

PLUM LINES - A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE WODEHOUSE SOCIETY

Vol. VIII, No. 4, 15 NOV 1987 WCY + 7

"Wodehouse (pronounced Woodhouse) can be compared to no other novelist, living or dead. His literary ancestor, instead, is the Roman dramatist, Plautus and, like Plautus, he is the manufacturer of a thousand comically crossed connections." Gerald Clarke, 1971.

WE PROUDLY ANNOUNCE that Richard Usborne, TWS, has accepted the Honorary Presidency which was offered to him by unanimous vote at our San Francisco Convention. It is hoped that Mr. Usborne and our two presidents-emeritus, Dr. Robert A. Hall, Jr., and Mrs. Florence Cunningham, will consent to act together as an Advisory Board to guide us in future policy matters.

EFFECTIVE 1 JANUARY 1988, THE EDITORSHIP OF PLUM LINES WILL BE ASSUMED BY EDWARD RATCLIFFE

ASSISTED BY HELEN RATCLIFFE, OF COURSE. ALL DUES AND CONTRIBUTIONS WILL BE PAYABLE (IN U.S. FUNDS) TO THE WODEHOUSE SOCIETY AND SENT TO MRS. RANDY KILGORE

WILL CONTINUE TO PROVIDE

COMPUTERIZED ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT, AS SHE HAS DONE FOR THE PAST TWO OR THREE YEARS.

And a fine edition it is for the serious PGW collector or for the beginning PGW appreciator OR for the confirmed reader. It is a comprehensive catalog of all the wonderful Wodehouse characters....by the author of our current supplement. $|\cdot|$

with a rare antique golf club (since he has long represented himself as "The Oldest Member," a retired golfer). It is a No. 5 iron or mashie, bearing a Nicoll's Wizard trademark, hand-forged in Leven, Scotland (only a short drive from St. Andrews). A clean wooden shaft and spiral-wrapped leather grip further attest to its antiquity. Vintage 1890-1910. OM cherishes it, and it shall be a prized trophy on his study wall.

........ROB KOOY, TWS, our European Correspondent and editor/publisher of "Nothing Serious," the newsletter of the P. G. Wodehouse Society (Netherlands), advises that around twenty PGWS members will travel to London this month to attend Edward Duke's "Jeeves Takes Charge," now playing there. They also hope to have Lt. Col. Norman Murphy show them around Wodehouse's London.

MAYOR FEINSTEIN'S PROCLAMATION making August 15th, 1987, "P. G. Wodehouse Day in San Francisco," has been taken to England where it will be displayed in the Wodehouse Corner of the P. G. Wodehouse Library, Dulwich College, London.



Dr. Daniel Garrison, TWS, author of Who's Who in Wodehouse, wrote this essay, adding to the growing literature about Plum....

MIDWESTERNERS IN P.G. WODEHOUSE

Though he is most of all a comedian of people who moved in small circles. Wodehouse delighted in characters who had at one time or another swum into the life of New York or London out of little places far away. The chaotic social mobility of America was for him the stuff of great comedy: millionaires like Bradbury Fisher who graduate from federal penitentiaries as English earls graduate from St Austin's or Oxford, prize fighters like Mugsy Steptoe who now must learn to live like English gentlemen. and Canadian provincials like Joe Rendal who make it big in the New York stock market. Because his personal strides were so long--London, New York, Hollywood--Wodehouse himself knew nothing about the midwest except what he saw in print and out the train window on his way to Hollywood, but his love of gangsters made him think of Chicago when he created Chimp Twist, Charlie Yost, and the bootlegger Ed Murgatroyd, Its fabled toughness is invoked early in a goalkeeper's American mother, Lady Tresillian: "There are few things more horrible than a Chicago voice raised in excitement or anguish." Chicago's less famous good-naturedness is reflected in Horace Jevons, the genial Chicago millionaire who employs Rupert, The Efficient Baxter prior to the action of "Crime Wave at Blandings." It is in this story, you will remember, that Baxter is repeatedly shot with young George Threepwood's air gun--a gentler fate than would surely have been his lot if he had followed Jevons to Chicago.

