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Wodehouse in America

In his new biography of P. G. Wodehouse, Robert McCrum writes: "On a strict calculation of the time Wodehouse eventually spent in the United States, and the lyrics, books, stories, plays and films he wrote there, to say nothing of his massive dollar income, he should be understood as an American *and* a British writer."

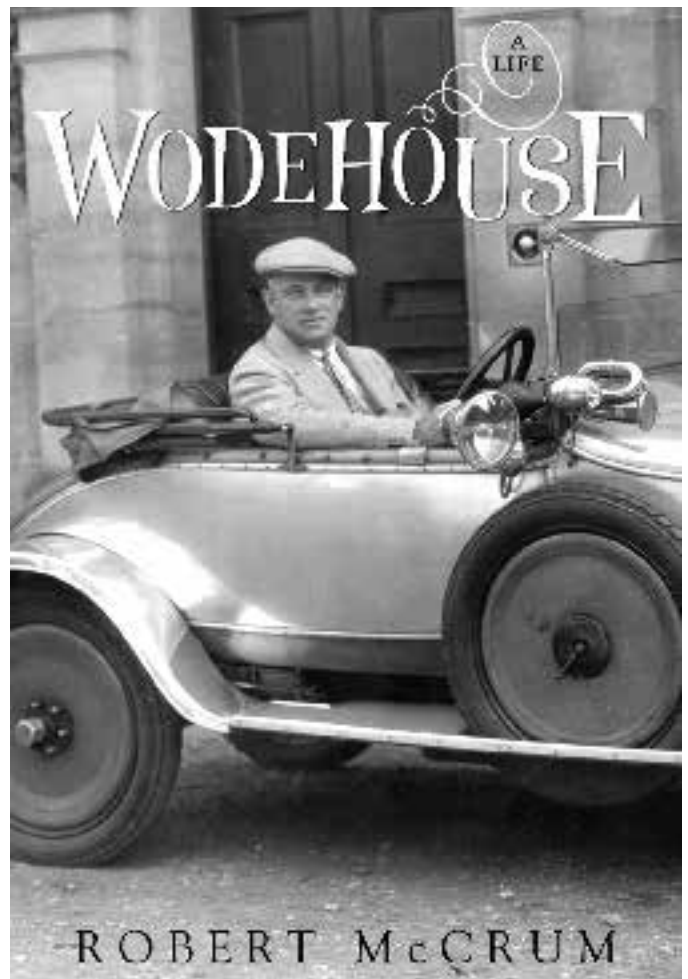
The biography *Wodehouse: A Life* will be published in the United States in November by W.W. Norton & Co., and will be reviewed in the next issue of *Plum Lines*. McCrum's book presents the American side of Wodehouse's life and career more fully than any previous work. So with the permission of W.W. Norton, we present some advance excerpts from the book concerning Plum's long years in America.

First trip

Wodehouse sailed for New York on the *SS St. Louis* on 16 April 1904, sharing a second-class cabin with three others. He arrived in Manhattan on 25 April, staying on Fifth Avenue with a former colleague from the bank. Like many young Englishmen, before and since, he found it an intoxicating experience. To say that New York lived up to its advance billing would be the baldest of understatements. 'Being there was like being in heaven,' he wrote, 'without going to all the bother and expense of dying.'

'This is the place to be'

Wodehouse later claimed that he did not intend to linger in America but, as in 1904, would just take a holiday from the *Globe* anticipating that 'after nineteen days I would have to . . . go back to the salt mines.' He did, however, arrive in Manhattan with two completed short stories . . . [and] acquired a new literary agent, Seth Moyle, who rapidly sold both stories for the incredible sum of \$500, a sudden infusion of money that transformed Wodehouse's circumstances. So



perhaps he had hoped to strike gold. Whatever his secret expectations, the discovery, while his stories were commanding less than ten guineas in London, that American editors were prepared to pay on such a stupendous scale was, he wrote many years later, 'like suddenly finding a rich uncle from Australia. This, I said to myself, is the place to be.' Bubbling over with hope and ambition he immediately cabled his resignation

to the *Globe* and took a room in what he described as 'a seedy rookery' at the corner of Washington Square, inhabited by a group of young writers as impecunious as himself. He was exaggerating, as usual. The recently built Hotel Earle, 103 Waverly Place, on the edge of Greenwich Village, a short walk from Bleeker, Delancy and Wooster streets, was a fine eight-storey establishment with a tradition of artistic patronage; it would be his regular New York base until 1913.

Ethel and Long Island

Wodehouse later recalled their courtship with its romantic visits to Long Island during August and the first half of September. They used to go down to the Pennsylvania Station, take the LIRR (Long Island Railroad) and ride down to Long Beach where they would swim and have lunch, and then come back on the train. For both, it would be the beginning of a lifelong love of the South Shore.

Hollywood

'Well, here we are,' Wodehouse wrote to Townend, a month after arrival, 'settled in a house miles away up at the top of a mountain, surrounded by canyons in which I am told rattlesnakes abound.' Nothing speaks so eloquently about Wodehouse's mood of detachment from the movie world on his second Hollywood sojourn than the spectacular isolation of his new home, 1315 Angelo Drive. The house, which belonged to Gaylord Hauser, the best selling diet guru and homosexual confidant of Greta Garbo, was a newly built, English-style mansion on the wild, unpopulated outskirts of Beverly Hills, with an astounding view of the city below and the ocean in the distance. The property was built into the hillside on different levels, had a superb swimming pool, and guaranteed privacy and seclusion. Their nearest neighbor, the actor Nelson Eddy, was several hundred yards away up the hill, and Wodehouse's cricket-loving friend, the actor Charles Aubrey Smith, had a house still further up Angelo Drive.

Remsenburg

In old age, Wodehouse craved solitude as much as redemption. In a return to childhood habits, he wanted more than ever, he said, to be left alone with his characters. At first, the house in Basket Neck Lane was simply a summer retreat, a place of cooling ocean breezes, but gradually Remsenburg became the home that he preferred, ideal for afternoon walks with Guy Bolton, well suited to the Wodehouse menagerie, and close to the sea in a landscape that reminded him of

Emsworth and Bellport. There was, he told friends with typical bravado, never a dull moment in the country, while the daily four-mile round trip to the post office kept him very fit. In April 1955 the Wodehouses moved out of 1000 Park Avenue for good.

Jonathan Ames Reads; Broadway Special Perplexed

BY PHILIP A. SHREFFLER

On 29 July 2004 a handful of the Broadway Special (actually a large hand, for these were fully grown adults, you see) put on the nosebag together at Portfolio, West 19th Street and 5th Avenue in Manhattan, before anking around to the Chelsea Barnes & Noble to hear Jonathan Ames read from his *Wake Up, Sir!*, a book presumed to be inspired by Plum.

Ames, a slight, balding chap, was already addressing his respectably sized audience of about 100 when we arrived, and so we missed his prefatory remarks, if any. And since we hadn't read the book, we were a little lost in terms of its exposition, if any. It did seem to us that Jeeves was a character in Ames's book, but it was unclear what role that noble valet played in it, if any.

The sections of the book that we did hear sounded something like PGW admixed with Robert Benchley, corrupted by Henry Miller. This must be the nature of the post-modern novel (the modern age evidently having ended sometime recently) in which Wodehouse characters may be invoked to inform a work dealing with such topics as masturbation, brain tumors, nose fetishes, and death: Sir Roderick Glossop would be out of his depths here.

To be fair, the audience—though some were pensive and some dozing—nevertheless appeared for the most part attentive and bemused. Fortunately for the Broadway Special members present, the reading occurred in the music section of the bookstore, occasioning the perusal and purchase, during the reading, of edifying CDs after our more-or-less having intellectually handed Mr. Ames the mitten.

None of us purchased the book.

Editor's Note: Please see page 4 of this issue for a complete review of *Wake Up, Sir!* by Elliott Milstein.

I could see by the way she sniffed that she was about to become critical. There had always been a strong strain of book-reviewer blood in her.

Aunts Aren't Gentlemen, 1974

Hooray for Hollywood: August 11–14, 2005

BY JAN WILSON KAUFMAN

“There is the world we live in, and there is the world of Wodehouse, and it is good that man should be able to escape for brief periods from the one into the other.” This is how an anonymous critic once perfectly described the appeal of TWS Conventions. Now is the time to write down the dates of the next year’s big beanfest, so you’ll be all prepared for an affordable vacation on the sunny UCLA campus, in star-studded Southern California. In last year’s surveys filled out by many very articulate TWS members, there was a great unanimity in saying that conventions costs were a great concern and a determining factor in attendance. Accordingly, UCLA was chosen both for its central location and fine facilities, and because costs can be kept down. Unlike the dormitories you probably remember from your college days, we’ll be staying in new buildings with private baths, air-conditioning, maid service, TVs, an Olympic swimming pool, and high-speed Internet hook-ups.



Among other delights there will be an optional trip to Hearst’s Castle at San Simeon; showings of rare movies; a variety of speakers, skits, and readings by several chapters; a tour of the Hollywood Wodehouse knew; and some amusing competitions. Further details will be announced in *Plum Lines*.

Convention Casting Call for All Chapters

BY JAN WILSON KAUFMAN

All chapters are invited to work out skits or readings for TWS’s “Hooray for Hollywood” Convention (August 11–14, 2005). If you think you already laugh a lot now at your meetings, just try creating a skit with Wodehouse characters for a really hilarious time. Themes relating in any way to Tinseltown would be ideal, but any other Wodehouse stories would be welcome. *Variety* reports that Blandings Castle, The NEWTS, and the Perfecto-Zizzbaum Motion Picture Corporation of Hollywood, are already in production, but no casting has been announced. Please let me know as soon as possible if you would like to participate, with an approximate time for your presentation, which could vary from 10 to 30 minutes.

Everybody liked Bill Shannon, even in Hollywood, where nobody likes anybody.

The Old Reliable, 1951

The English Dude



[P. G. Wodehouse] had been a writer of public-school stories before he became a journalist in New York. His Jeeves and Bertie Wooster were inspired by the American notions of the English dude and butler; but they were sartorially and socially irreproachable and his lyrical-ludicrous style, combining American slickness with English sensibility, eventually made him the most generally appreciated contemporary writer.

