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Noble Nuptials and Newport or Mrs. Astor's Big Mistake

BY NORMAN MURPHY

One of the highlights of the convention in Providence this October will be a tour of Newport, Rhode Island. Here Norman describes a fascinating aspect of the Gilded Age, of which Newport was a part—and, of course, there's a Wodehousean connection!

What do the following Wodehouse characters have in common? Lord Drever, Lord Arthur Hayling, Lord Runnymede, Freddie Threepwood, Lord Hunstanton, Lord Biskerton, Lord Chuffnell, Lord Ickenham, Lord Topham, Conky Biddle. The answer is that they were all members of the aristocracy who either married or wanted to marry American heiresses, while other Wodehousean sprigs of nobility wanted to marry chorus girls.

We all vaguely remember Gaiety Girls marrying into the House of Lords, but why did Wodehouse use the American heiress theme so often? He did so because it was a social phenomenon of his youth. It was only when I read a splendid book entitled *To Marry an English Lord*, by Gail MacColl and Carol Wallace (Sidgwick & Jackson 1989), that I realized what a phenomenon it really was. Between 1874 and 1914, 118 American heiresses married into the British aristocracy—and, by a splendid irony, it all began with the snobbery of Mrs. Caroline Astor (1836–1908).

I read somewhere that before the American Civil War, there were 12 millionaires in America. After the war, there were hundreds. By 1870, men like Vanderbilt, Carnegie, Rockefeller, Gould, and others had made vast fortunes and, at their wives' insistence, went to New York to spend their money. They built themselves enormous houses along Fifth Avenue, furnishing them with priceless antique furniture, and looked forward to "entering Society." The snag was that Society was dominated by Mrs. Astor, who ruled New York's social life with a rod of iron and did *not* view the newcomers with approval. Third-generation money herself, she saw it as her duty to set the standard for Society—and that meant deciding who was or was not in it.

Following the lead of Mrs. Astor, whose social secretary, Ward McAllister, had stated that New York Society comprised only 400 people, the "Nobs" (Old New York) considered the "Swell" (New Money) extravagant and boorish. And no matter how much money the Swells spent, no matter how magnificent the palaces they built along Fifth Avenue, the Nobs excluded them by simply not returning their calls and ignoring them at social functions. Commodore Vanderbilt's family,



The Gothic Room at the Marble House Mansion in Newport, RI

for example, had to wait well over 10 years, until 1883, for Mrs Astor to acknowledge their existence. The result was that some of the New Money wives decided to take their daughters somewhere where they would be appreciated.

Clara Jerome, wife of Leonard Jerome, took her girls to Paris. Ellen Yznaga did the same thing, and the two mothers, their daughters, and their money were warmly welcomed by Napoleon III. At the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War in 1870, they moved to London (to Brown's Hotel, which features in my Wodehouse Walk) and joined another American wife snubbed by Mrs. Astor, Marietta Stevens and her daughter Minnie. Soon after their arrival, they were presented to the Prince of Wales (later Edward VII), who found the girls pretty, attractive, and different. Then all doors were open to them.

In 1872 the Hon. Henry Wodehouse, a cousin of you-know-who, married Mary Livingstone, daughter of J. P. King of Sands Hill, Georgia. In 1874 Lord Randolph Churchill, the Duke of Marlborough's son, married Jennie Jerome—and started the fashion for impoverished British aristocrats marrying American heiresses, a fashion which lasted 40 years.

These High Society transatlantic alliances arose from four factors. Firstly, the traditional wealth of the British aristocracy came from land, which they rented to tenant farmers. It had proved profitable over the centuries, but that came to an end in the early 1870s when a series of disastrous harvests meant food had to be imported from abroad. Cheap Australian mutton and even cheaper beef and corn from America meant that rent rolls of the great country estates fell sharply and landowners suddenly found themselves in dire financial straits.

Secondly, with the British habit of leaving the estate to eldest sons, there were very few British heiresses around, and they were soon snapped up.

Thirdly, marrying a British aristocrat meant an American girl got something she could never get at home—a title. Mrs. Astor might sneer at the fashion, but many of the mothers she had snubbed over the years were delighted to get their own back. She felt the indignity deeply and even put her footmen into the same livery as Queen Victoria's servants, but nothing could hide the unpalatable fact that girls she had snubbed were returning to New York as countesses, marchionesses, even duchesses.

Fourthly, while American millionaires had money and built enormous extravagant houses, they had no castles or historic Stately Homes. When the aristocratic brides came back to America and visited their friends along Fifth Avenue or at Newport, they made all the right noises about the luxurious surroundings, but would murmur condescendingly that it was all very different from her husband's 600-year-old ancestral castle!

From the mid-1870s onward, young British aristocratic hopefuls would arrive in New York with letters of introduction. These in turn led to invitations to dinner, to social evenings and all the rest of it. If he found a girl with sufficient money, then the young man would start his campaign in earnest. If all went well, the girl's family would invite him to join their summer house party at Newport. And it would be during his stay there that he would murmur those four magic words—and another historic British estate received a welcome financial transfusion.

The American newspapers soon caught on, and there were dozens of cartoons over the years, satirizing the chinless effete aristos and their search for heiresses. In Britain the fashion led to a series of musical comedies, one of which even used the real name of the heiress involved. *The Dollar Princess* of 1909 (like *The Prince and Betty* [U.K. version] three years later) revolved around an American girl refusing to make such a marriage, but the young aristo concerned proved his worth and it all worked out in the end. And Newport, even more than New York, was the center of it all.

Newport was, in summertime, the center of the American social world. It was where the wealthiest of the wealthy from New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, and Washington mixed happily. For the rest of the year, they ruled the roost in their own cities, but Newport was where they all went in the summer. In the summer of 1895, the British Embassy even closed its offices in Washington and moved to Newport's Bellevue Avenue.

It was in the Gothic Room of Marble House at Newport that the 9th Duke of Marlborough proposed to Consuelo Vanderbilt in 1895, a proposal that brought the dukedom \$15 million overall. May Goelet of Ochre Court, Newport, became Duchess of Roxburghe in 1903 (reputedly for \$2 million), while Beatrice Mills lived in one of Newport's smaller houses but became Countess of Granard in 1909. (Her London house is now the home of the English-Speaking Union in Charles Street, London, just along the road from the original of the Junior Ganymede club.) By my calculations, the final American "score sheet" (1874–1914) was 5 dukes, 5 marquesses, 21 earls, 3 viscounts, 24 barons, 22 baronets, and 8 knights. The British "score sheet" is impossible to ascertain, but I saw somewhere that \$40 million had crossed the Atlantic by 1900. Although some of the marriages were unhappy, others were very successful, and the Randolph Churchill–Jennie Jerome alliance produced Winston Churchill.

The combination of ancient titles and vast wealth provided fodder for the gossip columns on both sides of the Atlantic for 40 years. No wonder Wodehouse used the theme so often. I suppose such marriages occur today, though it seems to be the weddings of pop stars that hit

the news. But Elin and I live in hope. I am still waiting for oil to be found at Elin's home at Southold, Long Island, and she is still waiting for my services to the nation to be recognised with a well-deserved peerage. One day, perhaps . . .

All over the country decorous Dukes and steady Viscounts, who had once sown wild oats in the society of the young Galahad, sat quivering in their slippers at the thought of what long-cupboarded skeletons those Reminiscences might disclose.

Heavy Weather (1933)

The Reminiscences of Galahad Gould

BY CHARLES E. GOULD, JR.

In the first part of Charles's reminiscences, he described how he started as a book dealer. Here we learn about some of his more interesting experiences.

Dazzled collectors who have bought from me, dazzling dealers who have sold to me: in the words of Richard Wilbur (albeit his words are about insects), they are "the fine pistons of some bright machine." Respecting their privacy and revering them all, I shan't mention here the living except the unique Bibliographer, Biographer, and Collector David A. Jasen; but I may mention as also great Wodehouse Collectors I have known the late Walter White, the late Dr. Einar Himma, the late Robert G. Plunkett, the late Walter Pond, and of course the late James Herbert Makepeace Heineman. These men dealt with me, and I with them, and I grew fond of them all . . . including the one who wanted me to buy his duplicates at 10% *more* than my list price for the same items. Occasionally I did, and, like Mr. Snow in *Carousel*, in a manner of speaking, I made out pretty well. So I'm a dealer, *primus inter pares*.

From the late, I presume, George Linthicum (whose distinguished name always sounded to me like a bookbinder's or monkish scribe's term) I bought many books for resale and several spectacular books now reposing in my collection. For one of them (many years ago) he quite reasonably wanted \$1,000 overnight. I sent a personal check by mail . . . which, prior to the crippling disasters of technology, could actually move from coast to coast overnight. When he had not received it in two days, he telephoned to doubt my word that I had sent it. I sent another. Receiving both on the same day, he had the grace to telephone acknowledging receipt . . . and then he went ahead and cashed them both. And why not?

Here sparks the spirit that I have so sadly lacked! I wrote the checks and didn't have the wit to stop payment on the first one. That I am many hundreds of dollars ahead, now, on this particular deal, is vaguely irrelevant. And, of course, George Linthicum almost at once repaid



Charles "Galahad" Gould reminiscing for the masses

me. A major collector once referred to Mr. Linthicum as a "gouger," for he had had the unfortunate experience of finding out what Mr. Linthicum had paid for a book he was offering—and which ultimately I bought. It is still in my collection at something like 10 times what Mr. Linthicum paid for it. I've seen one offered since at almost 10 times *that*. I, too, have been called a "gouger," for in my youth I bought a PGW book, querying the asking price of \$3 and offering (as I recall) \$75 for it. The dealer, vaguely offended, insisted on his price of \$3. Somehow (probably through my own loose lips) word got out that I sold it for \$300 a few months later. Now, incidentally, the equal of that very volume was recently \$650 on another stage, and in certain swamps my name is, I imagine, mud. It takes a certain amount of nerve to succeed as a failure. But as Barry Phelps used to say in his catalogues, "I am not a charity, and nobody has to buy a book."

Dr. S., a Canadian dentist, telephoned about 15 years ago to order \$3,000 worth of books for which he wished to pay over a period of six months, offering as a reference Peter Stern. Knowing that the chariest and most charitable man is prodigal enough if he unmasks his beauty to the moon, I called Peter: "Yeah, sure he's ok, slow to pay

. . . about as slow as you used to be." A different Dr. G. ordered two or three thousand dollars' worth of books but agreed to pay in anticipation of each shipment over a period of six months. Dr. G. was an oncologist at Sloan-Kettering in New York, and when in the midst of this transaction I remarked to him that Carolyn, my wife, was trafficking with non-Hodgkins undifferentiated histiocytic lymphoma, he replied, "That's terrible." Later I wrote to him to say that those two words, in the midst of many well-meant effusions, were the two words meaning most to me. He paid for all the books, of course. I have not heard from him again, but I still recall "That's terrible"—easy words not easy to say.

