottle



A youthful
picture of
Don Marquis,
approximately
age 30

for capturing and killing insects to study: “i thought what is sport to you old fellow is death to us insects[.] morality is all in the point of view if the cockroaches should start killing the humans just to study them there would be a howl go up from danville illinois to beersheba palestine[.]” Years later, in *The Adventures of Sally*, Wodehouse similarly noted that “The fascination of shooting as a sport depends almost wholly on whether you are on the right or wrong end of the gun.”

No discussion of Archy would be complete without a mention of his friend and nemesis, Mehitabel the alley cat. Mehitabel, who claimed to have once been Cleopatra, is as flighty and superficial as Archy is thoughtful, erudite, and generally depressive. She has been generous with her favors and takes the bitter with the sweet. She has had her adventures but claims to have never been an adventuress. Although she has never married, she keeps having kittens: “i look back on my life and it seems to me to be one damned kitten after another[.]” At one point, she puts her latest litter into an abandoned garbage can. She unconvincingly laments that “if it rained into the can before i could get back and rescue them i am afraid the little dears would drown[.]” She does not carry a grudge over from one life to the next and is, she asserts, always a lady. Mehitabel’s oft-repeated motto is “*toujours gai*.”

Other characters appear in Archy’s reports. There is Freddy the rat—a former poet and critic—whose negative reviews of Archy’s poems consist of eating

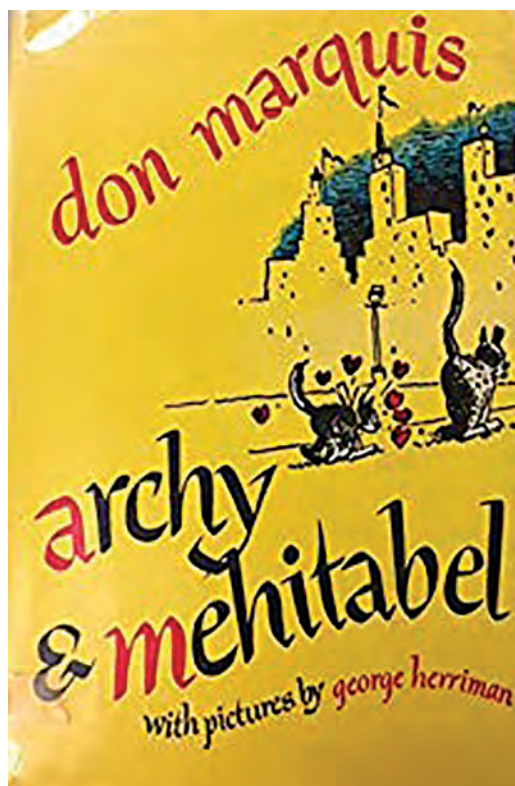
them. Crusty Bill, a hornet, becomes a drunk by eating flies who became intoxicated in bars. Warty Bliggens, a toad, believes that the universe is created especially for him. Why else is there a toadstool for him to sit under?

Archy, the reincarnated cockroach, has had many reincarnations: as an opera, a stage musical, a television musical, and a one-man show. Various Archy and Mehitabel collections remain in print today, notably *The Annotated Archy and Mehitabel* (2006), with detailed annotations and an introduction by Michael Sims. An excellent companion is the 2011 Everyman collection, *The Best of Archy and Mehitabel*, which includes a reprint of E. B. White’s introduction to *The Lives and Times of Archy and Mehitabel* (1950) and iconic drawings by George Herriman. White was a huge fan of Marquis, writing that if he ever taught a class that had to do with American literature, his students “would certainly become acquainted with writers like Don Marquis.” White often credited Archy and Mehitabel as inspiration for *Charlotte’s Web*.

Like Wodehouse and many other notable writers of his day, Marquis tried his hand from time to time as a screenwriter in Hollywood, and, like Wodehouse, he found the venture to be well paid but ultimately frustrating. Unfortunately, Marquis put all his money (and more that he borrowed) into financing another of his plays, *The Dark Hours* (1932), directed—actually misdirected—by his wife, which immediately folded, leaving him more or less permanently in debt.

While Marquis’s professional life had its ups and downs, his personal life was the stuff of extended Greek tragedy. He married his first wife, Reina, in 1909, and they had two children: Robert, born in 1915, and Barbara, born in 1918. Robert died in 1921 at age five. Reina died suddenly in 1923. In 1926, Marquis married his second wife, Marjorie. Daughter Barbara died in 1931, age thirteen. Marquis suffered at least one heart attack and several strokes and was totally incapacitated the last two years of his life. Marjorie, who was his caretaker, died suddenly in 1936 at age 44; Marquis died a year later, age 59. *Newsweek* reported, “He died a penniless and hopeless cripple.” White wrote to James Thurber that Marquis was “one of the saddest people of our generation. . . . What a kick in the pants life gave that guy!”

Marquis’s obituary in the *New York Times* gave top billing to his having been the author of *The Old Soak*. But Marquis’s most prescient epitaph came from the man himself, who is reported to have said that “It would be ironic if I’m remembered only, assuming I’m remembered at all, as the creator of a goddam cockroach.”



One of the many collections of the words and wisdom of Don Marquis’s immortal characters, Archy and Mehitabel

Wodehouse and the Hidden Painter

BY PETER NIEUWENHUIZEN

Peter always entertains when he speaks at our gatherings, and that was true again of his delightful talk at the 2017 TWS convention in Washington, D.C. There's even a bit of mystery along the way. With Peter's approval, we've shortened the text a bit, so we're able to print many of the images from his presentation. If you'd like a copy of the full talk, I'm sure Peter would be happy to provide it; just let me know. Enjoy!—OM

IN THE WORKS of P. G. Wodehouse we meet many famous intellectuals (Spinoza, Nietzsche), poets and writers (Shakespeare, Tennyson, Byron), sportsmen (Jack Dempsey, Harry Vardon), and historic figures (Julius Caesar, Sir Philip Sidney).

It is time that we give more attention to the references to, and the characters of, painters in the works of Wodehouse. Perhaps Wodehouse met more writers and sportsmen than painters, leading to the prevalence of those sorts in his works. Still, painters and/or paintings do crop up. Sometimes there are tangential references in Wodehouse's works to painters, such as the time that he referred to his friend Bill Townend in the story "Ladies and Gentlemen v. Players" in *Windsor Magazine* (August 1908) as the painter Townend. (In real life, Bill Townend actually was an artist—he drew, for example, the illustrations for the Wodehouse novel *The White Feather*.)

On Thursday, my brother Bob arrived from London, bringing with him a friend of his, a Mr. Townend, who said he was an artist, but I had never seen any of his pictures. He explained this at dinner. He said that he spent the winter thinking out schemes for big canvases, and in the summer he was too busy playing cricket to be able to get to work on them.

In the Wodehouse stories we meet characters who are painters, or who pretend to be painters. Wodehouse sometimes uses the names of famous painters from the past to set examples. Occasionally a painting is the focal point of a story. There are several questions we could ask of Wodehouse references to painters. For example, does he prefer English or European painters, or others? But the question we'll ultimately tackle here is: Was there an actual painter who at some time lived near Wodehouse, with whom Plum may have crossed paths, and who may have influenced him sufficiently to get

special mention in Wodehouse's work? Where was this "hidden painter" mentioned, and what were the details of his relationship with Wodehouse?

Let's start with the fictional painters in Wodehouse stories. Two painters appear in the early story "The Man Upstairs": advertising illustrator Reginald Sellers and his friend Bill Bates, who is pretending to be a certain "Alan Beverley," the painter of "Child and Cat" (illustration from the 1910 *Strand Magazine* below):



In the 1913 novel *The Little Nugget*, Mrs. Nesta Ford is an amateur painter whose painting of her son, the spoiled and unpleasant child Ogden Ford, causes her new friend Lord Mountry to imitate one "who turns no more his head, because he knows a frightful fiend doth close behind him tread."

The first fully recognizable Jeeves and Wooster story was "Leave It to Jeeves," published in 1916 in the *Strand Magazine*. The story tells about Bruce ("Corky") Corcoran, a friend of Bertie's, painting the baby of his former fiancée, Muriel Singer, and bird lover Alexander Worple. Because Corky has painted it in a disastrous

way, the baby unfortunately becomes the topic of a new cartoon strip, *The Adventures of Baby Blobbs*, for the comic section of the *Sunday Star*.



"THERE WAS CORKY, HUNCHED UP AT THE EASEL, PAINTING AWAY, WHILE ON THE MODEL THRONE SAT A SEVERE-LOOKING FEMALE HOLDING A BABY."

I found at least 25 fictional characters in Wodehouse who were identified as painters or painter impostors. These include Algie, Lord Wetherby in *Uneasy Money* (1916), James B. Wheeler and Alice Wigmore in *Indiscretions of Archie* (1921), Victor Beamish in "Ukridge's Accident Syndicate" (1923), and George Finch—"the worst painter in New York"—in *The Small Bachelor* (1927). The Mulliner stories alone have several, including Ignatius, Lancelot, and Brancepeth.