—From *The Long Week-End: A Social History of Great Britain 1918–1939*, by Robert Graves and Alan Hodge

Oh, No, Jeeves

BY ELLIOTT MILSTEIN



Many a Wodehousean has ambivalent feelings when it comes to adapting the Master's work to another medium. On the one hand, there is the thrill of the Wodehouse experience in a new and different way; on the other, there is that vague sense of uneasiness that comes from monkeying around with the holy writ. One must deal with the natural disorientation that accompanies the change in senses—from reading to seeing or hearing. The only true Bertie Wooster is, after all, the one who speaks to us in the novels and short stories. When we see Hugh Laurie—as superb as he is—he isn't the EXACT Bertie because he has taken a form and shape, and no matter how faithful the adapter (and Clive Exton was, I think, brilliant), it still isn't pure. Nonetheless, the Jeeves and Wooster series is, by and large, a delight, and the variation from the pure word is a price worth paying to see the Drones Club, Brinkley Manor, and all those characters depicted so well in the flesh.

But then there was that episode where Bertie and Jeeves jump ship and show up back at Crichton Mansions months later with long beards. For me, that was the moment the series “jumped the shark.” Why then and not sooner—with all the other liberties taken—I cannot say. Quite possibly, if that episode had never happened, then it would be another moment, because, with adaptation, that moment is almost always inevitable. Ultimately we wind up in the world of extension, where the adaptor has completely slipped

the reins and is writing his own story “inspired by the works of P. G. Wodehouse.”

Which is not to say that these efforts are to be denigrated. Sometimes extension can work quite nicely, as in the various interpretations of Sherlock Holmes, from *A Taste of Honey* to *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes*; but with Wodehouse one tends, instead, to end up in the world of pastiche, which is a completely different thing.

Wodehouse's work lends itself nicely to Aristotelian criticism, dissecting separately the elements of plot, character, language, and *scena* (in this case, the “Wodehouse World”). The art of pastiche, of course, is finding the right juxtaposition of disparate elements; in the case of Wodehouse, usually this entails using the characters and language while shifting the *scena* and/or plot. A good example is Peter Cannon's *Scream for Jeeves*, which combines a Bertie Wooster story with an H P Lovecraft plot. The point is to tickle the sensibilities with the unexpected.

Jonathan Ames's *Wake Up, Sir!* seems to begin as a pastiche (or an extender), but rather early in the novel the Wodehousean reader becomes hopelessly lost. We are introduced to Alan Blair, a young, Jewish novelist, living in contemporary New Jersey with a valet named Jeeves. We are at first uncertain exactly who this Jeeves is. Is it Wodehouse's Jeeves in an alternate universe? Is it a fictional descendant? But soon we learn that, no, it is a contemporary valet, who is, himself, aware of the works of Wodehouse and who finds his name rather a burden, even as he takes on, somewhat, the conversational and professional style of that great fictional character.

What follows, then, is a novel that in no way relates to the Wodehouse world, filled with alcoholism, violence, graphic sex (both homo and hetero as well as some nice perversions), venereal disease, anti-Semitism, drug use, and much else. In fact, by the time we get to the marijuana scene, the reader is so jaded it's rather disappointing that they're not mainlining heroin.

Is this pastiche? Is Ames using Wodehouse as a backdrop to these un-Wodehousean elements in order to point them up in some way? Ultimately, one is forced to say no, because, within a very short time, all Wodehousean elements—except this valet, whose character is gradually relegated to that of quite a minor role—are completely absent. Many times, the potential is there—Alan has a hangover, and rather than mixing a pick-me-up, Jeeves recommends a breakfast of eggs; when asked the reason spelling contests are called “bees,” Jeeves has no answer; when asked to steal a valuable sculpture, Alan does not even consult his valet—but Ames never points up his differences from the original.



Jane for Ames
Photographed by Tom R. Bowie
©1945 G.A. S&L, Scarsdale

Is this deliberate, or is Ames merely pretending to be a well-read Wodehousean? Even Ames's half-hearted attempt at imitating Wodehouse's style is abandoned after the first two chapters. (Of course, who could blame him?) So what was the point of having a Jeeves in the book at all?

The Wodehousean reader is fixated by the invocation of the Master's name and most famous character (as Ames could have only expected) and cannot help but put them front and center as he reads this book. But the Wodehouse element is merely on the fringe of this tale of self-discovery and self-destruction; it is a device for the author to show how literate he is, like his references to Proust, Genet, Anthony Powell, and the dozens of other writers whose names are dropped on virtually every page: mere gimmick and affectation. Ultimately, it is a distraction.

Read without this lens, the book has some merit: an interesting cast, a number of humorous passages and some fun digressions and philosophical discourses. But the author is mistaken if he believes that opening in a Wodehousean vein will aid him in raising this little effort to the level of great comic literature. Rather, by holding up a portrait of the Master, his own visage looks so much paler in comparison: His plot is flabby, his characters are flatter, his world a veneer, and the style so weak in contrast as to be an embarrassment. Had he left Jeeves out altogether, Ames's novel would have come off much better, though for tales of this kind, I

still prefer *Catcher in the Rye* or *The Fan Man*. But I suspect that the non-Wodehousean reader will actually enjoy it far more than the readers of this review, as the weak use of the Jeeves character will not grate on them as badly. Frankly, after finishing it, I took down my copy of *Carry On, Jeeves*, just to refresh the palette. Ain't nothing like the real thing, baby.

What Perils of Loving Wodehouse?

BY WILLIAM (TOM) THOMAS

Should I ever be fortunate enough to join the SDrones Club, I hope to celebrate the occasion by announcing a sweepstakes based upon the year in which the accumulated number of words written about P. G. Wodehouse exceeds the number written by him. Anthony Lane did his bit to close the gap more than a short-story's worth with his nearly 11,000-word essay, "Beyond a Joke: The Perils of Loving P. G. Wodehouse," in *The New Yorker* of April 19 & 26, 2004.

His essay merits our attention because that magazine fashions, or at least nourishes, public opinion; Mr. Lane is a respected author who joined its staff in 1993 and serves as its film critic; and his comments range from entertaining and enlightening to disjointed and disconcerting. The essay's title invites the response, "So, what *are* the perils of loving Wodehouse?"

I don't question whether Lane believes "Wodehouse is the funniest writer—that is, the most resourceful and unflagging deliverer of fun—that the human race, a glum crowd, has yet produced." He provides ample evidence in this essay and elsewhere. In his *Nobody's Perfect: Writings from the New Yorker*, a collection of reviews and related articles, and a weighty volume in both senses of the word, Lane joyfully reports having "been drenched in P. G. Wodehouse from an early age" and compares himself with Bertie Wooster in being "congenitally unable to speak before ten in the morning." And he leads his essay with a photograph of an apparently ebullient Wodehouse taken about 1917.

Thus, I'm not surprised to learn that Lane prizes his six-volume set of "The Great Sermon Handicap" in 58 languages and dialects, but I am surprised that he, or anyone else, has read "Uncle Fred Flits By" over 200 times or consults a copy of *The Jeeves Omnibus* daily and hopes to be buried with it. He furthers his standing as a Wodehousian by this fanciful call to action: "Place

a copy of 'Lord Emsworth and the Girl Friend,' say, in every drawer of every desk in every house in the land, just as the Gideons supply Bibles to hotel rooms, and national morale would fly through the roof."

Lane praises Wodehouse but also honors at length his great-uncle Eric, a dedicated devotee of Wodehouse whom Lane never knew and whose estate included many of Wodehouse's novels, extensively annotated with personal marginalia. Lane's parents took possession of the books, but he derived the benefit of having them at hand. "Uncle Eric" flirted with the allures of fascism in Great Britain between the world wars, a link that Lane unsuccessfully tries to forge between him and Wodehouse, and in doing so tells us far more than we possibly wish to know about Eric's military service, personal possessions, and foreign travels.

An illustration of a gentlemen, apparently "Uncle Eric," with an open copy of *The Code of the Woosters* is captioned with a segment of a longer sentence from the essay: "Immerse yourself in Wodehouse for a while and you start to subscribe, whether you like it or not, to his sneaky inversion of accepted social values." This can be read as both a commendation and a condemnation, but Lane's opinion of that novel is unambiguous: "a book as indispensable to the alert mind of the twentieth century as *Anna Karenina* was to that of the late nineteenth."

The circumstances surrounding Wodehouse's civilian internment by the Germans in 1941 and events leading to the five 13-minute radio broadcasts from Berlin; the inflammatory aftermath and political considerations driving official inquiries, as needlessly exacerbated by the decade-long delay in making public the broadcast transcripts, now available on the World Wide Web; and the lasting consequences of the Berlin business on Wodehouse's personal and professional life have been so thoroughly researched and documented that I'm amazed anyone yearns for more. Readers unfamiliar with this period of Wodehouse's life might want to review the transcripts with official records in Iain Sproat's *Wodehouse at War* and the conclusions reached by conscientious biographers, such as Frances Donaldson, Benny Green, David Jasen, Norman Murphy, Barry Phelps, and Richard Osborne, who examined those regrettable events and consequences in thoughtful perspective. They agree with official government findings that Wodehouse was not guilty of wrongdoing, although, in Green's words, he "displayed foolishness worthy of the most witless of his heroes."

Lane, as many others have, analyzes Wodehouse's "withering portrait" in 1938 of fictional fascist Roderick Spode, leader of the Black Shorts and designer of feminine lingerie, in *The Code of the Woosters*. Lane shows

no qualms in discounting the official investigations and a knighthood that absolved Wodehouse but repeats the "Nazi stooge" allegation and wonders if he "reflected on his novel as he sat at the microphone in Berlin and did the dirty work for a nation run by genocidal Spodes."

He takes evident pleasure in announcing Robert McCrum's forthcoming Wodehouse biography, "in which he rightly devotes the bulk of his attention to the unappetizing sight of a Wodehouse doing everything to pretend that the global hullabaloo that kept interrupting his work was no more than a passing fuss." McCrum confirmed in *Wooster Sauce* this June that Wodehouse in Berlin has not been forgotten: "Never mind the joy he gave to millions—the hundreds of lyrics, and scores of stories, it is those five Berlin broadcasts that steal the show."

Lane cites noted authors—Doyle, Joyce, Proust, Tolkien, and Trollope—to bolster his argument that "ignoring real life can leave you open to damnations, great and small." To him, Wodehouse and Uncle Eric were earnest, free-spirited, and tainted. This seems to be Lane's peril of loving Wodehouse, whose demarcation between fiction and reality he finds wanting and even ominous. Still he asks, "Which Wodehousian has not woken up, on a Monday morning, and said to himself, 'I prefer being Bertie Wooster to being me'? P. G. Wodehouse, for one, I'd be willing to bet.

Wodehouse did not think highly of *The New Yorker*, judging by commentary in his *America, I Like You* and letters in *Yours, Plum*. His short stories appeared in about 70 periodicals, including perhaps 50 in the United States, but that magazine was not among them. John Lardner reviewed *Spring Fever* less than warmly in its pages in 1948, reporting a decline in the author's comic powers but praising his earlier novels as "a masterly body of work." The magazine in 1960 carried an anonymous writer's one-page account of an informal luncheon visit with the Wodehouses at their home on the occasion of his 79th birthday, which his publisher had billed as his 80th, and an anonymous report on his 90th birthday party greeted readers 11 years later.