David A. Jasen, the first bibliographer and first biographer of Wodehouse, bought from and sold to me years ago, and we are still in touch. The volumes in his vast private collection, like all the flowers, have since gone to graveyards, almost every one, where they will bloom again. Unique among other biographers, David really knew Wodehouse personally; but, setting that aside, David Jasen had a uniquely cultivated ear for the Wodehouse voice, and the indices in his various volumes are uniquely indispensable to the scholar or serious reader. At the same time, this Wodehousean pioneer sneers openly at the latter-day Heineman accumulation and disdains Ms. McIlvaine's bibliographical accomplishment. "Why bother?" I ask him. Let's just look at everything produced under the name P. G. Wodehouse: that is more than enough to keep various people busy, and I think anybody is allowed to collect anything he wants—or know of it, whether he wants it or not. No one despises Professor Jasen's unique and original productions, and every sensible soul reveres them. Naturally, others got onto the bandwagon he led, but that embellishes—does not diminish—his leadership and baton. George Lyman Kittredge (1860–1941) was the foremost Shakespearean scholar of our time; when asked by one of his students how, without a Ph.D., he had attained professorial tenure at Harvard, Kittredge replied, "Who could examine me?" Jasen is the Kittredge of Wodehouse.

Aubyn and Harris Kendall, Limestone Hills Bookshop, in Texas: we became quite close epistolary friends, though because Texas is west of the Hudson, we never met. Harris identified himself as Cherokee Bill, a Native American, and our vast correspondence may yet be seen somewhere. Witty and wistful and wise, like (I surmise) all his tribe, Harris for 10 years in the 1970s added constantly to my inventory and occasionally to my collection. After he died, Aubyn and I dealt in books to a large extent, and to the late Aubyn I owe possession of the last first edition missing from my collection, the U.K. first edition of *The Man Upstairs*, which she bought for me at a Christie's auction in London. As the years close on the death of our

spouses passed, Aubyn and I enjoyed the evening question of which of us, even allowing for the time warp between Connecticut and Texas, had enjoyed too many whiskies. I'm afraid I was often ahead.

In this sort of piece you expect me to touch on What I Have Learned in a quarter of a century. G. B. Shaw in his crabby way remarked that we learn nothing from experience except that we learn nothing from experience; and, alas, I have not learned anything more than what Dorothy Parker taught me in 1966: you can never keep up with the need to be cynical. In 25 years, I recall the return of only four books: (1) "You perhaps overlooked the presence on page 192 of something I don't care to mention"; (2) "You describe the latter pages of this (\$10) book as 'damp-marked,' but it's mildew"; (3) "You described this inscribed first edition (\$600) as 'not very good,' and you were right . . . but I didn't want to believe you"; (4) "I thought this was a collection of matchbooks, who is P. G. Wodehouse?" Bob Plunkett, half seriously, mocked my packaging as being a pain to unpack . . . but one shipment 25 years ago taught me what the Post Office can do to a parcel. Bob once severely rebuked me for thanking him for his large checks by referring to them as "handsome." He found that offensive, but I had seen this locution somewhere and meant it as a compliment. I've hardly written a "handsome" check in my whole life.

A Mr. Page (I think his name was) of Dorset soaked several of us for thousands of dollars for books that even before he arrived in his prison cell he was unable to deliver. My agent in New York (now deceased) I had long since paid up front when the bad news came from the Dorset constabulary, and ultimately I forgave him more than half the \$3,000 he had lost us on this deal: like Bertram Wooster, I have a heart of chilled steel and a brain like the tip of an ice pick, but you mention an aging mom and AIDS and I wilt like a flower in Tennyson's crannied wall. About 20 years ago I bought a signed copy of *William Tell Told Again* from a dealer in Newcastle-on-Tyne. Six months later or so came this marvelous letter: "Again we acknowledge receipt of your cheque in the amount of £1000.00. Thank you. That you have not received the book is a puzzlement." And so it remains to this day . . . at least on this side of the Atlantic.

But I have plenty of inscribed copies in my collection, including a *William Tell Told Again*, and several others for sale. Had I not spent a third of a century dealing with what hymnodist Reginald Heber described as "the brightest and best of the sons of the morning" and what Walter Pater mentioned as "the best that has been thought and said," I would not have the temerity to offer this crawling scrawl. But from P. G. Wodehouse I learned the immortal lines of James Graham, First Marquess of Montrose (1612–50):

He either fears his fate too much,
Or his deserts are small,
That dares not put it to the touch
To gain or lose it all.

And so I conclude this reminiscence, which I hope perhaps will not be my last. I have dwelt for a quarter of a century dealing in Wodehouse, for a third of a century in the groves and graves of academe. Quivering now on the brink of senility, I recite to myself daily the words of W. S. Gilbert:

... Of all the afflictions accurst
With which man's saddled
and hampered and addled
A diffident nature's the worst,

and then return to Robert Browning's Andrea del Sarto:

I regret little, I would change still less. . . .
And I have labored somewhat in my time
And not been paid profusely. . . .

Or, in the words of Wodehouse's early, long premature draught of his own epitaph, you may say of me: "At least he did take trouble."

2007 Editorial Changes

Attention all Plummies, and potential *Plum Lines* contributors! We're making some changes in the editorial line-up. As of this issue, Gary Hall will assume the role of Editor in Chief. Dan "Cyril Waddesley-Davenport" Cohen will take on the role of Columns Editor, and Susan "Rosie M. Banks" Cohen will continue performing the duties of collecting and compiling Chapters Corner. Eagle-eyed Elin Woodger, from across the sea, will provide expert copyediting and editorial advice, and Neil Midkiff will continue to provide final proofing and technical assistance, as well as mail production. See the back page of this issue for details about where to send articles and other contributions. As always, we need your humorous articles, your academic Wodehousean research, and all the Wodehouse references and Quick Ones you can find, so toss it over the fence to us at the e-mail and snail mail addresses listed on page 24. Right ho, off we go, into the future and beyond!

A Week With Wodehouse

As noted previously in *Plum Lines*, the PG Wodehouse Society (U.K.) will be celebrating its 10th anniversary by holding a special event entitled A Week With Wodehouse this summer. The dates are July 8–15, and the week includes Wodehouse Walks in London and Dulwich; a meeting at the Savage Club (where Plum had been a member); a Tour of Lord's Cricket Ground; a day trip to Guildford and Emsworth; a weekend tour of Wodehousean sites in Shropshire, Worcestershire, and Gloucestershire; and a splendid farewell dinner in London. The price is approximately \$830–\$900, fully inclusive except for London hotel. There are places still available, so you are interested and would like further information and a booking form, write to Hilary Bruce.



Wooster (Ohio) to the Rescue

From a January 2, 2007, entry on www.the-daily-record.com (which serves the town of Wooster, Ohio):

Efforts to rebuild a subdivision of Pudupattinam, a village on the southeastern shore of India that was destroyed in the December 2004 tsunami, began in the spring. The new village community will be home to 26 families who will move out of the corrugated steel shelters they have lived in for two years on Thursday. The village will be officially named "Wooster Nagar" [Wooster subdivision] at a dedication ceremony Wednesday in honor of the people of Wooster, who funded the entire project.

The subsequent article by the *Daily Record* staff writer Chanda Neely describes the effort in detail, and highlights the work of the many heroes who are making this happen, including Bala Venkataraman, president and CEO of Magni-Power, who moved to Wooster from that area of India in 1970.

Bravo, Wooster, for your global noblesse oblige! To learn more, go to www.tsunami.org.

Call for Clean, Bright Entertainers

Once again our convention will officially kick off with a Friday night Clean, Bright Entertainment, in the spirit of Beefy Bingham's extravaganza immortalized in "Jeeves and the Song of Songs." While the NEWTS already have a few things up their sleeves, we'd like to offer those harboring a secret Wodehousian talent the opportunity to share it with the assembled multitude. So—if you do bird calls or hog calls, recite "Dangerous Dan McGrew," do interpretive dance, or sing "Sonny Boy," let us know, and you too could be a Clean, Bright Entertainer. Interested parties may e-mail or call Max Pokrivchak.

Convention 2009!

The Wodehouse Society Convention Steering Committee (TWSCSC) is pleased to report that the new procedure to determine the locations of future conventions has been a success. Bids for hosting the 2009 convention were received from the Chicago Accident Syndicate, hosts of our biggest convention ever (in 1997), and the Northwodes of Minneapolis-St. Paul. Both submitted strong bids that made the TWSCSC's decision very difficult, but in the end the nod was given to the Northwodes in deference to our tradition of providing our membership with new and exciting venues in which to convene, whenever possible. The Northwodes have elected to hold their convention on June 12–14, 2009, in the lovely and fascinating city of St. Paul—mark the dates in your calendar now! The chapter will make a presentation at the convention in Providence, and details will, of course, be published in future issues of *Plum Lines*. Congratulations, Northwodes!

Plum Lines Index Available

Readers who like to keep on top of what has appeared when in *Plum Lines* are reminded that a dandy index is available. Beginning in 1980 with *Comments in Passing*, P.L.'s first incarnation, the index has been updated through 2006 and can be accessed via our website (www.wodehouse.org; follow the link for *Plum Lines*) or requested via e-mail (write to Kris Fowler). You can request a hard copy of the index by sending a check for \$8 (made out to The Wodehouse Society) to Kris Fowler. Payment can also be made via PayPal.



I supposed that he was about to rebuke his flock for the recent expression of feeling. But such was not the case. No doubt he was accustomed by now to the wholesome give-and-take of these clean, bright entertainments . . .

"Jeeves and the Song of Songs" (1929)

Books on Wodehouse

The year 2006 saw the publication of two important books on P. G. Wodehouse. If you missed the news of their publication in past issues of *Plum Lines* and would like information on how to obtain them, here is what you need to know.

A Wodehouse Handbook
by N.T.P. Murphy

Reviewed in this issue of *Plum Lines*; see page 15. Since the publication of this self-published two-volume work in December, the price has been raised to UK£28, or US\$56. Shipping costs have also been raised, so please get in touch with Norman for full information before sending your order.

*P. G. Wodehouse and Hollywood:
Screenwriting, Satires and Adaptations*
by Brian Taves

Reviewed in *Plum Lines*, Winter 2006, page 7. Brian's book was published in June by McFarland & Company and is listed for \$35. It is available from McFarland (<http://www.mcfarlandpub.com> or 800-253-2187), Amazon, and Barnes and Noble. As noted in the Autumn 2006 issue of *Plum Lines* (page 7), Brian will bring copies of the book to the Providence convention in October; he will be selling them at a discount for \$30. He is also willing to accept mailed orders for discounted, autographed books now; shipping is \$4 within the U.S. and Canada, \$8 overseas. Make out your check to Brian Taves and send it with your order to him.

Books and Articles about P. G. Wodehouse

BY TONY RING

Part 2 of a talk given at the Hooray for Hollywood! convention, Los Angeles, August 2005. The third and final installment, along with a complete list of the books and articles Tony discusses, will be published in the next issue.