As a New York theatre man, Plum knew the Midwest was a steady source of pretty girls like Billie Dore, Sandy Miller, and Spectatia Huskisson who had come to the city in search of excitement, fame, and fortune, and of actors like the amnesiac Sausage Chappie in *Indiscretions of Archie*, who started his life in Springfield, Ohio. He also knew that it was a source of writers like Cole Porter, who went to Yale and thence to Broadway from a small town in Indiana. James Renshaw Boyd is a New York playwright in "Black for Luck" (1915) whose father is a

Chicago meatpacker, creator of Boyd's Premier Breakfast Sausage and Boyd's Excelsior Home-Cured Ham. Other midwestern authors write romantic potboilers such as Sweets of Sin, by Cora McGuffy Spottsworth ("Spottsworth for Blushes") and A Society Thug by Nesta Ford, mother of the pestilential brat Ogden Ford.

Wodehouse's midwesterners usually Make Good. J. Russell Clutterbuck, the eccentric publisher from Niles, Michigan (an unbearably dreary town a few miles from where my own father grew up), now publishes The Book Beautiful. J.G. Anderson owns a hotel in Bessemer, Ohio and a resort in Maine, Rosalinda Banks Bessemer Spottsworth owns homes in Pasadena, Carmel, New York, Florida, Maine, and Oregon, but she comes from a dismal little town in southern Ohio called Chillicothe, the same backwater that (seventeen years earlier) miraculously produced young Joey Cooley, who makes it in Hollywood as a child film idol (and hates it). In Big Money (1931), T. Paterson Frisby went west from Carcassone, Illinois to create the Horned Toad Copper Corp., Inc. before settling down in Grosvernor House in London, Isabel Rockmetteller is an early Illinois variant of the Aunts who drive their nephews to frenzied activity in "The Aunt and the Sluggard."

Outside New York and Hollywood, America was a wilderness to Wodehouse. Isabel Rockmetteller's nephew Rockmetteler Todd lives "all alone in the wilds of Long Island," a wasteland that Wodehouse was to live long enough' to see so well conquered by civilization that he dared to take up residence there after the war. But somewhere a few miles west of Long Island lay the Great American Desert, or Forest, or something best left undisturbed. Plum's idea of Michigan, a thoroughly settled dairy state in the American Rust Belt, suggests a howling desert somewhere west of Arizona. Spectatia Huskisson, for example, comes from a pastoral paradise called Snake Bite (the only snakes I ever saw in Michigan, where I was raised and

spent plenty of time close to the ground, were harmless garter snakes). Spectatia, who now makes her living singing in a New York restaurant, has "the musical diction of one trained to call the cattle home in the teeth of Western hurricanes."

When midwesterners aren't developing their lungs calling in livestock across the endless prairie (in this connection let us not forget James Belford, who learned hog-calling on a farm in Nebraska and was rewarded with Lord Emsworth's undying friendship and the hand of his niece Angela), they are in the ruck of heavy industry somewhere out there. J.G. Anderson comes from Bessemer, Ohio; Polly Weatherby from Carbondale, Illinois, and Nesta Ford from Mechanicsville (Plum got it wrong: it's Mechanicsburg). And notwithstanding their names, none of these towns are in fact industrial.

No one will accuse Wodehouse of being sentimental about the Midwest. He saw it steadily, he saw it whole, and he never got off the train.

- J.G. Anderson, owner of the Hotel Washington in Bessemer, Ohio and the Lakeside Inn near Skeewassett, Maine; sometime employer of Barmy Fotheringay-Phipps in Barmy in Wonderland (1952, =Angel Cake).
- James Renshaw Boyd, New York playwright from Chicago in 15BL, son of Boyd's Premier Breakfast-Sausage and Boyd's Excelsion Home-Cured Ham.
- J. Russell Clutterbuck, Oswald Stoker's eccentric American publisher in "The Right Approach" (1947), partner in Clutterbuck & Winch, publishers of the book beautiful. Owner of a summer home in Bensonburg, L.I. in French Leave (1956), and a customer of the Trents' honey business who is displeased with the price he is charged for honey. His home town is Niles, Michigan. Thrice married, he bulges opulently in all directions; his round face, round eyes, and round spectacles give him the look of an owl