Most interesting are the paintings that are the focal points of certain stories. There's such a piece in the 1929 story "Jeeves and the Spot of Art" from *Very Good, Jeeves*. In that story, the artist Gwladys Pendlebury paints a portrait of Bertie Wooster. This portrait later becomes a poster for Slingsby's Superb Soups.



In the 1947 novel *Full Moon*, William "Bill" Lister, Galahad's godson, is a gorilla-faced painter who is in love with Prudence Garland, niece of Lord Emsworth. Disguised first as the painter Messmore Breamworthy and later as Mr. Landseer, the animal painter, he tries to invade Blandings Castle. He gets hired to paint the Empress and actually gets paid for this painting.

An important painting (which is destroyed) is featured in *A Few Quick Ones* in 1959, in the story "Jeeves Makes an Omelette." There are even two family

members who are painters: father Edward Fothergill and his son Everard. Bertie Wooster is supposed to destroy the "The Fothergill Venus" that was painted by Cornelia Fothergill's father-in-law Edward, but Bertie instead eradicates the wrong painting. (No surprise there!) Ultimately, father Edward steals back his painting himself, which later is presumed lost in the neighborhood burglaries.

Wodehouse does mention real painters. However, he uses only four English painters from several centuries, including Thomas Gainsborough and Joshua Reynolds, and seven other old masters, including Michelangelo, Holbein the Younger, and Vermeer. But in this short list there are no French, Spanish, Scandinavian, Russian, American, or Japanese painters.

Wodehouse typically uses the famous painters to set up a humorous aside. For example, in the incomplete *Sunset at Blandings* (1977), Gally Threepwood warns his niece Victoria Underwood that her fiancé Jeff "Bingo" Bennison is an impecunious artist who will not earn great mounds of pounds with his comic strip:

"Freddie tells me he has tried every possible market and nobody wants it. However promising an architect Jeff may have been, he apparently isn't good at comic strips. Don't blame him. Many illustrious artists would have had the same trouble. Michelangelo, Tintoretto, and Holbein are names that spring to the mind."

In *The Small Bachelor* (1927), J. Hamilton Beamish asks Mrs. Waddington why she objects to George Finch as a son-in-law. She answers, "He is an artist." Beamish replies, "So was Michelangelo." But Mrs. Waddington isn't impressed: "I completely fail to understand, Mr. Beamish, why, when we are discussing this young man here with the black eye and dirty collar, you should persist in diverting the conversation to the subject of a perfect stranger like Mr. Angelo."

Wodehouse also uses the famous painters as a standard to compare the fictional painters in his oeuvre. In *Quick Service* (1940), the fictional painter Joss Weatherby paints a portrait of Mrs. Beatrice Chavender. But does Joss succeed?

[Mrs. Chavender] entered a moment later, looking like Mrs. Siddons in one of her more regal roles. She would have made a good subject for the brush of Sir Peter Lely or Sir Joshua Reynolds. Indeed, both Sir Joshua and Sir Peter would probably have made even a better job of her than Joss Weatherby had done.



The Infant Samuel at Prayer
by Joshua Reynolds



Reynolds's portrait of
Sarah Siddons

Joshua Reynolds's painting of Mrs. Siddons is a famous painting: a copy is in the art collection at Dulwich College (where Wodehouse was a student). *The Infant Samuel at Prayer* was also the basis for the mantelpiece statuette that gets smashed seven times in the Wodehouse stories.

Some famous paintings are used by Wodehouse as a descriptive phrase. The nineteenth-century English painter James Sant painted his thirteen-year-old niece Anne Kathleen Rendle. The sentimental portrait *The Soul's Awakening* appealed to the Victorian public and was widely reproduced in engravings and prints. The picture became an expression for sentimentality, blushing, uneasiness, and shyness:



The Soul's Awakening
by James Sant

Uneasy Money: "What brings you charging in here looking like the Soul's Awakening?"

"Jeeves in the Springtime": The man was goggling. His entire map was suffused with a rich blush. He looked like the Soul's Awakening done in pink.

"Absent Treatment": "Have you ever seen that picture, *The Soul's Awakening*? It represents

a flapper of sorts gazing in a startled sort of way into the middle distance with a look in her eyes that seems to say, 'Surely that is George's step I hear on the mat! Can this be love?'"

After all of these entertaining items, now we'll get to the heart of the matter. In *Something Fishy* (aka *The Butler Did It*, 1957), there are several famous painters mentioned. This story is concerned with Lord Uffenhams's collection of forged paintings. The art appraiser Mortimer Bayliss has to bring the bad news to Lord Uffenhams that all the paintings he was hoping to sell were forgeries:

"This," said Mr. Bayliss, indicating the Gainsborough he had been examining, "is undoubtedly a Wilfred Robinson. He painted a beautiful Gainsborough. That Constable is a Sidney Biffen. His middle period, I should say. About this Vermeer I'm not so sure. It might be a Paul Muller or it might be a Jan Dircks. Their style is somewhat similar, due no doubt to the fact that they were both pupils of van Meegeren. Ah," said Mr. Bayliss with enthusiasm, "there was a man, that van Meegeren. Started out in a modest way forging De Hoochs, and then rose to Vermeers and never looked back. Sold the last one he did for half a million pounds. They don't make men like that nowadays. Still, Muller and Dircks are quite good, quite good. Not bad at all," said Mr. Bayliss tolerantly.

Why did Wodehouse give such great attention to the forger van Meegeren? What was so special about him? Was there a special reason to mention him? We must look deeper into this question.



Han van Meegeren

Han van Meegeren was a Dutch painter. He was born in 1889, and he grew up in the Dutch city of

Deventer. He studied building technology and took a drawing course. He gained success with his first drawings, earned a lot of money, moved to The Hague, and became a society figure, giving lots of parties. His most famous drawing was *Hertje (The Fawn)*, an image of a pet roe deer belonging to Princess Juliana, which he drew in 1921 in only ten minutes.



*Hertje as drawn
by van Meegeren*

Unfortunately, van Meegeren began to receive more negative criticism on his work. After moving to the French Riviera, he decided to get revenge on the world of art critics. In the 1930s, he started forging old Dutch masters, such as Vermeer, and succeeded in selling them to museums. Following World War II he was arrested after being accused of selling a Vermeer forgery (*Christ with the Adulteress*) to Hermann Göring, through art dealer Alois Miedl. Göring allegedly paid what would be \$7 million today. After the war, this painting was recovered by the allied forces in a salt mine in Austria.



*Han van Meegeren's Christ with the Adulteress,
and the postwar recovery of that painting from a salt mine*



Van Meegeren was tried in 1947 for treason for his forgeries. He pled his innocence, claiming that he hadn't sold an original Vermeer masterpiece, but just a copy. In court he painted several paintings in the style of Vermeer to prove this. He confessed to having forged over twenty famous paintings that were housed in several international and Dutch museums, like the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam and the Boijmans Van

Beuningen in Rotterdam, where his most famous forgery lives, *The Supper at Emmaus*:



The trial was international news, and Wodehouse must have heard of it. Van Meegeren was sentenced to one year in prison for his forgeries, but he died in 1947 before his sentence could be carried out.



*The trial of Han van Meegeren, during which he tried to prove
innocence by demonstrating his ability to forge great masters.*

So, what of Wodehouse and this painter/forgery? What was their relationship? Why cite van Meegeren in 1957 in *Something Fishy*, ten years after his death? It's possible Wodehouse had read an article in the *Saturday Evening Post* of January 11, 1947. The article title is on the front cover: "The Man Who Swindled Göring."

But is there more than this incidental connection? Let's travel back in time. In March 1932 Wodehouse moved to France with Ethel to Auribeau-sur-Siagne at the Côte d'Azur, twelve miles from Cannes, and lived there for a year. In October 1932, Han van Meegeren and his wife Jo also moved to this region, to a small castle on a hill in Roquebrune-Cap-Martin, only a few miles from Monte Carlo and its famous casino, and lived there until 1937. In Roquebrune, van Meegeren

painted the famous forgery *The Supper at Emmaus* and six other forgeries.

Han van Meegeren and his wife Jo took part in the society life in Monte Carlo; he tried to drum up work painting portraits of the English upper-class clientele. Meanwhile, Wodehouse liked to play occasionally in the casino in Cannes. In a March 1932 letter to his friend William Townend he wrote:

We all dined at the casino last night. I played chemmy after dinner, won four thousand francs, and legged it home with the loot at half-past one. Ethel stayed on till 8 AM and lost about as much!!

Wodehouse also visited the casino in Monte Carlo. We know this from David Jasen, who interviewed E. Phillips Oppenheim for Jasen's biography *P. G. Wodehouse: Portrait of a Master*:

In particular, he [Oppenheim] was reminded of an evening in the sporting club [and casino] in Monte Carlo when he was seated at the bar with Plum, and Plum leaned towards him and asked: "Who is that long, sandy gin-and-tonic on the corner stool?"

