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Hooray for Hollywood!

A Jan Wilson Kaufman Production

Presented by Blandings Castle and the Perfecto-Zizzbaum Motion Picture Corporation, August 11–14, 2005

Scene 1: Sunset Village, UCLA, California

P. G. Wodehouse lived and worked in Hollywood for only a few years in the 1930s. By his own accounts he wasn't crazy about it. Certainly Hollywood was not kind either to the writing he had done for the studios or to their adaptations of his other work. Yet in two novels (*Laughing Gas* and *The Old Reliable*) and a series of short stories (at least six), he chronicled—or, more accurately, created—a Hollywood that is immortal, especially to Wodehouseans. It is a place of noddies, queens of stormy emotions, captive writers, scheming studio heads, and so many other unforgettable characters.

It was essential—indeed, inevitable—that TWS members would gather in this mythic place. And gather we did, starting on Thursday, August 11, for the Great Hollywood Convention. The location was the University of California campus in Los Angeles, chosen by our late president, Jan Kaufman. Here we could have it all: beautiful scenery, perfect proximity to Hollywood, skits, quizzes, films, movie treatments, songs, scholarly talks, browsing, sluicing, and the inevitable joy and laughter of being with fellow Plummiess—everything. What follows is a description of three wonderful days by a few of us who were there.

Scene 2: A Tour of Hollywood

by Dan Cohen

On Friday morning convention goers piled into a couple of buses for a tour of Hollywood. On our bus the tour guide was actor, writer, and convention



Smiling faces, new and renewed friendships, and a touch of the regal at the TWS 2005 convention in L.A.

speaker Curtis Armstrong, who regaled us with “facts and almost facts about Hollywood.” The guide on the second bus was Beth Miles of the Perfecto-Zizzbaum chapter, who had done a fine job of planning the tour along with Curtis.

The buses took us through parts of Beverly Hills, which is every bit as glamorous and expensive as you thought it was, then down Hollywood Boulevard (of which more later) to Paramount Studios [founded by Jesse Lasky and Adolph Zukor]. This is no theme park or historical recreation—it is the oldest and largest working studio in Hollywood (now incorporating the old RKO, later Desilu studio). But it is a studio of the post-movie era, for few theatrical films are made here anymore—it is mostly television shows now, and has been for many years.

Still, there are plenty of reminders of Classic Hollywood—like the ornate gate to the studio. This is the Bronson Gate, from which Charles Bronson took his screen name, his own being unpronounceable. Besides, making a TV show is a great deal like making a movie. We rounded a corner and suddenly found ourselves on the New York City street set. The buildings, really just facades, were so realistic that I would have sworn one of them was the brownstone Susan and I lived in when we first moved to New York many, many years ago. A few hundred yards away they were actually shooting on a set made up to look like a Chicago street. One thing missing was the Western town. Our guide said there were a few Western sets kept around, mostly as historic relics. The popularity of the Western has declined so much in movies and television that there is little use for the Deadwood Saloon or the dusty street.

We then were taken to the Paramount Theater, a state-of-the-art movie house with an enormous screen and the loudest sound system I have ever heard. We saw a brief trailer for a new film, which seemed to consist primarily of gunshots and other explosions. The sound was quite alarming.

Lunch was at the Paramount commissary—sorry, no Steak Pudding Marlene Dietrich. Then it was back on the bus again, this time for a more extended visit to Hollywood Boulevard. Once the center of Hollywood glitz and glamour, it has fallen on hard times and now resembles Times Square before it was cleaned up. Both sides of the boulevard are paved with plaques for the “stars.” It is called the Hollywood Walk of Fame, but it is an odd collection. There is a plaque for Marilyn Monroe and a few feet away is an identical plaque for “Who’s That.” Space on the Walk of Fame is for sale—\$15,000 earns you a star in the sidewalk.



Dan Cohen, our esteemed Editor in Chief, in one of his less-gorilla-like moments.

But for the Classic Hollywood buff, there are things to see that set your heart aflutter. First and foremost is the gorgeously garish Grauman’s Chinese Theater. The courtyard is paved with handprints, footprints, and autographs of the stars in cement. No “Who’s That” here—Jimmy Durante even left a print of his nose. There are several other well-preserved 1920s and 1930s

theaters and restaurants as well as the still-elegant Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel, site of the first Academy Awards. Here Wodehousians gathered around the lovely bar, restoring their tissues for the bus ride back to UCLA.

The places where Wodehouse lived in Hollywood were not included in the bus tour (large vehicles are not allowed on Beverly Hills residential streets), but convention organizers provided excellent driving directions. The first is 724 Linden Drive. The problem is that 724 does not exist. Beverly Hills houses are often renumbered, so it is probably 722 or 728. Both are fairly modest, by Beverly Hills standards.

The next house, at 1005 Benedict Canyon Drive, is anything but modest, by any standards. Today it is hidden by a stucco wall and a lot of greenery. But from here Wodehouse was able to walk to work at MGM.

When Wodehouse went back to Hollywood in 1936, he didn’t want to walk to work, so he lived at 1315 Angelo Drive. When he moved there it was a rather isolated spot. Today it is more built up, but Angelo Drive is narrow and steep, with several hairpin turns. It is a white Tudor-style mansion, with an astonishing view of the city and ocean below. It gives you some idea of just how oofy Plum was at this time. We were able to get to the driveway for a good view of the place. There was not a soul to be seen, but there was a dog barking, not the deep, threatening bark of a guard dog but an irritated small-dog bark. I didn’t see the animal, but I like to think it was a Peke.

Scene 3: A Cookout and Clean, Bright Entertainment

by Gary Hall

At last the moment arrived, the convergence of that horde of happy bibliophiles over a mass of food and drink. The Hooray for Hollywood Barbecuers cheerily invaded the beautiful terraced balcony at Covell Commons, overlooking the green and vibrant UCLA campus as the sun set over Sunset Boulevard. The equally cheery background music was provided by Walter Nelson, who could occasionally be seen dancing with his wife, Sheila Murphy-Nelson.

No moody forkfuls were pronged that night! The crowd surged early and often past the tables full of the victuals, availing themselves forthwith. Perhaps more importantly, the dreadlocked fellows at the sluicing tables handed out glasses of wine and bottles of beer and expected nary a cent in return. Ah, nice it is to get a sloshy return on your convention dollar!

The conventioners mingled about the tables,

conversing and reacquainting. Gushing and guffawing was heard all 'round, as befits such an esteemed group. Marilyn MacGregor was spotted with her full Empress attire, right down to the pink pig stockings. Anne Cotton was a dashing figure in red silk. And Pongo's top hat rose regally above the crowd.

One dash of unintended spice was the presence at one of the tables of that mysterious L.A. animal, the Gate-Crasher. Despite the fact that he had no nametag, was shoveling it in at an astounding rate, and was espousing very little Wodehouseness, it wasn't apparent that he was a likely fake until his disappearance immediately after the BBQ and for the rest of the weekend.

As the evening cooled, the herd moved into the Grand Horizon Room and took their seats for the Clean, Bright Entertainment. After the proper call to disorder from Acting Pres Jean Tillson, we were welcomed by our fabulous Mistress of Ceremonies, Melissa Aaron, with a rousing banjolele/vocal performance of "Hooray for Hollywood." We hoped she would follow up with "Sonny Boy," but no such luck.

Neil Midkiff kept things rolling with two rollicking good songs: a reprise of "Good Gnus" from the Houston convention and "Whiskers," a setting of the lyric from "To the Critics, These Pearls" in *America, I Like You*. Neil also promised to lurk after the performances to play tunes as long as the survivors were willing to stress their vocal cords.

The New England Wodehouse Thingummy Society (NEWTS) then performed their farce "Penny's from Hades"—written, produced, and directed by Max Pokrivchak. The NEWTS enacted a Wodehousean Hollywood story, with Cindy McKeown doing a remarkable turn—and a few pirouettes—as the braided, jaded starlet Little Penny Nichols. Everything turned out happily for Montrose Mulliner, played by John Fahey, despite the petulance of the star, the smothering Hollywood mothering of Anne Cotton's Mrs. Nichols, and the frustration of The Director, Max. Cowboys, vampires, Indians (?!), and even Marie Antoinette made appearances. Dan Cohen, the omnipresent Gorilla (because he's the only TWS member who owns a gorilla suit), made an acrobatic appearance (a jungle dive behind the stage). Other cast members included Wendell Verrill, Jean Tillson, Lisa Fahey, Randall Burkett, Bill Franklin, Indu and Jagannathan Ravi, Shamim Mohamed, Elin Woodger, Amy Plofker, and Kris Fowler.

Dennis Chitty portrayed Jerry Shoesmith and Dan Cohen sat in for the under-the-weather Ed Ratcliffe as the gendarme in Dr. Chitty's adaptation of the first chapter of *Frozen Assets*, "Jerry Shoesmith and

the Gendarme." The silver-haired duo delighted us with their wry exchange concerning a lost-and-found wallet.

The Main Event of the evening was the Great Wodehouse Movie Pitch Challenge. From the many entries, three finalists were invited to pitch their film concepts to three of Hollywood's Biggest Cheeses: Sigismund Glutz (Elliott Milstein), head of Medulla-Oblongata-Glutz Motion Pictures; Isidore Fishbein (Shamim "Pongo" Mohamed), head of Fishbein Celluloid Corp.; and Jacob Schnellenhamer (Elin Woodger), head of Perfecto-Zizzbaum Studios. Elin's/Jacob's cigar would have made any magnate jealous.



Mike Eckman attempts to achieve fame and fortune with his movie pitch of "Sir Gregory."

With eagerness and excitement, the three presenters stepped to the podium, only to be met with the fearsome flurries of questions—and lack of social graces—that three Hollywood Producers are capable of generating when operating in tandem. Misinterpreting every nuance and Plummian characteristic of the proposed scripts, feeding off each others' errors and inspirations, and completely rewriting the endings on the spot, the producers were frighteningly funny. First Mike Eckman was fed to the sharks, providing his description of "Sir Gregory," a Wellesian approach to the Blandings saga (Orson Welles, that is—think *Citizen Kane*). Last was C. P. West (who bore an uncanny resemblance to Max Pokrivchak), pitching the Robin Hoodesque "Psmith of Psherwood Pforest." Despite their game efforts, though, the winner of the evening was the second entrant, Deborah Bellew, for her marvelous treatment of "The Lord of the Ring: Bertie's Engagement." If you have any question as to why Deborah was declared the winner, you need only gaze at the poster accompanying her treatment on pages 12–13 to see true Hollywood genius in the making.

Topping off the planned entertainment, Gary

Hall and Linda Adam-Hall took the stage with only a podium and Terry Kitchen's guitar for protection. They reprised "Be!," the poem that Tony Ring used to begin his Limp Lavender Leather talk in Houston; followed with a tune inspired by the golfing king in "The Coming of Gowf"; and topped it off with "Like," a collection of Plum's similes that told of the trials, tribulations, and eventual perfect harmony of boy-meets-girl.

The festivities carried on into the night, as Neil manned the keys and many brave souls sang from his lyric sheets of the Wodehouse songs from the Cazalets' terrific CD *The Land Where the Good Songs Go*. With smiles on their faces, ready for a weekend of gentle debauchery and cackling camaraderie, with visions of Plum's sweets dancing in their heads, the crowd vanished into the night.

Scene 4: A Series of Talks

by John Graham

At 8:15 A.M. Saturday morning, a somewhat bleary-eyed but cheerful lot of eager Wodehouseans converged on UCLA's Northwest Auditorium for the weekend's main attraction: a day-long series of learned talks and lighthearted readings, all culminating in a promised multimedia extravaganza courtesy of the Blandings Castle chapter. Acting President Jean Tillson welcomed all those assembled and paid a short but moving tribute to the late Jan Kaufman, whose vision had brought us together in Hollywood to celebrate the Master. This was followed by words of welcome from Plum's step-grandson, Sir Edward Cazelet, read to us by Hilary Bruce, chairman of the P G Wodehouse Society (UK).



Brian Taves, author and Library of Congress film historian, rouses the audience.

The first speaker was Brian Taves, film historian at the Library of Congress and author of *P. G. Wodehouse and Hollywood: Screenwriting, Satires, and Adaptations*, which is soon to be published by McFarland. In his talk, "Plum in Hollywood: Just the FAQs and a Few Myths Shattered," Brian gave us a generous preview of his book and left us eagerly anticipating its release

in spring 2006. As we all know, Wodehouse was twice employed by MGM as a screenwriter in the 1930s, and although he famously proclaimed that he did little work for his fat salary, Brian shows that in fact Wodehouse worked hard for the studio on both occasions, even though the film project which initially brought him to Hollywood (a screen adaptation of *Rosalie*) was never completed.

