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The Empress Strikes Back: The 2013 TWS Chicago Convention

BY TINA AND DAN GARRISON

NEVER TO BE OUTDONE in planning the unforgettable, The Chicago Accident Syndicate has laid the groundwork for a delightful 2013 TWS convention that will topple the mighty and amaze seasoned Plummiess from every continent. Ever since the record-breaking 1997 convention at the Intercontinental Hotel on the Miracle Mile, the Accident Syndicate has looked for another perfect venue that will strike a distinctive note and place our guests in a setting that will recall the clubby days of Plum's most established heroes.

Our solemn rites are therefore set for the Union League Club, Chicago's living answer to London's imaginary Senior Conservative Club—a calm and quiet place with discreet staff, excellent dining, and nearby access to the Loop's most celebrated attractions. Just five blocks from the Art Institute and six blocks from Millennium Park, the Union League Club is the ideal headquarters for your visit to Chicago, so make your reservations now for a longer stay than the convention requires (October 18–20). The Accident Syndicate has reserved a block of rooms at a very competitive price that extends five days before and five days after the Convention.

For anyone staying at the club, you have full access to a five-lane, 20-yard swimming pool; international squash, handball, and racquetball courts; a weight room; a golf practice room (of course!); a cardiovascular fitness center with selectorized weight machines; and a gymnasium. For the epicurean, there used to be a Smoking Room, but you can still get an excellent stogie at the desk. The club has a legendary cellar and a famous collection of single malt whiskies



*The Chicago
Skyline from
Millennium Park*



*Anish Kapoor's
Cloud Gate at
Millennium Park*



The Art Institute of Chicago main entrance

for the discerning guest. In addition to its opulent Main Dining Room, the Club offers breakfast and dinner at the Wigwam and an expanded pub menu at the Rendezvous & Carvery. And if, in the aftermath of your revels, you pass up the Chicago Art Institute, the Club maintains a collection of nearly 800 original art works representing more than 150 years of art making, chiefly in America.

The theme for the 2013 Convention was suggested by Carl Sandburg’s 1916 epithet for Chicago, “Hog Butcher for the World.” To this we counter—on a more contemporary note—“The Empress Strikes Back.”

Seasoned Wodehousians will expect (and enjoy) a program of meaty talks on beefy subjects; a banquet with prizes for the best costumes; contests of Wodehousiana for Plummys on every level, including a crossword puzzle on butlers and valets; games of the sophistication favored by Drones; a goodie bag that will surprise and gratify; and other attractions.



Riverside Drive slept. The moon shone on darkened windows and deserted sidewalks. It was past one o’clock in the morning. . . . Jimmy was awake. He was sitting on the edge of his bed, watching his father put the finishing touches on his makeup, which was of a shaggy and intimidating nature. The elder Crocker had conceived the outward aspect of Chicago Ed, King of the Kidnappers, on broad and impressive lines, and one glance would have been enough to tell the sagacious observer that here was no white-souled comrade for a nocturnal saunter down lonely lanes and out-of-the-way alleys.

Piccadilly Jim (1917)

Wodehouse’s Handwriting Analyzed

BY JOHN DAWSON

My handwriting is shaky this morning. I am much disturbed, much disturbed.

“Creatures of Impulse” (1914)

GRAPHOLOGY IS THE analysis of handwriting, especially in relation to human psychology. Although graphology had a certain amount of support in the scientific community before the mid-20th century, most surveys on the ability of handwriting analysts to assess personality and potential job performance have been negative. As a “pseudo-science,” graphology remains controversial. Although supporters point to the anecdotal evidence of thousands of positive testimonials as a reason to use it for personality evaluation, most empirical studies fail to show the validity claimed by its supporters. Many studies that have been conducted to assess its effectiveness to predict personality and job performance have been negative. The British Psychological Society ranks graphology alongside astrology, giving them both “zero validity,” per Wikipedia.

Having inserted that disclaimer up front, I confess to a fascination with the idea that personality traits can be discerned through one’s handwriting, and dabbled a bit in it myself many years ago. My interest in the subject was rekindled when I began to pore over the dozens of handwritten pages in Wodehouse’s “Money Received for Literary Work” notebook of 1900–1908.

I submitted a few pages to Deb Peddy, president of the American Handwriting Analysis Foundation 2008–2012. Deb agreed to a blind test, knowing in advance only that the samples were those of a 21-year-old, right-handed male from 1901. Among her impressions contained in a two-page report (eliminating technical jargon for clarity):

“General impression of writer: Highly intelligent, analytical, agile minded, extremely capable and driven, acutely developed senses, critical disposition. The writing indicates strength of will and determination as the writer was highly driven and progressive in nature. He was truly motivated by the senses and easily immersed in his creative processes. There are clear indications of literary ability and an appreciation for culture. Many features in the script are typical of writers, artists and poets.

“The handwriting is expressive and dynamic but also fraught with tension. There is some release in the form of imagination and creativity. In some samples there is a sense of control, in others an infusion of excitement and enthusiasm. Habits of self-indulgence would likely be in response to unmanageable levels of energy or anxiety.

“Overall there is a great deal of vitality and intensity which produced a wide range of emotions the writer found difficult to express. He could be considered spontaneous and interactive as well as withdrawn and introspective. He could be directed and focused as well as restless and anxious.

“The writer appears to have been adaptable to his environment with an intuitive sense of situations and people. He had a unique style, leaving a lasting impression. Charm and grace would prevail if the mood and occasion called for such. At the same time he would take pleasure in challenging people and directing conversations. It would be difficult to argue with his opinions or match his analytical abilities. Even in a ‘friendly’ context it would be intimidating for most to oppose his view. His sense of humor would gravitate toward satire or sarcasm, but, witty and funny, nonetheless.