So Wodehouse knew people in Monte Carlo and in the casino. He wrote about the adventures of Bingo Little and Freddie Widgeon in Monte Carlo. When Wodehouse arrived near Cannes, he wrote in *Hot Water* (1932):

The town of St. Rocque stood near the coast of France. The Château de Blissac stood near the town of St. Rocque. . . . The Château was on a hill. . . . In the centre of [the town], raising a golden dome proudly skywards, stood the building which had made the place the popular resort it was—the Casino Municipale. For St. Rocque, once a tiny fishing village, has become in recent years a Mecca for those who enjoy watching their money gathered in with rakes by sad-eyed croupiers.

The novel *French Leave* (1956) is also partly situated in the fictitious towns of St. Rocque and Roville. According to Wodehouse, Roville has a casino at the Promenade des Anglais, like Nice in reality has in the Cote d'Azur at the same Promenade. Until now it has been unclear which place is the model for St. Rocque. French Brittany was a candidate according to Norman

Murphy's *Wodehouse Handbook*. But a place with a castle on a hill like Roquebrune, where van Meegeren lived, and with a casino and a golden dome like the Casino de la Jetée in Nice, could well be the model Wodehouse was using from his time in Cote d'Azur.

So Wodehouse and van Meegeren visited the same casinos, in the same period, on the same southeast coast of France where they both lived. Van Meegeren met and painted the well-to-do English upper class, and Wodehouse refers to this geographical region in several novels.

When Wodehouse wrote *Something Fishy* in 1957, a year after *French Leave*, and referred to his stay in the south of France, he might well have recalled his former neighbor, Han van Meegeren, the hidden painter and, later, infamous forger, whom he might have met in their mutually frequented casinos with the English upper-class gamblers. I hope that we'll someday find a letter that will prove this assumption.



Ethel and P. G. Wodehouse studying a sword, with the painting of Ethel on the wall behind them.

The Wodehouse home had a painting of Ethel (seen in the picture above), which leads us to wonder: When and where was it painted? In the thirties? And by whom? Perhaps by . . . the hidden painter?

"You sit there and tell me you haven't enough sense to steer clear of a girl who calls herself Gwladys? . . . No good can come of association with anything labelled Gwladys or Ysobel or Ethyl or Mabelle or Kathryn. But particularly Gwladys."

"The Spot of Art" (1929)

Wodehouse and Flannery: The Rest of the Story

BY TODD MORNING

IN THE Autumn 2018 issue of *Plum Lines*, I wrote about P. G. Wodehouse's dealings in Nazi Germany with the American news correspondent Harry W. Flannery. Flannery had interviewed Wodehouse for CBS radio in June 1941 and presented an unflattering portrait of the humorist in his book *Assignment to Berlin*, which was a bestseller in the United States and Great Britain in 1942. Two of Wodehouse's most prominent biographers, Frances Donaldson and Robert McCrum, dismissed much of Flannery's reporting on Wodehouse. Donaldson took issue with Flannery's allegation that Wodehouse traded his release from internment for an agreement to broadcast. McCrum claimed that Flannery, because of his hatred of the Nazis, manipulated Wodehouse into making some stupid remarks.

While researching the first article, I learned that Flannery's papers are housed in the archive of the Wisconsin Historical Society. Since my first article left a number of questions unanswered about Flannery's reporting on Wodehouse, I decided to go to Madison to see what I could dig up. Before I went to the archive, however, I looked through many of the books that have been written about broadcast journalism during World War II. The work of Edward R. Murrow and other CBS correspondents during the war has been justly praised and widely researched. Surprisingly, Flannery received few mentions in the books I read. After all, Flannery was a correspondent in Berlin from autumn 1940 until autumn 1941, a crucial period during which Germany invaded the Soviet Union and the British bombing of Berlin intensified. As the CBS bureau chief in Berlin, he replaced William Shirer and was succeeded by Howard K. Smith, both of whom were very well-known journalists. Why has Harry Flannery largely been forgotten?

The answer may lie in this judgment by Stanley Cloud and Lynne Olson in their book *The Murrow Boys: Pioneers on the Front Line of Broadcast Journalism* (Houghton Mifflin, 1996):

Flannery, Bill Shirer's successor in Berlin, had been sent from the States a few months earlier by Paul White. A former announcer at a CBS station in the Midwest, he was not a good choice. Knowing little about Germany and not speaking the language, he was duped more than once by the Nazis. White conceded his mistake—which looked all the worse compared to the success of

Murrow's hires—and ordered Flannery home as soon as he could find a replacement.

In fairness to Flannery, Cloud and Olson do not cite sources for their negative assessment, nor do they provide examples of how he was duped by the Nazis. When I went through Flannery's papers, I found that after about six months in Germany, he began to suffer from what the American reporters called the Berlin Blues. His letters to his wife make it clear that he wanted to go home and was impatient with his bosses for failing to send a replacement. After returning from Berlin, Flannery continued to work for CBS at their West Coast office until 1949.

When I went to the Wisconsin Historical Society, I discovered that going through an archive is a little like panning for gold. I sifted a lot of gravel (such as hate mail from Nazi sympathizers), hoping to find some nuggets which would be of interest to Wodehouse Society members. A few items were intriguing, yet turned out to be dead ends. For example, I found the start of an article that Flannery apparently submitted to the (London) *Daily Express* sometime after his return from Berlin (no date is given). Flannery began by writing:

I first heard about Wodehouse in Germany as one of my aides brought back a story about him from his internment camp in southeast Germany. After that, as it happened, I became rather intimately associated with the Wodehouse saga, even being banned from the air by the Germans because of it. As a consequence, I believe I can shed some more light on the picture.

There are only two pages from this article in the archive, and it stops in mid-sentence. Flannery must have written more, yet I searched through many archival boxes and could not find the missing pages. (The *Daily Express* did not publish the article.) It is interesting to note that in *Assignment to Berlin*, Flannery wrote that he personally interviewed Wodehouse at the internment camp. Yet in the article for the *Daily Express*, he wrote, "One of my aides brought back a story about him from his internment camp." Such inconsistencies crop up frequently in Flannery's accounts of his dealings with Wodehouse.

Wodehouse was so incensed by his portrayal in *Assignment to Berlin* that in July 1945 he wrote to Flannery's London publisher, Michael Joseph Ltd., bringing up the possibility of a lawsuit. Part of Wodehouse's letter and part of Flannery's reply are printed in Frances Donaldson's biography of Wodehouse. The archive contains a copy of Wodehouse's letter and the exchange of letters between Flannery and his publisher. Understandably, Wodehouse was angered by Flannery's statement that a German government official, Werner Plack, arranged for Wodehouse's release from internment in exchange for the broadcasts. Wodehouse denied this and wrote:

I had never seen Herr Plack in my life when we were introduced by the late Baron Von Barnikow, an old Hollywood friend of mine. In short, my agreement to broadcast my camp experiences was after my release and was not as the result of a bargain with the German authorities. The only explanation I can think of is that Mr. Flannery misunderstood Herr Plack. On the occasions when I met him, I always found Herr Plack's English very difficult to follow. If Mr. Flannery cares to write me a letter admitting that he was mistaken, I shall not pursue the matter.

Robert Lusty from Michael Joseph Ltd. wrote to Flannery: "A complaint from this source is, in all of the circumstances, somewhat incredible, but at the same time we have to be careful regarding the legal position." The letter goes on: "As you may know, the laws of libel in this country are extremely strange, and although it may seem incredible for Mr. Wodehouse to proceed further in this matter, there is the possibility that he may do so, unless he hears from you." The publisher's solicitor also weighed in:

I don't know whether Mr. Flannery saw Plack and had the statement from him, or whether he was merely reporting that which had come to him in some other way. If he was merely reporting general information, he might simply inform Mr. Wodehouse that he regrets he was misinformed and leave it at that. If, in fact, he obtained this information directly from Plack, he might just as well ignore Mr. Wodehouse's letter.

On September 5, 1945, Flannery sent a response to Robert Lusty and also enclosed a letter to Wodehouse

for review by the firm's solicitor. Flannery wrote to Mr. Lusty:

It is certainly surprising to hear that P. G. Wodehouse, of all people, would object to my report on his brush with Nazism in Germany. My report, I sincerely believe, was the most accurate. It was not of the witch-burning type, although not especially complimentary to the political acumen of P. G. I feel certain that his present freedom is due to the realization that he was without malice aforethought.

Flannery also stated in this letter that Baron Von Barnikow was actually a German spy who was sent to the United States by Ernst Udet (the director of research and development for the Luftwaffe) to tour California aircraft factories and gather information on American airplane design. Flannery ended this letter by predicting that Wodehouse would ultimately not pursue a lawsuit with its attendant publicity: "He might prefer to let sleeping dogs lie, especially since I know more than any other observer, except the Germans, about his case." (I should also note that Wodehouse wasn't being completely honest when he stated that he had not met Herr Plack before 1941, and there may have been a darker side to Baron Von Barnikow's activities in the United States. But these are subjects for another article.)