Next up was the team of Hilary and Robert Bruce, delivering the talk "Red-Hot Stuff—But Where's the Red-Hot Staff?" prepared by UK Society patron, author, and noted cricket journalist Murray Hedgcock. Murray pondered on the journalistic staffs of some of Plum's best-known fictional periodicals, such as *Wee Tots*, *Tiny Tots*, *Cosy Moments*, *Peaceful Moments*, and *Milady's Boudoir*. All available evidence seems to suggest these publications were rather thinly staffed, often by as little as a single editor who relied on the work of outside contributors. Murray concludes that Plum's vision of publishing was perhaps ahead of its time and may have inspired the recent under-employment policies of Rupert Murdoch.



Hilary and Robert Bruce bring Murray Hedgcock's words across the pond to us.

Next up was UK ex-pat John Hayward, Los Angeles broadcaster, toastmaster, editor, author, and one-time president of the Hollywood Cricket Club. A born mimic, John entertained us with tales of cricket and similar delights in a variety of Anglo accents, including cockney, Australian, Yorkshire, Scottish, Irish, and Welsh (among others). Although he never met Wodehouse, John often played cricket with Boris Karloff, who along with Wodehouse shared the presidency of the Hollywood Cricket Club in 1937.

After a mid-morning coffee break, we reassembled to hear Chris Dueker on "Remembrance of Fish Past." A southern-California anesthesiologist and specialist in underwater medicine, Chris began his dissertation with some hilarious comments on English food, nutrition, and grammar (reminding us of the useful distinction between healthy and healthful). He then eased his way round to his two main questions: Is eating fish good for the brain; and does Jeeves really like fish? After an

extensive review of the relevant literature (both scientific and Wooster), Chris concludes that the answer to both questions appears to be a definite maybe.

Our next performer was Melissa Aaron, associate professor of English at Cal Poly Pomona, speaking, strumming, and singing about “That Instrument: Wodehouse on the Ukulele.” Melissa brought along two ukuleles and two banjoleles, which she played for our enjoyment as she schooled us in the instrument’s history (from 1879 Hawaii to 1920s England). According to Melissa, Bertie preferred the banjolele because that was the version of the uke most popular in England, and the songs he sang in *Thank You, Jeeves* were straight out of The Hit Parade of 1929.

Melissa left us humming a happy tune as we welcomed our next group of artists to the stage to perform a dramatic reading of “Uncle Fred Flits By,” voted in 2000 by six Wodehouse societies around the world as our favorite short story. Elin Woodger was the narrator, Gary Hall was a convincing Uncle Fred, and Max Pokrivchak was the pink chap Wilberforce Robinson. Showing her versatility, Linda Adam-Hall performed the roles of Pongo, the female servant, Connie Parker, Julia Parker, Claude Parker, Mr. Roddis, and the parrot. At the end, there were audible calls of “author, author” as we headed off to lunch.

As is customary at TWS conventions, the afternoon began with the business meeting and election of officers. Jean Tillson was unanimously chosen to be president for the coming two years, and Kris Fowler agreed to serve both as vice president and treasurer. Amy Plofker will continue as membership manager. As the first order of new business, Jean called on a nottle of NEWTS to propose that our 2007 TWS convention be held in Providence, Rhode Island, at the historic Biltmore Hotel. Their motion was seconded and agreed to unanimously.

Apparently not having enough else to do, Kris Fowler then proceeded to deliver the next talk of the day, “Published Works on Wodehouse,” which had been expertly researched and written by Tony Ring. To everyone’s regret, Tony and Elaine Ring had to cancel their trip to Hollywood at the last minute, but Kris did Tony proud by offering us a lucid guide to the many articles and books written about Wodehouse over the years, from 1910’s “Impressions of PG Wodehouse” by LH Bradshaw through 2004’s *Wodehouse: A Life* by Robert McCrum.

Next saw the return engagement of Elin Woodger, Gary Hall, and Linda Adam-Hall, this time assisted by Neil Midkiff. To start off, Elin gave us a brief but entertaining talk titled “Animal Crackers,” featuring

some of Plum’s notable pets in fiction and real life and a short history of animal stars in Hollywood. To end, Elin and Neil gave us a dramatic reading of “Gone Wrong,” Plum’s seldom-reprinted tale about a dog named Stiffy who becomes a movie star. (The story first appeared in *The Cecil Alden Book* in 1932.) Not to be outdone by Elin and the gang, John Hayward returned to the stage for a brief encore performance in the role of Anglo-raconteur extraordinaire.

“Sly like a fox” or “busy as a beaver” are common enough similes but far too mundane for P. G.



According to Dr. Chitty, this is how Bertie sees Aunt Agatha. Actually, it’s an urubu, a South American vulture.

Wodehouse, according to our next speaker, Dennis Chitty, retired professor of zoology at the University of British Columbia. In “The Master’s Beastly Similes,” Dennis presented a series of Plum’s mammal, bird, amphibian, and reptile similes and challenged us to name the implied Wodehouse character. For example, if the sentence is “He always looked a bit like a pterodactyl with a secret sorrow,” the “he” is Bertie’s Uncle Tom. To no one’s surprise, the eventual winner of Dennis’s pop quiz was Neil Midkiff, who earned himself a bottle of genuine Canadian maple syrup.

The last speaker of the afternoon was Hollywood actor Curtis Armstrong, making a much-anticipated return appearance at a TWS convention after his crowd-pleasing talk on “Noddies I Have Known” in Toronto two years ago. This time around, in “Under the Influence of *Laughing Gas*,” Curtis argued that Plum’s 1936 novel should really be read as a trenchant social commentary on the use and abuse of child actors by the film studios of his day. Mixing Wodehouse quotations

with inside stories of modern-day Hollywood, Curtis proved once again to know his subject matter and left us applauding loudly and gladly for more.

The afternoon's finale saw the return engagement of TWS's Blandings Castle chapter—a happy band of folks who have entertained us at every convention since 1993. This year David Smeltzer and his crew gave us “Hollywood Comes to Blandings,” part film and part live performance. Based loosely on the short story “Lord Emsworth Acts for the Best,” the filmed portion starred Ed Ratcliffe as Lord Emsworth and Shamim (Pongo) Mohamed as Freddie Threepwood. On stage, newcomer Paul Abrinko played the role of Mr. Schnellenhamer. All told, some 18 players joined the cast, including Marilyn MacGregor's neighbor Bert Rackham, who made a convincing, albeit slender, Beach; as well as Tom Wainwright, Kathy Haug, Neil Midkiff, Susanna Smart, Kerry O'Connor, Shirley and Len Lawson, Marilyn MacGregor, and David himself—not to mention the dog Bingo, played by Rupert, and the pig Empress of Blandings, played by Herself. The rumor 'round Hollywood is that producers are already queuing up to obtain the international distribution rights to Blandings Castle's latest.



Tom Wainwright makes a dramatic point during Blandings Castle's skit.

Scene 5: An Elegant Banquet

by Elin Woodger

And so to Saturday night, always a highlight of our conventions. There was little more than an hour to dash back to our rooms and prepare for the festivities, which for some meant dressing up to the nines and for others period or Wodehouse costume. The photographs don't begin to do justice to the more imaginative get-ups. No Gate Crashers this time, but it was clear there were plenty of Imposters in attendance.

We gathered first on the Covel Commons terrace to engage in the sluicing, feasts of reason, and flows of soul at which Plumies excel. There was also a surge to buy tickets for the Great TWS Raffle. The

long list of prizes donated included books on tape, *Wodehouse Playhouse* DVDs, Wodehouse books, and autographed copies of books by PGW scholars as well as the “Hollywood” chapter from Norman Murphy's forthcoming masterwork. While people queued for tickets, President Jean Tillson presented UK Society Chairman Hilary Bruce with a large, stuffed—and grunting!—black pig, in honor of the UK group's “Save the Berkshire” campaign.

Then it was on into the Grand Horizon Room, under the eyes of the costume judges, to be welcomed by Master of Ceremonies Bill Franklin. We sat down to a splendid dinner of *Salade Sid Caesar*, *Poulet Clark Gable* (or *Surprise Végétarienne d'Anatole*), *Asperges beurrés Minna Nordstrom*, *Pilaf de ris Sam Goldwyn*, and *Trio de desserts Wilmot Mulliner*. Some of us strongly suspected that Anatole was working overtime in UCLA's kitchen!



Bill Franklin, Master of Ceremonies deluxe

Bill then called for glasses to be filled, and Anglo-raconteur John Hayward proposed the toast “to the man who brought us together, whose work we celebrate this weekend, whose books have given pleasure to millions around the world . . . P. G. Wodehouse.” Next, Len Lawson offered a moving toast to Jan Kaufman, whose convention this really was; and finally Wendell Verrill gave the toast to the “absent friends” whom we have lost since the last convention.

The evening's program began with a presentation to Jean Tillson, in recognition of the superlative job she had done in taking over convention organization after Jan died, not to mention everything else she has done on the Society's behalf (which, I can tell you, has been *quite* a lot). Past president Susan Cohen presented Jean with a first edition of *Louder and Funnier* as well as a photograph of Plum's birthplace in Guildford, mounted above a copy of his birth certificate.

Then came the prize-giving. First up were awards for the Hollywood-themed Fiendish Quiz devised by Ian Michaud (the Toronto winner). Though it had been sent out in advance of the convention to give everyone a chance, the fiendishness of this year's quiz meant that only 11 people entered. Amy Plofker was third, John Graham second, but the winner by a close margin—to nobody's surprise—was Neil Midkiff. As it has been decided that from now on the winner has to create the quiz for the next convention, the relief on Amy and John's faces was profound. Have fun, Neil!

Next came the costume competition, where the categories dreamt up by the judges—Kris Fowler, Walter Nelson, and Sheila Murphy-Nelson—earned as much applause as did the winners. The first prize went to Emelie Levinson, the Person So Steeped In Wodehouse That She Quoted Passages To The Costume Judges. The runner-up, winning for Sacrifice in Honor of a Costume, was Howard Lewis (dressed as Boko Fittleworth), who in adjusting his monocle managed to transfer his red wine to his shirt. Fortunately, his prize was a bar of chic gentleman's soap. Other prize winners included:

A Young Man in Spats: Shamim (Pongo) Mohamed

A Modern Girl: Susan Collicott as Dr. Sally

Best Hollywood Character: Melissa Aaron as Minna Nordstrom

Best Criminal, Female: Anne Cotton as Dolly Molloy

Best Criminal, Male: John Graham as kidnapper-screenwriter Eddie or Freddie or George

Best Clergyman (much needed to minister to all these godless folk): John Dial as the Bishop of Bongo-Bongo

Best in Show: Missy Ratcliffe as Empress of Blandings

Best Pig-Girl: Marilyn MacGregor

Best Ginger-Headed Sailor: Beth Miles

Best New Perspective on a Familiar Character: Ann Smeltzer as Lady Bassett, in evening dress and carrying a rhinoceros bone

Most Topping Couple: Susan Hollis Garrett and David Garrett

And the pièce de résistance, the Parade of Aunts:

Aunt Agatha, representing the dignified aspect of this character but not the rest: Margaret Slythe

Aunt Brenda, who wields so fierce a lorgnette that policemen shrivel and have to leave the force and become grocers (which is how Sir Thomas Lipton got his start): Eleanore Dial

Aunt Constance, whose more unfortunate characteristics might make you forget that she's a "very handsome woman": Sally Schubert
Aunt Dablia, the good and deserving aunt who could be one of the boys: Holly Rainville

The applause for the winners—and Walter's marvelous work at the microphone—was deafening.

Finally the moment arrived for the Great TWS Raffle, run by the NEWTS's hard-working Indu Ravi in support of the TWS convention fund. People had been able to buy tickets for specific prizes; for each item being raffled the tickets were emptied into Pongo's top hat, and an expectant hush fell over the room as a ticket was drawn and the winner's name read out. This was generally followed by a smattering of applause mixed with groans of disappointment—and accusations of favoritism. But it was all a great success as in the end we raised over \$800—not bad!

At last it was time for Bill to bring the curtain down on the evening's activities—officially, at least. But emptying the room took time, as Plumies continued to socialize and cluster around the piano to sing songs with Neil. It needed some very earnest pleading by the UCLA staff to get the last late, lingering stragglers out.

Scene 6: The Tearful Goodbye

by Elin Woodger

The end of a convention is always difficult. Some people, in fact, cannot even stay for the traditional Sunday brunch and leave early in the morning, ostensibly to catch a flight—but *we* know it's because they are unable to bear the goodbyes.