The first of the books written principally about aspects of Wodehouse's work, rather than his life, was Richard Usborne's *Wodehouse at Work*, appearing in 1961 and revised after Wodehouse's death to reappear in 1976 as *Wodehouse at Work to the End*. Although Usborne did not manage to meet Wodehouse until about 1970, he corresponded with him since 1952, bombarding him with many questions about his sources, motives, and early work. Usborne's masterly analysis has always been regarded as setting the standard for Wodehouse scholarship, although his lack of access to (and appreciation of) Wodehouse's phenomenal number of magazine appearances led to some inevitable and regrettable misunderstandings.

The next full-length study was by a Dutchman, Richard Voorhees, whose *P G Wodehouse*, written in English, was part of the American publisher Twayne's English Authors Series. This 205-page study is very rarely offered today; the last copy that I am aware of in the market came from the discarded stock of the Tampa public library.

In 1966 an academic, R. B. D. French, was invited to contribute an analysis of Wodehouse's work to a *Writers and Critics* series being published by Oliver & Boyd. Although sales were small, and I understand from Charles Gould that unsold copies were pulped very soon after publication, it was very well received and is today regarded as the best concise analysis of Wodehouse's writing.

There followed two books by the British broadcaster Geoffrey Jaggard, *Wooster's World* and *Blandings the Blest*, the first concordances of part of Wodehouse's fiction. Though they concentrated respectively on the Jeeves and Wooster and Blandings series, each went wider in their remit to include some references to the Drones type of character and the Peerage respectively. As potentially everlasting, authoritative works, they suffered from three main problems. One was not of Jaggard's making: Wodehouse was still writing, and he produced eight further books after Jaggard completed his researches. The other two can fairly be called defects: one was his apparently random choice as to which characters, if any, from any particular novel or short story to include in his work (which as a result lacked the comprehensive coverage of a true concordance), and the other was to make far too many elementary errors in his attributions

and descriptions.

The task he had set himself—in the days, remember, before computers enabled the simple integration of data from numerous sources—was formidable, but because of his mistakes, the superficially excellent quality of his work should be downgraded to very good. But Jaggard's extensive typewritten notes of Wodehouse's other works (amounting in all, he claimed, to 350,000 words), together with the two published books, was to form a basis for the far more comprehensive *Millennium Wodehouse Concordance*.

Early in 1993 I came across the Geoffrey Jaggard manuscripts for sale by a London book dealer and had the idea of completing the job which Jaggard had so capably started. I discussed it with John Fletcher, proprietor of Porpoise Books, at the 1993 TWS convention, and he agreed to publish what in due course became the 600,000-word, eight-volume *Millennium Wodehouse Concordance*. The combined *Concordance* represents as faithfully as possible Jaggard's original vision of what could be achieved: just about every character from all the fiction is described in greater or lesser detail, and many other entries provide humour and opportunities for unanswerable trivia questions. A comprehensive reference system back to the source of each entry is provided, and the whole exercise covers both the U.K. and U.S. book editions, reprints and omnibuses where different, and the magazines in which most of the stories made their first appearances.

In 1970 David Jasen published his *A Bibliography and Reader's Guide to the First Editions of P. G. Wodehouse*. It provided one-line summaries of the characters appearing in each novel and included useful additional information regarding magazine appearances, lyrics, and films of Wodehouse stories. It was another book which suffered from the fact that Wodehouse was still writing, and it was not until 1986 that the fully revised and extended second edition was published by Greenhill Books in the U.K.

An American journalist, Herbert Warren Wind, met Wodehouse regularly in 1970 in preparation for a profile that appeared in the *New Yorker* in May 1971. An expanded text was published as a book [*The World of P. G. Wodehouse*] in 1972, and a new edition, excluding many of the illustrations but including a few pages of text written after Wodehouse's death, appeared in the United Kingdom in 1981. The book resembles nouvelle cuisine to a hungry consumer: what there is is well presented, but there is not very much of it. Even the expanded book has only 67 pages of text.

Professor Robert A. Hall, Jr.'s unashamedly technical analysis of Wodehouse's writing was the sort of study which Wodehouse himself would have hated. Entitled *The Comic Style of P. G. Wodehouse*, it was published in 1974. I am assured by friends whose heads, like Jeeves's, stick out at the back, that what Hall wrote is the goods, but his work was disguised in writing of such complexity that the reader could be forgiven for assuming that he is a lawyer trying harder than usual to be obscure. Hall wrote many essays about other aspects of Wodehouse's writing during the following few years, some comparatively readable, and many appeared in *Plum Lines*.

Owen Dudley Edwards, an academic from Edinburgh University, wrote a series of essays for *New Blackfriars* in the mid-1970s which were collected and expanded into *P. G. Wodehouse: A Critical and Historical Essay*. From the outside, it is without doubt the most unattractive-looking book in my entire collection, the rough, plain sage-green jacket fading in daylight to a sickly fawn on the spine. Publishers really should give more thought to how their offerings will look after a period of normal use!

David Jasen's 1979 book, *The Theatre of P. G. Wodehouse*, was published in London by B. T. Batsford and was a milestone in Wodehouse publishing, for it was the first book to concentrate on his important career in both the straight and the musical theatre. The book provides cast lists, lyric lists, and illustrations such as programmes and scenes from the various shows. It is far from comprehensive—a book of this type never could be—but it achieved its objectives and was groundbreaking in its conception.

In 1980 yet another overseas writer tackled the oeuvre; this time the Indian M. N. Sharma, whose doctoral thesis was published as *Wodehouse the Fictionist* in India. This scarce book concentrates on analysis of the stories and attempts to prepare a chronological comparison between various series.

Another of the books which appeared in 1981 was Richard Usborne's *A Wodehouse Companion*. This sought to summarize the plot of each book in a page or so, which worked quite well for the novels but much less well for the short-story collections, as no attempt was made to achieve the impractical objective of providing summaries of them all. The book also included short essays describing the characteristics of some 64 of the leading characters from the works as a whole.

In 1988 the story summaries were combined with *Wodehouse at Work to the End* to provide the paperback *The Penguin Wodehouse Companion*. Five years ago Ebury Books, part of the Random House group, evolved *Plum Sauce*, a further update based on these two titles. This at last corrected Usborne's long-held misapprehension

(which is also evident in *McIlvaine* itself) that *Psmith Journalist* was in some way derived from the American version of *The Prince and Betty*, when the truth is that it was the other way round.

Two other books appearing in the centenary year were in a completely different vein. *Thank You, Wodehouse* is a delightful book of academic pretense, a collection of essays by two Oxford dons, principally J. H. C. Morris. Its authors try to find answers to such important trivia as which Oxford College Bertie attended and how many Oldest Members there were. Beautifully written, it deserves a place on the bookshelf alongside the more factually based biographies and bibliographies and the critical works.

The year 1981 also saw the debut of a book which may have a superficially similar objective but was far more thorough in its research and extensive in its ambition. Lt. Col. Norman T. P. Murphy, of whom you may have heard, initially printed 500 copies of *In Search of Blandings*, the result of years of research into the factual sources behind the characters, places, and incidents in Wodehouse's fiction. Five years later it was reprinted in hard covers which, oddly, announced "With an Introduction by Tom Sharpe." Tom Sharpe's contribution was actually a *Preface*, with *Introduction* as the title of Chapter 1!

We eagerly await the new, bigger and more comprehensive survey from this author, which will again be printed privately. [This is, of course, *A Wodehouse Handbook*, recently published and reviewed in this issue (page 15); see also page 6. —Ed.]

Another attempt to provide a concordance of Wodehouse characters was made by Dan Garrison, whose *Who's Who in Wodehouse* was published in 1987 and was expanded in 1989 to incorporate a survey of unrepublished magazine stories. This book remains the best single-volume concordance available and contains a very valuable (and nearly complete) comparison of the different names of short stories as they appeared in U.K. and U.S. book collections and in magazines.

Usborne's *After Hours with P. G. Wodehouse* is a very readable collection of essays on random topics, based on researches carried out and talks given over the years. A lot of valuable incidental information is hidden in its pages, and any Wodehousean wanting a change from the more routine writings I have covered in this paper would be well-advised to place this on his bookshelves alongside *Thank You, Wodehouse* and *In Search of Blandings*.

The American Kristen Thompson prepared a technical analysis of the Jeeves and Wooster novels entitled *Wooster Proposes . . . Jeeves Disposes*. By no means as difficult to follow as Hall or Sharma, it is nevertheless a book which requires considerable concentration.

After an unforeseen delay of two years, Roderick

Easdale finally had his personal review of Wodehouse's work, the paperback *A Novel Life of P G Wodehouse*, published by Superscript in the U.K. in May 2004.

And we mustn't forget the most recent book of all: Brian Taves's new work on Wodehouse's career in film and television. [*P. G. Wodehouse and Hollywood*; see page 6. Note also that Norman Murphy's *A Wodehouse Handbook* has since become the most recently published book on Wodehouse. –Ed.]

Divine Providence Convention FAQs BY JEAN TILLSON

Q1: The registration form says the Biltmore will honor the convention guestroom rate for three days prior to and three days after the actual convention dates of October 11–14, 2007. But, when I called to reserve my room, they said they could only honor it for one day on either side. What gives?

A1: When you call the Biltmore and none of the in-house reservations lines are available, your call is transferred to a central reservations chappie located somewhere in the fourth dimension, and all that person can do is toe the standard hotel policy line by extending the rate no more than one day before or after the actual convention dates. Therefore, if you want to reserve your room for extra dates, ask to be connected to *in-house reservations*. If you get someone's voice-mail, leave a message (including your contact information), and when they call you back they will be able to reserve you a room up to three days before October 11 and/or three days after October 14, *if there are rooms available*.

We cannot overemphasize the need to make your hotel reservations early! The Biltmore is a very popular hotel, and October is a very popular month for tourism in New England. *Please*, if you plan to attend the Divine Providence convention, make your hotel reservations, even if you delay sending in your registration form. This is especially important for folks who want to come early or stay late, because we do not have any rooms guaranteed to us for any dates before or after October 11–14.

Q2: How long will the convention room rate be offered by the Biltmore?

A2: Until September 14, 2007. That's right—*until one month before the start of the convention*. After that, the Biltmore can release our block of rooms for general sale at prevailing rates, which can be as much as \$350 per night. So, those of you who normally don't make your hotel reservations very far in advance, please consider doing so just this once!

Q3: What if I reserve my room and/or register for the convention now and find out later on that I can't go?

A3: If you cancel your hotel reservation *at least 48 hours* prior to your scheduled arrival date, it won't cost you a farthing. If you cancel within those 48 hours, however, it will cost you a night's stay, which at the convention rate is approximately \$200! So if you are unable to attend the convention after all, call the Biltmore at once to cancel your reservation.

As for your convention registration, TWS will reimburse members as much and as late as we possibly can. Anyone who cancels by September 30, 2007, will get a full refund. After that, refunds (in whole or in part) will depend on a number of factors we cannot accurately predict at this time; therefore, cancellations made after September 30 will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

Q4: Is there a roommate-matching service for this convention?