Michael Joseph's solicitor told Flannery that if he heard that Wodehouse traded his release for the broadcasts directly from Werner Plack, he could just ignore Wodehouse's letter—no reply was necessary. Flannery, however, responded to Wodehouse. He fudged on how he had heard that Wodehouse made a deal with the Germans. He also took credit for the fact that Wodehouse had not been charged by the British authorities:

Your letter of 16 July 1945 denies that Werner Plack of the German Foreign office met you while you were in the internment camp near Gleiwitz, and declares you did not meet Plack until you were brought to Berlin. That may be true. Whether Herr Plack went to the camp himself, had someone else go, or obtained your release on information otherwise obtained from the camp is irrelevant. In any case, Herr Plack told me that he had not only arranged your broadcasts but those of others to follow and planned to attract listeners to the Nazi program. If you had read my full report in *Assignment to Berlin*, you would have noted

that I did not accuse you of political complicity. Rather I have reported the situation factually, according to my own observations and reports from others presumably competent. I presume the situation as I reported it was found [to be accurate] by the authorities, as a result of which you are now a free man. If you care to write, I should be glad to know more about the situation and your future plans. Give my best to your wife.

Wodehouse did not pursue legal action. Yet he realized the damage Flannery's book had done to his reputation. (Frances Donaldson wrote: "In the course of time, Plum grew to dislike Flannery almost more than anyone he had met in his life.") Flannery was an eyewitness to Wodehouse's activities in Berlin, and most people in the United States and Britain took him at his word. I didn't come across a single article or book review written during the war years that cast doubt on Flannery's reporting on Wodehouse. A June 16, 1942, letter to Flannery from William Shirer, congratulating him on *Assignment to Berlin*, no doubt reflected the views of most people at the time: "I was somewhat bothered at the time by the affair of Wodehouse, but I think you have cleared it up very nicely."

Is there any truth behind this claim by Flannery in his letter to Wodehouse? "I presume the situation as I reported it was found [to be accurate] by the authorities, as a result of which you are now a free man." Did Wodehouse really owe his freedom to Flannery?

The British government's official summary of Wodehouse's wartime activities written by Major E. P. J. Cussen does indeed contain references to Flannery's book. Section 9 of the Cussen report bears the heading: "Harry Flannery, the American Radio Reporter." About Flannery's portrait of Wodehouse, Cussen wrote, "It is unnecessary to set out in full the material contained therein, which is not altogether favorable to Wodehouse. Flannery leaves no doubt that he thought Wodehouse was a most stupid person and without any political sense. It is proposed to interview Flannery when possible."

Cussen went on to write, "When I interviewed Wodehouse I thought it right to read him certain extracts from Flannery's book, but as has been mentioned, Wodehouse was unable to deal with them save in a very general way." Even though the Cussen report is written in a detached and legalistic manner, the last sentence of the report shows that Cussen personally shared Flannery's view of Wodehouse's lack of political judgment: "I have strongly advised Wodehouse to

refrain from giving any more interviews to the press, though it remains to be seen whether he is capable of carrying out this advice." As far as I can tell, no one associated with the British government interviewed Flannery about his contacts with Wodehouse.

Another document that I found in the British National Archives is basically a summary of Flannery's chapter on Wodehouse in *Assignment to Berlin*. It is dated August 31, 1944, a month before Major Cussen's report was completed. The document, which seems to have been prepared as part of a wider investigation of Werner Plack, states: "The most revealing light is thrown on his [Wodehouse's] release by the American journalist H. W. Flannery in his book *Assignment to Berlin*."

The author of this report then refers to several sentences in the book where Flannery described meeting Wodehouse at the Adlon Hotel in Berlin, shortly after Wodehouse's release from internment:

He told Flannery he had understood he was to be quite free. He added he was supposed to see "a Mr. Slack or Black" whom he had met at camp. This seems to have clearly referred to Werner Plack and was clearly intended to suggest that Wodehouse had so little acquaintance with the German Foreign Office official that he was even uncertain as to his name. Yet in a letter to his friend William Townend, he refers to Werner Plack as "my Hollywood friend." This incident suggests that Wodehouse is not always quite as frank and ingenuous as he pretends. It also reveals that Wodehouse had had an interview with a Nazi propaganda official prior to his release from internment.

As soon as this document was declassified in August 2011, the British press pounced. *The Independent*, for example, in an August 26, 2011, article (topped by the sensational headline "New Files Suggest Greater Link Between Wodehouse and the Nazis") focused on Wodehouse's muddling of Plack's name and another incident (again taken from *Assignment to Berlin*) in which Wodehouse supposedly wondered whether he would be paid for the broadcasts. The reporter from *The Independent* thought he had uncovered new and incriminating information about Wodehouse. Apparently he failed to realize that he was merely recounting material that had been published 69 years earlier.

For the record, in his official statement to Major Cussen, Wodehouse said that he had met Werner

Plack in America before the war: “I remember Plack from Hollywood. I had never known him very well but had met him occasionally at parties.” And, as I have mentioned, Frances Donaldson provided exhaustive documentation, proving that Wodehouse did not make a deal with Werner Plack to trade the broadcasts for his release from internment. As early as 1945, George Orwell wrote: “The striking of an actual bargain between Wodehouse and Plack seems to be merely Flannery’s own interpretation.” In addition, Ian Sproat, in his research for *Wodehouse at War* (Ticknor & Fields, 1981), interviewed Werner Plack, who told him that Wodehouse was never paid for the broadcasts.

So what have I learned after several months of blowing the dust off the mostly forgotten writings of Harry W. Flannery? First, let’s look at a statement about Flannery in McCrum’s biography of Wodehouse. McCrum wrote that Flannery “was a committed anti-Nazi who saw the interview as an opportunity to extract maximum propaganda value from Wodehouse, whom he believed to be a mixture of dupe and collaborator.” McCrum offers no citation for this statement, but his source may have been *Wodehouse at War*, where Ian Sproat wrote: “What actually happened was that Flannery, who was strongly anti-Nazi, disliked and despised Wodehouse, because he believed that in fact Wodehouse was half-dupe and half-collaborator, and he wanted this to be evident from the interview.” Sproat also offers no source to back up his statement.

In *Assignment to Berlin*, Flannery didn’t hide his dislike for Wodehouse. Neither he nor Sproat, however, offered hard evidence that Flannery had made a conscious decision to use Wodehouse in a personal propaganda war with Germany.

What of the claim by Stanley Cloud and Lynne Olson that Flannery was in over his head in his position as a foreign correspondent? No specific examples are given to support that judgment, but there is no doubt that in his reporting on Wodehouse, Flannery is guilty of inconsistencies and a few downright falsehoods.

On the other hand, we have to give credence to Flannery’s belief that his portrayal of Wodehouse helped lead British investigators to conclude that Wodehouse should not be prosecuted for the broadcasts. Major Cussen joined Flannery in stating that Wodehouse was naive, but not a committed Nazi collaborator.

This is the opinion of most people today who are familiar with Wodehouse’s uncomfortable World War II saga, and one of the first to present this view was Harry Flannery. Despite the deficiencies in Flannery’s reporting on Wodehouse, the fact is that some of it stuck.

A Few Quick Ones

Unless otherwise credited, these items are courtesy of our prolific Quick Ones providers, Evelyn Herzog and John Baesch.

TWS member **Greg Lyons** sent us the March 9, 2019, *Economist* article entitled “Mixing Fake Drinks,” and a reply, published on April 6, from Fabrizio Galimberti of Braybrook, Australia. Galimberti said that, after reading about how disruptive technology may change the whiskey industry, he was reminded of a Mulliner story. He quoted Wilfred Mulliner that his was “the brain which had electrified the world of science by discovering that if you mixed a stiffish oxygen and potassium and added a splash of trinitrotoluol and a spot of old brandy you get something that could be sold in America as champagne at a hundred and fifty dollars the case.”

Several members sent along references to the March 20, 2019, article in the *Times* (London) about the letter to *Chums* magazine that was published on May 18, 1898. The letter was from “Mr. Wodehouse of Dulwich” and asked, “How can one become a journalist?” Wodehouse would have been sixteen at the time. As the article states, the letter “received a lengthy reply from the editor that began, slightly pompously, ‘only if Providence has willed it’ before giving more helpful hints.” Obviously, we feel, Providence willed it in this case. You can find this letter and reply at <https://tinyurl.com/pgw-chums>.

In the April 22, 2018, *New York Times Book Review*, Nicole Lamy’s “Match Book” column was devoted to “Novels with a Sense of Humor.” A reader wrote to Ms. Lamy to ask for suggestions for humor and rather dismissively said, “Sure, there’s the dry wit of P. G. Wodehouse’s Jeeves stories.” Ms. Lamy steered her back in the right direction: “Don’t mistake P. G. Wodehouse as fringe: The master humorist edges out ‘The Goldfinch’ by Donna Tartt, ‘All the Light We Cannot See’ by Anthony Doerr, and ‘Stoner’ by John Williams, to claim the top spot on the list of favorites sent to the Match Book inbox.”