“In interpersonal relations he was inhibited and discerning, choosing friends and confidants very carefully. It was in social context that he was more flexible. It was important to him to establish contacts and make an impression. His personal style was dynamic but not in a contrived manner. Although he possessed social graces he preferred solitude and needed ample time for reflection.

“The writing shows a high degree of intelligence and analytical prowess. There are many indications of his creative, unconventional thinking processes. He could be fiercely independent and took a novel approach to problem solving and developing ideas.

“The combination of features in the writing suggests the writer was strategic in planning, organized in method, and could accomplish anything through sheer force of will. He was consumed not only by his feelings but in gaining knowledge. He had an all encompassing drive and was greatly affected by his experiences.

“Naturally protective of his own sensitivities, he could be extremely defensive. He was very likely to relieve frustration with verbal assaults. Sarcasm would be used as much in anger as in humor. Mental processes appear to be swift and definite. It is unlikely he was patient with those less certain. He was authoritarian in attitude and could be hypercritical of ideas outside his belief system.”

Science or pseudo-science? In view of the known facts of P. G.’s life and personality, some of Peddy’s comments seem uncannily accurate.

By the way, Wodehouse himself once engaged in a bit of handwriting analysis: “Oh, there’s a letter for you. I’ve just been to fetch the mail. I don’t know who it can be from. The handwriting looks like a vampire’s. Kind of scrawly.” (“Doing Father a Bit of Good,” 1920)

There was practically one handwriting common to the whole school when it came to writing lines. It resembled the movements of a fly that had fallen into an ink-pot, and subsequently taken a little brisk exercise on a sheet of foolscap by way of restoring the circulation.

“A Corner in Lines” (1905)

The 2015 Convention!

YES, THE 2015 CONVENTION can be yours! Details are available in TWS’s Convention Steering Committee (CSC) Charter. If you are unable to get it from TWS’s website (<http://www.wodehouse.org/twsCSCcharter.html>) for some reason, please write to Elin Woodger for a copy (see below).

All bids for the 2015 convention must be submitted to Elin Woodger by January 14, 2013.

The host chapter selection will be made well in advance of the 2013 Chicago convention. The CSC Charter mandates: (1) Any chapter wishing to host a convention must submit their bid to the Committee by nine months before the next convention (in this case, by January 14, 2013). (2) The Committee will notify bidding chapters whether their bids have been successful at least six months before the next convention. Thus, chapters wanting to host the 2015 convention will be notified by April 14, 2013, whether their bid has been successful or not. (3) If the Committee receives no bids by the nine-month deadline, they will use those nine months to make their own convention plans—which may mean selecting a likely chapter and inviting them to play Persian Monarchs, with the honor of hosting the 2015 convention as the stakes.

For full host chapter selection criteria, you may download the CSC Charter from our website, or you may request a copy from Elin at the e-mail address or street address listed above.

P. G. W. and the Frogs

BY BARBARA C. BOWEN

I HAVE CLAIMED elsewhere that, contrary to our expectations, P. G. Wodehouse had an astonishingly keen ear for languages, both varieties of his own and a surprising number of foreign tongues.¹ There is a good deal of French, both authentic and phony, in his books, and my contention is that his use of it shows remarkable linguistic sensitivity. A French police sergeant addresses Jerry Shoemsmith as “Zooksmeet,”² and at the beginning of *The Luck of the Bodkins* there is a hilarious scene in a French hotel in which Monty Bodkin, following the instructions of his fiancée, is practicing his French on the waiter: “Er, garçon, esker-vous avez un spot de l'encre et une pièce de papier—note-papier, vous savez—et une enveloppe et une plume?” The waiter’s fiancée, however, has told him to be sure and practice his English, so he brings Monty “Eenk—pin—pipper—enveloppe—and a liddle bit of bloddin-pipper.” Later, Monty rashly asks him if he knows how to spell “sciatica,” which of course he does—in French: “Comme ça, monsieur. Like zis, boy. Wit’ a ess, wit’ a say, wit’ a ee, wit’ a arr, wit’ a tay, wit’ a ku, wit’ a uh, wit’ a ay. V’là! Sciatique.”

Not much help to poor Monty!

I can’t resist briefly quoting Aunt Dahlia’s French chef Anatole one more time. After Aunt Dahlia ill-advisedly tries to calm his fury by saying “It’s quite all right,” he bursts out:

“All right? *Nom d’un nom d’un nom!* The hell you say it’s all right? Of what use to pull stuff like that? Wait one half-moment. Not yet quite so quick, my old sport. It is by no means all right. See yet again a little. It is some very different dishes of fish.” And so on.³

Here I would like to broaden the linguistic perspective by asking a very general question: Why on earth do the French like Wodehouse? Apparently they do; apart from the numerous translations of his books into French, of which more anon, Ken Clevenger found references to three French university dissertations on him. I was only able to get hold of two of these, but both are interesting.

They were both completed in the same year (1975), and both are what the French call *thèses de Troisième Cycle*. The less interesting one, from my perspective, is *Jeeves, héros comique de P. G. Wodehouse* by Marie-José Arquie. As we expect from the title, the whole thesis of 200 pages is about Jeeves, and a language problem soon becomes obvious: the author cannot distinguish between a valet and a butler, although French does have a word for each, *valet* and *majordome*.

Jeeves is exhaustively described, likened to a character in Guignol, i.e., a puppet, and to Sherlock Holmes, and presented as a parody of Nietzsche’s superman. Jeeves and Bertie are compared to Laurel and Hardy and to Astérix and Obélix. Some valid points are made: Jeeves has the physical and moral qualities of the serious hero, and he can’t be credible because he’s a stereotype. A number of points seem to me at least debatable (Jeeves’s aunts are parodies of Miss Marple), and one is definitely mistaken (a supposed reference to Jesus).