A4: Yes, we do have a roommate-matching system set up! Here are two ways to take advantage of this system:

1. *The preferred way:* Subscribe to our special mailing list with the message: subscribe roommates. Once subscribed, you can reach others who are looking for roommates. Be sure to include specifics, such as whether you are male or female, prefer a smoking or nonsmoking room, habitually stay out late on the tiles, or normally retire to bed early with a good book.

2. *The alternate way:* Those who don't have e-mail but still need a roommate can write to Anne Cotton, who will try to find roommates for those who are not computer-accessible. Along with your name and address, your letter should provide your phone number and the best time to call, which Anne will pass along to any potential roommates.

Questions? Get in touch with Anne.

Turnabout Is Fair Play: Identities Hidden and Detected in *Laughing Gas*

BY STU SHIFFMAN

This is Part 2 of Stu's treatise on the real-life counterparts of characters in Laughing Gas. See the Winter 2006 issue for Part 1.

City of Angels

In this unique house of worship called Angelus Temple in the city of Los Angeles, the Almighty occupies a secondary position. He plays an important part in the drama, to be sure; but center stage is taken and held by Mrs. [Aimee Semple] McPherson. . . . She is playwright, producer, director, and star performer in one. . . . Her Sunday evening service is a complete vaudeville program, entirely new each week, brimful of surprises for the eager who are willing to battle in the throng for entrance.

Sarah Comstock in *Harper's* (1926)

The 1920s was a time of enormous growth for Los Angeles. Historian Kevin Starr, in *Material Dreams: Southern California Through the 1920s* (Oxford University Press USA, 1990), said that Los Angeles "envisioned itself, then materialized that vision through sheer force of will . . . the Great Gatsby of American cities."

Los Angeles, Starr wrote, "invited Americans from elsewhere to settle there, and they did in heroic numbers." Los Angeles had 1.47 million people by 1930. It had tripled in 10 years and was the fifth-largest city in the country. "I attended a dinner this morning given by the Old Settlers of California. No one was allowed to attend unless he had been in the state for two years," said Will Rogers in 1924. Change was rapid and disconcerting in the 1920s and even more so after the stock market crash of 1929 (think *The Grapes of Wrath* and W. C. Fields in *It's a Gift*).

"If you tilt the country sideways, Los Angeles is the place where everything loose will fall," said Frank Lloyd Wright. Yes, all the nuts ended up in southern California. The quintessential Los Angeles evangelist famously ministering to all those lost souls was Aimee Semple McPherson (1890–1944) at her Angelus Temple in the Echo Park area of Los Angeles. I believe she may have been the true-life inspiration for *Laughing Gas*'s Sister Lora Luella Stott, leader of the Temple of the New Dawn. Mabel Prescott, who eventually becomes engaged to Egremont, is one of the Temple's promoters. The coterie of Joey Cooley's kidnappers turn out to be, behind their

Wodehousian fake beards, no gang of racketeers but, rather, aspiring film scriptwriters who are all deacons at the Temple.

"Haven't you ever heard of Sister Lora Luella Stott?"

"No. Who is she?"

"She is the woman who is leading California out of the swamp of alcohol."

"Good God!" I could tell by Eggy's voice that he was interested. "Is there a swamp of alcohol in these parts? What an amazing country America is. Talk about every modern convenience. Do you mean you can simply go there and *lap*?"

As a medium of the revelation, Aimee Semple McPherson was not Sinclair Lewis's Elmer Gantry, although the character of the touring tent ministry evangelist-healer, the beautiful, pure, and dedicated Sister Sharon Falconer, played by Jean Simmons, may have been inspired by her. McPherson spread the Foursquare Gospel with a true faith, a show business attitude, and a bit of sex appeal in her dramatic and well-presented "illustrated sermons" through the new power of radio-borne messages over her own KSFG. She denounced Broadway and Hollywood as scandalous and sinful, while at the same time she wore Paris gowns, dyed her hair blond, wore jewelry and makeup, and put on performances that can only be described as spectacles. For one such performance, billed as Sister Aimee preaching on the "Consequences of Breaking God's Law," she entered the church on a motorcycle in a policeman's uniform, driving down the center aisle to the pulpit.

She is most notorious for the curious affair of her disappearance in 1926, a media wonder like that over the parallel disappearance of mystery author Agatha Christie in December the same year. On May 18, 1926, Sister Aimee was reported missing while swimming in the ocean off Venice Beach in Los Angeles. Frantic searches were held for her body. It was a media circus, and Upton Sinclair wrote a tearful poem, "An Evangelist Drowns," which includes these lines:

My Savior—wilt Thou not save me?
Ten thousand to my aid would run,

Bring me my magic microphone!
Send me an angel, or a boat . . .

She turned up in Mexico five weeks later, telling a rather fantastic story of having been kidnapped and held captive. Her story seemed unlikely, and an investigation by the county grand jury found that instead of being kidnapped, Aimee had spent an idyllic month with Kenneth Ormiston, a radio engineer for her church station.

Yet she weathered the storm of scandal as a penitent and repentant sinner, always a winner in the Old Time Religion. It was certainly good enough for her followers.

I Went to a Garden Party

Tallulah Bankhead called it "the most gruesomely named hotel in the western hemisphere."

There was a vanished garden of carnal abandon, that place of rest, the Garden of Allah on Sunset Boulevard, in the quaint village of Hollywood. This is the basis of The Garden of Hesperides, where Reggie stays in *Laughing Gas*. (The Garden of the Hesperides, you may recall, was the destination of the mythic Greek gyro, um, I mean hero on his Eleventh Labor to retrieve the Golden Apples from the daughters of Hesperus on the Isle of the Blest. This story was also the basis of the famous paintings by Frederic Leighton and the pre-Raphaelite artist Sir Edward Burne-Jones.)

Once upon a time, there was Alla Nazimova, silent movie star, producer, and international poseur. She was born Adelaida or Alla Leventon in Yalta in 1879, the daughter of a Jewish pharmacist and his wife. Her stylized acting and bizarre public image made her appear remote and mysterious. She retired from films in 1925 but reappeared in character roles in the 1940s.

At the time of the introduction of sound, Nazimova decided that some diversification might be good, and she converted her well-situated 1921 mansion estate into a 3½-acre semitropical hangout. Retaining a private apartment upstairs in her former mansion, she converted the bottom story into a restaurant and bar, and the property was transformed into a complicated and romantic collection of Spanish-style bungalows and detached apartments,

with 25 villas constructed around the pool (shaped, supposedly, like the Black Sea). This was the famous "Garden of Alla" (later renamed "Allah") apartment-hotel at 8150 Sunset Boulevard, opened in January 1927. Within a year, the endeavor went bankrupt, and Nazimova ended up a tenant in what had been her own home.

Then there were the people who stayed there—the writers and actors (in the case of Robert Benchley sometimes both): Harpo Marx and Sergei Rachmaninoff, Errol Flynn, Gloria Swanson, Greta Garbo, Tallulah Bankhead, Dorothy Parker, and Leopold Stokowski. Also Artie Shaw, Al Jolson, Humphrey Bogart, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Lillian Hellman, and Ernest Hemingway—the list goes on and on. Sheilah Graham, whose book *The Garden of Allah* (1970) is a wonderful source, termed it "the Algonquin Round Table gone West and childish." Musician Artie Shaw thought it "one of the few places so absurd that people could be themselves."

Stories verging on the nature of myths and legends of Robert Benchley's residence at the Garden are legion. According to one story, for whose veracity I make no claim, he held forth at the pool to P. G. Wodehouse on the Hollywood "nodders." They were lower, he explained to the British author, than the studio "yes men," for after the "yes men" yessed a producer, he said, the "nodders" nodded. You may recall how Wodehouse used it in "The Nodder":



Joey cooling his heels in the dentist's office

Putting it as briefly as possible, a Nodder is something like a Yes-Man, only lower in the social scale. A Yes-Man's duty is to attend conferences and say 'yes.' A Nodder's, as the name implies, is to nod. The chief executive throws out some statement of opinion, and looks about him expectantly. This is the cue for the senior Yes-Man to say 'yes.' He is followed, in order of precedence, by the second Yes-Man—or Vice-Yesser, as he is sometimes called—and the junior Yes-Man. Only when all the Yes-Men have 'yessed,' do the Nodders begin to function. They nod.

The Lion of Hollywood

In *Laughing Gas*, Theodore P. Brinkmeyer, satrap

of Brinkmeyer-Magnifico Pictures, may be a kinder, gentler version of the iconic Hollywood studio kingpin, Louis B. Mayer of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. Hollywood executive B. P. Schulberg gave him the title "Czar of all the rushes." Some privately referred to him as "Louis B. Merde." Historian and film director Kevin Brownlow said that "history has shown him [Mayer] to be a childish, melodramatic paranoiac."

The character of T. P. Brinkmeyer serves as guardian of young Joey Cooley, while the real-life Louis B. Mayer was the patriarch and only king (except for the money men in New York) of a dominion that held "more stars than there are in heaven," including, at various times, Clark Gable, Cary Grant, Elizabeth Taylor, and Katharine Hepburn, among many more. Mayer was often personally involved in the private lives of his employees, usually to make sure their public reputation matched the studio's image for wholesomeness and decency. He distributed metaphorical chicken soup with an iron hand. [Note: *Mayer was also known to order the MGM commissary to serve his mother's chicken-soup-with-matzo-balls recipe (three kosher hens to the gallon)!—Ed.*] When Mickey Rooney, former child actor, star of the Andy Hardy series, and a well-known womanizer and partygoer, started to get a little too much press for these activities, Mayer supposedly took him aside and gave him the Mayer version of a Judge Hardy lecture: "You're Andy Hardy! You're the United States! You're Stars and Stripes! You're a symbol! Behave yourself!"

Louis B. Mayer (1885–1957) was to all appearances the stereotypical Hollywood studio mogul: a short, feisty, cigar-chomping autocrat who ruled over his film factory, treating the stars, directors, and craftspeople like assembly-line workers. He was born Lazar Meir or Ezemiel Mayer in Russia and moved with his family to New Brunswick, Canada. In 1904 the 19-year-old Mayer moved to Boston. Three years later he purchased a small, dilapidated 600-seat theater called the Gem in the Boston suburb of Haverhill. He renamed the theater the Orpheum (a theater name to conjure with, as the Keith-Orpheum vaudeville chain spelled Entertainment), and promised the public that he would present only "high-class films." When the Orpheum became a success, Mayer expanded into film distribution by opening the Louis B. Mayer Film Company. In 1913 Mayer entered into an arrangement with Jesse Lasky, who was producing films in California, and other film producers. Two years later, Mayer and several partners formed the Metro Pictures Corporation, and one of the first films they acquired for distribution was D. W. Griffith's classic and notorious *The Birth of a Nation* (1915).

With the stupendous success of that film, Mayer formed a series of distribution companies: Master

Photoplays, Serial Producing Company, and American Feature Film Company. In 1918 he lured actress Anita Stewart away from Vitagraph, formed Louis B. Mayer Pictures, and moved to Los Angeles to start making his own films. It was Marcus Loew, founder of the still-powerful national chain of movie theaters and head of Metro Pictures, with Mayer and Goldwyn, who orchestrated the series of mergers that led to the formation of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer in 1924.