In the February 24, 2018, *Spectator*, Lucy Vickery invited readers to provide a resignation letter in the style of a well-known author. W. J. Webster offered PGW resigning from his golf club. Excerpts: “But now I am merely feeble. . . . The ball dribbles from my driver; I strike air from a perfect lie; I top putts. My partners have gone from amused tolerance to a wincing horror. I sense their fear of contagion.”

Susan Z. Diamond



Susan Z. Diamond and Allan Devitt in jolly times

THE CHICAGO Accident Syndicate is saddened to report the passing of Susan Z. Diamond on April 25, 2019, after a courageous battle with esophageal cancer. Susan and her husband, Allan Devitt, have been actively engaged members of our chapter since 1997 and were important to making both the 1997 and 2013 Chicago conventions the widely acclaimed successes they were. Chapter gatherings at the Devitt/Diamond manse (as ever, in Bensenville) were famously filled with browsing and sluicing made special by Susan's unique culinary offerings.

That said, Susan was most particularly active in the Sherlockian world. She held the title of the Great Mogul in the Baker Street Irregulars and the Lone Star in the Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes. She was avidly involved in a number of Sherlockian scion societies, including the Criterion Bar Association. As president of the Watsonians, she was responsible for the annual running of the Chicago Silver Blaze, which is the oldest still-active Sherlockian horse race in the world.

Susan also gave back to her community, serving on the boards of the Bensenville Community Library, the White Pines Civic Association, and other organizations. For forty years she operated her own consulting firm, Diamond Associates, Ltd.

The Syndicate will miss Susan's crisp sense of humor, her steady hand as part of our chapter's presidential triumvirate, and her deep Wodehousian knowledge.

—Will Saddler

Where Do I Find . . . ?

Neil Midkiff tells us that his web pages on the Wodehouse stories and novels, formerly at earthlink.net, are now hosted at Madame Eulalie, at <https://madameeulalie.org/neil/story.html> and <https://madameeulalie.org/neil/novel.html>. A one-stop shop, an excellent resource, of which you should make use!

A Few More Quick Ones

Wodehouse apparently started life in rather a nice spot. Christopher Winn described Surrey in the August 5, 2017, *Spectator*. He said that "if you drive east from Guildford, birthplace of P. G. Wodehouse and possessed of 'the most beautiful high street in England,' according to Charles Dickens, you enter a magical land of hills and trees, carpeted blue in the spring, dappled green in summer, blazing red and gold in autumn." Everyone should be that lucky to be born in such surroundings!

Reviewer Hermione Eyre approved highly of Stephen Fry's book *Mythos* ("a go at the Greek myths"), writing in the *Spectator* of December 16/23/30, 2017, that Fry had "done it jolly well." Eyre said that the book was "full of satisfying detail," and that "Fry's enthusiasm is frighteningly genuine and cannot be contained in the narrative, spilling into footnotes and appendices." It does sound like a good read. At one point, Eyre mentioned some of the book's characters and stated that "the goddess Hesta reminds [Fry] of Aunt Agatha." It would seem likely that Fry has made other Plum references in this work.

The Genesis of *Jeeves and the King of Clubs*

IN ITS MARCH 2019 issue, our sister publication in the U.K., *Wooster Sauce*, published an article by Ben Schott, the fellow who recently released his "homage" to Wodehouse, *Jeeves and the King of Clubs*. If you have access to that issue, it gives great insight, which seems to be very much in harmony with Elliott Milstein's top-notch review in our Spring issue of *Plum Lines*. If we go back a bit, we find that in the December 16/23/30, 2017, *Spectator*, when Schott was still hard at work on the project, he said that first idea for the book came after he wrote a short story in that magazine imagining an encounter between Bertie Wooster and President Trump. The response he received was substantially positive ("generous") and led to the idea for the book. He decided to make Bertie a British spy to give the book "a soupçon of edge." While we know that reviews have been mixed, we do believe he accomplished the latter and has created much dialogue about the story and the approach. As some of Wodehouse's works come into the public domain (see our explanation in the Spring 2019 *PL* issue), it will be interesting (and perhaps sometimes disturbing) to see what gets riffed off the Master's stories.

Dean Miller



We'll raise a toast to Dean Miller, Susan Diamond (see page 14), and Jelle Otten (see page 16), as well as other TWS members who have passed away since our last convention, at our gathering in Cincinnati in October.

THE CHICAGO ACCIDENT SYNDICATE is sad to announce the loss of one of our earliest and most eminent members. Dean Miller died on January 28, 2019, at the age of 87. Many of you will remember Dean—frequently in the persona of Vladimir Brusiloff or a jaunty Scotsman—and his wife, Martha Swift, from their pointed conversation and faithful attendance at TWS conventions. Dean was a retired history professor, author of the academic work *The Epic Hero*, world traveler, collector, and much more. He entertained his fortunate friends with trenchant observations, anecdotes, parodies, doggerel, and plays. He coauthored our chapter play for the St. Paul, Minnesota, convention. Several of his poems and pieces appeared in *Plum Lines* and *Wooster Sauce*; the most recent was a report on his delight in obtaining a vintage British bobby's helmet. Although during his last year Dean battled pneumonia and related health issues, he continued reading, corresponding, researching, and writing. In November 2018, he traveled to the University of Edinburgh to deliver what was his final paper at the “Thinking About Mythology in the 21st Century” colloquium. His dry wit and obscure (the best kind, don't you know) Wodehouse asides will be missed but not forgotten.

—Will Saddler

Blandings Reboot

BY BILL FRANKLIN

THIS ERRANT and somewhat distracted reporter needs to bring The Wodehouse Society up to date about the Blandings Castle chapter. One of the first TWS chapters, and a once-shining example of Wodehousian camaraderie, Blandings Castle has been dormant for far too long.

With the passing some years ago of our Oldest Member, Ed Ratcliffe, with other departed members, and with the general aging of the earliest members of the seminal chapter, this reporter was asked at the 2017 convention in Washington, D.C., to try to spark a bit of life back into the San Francisco Bay Area chapter. In no way could I replace the fine work and spirit of our past members such as Thomas Wainwright, Jan Kaufmann, Marilyn MacGregor, Doug Stow, and so many others. In prior years we would gather quarterly, prepare a skit for the convention, see some theatre—42nd Street Moon mainly—or other such endeavors. So, through a series of emails, I began to kick off a rejuvenation campaign. Hopefully this honors the memory of those who have come before.

On July 8, 2018 (yes, I should have submitted some dispatches a bit ago), the Blandings Castle chapter held its first get-together in some years. We watched a one-day cricket match at the grounds of the Marin Cricket Club, where we were welcomed by the club chairman, Nick Lyman, and the team captains.

Your intrepid reporter convened with Ninad Wagle, Rowena Southard, and Ian Stewart and his lovely wife Rose. Neil Midkiff and Raja Srinivasan



Blandings members Rose and Ian Stewart and Ninad Wagle



Ian Stewart tries his hand with a cricket bat.

sent regrets. We had a delightful lunch of sandwiches, cheese, cakes, pies, and wine, and a lovely tea break at 3:30 PM. Ninad and Ian took to the batting nets for a bit of cricket practice courtesy of the Marin Cricket Club.

Our next meeting will be at my home on Saturday, July 20, for a potluck luncheon—time to be determined. Please contact me at sfblandingscastle@gmail.com for further details.

Jelle Otten

BY PETER NIEUWENHUIZEN

JELLE OTTEN, beloved past president of the Dutch P. G. Wodehouse Society (PGWS), passed away on March 10, 2019, at the age of 76, after a long illness. Jelle was PGWS president from 1999 to 2004. He was a regular and active participant at several TWS conventions in the U.S. with his wife, Marjanne. I had the pleasure of accompanying them to Detroit, Chicago, and Seattle. Jelle, a chemist by profession, was proud of his nom de Plum, Chas Bywater of Rudge-in-the-Vale. In 2009, Jelle spoke at the TWS convention in St. Paul, Minnesota, presenting a story, "First Aid for Dora," which he found had been published in the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* in 1926.

Jelle's interest in P. G. Wodehouse started in the 1950s, when he discovered Dutch translations published by Spectrum Publishers in Utrecht. As a pharmacy student at Leiden University, Jelle was challenged by fellow students to recite a poem by heart. Immediately he jumped on a table and, much like Rocky Todd in *Carry On, Jeeves*, shouted out the only poem he knew:

Be!
Be!
The past is dead.
Tomorrow is not born.
Be today!
Today!
Be with every nerve,
With every muscle,
With every drop of your red blood!
Be!

And Jelle's fame was cemented.

Jelle was an avid reader of Wodehouse in English. He bought new editions as they appeared. Jelle became a member of The Wodehouse Society in the 1990s, and learned from that group that there also existed a society in The Netherlands. Of course, he also became a member of that Dutch society. In 1999 he noticed that the PGWS board was having challenges managing the Dutch society. So Jelle became president, with a new and fresh team. Jelle led the society for five years and worked to publish Dutch translations of Wodehouse to attract new and young readers. It is an honor and a pleasure for me to be his successor and to continue his work.