- which has done itself too well on field mice. Publishes Jefferson Auguste's novel.
- Joey Cooley, child film star, mutinous Idol of American Motherhood in Laughing Gas (1936), comes from Chillicothe, Ohio; Little Lord Fauntleroy type complete with curls.
- Billie Dore, one of the chorus of George Bevan's musical comedy Follow the Girl, playing at the Regal in A Damsel in Distress (1919). Daughter of an Indiana nursery gardener, marries Lord Marshmoreton.
- Mrs. Elmer Ford, sometimes-divorced wife of the New York merchant prince, named Ruth in "The Eighteen-Carat Kid" (1913), Nesta in The Little Nugget (1913) and in Piccadilly Jim (1917), where she is two years married to Peter Pett, Elmer Ford having perished suddenly of an apoplectic tall. formidably handsome seizure. A woman, originally from Mechanicsville, Illinois, more recently from New York and smothered in furs. Author of sensational fiction, e.g. A Society Thug. The type of woman whom small, diffident men seem to marry instinctively, as unable to help themselves as cockleshell boats sucked into a maelstrom. Protective mother of Ogden: aunt of Willie Partridge in Piccadilly Jim. Her sister Eugenia is Mrs. Bingley Crocker in the same novel.
- T. (for Torquil) Paterson Frisby, brothe:
 Josephine Moon and employer of Berry
 Conway in Big Money (1931). Comes from
 Carcassone, Illinois, now resident at
 Grosvernor House, London. Dyspeptic
 president of Horned Toad Copper Corp.
 Inc. A little man, looks as if was made
 of some leathern materials and then
 pickled.
- Spectatia Huskisson, aspiring singer from Snake Bite, Michigan in "Mother's Knee" (Indiscretions of Archie, 1921). Tall, blonde, constructed on substantial lines, with the musical diction of one trained to call the cattle home in the teeth of Western hurricanes.

- Alexandra or Sandy Miller grew up in a small Illinois town and was put through secretarial college by her rich uncle Alexander. Small, pretty, vivacious secretary to Monty Bodkin at Llewellyn City at the beginning of *Pearls*, Girls, and Monty Bodkin (1972), takes job as secretary to Grayce Llewellyn and becomes engaged to Bodkin. Friend of Ivor Llewellyn in Bachelors Anonymous (1973).
- Ed. Murgatroyd, Chicago bootlegger, is engaged to Genevieve Bootle in 33CA.
- Isabel Rockmetteller, title character of "The Aunt and the Sluggard" (1916), aunt of Rockmetteller Todd; a large, solid, moneyed female from Illinois.
- John, the Sausage Chappie in "Archie and the Sausage Chappie" (Indiscretions of Archie, 1921), is an amnesiac war veteran who gave Archie Moffam a bit of sausage outside St. Mihiel during the War. Remembers he was born in Springfield, Ohio, and was an actor before the war.
- Cora McGuffy Spottsworth, dark, subtle, exotic snake with hips, has large, dark, and lustrous eyes like those of some inscrutable priestess of a strange old religion. A widow from Illinois, author of Furnace of Sin. Publisher's slogan is "Spottsworth For Blushes." A fine golfer, competes against Agnes Flack in the Women's Singles in "Feet of Clay" (1950, ="A Slightly Broken Romance"). A woman of socialist views, attracts the amorous attention of Sydney McMurdo.
- Rosalinda Banks Bessemer Spottsworth, rich American widow in Ring for Jeeves (1953). Born Rosalinda Banks of Chillicothe, Ohio, her first husband was Clifton Bessemer, the Pulp Paper Magnate, who died in a head-on collision with a beer truck; her second was Alexis B. Spottsworth, sportsman and big-game hunter, killed by a wounded lion. Recent devotee of psychic research, a Rotationist with homes in Pasadena, Carmel, New York, Florida, Maine, and Oregon. Buys Towcester Abbey to move it to California