Wodehouse was particularly acerbic in describing the magazine's lengthy Profiles of noted individuals, at least until 1971, when Herbert Warren Wind's "Chap With a Story to Tell" appeared as a Profile, a contribution which Richard Osborne in his revised biography called a "mellifluous appreciation." Wodehouse and Wind shared a passion for golf, which, coupled with Wind's reputation for evenhandedness, might have accounted for Wodehouse's change of heart. James Thurber, a contributor to *The New Yorker* for decades, relates in his

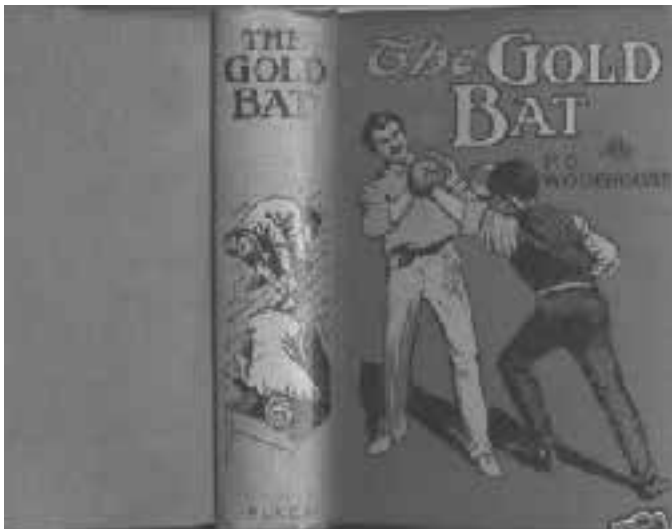
The Years with Ross how Wodehouse once inadvertently came close to being considered a *New Yorker* author when a verse by Philip G. Wylie, who was identified only by his initials, later was attributed to Pelham Grenville Wodehouse when reprinted in a New York newspaper.

I know of four other published responses to Lane's essay. Mark Grueter and Bill Hogan in letters to the editor in *The New Yorker* defended Wodehouse's broadcasts, the former interpreting them as an "indictment of the absurdity of war," and the latter suggesting that Wodehouse at the time was "adrift, as Bertie [would be] without his Jeeves." Jan Wilson Kaufman in *Plum Lines* (Summer 2004) approvingly quotes Lane on our indebtedness to Wodehouse for his literary achievements, but she avoids the Berlin business. Norman Murphy in the same issue skewers Lane for relying upon unfounded premises to reach illogical and damning conclusions.

I have tried to understand Lane's animus toward Wodehouse, and I have failed. Unlike "Uncle Fred Flits By," Lane's essay doesn't weather repeated readings. With the exception of satire, that is too much to ask of threadbare opinion cloaked in the garb of scholarship.

Collecting Wodehouse: *The Gold Bat*

BY JOHN GRAHAM



One hundred years ago this fall, Wodehouse's fourth book, *The Gold Bat*, was published in London by Adam & Charles Black on September 13, 1904, after having been serialized in *The Captain* in six monthly installments between October 1903 and

March 1904. It was Plum's first novel to appear in *The Captain*, the magazine for boys (and "old boys") most closely associated with his school stories. The first-edition book sold for 3s 6d. There are no records of how many copies were printed, but the number is not likely to exceed 1,000. In 2004, surviving copies in very good condition sell for \$1,500 or more. Fortunately, however, this is one early Wodehouse for which far less expensive alternatives exist, including several early printings in nearly the same format as the first edition.

Stop me if you've heard this before, but the story of *The Gold Bat* takes place at Wrykyn in the Easter term during the rugby football season. Plum's first novel to be set at Wrykyn, a fictional version of his beloved Dulwich, it is essentially a mystery story, concerning the strange disappearance of a small gold charm (in the shape of a bat) and the sinister doings of The League. There is also a bit of boxing, Tuesday morning mathematics, some illicit smoking and two ferrets named Sir Nigel and Sherlock Holmes.

The first edition is bound in dark-red cloth with color illustrations on the front cover and spine by T. M. R. Whitwell, reproducing two of the eight black-and-white plates within the book. The three-word title appears in gold letters on the spine, while on the front cover "The" is written in blue-grey and "Gold Bat" in yellow. Black lettering is used to record the author ("By P. G. Wodehouse" on the front cover and simply "Wodehouse" on the spine) and the publisher ("A&C Black" on the spine only). The title page has the date 1904 at the bottom. Page 279 carries a full-page ad for *The Pothunters* and page 280 has two half-page ads for *A Prefect's Uncle* and *Tales of St Austin's*.

Black continued to issue copies of the first edition until at least 1909. These so-called "first edition reissues" can be distinguished from true firsts only by the presence of an eight-page advertising insert printed on semi-glossy paper and pasted between page 280 and the rear endpaper. The date of 1909 can be inferred from the insert itself, which lists *Mike* as Plum's most recent book. If an enterprising book dealer (or collector for that matter) were to remove the insert, there would be no way to tell a reissue from a first edition. As of mid-July, the Internet book site abebooks.com listed one copy of the "first edition, first issue" for \$1,998 and one copy of the "first reissue" for \$860. If you have a steady hand and a guilt-free conscience, why not opt for the later one.

There is a true second edition of *The Gold Bat*, published August 1911 as stated on the copyright page. Some copies contain an advertising supplement (listing *Psmith in the City*), but otherwise the book uses the first-edition text and the eight Whitwell plates.

According to an article in the November 2003 issue of *Book and Magazine Collector* by TWS members Tony Ring and Nick Townend, there were at least four variants of this edition, mostly involving changes to the spine. On one issue all of the spine lettering is in black, on another in yellow. The other two have gold spines like the first edition, but one omits Wodehouse's name. Nick tells me that he has recently discovered two more variants and guesses there may be even more. Both newly discovered second editions have all-black spine lettering and omit Wodehouse's name. On one copy, the name of the publisher is written "A&C Black"; on the other, it is simply "Black." No matter what variant of the second edition you happen to buy, you are likely to pay \$150–\$400.

Another option for serious collectors is to acquire the six issues of *The Captain* in which *The Gold Bat* first appeared. This turns out to be a surprisingly affordable alternative to an early edition of the book, and as an added bonus, you get far more illustrations (25 in all). Single issues of *The Captain* rarely come on the market, but bound volumes (in their distinctive red boards issued by its publisher) often do. If you want *The Gold Bat* this way, look for volume 10. I found two copies for sale on abebooks, one listed for \$125 and one for \$100. Ebay is another good source.

In 1923 Black reset the text and reissued *The Gold Bat* with a color frontispiece but without the other illustrations. The book was part of a uniform series of six of Plum's school books, each with plain red boards wrapped in multicolored dust jackets. This edition was reprinted in 1926 and 1933. Depending on condition, copies without dust jackets sell for \$30–\$100 today. According to McIlvaine, imported sheets of the 1923 edition may also have been issued by Macmillan, New York, although no collector that I know has ever seen a copy. In 1974, all six school books in this series were reissued by The Souvenir Press in London. In paperback, Penguin published *The Gold Bat and Other Stories* (those being *The White Feather* and *The Head of Kay's*) in 1987 using the text block (and even the pagination) of the Souvenir Press volumes.

So ends the recorded publishing history of *The Gold Bat* according to McIlvaine, but there is more to tell. In 1971 Project Gutenberg, a nonprofit Internet publishing venture founded by Michael Hart at The University of Illinois (www.gutenberg.org), began posting plain-text files of selected works in the public domain in the United States (roughly defined as any book published anywhere before 1923). In 1999 they posted their first Wodehouse (*Piccadilly Jim*), and they currently offer 36 titles to choose from, including *The*

Gold Bat. You can access and download any of their books for free, and there are no restrictions on how their files can be used. So perhaps it is not surprising that some enterprising publishers would begin to turn these electronic files back into conventional books. As far as I know, the first publisher to offer Wodehouse is called Wildside Press, a self-described "internet-based, print-on-demand publishing company," founded by science-fiction writer John Betancourt.

Currently, Amazon.com lists 34 Wildside Press Wodehouse offerings in both hardback and paperback editions, including *The Gold Bat*. I recently purchased one of their hardbacks. It is a handsomely produced volume with blue boards and a simple black dust jacket. My one complaint is that the inside flaps carry a rather poorly written seven-paragraph introduction to Plum's life and works ("P. G. Wodehouse, creator of Bertie Wooster and his ultra-competent butler Jeeves" and the like). But there is one pleasant surprise: The title page gives the location of Wildside Press as Doylestown, Pennsylvania. Doylestown, you may recall, is where in 1979 The Wodehouse Society began.

Gretchen Worden: An Appreciation



When I heard that Gretchen Worden, age 56, had died on August 2, I immediately thought of Plum's words after the death of his beloved stepdaughter Leonora: "I thought she was immortal." Other members of Chapter One who had known Gretchen over the years had the same reaction. She was a big woman with a rich throaty laugh and a wicked sense of humor. She was a longtime Wodehouse fan and an early member of Chapter One. Wodehouse had sparked her interest in cow creamers, and her nom de Plum was, of course, Uncle Tom. Her illustrated talk on her cow creamer collection was the hilarious highlight of the 2001 Philadelphia convention. No one ever seemed more alive, or lively.

Gretchen was director of Philadelphia's Mutter Museum, an institution that is a little difficult to explain. It started as a collection of medical curiosities—Chief

Justice John Marshall's bladder stones, the liver shared by the original Siamese twins Chang and Eng, etc. There were an astounding number of anatomical deformities and diseases on display. Yet somehow Gretchen managed to transform the place into a mecca for artists and photographers and the general public. A book on the museum, which she helped put together, became a best-seller. And she became a genuine Philadelphia-area celebrity.

She was a collector. In addition to her cow creamer collection she had a collection of toilet paper from around the world. She also collected rats—model and stuffed. A conversation with Gretchen was unique, and sometimes alarming. She was absolutely one of a kind.

Alas, Gretchen Worden was not immortal. But she was utterly unforgettable.

—Dan Cohen

Six Degrees of P. G. Wodehouse: The Actors

In the Winter 2003 *Plum Lines*, David McDonough challenged readers to find the connection between Wodehouse and a list of Oscar-winning actresses, based on the popular 1990s game Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon. (The idea is that we are all connected by six or fewer stages of circumstances or acquaintance. For example, Maggie Smith was in *Gosford Park* with Stephen Fry, who played Jeeves in the TV series *Jeeves and Wooster*.) David now challenges you to find the Wodehouse connections with a list of Oscar-winning actors. As before, McDonough says, "If you come up with better links than we did, you are entitled to your choice of cigar or coconut." Answers are on page 14.