This, then, was the Czar of the MGM lot: decreeing buildings to appear, and they are built; binding corporations together in holy matrimony; ordering films, and they are made; changing lives and the course of mighty rivers; bending steel with his bare hands. And who, disguised as Clark . . . Oh, that's a different sort of superman.

Ties That Bind:

I showed this article to a coworker who, unfortunately, is not familiar with the Master's oeuvre (or even two oeufs and a side of jambon). "What does this all mean?" asked he. "It just seems to be a bunch of facts that don't hang together!"

Yelling at him that "It's a *roman à clef*, dammit!" seems to have been ineffective, especially as he hadn't read the novel. So, what is the key to the puzzle that is *Laughing Gas*? It's another great story where Wodehouse delivers great entertainment, drawing upon all his experiences in and around the great studios and film community of Hollywood. Like any writer, he looks at what he knows through personal experience and transmutes it through a sea change into something rich and strange. The novel's characters are original to Wodehouse even when their sources may be very real and well known to the world in their own identities.

It's Dottyville, Jake.

Ivor Llewellyn's lower jaw moved slowly downward, as if seeking refuge in his chins. His eyebrows rose. The eyes beneath them widened and seemed to creep forward from their sockets. As President of the Superba-Llewellyn Motion Picture Corporation he had many a talented and emotional artist on his pay-roll, but not one of them could have registered horror with such unmistakable precision.

The Luck of the Bodkins (1935)

Collecting *The Jeeves Omnibus*

BY JOHN GRAHAM

In last quarter's collecting column devoted to Wodehouse titles with important anniversaries in 2006, there was one book I overlooked: *The Jeeves Omnibus*, first published 75 years earlier on October 30, 1931. To make amends, I'll devote this entire column to that book, arguing it is one of the cornerstone titles in the Wodehouse canon. *The Jeeves Omnibus* was published in London by Herbert Jenkins exactly 15 days after Plum's 50th birthday. It was the very first volume (of many more to follow) to collect previously published Wodehouse stories, and it was the book that fully enshrined Jeeves as his most important character. Although unclear at the time, looking back now, we can say also that with the publication of *The Jeeves Omnibus*, Wodehouse closed the book on Bertie and Jeeves as short story characters; henceforth, with the exception of two lesser efforts in 1959 and 1965, he would tell their story exclusively in novels.

At 847 pages, *The Jeeves Omnibus* was the longest Wodehouse book that Herbert Jenkins had published to date. It contained 31 previously published short stories: 11 from *The Inimitable Jeeves* (1923); 9 from *Carry On, Jeeves* (1925); and 11 from *Very Good, Jeeves* (1930). The stories from the latter two volumes were reprinted without any major changes. (Of course, five of them had already been heavily revised from their earliest book appearance in *My Man Jeeves*.) A few stories did see minor changes: For example, in "The Ordeal of Young Tuppy," Jeeves's last line becomes "Pip-pip" rather than "Cheerio." In contrast, the 11 stories derived from *The Inimitable Jeeves* are quite different from the way they read in that book. To understand why, we need to go back a few years.

On November 24, 1920, in a letter to his stepdaughter Leonora, Plum wrote: "I am at present moulding the Archie stories into a book. The publisher very wisely says that short stories don't sell, so I am hacking the things about putting the first half of one story at the beginning of the book and putting the finish of it about a hundred pages later . . ." (*The Indiscretions of Archie* was published in February 1921.) Two years later, still adhering to the "short stories don't sell" philosophy, Wodehouse reworked 10 Jeeves stories that had recently appeared in the *Strand Magazine* along with an earlier one from 1918 into 18 loosely stitched chapters for *The Inimitable*



The 1931 collection of 31 stories

Jeeves. (In the United States, the stories appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post* or *Cosmopolitan*; Doran published the book with the shorter title *Jeeves*. Despite McIlvaine's puzzling claim to the contrary on page 43 of her bibliography, the U.K. and U.S. books are identical.) For book publication, Wodehouse split seven of his original magazine stories into two chapters each, keeping only four of them as single chapters. In almost every case, he added new lead-in material, tying each story closer to the preceding one. (A useful list of relevant story titles can be found on the U.K. Wodehouse Society website at <http://www.eclipse.co.uk/Wodehouse/is9.htm>.) Within

the next few years, however, Bertie and Jeeves had become so popular that their creator never again felt compelled to "hack the things about" before transferring their magazine exploits to books.

When Herbert Jenkins decided to publish a (nearly complete) collection of Jeeves short stories in 1931, Wodehouse went back to the original magazine versions of the 11 short stories in *The Inimitable Jeeves*. This made some sense since each short story had been written to stand on its own; but it also meant sacrificing the clever openings he had added in 1923. As a result, except for minor edits, most of these 11 stories in *The Jeeves Omnibus* appear the way they read in the magazines: "The Great Sermon Handicap" and "The Purity of the Turf" are two such examples. In one case, "Jeeves in the Springtime," Wodehouse clearly started with the magazine version but could not resist borrowing a few ideas from *The Inimitable Jeeves*. There is one story in *The Jeeves Omnibus*, "Aunt Agatha Takes the Count," which differs sharply from both the earlier magazine and book versions. Gus Caywood, who helped me with some of these details, makes a strong case that this is a rare example where a Wodehouse revision is less successful than the original. Compare this new version to chapters 3 and 4 of *The Inimitable Jeeves* to see if you agree with him. (I do!) In any event, the bottom line of all of this is: Unless you have *The Jeeves Omnibus*, you don't have Plum's final version of these stories.

In 1967 Herbert Jenkins republished *The Jeeves Omnibus* under a new title, *The World of Jeeves*, adding three more stories. (In the United States, Manor Books

published this as *All About Jeeves* in a two-volume paperback; it was not published in hardcover until 1988.) The three new stories are: "Bertie Changes His Mind" (included in *Carry On, Jeeves*, but previously omitted, perhaps because the story is narrated by Jeeves); "Jeeves Makes an Omelette" (from *A Few Quick One*); and "Jeeves and the Greasy Bird" (from *Plum Pie*). As long as you have copies of these three stories in other volumes, I recommend sticking with *The Jeeves Omnibus*: Quite simply, for about the same price, it is a more attractive book, and older eyes will appreciate its larger print. No version of the omnibus has ever included "Extricating Young Gussie" (from *The Man with Two Left Feet*). One other note of caution: Over the years, the book title *Jeeves Omnibus* has proven to be a popular one. Hutchinson and Dorset Press used it in the 1980s and Barnes and Noble in the 1990s, but none of these are the same book.

McIlvaine describes *The Jeeves Omnibus* in detail. In short, it looks a lot like all other Jenkins output from the period, only fatter. The book has a frontispiece with a photograph of Plum, signed in the lower right-hand corner. The signature is so realistic that I've seen more than one uninformed (or unethical) seller describe their copy as being "inscribed by the author." What McIlvaine does not mention is that there were six printings, all identical except for the copyright page. This is good news for collectors: It means the book is fairly common and hence affordable, even today. The dust jacket was also exactly the same on all printings; there are no ads on the inside flaps, and the price remained 7/6 on the spine. Unfortunately, dust jackets are far less common than books these days. Barry Phelps once attributed this to the fact that the flaps were so narrow that the jackets had a tendency to fall off. If you come across a copy in dust jacket, expect to pay well over \$1,000.

Wodehouse wrote an introduction for *The Jeeves Omnibus*, and it's worth the price of the book on its own. (With minor changes, this introduction reappeared in *The World of Jeeves* and Random House's Modern Library volume, *Selected Short Stories by P. G. Wodehouse*.) To my mind, the most intriguing passage (deliberately penned in the style of Conan Doyle's Dr. Watson) comes near the end: ". . . for as regards Jeeves and Bertie, all has not yet been told. The world at present knows nothing of Young Thos. and his liver-pad, of the curious affair of old Boko and the Captain Kidd costume, or of the cook Anatole and the unwelcome birthday present. Nor has the infamy wrought by Tuppy Glossop upon Bertie been avenged." True, in *Joy in the Morning* (1947) we learn about Boko Fittleworth and a Sinbad the Sailor costume. But as for a Captain Kidd costume and the other curious incidents, I suppose we'll just have to wait a while longer.

Wodehouse—or Sloth?

In the Autumn 2006 *Plum Lines*, David Landman whimsically wondered whether a certain picture of Plum touching his toes might be a hoax. Charles Gould shares a similar experience: "About 40 years ago, Peter Schwed sent me a copy of that Tom Blau photograph, and, assuming it was a photograph of Wodehouse, I had it matted and framed with his autograph beneath. It now appears, however, that without benefit of David's recent study, the framer put the photograph upside down, and that explains why so many

visitors have thought it was a picture of the Giant Sloth (*Bradipodidae Magnus*) and wondered at the presence of the Wodehouse signature. A harmless little joke, I suppose they thought—and a far cry (or distant weeping) from the monstrous hoax David has exposed."

It is to be questioned whether in the whole length and breadth of the world there is a more admirable spot for a man in love to pass a day or two than the typical English village. The Rocky Mountains, that traditional stamping-ground for the heart-broken, may be well enough in their way; but a lover has to be cast in a pretty stern mould to be able to be introspective when at any moment he may meet an annoyed cinnamon bear.

A Damsel in Distress (1919)

Kern and Wodehouse in Providence

In honor of the Divine Providence convention, the John Hay Library at Brown University is mounting an exhibition of Jerome Kern and P. G. Wodehouse scores and sheet music. They include vocal scores from *Have a Heart*, *Leave It to Jane* and *Show Boat* and selections from *Oh, Boy!* Many of the materials to be displayed are rare, and some are Kern's own copies. These treasures come from the library's Harris Collection of American Poetry and Plays and from its sheet music collection. The exhibition will be in the Lownes Room and will be open for our enjoyment Tuesday through Friday (October 9–12) from 9 A.M. to 5 P.M. We are hoping the Newport tour bus will return early enough on Friday to drop interested people off at the library, which is approximately a 15-minute walk (downhill) from the convention hotel. Due to traffic considerations, however, we cannot guarantee this opportunity, so if seeing the exhibit is vitally important to you, make sure you schedule another time to visit it.

A Wodehouse Handbook to Savor

In December 2006 Norman Murphy published *A Wodehouse Handbook: The World and Words of P. G. Wodehouse* in two volumes—hence two reviewers. Note that since ordering information was published in the last issue of *Plum Lines*, the price of the book has been raised; see page 6.

Volume 1: The World of Wodehouse

Reviewed by Ian Michaud

When Norman Murphy's *In Search of Blandings* rolled off the presses in 1981, Wodehouseans everywhere were delighted to discover that many of the things Wodehouse wrote about were firmly based on actual people, places, and events that he knew or knew of. Among countless other highlights, *In Search of Blandings*, the culmination of years of research by its author, introduced readers to A. B. Filmer's octagon, the actual stucco sphinxes guarding the front door of Peacehaven down in Valley Fields/Dulwich, the "real" Mario's Restaurant and Barribault's Hotel, and the estate and stately homes Wodehouse had in mind when he created Blandings Castle.