Nevertheless, there was still plenty of laughter to be had, and after we had gorged ourselves on a delicious breakfast, the Perfecto-Zizzbaum Motion Picture Corporation—TWS's Los Angeles chapter—provided it in a big way. Disguised as "The Mulliner Broadcasting Company & Perfecto-Zizzbaum Radio Players," they presented Wodehouse's classic story "The Rise of Minna Nordstrom" as a radio play of the 1930s. Melissa Aaron, who had cleverly adapted the piece, was in hilarious form as Vera Prebble/Minna Nordstrom, as were Howard Lewis, Karen Shotting, and Beth Miles, playing various other characters. Blandings Castle's Neil Midkiff filled in brilliantly for Walter Nelson as Mr. Mulliner, a policeman, and—the most ingenious part of the presentation—the Golden Voice of the Airwaves, who both announced the radio play and also did the between-acts commercials. The sponsor of this

radio broadcast was “Mulliner’s Magic Marvels, makers of Mulliner’s Raven Gypsy Face Cream, Mulliner’s Snow of the Mountains Lotion, and Buck-U-Uppo.” The final advertisement noted, “Remember, Mulliner’s Buck-U-Uppo! Accept no substitutes. Ask your chemist for it by the bottle or by the case, and insist on the genuine Mulliner’s. As favored by the clergy.”

The convention could not have ended on a higher note. Perfecto-Zizzbaum earned well-deserved cheers for a splendid performance, the last of a splendid convention. Some conventioners chose to stay another night or two in order to visit local sites (including pilgrimages to Wodehouse’s Hollywood addresses) and otherwise prolong the fun. Many gathered for a Sunday-night dinner in nearby Westwood to review and relive the weekend. All agreed that Providence 2007 cannot get here fast enough!

Credits

As movie credits make clear, successful productions employ the talents of a great many people. This one began with the almost-solitary efforts of Jan Wilson Kaufman, who died before she could see her vision realized. Others saw it through for her, chief among them Jean Tillson, who organized a hard-working and diligent team from 3,000 miles away. Jean owes much to Ed and Missy Ratcliffe, who had been by Jan’s side in her final illness and were able to pass on Jan’s hopes and ideas for the convention; and to Elin Woodger, who advised and supported Jean from across the Atlantic. (Thank heavens for computers!)

The convention was made thoroughly enjoyable by the contributions, efforts, and talents of the following people: Melissa Aaron, Linda Adam-Hall, Curtis Armstrong, Deborah Bellew, Hilary Bruce, Robert Bruce, Dennis Chitty, Dan Cohen, Susan Cohen, Anne Cotton, Chris Dueker, Mike Eckman, Kris Fowler, Bill Franklin, Gary Hall, John Hayward, Murray Hedgcock, Len Lawson, Shirley Lawson, Neil Midkiff, Ian Michaud, Elliott Milstein, Beth Miles, Shamim Mohamed, Norman Murphy, Sheila Murphy-Nelson, Walter Nelson, Amy Plofker, Max Pokrivchak, Indumathi Ravi, Tony Ring, David Smeltzer, Brian Taves, Wendell Verrill, Beth Wainwright, and the casts and crews of “Penny’s from Hades,” “Hollywood Comes to Blandings,” and “The Rise of Minna Nordstrom.” The organizers are also indebted to the following companies who donated raffle prizes: Acorn Media, Audio Partners Publishing Corp., BBC Audiobooks Ltd, and Overlook Press.

We thank everyone who contributed to a most

memorable weekend. Above all we are grateful to our beloved P. G. Wodehouse, whose life and work we meet to celebrate.

For additional convention coverage, see pages 15–18 for the Convention Collage—in Technicolor!

Convention Loot for Sale

Does all this talk of the Hollywood convention leave you feeling tired, listless, run-down? Does looking at the many pictures of convention revelers cause you to suffer a bilious attack? If so, we may have just the cure you need! It is well known among Wodehousians that the procurement of a complete set of convention “loot” can act as a gentle cathartic, a wonderful tonic, and a certain corrective of all impurities in the human frame. No other remedy (except, perhaps, making definite plans to attend the next convention) is so immediate in its effects. The following curative items are available at the modest prices shown, which include postage and packing anywhere in the world:

- Convention pin (in purple, yellow, green, and gold): US\$7
- “The Wodehouse Society” nametag lanyard (purple with white lettering): US\$7
- Magnet bearing the convention logo (black and white): US\$5
- Plastic, drawstring bag with convention logo (black and white): US\$5
- A complete set of convention loot: US\$20

Revive your torpid liver today by sending a check or money order in U.S. funds (made out to The Wodehouse Society) to:

Jean Tillson

Those who wish to purchase loot in British pounds sterling may contact Elin Woodger for assistance.



A Letter

Dear Wodehouse Friends,

Your many compliments about my late sister, Jan Wilson Kaufman, in the Spring 2005 issue of *Plum Lines*, deeply touched her family and me. You described her so well: humorous, fun loving, generous, artistically talented, hospitable, warm, and friendly. It was so kind of many of you to write about how Jan's friendship affected your views and lives.

There wasn't a stranger with whom she couldn't strike up a conversation. She had great interest in many diverse subjects and easily talked about them. Jan was especially curious about English life, customs, and clothing in the last several centuries, and she loved sharing this interest. Preparing slides and a talk about an English town related to Wodehouse gave her tremendous pleasure.

Jan was an avid reader all of her life, beginning with the OZ books. Traveling to the places she read about was one of her goals. During the 41 years I've lived in Taiwan, she visited three times, and we traveled from here to Japan on two trips. We took many trips together in North America and in Europe. As most of you know, her favorite destination was England, which she visited 6–7 times.

Jan was so pleased and happy to be able to fly her final flight to and from London. She was delighted to

attend the very elegant, biennial Wodehouse dinner and to enjoy meals in the homes of the Murphys and the Rings. All of those Wodehouse activities in October and November were very precious to her.

We grew up in Palmdale, California, in the Mojave Desert, about 60 miles north of Hollywood. The close proximity was one of the reasons for following the lives of the movie crowd. Westerns were, and still are, filmed in the rocky buttes, 15 miles, east of Palmdale, and we locals avidly awaited their release. Jan was greatly looking forward to the August convention and did her best to locate good accommodations and provide a close-up view of how the industry functioned when Wodehouse was active there.

Jan would want you to have a joyous time at this gathering, laughing during the skits and movies and while riding and dining among the palm trees. We will remember her devotion to you Wodehouse friends and her dedication to the goal of a smashingly successful Hollywood convention.

Nancy Wilson Ives
June 6, 2005

And a smashingly successful convention it was—but a sad one all the same because Jan could not be there to see her vision realized. We will always miss her.
—Ed.

Wodehouse Playhouse DVD Raffle to Benefit the TWS Convention Fund

We have six complete sets (a complete set being all three seasons) of *Wodehouse Playhouse* DVDs to raffle off in support of the TWS convention fund. Said fund helps us pay early convention costs, such as hotel deposits, that would otherwise leave TWS short of the ready for regular expenses like *Plum Lines*. The DVD sets—which are in Region 1 format (that is, compatible with machines in the United States, U.S. territories, Canada, and Bermuda)—ordinarily sell for over \$70. They were donated to TWS by those dear, kind chaps at Acorn Media (may green fly never trouble their roses!), and raffle tickets are \$5 each. Please note that you may buy as many tickets as you like to increase your chances of winning, but you can only win one set of DVDs. The deadline for buying raffle tickets is February 28, 2006, and winners will be announced in the Spring 2006 issue of *Plum Lines*.

For those of you worried about possible nobbling, please know that the winning tickets will be drawn by two fair-haired infants who cannot be bribed, except with Gummi worms. Send your oof and contact information (including an e-mail address if you wish to have your ticket purchase confirmed) to Amy Plofker. You may send checks (made out to The Wodehouse Society), money orders (ditto), or—at your own risk—cash. Any Gummi worms received will be distributed to the judges anonymously.

The Great Wodehouse Movie Pitch: *The Lord of the Ring: Bertie's Engagement*

BY DEBORAH BELLEW

On Friday evening of the "Hooray for Hollywood" convention, Max Pokrivchak hosted The Great Wodehouse Movie Pitch Challenge, in which contestants were invited to pitch a movie treatment à la Wodehouse (see convention report). The winning entry was submitted and presented by Deborah Bellew of Devon, Pennsylvania. Herewith we reproduce the presentation Deborah gave that night—along with her original written pitch submitted to the judges prior to the competition. In subsequent issues of Plum Lines, we will publish other superb entries in the Challenge. —Ed.

Hello and good evening. I'm Ms. Perfecta Zizzbaum, principal agent of the Perfecta Zizzbaum Notion Pitching Company ("We pitch notions like nobody's business.") With me is my fantastic assistant, Adriane, who is an accredited film psychic. We are appearing on behalf of Ms. Deborah Bellew to pitch her movie idea to your fine studios.

Our company is not very familiar with this P. G. Woadhouse—sorry, WOOD-house—but I have her notes right here. We pride ourselves on service, so we've added lots of great improvements to Ms. Bellew's original ideas. [See below.] I'm sure you'll agree as to the result!

At Perfecta-Zizzbaum Notion Pitching we do our homework, so as a warm-up I presented this yesterday to an actual Hollywood director. (This is true.) He advised me to simplify for those who don't know Whithouse—sorry, WOOD-house. So, stated plainly, this is a theatrical scripted feature that uses the structure of popular reality TV show *The Bachelor* to showcase popular Wodehouse characters Bertie and Jeeves.

But what's the fun in stating it so baldly? Use your imagination to fill in the picture . . . We see an extravagant 1920s mansion, presided over by elegant hostess Aunt Agatha, where she has summoned five would-be brides. They are all vying for the rich, handsome British aristocrat Bertie Wooster. They compete for his hand in marriage, but they don't count on dealing with Bertie's best friend, mastermind Jeeves.

Now, Ms. Bellew's notes end here, but I feel there is only one possible title for this movie, combining as it does the English gentry with the romance of courtship: "THE LORD OF THE RING: Bertie's Engagement." It has a nice sound to it, doesn't it?

For casting, take a look at the great talent we propose. [Assistant Adriane displays the "Spice World" movie poster with additional head shots for the three lead roles.] As you can see, we've given it a lot of thought and have come up with the perfect actors:

BERTIE WOOSTER: handsome and eligible bachelor, played by Russell Crowe

REGINA JEEVES: best friend and mastermind, played by America's sweetheart, Julia Roberts

AUNT AGATHA: elegant hostess, played by recent sensation Lindsay Lohan

And as the would-be brides—the Spice Girls!

HONORIA GLOSSOP: brainy and ambitious, played by Posh Spice

STEPHANIE "STIFFY" BYNG: outdoorsy and energetic, played by Sporty Spice

MADLINE BASSETT: sensitive and dreamy, played by Baby Spice

BOBBIE WICKHAM: red-headed and exuberant, played by Ginger Spice



*Will you soon see this poster in a theatre near you??
Yes, if Deborah Bellew has her way!*

FLORENCE CRAYE: a little intimidating, played
by Scary Spice

This movie can easily be adapted to your studio's tastes – whether by setting it in the antebellum South, by including a horse race among the brides' challenges (think of box office winner *Seabiscuit!*), or by giving Aunt Agatha a musical number to show off Ms. Lohan's singing abilities.

In conclusion, your studio will love this film. It appeals to both art-house and reality audiences, and we'll definitely pull in the Wodehouse fans with our attention to detail. (I hear P.G. Wodehouse has as devoted a following as does Anne Rice with her vampire novels!)

So who says Hollywood spoils books when turning them into movies? Let's prove them wrong and give this one the green light! Thank you!

Following is Deborah's original entry as submitted to the judges:

The Title: *The Lord of the Ring: Bertie's Engagement*

Tagline: Bye Bye Bertie

The Pitch: *Shakespeare in Love* meets *Die Hard* in the Roaring Twenties, *Survivor*-style!

The Synopsis:

An extravagant country mansion is full of would-be brides vying for a rich British aristocrat husband. They are expelled in competitions one by one . . . until at last elegant hostess Aunt Agatha, played by Lindsay Lohan, sings a musical number while Bertie, played by Russell Crowe, presents a single rose to his bride-to-be (to be determined by test audience). Julia Roberts stars as mastermind Jeeves.

The Cash:

By using reality filming techniques, the production budget can be as low as *The Blair Witch Project's* while pulling in a fan base as devoted as *Spider-Man's*. There will be unlimited product placement opportunities with powerhouses like Pottery Barn and Coca-Cola, and after this movie is a smash it can be spun off as a TV series with Paula Abdul as host.