The other dissertation is by Evelyne Gauthier and is titled *Etude structurale du récit chez P. G. Wodehouse*.⁴ This one is also exclusively about Jeeves, and given the title we are not surprised that [the Russian scholar Vladimir] Propp’s structural principles are the basis of Gauthier’s argument. Gauthier gets “valet” right, but, like most foreigners, assumes that Jeeves’s world is *un petit monde qui n’existe plus guère* (a little world that hardly exists any more), not realizing that it never did exist. She divides the dissertation into five sections, which consider successively overall structure and narrative function (Propp’s term); the structure of individual functions; the characters and their interaction; and, most important for the author, *les problèmes du discours*. Most interesting at least to me, however, is the fifth section, which consists of an original Jeeves short story in English.

This is a considerable tour de force, which shows both a thorough knowledge of Wodehouse and a truly remarkable mastery of English. (In the last sixty years, I have met only two French people who could pass for English when they spoke it.) It’s a typical Bertie/Jeeves story, with the usual complications and a happy ending, and characters who are either old friends like Aunt Dahlia and Florence or clones of Bertie’s young friends. The minor blemishes are, however, interesting.

Most obviously, there are a few mistakes in English, twice involving prepositions: “at the hands of Jeeves” instead of “in the hands of Jeeves” and “quick at the uptake.” There is no English verb “to portrait”; the past tense of “slink” is not “slinked”; “the top of my toes” should be “the tip of my toes,” although this could be a typo, of which there are many.

More seriously, to my mind, there are some errors in tone. Does Wodehouse’s Bertie ever swear? I don’t think so; here he says “Dammit” once and “the damn thing” once. He also refers to the Bible as “the Testaments, both old and juvenile,” and I don’t believe Wodehouse ever makes joking references to religion. Bertie comes across as a less charming character; at one point he actually wails at the idea of marrying the wrong girl. Jeeves

describes one of his ideas as an “unforeseen conjecture,” which doesn’t quite ring true, and Florence’s lengthy statement that she will marry Bertie, while expressing her usual sentiments, rings very false indeed.

Gauthier uses dozens of Wodehouse’s usual clichés and similes, but a few of her own strike me, again, as introducing a slightly jarring note. Aunt Dahlia’s “booming on” reminds Bertie of the cannon at Waterloo; Porky’s gloom “stood out as plainly as a Palm Beach suit at the Eton and Harrow match”; and Jeeves reports that Percy told his loved one that her hat “looked like a young Vacherin,” a French dessert of which Bertie is unlikely to have heard.

On the whole, though, this is a very creditable imitation, which bears out the author’s contention that structure is the basic factor here. I wish I could have seen the third dissertation, titled *Le monde de P. G. Wodehouse*, by Evelyne Ginestier, which is a doctoral thesis and thus a cut above the other two, and listed as “quatre volumes”!

Let’s move on to a related subject: translations of Wodehouse books into French. This has already been treated by one of Wodehouse’s most reliable critics, Richard Osborne. In his *Wodehouse at Work to the End*⁵ he devotes sixteen pages to an appendix titled “The French for Wodehouse,” concentrating on a French translation by Denyse and Benoît de Fonscolombe of *Joy in the Morning*. The French title is *Jeeves, au Secours* (we can’t seem to get away from Jeeves), and Osborne begins with a list of impressive translations, some of which would not have occurred to me despite my sixty-year familiarity with French. For instance: *la corrida* for “rannygazoo,” and *espèce d’horrible graine de charançon* for “you horrible young boll-weevil.”

The rest of this appendix consists of criticisms of the translators, who sometimes give up, especially on quotations, and sometimes actually misunderstand the English. One example concerns my favorite Wodehouse simile: Stilton Cheesewright is dithering outside the jeweller’s shop where he plans to buy an engagement ring for Florence, and when Bertie prods him with his umbrella he “spun round with a sort of guilty bound, like an adagio dancer surprised while watering the cat’s milk.” Setting aside the question of why in the world an adagio dancer, or anyone else for that matter, would water the cat’s milk, we can also question the French translation: *Il se retourna d’un bond avec l’air coupable d’une danseuse classique surprise à tirer la queue d’un chat*. (He turned around in one leap with the guilty look of a classical dancer surprised while pulling the tail of the cat.) This, while making marginally more sense than the original, appears to be a willful misreading.

Osborne consulted a Belgian whose English was perfect, asking him to read *Jeeves, au Secours* and report on it. Even before doing so, his Belgian acquaintance had this to say:

I will read it. But it cannot be very good, for two reasons. First, there are no equivalents for the *layers* of slang in French. There is no upper middle class in France comparable to the English public-school type, and French student slang is regional and changes much too quickly. Anyway, French is a Latin language. In German and Dutch, you’d possibly find that Wodehouse translations could be good. But not in French. It hasn’t got the same sort of idioms as English. The second reason is this: I have never heard of the Fonscolombes, which probably means that they are not *littérateurs* in their own right . . .

My own acquaintance with Wodehouse in French is confined, alas, to two books, and I regret this. What in the world did the French translator do with the wonderful noise of the Empress of Blandings feeding?: “A sort of gulpy, gurgly, plobby, squishy, wofflesome sound, like a thousand eager men drinking soup in a foreign restaurant.”⁶

My first French version, and the only one I own, is *Merci, Jeeves*, a translation of *Thank You, Jeeves*⁷. This is the one about Bertie, his banjolele, his friend Chuffy (Lord Chuffnell), his former fiancée Pauline Stoker, and his old enemy Roderick Glossop. Speaking of the latter, in the first chapter Bertie says, “Good gosh! The man must have the crust of a rhinoceros.” The French reads *cré nom de nom. Il doit avoir une carapace de rhinocéros, ce type*. This is an exact translation, but, as foreseen by Osborne’s Belgian friend, *carapace* doesn’t have the slang connotations in French that “crust” does in English.