1. Emil Jannings
2. Warner Baxter
3. George Arliss
4. Lionel Barrymore
5. Frederic March
6. Wallace Beery
7. Charles Laughton
8. Clark Gable
9. Victor McLaglen
10. Paul Muni
11. Spencer Tracy
12. Robert Donat
13. James Stewart
14. Gary Cooper
15. James Cagney
16. Paul Lukas
17. Bing Crosby
18. Ray Milland



Lionel Barrymore



Bing Crosby

19. Ronald Colman
20. Laurence Olivier
21. Broderick Crawford
22. Jose Ferrer
23. Humphrey Bogart
24. William Holden
25. Marlon Brando
26. Ernest Borgnine
27. Yul Brynner
28. Alec Guinness
29. David Niven
30. Charlton Heston
31. Burt Lancaster
32. Maximilian Schell
33. Gregory Peck
34. Sidney Poitier
35. Rex Harrison
36. Lee Marvin
37. Paul Scofield
38. Rod Steiger
39. Cliff Robertson
40. John Wayne
41. George C. Scott
42. Gene Hackman
43. Jack Lemmon
44. Art Carney
45. Jack Nicholson
46. Peter Finch
47. Richard Dreyfuss
48. Jon Voight
49. Dustin Hoffman
50. Robert DeNiro
51. Henry Fonda
52. Ben Kingsley
53. Robert Duvall
54. F. Murray Abraham
55. William Hurt
56. Paul Newman
57. Michael Douglas
58. Daniel Day-Lewis
59. Jeremy Irons
60. Anthony Hopkins
61. Al Pacino
62. Tom Hanks
63. Nicholas Cage
64. Geoffrey Rush
65. Roberto Benigni
66. Kevin Spacey
67. Russell Crowe
68. Denzel Washington
69. Adrian Brody
70. Sean Penn



Laurence Olivier



Paul Scofield



Robert DeNiro



Daniel Day-Lewis

Rivals of P. G. Wodehouse

An occasional feature on American humorists of Plum's time

BY DAN COHEN

If you read down the credits on the 1917 Wodehouse, Bolton, and Kern musical comedy *Leave it to Jane*, you will see that it was “founded” on the play *The College Widow* by George Ade. Unless you were born in Indiana you probably won't recognize the name George Ade. But Wodehouse certainly knew who he was. In 1952 Plum cited Ade at the top of his list of humorists who had “departed.” Ade had been praised by Mark Twain and H. L. Mencken and was, for a time, the most successful humorist in America.



George Ade was born in 1866 in the tiny Indiana town of Kentland, about 80 miles from Chicago. His earliest memory was “that night in October, just as far back as I can reach into the past, we sat on the fence and looked at a blur of illumination in the northern sky and learned that the city [Chicago] which we had not seen was burning up in a highly successful manner.”

After graduating from the newly built Purdue University, Ade tried to make it as a newspaper writer but had little success until he contacted John T. McCutcheon, a Purdue buddy who was working as an artist on *The Chicago Record* and was beginning to establish himself as one of the finest newspaper illustrators and cartoonists of his time. McCutcheon got Ade a job as a reporter for *The Record*.

Ade began to hit his stride in 1893 when he and McCutcheon teamed up to contribute to a regular feature boosting the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition that was to open that year. When the

Exposition closed the pair was assigned to write and illustrate “Stories of the Streets and of the Town.” They could do just about anything they wanted. One day it was a story about “The Junk Shops of Canal Street,” the next day “Hobo Wilson and the Good Fairy.” Ade was turning out 1,500–1,800 words a day, every day. His editor recalls that Ade “consistently shied away from the typewriter and . . . his copy always came to my desk in his own bold and very legible handwriting.” Though the column was extremely popular, the author remained anonymous, noting, “The composers working on my hand-written gems never had to reach for an upper-case ‘I.’”

Said Ade, “I kept my two-column department going for seven years. Before I retired to the clover pasture and began to steal money by syndicating, I had published four books, all of the material having first appeared in the paper.”

Another American Hoosier humorist and great Ade admirer, Jean Shepherd, wrote, “He experimented constantly, and the push of a daily deadline forced him to be completely unselfconscious. He wrote rapidly and rarely rewrote a line, and almost every column varied in form from the one before it. It is too bad that there are few outlets today that can give a writer such freedom and yet impose work discipline.”

Ade evolved a form of sketch or short story called “Fable in Slang,” a title the gentle humorist was not quite comfortable with: “But by ‘slang’ I did not intend the ‘flash’ talk of thieves or people of the underworld. When I used the word ‘slang’ I meant the ‘vernacular,’ . . . Indeed my slang was selected for *Mother and the Girls*. I tried to make playful use of the vernacular . . .” When Ade's first volume of *Fables in Slang* was published it was an enormous success, not only with the public but with what he called The Serious Literary People. Almost overnight George Ade became a national institution.

Ade had always been fascinated by the theater and went on to write plays and musical comedies. These too were successful. He even wrote for the movies, though apparently without much success.

Ade was making money by the sackful—over \$1,000 a week—and this was the early 1900s. He invested lots of it in Indiana farmland, which he figured would be there after his success faded. And fade it did. He continued writing for most of the major magazines, but the spark was gone and he began repeating himself.

Ade built a huge English-style manor house called Hazenden near Brook, Indiana, and lived like a country squire. He never married, but he was no recluse. He held huge parties on his estate, and he became a world

traveler. "The time to enjoy a European tour is about three weeks after you unpack," he observed.

By the 1930s the world had changed, and there was no longer a market for George Ade's style of humor. He gave up writing and died in 1944, almost completely forgotten.

Today much of Ade's work may seem dated, and his dialect humor can be jarring a century after it was written. But he was a funny and incisive writer, and you get a look at the American Midwest at the turn of the last century that you will get nowhere else. A collection of Ade's Chicago stories, with the McCutcheon illustrations, is still in print, and many of his other books can be found through used-book sources on the Internet for modest prices.

St. Mike's, Wodehouse and Me: The Great Thesis Handicap

BY ELLIOTT MILSTEIN

Editor's note: This is Part 2 of Elliott's opening talk at last year's convention in Toronto. In Part 1 we learned how he came to write his college thesis, which examined Wodehouse's works by dividing them into an Early Period, Middle Period, and Late Period. Having discussed the Early Period in the last issue of Plum Lines, Elliott now moves on to the Middle and the Late . . .

Not to keep the thing in the dark any longer, the Middle Period begins with the publication of *Leave It To Psmith* in 1923 and the Late Period with *Full Moon* in 1945. For my remaining time I will briefly delineate the differences between these two periods. For a more in-depth analysis, you will need to wade through my entire thesis.

In my readings on Wodehouse, I had noticed that many scholars talk about the change in Wodehouse's style in writing *Leave It To Psmith*, but none mention the equally startling change while writing *Full Moon*. Some noted a deterioration in his style. Wodehouse, for instance, did not, in the 1950s, get the glowing reviews he had received in the 1930s. The only changes noted were negative. But by the 1960s, the good reviews returned, and the reviewers were uniform in their judgment that "nothing had changed" and that Wodehouse could still crack them through the covers. The reality is that much *had* changed.

The change I noticed first was in his use of imagery. In the Middle Period, Wodehouse would often use a central image throughout a novel, usually one having to do with the title. The best example is

Heavy Weather. The main conflict in the book deals with Ronnie Fish's insane jealousy over Sue Brown, which she calls his "making heavy weather." And the weather throughout the novel is, indeed, oppressively hot and humid. At the tensest moment in the story there is a vicious thunderstorm, and after Ronnie and Sue become reconciled, the air becomes fresh, sweet, and cool.

Wodehouse obviously began *Full Moon* with similar intentions toward a central image. The story opens with the moon "nearly at its full," and we are introduced to the characters by following its rays. The moon waxes slowly over Blandings as the various lovers grope their way toward their unions. The high point comes with Tipton and Veronica walking in the moonlight. The moon is discussed, and they turn in, Tipton all atwitter, as the moonlight "seemed to beckon him." He goes out again to find solitude on the "moonlit terrace," but Lord Emsworth finds him, mentions the moon again himself, and then turns to his favorite topic, the Empress. He talks so much and at such length about his pig that the lovesick and disgusted Tipton wishes "that his companion would trip over a moonbeam and break his neck."

In fact, everything that can possibly be done with the moon is exploited in Chapter Four, and the reader, going on past form, expects this image to continue to infuse the book, but Chapter Four is the last time the moon is mentioned (except for a casual reference later to the moonlight walk of that chapter). If one works out the time sequence in *Full Moon*, one notices that the moon would be full by the denouement, but Wodehouse does not point this out. Clearly, when sketching the book out, Wodehouse had intended to use the familiar central image structure, but decided against it when he came to finishing it. It might be argued that since he was interrupted in writing the book he simply forgot, but I think not. There is no other case in the Late Period of a book with one central image. Wodehouse had abandoned that structure in favor of a multiplicity of images.

He also stopped making his titles double entendres. In the Middle Period, the titles often served two purposes (and when his chapters were titled, they often did too). One immediately thinks of *Money For Nothing*, *Hot Water*, *The Small Bachelor*, and *Money in the Bank*. In the Late Period there are titles equally suited to this purpose (e.g., *Something Fishy* and *Ice in the Bedroom*), but the possibilities are never explored. I myself explored a number of double entendres while working the distaff crowd at Friday night pubs on this very campus, but that's another story.

Wodehouse was famous for helping to create the distinctive slang of *entre-deux-guerres* Britain. He had used popular expressions in his early period, like “C-3” and “oojah-cum-spiff,” but in 1923 he begins something new, as when Psmith says to Mike Jackson, “let us trickle into yonder tea-shop and drink success to a cup of the steaming.” According to Partridge’s *Dictionary of Slang*, this is the first use of the word *trickle* meaning “to go,” and *steaming*, initially a military term for pudding, here means “tea.” Other slang words that made their way into the English language through Wodehouse were *turpy*, *teuf-teuf*, *snappers*, and *buzzer*. Terms that were already there, like “steaming,” had their meaning changed, such as “zippy” and “pip-pip.” But the last of these slang inventions was “oompus-boompus” in *Money in the Bank*. I have found no case of an invented slang word anywhere in the Late Period.