Jelle was always interested in the Wodehouse world outside the Dutch borders. He became a participant in



Marjanne and Jelle Otten brought their trademark joy and humor to the Seattle convention in 2015.

(photo by Barbara Saari Combs)

the Russian Wodehouse Week in 2008 and was a co-organizer of the Dutch Wodehouse Tour in England in 2009. During that tour, our society visited the Berkshire Pig Breeders; toured castles that were models for Blandings Castle; went to Wodehouse's birthplace in Guildford; and, of course, attended a special Norman Murphy walk through the London Mayfair district, guided by the tireless Colonel Murphy.

When we started the Amsterdam chapter of The Wodehouse Society (The Right Honorable Knights of Sir Philip Sidney), Jelle wrote the quarterly reports for *Plum Lines* for many years. In 2010, for his work as "foreign correspondent," he received the Vladimir Brusiloff Award for Encouraging Literary Encounter.

Some years ago Jelle was diagnosed with prostate cancer and was treated with various experimental therapies. As a pharmacist, he was willing to try all available treatments. Despite those efforts, sadly, his condition deteriorated. He still tried to attend all of the society meetings in Amsterdam at Mulliner's Wine Bar and later at Szmulewicz restaurant, but in June last year he attended our PGWS meeting for the last time and said farewell to his many Wodehouse friends. In his last days Jelle stayed in hospice in his home town of Deventer, where I visited him for the last time. He could not read Wodehouse anymore because of his weakened condition, but he could still listen to the weekly installments of the Dutch Wodehouse podcast on the website moderndutch.nl. Wodehouse was his best medicine to the end.

Jelle is buried in the Tjoenerhof cemetery in Diepenveen, The Netherlands. Our deep sympathies go out to Marjanne and Jelle Otten's family. We will miss his joy in Wodehouse and in life, and his humor, very much.

Chapters Corner

WHAT IS YOUR chapter up to these days? Please send all news to Gary Hall (see back page). Note that webmaster Noel Merrill keeps chapter items posted on the society website. It's good to send advance info about upcoming events to Noel. His contact information is on the last page of this issue. Chapter contacts are also the reporters, except where otherwise noted.

A Little More Bertie Than Jeeves
(Waynesville/Sylva, North Carolina)
Contact: Erin Watras

WE VOTED to meet on the fourth Thursday of every month at 5:30 PM at Bosus (a local wine shop) in Waynesville, North Carolina. We are currently reading *The Crime Wave at Blandings* and will discuss our favorite bits at our next meeting.

In other news, I (Erin Watras) will pass the chapter presidency to our administratively gifted and Jeevesian member, Beth Baxley. Beth has a fantastic knowledge of all things Wodehouse and has already been representing our chapter in various arenas with great success.

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



See page 15 for the article "Blandings Reboot"!

The Broadway Special
(New York City and vicinity)
Contact: Amy Plofker



A FEW MEMBERS of the Broadway Special traveled to Hartford, Connecticut, on April 13 to drink in the acclaimed show *Perfect Nonsense* in its North American premiere. We all agreed it was well worth the trip and sincerely hope the show will get picked up by other theatres in the U.S. and Canada, to brighten lives in cities across the continent. After the show, we and a number of NEWTS converged upon a nearby restaurant to restore our tissues with top-notch browsing and sluicing, fortifying ourselves for our trips back to our respective native climes.

Capital! Capital!
(Washington, D.C., and vicinity)
Contact: Scott Daniels



Chapter One
(Greater Philadelphia area)
Contact: Herb Moskowitz



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



THE CLIENTS of Adrian Mulliner will hold a Senior Bloodstain on Friday morning (time and place to be determined), October 18, 2019, at the Pigs Have Wings convention in Cincinnati. Featured will be the playlet *The Rummy Affair of Tadpole Phelps* by Mike Eckman.

The Den(ver) of the Secret Nine
(Denver and vicinity)
Contact: Jennifer Petkus



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 chapter is working hard to prepare for the convention in Cincinnati. We hope our fellow Plummies continue to enjoy the enticing photos on our Facebook page—if you haven't seen them, search FB for "Pigs Have Wings."

We met on June 1 at Susan Pace and Bill Scrivener's house. We're beating the bushes for items for the rummage sale and the raffle. If you've got a Wodehouse item that no longer brings you joy (hard as that is to believe), please send it along to Bill Scrivener. We're looking forward to hosting you all, and we encourage all prospective Pigs who may be lurking in the underbrush to come forward and join us.

Friends of the Fifth Earl of Ickenham

(Buffalo, New York, and vicinity)

Contact: Laura Loehr



THE FRIENDS met up on April 7, 2019, for a performance of *Anything Goes*. It's been a terribly long time since we last met, and just three hearty souls were available for the performance. We thoroughly enjoyed the entertainment at the Lancaster Opera House. Afterwards we trundled over to a nearby eatery named The Yelling Goat to sample the victuals and talk about the musical. However, the place could have been named The Yelling Crowd—it was quite raucous. Anatole was definitely not in the kitchen, but we enjoyed the meal and each other's company nonetheless. As others had expressed interest in joining us but couldn't adjust their calendars, we will try to plan future meet-ups this year, so that we can spread sweetness and light in Western New York.

The Melonsquashville (TN) Literary Society

(Tennessee)

Contact: Ken Clevenger



THE MELONSQUASHVILLE (TN) Literary Society had a quiet winter and spring. In early December, we had a great reading of an adaptation by member Mary Jane

Curry of the Wodehouse-Hay play *Leave It to Psmith*. Then a few of us got together again in late January 2019 for the most excellent NC Stage production of *Jeeves at Sea*. They have now done all four of Margaret Raether's Wodehouse adaptations.

We next met in Knoxville on March 30 for a Wodehouse poetry reading session. It proved to be quite a treat as several different members selected poems that fit their personal circumstances. Ken Clevenger offered "Good Gnus" and "Printer's Error," added a few remarks about the three Plum poetry books, and read "Dowie's Lament" from *By the Way: 200 Verses*, the second volume of *P. G. Wodehouse in the Globe Newspaper*, edited by Tony Ring. "Dowie's Lament" also illustrates the frequent "real news" context from more than a hundred years ago that helps bring then-current events to life along with the joyful Wodehouse rhyming words.

Paula introduced yet another weaponized poem with "An Infant in Arms." Lee and Sabrina read "A Happy Marriage." Joan gave us "A Bridge Tragedy" and also presented "Cleopatterer" as a lyric example of Plum's poetry. Bill was asked to do "The Peer and the Policeman" from *A Damsel in Distress* to show Plum's use of rhyming prose passages, and he also added "A Solitary Triumph" to further the crime theme. Fran, who brought deviled eggs as a luncheon treat, appropriately read "The Peril of Eggs." Stephen also brought an example of a lunch theme, "The Gourmet's Love Song." Mary Jane introduced a literary note with "Sherlock Holmes's Lament." Finally, Ken added Ogden Nash's tribute to Wodehouse with "P. G. Wooster, Just as He Useter." All agreed that the Wodehouse we know as the master of English language prose was equally adept in the poetry format.

We have corresponded with the new western North Carolina chapter, A Little More Bertie Than Jeeves, and are hoping for some joint Wodehouse activities in time.

The Mottled Oyster Club / Jellied Eels

(San Antonio and South Texas)

Contact: Lynette Poss



The New England Wodehouse Th ingummy So ciety (NEWTS)

(Boston and New England)

Contact: Lynn Vesley-Gross
or Roberta Towner



ON MARCH 23, the NEWTS gathered at the home of MaryAnna Foskett in Arlington, Massachusetts. In colonial times, Arlington was known as Menotomy, where our forebears said it with muskets when the redcoats passed through in 1775. Peace reigned on March 23, 2019, however, at least in part due to an abundance of foodstuffs and libations. First order of business was a run-through of our skit for the upcoming convention, the details of which remain top secret. Later, we read aloud Plum's mini-masterwork "Trouble Down at Tudsleigh" from *Young Men in Spats*, pausing only for the paroxysms of laughter to subside. The world needs more of this kind of humor and less of almost everything else. We concluded with a preview of our (then) upcoming field trip on April 13 to the Hartford Stage theater to see *Perfect Nonsense*. We next gather (or nottle, in NEWTS parlance) on June 23 to celebrate summer with pastoral dances and croquet at the Ravi estate in Bedford, Massachusetts.

The Northwodes

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



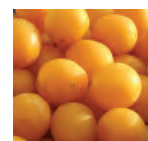
SEVEN BRAVE Northwodes met at the Liffey Pub on February 10 after a heavy snowfall to discuss *Lord Emsworth and Others*. The drinks and food were delightful, but there was a complication when we found that there are two collections of that name, with different stories. Of the seven attendees, three had read the first version and four had read the second. They were all great stories but with little overlap. So we were not all singing from the same songbook during the discussion. Before adjourning, Mike Engstrom mentioned that the flip side of our image of the Empress of Blandings displayed a cartoon of a tutor. Mike assembled his air-powered Nerf gun and pumped it up; soon the air was thick with darts. The target-tutor never had a chance. The waitress's stern aspect and grave tone encouraged us to leave quickly after recovering the darts and target.