- stone by stone. Owns a Peke named Pomona and the undying love of Captain Brabazon-Biggar.
- Lady Tresillian, wife of the Earl of Runnymede, mother of Clarence and Lord Staines, daughter of a Chicago millionaire named Trotter in "The Goal-Keeper and the Plutocrat" (1912). There are few things more horrible than a Chicago voice raised in excitement or anguish.
- Alexander "Chimp" Twist, unsuccessful crook, alias private investigator J. Sheringham Adair (Tilbury Detective Agency) with an office opposite Lord Tilbury's in Sam the Sudden (1925, =Sam in the Suburbs). In Money for Nothing (1928) he is Dr. Alexander Twist, proprietor of Healthward Ho, Worcestershire, dedicated to the reconditioning of overfed gentry. Again posing as J. Sheringham Adair and headquartered at the Halsey Buildings, Mayfair, in Money in the Bank (1942), Ice in the Bedroom (1961), and in Pearls, Girls, and Monty Bodkin (1972, =The Plot that Thickened), where Gravce Llewellyn hires him to look after her pearls and Pop Llewellyn's diet. A small, weedy man with a waxed moustache and the face of an untrustworthy monkey. Formerly a Chicagoan, now frequently associated with Soapy and Dolly Molloy in schemes which involve burglary and end unprofitably for all three.
- Pauline or Polly, Countess of Wetherby, née
 Pauline Davis of Carbondale, Illinois,
 former chorus girl married to Algie
 Wetherby in *Uneasy Money* (1916). Earns
 her living performing barefoot "Greek"
 dances at Reigenheimer's on 42nd Street.
 Friend of Claire Fenwick.
- Charlie Yost, Chicago gunman in England, former associate of Horace Appleby in Do Butlers Burgle Banks? (1968).

Honorary Mention

- James Bartholomew Belford, son of Old Belford the parson, worked on a farm in Nebraska where he learned the art of hog-calling from Fred Patzel, hog-calling champion of the Western States. Angela's fiancé in "Pig-Hoo-o-o-o-ey!" (1927).
- Buck Macginnis, a short, tough, clean-shaven American gangster with a broken nose, first tried to kidnap Ogden Ford in Chicago in 1907. He succeeds (with the aid of Smooth Sam Fisher) in 13EC and LN13.
- Sally Painter, daughter of an impecunious artist named George Painter, sister of Otis. A sculptress with a little bit of money left her by an aunt in Kansas City; lives in Budge Street, Chelsea. In love with Pongo Twistleton in *Uncle Dynamite* (1948).
- Jane Pillenger, private secretary and typist to Mr. Meggs in "A Sea of Troubles" (1914). A wary spinster of austere views, uncertain age, and a deep-rooted suspicion of men. Formerly secretary to an Indiana novelist.
- Rockmetteller "Rocky" Todd, sluggard poet in "The Aunt and the Sluggard" (1916), nephew, namesake, and dependent of Isabel Rockmetteller of Illinois; in "Jeeves and the Unbidden Guest" (1916) he is a friend of Bertie's who lives all alone in the wilds of Long Island.

Daniel H. Garrison Northwestern University Evanston, Illinois

Dr. Garrison delivered a it means that one of the aims of The Wodehouse Society is being realized: the recognition of Wodehouse in college and university paper on the Greco-Roman antecedents of the Wodehouse our membership. literary style at our S/F convention, which was well received in about twenty other university professors, Constitution). **TWS** 3, [Par. curricula scholarly

The society is fortunate in having Dr. Garrison, along

A Presidential Word or Two:

Dear Members of The Wodehouse Society:

P. G. Wodehouse could have written the script for the good time we enjoyed at the 4th International Convention of The Wodehouse Society in the Canterbury Hotel in San Francisco, August 14, 15, and 16, 1987.

From the moment we walked through the open door into the Lawson's hotel suite where laughter and conversation abounded, we felt at home, right in our element. The San Francisco Wodehouse Chapter had thoughtfully provided for this get-acquainted time on Friday evening. We didn't meet a stranger.

Our love and admiration of Wodehouse broke all barriers. We talked of his books, his characters, his lyrics, his plays, as if we were old friends who hadn't seen one another for a long time and were taking up the threads of conversation from the last time we were together. This ease and happy atmosphere permeated the convention for all three days.