Another difference in patterns between the Middle and Late periods is Wodehouse’s use of violence. We rarely associate Wodehouse’s world with violence, but just as Disney’s G-rated cartoons are filled with violence and terrifying images, so too are Wodehouse’s lyrical comedies. There are violent images throughout the Middle Period as well as a significant amount of purposeful violence, beginning with the cottage scene near the end of *Leave It To Psmith*, with Freddie’s physical injuries and Psmith’s gunplay. The comedy tends to cover it up, but it is there. We have the relatively harmless destruction of property, such as Aunt Dahlia’s smashing the porcelain figure of the Infant Samuel at Prayer, or the Duke of Dunstable’s demolition of his nephew’s sitting room with a poker. But there are also violent attacks on a character, such as Tubby Vanringham’s throttling of Sam Bulpitt in *Summer Moonshine*. The worst violence inflicted is the mayhem committed on Roderick Spode in *Code of the Woosters*. Gussie Fink-Nottle hits him over the head with a painting; Bertie ties him up, hits him again (this time with a vase), and finally puts his cigarette out on his hand. Such violence is generally skirted in the Late Period. Let’s take a look at two similar passages, one from the Middle Period’s *Money in the Bank*, the other from the Late Period’s *Something Fishy*:

The tobacco jar was one of the large, thick, bulging tobacco jars . . . Dolly, moreover, though of apparently frail physique, was stronger than she looked. She possessed good muscular wrists and a nice sense of timing. The result was that one blow . . . was amply sufficient. Jeff’s eyes rolled heavenwards, his knees buckled under him, and he sagged to the floor. And, as he did

so, Anne sprang forward with an anguished scream and flung herself on the remains.

“Jeff,” she cried. “Oh, Jeff, darling!”

Considering her views, strongly held and freely expressed, regarding this young man, such agitation may appear strange. But it is well-known fact, to which any authority on psychology can testify, that at times like this the feminine outlook tends to extreme and sudden alteration. A girl may scorn and loathe the scrum half who leaps at her in rhododendron walks, but let her behold that scrum half weltering in his blood after being rapped over the head with a tobacco jar, and hate becomes pity, pity forgiveness and forgiveness love.

Now, the Late Period version. It begins with Lord Uffenham recalling the scene I just read:

“Lord love a duck, I can see the scene as plainly as if it had happened yesterday. There was Jeff squaring away at Molloy—unpleasant feller he was. Going a bit bald on the top, I remember—and Mrs. Molloy—Dolly her name was, and, as I say, a sweet little woman, though of course with some defects—upped with the jar and let him have it. Like this,” said Lord Uffenham, and lumbered to the door. “Jane,” he called. “Jay-un.”

“Yes?”

“Cummere. Young Holloway’s had an accident. I was showing him that tobacco jar of mine and my hand slipped.”

Chapter 16

It was some time later that Bill, waking from a disordered nightmare, in which strange and violent things had been happening to him, became aware that someone was standing by his side . . .

“Was that you?” he said coldly.

“Hey?”

“Did you hit me with that tobacco jar?”

“Yerss, that’s right. Bring the young folks together, that’s what I say. As I anticipated, it worked . . . And up she comes and seeing your prostrate form, flings herself on it and kisses yer. The usual routine.”

You notice that the violence in the second version is totally omitted. No blows to the head, no knees buckling, no welter of blood. But did you also notice

that there is no reconciliation scene? No cries of “darling,” no description of the reunion or examination into why it has happened.

Well, naturally, it has all happened before so there is no reason to go into it again. But by 1946 we have had over 60 engagements in the Wodehouse canon. It is understood that young people in love will get engaged and get married. The Late Period has a significant reduction in the romantic element. That is not to say that love is ignored in the Late Period. It is always there, and often still forms the main core of the plot. But it is definitely diminished. In the earlier books, as soon as the love interest is resolved, the book ends. This is not wholly true of the Late Period. In *Something Fishy*, again, for instance, the real interest is in the tontine, and though the love angle is straightened out about three quarters of the way through the book, there is still the tontine to be settled.

All of these changes—changes from the Middle to Late Period—are communicated to us through the change in narrative voice. The Middle Period begins with the emergence of a unique style, and that style is characterized by the main character, Psmith.

Psmith is unique in the Early Period, where he floats through public school, a bank, and a New York newspaper with a languid insouciance and bemused detachment, but his distinct voice ultimately becomes, as Richard J. Voorhees points out, the source of four styles of Wodehouse speech in the Middle Period: the young hero; Wodehouse’s morons—Bingo Little, Barmy Fotheringay-Phipps, et al.; Jeeves, whose speech stems from the formal strain in Psmith; and Wodehouse’s own narrative voice. In the Early Period, Wodehouse experiments with various narrative voices, but Psmith’s dominates the Middle Period. Beginning with *Full Moon*, however, the tone shifts gradually to another voice, that of Bertie Wooster.

The first-person narrative voices in the Wodehouse canon are pretty much limited to short stories: the Oldest Member; Mr. Mulliner; James Corcoran (Ukridge’s biographer); and the various Eggs, Beans, and Crumpets of the Drones (whose styles are, admittedly, very Wooster-like). Bertie is the only narrator to cross over from short story to novel, which he does fairly early in the Middle Period. (Only one other novel is written in the first person, *Laughing Gas*, a bizarre and atypical novel, the narrator of which, Reggie Havershot, in both style and temperament, is pretty much a Bertie clone.)

In a word, one can say that Psmith is essentially the narrator of all the Middle Period novels and Bertie, when he is not writing his own stories, is the narrator

of the third-person Late Period stories.

I have already noted the decrease in emphasis on romance, shown in the similar passages from the two Lord Uffeham books. This is clearly a Woosterish approach to a story. The Middle Period books are replete with romantic scenes, though when they occur in the Wooster novels Bertie is squirming in agony. In the Late Period, they are almost completely absent.

Another aspect of this change in narrative voice is seen in the ratio of narration to dialogue. The Wooster novels of the Middle Period have far more dialogue than the third person novels. In the Late Period, the ratio is about the same—the third-person novels now also have description and detail pared to the bone.

But really the change is an almost ineffable alteration in style. Psmithian flowery formality gives way to Bertie’s zippiness. We see many of Bertie’s verbal signatures in the Late Period narration, which, in the Middle Period, are evident only in Wooster/Jeeves stories. Let’s sample some of these Woosterisms:

From *Ice in the Bedroom*, 1961:

As he latch-keyed himself into Peacehaven, one would not be far wrong in saying there was a song on his lips.

From *Service with a Smile*, 1961:

It was one of those avant-garde plays which bring the scent of boiling cabbage across the foot-lights and in which the little man in the bowler hat turns out to be God.

From *Pearls, Girls & Monty Bodkin*, 1972:

Correction. A word as weak and inadequate as “say” should never have been employed when such verbs as “chanted,” “caroled,” or even “fluted” were at the chronicler’s disposal.

And my favorite, from *Galahad at Blandings*, 1969:

If ever he had seen a fermenting aunt, this fermenting aunt was that fermenting aunt.

There are many others as well. The Late Period third-person narration is not pure Bertie Wooster, of course, but it is close. One might say that it is the style of a Bertie Wooster who has spent a little more time around Jeeves.

This is not mere speculation and fancy. There is something a little odd about Wodehouse’s use of time. Critics have caviled at Wodehouse’s playing fast and loose with time, many remarking that time stands still

in Wodehouse. How else does one explain the lack of the aging process of his characters over the course of decades? As Wodehouse himself remarked, if one accepts Lord Emsworth, for instance, as being in his sixth decade of life in *Something Fresh*, he would be a doddering centenarian before *Service with a Smile* opens.

But time, while it moves slowly, does not stand still. We see the Empress win the silver medal, not just once, but thrice, so we know that at least three summers have passed between “Pig-hoo-o-oey!” and *Galahad at Blandings*. Also, in *Jeeves in the Offing*, Bertie refers to Gussie’s prize-giving at the Market Snodsbury Grammar School as having taken place the previous year.

Bertie ages over the course of his saga as well. Beginning as a young man with a thirst for parties and a desire to get married, he slowly gives up the hectic nightlife, and his early interests in a female partner give way at first to a strong desire to avoid entangling relationships and, ultimately, to a condition where matrimony is no longer considered reasonable or, indeed, possible. In the final Wooster books, Bertie comes off as a rather middle-aged bachelor. And with *Jeeves and the Tie That Binds*, when Jeeves destroys the Club book section on Bertie, they become, essentially, married to each other.

Now, in the opening chapter of Wodehouse’s last completed novel, *Aunts Aren’t Gentlemen*, Bertie refers to “my American pal, Tipton Plimsoll, with whom I had dinner last night to celebrate his betrothal to Veronica.” In *Galahad at Blandings*, Tipton refers to this same dinner, but in a tone that suggests it was in the more distant past. We can see then that *Aunts Aren’t Gentlemen* is meant to take place immediately after the events recorded in *Full Moon*. Therefore, by extrapolation, since all the novels of the Late Period are interconnected in one way or another, we can see that all the third-person novels of the Late Period take place after the last Wooster/Jeeves novel, or, in other words, after Bertie has spent a little more time around Jeeves.

By the time Bertie has completed writing the dozen novels and handful of stories that make up his saga, he might be in a position to begin writing about others. Yes, I rather like to think that, when I am reading a Late Period Wodehouse, I am reading the nonautobiographical works of Bertram Wilberforce Wooster.

So there you have it, ladies and gentlemen. The three periods of Wodehouse: Early (1900–23), Middle (1923–45), and Late (1945–74). Now, let’s all start using this terminology regularly from now on.

You don’t want me to have to come back and do this again, now do you? What would Professor Cameron say? Well, I would rather like to think that he and Plum are up there right now, looking down and saying that I had cracked it through the covers. Which reminds me of the cricket game I saw in Brighton in the summer of ’74. But that’s another story.

He got through the song somehow and limped off amidst roars of silence from the audience.
 “Extricating Young Gussie,” 1917

Answers to “Six Degrees” quiz on page 9:

1. Emil Jannings was in *The Blue Angel* with Marlene Dietrich, who was in *Around the World in Eighty Days* with David Niven, who played Bertie Wooster in *Thank You, Jeeves*.
2. Warner Baxter was in *42nd Street* with Ginger Rogers, who was in *Shall We Dance* with Fred Astaire, who starred in *A Damsel in Distress*.
3. George Arliss was in *Cardinal Richelieu* with Arthur Treacher, who played Jeeves in *Thank You, Jeeves*.
4. Lionel Barrymore was in *David Copperfield* with Arthur Treacher.
5. Frederic March was in *The Affairs of Cellini* with Frank Morgan, who played Jimmy Crocker Sr. in *Piccadilly Jim*.
6. Wallace Beery was in *Viva Villa!* with Arthur Treacher.
7. Charles Laughton was in *Tales of Manhattan* with Rita Hayworth, who was in *You Were Never Lovelier* with Fred Astaire.