Fortunately for all of us, Murphy's researches didn't end with the publication of *In Search of Blandings*. Delegates to the 1999 TWS Convention in Houston, who were shown a photograph of the actual pig Wodehouse knew when he created Empress of Blandings, will vouch for that.

And now, at long last, there is the publication of the massive *A Wodehouse Handbook* in two volumes totaling more than 1,000 pages to answer (almost) every question a Wodehouse enthusiast could possibly have. Volume 1 expands on the revelations of *In Search of Blandings* with more details of the world Wodehouse knew and how he adapted it for his fiction, while Volume 2, reviewed separately, annotates the countless quotations and allusions scattered through the books.

Was the wait worthwhile? Well, the reader has barely cracked

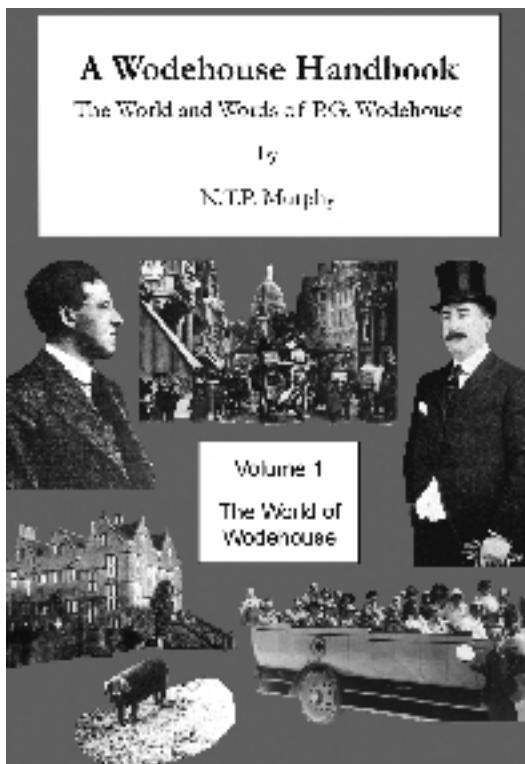
open the *Handbook* before coming across a delightful theory that the plot of the short story "Jeeves and the Impending Doom" may have been based on fact. That was the story in which Bertie Wooster's Aunt Agatha tried to get her wastrel nephew a job as secretary to the politician A. B. Filmer. In real life Wodehouse's terrible maternal Aunt Mary ("the scourge of my childhood"—P. G. Wodehouse; "I can't think of anything good to say about her"—Mrs. Nella Wodehouse) was the model for Aunt Agatha, and Plum's cousin Edmond Wodehouse, the Member of Parliament for Bath, was Aunt Mary's favorite nephew. As Murphy theorizes, "I note that she (Aunt Mary) considered young Pelham was wasting his time as a freelance journalist. She certainly had the strength of character to presume on the family relationship and approach her cousin by marriage for a job for her wayward nephew. And I further note from newspaper social columns of the time that the Right Hon. Edmond Robert MP stayed with his cousin Charles Edward Wodehouse in the summer of 1902 and 1903 not at 'Woolam Chersey, Herts' but Woolmers Park, Herts. It is probably pure coincidence . . ."

Not a scrap of hard evidence is provided to support the above theory, but from what we know of the psychology of the individual (the individual in q. being

Aunt Mary), I fancy that Sherlock Holmes himself would doff his deerstalker, if he wore one, in silent tribute to Norman Murphy's deductive powers.

Not wanting to give away too much of the product, that will be the only excerpt quoted in detail here, but Norman's book is liberally sprinkled with scores of similar anecdotes, many of them with hard, corroborative evidence firmly linking Wodehouse's world with Wodehouse's fiction.

Murphy supplies us with the likely sources for a long list of characters, places, and events, including Florence Craye; Aunt Dahlia; Battling Billson; Ukridge; Mustard Pott's "Great Clothes Stakes"; Lord Tilbury; the Potts Brothers and their hedgehog lunch; Sir Roderick Glossop; the plot for the short story "Rodney Fails



Colonel Murphy's labor of love, Volume 1

to Qualify"; the obituary of a big-game hunter which reminds us of how A. B. Spottsworth handed in his dinner pail (which, you'll recall, was a difference of opinion with a lion: Spottsworth thought the animal was dead, but the lion disagreed); the actual equivalents of the Drones, Senior Conservative, Junior Ganymede, and Junior Lipstick clubs; the Market Snodsbury Grammar School; the recipe for Green Swizzles; and a charming anecdote of what may have given Wodehouse the idea for Buck-U-Uppo.

It seems that one of Plum's clergyman uncles was feeling a little under the weather and the local chemist came to his rescue with a tonic which left both the uncle and a visiting bishop in no condition to address the congregation at evensong that Sunday. For more details, see chapter 11 of *A Wodehouse Handbook*.

As is inevitable with a project of this scale, one or two howlers did manage to slip past the eagle eye of the proofreaders. For example, that bit on page 304 about "the Argentinian footballer Pele" tends to leap off the page and smite the reader on the eyeball. But this is a mere quibble and need not detain us. You are, after all, not considering the purchase of *A Wodehouse Handbook* because you want an authoritative history of the World Cup.

One of the delights of an output as massive as Wodehouse's is that no matter how many questions the researcher answers, there will still be unanswered questions left to deal with. Murphy himself writes: "I would be a proud man indeed if I had found the original of Wodehouse's beloved woolly-headed peer" and then goes on to thoughtfully provide the reader with a tantalizingly plausible look at a leading candidate for the honor of being the real-life model for Lord Emsworth.

My curiosity about the three vets named to treat the Empress remains unquenched. What, for example, about Dr. Webber, who was called in to treat the Empress after she ate Gally's manuscript in *Heavy Weather*? To me that name, like Fred Patzel, has the ring of fact rather than fiction. Could it be another of those allusions or inside jokes like "Schwed and Meredith," "Fred Basset," and "Murphy's Mews" that Wodehouse liked to sprinkle through his fiction as tributes to friends and pen pals? Could Webber, in fact, be the name of the animal-loving Wodehouses' own vet at the time? The answers to these and other questions, I suppose, will have to wait for future editions of *Plum Lines*.

In the meantime N. T. P. Murphy's *A Wodehouse Handbook* supplies the goods in spades and must be considered an essential addition to any Plummie's library. I confidently predict that TWS chapter meetings

in the months to come will include scenes like the following:

An Egg: According to the Infallible Murphy, your theory that Bliss Carman was the primary source for Ralston McDowell is a load of hooey!

Bean (stung): Oh, yes? Well, possibly Norman isn't infallible. But if he is, those Green Swizzles you mixed at our last meeting were nothing like the real thing!

And over in the corner a Pieface who is challenging a Crumpet's theory that Jackie Cooper was the primary source for Joey Cooley and the Crumpet, not having booked his order for *A Wodehouse Handbook*, is unable to mount anything in the nature of an effective counterattack.

Volume 2: The Words of Wodehouse

Reviewed by Leonard Goldstein

Reading through any three consecutive pages of Volume 2 of N. T. P. Murphy's *A Wodehouse Handbook* ineluctably brings to my mind Mark Twain's description of Rudyard Kipling—"He knows all that can be known"—though modesty forbids me to add the second half of that line ("and I know the rest.") Often referred to affectionately (or in awe?) with the Bateman-esque sobriquet TMWKAEE (The Man Who Knows Almost Everything), NTP here has made a valiant effort to drag the rest of us to within, ah, expectorating distance of his lofty plateau. And if he can succeed with me, born 61 years after PGW on the left side of the Pond and educated in public schools that really were public schools, well, then, with whom can he not?

NTP not only wears his learning lightly but has made an admirable effort to strike a balance between not bothering to explain things that any fule kno, as G. Willans might put it in his Molesworth books, and over-documenting every bit of British daily life and public-school/Oxbridge education as experienced from, say, the 'teens through the '50s, after which time film, television, and Bill Bryson led to our heightened awareness of a more-or-less common culture, with the exception of oddly flavored crisps. He attempts to answer the broad questions the naïve Wodehouse reader might ask, apart from "Can you permanently damage your abdomen by laughing too hard?" (A: No. Let'er rip!), viz.:

- (A) Who (where, what) is [insert common or proper noun]?
- (B) I'd like to know more about that [not actually a question, but let's cut the n.W.r. some slack here]
- (C) Where does that quote come from? (alternately, What was that line

before Bertie mangled it?)

Obviously there is some overlap in these categories, but NTP handles them all with aplomb. In category (A), the common or proper noun, his erudition and clarity make for an enlightenment closely rivaling Siddhartha Gautama's, and much faster-acting. Some random examples:

- Fish slices: not something to eat, but to serve fish with. Go figure.
- Messmore Kendall: along with Spike and Sadie, what PGW—or rather, his British readers—thought Americans were typically named.
- Samuel Plimsoll: the fellow who got those lines painted on a ship's hull. Not really a shoe at all.
- Tinsel Town: Hollywood, of course, but I never knew the phrase was coined by Oscar Levant.
- Mecca: an early attempt at Starbuck's in London.

And there are pictures, too. It may not be enough to know that a fives bat was something like a squash racket for handball, so NTP provides a picture to give you an idea of what was involved when a school prefect used it to give an unruly lad six of the best. Much more enjoyable to view are the pictures of elegant Gibson Girl Camille Clifford and vampish Theda Bara. Somewhere in the middle is a 1913 view of the Gracechurch Street HSBC bank.

In addition to identifications, NTP often provides mini-essays on assorted topics which are fun to read just for themselves. Did Bertie wear a monocle or not? Can you have Harrods arrange a burial? What's the deal with the sticks and rods that various officials carry and occasionally go around banging on doors in Parliament? Everyone knows that the Greek mercenaries stranded in Mesopotamia after the death of Cyrus measured their march back to the sea in parasangs, but just how long is a parasang? These essays often provide an insight into NTP's own views on a topic mentioned by PGW, the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:15): "I have never understood the moral lesson of this parable." Kafka is dismissed with a quote from Alan Bennett about British irony as a sort of disinfectant protecting Brits from the gloom of "these serious Continentals." The one man who appeared really faultless in evening dress was Fred Astaire.

If anything, NTP's assiduousness in tracing out people, places, and things is exceeded by his skill at using Bartlett's, Brewer's, the British Library, and, I assume, his

own prodigious memory to nail down catchphrases and quotations. Though we can't all have a Jeeves, NTP makes a more than adequate replacement. What's that line again about the lark and the snail? Ah, yes, Browning; that Pippa thing. A tougher one, you say? All right, what in the world does PGW mean by an ox in the teacup? Anything like Le Boeuf sur le Toit? Oh, I see, a century-old ad for Oxo beef stock. "When you were a tiddley-om-pom and I was a thingummajig"? Must be that Henley poem "To W.A." about a King in Babylon. And how am I supposed to know what Mr. Gladstone said in 1878? I no longer have to know, because Volume 2 contains the answer under Gladstone.