The Trailer:

VISUAL: Slow zoom in on mansion.

SFX: *Elegant music*

NARRATOR: In an idyllic country house . . . miles from anywhere . . .

SFX: *Jazzy music*

NARRATOR: . . . are gorgeous young women vying for the hand of a British aristocrat! They'll do anything to make him theirs . . . and they'll stop at nothing to make him into their dream man."

MADELINE: I'm Madeline Bassett! I'm sensitive and dreamy and believe the stars are God's daisy chain.

BOBBIE: I'm Bobbie Wickham! I'm into wild adventures and crazy times.

HONORIA: I'm Honoria Glossop! I'm brainy and ambitious.

STEPHANIE: I'm Stiffy Byng! I'm outdoorsy and energetic.

FLORENCE: I'm Florence Craye! Some people find me intimidating.

JULIA: I'm Regina Jeeves. I'm devoted to Bertie and can whip up an amazing hangover remedy.

NARRATOR: There are elegant parties . . .

VISUAL: *Elegant party*

NARRATOR: . . . physical competitions . . .

VISUAL: *Rings above a swimming pool, with the last one looped back, forcing the contestant to drop into the water in full evening dress*

NARRATOR: . . . and infighting . . .

VISUAL: *Angry contestants fighting*

NARRATOR: . . . as all compete for a chance to mold this bachelor into their ideal mate . . .

HONORIA: Bertie, let's discuss Nietzsche.

BERTIE: Aaaaargh! [like Macaulay Culkin in *Home Alone*]

NARRATOR: And then a no-holds-barred paintball shootout decides the victor!

VISUAL: *Extremely violent gunfight*

NARRATOR: Who will it be?

VISUAL: *Movie title and logo*

NARRATOR: Come fall in love again when *Lord of the Ring: Bertie's Engagement* opens this Christmas at a theater near you.

The Bottom Line:

It's highbrow like *Titanic* . . . it's lowbrow like reality TV . . . with the English setting of *Notting Hill* . . . and the time period of *Chicago*. This can't-miss proposition offers a huge box-office take and Oscar glory. All it needs is to be given the green light!

Let Them Eat Hash: Studio Commissary Dishes Mentioned by PGW

(as provided by Norman Murphy)

Beef Stew Bette Davis (*Pearls, Girls and Monty Bodkin*)

Cheese Sandwich Maurice Chevalier (“The Castaways”)

Corned Beef Hash Betty Grable (*The Old Reliable*, p. 29)

Malted Milk Bette Davis (*The Old Reliable*, p. 38)

Mutton Stew Joan Clarkson (“Juice of an Orange”)

Steak Pudding Marlene Dietrich (“Monkey Business”)

Surprise Gloria Swanson (“The Castaways”)

Letter from England

BY KRIS FOWLER

*Our guest letter writer in this issue is the newly elected vice president and treasurer of The Wodehouse Society, who also heads the Northwodes chapter in Minneapolis. In addition to her dedication to Wodehouse, Kris has a strong passion for bell-ringing—the kind that goes on in church towers, as immortalized by Dorothy Sayers in *The Nine Tailors*. Earlier this year Kris came to London to carry out a sabbatical project, and while she was here she quite naturally indulged in her campanological passion—and in a few Wodehousean activities as well. It was the work of a moment to impose on her good nature and persuade her that what Plum Lines really wanted was a Letter from England written by TWS’s newest officer—which also saved me the trouble of writing it! Clever, what?*

—Elin Woodger

An American Wodehousean who manages to spend May, June, and July in London can look forward to at least five Wodehouse-related events, most organized by the impressively active P G Wodehouse Society (UK). I tried it this past summer, so here’s the timeline based on my personal experience.

First are the two cricket matches played by the Gold Bats, with emblem snazzily embroidered on plum-coloured caps. The brief match against masters and a few students of Dulwich College [June 17] is notable for the smashing tea provided by PGW Society



members—a Dulwich Duster was overheard proposing a P G Wodehouse Tea Appreciation Society—and for the opportunity to look at the Wodehouse corner in the library, complete with the Master’s typewriter and pipe. Plus, for a lucky few there was a whirlwind drive around various landmarks of Valley Fields, of which Dulwich is the prototype. (If you ever doubted that Wodehouse wrote about real places, see the next paragraph.) The following match against the Sherlock Holmes Society [June 26], using the 1895 Laws of Cricket, was the leisurely Sunday-in-the-country sort. One is advised to pack a woolly jumper, midsummer though it may be, in addition to a picnic basket of which Jeeves would have approved. Chairman Hilary Bruce sets the standard here, with multiple courses centering around a magnificent hand-raised meat pie. Future years may feature an increased Gold Bats schedule, as rumor has it that a fixture might be arranged with another literary society, which would prefer to play by even older rules—I meant to say, laws.

A lovely Saturday morning in July [the 9th] provides Activity #3: a brisk tour of certain key spots in London, trying to assimilate fascinating facts like which clubs were the models for the Drones, where Bertie Wooster’s apartment was, and what sort of ties they sell in the Burlington Arcade (not a scarlet horseshoe in the bunch, I’m relieved to report). The guide for this marvelous Wodehouse Walk is, of course, Lieutenant Colonel NTP Murphy; those who can’t make it to a Walk are highly advised to read the relevant sections of his masterly *In Search of Blandings*. Also all the other sections, and it’s a good idea to read them before going on the Walk. And after. I might now be able to find my way alone and unaided to the pub that inspired Jeeves’s club, the Junior Ganymede. Rather easier to find is the famous Sherlock Holmes Pub, where the tour ended and its leader got a well-earned g&t.

A few days afterward is a Savage Club evening [July 12], with Col. Murphy, as a member of the club, again acting as host. These periodic meetings are considered casual, and certainly one can have a genial chat with dozens of Wodehouseans bearing filled glasses and no stiff collars. But the short program is worthy of a more formal event; this year it was a reading by Graham Seed, who used his acting chops to put over bits of *Heavy Weather* as they were meant to be put over. [Graham, who played Britannicus in the classic miniseries *I, Claudius*, is perhaps best known here in the UK as Nigel

Pargetter in the BBC Radio 4 soap opera *The Archers*. –Elin] I may say that the wealth of professional talent the UK Society can draw upon is one of those things that has made me green with envy during years of reading about their events, so it was a comfort to get in on at least one of them. My luck was not all of the right sort, since I missed multiple theatrical productions by mere days on either end of my stay (*By Jeeves* in April, *Good Morning, Bill* in August).

Let me see, that makes four activities, not counting a few enjoyable but minor items not likely to repeat. There was the pleasure of buying, for a pound and a half, the Wodehouse entry in Penguin's 70 slim volumes celebrating their 70th anniversary and giving it to potential converts. I listened to BBC Radio 4 the morning when PGWS(UK) president Richard Briers plugged the "Save the Berkshire" campaign and bought a copy of the *Times* that day, which carried a full page on the same issue with a photo of mini-Emperesses; both these PR coups were brought off by Chairman Bruce. (I attempted to support the campaign by inquiring at the posh traditional butcher shop near my borrowed flat: "Do you carry Berkshire pork?" "Ours comes from Surrey." "I meant the breed, not the location." "Sorry, let me check . . . no, but we have Gloucester Old Spot." "No, thank you.") There were also more than a few merry little dinners with private Wodehouseans, for which I raise a grateful glass, but I can't count them since not on the regular schedule; your mileage may vary.

I still only make it four . . . ah yes, the fifth activity is writing a Guest Letter from England. A hearty pip-pip to you all from a very happy traveler.

The Dilemma of Godfrey Lodesworth

We recently received a delightful pastiche by Jim Davis of Grand Rapids, Michigan. Entitled "The Dilemma of Godfrey Lodesworth," the story was written, Jim tells us, "merely for fun and strictly out of admiration for PGW's golf stories, of which I am a great fan." Unfortunately, the story is too long to be published in its entirety in Plum Lines, but we are happy to present a small snippet from Jim's tale here. If you would like to read the whole thing, get in touch with Jim.

Godfrey Lodesworth approached life with a secure countenance. He was well loved by all, operated a successful shipping business and had the respect of his

employees. His command was judicious, his bearing modest but firm. In matters of opinion, Lodesworth was judged balanced and fair. His advice was sought far and wide. Men of repute consulted him before engineering policy for both government and industry. His seemed a world worthy of admiration if not adulation.

But those few of us who played golf regularly with him knew a different Lodesworth. Though he played to a 6 handicap, Lodesworth's game was based upon fear. Oh, he struggled fiercely against it and was, generally, the master of it, but one could see in the tense frame, the pursed lips, the nervous eyes, that here was a fellow unsure in his depths of what was to come.

How many of us come to the tee utterly afraid of the shot? We tremble because we do not know. Unable to trust our true natures we push—the golfer's term for adding something extra, some striving, some attempt to dictate to the complicated swing a measure of control. The outcome is generally far from welcome. Indeed, our worst fears are confirmed and the spiral of self-deluded doom worsens.

Lodesworth contended with these demons until one outing—I believe it was the club's annual Captain's Mashie championship—that he was finally forced to confront these most unworthy blemishes.

I was paired with him and although he presented a casual nonchalance, I noticed the slight tremble of his hand. Nor did it bode well that our match was against Henry Fleeting and Maurice duFlem, two of the most feared golfers of our generally amiable club, dubbed the "Soul Killers."

Fleeting and duFlem were old chums from the war having met while on duty in France. Both were quartermasters for their respective battalions and squirreled away such material from creative enterprise that they were able to open a merchandise mart upon the war's end. It did well. They prospered and took up golf.

It was not their prowess at the ancient art that made them feared or caused other members to recall prior commitments when asked to fill out their foursome. Indeed, they were known as two of the club's most generous pigeons, making and losing substantial bets. No, gentlemen. They had a more elemental effect upon their hapless foe—they made him mistrust himself.

It was not something they set out to do. Both are well-meaning individuals. They are fond of good company, enjoy a hearty drink following the round and, in general, have the high-handicapper's congenial resignation that low scores are beyond their pale and the occasional fine shot is but a miracle of good fortune. It is this same damnably blameless congeniality that clouds

their understanding the game's finer psychological levels.

It is on the par 5 sixth, for example, where one must negotiate the Whins Creek on the left and the Prelate's Pause bunker on the right to find the merest slip of safe harbor off the tee, that the Soul Killers will lapse into the most horrid conversation. Here is a mere sampling.

"Good lord, not the sixth already," announces one half of the deadly duo. "I suppose it is all hopeless now. I lost three balls to the Whins yesterday. The wind is not helpful today. God knows I have no idea what to hit here today. I suppose I shall just have to hit and pray as usual. Par is a lost cause here, I think."

"The Prelate shall give me pause today," the other would chip in. "I was with him twice on Tuesday and could not escape his grip in less than three shots. God, I hope to avoid it today."

You get the idea. Such a litany of negative thoughts can have but one effect to him who totters, they shove him over.

Godfrey Lodesworth stiffened his lip and bid a cordial, but restrained, welcome to the Soul Killers. Then, as the honor was his, he prepared to play off.

...

A Letter from Our President

Dear fellow Wodehousians,

First and foremost, I would like to express my gratitude for being allowed to serve as TWS president. Without the least exaggeration I can say that many of my happiest moments have been—and fondest friendships are—the direct result of my association with TWS. I am inexpressibly grateful, therefore, for the opportunity to do something for TWS in return.

Now, then, it is my honor to inform you that The Wodehouse Society Board of Directors met—as it was obliged by our constitution to do—during the recent convention. Highlights of this historic summit included salted cashews, some really elegant chocolates, and the following items of business.

TWS Tax Status. In March 2005 TWS was granted 501(c)7 (social club) status from the IRS, with an effective date of October 4, 1997 (when our constitution was ratified and we became an "official" organization, for which we have Elliott Milstein to thank, bless his heart). This means we are really and truly exempt from paying federal income taxes (as opposed to simply believing nobody would mind so very much if we just ignored the whole bally mess).

TWS PayPal Account. TWS will create a PayPal account so people can pay their membership dues online (this will be especially helpful to international members). People will still be able to mail in a check if they prefer. We're not sure how long it will take us to set this up, but look for an announcement in a future issue of *Plum Lines*.

TWS Membership Dues Increase. The last time dues were increased was 1997. Because of the increased costs of . . . well, just about everything since then, the Board reluctantly voted to raise dues to US\$25 per year beginning with Spring 2006 renewals, with new memberships starting at the increased rate on January 1, 2006.

TWS Convention Steering Committee. The Board voted to create a committee to (1) select a chapter from among those who want to host a convention, (2) provide convention planning guidance to the host chapter as requested or required, and (3) fulfill the role of convention host in the event that no chapter volunteers for the job. Again, more details on this item will be available in a future issue of *Plum Lines*.