8. Clark Gable was in *Night Flight* with Robert Montgomery, who played Jimmy Crocker in *Piccadilly Jim*.

9. Victor McLaglen was in *Gunga Din* with Joan Fontaine, who costarred in *A Damsel in Distress*.
10. Paul Muni was in *The Story of Louis Pasteur* with Akim Tamiroff, who was in *Tortilla Flat* with Frank Morgan.
11. Spencer Tracy was in *Tortilla Flat* with Frank Morgan.
12. Robert Donat was in *Vacation from Marriage* with Glynis Johns, who was in *Mary Poppins* with Arthur Treacher.
13. James Stewart was in *You Gotta Stay Happy* with Joan Fontaine.
14. Gary Cooper was in *Alice in Wonderland* with Arthur Treacher.
15. James Cagney was in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with Arthur Treacher.
16. Paul Lukas was in *Lord Jim* with Peter O'Toole, who played Lord Emsworth in *Heavy Weather*.
17. Bing Crosby was in *Anything Goes*.
18. Ray Milland was in *The Major and the Minor* with Ginger Rogers, who was in *The Gay Divorcee* with Fred Astaire.
19. Ronald Colman was in *The Prisoner of Zenda* with David Niven.
20. Laurence Olivier was in *Rebecca* with Joan Fontaine.
21. Broderick Crawford was in *Born Yesterday* with William Holden, who was in *The Towering Inferno* with Fred Astaire.
22. Jose Ferrer was in *Lawrence of Arabia* with Peter O'Toole.
23. Humphrey Bogart was in *Casablanca* with Claude Rains, who was in *Lawrence of Arabia* with Peter O'Toole.
24. William Holden was in *The Moon is Blue* with David Niven.
25. Marlon Brando was in *Bedtime Story* with David Niven.
26. Ernest Borgnine was in *The Wild Bunch* with William Holden, who was in *The Moon is Blue* with David Niven.
27. Yul Brynner was in *Morituri* with Marlon Brando, who was in *Bedtime Story* with David Niven.
28. Alec Guinness was in *Lawrence of Arabia* with Peter O'Toole.
29. David Niven was in *Thank You, Jeeves*.
30. Charlton Heston was in *Hamlet* with Richard Briers, who played Gally Threepwood in *Heavy Weather*.
31. Burt Lancaster was in *Separate Tables* with David Niven.
32. Maximilian Schell was in *Judgment at Nuremberg* with Marlene Dietrich, who was in *Around the World in Eighty Days* with David Niven.
33. Gregory Peck was in *The Guns of Navarone* with David Niven.
34. Sidney Poitier was in *The Defiant Ones* with Theodore Bikel, who was in *My Fair Lady* with Stanley Holloway, who played Beach in the BBC series *Blandings Castle*.
35. Rex Harrison was in *My Fair Lady* with Stanley Holloway.
36. Lee Marvin was in *The Professionals* with Robert Ryan, who was in *The Sky's the Limit* with Fred Astaire.
37. Paul Scofield was in *A Man for All Seasons* with Wendy Hiller, who was in *Separate Tables* with David Niven.
38. Rod Steiger was in *Dr. Zhivago* with Ralph Richardson, who played Lord Emsworth in the BBC series *Blandings Castle*.
39. Cliff Robertson was in *Autumn Leaves* with Joan Crawford, who was in *Dancing Lady* with Fred Astaire.
40. John Wayne was in *They Were Expendable* with Robert Montgomery.
41. George C. Scott was in *The Bible* with Peter O'Toole.
42. Gene Hackman was in *The Birdcage* with Robin Williams, who was in *Hamlet* with Richard Briers.
43. Jack Lemmon was in *The Notorious Landlady* with Fred Astaire.
44. Art Carney was in *Going in Style* with George Burns, who costarred in *A Damsel in Distress*.
45. Jack Nicholson was in *Something's Got to Give* with Amanda Peet, who is in the upcoming version of *Piccadilly Jim*.
46. Peter Finch was in *Network* with William Holden, who was in *The Towering Inferno* with Fred Astaire.
47. Richard Dreyfuss was in *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* with Bob Balaban, who was in *Gosford Park* with Stephen Fry, who played Jeeves in *Jeeves & Wooster*.
48. Jon Voight was in *Midnight Cowboy* with Bob Balaban, who was in *Gosford Park* with Stephen Fry.
49. Dustin Hoffman was in *Tootsie* with Geena Davis, who was in *Stuart Little* with Hugh Laurie, who played Bertie Wooster in *Jeeves & Wooster*.
50. Robert DeNiro was in *Taxi Driver* with Jodie Foster, who was in *Svengali* with Peter O'Toole.
51. Henry Fonda was in *Mister Roberts* with Jack Lemmon, who was in *The Notorious Landlady* with

- Fred Astaire.
52. Ben Kingsley was in *Maurice* with Judy Parfitt, who played Lady Constance Keeble in *Heavy Weather*.
 53. Robert Duvall was in *True Grit* with John Wayne, who was in *They Were Expendable* with Robert Montgomery.
 54. F. Murray Abraham was in *The Sunshine Boys* with George Burns.
 55. William Hurt was in *The Accidental Tourist* with Geena Davis, who was in *Stuart Little* with Hugh Laurie.
 56. Paul Newman was in *Until They Sail* with Joan Fontaine.
 57. Michael Douglas was in *Napoleon and Samantha* with Jodie Foster, who was in *Svengali* with Peter O'Toole.
 58. Daniel Day-Lewis was in *In the Name of the Father* with Tom Wilkinson, who is in *Piccadilly Jim*.
 59. Jeremy Irons was in *The Man with the Iron Mask* with Hugh Laurie.
 60. Anthony Hopkins was in *The Lion in Winter* with Peter O'Toole.
 61. Al Pacino was in *The Godfather* with Marlon Brando, who was in *Bedtime Story* with David Niven.
 62. Tom Hanks was in *Philadelphia* with Denzel Washington, who was in *Much Ado About Nothing* with Richard Briers.
 63. Nicholas Cage was in *Peggy Sue Got Married* with Maureen O'Sullivan, who was in *Hideout* with Robert Montgomery.
 64. Geoffrey Rush was in *Shakespeare in Love* with Tom Wilkinson.
 65. Roberto Benigni was in *Son of the Pink Panther* with Anton Rodgers, who played Ukridge in the BBC series *Ukridge*.
 66. Kevin Spacey was in *Glengarry Glen Ross* with Jack Lemmon, who was in *Hamlet* with Richard Briers.
 67. Russell Crowe was in *Proof of Life* with Meg Ryan, who was in *IQ* with Stephen Fry.
 68. Denzel Washington was in *Much Ado about Nothing* with Richard Briers.
 69. Adrian Brody was in *The Village* with Brendan Gleeson, who was in *Troy* with Peter O'Toole.
 70. Sean Penn was in *Mystic River* with Tim Robbins, who was in *IQ* with Stephen Fry.

You can't heave a brick in Hollywood without beaming an English elocution teacher. I am told there are English elocution teachers making good money there who haven't even got roofs to their mouths.
Laughing Gas, 1936

Chapters Corner

CONDUCTED BY SUSAN COHEN

It's fun being with other fans, and it's fun reading about what other fans are doing. So please use this column to tell the world—the Wodehouse world, that is—about your chapter's activities, zany and otherwise. Representatives of chapters, please send all info to me, Rosie M. Banks, otherwise known as Susan Cohen. Anyone reading this who is not a member of a local chapter but would like to attend a meeting or become a member should get in touch with the contact person listed.

Take A Card: Amy Plofker, our Membership Secretary, and one of the founders of our new New York chapter, has a good idea for anyone organizing a chapter, running a chapter, or simply in a chapter. Even chapterless members should find her suggestion useful; so if you want to spread the word about TWS beyond your circle of friends and acquaintances, here's how: TWS has lots of charming pasteboard cards, about 3.5" x 5.5", which contain a wholehearted plug for joining the society, along with information about how to join. Putting these cards in your local library and bookstores would be very useful. Amy has received good responses by putting them out at Wodehouse theatrical performances. Contact Amy [see last page of this issue] if you want some cards.

Anglers' Rest
(Seattle and vicinity)
Contact: Susan Collicott
Phone:
e-mail:

Summer in Seattle is a rather busy season. We mossy-backed folks must scurry about and fit a whole summer's worth of activities into the three weeks when the rains stop and the strange yellow glowing orb in the sky appears. We marvel at the warmth, the feeling of dry pavement, and the freedom of movement when one is not wrapped head-to-toe in foul-weather gear. Due to this frantic flurry of activity, Anglers' Rest meetings are rare in summer.

Anglers' Rest folks have quite a few plans for the fall, though! On the list are: walking tours of 1920s buildings in Seattle, tea outings, musical outings, showings of Wodehouse videos, croquet games, outings to Seattle Cricket Club matches, and many other activities!

Blandings Castle Chapter
(greater San Francisco Bay Area)
Newsletter: *The Argus Intelligencer and Wheat Growers Gazette*
Contact: Jan Kaufman, president
e-mail:

We met at Jan Kaufman's house in Emeryville on Sunday, August 29. We began with our usual pot-luck lunch, always one of the most popular parts of our casual meetings. Among other diversions, we discussed the latest scenario from the Blandings Hollywood Skit Committee. The committee recently met at the ever-hospitable Ed and Missy Ratcliffe's in Felton. Director Dave Smeltzer did some preliminary casting for this skit, which will feature an Academy Award-winning mixture of live and filmed performances.

Many of us attended a memorial service at the San Francisco Arboretum in honor of Rhoda Robinson, our popular longtime Blandings member. Rhoda had been a volunteer at the Arboretum. She died very suddenly at home on August 6, and will be greatly missed by everyone who knew her charm and sense of humor.

The Broadway Special
(New York City and vicinity)
Contact: Philip Shreffler
e-mail:

Following the success of the East Coast Binge (see *Plum Lines*, Summer 2004), the Broadway Special planned two events for the dog days of summer (one would like to say "pig days of summer," but one hesitates). For the first event, a reading of Jonathan Ames's *Wake Up, Sir!* on July 29, see our special report on page 2. Our second convocation will be a "Summer Moonshine" meeting on Saturday, August 28, at the Wheeltapper Pub in the Fitzpatrick Grand Central Hotel, 141 East 44th Street (at Lexington Avenue) from 5:00 to 7:00 P.M. We shall have no formal program for the evening, just good Plummish (if that's the word I want) camaraderie, conversation, browsing, and sluicing. No need to remit oof to anyone, as we shall all order from the pub's menu. However, we do request that those wishing to attend either or both events RSVP to Philip Shreffler so that we are able to apprise the venues of how many of the better element to expect. [*Editor's note: We regret that Plum Lines will not have arrived in time for people to RSVP for this event.*]

There is a third event ahead for members of the Broadway Special and members of other chapters or anyone in the New York area or beyond interested in joining us, though it will not occur until winter. Robert McCrum, author of the soon-to-be-released Wodehouse biography, *Wodehouse: A Life*, will do a reading, Q&A, and book-signing on Sunday, December 19, 11:00 A.M.–1:00 P.M. at the 92nd Street Y, Unterberg Poetry Center, 1395 Lexington Avenue, New York. This is part of the Biographers & Brunch series. The cost is \$35.00, including brunch. Tickets should be purchased directly from the 92nd Street Y by phone or website (details on page 23). Please RSVP to Philip Shreffler anyway, in case we plan something after the brunch so we can let you know about it. The faster you buy your ticket the better, so you can be sure of getting a seat.