There are a few simple errors, like *pantalons* with an “s” for trousers, and some ill-advised translations, like the literal renderings of Bertie’s banjo tunes “I Lift Up My Finger and I Say Tweet-Tweet” and “Body and Soul” at the beginning of chapter 11. I doubt whether these mean anything to French readers. The same chapter has a good example of Wodehouse slang: J. Washburn Stoker has sent Bertie an invitation to dinner on his yacht, the gist of which, as given by Bertie to Jeeves, is: “I shall be frightfully bucked if you will come and mangle a spot of garbage on the boat to-night.” The French rendering of this is: *Je serais furax si vous ne venez pas avaler quelques saletés sur le bateau, ce soir*, which has quite the wrong tone (I would be furious if

you didn't come to swallow a few dirty things [garbage] on the boat this evening). Bertie may dislike Stoker, but he wouldn't attribute such outright rudeness to him.

One final example, this time of giving up hope of an adequate translation. In chapter 12, Bertie is imprisoned on the yacht because Stoker, misled by previous events, has decided that it's imperative for Bertie to marry Pauline, and Jeeves, of course, comes to the rescue. His suggestion is, as usual, couched in parentheses:

“Well, I was wondering, sir, if on the whole it would not be best if you were to obviate all unpleasantness and embarrassment by removing yourself from the yacht.”

“What!”

“Yacht, sir.”

There is presumably no way to render the yacht/what confusion in French, so the translators have to be content with “*Quoi?*”

My other example is *Ça va, Jeeves*, a translation of *Right Ho, Jeeves*⁸ kindly lent to me by Ken Clevenger. This is the one about Gussie Fink-Nottle in love, Anatole's magnificent outburst in *franglais*, and Gussie's sozzled prize-giving speech to the youth of Market Snodsbury. Let's take Anatole first. His long tirade is reduced to a few lines containing several French slang expressions, but omitting a number of the chef's more picturesque remarks, and of course in correct French, which spoils the whole point.

Ça va, Jeeves also contains the usual refusal to translate literally when this would have been quite feasible; why render “salted almond” (ch. 7) by *plat de résistance*, which means “main dish”? Gussie's prize-giving speech (ch. 17) is also quite funny in French, but to my mind not as funny as in English, perhaps because he doesn't come across as quite as sozzled in French. The translations of difficult expressions seem rather too coherent: in Gussie's mixed-up version of the conversation between two Irishmen *le gagnant de la course n'est pas toujours le plus rapide* (the winner of the race isn't always the fastest) is used for “the race is not always to the swift,” and *l'éducation est une porte de sortie, non pas une voie de garage* (education is an exit door, not a parking lane) for “education is a drawing out, not a putting in.”

I could adduce many more examples, but fear that they would not help to answer my main question, which remains: why do the French, not celebrated for appreciating the British, like Wodehouse sufficiently to translate him and write dissertations about him? Readers of *Plum Lines*, can you resolve this enigma?

Endnotes

¹ “P. G. Wodehouse Linguist?” in *Plum Lines* 31/2 (Summer 2010), 1–5.

² *Frozen Assets*, ch. 1.

³ *Right Ho, Jeeves*, ch. 20.

⁴ Université François Rabelais, Tours, 1975.

⁵ London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1976 (1961).

⁶ “Pig-hoo-o-o-o-ey!” in *Blandings Castle*.

⁷ Tr. Benoît Fonscolombe (Union Générale d'Éditions, 1982).

⁸ Tr. Josette Raoul-Duval (France Loisirs, 1982).

“I have no wish to condemn you unheard, Purkiss,” he said, “but all this begins to look a bit French. Did you kiss Miss Jobson?”

“The Editor Regrets” (1939)

From the *Southampton Press*

WILL JAMES writes of Plum in the October 11 *Southampton Press*, the newspaper that covers the Remsenburg area. Mr. James documents the historical marker ceremony, and provides some local background about Wodehouse's relationship to the area:

Bob Nidzyn remembers a quiet man who lived on Basket Neck Lane in Remsenburg in the mid-1960s. The man used to walk the streets of the hamlet every morning to get his newspaper at a corner store on Montauk Highway. . . .

“We used to ride our bicycles and we'd see him on the street,” said Mr. Nidzyn, now 56 years old. . . . “At first he seemed like a quiet, keep-to-himself kind of guy. Eventually he opened up and he'd say, ‘Hey, how you fellas doing?’”

Mr. James quotes TWS President Ken Clevenger (“His works are full of quiet, rural, almost rustic country places, and in Remsenburg I think he may have found a little piece of America that was somewhat ‘English countryside-y’ in nature.”) and Andrea Jacobsen who, with Bob Rains, was a prime mover of the historical marker project.

Mr. Nidzyn is quoted as saying that “pilgrims from as far as Europe get off the train . . . looking for clues about their favorite author. They'd wander in and say, ‘Hey, have you ever heard of P. G. Wodehouse?’ . . . And I'd say, ‘Heard of him? Hell, I knew him!’”

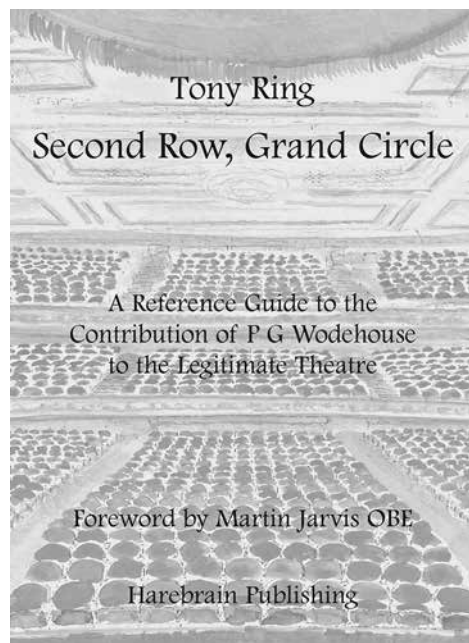
Literature from the Wodehouse Literati: Ring, Ratcliffe, and Murphy

BY GARY HALL

HOW LUCKY WE ARE to be part of The Wodehouse Society! We've discovered a source of perpetual humor, we have society mates around the world, and some of our Plummy friends document the Wodehousean world in so many creative ways.