It is also my pleasant duty to report to you on the Dread Business Meeting held after lunch on the Saturday of the convention, during which we had the election of officers. Elin Woodger very kindly stood in for our much-missed president Jan Wilson Kaufman and nominated me for president, which nomination the attending members saw fit to approve. They also approved my nomination of Kristine Fowler (see bio on page 26) not only for vice president but also for treasurer, the latter nomination being emphatically seconded by outgoing treasurer Amy Plofker, who was, of course, reelected as membership manager. While this arrangement does not remedy our less-than-ideal situation of sticking TWS Board members with more than one office, it does at least spread the burden around a bit.

After I gave a brief report of the TWS Board meeting, per above, it was time to present the bids for the 2007 convention. There was only one scheduled, so I called forth my fellow NEWTS and we let fly with our paean to Providence, Rhode Island. There was no volley of rotten fruit, so it looks like we're all set for a hot time at the Biltmore Hotel in October 2007 (see details on page 26).

Thank you once again for this opportunity to serve TWS. I look forward to the next two years with much pleasure!

Yours ever,
Jean Tillson
(President Pighooy)

Convention Collage—in Technicolor!



Michelle Grisat and Pongo preparing for a topping evening



Missy Ratcliffe, Jean Tillson, and Amy Plofker man, or rather, woman the registration table



Deborah Bellew shows off the hardware after her successful movie pitch!



John Graham peers through the shrubbery, while a pig looks on suspiciously



John Fabey looking positively regal



The Perfecto-Zizzbaum skit sizzles at the Sunday brunch.



The NEWTS Extras take their well deserved photo call after their production "Penny's from Hades."



David and Susan Garrett in their award-winning finery



Curtis Armstrong, our Genuine Hollywood Actor, stirs the crowd.



Melissa Aaron, banjolele queen



Linda Adam-Hall and Gary Hall (and Terry Kitchen's guitar) give praises to Gouf.



Walter Nelson and Sheila Murphy-Nelson dance on the terrace overlooking L.A.



De-lightful, de-lovely , , ,



A gaggle of Plumemies forms pre-reception



Susanna Smart looking, well, smart



Chris Dueker shows some fine leg . . .



The NEWTS stars after their Friday evening performance



. . . but is upstaged by the jolly pig-stockinged Marilyn MacGregor.



The Bronson Gate swarmed by eager conventioners



Brian Taves and Neil Midkiff soak up the California sun.



Len Lawson discovers the wonders of the Digital Age.



Clean, Bright Enjoyment



Dr. Dennis Chitty working the crowd like a seasoned quizmaster



John Baesch and Evelyn Herzog



Missy Ratcliffe in a nosey mood



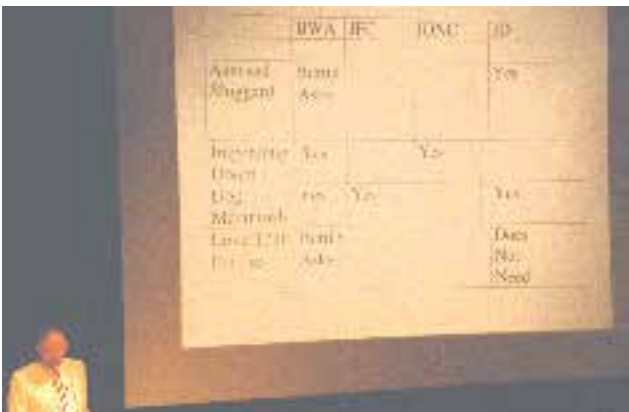
Cindy McKeown seems to be all sweetness and light as the fearsome Penny Nichols.



Father Wendell Verrill fails to convert the Scarlett Woman, aka Dolly Molly, aka Anne Cotton.



Marjanne Otten-Scholten and Jelle Otten ensure that The Netherlands is represented in The Tome.



Chris Dueker waxes scientific, bringing illumination to the students of P. G. Wodehouse



The intimidating Movie Pitch directors: Elliott Milstein as Sigismund Glutz, Pongo as Isidore Fishbein, and Elin Woodger as Jacob Schmellenhamer



John and Eleanore Dial in their award-winning attire



The ritual "signing of the menus"



Elin Woodger, Linda Adam-Hall, Max Pokrivchak, and Gary Hall bring "Uncle Fred Flits By" to life.



Dinner proceeds apace



Terry Kitchen hoppin' and a-boppin' in Westwood



TWS president Jean Tillson thanks speaker John Hayward with her well-known maidenly reserve.



Missy Ratcliffe demonstrates that porcine species are welcome at the bar!



The three Schnellenhamers of the weekend: Paul Abrinko, Elin Woodger, and Howard Lewis

The Beauty Prize: A Review

BY M. E. RICH

The Broadway Special has had quite a run of luck since the works of P. G. Wodehouse are often revived by the show-biz community of New York City. But one hardly dared dream of the premiere of a piece heretofore unseen on the Great White Way! Imagine, then, with what buoyant expectations we met on May 7 for the matinee performance of *The Beauty Prize*, produced by Musicals Tonight! The new venue for this enterprise was the 45th Street Theatre, an intimate space of 99 seats, technically classified as an Off-Off-Broadway venue. It's in spitting distance of the "legit" houses, such as the new Hilton Theater, wherein lurks the ill-advised cheese-puff *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, whose *Playbill* does not deign to credit the source of this overblown carnival piece, the redoubtable Ian Fleming.

But Musicals Tonight! proudly declares its association with Wodehouse, having given us *Have a Heart* in 2004. The exigencies of presenting a thespian delight are such that this company has dispensed with the opulent fripperies of sets, props, and orchestra and has made only the merest concession to the concept of costumes, choreography, and lighting. Instead we are given a cast of great ability and charm who play their parts with the brisk sincerity of a time gone by while carrying their scripts, to which they seldom refer, and which are, surprisingly, integrated into the performance. It's actually somewhat comforting to see the book of the show so tangibly displayed in these staged readings—it's as if the authors are in concert with the players. And this was the revelation of the day: George Grossmith and P. G. Wodehouse had, in 1923, anticipated the tenor of our times with an uncanny clairvoyance. The plot was vintage Plum—boy meets girl and immediately plights troth; misunderstandings ensue; boy and girl grow indignant and part, only to be reconciled as the curtain falls, surrounded by their friends, many of whom have also become engaged.

But the intricacies that fill almost two hours are utterly 21st century: In London our American heroine, Carol, is a comely heiress in love with John, an attractive millionaire posing as an "Average Joe," each unaware of the other's wealth. Her millineress, Lovey, has entered Carol's photograph in a newspaper contest that promises a husband to the Beauty who wins the Prize, and—this being Wodehouse—the unwitting Carol is deemed the fairest of them all. "The Bachelor," Odo, arrives, sans rose, and expects a pliant Swan willing

to be molded by him. He quickly realizes this would require an "Extreme Makeover" but manfully tells her that he's up to the job. A sudden John interrupts this irregular wooing, incensed at learning that Carol is in fact swimming in oof and under the impression that she has been playing at "The Simple Life" while toying with his affections. Meanwhile, Lovey has been smitten with the confident, if peculiar, Odo and assures him that she would give anything to be his Galatean "Bachelorette," but they agree that his commitment to Carol must be honored.

Somehow—and please don't ask me how—everyone winds up on the transatlantic liner *Majestania* headed for New York in Act Two. High jinks and contretemps follow as John and Carol trade barbed quips while Odo assays every activity aboard. He proves himself quite "The Contender," winning each "Amazing Race" with panache and tripping the light fantastic as though "Dancing with the Stars." With a final scene set on an island—Long Island—at Carol's father's estate, we witness rapprochement, misapprehensions dispelled, and the triumph of Love, the ultimate "Survivor."

Perhaps you have noticed that I've mentioned only four characters. Imagine, if you will, the subplots, secondary intrigues, and assorted entanglements among the throng of a dozen supporting actors, and you'll realize that the laws of time and space that govern *Plum Lines* constrain me from covering *The Beauty Prize* in more detail.

Director Tom Mills consistently provided an energetic pace and breezy style, and it was a treat to watch his choreography for the "Non-Stop Dancing" number, as the cheerful chorines twirled merrily with fluttering scripts in hand. Rick Hip-Flores, the music director who was hidden well back on stage, supplied a jazzy but melodious accompaniment, a one-man band confined to a single keyboard, with the lovely, lilting score of Jerome Kern well served by Wodehouse's blithe and sunny lyrics. And what fun to hear the self-plagiarizing "Cottage in Kent" sung by Odo and Lovey. The tune and a good portion of the rhymes are instantly identifiable as "A Bungalow in Quoque" from a 1917 Princess Theater flop, *The Riviera Girl*. As Barry Day pointed out, the team pragmatically recognized that the West End would never see that disappointing musical, just as Broadway was unlikely to host a production of *The Beauty Prize*, so a slight tweak to the site and a few substitutes in the menagerie were all that were required to slip in this duet. But 82 years on, the Broadway Special happily welcomed the new description of a beloved little dwelling, rather like, shall we say . . . *This Old House?*

Wodehouse on the Boards

BY TONY RING

This is Part II of Tony's convention talk from Toronto 2003; the first part appeared in the previous issue of Plum Lines.

Wodehouse's first major success was his adaptation of Molnar's *The Play's the Thing*. This was followed by *Her Cardboard Lover*, which was the first major stage appearance of Leslie Howard, who, to the annoyance of Jeanne Eagels, made himself its star. Originally the play had been adapted by Valerie Wyngate from a Jacques Deval play, but the tryout was unsatisfactory. Gilbert Miller approached Plum to rewrite the show, the management replaced Laurette Taylor by Jeanne Eagels in the starring role, and the show went on. Leslie Howard had been given some of the best lines in the play and eclipsed Eagels, who during the next few weeks resorted to all sorts of professional tricks to try to steal the limelight. She was brought up before Equity on a number of charges and, after a quarrel with her offstage lover, drank herself into oblivion. Leslie Howard reprised the role in London, where the female star was Tallulah Bankhead, and Miss Bankhead took her own company on a New England tour with the production in 1941.

Back in England in 1929 and 1930, Plum teamed up with Ian Hay and between them they converted two of his novels and one of Hay's short stories into plays. They were interested in a suggestion that a theatre company be established to perform Wodehouse plays, rather in the way that in England today Scarborough is always used to try out new Alan Ayckbourns, and Hull Truck Theatre launches new works by John Godber. But the plan was dropped before the infant concept reached adolescence, probably because Plum went west to seek his fortune in Hollywood and the supply of material dried up. It may, incidentally, interest those of you who enjoy Miss Marple films to know that Joan Hickson's first three West End appearances were in these three plays, successively *A Damsel in Distress*; *Baa, Baa, Black Sheep*; and *Leave It To Psmith*. All were substantial hits.

Gilbert Miller was instrumental in getting Plum involved in another rewrite, this time of *By Candlelight*, which had been staged most successfully in London but which Miller did not think was right for New York. He asked Plum to rework it, which he did, the name was changed to *Candlelight*, and Leslie Howard was given the male lead opposite Gertrude Lawrence, who was making her straight theatrical debut. It was reasonably

successful, the critics' principle adverse comments being directed at the relative thinness of Siegfried Geyer's story, for they enjoyed the cast performances. The U.K. would not see Plum's adaptation until 1989.

Wodehouse could not continue at that pace, and his move to Hollywood in 1930 created a natural break. But there was still time for him to team up with Guy Bolton to write the play *If I Were You*, from which Plum's novel of the same name was later derived. Although, interestingly, it was published as a play in book form, unlike most of his plays it may never have reached the stage. I should add that four years later, in 1934, he and Bolton revised it, especially the latter part of Act II and Act III, and it hit the West End stage in London as *Who's Who*. After 19 performances it left it again.

From then on, with one exception, Wodehouse's straight plays, from whatever origin, and with whomever written, almost always failed. In 1934 *The Inside Stand* was put on in the West End. As already mentioned, this was an adaptation of his novel *Hot Water*, with Freddie Widgeon imported into the cast, but it only lasted 50 performances.

There were two postwar adaptations from Ferenc Molnar: *Arthur* and *Game of Hearts*. It has long been assumed that only one Molnar-Wodehouse collaboration, *The Play's the Thing*, reached the stage, but in fact there was an amateur staging of *Arthur* in New York in 1978.