I want to thank those individuals who took time from busy schedules to write letters for this convention. Ann Smith wrote concerning the Wodehouse property in Remsenburg which is being renovated and the whole complexion of the home and property changed. Some of use were interested in seeing to the preservation of that property as a National Landmark. With this information it now seems fruitless for us to pursue this idea. Thank you to those who expressed opinions on this subject.

James Heineman wrote a fine letter on the progress of his Wodehouse Bibliography, which Carl Wells read at the banquet Saturday evening. This book, of interest to all of us, will be off the press in the near future.

Margaret Slythe, librarian for the P. G. Wodehouse Library at Dulwich College, wrote a description of the transformation of the Dulwich College Library into the P. G. Wodehouse Library in 1981. She also sparked us all with the idea of a Wodehouse meeting in Dulwich. The idea took off like wildfire. Some said, "Four years from now..." A motion may have been made to this effect. Then others said, "Four years is too long a time to wait." Some have said, "Could it be a tour?" To settle all this, of course, what does a brilliant mind do but appoint a committee to settle it all. To plan this adventure are Beth Wainwright, Ed and Helen Ratcliffe, Andy Miller, Phil Ayres, Jan Kaufman, and Jeremy Thompson. If I have omitted someone, or added a name in error, please let me know.

Honors were bestowed at this convention. Mary and Bill Blood were given honorary memberships. Except for them, we would not exist as an organization. Richard Usborne was asked to be Honorary President of the International Wodehouse Society. In today's mail is his acceptance. It reads:

"You offer me butter in a lordly dish. Of course I accept the great honor of being Honorary President of the International Wodehouse Society. If I survive till the next issue of Who's Who, I shall see that this title is included. Tell Bill Blood that he can count on me to stand in for him if he goes off on holiday from time to time."

The consideration for a memorial plaque to be placed in the Poet's Corner in Westminster Abbey is coming up this month before the Dean of the Abbey. We talked about him at our convention. On September 1st. I wrote a letter to The Very Reverend The Dean in behalf of our two hundred and fifty members, once again adding our request and support of this action.

To be president of this organization for the past two years has been a joy. Perhaps it is because each of you possesses that most elegant of traits, a sense of humor; thus making anything resembling work pure pleasure.

Thankfully yours,

Flame Curningham (Formerly Dolly Walloy)

We were fortunate indeed to have Florence as our president even for such a short time. She radiates .. personality, ideas, cheer, and good humor. L. Lawson said:
"The whole room lighted up when she entered...



A ---

PROCLAMATION

FROM THE
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
OF
SAN FRANCISCO

WHEREAS

the 20th Century has been entertained and enriched by the pleasurable gifts and rare humor of P. G. Wodehouse in his numerous writings; and

WHEREAS

the writings of P. G. Wodehouse extol the virtues of tolerance, light-heartedness, flouting of life's absurdities and the propagation of cheer, all qualities admired by San Franciscans; and

WHEREAS

The Wodehouse Society is an agglomerate of persons of all ages, races and creeds who share a common bond of admiration and appreciation for P. G. Wodehouse; and

WHEREAS

the Society strives to keep the literary works of P. G. Wodehouse fresh in the public mind by encouraging young readers to read them, confirmed readers to continue reading them, publishers to publish them, booksellers to supply them and libraries to lend them: and

WHEREAS

the 4th International convention of The Wodehouse Society will be held August 14th, 15th, and 16th at the Canterbury Hotel in San Francisco; now

THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED that I, Dianne Feinstein, Mayor of the City and County of San Francisco, do honor this master of gentle satire and sparkling good humor by declaring Saturday, August 15th, 1987, to be P. G. Wodehouse Day in San Francisco, and do encourage all to continue to enjoy the rich delights of the great humorist.