This autumn alone, several books have arrived at the Hall house. Some are new editions of previously published stories from the canon. One is a collection of items previously printed in *Plum Lines*, and more: Thanks, Ken Clevenger, for putting all of your "Mulliner Menagerie" items (including the unpublished ones) in your book (see p. 10 for more details).

And some are results of fascinating and deep academic work, and I must mention a few of them here.



Tony Ring has long been a man who gathers and disseminates Wodehouse information par excellence. His contribution to the documentation of PGW's works is unsurpassed, and he's done it again. *Second Row, Grand Circle* is now available from Tony and, as the subtitle says, is a reference guide to the contribution of P. G. Wodehouse to the legitimate theatre.

Legitimate theatre, of course, refers to non-musical theatre, and Wodehouse's efforts in this direction were sufficiently prolific to fill this 485-page volume. Part I ("The Context of Wodehouse's Play-Writing") provides thorough historical background and generously quotes from letters to and from those involved in PGW's playwriting.

Despite my enjoyment of that introductory section, I find myself most delighted by Part II ("Detailed Notes About Wodehouse's Plays"). The reader is treated to a chapter for virtually every published and unpublished play (performed and not performed) in which Wodehouse had a hand. For each play, an image of the program is provided (when available), along with an introduction, a concordance of characters, summary of reviews (when available), cast lists, the best nifty quotes from the play, and so on. It is terrific fun, and a wonderful job by Tony to gather it all together while the information is still recoverable.

Some scripts have been lost over the years, so with this book in hand, perhaps some of you illustrious society members could help fill those gaps?

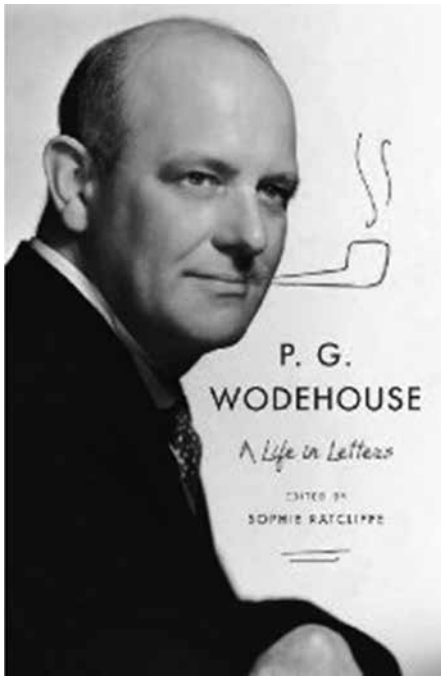
One section documents Wodehouse-related plays in foreign languages, and a final section describes some plays adapted by others from Wodehouse material without his involvement.

Altogether it is a tremendous effort. It makes me wish I had a Saturday-night time machine to take me back to the West End and Broadway of those days and take it all in.

The foreword is written by British actor and writer Martin Jarvis, OBE. Tony's work is offered by Harebrain Publishing. You can get a copy by writing to Tony; PayPal is the preferred payment method, but Tony can advise you of other options.

WE ALSO RECEIVED an advance copy (at least, for the U.S.—it's been on sale in the U.K. for some time) of Sophie Ratcliffe's *P. G. Wodehouse: A Life in Letters*. Fortunately, we have a sizable mailbox. This remarkable work is being published by W. W. Norton & Company, and we must thank Elizabeth Riley and Norton for their generosity. (When one of you decides to take over the editorship of this august journal, you'll find this a nice benefit of the job!)

Dedicated to all of Wodehouse's heroines ("imaginary and real, especially Leonora"), this collection is a testament to Dr. Ratcliffe's considerable academic prowess, and I find it scintillating to read in sequence or just to pick up at random. Spanning most of the decades of Wodehouse's life (and even including a letter written by PGW to Ethel that was delivered forty years late and after his death), with background material to help paint the full picture, the book is a



Wodehouse on the Desert Island

BY TODD MORNING

THE VENERABLE BBC radio program *Desert Island Discs* has run almost continuously since 1942. The success of the program is perhaps due to its simple format: Guests (called castaways) are asked to choose their eight favorite recordings in advance of the show. The records are then played and discussed with the host in the context of the guest's life. I occasionally listen to the archived podcasts of the program from the BBC Radio 4 website, and much of the appeal for me comes from the wide variety of guests, who are not limited to the usual showbiz types but include prominent people from all walks of life. Some of the 2,500 guests who have appeared on the show over the years include Jacques Cousteau, Margaret Thatcher (and several other British prime ministers), James Stewart, J. K. Rowling, Princess Grace of Monaco, Sir Isaiah Berlin, and Stephen Sondheim.

Why is any of this of any interest to The Wodehouse Society? At the end of the show, castaways are asked to name one book that they would like to bring with them to the island (the complete works of Shakespeare and the Bible have supposedly already washed up on the beach), and for the past several years a searchable archive of the guests' picks has been available on the BBC Radio 4 website. Discovering which guests have chosen Wodehouse as their desert island author is simply a matter of making a few mouse clicks.

I am happy to report that Wodehouse holds his own in this archive. Twenty-four desert island castaways have chosen Wodehouse over the years. Many world literature heavyweights don't do nearly as well: the combined Brontë sisters were only picked five times, for instance. Dante was picked eighteen times, James Joyce sixteen, and Homer twenty. Jane Austen, however, was picked 27 times, and Charles Dickens seems to be the winner of my random survey with 61 picks.

I am also happy to report that North Americans will be familiar with many of the castaways who selected Wodehouse. Inevitably, a few of the names of the Wodehouse pickers were completely new to me.