After the war, Wodehouse found it very difficult to find magazines prepared to serialise his novels, and as he had five unpublished books on the stocks, he put a lot of effort into reviving his theatrical career, both straight plays and musical comedies. His one real success came in the U.K., from a collaboration with Guy Bolton in the adaptation of Sacha Guitry's *Don't Listen, Ladies*. As a result of his wartime escapades, it was decided that his name should not appear on the credits; instead the pseudonym Stephen Powys was used.

Three other shows were commissioned, and two at least were staged, though outside New York. One which may be of particular interest is *Don't Lose Your Head*, which started life as *Keep Your Head* and probably had the least likely plot of any of Plum's work, on stage or in fiction, for it concerned attempts by Burmese headhunters to sever the head of the heroine and included two murders. An American professor, E. P. Conkle, whose students at one time included Tennessee Williams, was the author of this thriller. Plum described it as "no earthly good as it stands but it has a fine central idea" and was asked to turn into

a comedy thriller. Wodehouse's version was further rewritten before the play was tried out in England, opening in Nottingham and then visiting Brighton before dying at the Saville theatre in London.

Having read the Wodehouse version and the two U.K. versions, I can confirm that PGW's humour and style was largely eliminated by these further rewrites. No surprise, then, that he chose to thoroughly rewrite his own draft for Billy Miles to put on at the Bermudiana Theatre Club under its original title, *Keep Your Head*, on April 9, 1951, the plan being that it would then run for about 15 weeks on the Straw Hat Circuit before opening on Broadway. Plum's report to Townend on the Bermuda experiment read:

The play in Bermuda did very well, but I gather it isn't right. With these stock tryouts you can never tell whether it is the play or the actors that made the thing not seem right. In this one, for instance, they only had six rehearsals and people kept forgetting their lines. Also, the man who played the Rajah's Prime Minister was no good, and it is a vital part.

So there was to be no Broadway production of a Wodehouse thriller after all.

I could have used the whole of this talk merely describing the agony Plum experienced as he wrote draft after draft of a play version of his novel *Spring Fever*, agony he shared in correspondence with both Bill Townend and Guy Bolton, whom he soon involved in the process. The draft was sent to several managers; spawned an American version of the same novel, *The Old Reliable*; was tried instead as a musical comedy; and was given several working names such as *Spring Fever*, *Phipps*, and *Kilroy Was There*. But for a variety of reasons the commercial production that the enormous amount of work put into the project demanded never materialized.

But I must return to the one play I have not yet dealt with yet. *Good Morning, Bill*, which has been revived in the U.K. more than any other of his plays by both amateur and professional companies, remarkably enjoyed its New York premier only last year. It had been an instant success on its first appearance on the London stage in 1927 despite the actions of the Censor's office, which, amongst other cuts, deleted a scene which went to the heart of the play.

The published text of *Good Morning, Bill*, reflected to a significant degree in the book *Doctor Sally*, is the sanitised version of the play. For those who have read neither the play nor the book, in the opening scene

the much married and divorced, but still young, Lord Tidmouth is visiting a hotel on the south coast to find his old friend Bill Paradene, whom he has not seen for 10 years or so. Bill is out, but Tidmouth is introduced to a pyjama-clad Lottie, who is sharing Bill's suite. Bill returns and tells Lottie to go to her room to change. The audience is in no doubt as to the nature of the relationship between Bill and Lottie, but the Censor required the following lines between Lottie and Tidmouth to be cut:

Lottie (to Bill): My goodness, the way you bully me, anyone would think we were married.
Tidmouth: Good Lord: AREN'T you?
Lottie: Not exactly.
Tidmouth: I see. Er – in the sight of God, what?
Lottie: Well, anyway, in the sight of the hotel management.

The longest, and to my mind saddest, cut went to the heart of the play, and audiences have never been able to appreciate the strength of what Fodor was trying to say. Essentially Bill Paradene had noticed a girl on the golf links, with whom he fell in love at first sight, and decided to drop Lottie, whom he now regarded as having been no more than the mere plaything of an idle hour, and try to get to know this girl. When he told Lottie, she had hysterics, and it was necessary to call a doctor to her. The doctor, of course, turned out to be Sally Smith, the girl on the links, who immediately realised the nature of the relationship between Bill and Lottie. Naturally, Bill was delighted at Sally's arrival as with this introduction he was now in a position to talk to her.

But the Censor cut the next scene, in which he asked Sally if he could retain her as his family physician and she responded by accusing him of insulting her, suggesting that she supposed he might expect the same services from her in return for her fee as had been provided to him by Lottie. Now that is pretty strong stuff for Wodehouse, and I regret that it has not been restored to the standard text.

After the London run of *Good Morning, Bill* was over, much of Acts II and III was revised into a sketch to be played in Variety at the Coliseum from May 20, 1929, with Sally Smith being played by Heather Thatcher, a renowned actress of the period, who wielded Sally's handbag to good effect. And finally, after the war, Wodehouse revised the play yet again and gave it an American setting, hoping to arrange a New

York production. He could not decide on its title, and in early typescripts he tried *Joy in the Morning*, *Summer Moonshine*, and *Nothing Serious!*

Plum was worried about what he saw as a need to spice up his dialogue for the post-war American public? Try this. In reply to Tidmouth's enquiry as to whether Lottie is his girl, Bill answered:

"In a way."

"What do you mean—in a way. She told me she gave you her all."

"Me and a number of others. She's like Caesar's wife. She gets around."

A rude joke. Unwodehousean, maybe, but Plum's attitude was "Needs must," and away from his beloved fiction he gave more than lip service to the phrase *Anything Goes*.

Piccadilly Jim Revisited

BY BRIAN TAVES

In the summer issue of Plum Lines, Philip Shreffler gave us his impressions of the new film Piccadilly Jim, based on the Wodehouse novel. Here Brian Taves, a film historian at the Library of Congress and TWS convention speaker, presents another point of view. —Ed.

Following scriptwriter Julian Fellowes's Academy Award for *Gosford Park* (2001), and its commercial success with a recreation of 1930s Britain, he was able to initiate the third film version of *Piccadilly Jim*. In itself, this was no small achievement, for the last P. G. Wodehouse movie on the English big screen had been *The Girl on the Boat* 40 years before.

The *Piccadilly Jim* that finally emerged from Fellowes's screenplay was an interpretation deeply at odds with Wodehouse humor, the result of the selection of a director, John McKay, who was mismatched with the story. Unlike Robert Altman and his direction of *Gosford Park*, McKay found the concept of a period setting distracting and labored to undercut it in every way. McKay sought to avoid the world of Wodehouse television adaptations and their country-house weekends. In its stead, he asserts an equivalence between the 1930s, the 1960s, and the world of 2004, as all one and the same. McKay noted, "I think P. G. Wodehouse inhabits a parallel universe to the period he is writing about, so we should find a parallel universe to suit this

Piccadilly Jim. We thus decided we would make up our own 'thirties' . . ." Every bit of decor looks less like the ostensible 1930s setting than one of the decade's science-fiction visions of the world as it would shortly become. The designs attempt to evoke the satires of the sterile stylization of modernism in films by Jacques Tati or Stanley Kubrick. However, McKay has no real vision of his own; instead *Piccadilly Jim* is chock-a-block modern with anachronisms and absurd inventions. McKay's defiantly iconoclastic visuals are incongruous, their lack of internal coherence constantly preventing viewers from immersing themselves in the world of the story. Equally at odds with any narrative unity is the singing of modern songs and the presence of 21st-century retro automobiles.

Costumes and makeup are particularly outlandish, especially unbelievable coiffures that spike, thrust, or droop to one side. The romantic leads vary scene by scene, from Jim in an enormous fur coat and scarf, to Ann in modern boots, to Jim and Ann in contemporary nightclub dress with resonances to 1970s disco.

In attempting to modernize Wodehouse, McKay lacks any conception of what has made the author successful. The opening sequence provides a sharp comparison of the divergent approach between the film versions of *Piccadilly Jim* in 1936 and 2004. In the former, Bayliss wakens Jim from a late night to discover he is asleep with his feet on the pillow where his head ought to be. Such a tasteful indicator of insouciance from the 1930s is beyond the sensibility of 2004; in this version Bayliss finds Jim in bed with three scantily clad floozies. Nothing could have been farther from the harmless spirit of Wodehouse, even when he portrays marital mores and infidelity in such theatrical adaptations as *Candle-Light*.

The *Piccadilly Jim* of 2004 is a true wastrel—a womanizer, brawler, and drunkard who is deeply unsympathetic. Robert Montgomery, the *Piccadilly Jim* of 1936, might have played such a character in a likeable manner, but instead of the classical Hollywood stars who could so perfectly embody Wodehouse characters, 2004 offers the modern Sam Rockwell. His performance lacks charm or charisma; he plays the role as standard-issue "bad boy." Of course, according to contemporary romantic formula, this must be the secret wish of Ann, whose characterization is altered substantially. Instead of Nesta writing thrillers, as in the novel, it is Ann who composes them, incorporating criminal brutality that reflects her own volatile, slightly disturbed nature. Jim compares her speech to that of Sam Spade, and her devotion to murder is portrayed as the direct result of Jim's scathing review of the book

of her poetry. Yet her first impression upon meeting Jim (she does not know his true identity until the end) is that he is too much of a “Mr. Nice Guy,” lacking the dangerous edge for which she yearns. Frances O’Connor plays much of the role in varying tones of hysteria, and frequent, rather obvious dubbing reveal an actress having understandable difficulty with her role.

The greatest error is in eliminating the sincerity of the remorse Jim must feel. In the novel, love changes him, and only later does Jim realize why Ann hates the man she never met: He had penned a vicious review of her book of poetry. This theme was retained, according to surviving plot synopses, in the original, now-lost, faithful 1919 movie of *Piccadilly Jim*, with Owen Moore in the title role. The 1936 film of *Piccadilly Jim* had Jim pen cartoon parodies of the Pett family in retribution for their condescending treatment of his father, before Jim knew Ann was their relative. The 2004 version makes an alteration that ruins the credibility of Jim’s transformation. The columns under the byline “Piccadilly Jim” were penned by a ghostwriter, meaning that Jim never did actually wrong Ann. To compensate, he need do no more than punch the real writer in the nose. Without the need for contrition, Rockwell etches a Jim incapable of remorse, rendering the central conflict meaningless. All that remains is a playboy who has found an equally wild girl.

If a 21st-century movie adaptation of Wodehouse requires actors like Rockwell who need to be introduced in bed with three women, there is indeed little place for Wodehouse in theatrical feature films. The behavior of the 1930s is not the same as the present, and having Ann arrange for assignations with Jim, or making him give a goodbye kiss to Bayliss, masquerading as his father, only seems crass. Perhaps it is best for Wodehouse to remain on television, where he need only appeal to narrower, more literary audiences, comfortable with the flavor of another, more distant era.



A certain liveliness was beginning to manifest itself up in the gallery. The raspberry was not actually present, but he seemed to hear the beating of its wings.

“The Masked Troubadour”
Lord Emsworth and Others (1937)

O Tempora! Wodehouse and Linguistic Decorum

BY OLIVER FERGUSON

As Walter Stevenson (aka Egbert Mulliner) delightfully demonstrated in his presentation “Expletives and Wodehouse” at the winter 2003 meeting of Chapter One in Philadelphia, Wodehouse is notably successful in achieving the effect of improper expletives without using them. A strongly uttered “Pooh” or “Tchah” by one of his characters serves better than any of the four-letter interjections routinely resorted to by present-day writers.*

The avoidance of explicit profanity and obscenity in the stories written prior to World War I and between the wars was partly in deference to contemporary standards of decorum, but it is also characteristic of those written during and after World War II, when these standards were less restricting. This linguistic restraint is a constant throughout Wodehouse’s fiction because he understood that it serves the interests of his comedy. As Stevenson observed, the very inadequacy of a “Tchah” enhances the comic effect of a situation.

Along with comically inadequate euphemisms, Wodehouse frequently relies on what may be called implicit impropriety, a device whereby the narrator will tactfully suggest, rather than allow a character to utter, the offensive term. Aunt Dahlia typically expresses her displeasure with “a rich hunting field expletive”; Boko Fittleworth is at a loss to account for where his fiancée learned expressions that he “couldn’t repeat with gentlemen present”; and he himself is denounced by Bertie’s Uncle Percy with “a number of adjectives . . . of a rugged and rather Elizabethan nature.” Augustus the cat, Bertie supposes, “cursed freely” when roused from his nap; and when annoyed, the dog Bartholomew, echoing Shakespeare’s melancholy Jacques, is “full of strange oaths.” The definitive example of this obviously favorite device (from *The Plot That Thickened*) deserves quoting in full: “The word [Dolly] uttered was so crisp and forceful that it raised the . . . hair on Monty’s head. Strong language was no novelty to him—he had once been present when somebody had slammed a car door on the finger of D’Arcy (‘Stilton’) Cheesewright . . . —but this particular ejaculation was new to him. . . .”