Signed

Dianne Feinstein

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Mayor

4th International Convention of

The Wodehouse fociety

CANTERBURY HOTEL, ENGLISH ROOM SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA AUGUST 15, 1987





In Celebration of the Life and Work of

P. G. Wodehouse

Welcome Ms. Florence Cunningham President, The Wodehouse Society

Dinner

Presentation of Prizes

Darts Tournament

Best Costume

Special Prizes

Tribute to Capt. Bill Blood

Presentation by Mr. Doug Stow, S.F. Chapter
to the founder of the Wodehouse Society

The Wodehouse Legacy
Opportunity for Wodehouse fans to read
a favorite passage from one of Plum's works,
to share a quotation, to make a toast or
make a personal observation

Featured Speaker
Mr. Alex Hemming
upcoming president of the "Old Alleynians,"
the alumni organization of Dulwich College,
the school attended by P. G. Wodehouse

Farewell



AN EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT

OF THE

FOURTH INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE WODEHOUSE SOCIETY

Our Covention opened at 7:00 pm, Friday, August 14th, 1987, with a 'drop in, get acquainted' gathering in Suite 901, Canterbury Hotel, in downtown San Francisco, where names on a membership list magically became smiling, congenial people.

Saturday started with breakfast in the English Room, then on to the program for the day. We were greeted by our President, Florence Cunnungham, of Kent, Washington, who called the meeting to order. Rhoda Robinson then read Mayor Feinstein's Proclamation [see p. C-1], after which Jeremy Thompson, MD [who started a P. G. Wodehouse Society two years before we initiated ours], delivered an address which set a keynote of good humor for the day.

Our president [as presidents are addicted to doing] rapped the gavel, and the business meeting began. Mary Blood, our Financial Secretary for the past seven years, read the abbreviated financial statement, the balance as of 15 August being \$2,236.17; because of this huge sum in the Wodehouse Society Fund, the decision was made to keep dues at the current level. No changes were made in regulatory policies. These members were elected for 2-year terms:

President - Bill Blood / Vice President and Historian - Phil Ayres / Financial Secretary - Katy Kilgore / PLUM LINES Editor and Publisher - Edward Ratcliffe / Assistant to the Editor and Publisher - Helen Ratcliffe.

Then Jan Kaufman gave an illustrated talk on 'Dudes, Drones, and Diracqs,' revealing that 'Diracqs' were motor cars, and everybody knew who the Drones were, but I can't recall where the Dudes came in. Len Lawson discussed [with slides and displays] 'The Many Faces of Jeeves,' being a review of Plum's book and magazine illustrators over his long writing career. As Dr. Bob Hall

was unable to attend the Convention, his 'Wodehouse's London' slides were shown and capably narrated by Doug Stow [who also printed the program and the souvenir booklet of Mayor Feinstein's Proclamation on his hand-press].

After lunch, Phil Ayres showed slides taken on a trip to England, 'On the Road in Search of Wodehouse.' Dr. Daniel Garrison, of Northwestern University, spoke on 'Plum's Roman Comedy, showing that the Greco-Roman theatrical traditions and plots may have influenced Plum's writing. Then !! the Darts Tournament, needing only a pub background to lend authenticity.

At six o'clock, again in Suite 901, our first glimpse of costumes and costumed. Florence Cunningham, stunning as Dolly Molloy, and Jeremy Thompson authentically impersonating Ukridge, won prizes at the banquet, along with several other well-clad Plummies. While no Jeeveses were seen, a Meadowes butled throughout the affair.

The Banquet, again in the English Room, brought together the largest (and surely one of the most congenial) groups of Plummies (58!) ever assembled in any one spot at any time.

A fine dinner was topped by an address by our featured speaker, Mr Alex Hemming, of London, brother of Bryan Hemming, TWS. Due to become president of the 'Old Alleynians,' the Alumni Association of Dulwich College, Plum's Alma Mater, he spoke of the founding and history of that public school, and of the interest of its students in Plum and other famous graduates.

On Sunday Morning, a 'no host' brunch was served in the Greenhouse Restaurant within the Canterbury Hotel. Many Plummies made their au revoirs to old...and new...friends; and thus the Convention ended.

THANKS to Florence Cunningham, now President -Emeritus, for service well rendered; to Pauline Blanc, founder of the San Francisco Chapter and chairman of the Convention Planning Committee; to Carl Wells, President of our San Francisco Chapter, and competent Emcee throughout our Convention; AND to the members of the San Francisco and Los Angeles Chapters, who worked together to make this Convention possible.