Capital! Capital!
(Washington, D.C., and vicinity)
Contact: Jeff Peterson
Phone:
e-mail:





On June 27, 30 members of Capital! Capital! gathered for an evening of Hunan food and P. G. Wodehouse fun. Brian Taves presented an update of his continuing research on Wodehouse-related films, chronicling the near-symbiotic relationship between Plum and Hollywood. Wodehouse books and stories were a durable source of Hollywood films, from early silents to full-scale productions. Likewise, Plum got inspiration—Lord knows there’s enough funny stuff going on there—for some 40 years of Hollywood stories and satires. Brian has unearthed more detail on British and other European Wodehouse-related films since he spoke on this theme at the TWS Philadelphia convention in 2001. He has recently acquired a significant collection of Wodehouse stills to illustrate film adaptations back to the earliest years. Brian hopes to publish a book on the subject in 2005, a publication that Capital! Capital! eagerly awaits.



The evening included a talk by a visitor to the United States: Mr. Harry Pillai, recently retired Director General of Police in New Delhi and brother of Capital! Capital! member Shanta Kumar. Mr. Pillai told us that Plum is much admired in India, especially among schoolboys who read the canon as part of their English language instruction.

On July 18, members of the Capital! Capital! faithful—21 in all—attended a local revival of *Anything Goes*, the musical comedy written by P. G. Wodehouse and Guy Bolton, with music by Cole Porter. The production was professional and spirited, albeit low-budget, but as they say, everyone had a toe-tapping good time. After the theater the group repaired to a nearby establishment noted for its wide selection of cool, amber-colored liquids. Some of the fellows even sampled a Belgian plum beer (Plum beer?) that was on the menu. Well, anyway, anything went.



On August 9, our numbers were 30 again as members of Capital! Capital! assembled for a Blandings Castle-style afternoon tea party, appropriately dressed, of course. Ladies in wide-brimmed hats and flowing summer skirts ate scones, trifles, cucumber sandwiches, and petit fours, while receiving the solicitous attentions of gentlemen resplendent in boater hats, ascot ties, and plus fours. Also in attendance was a cricketer; a sea captain with monocle; a young chap in whites who kept asking, “Tennis anyone?”; and a fellow in a checkered suit, who was widely suspected of being a turf agent. Naughty flappers and elderly aunts were seen sneaking off to the library, where bottles of sherry awaited those who sought something more fortifying than peach tea. And presiding over the festive table was Anatole, actually Ken Clevenger, dressed in chef’s whites and toque; and a French parlor maid, Shirley Wayman, stereotypically dressed. A good time, as they say, was had by all.

Chapter One
(greater Philadelphia area)
Contact: Susan Cohen

Phone:
e-mail:

Chapter One meets on Sunday afternoons. Meetings are held every two months, except in the summer. Place: the Dark Horse Restaurant, Headhouse Square, Philadelphia. New members are welcome. Our next meeting will be Sunday, September 19, at 1:00 P.M. A presentation will be made about the book *Wake Up, Sir!* by Jonathan Ames. At this meeting we will honor Gretchen Worden, a very special person and longtime member of TWS and Chapter One, who died suddenly in August at the age of 56. We share many happy memories of Gretchen.

There are no plans yet for our November meeting, but on Thursday, December 16, we will go as a group to hear Oxford University author Robert McCrum tell us about his new biography of Wodehouse, *Wodehouse: A Life*. What a nice Christmas present for Philly area Wodehouse fans! Time: 7:00 P.M. Place: The Free Library of Philadelphia, 1901 Vine Street. This event is free. If other chapters or Wodehouse fans in the Philly area or beyond who are not members of Chapter One would like to join us, we say the more the merrier. If you want further information, feel free to contact Andy Kahan, Program Director, Author Events at the Free Library of Philadelphia; phone: 215-567-4341. Andy's e-mail is KahanA@excen.library.phila.gov.

The Clients of Adrian Mulliner
(for enthusiasts of both PGW and Sherlock Holmes)
Contact: Marilyn MacGregor
Phone:

The Drone Rangers
(Houston and vicinity)
Newsletter: *DroneStar*, edited by Carey Tynan
Contact: Toni Rudersdorf
Phone:
e-mail:

Every other month we meet and discuss a Wodehouse book we have all read. These "book meetings" are held at the Barnes and Noble Town & Country at 7:00 P.M. On alternate months we meet for dinner.

To receive a *DroneStar* and join the Drone Rangers, contact Toni Rudersdorf and she will tell you where to send your membership fee, which is \$15. If you plan to visit Houston, we hope you can attend a book meeting or dinner meeting while you're here.

The Chicago Accident Syndicate
(Chicago and thereabouts)
Contact: Daniel & Tina Garrison
Phone:
e-mail:



The Chicago Accident Syndicate had another of its rowdy meetings on Saturday, August 7, at the home of Gail Wagner-Miller in Chicago. All brought food and drink, consumed same, and read passages from Plum in a cheerful and bonhomous spirit.

The Mottled Oyster Club
(San Antonio and South Texas)
Contact: James P. Robinson III
Phone:
Fax:
e-mail:

The San Antonio and South Texas chapter is still officially known as the Mottled Oysters. However, unofficially the Mottled Oysters have developed into two tracks of bimonthly meetings. Certain meetings (designated Mottled Oyster meetings) are held at a local bookstore (usually Barnes & Noble on Loop 410); other meetings (designated Jellied Eel meetings) are held at local restaurants. Mottled Oyster and Jellied Eel meetings are held on alternate months (with occasional

lapses). It is anticipated that Barnes & Noble will see the Mottled Oyster on September 9, discussing *Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves*. All and sundry are welcome at every meeting.

The New England Wodehouse Thingummy Society
(NEWTS)
(Boston and elsewhere in New England)
Contact: Anne Cotton, president
Phone:
e-mail:

The NEWTS had another nottle (meeting) on August 15. It was one of our better efforts, in spite of now-tropical-depression Charley, whose main effect on Massachusetts was to dump enough moisture to keep us from playing croquet. But the food was not only magnificent, there was more than ample to keep all 19 assembled Newts very happily stuffed indeed. We read through Max Pokrivchak's skit for the Los Angeles convention and enrolled some additional cast members; we expect to have a splendid turnout in 2005. And we even had time to read through—and laugh ourselves silly over—“Honeysuckle Cottage.” We all agree that to appreciate Plum's stories most fully, you have to read them aloud; only then, even with our amateur but impassioned histrionics, do the stories come fully alive. Our next bash has been scheduled for Sunday, October 3, at the home of David Nolan and Rosemary Roman.

The Northwodes
(St. Paul, Minneapolis, and vicinity)
Contact: Kristine Fowler
Phone:
e-mail:

Banjolele jamboree! When recent recruit Paul Martin Peterson rashly disclosed that he had a banjolele and could play it, naturally we leaned on him to provide the entertainment for the August 14th Northwodes gathering. Turns out another new Northwode is a sometime banjo player, so there was much technical discussion about four versus five strings, sound boxes, and the relative merits of picks and claws; the non-banjo-literate majority may have traded a few fogged glances over their oatmeal cookies, but they were impressed nonetheless. All chuckled while favorite passages of *Thank You, Jeeves* were read, and if the

musical accompaniment was a bit non-canonical, we were convinced that Bertie would have wanted to learn “Lazybones” if given half a chance. No complaints from the neighbors at time of going to press (“How dare you play that thing in a respectable block of flats? Infernal din!”), so the demonstration may be repeated another time. The October meeting will be a toast on the Master's birthday; contact Kris Fowler for details.

The Pale Parabolites
(Toronto and vicinity)
Contact: Peter M. Nixon
e-mail:

The Pale Parabolites . . . those who are seeking the Pale Parabola of Joy . . . whatever that may be. The Pale Parabolites' motto is *nil admirari*. Like the Empress of Blandings, the Pale Parabolites take things as they come and marvel at nothing.

The Pelikan Club
(Kansas City and vicinity)
Contact: Sallie Hobbs

The Perfecto-Zizzbaum Motion Picture Corporation
(Los Angeles and vicinity)
Contact: Melissa D. Aaron
e-mail:

We are thrilled to announce that PZMPCo celebrated the fourth anniversary of its existence in June! We had a large turnout, followed by browsing and sluicing at the Chado Tea Room, a fine source of the beverage that cheers but does not inebriate. We are looking forward to the convention next year and hoping that all the Wodehousians who come will learn to love dear Dottyville-on-the-Pacific as much as we do.

We meet the second Sunday of every month at 12:30 P.M. at Vroman's Bookstore, 695 E. Colorado, Pasadena. The readings change every month and can be found by checking our calendar or subscribing to our mailing list (see website information, below).

We have already set the readings for the rest of the year. September: *Uncle Fred in the Springtime*. October: Two Mulliner stories, “Best Seller” and “Strychnine in the Soup.” November: *Quick Service*. December: Two golf stories, “A Mixed Threesome” and “Sundered Hearts,” as well as our Annual Holiday Tea. In December Vroman's devotes all available space to shoppers, so this meeting usually takes place at the home of a PZMPCo

member. We also occasionally attend events of interest, such as the Avalon Ball on Catalina Island, an Art Deco dance in the fabulous Casino, scheduled for October 23, and the Lanterman House Tea, a ragtime era event planned for December 4, ukelele festivals, silent movies, etc. Subscribers to our e-mail list can be kept abreast of such local amusements

Information about our mailing list and important links can be found at our website: www.lahacal.org/Wodehouse.

The Pickering Motor Company
(Detroit and vicinity)
Contact: Elliott Milstein
e-mail:

A brief note to let everyone know that the Pickering Motor Company has not disbanded. All members in good standing read *Right Ho, Jeeves* as promised, and a lovely discussion took place many months ago at the home of Elliott & Elyse Milstein, where a new member was inducted, the chapter thereby increasing by 16-2/3 percent. A hiatus was, unfortunately, necessary, as the group decided to read *Blandings Castle and Elsewhere* and, only after adjourning, discovered that the paperback was out of print. Plans were made to get together to see *Anything Goes* in Stratford, but private lives got busy and contacts lost, and agley is the way things ganged. But all are solemnly pledged to meet in the fall. Also, a potential new member has been seen flitting about on the horizon. In short: stay tuned!