So characteristic is Wodehouse’s avoidance of coarse diction that the exceptions to his practice are worth noting. Not surprisingly, they are found in stories written in the 1940s and beyond. Whereas Battling Billson must in 1923 express his indignation by means of dashes (“the idea of a -- -- -- ’is size . . . goin’ and

dottin' a little -- -- like you!"), by 1949 Corky Pirbright can call the Haddock aunts "bitches," and one of these aunts labels Bertie a "piefaced young bastard."

Richard Usborne, in *The Penguin Wodehouse Companion*, attributes the presence of such inelegant diction as "fanny" and "bloody awful" in *Money in the Bank* (1942) to Wodehouse's exposure to the "all-male camps" during his wartime internment. Another influence is surely the relaxation of standards of usage during and following the war. Whatever the causes, though Wodehouse still preferred the euphemistic devices that are so effective in his earlier novels, expressions of greater explicitness can be found in several of the later ones. In *Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves* (1963), Bertie describes Pop Bassett as an "undersized little son of a bachelor." In the following decade, in *Jeeves and the Tie That Binds*, Wodehouse allows Aunt Dahlia to utter not an undetermined "rich hunting field expletive" but the more obvious "superfatted son of a bachelor"; and in the same novel, Ginger Winship refers to an S.O.B. Dolly Molloy comes even closer to the explicit term in *The Plot That Thickened* (1972): "Well, the son of a . . .," she said. The final word was lost in the forceful replacement of the receiver."

This novel contains a spectacular example of the new freedom in diction: "I don't care if your name is Butterwick," an outraged Dolly exclaims—"checking an impulse to insert the adjective 'god-damned' between the 'your' and the 'name.'" This blunt use of profanity is so startling that the reader may initially fail to realize that Dolly does not actually utter the word. Despite her antecedents (she is, after all, a product of the Chicago underworld, an accomplished shoplifter, and the wife of a confidence man), she is still governed by the linguistic decorum of an earlier time. The narrator, relating his story in the 1970s, is under no such restraint and reveals with an almost pedantic exactness the word that Dolly has repressed. Wodehouse's rhetorical ploy in observing this double standard of propriety is atypical, if not unique, in the canon.**

Philip Hensher, in his review of the Everyman edition (in progress) of the works (*The Spectator*, 14/21 December 2002), praises Wodehouse for his skill in using "linguistic register" and maintains that "one never feels that Bertie, Jeeves, Mulliner, Gussy, Madeline, or Emsworth are saying anything inappropriate." This judgment is largely accurate, but it is not supported by the exceptions to Wodehouse's usual practice regarding expletives. Although a distinct minority in the novels, their presence shocks—not because they are coarse or profane but because they are so at variance with what Hensher calls the "basically Edwardian"

world that Wodehouse created in his fiction, a world in which indecorous language has no place. On the relatively few occasions that Wodehouse employs an epithet appropriate to the times in which he is actually writing, his sense of "linguistic register" is less acute, and the result is uncongenial and uninteresting. A realistic "god-damned" does not have the marvelous suggestiveness of "a rich hunting field expletive"; "the son of a . . ." is almost embarrassingly lame; and though "piefaced young bastard" is undeniably effective, it is not as amusing as an expression that is ludicrously inadequate for the occasion.

Here is Bertie in *Right Ho, Jeeves*, engaged in a heated debate with his cousin Angela. The situation reaches an impasse when Angela tells him to go away and boil his head. Bertie draws himself up and replies coldly and with dignity, "In that case, tinkerty tonk.' And I meant it to sting."

* I should like to thank Mr. Stevenson for graciously sending me his notes for his presentation.

** The postwar cultural climate also accounts for the occasional presence of vulgar allusions in several of the later novels. For example, in *Joy in the Morning* (1946), Lord Worpleston says to a policeman, "As for that warrant of yours, you can take it and stick it . . . However, that is neither here nor there."

Simply Smashing

I could see that she was looking for something to break as a relief to her surging emotions . . . and courteously drew her attention to a terracotta figure of the Infant Samuel at Prayer. She thanked me briefly and hurled it against the opposite wall.

—*The Code of the Woosters* (1938)

Next to the cow creamer itself, the most important icon (pigs and pumpkins aside) in the Wodehouse canon is a small statuette of the Infant Samuel at Prayer. It is mentioned in three works and broken in two of them. This figure was not just a creation of the fertile Wodehouse imagination. According to Norman Murphy, the statuette was originally produced by the well-known porcelain manufacturer Minton in the 1850s and was displayed at England's Great Exhibition in 1851. It became hugely popular in Victorian homes as a means of inspiring piety in children and was often found in the nursery.



Gwladys Pendlebury, aka Jennifer Frudakis, preparing to launch the Infant Samuel.

But as any Wodehouse collector who has tried to get one of these items knows, they are nearly impossible to find (many were doubtless broken). Besides, Victorian Minton can be pricey. Well, now your long search is over.

TWS member Rosalie Frudakis, who owns a professional sculpture studio, had her niece Jennifer Frudakis (aka Gwladys Pendlebury), a professional sculptor, create an accurate copy of the original 2¾" statuette. They are cast in white plaster so that they are affordable and can be used for smashing on special Wodehousean occasions or when things get really rough.

The cost is \$9.95 each plus \$3 packaging and postage, or three for \$27 plus \$5 for postage and packaging. They may be ordered by sending your check along with your mailing address to:

Rosalie Frudakis
Frudakis Studio, Inc.

Infant Samuel statuette website: <http://hometown.aol.com/rofrudakis/myhomepage/business.html>

Jeeves on Bridge

Bobby Wolff's syndicated bridge column features one of the parodies of well-known writers by Philip and Robert King. The Wodehouse parody has Bertie trying to learn bridge to impress his latest fiancée. Here he is trying to bring home a three no-trump.

Jeeves persuades him to play dummy's heart king at trick one and asks, "What next?"

"I'd reel off all those jolly-looking diamonds, Jeeves."

"A strategy worthy of Von Clausewitz sir. May I ask how?"

"How, Jeeves? I don't understand. When you reel, you reel."

"An intermediate player would lead the ace and finesse the jack, sir."

"That's what I meant, Jeeves. I'd reel with finesse. It's just like trout fishing."

While this line is likely to lose a diamond to the safe hand, Jeeves mentions that West may have a bare diamond queen. Now East would have a diamond entry for a second fatal heart lead.

"Jeeves this isn't fair. Every time a fellow plays something, you cook up some awful distribution and make him look an ass."

Jeeves' solution astonishes Bertie; enter the closed hand in a black suit at the second trick, lead a diamond, and allow West to win if he plays the queen.

"But are you actually suggesting that I let the blighter make his bare queen?"

"One must speculate to accumulate, sir."

It dawns on Bertie that he must escape from this bridge fanatic of a fiancée, and a long cruise is called for.

"You may reserve two places immediately."

"I have already done so, sir."

Golf Digest and Wodehouse

Robert Elliott sends this information:

This is to advise that, as usual, the Master has triumphed. The June 2005 issue of *Golf Digest* notes that its editor, Jerry Tarde, votes for PGW's *Golf Omnibus* as the funniest golf book. No surprise to us, right?

Robert then reminds us of the universality of the golf stories, which perhaps explains this appeal, as expressed in the last lines of "The Heart of a Goof," when the hero "folded her in his arms, using the interlocking grip."

And for Our Next Act . . .

BY JEAN TILLSON

Delicious autumn! My very soul is wedded to it, and if I were a bird I would fly about the earth seeking the successive autumns.
—George Eliot

The New England Wodehouse Thingummy Society (NEWTS) cordially invites you and George Eliot to fly (or use any other form of travel) to Providence, Rhode Island, in the autumn of 2007 (October 11–14, to be specific) for The Wodehouse Society's 14th International Convention. Not only will this be a return to a time of year during which TWS conventions have often been held in the past, it will be a return to the elegance of a posh hotel over the economy of a college campus. The swanky hotel in question is the Providence Biltmore, opened in 1922 and designed to recreate the high standards of living enjoyed at the Vanderbilt Biltmore Estate in North Carolina. The Biltmore hotel is centrally located in downtown Providence within walking distance of the many and varied attractions of this historic city. Chief among the many entertainments the NEWTS are planning for convention revelers is a Friday bus trip to Newport, Rhode Island, to visit some of the famous "summer cottages" built by the country's wealthiest people at the turn of the 20th century. More details are, of course, forthcoming in future issues of *Plum Lines*, but our advice is to START SAVING NOW for this very special convention. And if you need more enticement in the meantime, visit the following websites:

The Providence Biltmore Hotel: www.providencebiltmore.com

The Providence Warwick Convention & Visitors Bureau: www.pwcvb.com/visitors

The Newport Mansions: www.newportmansions.org



The NEWTS present their plot to bring the convention to Providence in 2007, and the L.A. conventioneers gladly accept!



It's quite obvious that Kris Fowler has the proper spirit to be the new VP & Treasure for TWS!

TWS Elects New Vice President and Treasurer

BY JEAN TILLSON

The Wodehouse Society's new vice president and treasurer, Kristine Fowler, is a founding member of the Northwodes (Minnesota Chapter of TWS), for which she has performed various organizational tasks ever since the other founder members recognized certain qualities she shares with the Efficient One Who Shall Not Be Named. Kris is the mathematics librarian at the University of Minnesota, holding a master's degree in physics as well as library science. She is overqualified for the position of TWS Treasurer by dint of having real experience in this office with her professional association, but she didn't mind accepting the job at this time since it appeared she would not have to do any actual work as vice president. Her frivolous side shines forth at TWS convention costume competitions, during which (if she is not serving as a judge) she competes in the category of Most Obscure Character. The only time she lost this coveted award was when she wore a costume that required her to have asparagus tucked behind her ear (and that, no doubt, was only because she couldn't figure out a way to entangle it in her eyebrow, as the text called for). Congratulations and many thanks to Kris!

My First Time

BY CAROLYN POKRIVCHAK

This whole Wodehouse collecting obsession started because a woman I did not know became ill.

No, let's start at the beginning. When I was in 7th grade our literature book had a story titled "Uncle Fred Flits By." Now, I was the sort of a kid who just went ahead and read my books, not waiting for the teacher. Having laughed my way through Uncle Fred's flitting, I decided it was the funniest thing I had ever read and rushed to the library to read more P. G. Wodehouse. The school library had none, and our branch library had about six, which I read and reread for the next few years.

Fast forward: I am now married with two children who are old enough for me to have some time for myself. I went to a huge book sale in the New York City Armory and found a stall with nothing but Wodehouse. I bought all that I had money for and got the vendor's card. He was from England and agreed to send me some *Strands* from time to time.

Then my family and I moved to Ohio, and a trip to Canada was planned for my son Max's English class to attend the Stratford Festival. The day before the trip, one of the chaperones became ill (that's the woman I did not know). Max came home devastated because the school administration insisted on another chaperone or no trip. I called the teacher and volunteered. (Now comes the PGW connection.) The theaters were dark on Monday, so we took the students to Toronto for the

day. Of course, they ducked the chaperones at once, and I was on my own. I walked to King Street and found bookstore after bookstore after bookstore. The first one I entered had a PGW display, and the trap was set. When it was time to return to Stratford, I had at least eight or 10 more Wodehouse books. I announced to Max, "I guess I am now a Wodehouse collector." And I was.

I have books from many states and several from Europe and England. It always added to my trips to spend the days "Wodehousing." Some of the books are in languages I cannot read, but that's okay. It became my goal to have English and American copies of all Wodehouse titles listed in *Portrait of a Master*. It took me 25 years, but I have them!

There have been many funny or unusual happenings during my book buying, but one stands out. I was in Chicago, and the used bookstores were almost all clustered in a rather seedy part of the city. I was having a great time finding magazines as well as books. In one store the magazine section was curtained off from the main section. I was happily going through the piles of *Playboys* looking for issues containing Wodehouse stories when I realized that the only other people behind the curtain with me were what I would characterize as "dirty old men."

Such is the life of a Wodehouse collector.

When was your first time? Share your Wodehouse reading experiences with us! Send your story (anywhere from 200 to 600 words) to Dan Cohen (address on page 32).

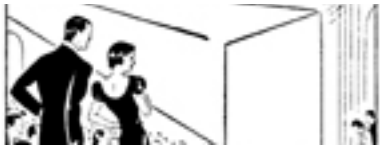
Pigs Do Have Wings

The following brief review was posted on PGWNet earlier this year by Daniel Love Glazer and is reprinted here for interest. Pigs Have Wings finished its run at City Lit on June 12. Unfortunately, Dan tells us that City Lit is not planning a Wodehouse-based production next season.