Unbedeviled for the first time in months by either a polar vortex or a snowpocalypse, fifteen members of the Northwodes woke up an extra hour early on April 14 and gathered at the Liffey to quaff "The Falernian" (renowned wine of ancient Rome, according to Holly Windle) and to discuss *Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit*. Maria Jette called the meeting to order, and the discussion touched on several topics: the hocking of valuables by women as their only recourse to deal

with financial adversity besides biting the ear of their menfolk, the debate about when a cancelled engagement becomes breach of promise, and the great variety of insults aimed at moustaches. All rued that they'd never know whether Bertie Wooster or Percy Gorringer won the Drones darts tournament. When the subject of breaking porcelain statuettes arose, the talk led to the Infant Samuel at Prayer and that led to a surprise Scripture Knowledge Quiz. Joan Rabe dug deep into lore—biblical, Wodehousian, and Irish Roverish—to come up with questions touching on pillars of salt, lions' dens, and the reason for the absence of unicorns. [See page 24 for the quiz itself!]

The Orange Plums

(Orange County, California)
Contact: Lia Hansen or Diana Van Horn



YOUR ILLUSTRIOUS O. Plummies have ticked merrily along since our last report, finishing up our reading and discussion of *Cocktail Time* and moving briskly on to try to discover just why it is that *Aunts Aren't Gentlemen*—or, in some cases, aren't human, for that matter.

Meanwhile, our beloved silver cow creamer mascot, The Duchess, showed up at our February meeting stuffed to the gills with Valentine heart candies and to our April meeting sporting a full bunny costume in honor of Easter—as evidenced by the accompanying natty photos. This is one cudster who knows how to make an entrance!



Having now conquered Boat Race Night with our uniquely homespun aquatic contest (see the Spring 2019 *Plum Lines*), and also having previously devised a spirited regular competition involving the hurling of Infant Samuel at Prayer statuettes into upturned (some would claim purloined) policemen's helmets (at betting odds blanching even the jaded Rupert Steggles), the

never-content-to-rest-on-our-laurels Orange Plums voted recently to create and embark on yet another goofy game. To honor the crucial bit of stage play which sets *Cocktail Time* running off in all directions (that of Uncle Fred knocking off Beefy Bastable's top hat with Brazil nuts expertly launched from a slingshot), we are actually setting out to replicate this heroic feat. The Orange Plums plugging plug-uglies? We shall see. Slingshots and top hats (and for safety's sake, styrofoam wig heads to perch them on—don't try this at home!) have now been requisitioned, and we're told that the Brazil nuts are on their way. The contest is slated for sometime this summer, so we'll be sure to get back to you with details and results in a forthcoming issue. Indeed, the competition already has its coveted trophy in place—feast your eyes on this eyesore! Don't you wish it could be among those present on your shelf or mantel?

Till next time, I remain nautically yours, Adm. George J. "Fruity" Biffen (aka Jeff Porteous).

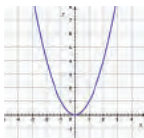


A prize to be coveted

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 PICKERINGS met at the home of the Mahakians on March 9, 2019. The reading assignment was *Right Ho, Jeeves*. Those of you who have been closely following the exploits of the Pickering Motor Company will know that this is the second book in our project of reading "Wodehouse's Five Greatest Novels" (the first was *Heavy Weather*).

Your humble reporter has begun taking notes while reading Wodehouse so he can look up all of the literary and biblical quotes and references in the books. One of the subplots in this book is Bertie's prize for Scripture Knowledge at school. Bertie and Jeeves give us references to Psalms, Judges, Daniel, Numbers, and Proverbs. I probably missed a few. There are literary quotes and references to Macbeth, Longfellow, Shaw, and Chaucer. I sometimes wonder if Wodehouse expected his readers to get all of the references to scripture and literature. An Edwardian gentleman might, but how about the rest of us? How did he find the time to read all that while writing such a prolific output? Perhaps his education in scripture and classics at Dulwich College stayed with him throughout his writing life.

I realized that most of the scripture references I have found in Wodehouse are Old Testament. I'm not sure why that would be, since the New Testament certainly was written in time for Plum to use.

Elliott noted that, early in *Right Ho, Jeeves*, Bertie compares Sherlock Holmes's practice as a consulting detective to Jeeves's practice as a consultant to Bertie's friends and relatives. While the Wodehouse canon contains many references to the Holmes canon, this book in particular has a plethora of such references, many quite arcane.

There was a consensus that the funniest scene Wodehouse ever wrote was where Gussie presents the prizes. It is possibly the most comic scene anyone has ever written. I watched Edward Duke act it out many years ago in *Jeeves Takes Charge*, and it was the most hilarious show I have ever seen in the theater.

The next meeting was to be May 5, 2019, with *The Code of the Woosters* as our reading assignment. The fourth in our series will be *Leave It to Psmith*. We have not decided on a fifth, but we felt it should be neither a Jeeves nor a Blandings book. Suggestions?

—Robert Walter

The Pittsburgh Millionaires Club

(Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania)

Contact: Allison Thompson



MEMBERS OF the Pittsburgh Millionaires Club donned their spats and pearls and gathered to dine and drink and read aloud “Uncle Fred Flits By.” Despite the embarrassment occasionally incurred by snorting iced tea out of our noses, a grand time was had by all. We welcomed new member David, newish member Beth, and the Usual Suspects.

We discussed the fact that this story refers to Pongo’s dreadful day at the dog races with his Uncle Fred—a story, like that of the prawns, of which we never learn the details (other than that the magistrate could have been more lenient). Embedded tales and references like this are part of what makes Plum’s world such a rich one.

The Plum Crazies

(Harrisburg, Pennsylvania and vicinity)
Contact: Betty Hooker



THE PLUM CRAZIES met on February 17 at the home of Betty and Tom Hooker. Barb Marbain, Ed Hain, Bob Rains and Andrea Jacobsen, Will and Marcia Campbell, Diana and Mike Staab, and Betty and Tom attended.

After a spot of food and drink, the Plum Crazies settled down to an overview of *The Swoop!* presented by Bob Rains. Bob explained that this book is an outlier among Plum’s works. The plot centers on an invasion of England by nine countries.

We discussed the racist illustrations and language, which are shocking and totally unacceptable today but were unremarkable and common a century ago. There was further discussion as to whether the publisher (Overlook Press) should have revised the illustrations or substituted new illustrations when they reissued the book in 2013. The consensus was that Overlook was correct in using the original illustrations and language. An explanation for younger readers (or any readers) should have been added. In the American version, the United States was invaded by only two countries, Japan and Germany.

The group decided to go see *Jeeves Takes a Bow* at the Oyster Mill Playhouse in Camp Hill. The chosen date is Sunday, August 25, at 2 PM.

Our next meeting is on Sunday, June 2, at 1 PM at the home of Tom and Betty Hooker. We plan to watch and discuss “Uncle Fred Flits By,” starring David Niven, to see how closely it matches the superbly written Wodehouse story.

The Plum Street Plummies

(Olympia, Washington and vicinity)

Contact: Thomas L. R. Smith



THE JUNE meeting is scheduled for June 8 at our usual time, 1 PM, and our usual place, Casa Mia on Plum Street in Olympia. We will read the collection of golf stories *The Clicking of Cuthbert* (or *Golf Without Tears*) for that meeting. This will be a great preparation for The Fourth Annual Wodehouse Open Miniature Golf Tournament in July.

The Right Honorable Knights of Sir Philip Sidney

(Amsterdam, The Netherlands)

Contact: Peter Nieuwenhuizen



THE KNIGHTS met on February 9 in Amsterdam. Traditionally, the cock-and-bull story contest has been held in the springtime to honor Mr. Mulliner, but we were a bit early this year. The winner was Willem Pekelder, a Dutch journalist. He was so excited about his choice between a cigar and coconut that he wrote a column about his coconut in the Dutch national newspaper *Trouw* (<https://www.willempekelder.nl/home/koppige-kokosnoot/>).



Journalist Willem Pekelder and his prized coconut

Knight Ole van Luyn read his favorite Wodehouse fragment. But it was a bit of foolery as he actually read a fragment of *Jeeves and the King of Clubs*, the new “Wodehouse” novel by Ben Schott. It was a difficult task to guess from which novel his passage came, since not all members had read the new novel.

The new Wodehouse stamp was presented by Herman van Riel. It was the ninth edition of a national Wodehouse stamp. Next year will be the jubilee!

There were some very special moments at this meeting of the Knights. The Christmas card from our patron (HRH Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall) was presented. We also remembered our former president, Jelle Otten, who was very ill at that time and has since passed away. [See *Jelle's obituary on page 16.*] We also heard about the Arenberg Trophy Rally, organized by the Drones Club of Belgium. Some of the Dutch members plan to join the Drones Club and discuss Wodehouse during the rally.