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

Consistent with our motto “all fish, all the time,” in deference to the proven superior brain power of our hero Jeeves himself, the Size 14 Hat Club has met twice in the last year. The first meeting, which was at Phil’s Fish and Chips, established the general form for all such gatherings, to wit, fish and talk.

The second meeting, held on Canada Day, saw us gathered for our annual Spinoza Day Fishing Derby. Place: off the Morrison family wharf on the North West Arm in Halifax. We debated what Spinoza would have made of the repeated suicidal leaps of the humble pollock to our hooks—in apparent contradiction to

conatus sese coservandi, so well acknowledged as one of the major tenets of Spinoza’s philosophy. Could it be that the fish were merely trying to avoid a pod of whales lurking at the mouth of the harbor?

The Soup & Fish Club
(northern Virginia area)
Contact: Deborah Dillard

Phone:
e-mail:

A Few Quick Ones

Newts at Ascot and Elsewhere

John Baesch (who always seems to find these things) has sent a clipping from *The Daily Telegraph’s* sports section—the “Ascot Diary” by Marcus Armytage. The author’s photo shows Marcus wearing a very proper top hat. He begins: “As a newt, never let it be said that Ascot isn’t eco-friendly. It would please Bertie Wooster’s friend Gussie Finknottle that a chunk of the £175m redevelopment of Ascot’s grandstands and realignment of the course has gone on—of all things—a newt protection scheme.”

It seems that during the renovations of the grandstands, it was discovered that the area was also the home for the lesser spotted common newt. The newts were rounded up and relocated at what Armytage says was a “staggering £100,000” cost in a “series of Royal Newt Enclosures.” About 30 newts were found, which works out to about £3,300 per newt. And worth every penny of it.

Meanwhile, David Landman sends news of another victory for the newts, or at least a close relative, the blue spotted salamander. Plans to build a connector road in Westford, Massachusetts, have been put on hold because it may have a serious impact on the salamander, which is an endangered species. According to the *Boston Sunday Globe*, “The state ruling seeks to protect three or four vernal pools that are home to the blue spotted salamander and the Blandings turtle, another endangered species.”

“*The Greatest Stylists*”

A small and witty book about punctuation, *Eats, Shoots & Leaves* by Lynne Truss, became a surprise best-seller, first in the U.K. and then the U.S. Wodehouse

is mentioned frequently. William A. (Tom) Thomas pointed out this paragraph in Edmund Morris's *New York Times* review of the book:

The greatest stylists—those who “hear” as they write—punctuate sparingly and subtly. Truss errs in saying that P. G. Wodehouse eschews the semicolon, but I can see why she thinks so. He uses it on average, once a page, usually in a long sentence of mounting funniness, so that its *luftpause*, that tiny intake of breath, will puff the subsequent comma clauses along, until the last of them lands with thistledown grace. By then you're laughing so much, you're not even aware of the art behind the art.

“Bright Young Things”

Wodehouse fans will certainly be interested in the film *Bright Young Things*, which opened to generally good reviews in the United States in the late summer. It is adapted from Evelyn Waugh's 1930 novel *Vile Bodies*. Waugh was a great admirer of Wodehouse, and his satiric novel is set in a mythical 1930s England, pure Wodehouse country.

In an article in *The New York Times* Charles McGrath writes, “*Vile Bodies* has an old-fashioned plot straight out of P. G. Wodehouse—an on and off again engagement, a rich dotty uncle living in the country, hangovers, missed appointments, improbable moments in motorcars.” Unlike Wodehouse, Waugh has a mean edge and deals with subjects Wodehouse never touched—like drugs and sex.

The film is written and directed by Stephen Fry, a name we all know. Says McGrath, “Mr. Fry is an accomplished novelist (as well as an actor with deep roots in Wodehousiana having played Jeeves in the BBC series *Jeeves and Wooster*).”

The film is in what is known as “limited release”—that is, in only a few theaters. It is unlikely to be coming “to a theater near you” unless you happen to live in the heart of a major city. Most of us will probably have to wait until it goes to DVD. Personally, I can hardly wait.

Collection, Anyone?

A Wodehouse collector is interested in selling his collection, either en masse or individually. For a list of available books, contact John Simonds.

The Wodehouse Prize

On PGWnet earlier this year, Augustine Mulliner posted an article from the *Guardian* of May 31 about awarding this year's Wodehouse prize for comic fiction to a writer with the wonderful Wodehousean name of Jasper Fforde. Fforde (I do hope that is his real name) was given the prize for his book *The Well of Lost Plots*. It is the third in his series about a literary detective named Thursday Next. The fourth book in the series, *Something Rotten*, should be out by the time this item is printed. The first two, *The Eyre Affair* and *Lost in A Good Book*, are available in paperback from Penguin.

The prize, among other things, consists of a live pig—in honor of guess who. There are also jeroboams and cases of champagne from Bollinger, one of the sponsors of the prize. When it was presented at the Guardian Hay festival, festival director Peter Florence said the book “has the true Wodehousean joy of brilliant verbal playfulness and seem genuinely and outrageously original. It's a happy marriage of delightful intelligence and complete lunacy.”

On PGWnet Len Goldstein cheered the Wodehouse prize-givers, as do I. I have read the first two books in the series and am waiting for the third to come out in paperback later this year. There is only one reference to Plum in the first two books. Thursday describes her humorless coworker Bowden this way:

The trouble was, he could read *Three Men in a Boat* without a single smirk and viewed P. G. Wodehouse as “infantile,” so I had a suspicion the affliction was long-lasting and permanent.

The books are set in an imaginary England where the Crimean War is still going on, the dodo has been recreated as a pet, and the population is obsessed with literature. It is also a world in which absolutely anything can happen. I thoroughly enjoyed the books, though I can't unreservedly recommend them to Plum fans. It helps if you are also a fan of science fiction/fantasy and Monty Python.

Still, in our TV-obsessed world, a man who loves books as Fforde so obviously does has to be treasured.

—Dan Cohen

Dark hair fell in a sweep over his forehead.
He looked like a man who would write
vers libre, as indeed he did.

The Girl on the Boat, 1922

Letter from England

BY ELIN WOODGER

It's been an excessively wet summer in jolly old England, but also a very busy one. In June the U.K. Society's cricket team, the Gold Bats, played their annual matches against the Dulwich College Dusters and the Sherlock Holmes Society. We lost both, although the Sherlockian match was a *very* near thing; a certain husband's umpiring decisions are still the subject of derisive comment. Not even the new club cricket cap (crossed gold bats on a plum background) could turn the scale. As always, reports on both matches can be found on the U.K. Society's website: www.eclipse.co.uk/wodehouse.

In July our speaker at the Savage Club evening was David Jasen, author of *Portrait of A Master*. He told us how he had tracked down Wodehouse in Remsenburg, corresponded with him, and eventually came to be allowed to write the biography. In the question-and-answer session afterwards, David told us stories of Lady Wodehouse, expressed his admiration for Plum's theater work, and talked about the controversial German broadcasts, among other things. Coincidentally, the next Savage Club evening, on November 9, will feature the latest Wodehouse biographer, Robert McCrum.

The summer has also brought a number of American visitors to these shores, including—of course—Marilyn MacGregor, who, if not quite a resident of the Lansdowne Club, has certainly become its U.S. recruiting agent. In June Susan Brokaw and her husband Dirk decided the Lansdowne was the only place to celebrate Susan's birthday, another splendid evening. June also brought us Jean Tillson and her dad, who managed to attend both cricket matches—as well they should, since Jean is a founder of TWSCC. Two months earlier, in April, Kristine Fowler came over for a week's bell-ringing course. Bell-ringers seem even friendlier than Wodehousians; if Kris had accepted half the invitations she was offered, she'd still be ringing her way round England.

Kris managed to fit in a Wodehouse Walk, which is becoming increasingly international. A recent "routine" walk saw two people from Malaysia, two Czechs, and two Germans. A couple of Americans, Tad Boehmer and his mother from Urbana, Illinois, had read their Wodehouse and joined the June walk. They thoroughly enjoyed themselves and concluded by marching up Charing Cross Road to buy a secondhand copy of *In Search Of Blandings*. Since then, 15-year-old Tad—who had already joined the U.K. Society—has become a member of TWS. And he is mighty welcome!

McCrum in the USA

Amy Plofker reports that Robert McCrum, author of the upcoming biography *Wodehouse: A Life*, is doing a mini book tour on the East Coast in December. Two venues are open to the public:

December 16, 2004, 7:00 P.M. (Free)
Free Library of Philadelphia, 1901 Vine St., Central Library, Philadelphia, PA
See more information regarding this event in the Chapter One details on page 19.

December 19, 2004, 11:00 A.M.–1:00 P.M. (\$35 including brunch)
92nd Street Y, Unterberg Poetry Center, 1395 Lexington Ave. at 92nd St., New York, NY
Call 212-415-5500 to buy tickets or visit www.92y.org (search for "wodehouse").

Wodehouse On Stage

BY AMY PLOFKER

Here's what's coming up in favored parts of the continent! Alert your friends who live nearby, or use this information to arrange your own travel itinerary. For a short plot description of each show, visit www.wodehouse.org/OnStage.html.

The Play's The Thing, August 21–September 18, 2004
Lincoln Center Mini Theatre, 417 W. Magnolia St., Fort Collins, CO
Ticket prices range from \$13 to \$20. Call 970-221-6730 for tickets or visit <http://www.openstage.com/> for more information.

By Jeeves, September 17–October 10, 2004
Beck Theater, Main Stage, 17801 Detroit Ave., Lakewood, OH
Performances are Thursday, Friday, and Saturday at 8 P.M.; Sunday at 3 P.M. For more information, call 216-521-2540 or visit www.lkwdpl.org/beck/index.html.

The Beauty Prize, April 26–May 8, 2005
The 45th Street Theater, 354 W. 45th St., New York, NY
For more information, visit www.musicalstonight.org. Tickets will go on sale at www.smarttix.com sometime after September 2004.

I'm never sure if *Anything Goes* counts as a "real" Wodehouse show or not, given that Wodehouse and

Bolton's original book was changed so drastically. Hedging my bets, I'll mention that professional productions can be seen in Stratford, Ontario (through October 31, 2004); Houston, Texas (January 27–February 13, 2005); Richmond, Virginia (June 10–August 14, 2005); and Los Angeles (July 6–September 4, 2005)—handy for convention-goers!

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