Here is the complete list of the *Desert Island Discs* castaways who chose Wodehouse. I've included some biographical material for each person.

George Chisholm (1915–1997): British jazz trombonist, also known as for (as one source put it) his “verbal comedy.”

treasure trove of his opinions, humor, inner thoughts, and commentary. Many of the letters are to expected recipients: William Townend, the Cazalets, Guy Bolton, and so on. And many others are terrific treats to find in the book: Agatha Christie, Ira Gershwin, George Orwell, etc.

I highly recommend purchasing this book when it becomes available in late January 2013. It will be available in all major bookstores as well as through Amazon, where it can be pre-ordered for \$19.56 (a 44% discount off the list price of \$35).

HAVING BEEN ON two Wodehouse walks with the ever-cheerful N. T. P. Murphy (we'll call him Norman henceforth), I was happy to procure a copy of his *One Man's London: Twenty Years On*. This revised and expanded version of his *One Man's London* (1989) is set up as a series of walks around—you guessed it—London. It is a tremendous resource for anyone who is curious about that city's buildings and history. There are seventeen walks in all, and you don't even have to be in jolly old England to enjoy them; indeed, it's perfect for reading in front of the fire when it's a bit too nippy to dash around a cold, windy city. Wodehouse gets a few mentions, of course, but so do Dickens, Conan Doyle, Kipling, and others—authors, painters, politicians, kings, queens, and many more.

A bit of Camembert, a touch of port, and *One Man's London: Twenty Years On*: the perfect recipe for the upcoming winter evenings. To find out how to order a copy, you may write to Norman).

Elsbeth Huxley (1907–1997): Author, perhaps best known for her memoir of Africa, *The Flame Trees of Thika*, which was adapted for television and shown on *Masterpiece Theater*.

William Hardcastle (1918–1975): Noted British journalist and broadcaster.

Arthur Marshall (1910–1989): Another noted British humorist and broadcaster.

Robert Bolt (1924–1995): Best known as the author of *A Man for All Seasons*. Wrote the screenplays for several David Lean films, including *Dr. Zhivago* and *Lawrence of Arabia*.

Jimmy Mulville (1955–): British comedy writer.

Ann Leslie (1941–): British foreign correspondent.

Richard Dawkins (1941–): Evolutionary biologist, perhaps better known as a proponent of atheism. Author of *The God Delusion*, among other works.

Stephen Fry (1957–): British actor and writer who played Jeeves in the popular television adaptations.

Terry Wogan (1938–): Irish-born host of many long-running BBC radio and television programs. His documentary about Wodehouse recently appeared on British television.

Hugh Johnson (1939–): Author of many books on wine.

Leonard Rossiter (1926–1984): British actor. Several of his comedies, such as *Rising Damp*, appeared on American television.

Barry Norman (1933–): British journalist, broadcaster, and film critic.

Bert Foord (1930–2001): Popular weatherman on the BBC in the 1960s and early 1970s.

Anatole Grunwald (1910–1967): Film producer. Best known for his work adapting Terence Rattigan's plays for the screen.

John Allegro (1923–1988): Biblical scholar, noted for his work on the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Henry Blofeld (1939–): Aforementioned cricket commentator.

Alan Titchmarsh (1949–): Gardening expert. He was the leader of the team of gardeners on the program *Ground Force* on the cable channel BBC America.

Douglas Adams (1952–2001): Author of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*.

Lord Oaksey (1929–2012): Aristocratic former jockey and racing writer.

Rowan Atkinson (1955–) British comic actor, noted for his recent turn on the synthesizer during the opening ceremonies of the London Olympics.

Jonathan Lynn (1943–) Writer of the television comedies *Yes, Minister* and *Yes, Prime Minister*.

Peter Sallis: (1921–) *Last of the Summer Wine* actor.

Now it is time to insert a few asterisks. Some of the castaways asked for the complete works of Wodehouse, some asked for specific works, and some asked for works that fit into a category, such as the golf stories or all the Blandings Castle novels. This may have to do with the fact that some of the past program hosts did not allow their guests to choose an author's collected works (too heavy for the life raft?). Also, Terry Wogan has appeared on the show more than once, which is why the archive officially lists 24 selections for Wodehouse, even though the above list includes 23 names. Sir Terry has actually appeared on *Desert Island Discs* three times, but on his third appearance he chose *War and Peace*. Perhaps he figured that the works of Wodehouse were already tucked away in his grass hut. Does this mean that only 23 castaways chose Wodehouse? Not exactly. Along with musical choices, guests have the option of choosing spoken word recordings. Thus, the late British diplomat Sir Nicholas Henderson (1919–2009), the ambassador to the United States during the Falklands war, chose *The Clicking of Cuthbert* read by Timothy Carlton as one of his records. I think we can therefore put him down as a vote for Wodehouse.

Finally, let me put in a plug for the BBC Radio 4 website, and its internet archive station BBC Radio 4 Extra. Readings or adaptations of works by Wodehouse appear with some frequency, and they are often available for streaming or downloading. Also available is the *Desert Island Disc Archive* at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/features/desert-island-discs>.

A Couple of Quick Ones

In an article in the June *Smithsonian*, Lance Morrow analyzes *Essays in Idleness (Tsurezuregusa)*, written by the 14th-century Buddhist monk and poet Kenko. Morrow calls Kenko's work "an eccentric, sedate, and gemlike assemblage of his thoughts on life, death, weather manner, aesthetics, nature, drinking, conversational bores, sex, house design, the beauties of understatement, and imperfection." Kenko is "charming, off-kilter, never gloomy," and Morrow compares the effect of reading the works to "taking a dip in the Bertie Wooster stories of P. G. Wodehouse."