—Ed.

My wife and I saw City Lit's production of *Pigs Have Wings* last night. It was a delight. The excellent adaptation was by Page Hearn. Page has played Jeeves many times on City Lit's stage and was the company's managing director before moving recently to New York. My wife thought the treatment—about two and quarter hours—was a tad long for non-Wodehouse buffs and could have been cut. I hardly noticed the passing of time despite the very hot theater, bereft of air conditioning.

The acting and production were excellent. Don Bender was a suave Galahad, in the mold of his Uncle Fred when City Lit did *Uncle Fred in the Springtime* and *Cocktail Time*. Of course Uncle Fred and Galahad have virtually the same persona. Jan Blixt, who played four characters in *Cocktail Time*, contented herself with two, Lady Constance and Maudie, this time around—and she was terrific. Deanna Boyd as Gloria Salt (and real estate agent Cooper) was very good, and Melanie Esplin as Penelope Donaldson was perfect. The other actors were fine too. The pigs, Empress of Blandings and Queen of Matchingham, were simulated by the clever use of umbrellas—believe it or not. Alas, all the umbrellas were pink. The Empress, as we know, should have been portrayed in black. Their grunts sounded very pig-like.



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 can get in touch with the contact person listed.

We are happy to welcome a new Canadian chapter—our third in two years! Capital F.O.R.M. is in Ottawa.

Anglers' Rest

(Seattle and vicinity)

Contact: Susan Collicott

We will be meeting in late September to share our enjoyable convention memories, plan for the future, and, of course, get in a spot of browsing and sluicing. We are also building our own e-mail list—if you wish to join our chapter's list, please send Susan Collicott your e-mail address and you will be added when the list is up and running. Details will also be publicized in future *Plum Lines*. Fall activities may include tours of Seattle, silent movies at the Paramount, tea with Bolsheviks, and many other boffo outings.

Blandings Castle Chapter

(Greater San Francisco Bay area)

Contact: Ed and Missy Ratcliffe

The Blandings Castle chapter is still basking in the glow of the Hollywood convention, and recovering from the Hollywood convention, so the only news at the moment is that David Smeltzer and his wife Susanna Smart are leaving our area and moving to Ohio, where David is becoming an assistant professor

at Kent State University. This is a gain for Ohio, but a great loss to us. We couldn't have better friends, and David's technical skills as a television producer resulted in some of our best convention skits.

The Broadway Special

(New York City and vicinity)

Contact: Philip Shreffler

The Broadway Special met on July 8 in the library at the Players on Gramercy Park South in Manhattan, the private actors, artists, and writers' club founded in 1888 by Edwin Booth and Mark Twain, among others. The club of both Jerome Kern and Guy Bolton (Plum's was the Lotus), PGW certainly frequented the Players—and the Broadway Special hopes to make the club its headquarters for all future informal meetings. Amiable conversation centered on a comparison of the book and new film version of *Piccadilly Jim* as well as on a broad range of Wodehousian topics—all in the Players' agreeable book-lined and red-leather-chaired snugger. The Special's next gathering will be a dinner meeting on October 15, to celebrate Plum's birthday. The restaurant is yet to be determined at this writing.

Buck-U-Uppo Bottling Company

(Seaside, Oregon, and vicinity)

Contact: Sandy Rea

Capital! Capital!

(Washington, D.C., and vicinity)

Contact: Jeff Peterson

This summer Capital! Capital! took a break. The D.C. chapter plans to gather once again when the sun ceases to boil and mosquitoes rest from their exertions, as I believe our favorite author once said of

the welcome fall season. September sees the chapter holding its Capital! Capital! Gang Rhyme Time (CCGRT) poetry contest. Veteran versifiers Ken Clevenger and Maria Comino are the cohosts for this event.

Capital F.O.R.M.

(Ottawa and vicinity)

Contact: Megan Carton

Ottawa, Canada's esteemed capital, is a government city and terribly fond of acronyms. Ours stands for Friends of Ralston McTodd. We have several keen individuals and are busy planning a quarterly newsletter and outings, such as possibly an Alpine Croquet Tournament. Alpine croquet is just like regular croquet but played in a hilly locale, to represent our rugged Canadian character. "Rugged" Canadian is an honorary term here. In actuality, our number includes government writers, a high school English head, a Provincial court judge, a sound engineer, and other similar riff-raff.

Chapter One

(Greater Philadelphia area)

Contact: Susan Cohen

Chapter One meets on a Sunday afternoon once every two months except in the summer. Place: The Dark Horse Restaurant, Headhouse Square, Philadelphia. New members welcome.

Reading a Wodehouse story aloud is an annual Chapter One event, and so at our May meeting we had a read-aloud of "A Shocking Affair," a school story from *Tales of St. Austin's*. Some of Chapter One's most talented actors read the story to the rest of us. Needless to say, we all got a huge laugh out of it. The school stories really show their true charm when read aloud. One of our members had gone to New York to see *The Beauty Prize*, and he reported back to us about the show. He was crazy about it, especially the song "You Can't Make Love By Wireless." Wonder what kind of lyrics Wodehouse might have written for a song about making love by television? It's probably lucky

for him and for us he didn't have to. I mean, hey, P. G. Wodehouse and Paris Hilton; not a match made in Heaven as far as I'm concerned.

Rosalie Frudakis brought casts of the tiny Infant Samuel statuette made by her talented niece Jennifer Frudakis, aka Gwladys Pendlebury. Little Sam was a big hit at the meeting, just as he was later at the Hollywood convention. Many Chaps were ready to buy a few (they don't cost much), to display proudly on a shelf and to smash against the wall when feeling exceptionally disgruntled.

Our next meeting will be September 18, when those of us who went to the convention will tell those who didn't go what they missed and make them jealous.

The Chicago Accident Syndicate

(Chicago and thereabouts)

Contact: Daniel & Tina Garrison

Our last meeting was in May at Susan Diamond and Alan Devitt's house. We intended to play a lively game of croquet, but superior browsing and sluicing, followed by several readings from the Master, meant that we never got around to the croquet. The truth is that the gentle influence of early summer (there is no spring in Chicago) had such a soothing effect on our usually quarrelsome natures that croquet seemed not quite the thing.

The Clients of Adrian Mulliner

(For enthusiasts of both PGW and Sherlock Holmes)

Contact: Marilyn MacGregor

Senior Bloodstains are held at Wodehouse Society conventions. Junior Bloodstains are held every January, part of the big annual Sherlock Holmes celebration in New York. The meetings are always great fun. One does not have to be a Client to attend; anyone interested in both Holmes and Wodehouse is welcome. The Clients of Adrian Mulliner held their Senior Bloodstain in one of the quieter rooms in Covell Commons (UCLA) on Saturday afternoon, August 13, just before the convention banquet. We signed up a few new members, sold some of our stellar pins (these sales are keeping us solvent so that we do not

have to nag the members for dues), and read Anne Cotton's opus "Sherlock Holmes and the Unsettling Smile" (featuring, among others, Adrian Mulliner as the definitely-not-greatest-detective in the British world). We will gather again in January at the annual Sherlockian festival in New York.

The Drone Rangers

(Houston and vicinity)

Newsletter: *DroneStar*, edited by Carey Tynan

Contact: Toni Rudersdorf

We discussed *The World of Mr. Mulliner* at our July meeting at Barnes and Noble. In August we dined at an intimate little restaurant named Annabelle's, consuming crab cakes and champagne while hearing all about the Hollywood convention from members who had attended it. We will meet in September, when the book on the agenda is *Full Moon*. Also in September, on the 5th to be exact, we will hold our annual video night, when, in addition to watching PGW videos, we'll enjoy a buffet dinner and a sing-along. The Drone Rangers are planning a day out to hear Toni and the Houston Concert Band perform at Hobby Center on Sunday, October 30, at 3:00 P.M. If you will be in Houston then, please join us. The music will be good and the company of PGWers as fine as you are likely to find anywhere! Our Remember Plum Party will be on November 5 at the Glidden residence. This is an annual event featuring videos, a buffet, lots of sluicing, and a piano player who plays as we sing along. We sing all kinds of songs, including the works of Berlin, Gershwin, and others.

A group of Drone Rangers volunteered to help in the disaster relief effort following Hurricane Katrina. We were assigned to the Food Bank. It was good to be able to help the victims of this terrible disaster.

The Mottled Oyster Club

(San Antonio and South Texas)

Contact: James P. Robinson III

The Mottled Oyster Club of San Antonio and South Texas is now meeting on a more or less stable schedule. On the second Thursday of each month we

meet at a bookstore to discuss Wodehouse. Every other month, under its nom de guerre of the Jellied Eels, the group meets at a restaurant for dinner. Interested or traveling Wodehousians are always welcome.

The New England Wodehouse Thingummy Society

(NEWTS – Boston and elsewhere in New England)

Contact: Anne Cotton, president

The NEWTS met on July 16 at the home of Lisa and Tom Dorward, in Ashby, Massachusetts. We began with the penultimate rehearsal of our convention skit ("Penny's from Hades") and continued with the traditional sluicing, browsing, and conversation about this, that, and the other. Amongst these refreshing activities we did find time to read "The Goal-Keeper and The Plutocrat," an early Plum tale from *The Man Upstairs*. There will be more full reports of the convention, but the NEWTS were grateful that our final cast assembled for one last rehearsal right on schedule and that the performance was the first and only run-through at which no cast member flubbed any lines. Whew!

The NEWTS' next meeting is scheduled for October 1 at the home of David and Elizabeth Landman—where, among other delights, we will get down to some serious contemplation of October 2007 in Providence.

The Northwodes

(St. Paul, Minneapolis, and vicinity)

Contact: Kristine Fowler

We Northwodes gave our intellects a break from monthly book discussions this summer, figuring a social outing in July would be just the thing instead. Noel Hegedus organized a creative afternoon of entertainments and refreshments at a lakeside gazebo, but arrangements had to be hurriedly rearranged when it turned out to be 97 humid degrees that day (Bonnie Sample reports, among the day's casualties, that trifle should not be attempted in such weather). Three lucky Northwodes escaped the heat temporarily by attending the TWS convention in mild Los Angeles. We can't wait for winter to arrive! Or at least autumn, when our

book discussions resume. We're also looking forward to our annual Birthday Toast to Wodehouse on October 15; details will be forthcoming.

The Pale Parabolites

(Toronto and vicinity)

Contact: Peter M. Nixon

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

PZMPCo turned five in June! We had a large turnout for our birthday meeting, followed by browsing and sluicing at the Chado Tea Room. We then spent the next two months worrying about the Hollywood convention, and now we are catching up on our sleep. We're hoping to have a PZMPCo presence at the next convention, too.

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; we promise that it's very low traffic. NB to Plummies in Southern California, whether domiciled or just passing through: Come up and see us.

We have already set the readings for the rest of the year. September: *Summer Moonshine*. October: Two golf stories—"Chester Forgets Himself" and "The Letter of the Law." November: *A Damsel In Distress*. December: Holiday Tea and "Jeeves and the Yuletide Spirit." 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 22; and the Lanterman House Tea, a ragtime era event planned for November

12; plus ukulele 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

The Pickering Motor Company shareholders meet every other month at Caribou Coffee on 14 Mile and M-5, though discussions have been opened for changing the venue. The next meeting is scheduled for October 15 (isn't everyone's?), and the book under discussion is *Uncle Fred in the Springtime*. Anyone living even remotely nearby is encouraged to contact us and join in the merriment.

Four members attended the Hooray for Hollywood convention, and one of them (we won't say who, but his initials are Michael Smith) was so caught up by Curtis Armstrong's lecture on *Laughing Gas* that he immediately procured the book, read it, declared it the funniest thing he had ever read in his life, and insisted on discussing it as well. As long as the coffee holds out, therefore, little Joey Cooley will be on the agenda also.

The Size 14 Hat Club

(Halifax, Nova Scotia)

Contact: Jill Robinson

The Soup & Fish Club

(Northern Virginia area)

Contact: Deborah Dillard

The noble aim of the Soup and Fish Club is to bring the joy of Wodehouse to the younger generation. The chapter's head and sole member, Deborah Dillard, aka Mary Kent, visits school librarians to talk them into letting her give presentations on the master's great works to their students, and she occasionally tackles other projects to spread the word about Wodehouse—for example, offering a trophy at the Clifton Lion's Labor Day Car Show, award to go to the car that a

Wodehouse character would most likely have driven. You can learn which car won and why in the next issue of *Plum Lines*.



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