But enough with the panegyrics! Does this monumental work have feet of clay? Well, maybe a couple of kaolinic toenails, more omissions than errors. It would have been nice, under Butler or Manservant, to have a definitive explanation of just what Jeeves is or is not, though PGW does have him working as a butler in *Ring for Jeeves*. [In fact, Norman covers this question in Volume 1, though Leonard hadn't read it yet, for which he is forgiven. –Ed.] Some Americans might appreciate being told that in Britain a biscuit is a cookie. Definitely (if for no other reason than to allay culture shock), under Moore & Burgess Nigger Minstrels, there should be a brief note about the casual use of that word in Britain, often with little or no opprobrium attached, long after it had become an article of hate speech in the United States and completely banished from polite discourse. Personally I believe Jeeves would have been dissatisfied with NTP's rejection of Nietzsche, fundamental unsoundness notwithstanding, solely on the basis that "Hitler admired him. 'Nuff said."

Errors are also minor in nature: calling the America's Cup the America Cup ("Lipton"); an understandable confusion of the archaic long s (ſ) with the similar but full-crossbarred letter f in the "ffrench-ffrench" discussion; the insertion of an ampersand into Sears Roebuck ("Crosse to Blackwell"); misspelling Margaret Sanger's name under "Jukes family" (and why not mention the Kallikaks while you're at it?); and, as long as we're talking Ks, the misspelling of Klondike under "Kennedy, Bart."

Yes, even Murphy nods, but to such a small extent that most of these items can easily be classified under the heading picky, picky. I mention them only to avoid speculation that I received any emolument for this encomium or was offered the *Handbook* at a reduced price. To conclude, what we have here is a compendium that will bring understanding and, dare I say, wisdom to any reader of PGW's works who has ever, between guffaws, read the words over again and wrinkled her brow or scratched his head. The interesting, almost paradoxical aspect is that the more you learn about PGW, the more valuable the *Handbook* becomes.



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 (see Chapter One below). 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.

Anglers' Rest
(Seattle and vicinity)
Contact: Susan Collicott

Phone:
E-mail:



One of the Anglers' Rest's calls-to-arms

The Anglers' Rest meets every other month (aside from holiday madness months when all bets are off) at various locales in the Puget Sound area. Much discussion of any topic in any way associated with Wodehouse takes place—and then everything else, too. We attend local arts events and try new restaurants, pubs, and teahouses. We read passages from favorite Wodehouse books out loud; trade interesting

Wodehouse-related items; and lend books, tapes, CDs, and DVDs to one another with abandon. Join us for a relaxing or invigorating time with folks of like mind and attitude.

The Anglers took a break over the winter as the Pacific Northwest was slammed with floods, windstorms, and shocker: SNOW for a week! Once the sun comes out, we'll gather together once more. We've lots of ideas and plans for the spring and look forward to being out and about again. Limber up, Anglers, we're going lawn bowling once the waters recede.

Blandings Castle Chapter
(Greater San Francisco Bay area)
Contact: Ed and Missy Ratcliffe

Phone:
E-mail:

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



E-mail:

The Broadway Special met on January 26 at The Players Club in Manhattan to discuss a part of Plum's school stories from *Tales of St. Austin's* and also to celebrate "The Poet Burns Night." The chosen stories—"The Prize Poem" and "Author!"—had been published in boys' magazines and were considered pleasant but ultimately uninspiring. While it was noted that all the characters in both offerings were really thoroughly decent, it was also pointed out that the plots seemed like just the exposition that one would find in later, more convoluted, sophisticated Wodehouse stories.

Following a good deal of witty and appropriate conversation, it was time for the Special—some of whose members were attired in tartan and Scots bonnets—to turn to the works of "the poet Burns," so often quoted in Wodehouse. Singing along with taped music, the company negotiated well the speedy and tongue-twisting "Hey, How, My Johnnie Lad" and did good service to "My Luv Is Like a Red, Red Rose," "A Man's a Man for A' That," and, of course, "Auld Lang Syne"

to conclude the meeting. Our next two meetings will be, first, on March 16 at The Players for a discussion of *Psmith Journalist*, and then on May 5, with the reading yet to be determined.

Buck-U-Uppo Bottling Company
(Seaside, Oregon, and vicinity)
Contact: Sandy Rea



Phone: 5
E-mail:

Capital! Capital!
(Washington, D.C., and vicinity)
Contact: Jeff Peterson



Phone

Capital F.O.R.M.
(Friends Of Ralston McTodd—Ottawa and vicinity)
Contact: Megan Carton

Phone:
E-mail:

Chapter One
(Greater Philadelphia area)
Contact: Susan Cohen



Fax:
E-mail:

We had one of our most literate meetings ever in January, but thank God, we all got through it. Conversation floated here and there, touching on great but windy writers such as Proust and Melville; painters; architecture; and the state of the planet, which, despite global warming, is not so hot. We discussed the *Odyssey* and *Moby Dick*. You know who Moby Dick is, a big fat old white whale (is it politically correct for me to say that?), and imagine my surprise when the very next day I read Nicholas Kristof's column in the *New York Times* where, lo and behold, he discussed both the *Odyssey* and *Moby Dick*. What a coincidence! Or was it? I suspect he was at our Chapter One meeting incognito, disguised either as a waiter or a Manchester United fan.

Thanks to Barbara Van Hook, we toasted the Chinese Year of the Pig. We also toasted Debbie Bellew, whose essay on writer Frances Hodgson Burnett was included in a new book, *In the Garden*, published by Scarecrow Press. Dan Cohen gave a talk on "Gin and Cigarette Ash." That sounds very brooding, almost Russian, but is actually Ethel Wodehouse's recipe for a martini. In addition to telling us about the many writers of Wodehouse's era who spent their lives in an alcoholic haze, Dan, who'd attended many a three-martini lunch himself at one time, regaled us with stories about those booze-soaked afternoons worthy of the Drones Club. Dan then discussed Wodehouse's work habits. The Master, though no teetotaler, was a man addicted to work, not to gin. Chapter One will meet again on March 18 to celebrate Mother's Day U.K. and mothers (there are some, you know) in Wodehouse.

The Chicago Accident Syndicate
(Chicago and thereabouts)
Contact: Daniel & Tina Garrison

Phone: 8
E-mail:



The Chicago Accident Syndicate lets the sunshine in.

The Accident Syndicate met on Saturday, February 10, for another of our noisy lunches, this time at the Valley Lodge in nearby Glenview, where we were not known, discovered for us by our redoubtable leader Kathy Lewis. Among the readings were passages from Norman Murphy's new *Wodehouse Handbook* read by Daniel Love Glazer, the most memorable to my personal ear being about the Sweet Singer of Michigan. Being a native of Michigan, I can say that it is a little short of sweet singers—which made the reading especially sweet.

After a few moments of self-pity that we were not selected to host the 2009 TWS convention, we fell to planning the skit which we will perform in St. Paul. It will make them grind their teeth, I dare say, and give pleasure to all others!

The Clients of Adrian Mulliner

(For enthusiasts of both PGW and Sherlock Holmes)

Contact: Marilyn MacGregor

Phone:

The Clients met on January 13 during the Holmes weekend in New York, for our usual Junior Bloodstain. We recruited half a dozen new members, sold some of our club pins, and had an impassioned reading of "Sherlock Holmes and the Horrible Hound," by Anne Cotton. For those of you who missed it, cheer up, we may drag it out for another showing in Providence at the Clients' Senior Bloodstain.

The Drone Rangers

(Houston and vicinity)

Contact: Toni Rudersdorf

Phone:

E-mail:

We meet every month, alternating the meetings so that one month we dine out together and the next month we hold a book meeting. At the book meetings, which take place at Barnes & Noble on Westheimer at Voss, we have two reports. One is about the book of the evening, the other is about "something Wodehouse." We browse and sluice at dinner meetings and share views. TWS members visiting Houston are always welcome at any of our meetings.

The Drone Rangers had a long, lazy holiday, pausing in the lollygagging only to mosey across Texas to Fort Worth to enjoy a performance of *Right Ho, Jeeves* at Stage West on December 30 (see page 23). We were very happy to see D-Rangers from Dallas, Vijay Barnabas and his wife Anne. Vicki Jacobs and her family, friends of D-Ranger Bertie Ramos, also attended. Bertie could not join us that night, but he had introduced Vicki and her children to Plum two years ago. They helped make the evening one long, glad scream and we look forward to future events that include them.

The first gathering of the Drones in the New Year was on January 26, when we discussed *Carry On, Jeeves*, the book of the evening. D-Ranger Dorothy McIsaac went into several of the fine points of this great collection of short stories, and everybody read out the bits, quips,

and paragraphs that especially tickled their funny bones. Feeling puckish, we made our way to the Barnes & Noble where our meetings are held because the tea table there is always heavily laden. Luscious snacks included cakes, pudding, cookies, muffins, shrimp, and cheese-'n'-fresh-baked bread. Among the newspapers and newsletters available for us to pursue at Barnes & Noble was the newly resurrected *Drone Star*, edited and published by clever Drone Rangers Rebecca Joiner and Bill Mitchell.

February 24 was the scheduled date of our annual Remember Plum Party—see the next *Plum Lines* for a report of this always special event.

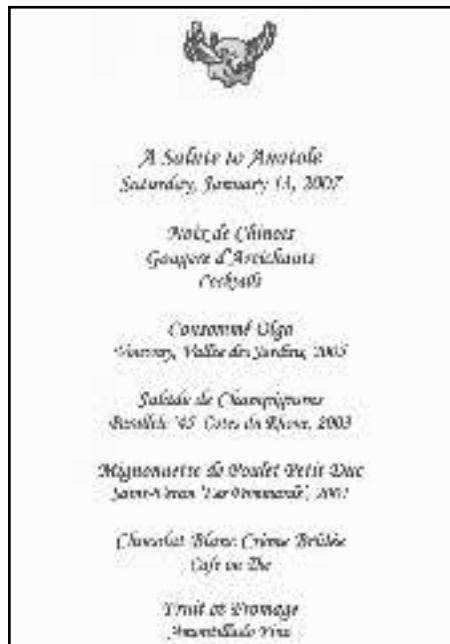
The Flying Pigs

(Cincinnati area and elsewhere)

Contact: Susan Brokaw

Phone:

E-mail:



On Saturday evening, January 13, stalwart members of the Flying Pigs donned black tie and fancy dresses and gathered at the home of Bill Scrivener and Susan Pace for our first annual formal dinner, "A Salute to Anatole." It was a five-course affair (six if one includes pre-dinner appetizers and cocktails), planned, prepared, plated, and presented with expert care and attention by our hosts and their son Luke. And each course was paired with a complementing wine, expertly served by the tuxedoed Luke. Although not a roll was

thrown, we did enjoy a diversion after the *chocolat blanc crème brûlée* and before *le fruit et fromage*: a round-the-table reading of the first two chapters of Wodehouse's *Pigs Have Wings*. It was a wonderful evening in the happy company of fellow Wodehousians.