The May 25 *Times* (London) published an obituary of literary agent Hilary Rubenstein wherein Rubenstein is quoted as saying Wodehouse was the top: "He is in my pantheon of dream authors, those who are productive, professional, modest, never testy, and generous in their appreciation."

A Mulliner Menagerie

READERS OF *PLUM LINES* in recent years were treated to a series of articles by Ken Clevenger, wherein that author joyfully documented the various fauna that make appearances in the Mulliner stories. Ken is an expert on the subject of the tales of Mr. Mulliner, and now you can enjoy a complete, unabridged collection of these essays. *A Mulliner Menagerie*, Ken's second self-published Wodehouse-related book, is available from Amazon and can be yours for a few pence (\$7.99 at this writing).

The book is very thorough and, if it wasn't so cheerful, one might say encyclopedic in its documentation of the animals of Wodehouse's Mulliner stories. Not only does Ken devote chapters to cats, dogs, gorillas, reptiles, and so on, but he collects the miscellaneous beasts in the final chapters, where giraffes, gazelles, hippopotamuses, and others make their appearances.

True to form, Ken has a bit of fun at the expense of the editors of *Plum Lines* regarding the changes made when twelve of the pieces were published in The Wodehouse Society's journal. In self-deprecating fashion, he claims that readership of *PL* nose-dived during the period. We assure you that such a rumor is entirely unfounded.

In addition to the 27 chapters, Ken gives the reader a Wodehouse quiz that's also a collection of poetry ("doggerel," according to him). In each of the pseudo-sonnets, he encodes clues to one of the Mulliner stories. (Those who guess all of the references win an as-yet-undetermined prize!) Answers are available in the book.

All in all, this is an original concept and very complete. As a reference book, it works well if you're looking for that odd Mullinerian gorilla or newt or other creature. But more than that, it's a labor of love, and it shows. Ken's humor and enjoyment of the material shines through, and ultimately the book is another great testament to the power of Plum to keep us laughing.



Don't Hog That Fuel

THE WASHINGTON STATE Department of Transportation published an article dated September 30, 2012, entitled "The Hybrid Vehicle and Alternative Fuel Report." This journal includes an article by TWS's Tom Smith, made notable to us by an interesting footnote in a discussion about a mandate of alternative biofuel options. The footnote relates to

some information gleaned from *National Hog Farmer* magazine, and states: "While *National Hog Farmer* is no Augustus Whiffle on *The Care of the Pig*, Whiffle does not discuss biofuel."

Norton Does It Again

Our friends at W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., have scored again. On October 22, 2012, they published *Utterly Uncle Fred*, a fine collection of the three novels about the 5th Earl of Ickenham, Frederick Altamont Cornwallis Twistleton, aka Uncle Fred. As the press release describes it, "*Utterly Uncle Fred* brings together three novels of thievery and mischief—the jewel-heisting *Uncle Dynamite*, the letter-purloining *Cocktail Time*, and the pig-napping *Service With a Smile*—and the short story that started it all: 'Uncle Fred Flits By.'"

The book is 700 pages of delight and is presumably available through all the usual mainstream outlets. The announcement states an asking price of \$24.95, so it's certainly a bargain. Note that it is a paperback edition with original cover art by Dan Park.

We must again thank W. W. Norton for keeping the spirit alive and putting together these collections. A good cause, indeed. If you need a good dose of Uncle Fred in one convenient collection, this would be it, and as soon as you've had the parrot's claws clipped, you can seek it out online quite easily, we imagine. Enjoy!

Spy vs. Wodehouse

TOM MAGUIRE told us of a new nonfiction book by Ben Macintyre, *Double Cross: The True Story of the D-Day Spies*, which contains a number of Wodehouse references, "this comic genius" among them.

Included in the book are references to Wodehouse and Ethel when they lived in Paris: "Mrs. Wodehouse is very pro-British and is inclined to be rude to anyone who dares address her in German. She has on occasion said loudly in public places: 'If you cannot address me in English don't speak at all. You had better learn it as you will have to speak it after the war anyway.'" That was from a report by an MI6 officer, who concluded that "Wodehouse himself is entirely childlike and pacifist."

The non-collaboration during WWII is properly addressed, with conclusions similar to those of other biographers. Macintyre states that Wodehouse "made a series of whimsical and deeply foolish radio broadcasts . . . in the naive belief that he would be admired for keeping a 'stiff upper lip' during his internment."

Letter from England

BY ELIN WOODGER



IT HAS BEEN another busy old year here when it comes to all things Wodehouse—three UK Society meetings in London, a Weekend with Wodehouse in Norfolk (already reported by Karen Shotting; see the last issue of *Plum Lines*), a Berkshire pig-judging competition, and the Society’s biennial formal dinner. The only thing that didn’t happen as planned were June’s two official cricket matches (against the Dulwich Dusters and the Sherlock Holmes Society of London), both cancelled due to rain. It has, in fact, been one of the wettest years on record, and we probably have our heavenly Plum to thank for the one glorious weekend of sunshine we had for the Norfolk trip.

The thrice-yearly meetings are worth a quick mention in this letter. Society members gather at The George, a 1723 pub across the Strand from the Royal Courts of Justice, and the usual format is to engage in a bit of sluicing and chattering before Chairman Hilary Bruce calls the meeting to order, delivers parish notices, and introduces the evening’s speaker. Afterward, we resume our sluicing and chattering.

Lately, however, instead of a speaker there has been some form of entertainment. At the February meeting, two delightful actors presented a dramatization of the first part of *Over Seventy*, with one of said actors playing the part of the footnotes. (You heard me.)

In July we had a balloon debate, wherein seven Wodehouse characters were presumed to be aloft in a balloon that was losing altitude. As it was necessary to dispense with a bit of weight, sacrifices had to be made, so the seven members portraying the characters had to present their arguments for remaining in the balloon, and for others to be ejected from it. The audience was to be the final arbiter of who could stay in the balloon.