There was discussion about the commemorative plaque for P. G. Wodehouse to be placed in Westminster Abbey in London this year. Hopefully we will be invited to join the official celebration when it occurs.

A special certificate was presented to two greatly admired members. Ronald Brenner, member since 1982, was one of the first PGWS members. He is present at every meeting, but if you have missed him, you will certainly smell his pipe. Because of his performances during the hunting game at the Belgian Drones Club, he was rewarded with The Colonel Francis Pashley-Drake Award for Pipe Smoking. A golden pipe came with the certificate.



Ronald Brenner (sans pipe) receives his award from Peter Nieuwenhuizen.



Hilde Bueger takes home the prize.

Another award was given to Hilde Beuger, the calligrapher of our membership certificates. Her great literary skill was rewarded with the Rockmetteller Todd Award for Poetic Poetry and Calligraphy. Hilde is an excellent scribe and teacher of poetry.

For all of the members in attendance, there was a special present: a translation of the Wodehouse story "Ahead of Schedule" into Dutch. It was published as "Systeem" in the newspaper *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad* in the Dutch Indies in 1910. The story was later published in *The Man Upstairs* (1914).

The next regular meeting of the Knights will be at 1 PM on October 12, 2019, at the Szmulewicz Restaurant, Bakkersstraat 12 (off Rembrandtplein), in Amsterdam.

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



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



THUMBING OUR nose at heavy weather and spring fever, McNulty and Robinson, the law-and-order arm of the Size 14 Hat Club, met recently to discuss the revelations exposed by Ben Schott in *Jeeves and the King of Clubs*. It has been nearly a century since Spode and his Black Shorts Fascists were exposed, so it is high time we heard the inside story regarding the pre-World War II undercover resistance work of Reginald Jeeves and his faux puppet Bertie Wooster. Of course, all of this is no less than might be expected given Jeeves's own admission in *Ring for Jeeves* that he had "dabbled in the First World War to a certain extent." But we must also admit to a certain feeling of relief. Jeeves's egregious lawbreaking has long been disturbing. To now find out such behavior was in the interests of higher causes renewed our faith in the purity of purpose no matter how questionable sometimes the appearance. And though this book finally, if unofficially, lays to rest one major doubt raised by all the Jeeves and Bertie stories (to wit, is it possible Bertie was actually the useless numbskull he appeared?), this particular piece of history cannot put to rest the further queries raised by Jeeves himself in *Ring for Jeeves*, whereby the absence of Bertie is explained as Bertie having gone off to a school to learn how to "darn his own socks." Ha! Since that piece of history was written in 1952 it now seems

safe to assume Bertie was actually off taking a refresher course in Secret Service affairs pertinent to possible employment during the Cold War. We anxiously await the update from Mr. Schott re those goings-on.

As for whether Mr. Schott has been sacrilegious in filling in the gaps where PGW left off in these histories, the Master has nothing to fear. By definition the originals stand alone. Not for nothing has Mr. Schott described his contribution as an homage, and there seems upon reading only reverence and no evidence of mocking. Quite the reverse, it all appears to be awe and adulation by the author.

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



A New Wodehouse Audiobook

BY NEIL MIDKIFF

ENGLISH ACTOR Simon Jones (who played Arthur Dent in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* and "Bridey" in *Brideshead Revisited*) has narrated over seventy audiobooks, but only this year has he begun recording P. G. Wodehouse's works. The first is *Right Ho, Jeeves*, with "Leave It to Jeeves" from *My Man Jeeves* as a bonus. I am pleased to report that Simon Jones makes a delightful Bertie Wooster, with the perfect classic upper-class accent, ideal clarity of diction and phrasing, and the vocal flexibility to give each character in the stories his or her own manner of speech—with minor reservations.

Most refreshing is that Jones reads Bertie just as Bertie sees himself, letting the humor come from Wodehouse's words rather than imposed verbal mannerisms such as the silly giggle that (for me) mars Richard Briers's otherwise fine portrayal. Jones also imparts a confidential tone to Bertie's narration, giving the listener the feeling of being in the next chair to Bertie's at the Drones Club as he tells the story; Bertie's dialogue passages with other characters are read just a bit more brightly both in tone and tempo, an audible realization of the quotation marks in the book.

Other outstanding characterizations include a very silly-ass Gussie Fink-Nottle, a soft and soppy Madeline Bassett, a brusque Tuppy Glossop, and a delightful

Anatole, with admixtures of Brooklyn accent in the American slang phrases of his mangled Anglo-French, just as he heard them from the Littles' chauffeur Maloney. Aunt Dahlia is deeper into the baritone register than I expected, but otherwise is the perfect aunt. At the start of the novel, I was concerned that Jeeves's voice was pitched too similarly to Bertie's and that listeners unfamiliar with the book might have trouble sorting out their dialogue phrases. I may have been influenced by Jonathan Cecil's excellent readings with a deeper bass tone for Jeeves. But as the story continued, either Jones became more practiced or I adjusted to his style, and Jeeves began to sound more smooth and formal, more in control of himself, and the distinction of voices became clearer.

With all these good qualities on hand, it is disappointing that this release is not as perfect as it should be. I prefer audiobook readings to dramatizations; I like my Wodehouse word-for-word. Unfortunately there are numerous inaccuracies in this recording: many apparent slips in reading which were not corrected, and some errors which are worse. I know that time is money in the recording studio, and that an occasional omitted "indeed," an extra "as," or a "that" read as "the" can hardly be said to obscure the meaning, but given Jones's praise for the rhythm of Wodehouse's style (in an interview he says it seems designed to be read aloud), a retake of a sentence every few pages or so would have made me a great deal happier. There are a few curious pronunciations, including "cognoscenti" with a hard "sk" in the middle and "Mechlin" with a first syllable rhyming with "wretch," which caught my ear. Either Jones or his script editor corrected Bertie's "Aix to Ghent" in chapter 22 to match Browning's version, which doesn't bother me much, but in chapter 17, Jones's Gussie speaks of "sermons in stones, books in the running brooks, or, rather, the other way about" which spoils Wodehouse's joke completely by quoting Shakespeare correctly (see <https://tinyurl.com/rhj-notes> for more).

Technically, the recording is quite clear, but there are some inconsistencies in volume between segments. And the entire eight-hour audio file of the review copy was a single .mp3 track with no apparent chapter markers, even for the short story and an interview. One hopes the commercial release will have corrected these.

All in all, though, despite these drawbacks, I've had a great deal of enjoyment from this recording, and hope that it will be followed by more (preferably with a stricter editor). Details and ordering information are at <https://tinyurl.com/jones-rhj>.

Scripture Knowledge Quiz

Joan Rabe and the Northwodes were recently discussing Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit (in which Bertie mentions his Scripture Knowledge prize—he was rather proud of that!), and Joan created her own SK quiz. You may now all achieve those same lofty heights as Bertie, by forever being a winner. If you'd like your prize certificate, send along the answers. Don't strain yourself.



1. In the Book of Genesis, what was Lot's wife turned into?
2. Also in Genesis, who was the first murderer?
3. Who was thrown into the lion's den?
4. How many times is the Infant Samuel at Prayer mentioned in Wodehouse?
5. According to the musical group the Irish Rovers, what animal didn't embark on Noah's Ark?

Contents

- 1 Pigs Have Wings—October in Cincinnati!
- 2 Rivals of P. G. Wodehouse: Don Marquis
- 5 Wodehouse and the Hidden Painter
- 10 Wodehouse and Flannery: The Rest of the Story
- 13 A Few Quick Ones
- 14 Susan Z. Diamond
- 14 Where Do I Find . . . ?
- 14 A Few More Quick Ones
- 14 The Genesis of *Jeeves and the King of Clubs*
- 15 Dean Miller
- 15 Blandings Reboot
- 16 Jelle Otten
- 18 Chapters Corner
- 23 A New Wodehouse Audiobook
- 24 Scripture Knowledge Quiz

24 *Plum Lines* Vol. 40 No. 2 Summer 2019

Officers & Volunteers

President
Tom Smith



Vice President
Bill Scrivener



Treasurer (dues payments):
Indu Ravi



Membership Secretary (new-member inquiries, contact information changes):
Ian Michaud



Contact Ian electronically at <http://www.wodehouse.org>; click on the Membership tab for contact forms.

Editor in Chief and Oldest Member:
Gary Hall

Proofing Editor: Elin Woodger

Final Proofreading & Technical Assistance, Printer/
Mailer Liaison, Rosters, Dues Sheets: Neil Midkiff

Website address: www.wodehouse.org
Webmaster: Noel Merrill

Quick Ones (unless otherwise credited) courtesy of
John Baesch and Evelyn Herzog.

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.

All quotations from P. G. Wodehouse are reprinted by permission of the Copyright Owner, the Trustees of the Wodehouse Estate.