The Mottled Oyster Club / Jellied Eels

(San Antonio and South Texas)

Contact: James P. Robinson III

Phone:

E-mail:

The San Antonio chapter of TWS continues to meet monthly on the second Thursday of each month (except when we don't). We have a split personality: March, May, July, September, and November find the Jellied Eels assembling at a local eatery-slash-watering hole, which we work mightily to tie in with PGW or his works in sometimes very obscure ways, while in April and every other month thereafter we gather as the Mottled Oyster at Barnes and Noble. We have lots of lighthearted fun together and would love to add to our roster.

The New England Wodehouse Thingummy Society

(NEWTS – Boston and elsewhere in New England)

Contact: Anne Cotton, president

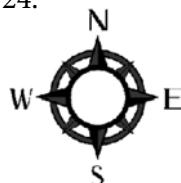
Phone:

The NEWTS had a perfectly amazing post-Christmas bash on January 6 (Twelfth Night). We took our usual class picture out of doors without coats, as the sun was shining merrily and the temperature, in January in New England, was above 70 degrees. Weird "winter." We feasted and swigged our fill; we had our usual gift exchange; and we read the story "How's That, Umpire?" from the cricket collection *Wodehouse at the Wicket*, edited by Murray Hedgcock. We will gather again on March 25 (exact details still to be set). Between now and then, most of the NEWTS will hibernate, except for the cast of our Providence TWS convention skit, who were scheduled to rehearse on February 24.

The Northwodes

(St. Paul, Minneapolis, and vicinity)

Contact: Kristine Fowler



Phone:

E-mail:

Our long-simmering plot is now revealed to the world: The Northwodes' bid to host the 2009 convention in St. Paul has been approved! We are delighted at the prospect of welcoming other TWS members to our fair city (in the summer, we hasten to point out). But as June '09 is some time away, our little band of serious thinkers feels we can take a break from planning and just relax for a bit. That means purely social gatherings, with a little book discussion thrown in, for the next few months; details available on request.

The Pale Parabolites

(Toronto and vicinity)

Contact: Peter M. Nixon

E-mail:

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

The Pelikan Club

(Kansas City and vicinity)

Contact: Sallie Hobbs

E-mail:

The Perfecto-Zizzbaum Motion Picture Corporation

(Los Angeles and vicinity)

Contact: Melissa D. Aaron

Phone:

E-mail:

We meet the second Sunday of every month at 12:30 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 also occasionally attend events of interest, such as the Avalon Ball on Catalina Island; an Art Deco dance in the fabulous Casino; and the Lanterman House Tea, a ragtime-era event. We go to 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

Phone:

Ford Motor Company has announced its largest single quarterly loss in history and continues its massive downsizing. General Motors and Chrysler, while doing marginally better, are still in the process of continuing layoffs. Is there any bright light in the American automotive industry? Is there any hope for Detroit? Yes, friends, there is! The Pickering Motor Company continues its explosive growth. Since our last quarterly statement, we have increased members (two new ones), meeting frequency (one a month), books read (one a month), meals consumed (oh, please!), drinks quaffed (<burp>, excuse me) and merriment enjoyed (never you mind). After but a brief pause to enjoy the December holidays and then recover from them, the Pickerings are foregathering in the home of newly elected president Ann Warren (Elliott Milstein stays on as Chairman of the Board but has relinquished his day-to-day responsibilities in order to spend more time with his family) to discuss both *Summer Lightning* and *Heavy Weather*—both books at one meeting!

The Pickering Motor Company accepts all applicants and will accommodate anyone who likes Wodehouse (or food or drink or merriment, for that matter). Help improve the Michigan economy: Buy a new Wodehouse and come join us! We typically meet in a member's home each month, although when the weather is nice, we have been seen on the patio outside Caribou Coffee. There are no dues (no matter what Dicron says) and no embarrassment if you haven't read this month's book (just ask Sue). So if you live in metro Detroit and are looking for some soul mates with whom to talk Wodehouse, come for a test drive.

From the Chicago Tribune, February 13, 2007 (article by Charles Leroux):

Do you ever say to that man or woman with whom you share your dreams, "Say, Hon, how about we go to an eatery tonight?" You don't. Does Charlie Trotter say, "Come on over to my eatery one of these days"? He doesn't.

No one says it. We say "restaurant" or we say the name—"Jimmy John's" perhaps, or "The House of Sushi and Noodles"—or a description like "that Mexican place with the apricot margaritas that that woman at work told you about."

We don't say "eatery." Ever.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the term first appears in 1901 as "Muttheimer's is one of those eateries where the waiters look wise." By 1923, it was starting to take on negative connotations. P. G. Wodehouse's Bertie Wooster says, "Why, then, was he lunching the girl at this God-forsaken eatery?"

The Portland Wodehouse Society
(Portland, Oregon and vicinity)
Contact: Ray Steen
E-mail:



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



The Soup & Fish Club
(Northern Virginia area)
Contact: Deborah Dillard
Phone:
E-mail:

Now is the time to pester your local librarian to put Wodehouse on the summer reading list. Remember, librarians are not policemen and therefore cannot easily be bribed by donuts. I did have some luck bringing a box of iced pig-shaped cookies along with a couple of Blandings Castle books on a rainy midweek afternoon last year. Instead of pushing me aside, the gals in square-rimmed glasses eagerly tucked into the sugar cookies and listened with great interest to a short Blandings synopsis. Result: *Summer Lightning* made the Summer Reading List. Like Aunt Dahlia said, "Good old bribery."



This is a photo of Ruby showing off her rumble seat. She was the winner of Best Antique in the Clifton Lions Labor Day Car Show, sponsored by the Soup & Fish Club.

A Right Ho Experience

BY TONI RUDERSDORF

On December 30, 2006, 12 Drone Rangers and friends journeyed across Texas to Fort Worth to see *Right Ho, Jeeves*, as adapted by Mark Richards from the novel by P. G. Wodehouse. One lonely D-Ranger who had planned to be part of our merry band remained at home, flat in bed from a back injury. Good news for him, however. The show took a break while the Fat Stock Show was underway in January and resumed in February, so he and others were able to enjoy *Right Ho, Jeeves* then.

Susan Garrett found us comfortable lodgings near the Cultural Center in Ft. Worth. We dined at the Macaroni Grill before heading for Stage West, which is hidden like an Easter egg in the Cultural Center. Nary a sign nor hint of it was to be seen, yet because we are brave, tenacious, and willing to ask for directions, each Wodehousean found his/her way in time for the show. The group was dressed to the nines in finery, specifically Bill Mitchell in his authentic Scots suit of tweed; Fran Knight in her Aeolian mink fur; Carey Tynan in her rubies; and Susan Garrett in her fur stole, tawny sheath, and matching necklace, earrings, brooch, and bracelet. John Moore looked like Psmith in his gent's leisure suiting, Vijay and Anne Barnabas were beautiful in jewelry of American Indian design from Anne's new shop, and for the record I wore a black gown draped with pearls.

As for the show, Regan Adair portrayed Bertie Wooster—and we can put our stamp of approval on every moment that he was on stage. Regan has curly brown hair that, as the fiendish tale unfolded, became wilder and wilder until, by the end, each separate and combined lock was standing out like those famous quills upon the fretful porcupine. What a hoot!

Jim Covault was Jeeves—and has been Jeeves in every Stage West performance of Wodehouse. He is sublime, tall, austere, and feudal, with just a corner of a lip quirking at all the right moments. Dwight Greene nearly stole the show in the scene in which he portrayed a most annoyed Anatole in lavender pajamas. The audience laughed so loudly they had to suspend the action for a few moments while we wiped our eyes and caught our breaths. Scott Meek also rang the bell as Gussie Fink-Nottle, and Kelly Thomas was a riot as Aunt Dahlia. She has been Aunt Dahlia in every Wodehouse performance we D-Rangers have been privileged to witness. She is so perfect that it will be extremely difficult to accept another.

By show's end we were parched and stampeded to my suite to imbibe champagne. There is much to be said in favor of slurping champagne when one does not have to drive home and may stagger back to one's room. Next morning the manager's office (where coffee awaited us along with hot buttered buns) was wall-to-wall D-Rangers asking in hushed tones for a pick-me-up or aspirin. The blighter smiled entirely too much, though he did keep the coffee coming, so one felt grateful despite the glare off his very white teeth.

Nonetheless, the party was extended that day when most of the group met to enjoy a delicious brunch at a charming local eatery, followed by an excursion to the Kimbell Art Museum to view the magnificent exhibit featuring Egypt's Queen Hatshepsut on its last showing in Fort Worth. All in all, a perfect way to end the year!

Bad Goodwood

Edward Bowen noticed Reg Lansberry's November 8, 2006 article in the Midatlantic Thoroughbred publication. Lansberry is describing George F. T. Ryall, who was for many years the *New Yorker's* horse racing writer. He quotes from Brendan Gill from 1975:

. . . Ryall resembles a character out of some sunny Edwardian novel. Bertie Wooster might well have stumbled against him in the press of the crowd on a corking afternoon at Goodwood. Bertie would have burst out, "Sorry, old chap!", and Ryall would have told him what he thought of him, in a courteous, sidelong snarl.

"And my friend, Mr. Little," said Oofy, in conclusion, "wants a tenner on Spotted Dog for the Prix Honore Sauvan."

And Bingo was just about to shake his head and say that he didn't think his wife would like him to bet, when the glorious Riviera sunshine . . . lit up Oofy's face and he saw that it was a perfect mass of spots. A moment later, he perceived that the bookie had a pink spot on his nose and the waiter, who was now bringing the bill, a bountifully spotted forehead. A thrill shot through him. These things, he knew, are sent to us for a purpose.

"Right ho," he said. "A tenner at the current odds."

"All's Well with Bingo" (1937)

Walk's End

Word has been received from our London office that Norman Murphy will cease doing Wodehouse Walks (covering Bertie Wooster's London) after this summer. His swan song will take place on September 8. The Society assures us, though, that the classic Wodehouse Walk and another walk that Norman has devised (covering Wodehouse's early years in London) will be preserved and made available to future visitors to London by means that will be announced in due course.

Volunteer Officers

President of The Wodehouse Society:
Jean Tillson

Membership Secretary (new-member inquiries,
contact information changes):
Amy Plofker

<http://www.wodehouse.org/inquiry/>

Treasurer (dues payments):
Kris Fowler

Editor Emeritus: Ed Ratcliffe

Editor in Chief:
Gary Hall

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Website Development & Maintenance:
Shamim Mohamed, AKA Pongo

Where to submit articles:

My First Time and Rivals of Wodehouse: Dan Cohen
Chapters Corner: Susan Cohen (same address as Dan)
All other submissions: Gary Hall & Linda Adam-Hall

Note the address change for Gary Hall and Linda Adam-Hall. They are still in their mountain cradle in Estes

Park, Colorado, but with a different street address for your Plum Lines contributions!

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