The characters taking part in the debate were Aunt Dahlia, the Duke of Dunstable, Empress of Blandings, Rupert Psmith, Roderick Spode, Lord Tilbury, and Ukridge. Arguments were fast, fierce, and funny, and when judgment time came, there was a tie: the Duke of Dunstable and Empress of Blandings were both allowed to stay aloft. The Duke’s inclusion may seem surprising, but he made a jolly convincing argument while being massively entertaining as well. Personally, I was rooting for Lord Tilbury, though perhaps the fact that he was played by Norman had something to do with that. Alas, he was one of the first to leave the balloon.

Norman made up for this disgrace in September, when he filled in for Hilary Bruce and presented

the Society’s award for the Berkshire Champion of Champions at the Royal County of Berkshire Show in Newbury. It was a very close competition as a sea of black pigs with the requisite white markings were herded around the ring; the winner was a magnificent boar named Harry. While we were there, Norman renewed acquaintance with Truffle, the sow (now retired and massively huge) he had shown as a novice pig handler a few years earlier (see *Plum Lines*, Winter 2008).

The big event of the year was the dinner at historic Gray’s Inn, London, which was, as always, well attended and a lot of fun. The only noticeable difference between this dinner and previous ones was having fewer overseas participants than usual. Masha Lebedeva came from Russia, while the U.S. was represented by Susan Brokaw, Dirk Wonnell, Elliott Milstein, and Max Milstein (Dan and Tina Garrison cancelled at the last minute, alas). The best explanation for this lack is that so many came over for the Norfolk weekend in May, and for some odd reason they shied away from shelling out for another trip to Blighty.

Too bad for them, as it was another splendid evening spent in magnificent surroundings. Following a champagne reception, everybody filed into the banquet hall for dinner and entertainment, the former organized chiefly by Tim Andrew, the latter by Tony Ring. Society Patron Simon Brett, a popular author over here, gave the toast to Wodehouse and The P G Wodehouse Society (UK); his talk was tremendously funny and well received. Tony’s entertainment, “A One-Girl Beauty Chorus,” centered on the shenanigans of Bobby Wickham, played by Lara Cazalet (Wodehouse’s great-granddaughter). Lara’s brother Hal gave us a couple of songs, including “Sonny Boy” (what else?), but the major surprise of the evening was the Duke of Kent, who played Jeeves. Who would have thought the Queen’s cousin could be so perfect as that sage gentleman’s gentleman? Every inflection was just right, and I believe the man has missed his calling—he shoulda been an actor.

As I write this, the November meeting has not yet taken place. It will feature a question-and-answer session with Sophie Ratcliffe, editor of *P. G. Wodehouse: A Life in Letters* (see page 7 for more information about this book). We should learn quite a lot about what it took to compile and edit that wonderful tome—a terrific way to end a terrific year.

Chapters Corner

WE WELCOME you to use this column to tell the Wodehouse world about your chapter's activities. Chapter representatives, please send all info to the editor, Gary Hall (see back page).

Anglers' Rest

(Seattle and vicinity)
Contact: Susan Collicott
Phone:
E-mail:



Birmingham Banjolele Band

(Birmingham, Alabama, and vicinity)
Contact: Caralyn Campbell
Phone:
E-mail:



NOEL MERRILL's banjolele was in rare voice and full force on September 29 at the home of Linda and Ralph Norman in Knoxville, Tennessee, at our most recent meeting. Mind you, plucking and twanging are not unfamiliar sounds around these parts.

But a gracious and delicious tea party with a score of guests is rare, and ours was outstanding. The entertainment was a dramatic reading of "Uncle Fred Flits By." Aided by a stained-glass parrot, a friendly Airedale, and assorted other props, Linda and Ralph Norman, Jack Davis, Harry Hall, Lucy and Noel Merrill, Catharene Petty, and Ken Clevenger brought to life Plum's funniest short story. The incidental fact that a sippable sherry was served throughout the afternoon along with the teas might have added a smidgen to the laughter or its volume. As a fun chapter event, we strongly endorse the dramatic reading of Wodehouse's short stories.



The Banjolelers flit by.

We will meet on December 15 for a southern BBQ lunch, some warm mulled wine (what wine goes with BBQ?), and "Jeeves and the Yule-Tide Spirit." If you are in the Knoxville area about then, do plan to attend.

Blandings Castle Chapter

(Greater San Francisco Bay area)
Contact: Ed and Missy Ratcliffe
Phone:
E-mail:



A SMALL contingent of Blandings members greeted Ken and Joan Clevenger on October 19 as their West Coast tour brought them to San Francisco. Dinner at Gaylord India Restaurant spiced up our conversations, and the Gershwin musical *Of Thee I Sing* at nearby 42nd Street Moon gave us some belly laughs which, though not by Wodehouse, were certainly appropriate to the election season.

The Broadway Special

(New York City and vicinity)
Contact: Amy Plofker
Phone:
E-mail:



THE BROADWAY SPECIAL celebrated a balmy Midsummer Eve's Eve on June 22 with a cerebral discussion of *Right Ho, Jeeves*, wherein our usual convivial quipping evolved into an unusually high-minded dialectic. Perhaps the Specialists had all ordered tuna fish for lunch, for references were made to Dickens, Herodotus, Jane Austen, Moby Dick, Parsifal and Siegfried, Pomp and Circumstance, Holy Fools, the Great War, and the Industrial Revolution.

It has been proposed that we consider adopting a format of Wodehousian meetings in which the topic of the evening is dealt with first and foremost, followed posthaste by throwing the conversation open to matters personal, professional, and non-Plum in nature. We have taken the suggestion under consideration but are rather doubtful we can achieve the necessary gravitas for the entire first half of a meeting.

Plans were confirmed for our next two meetings (reports below), and we will gather once more in 2012 on St. Andrew's Day (November 30), with a holiday theme (yet to be determined). But never fear—we'll come up with something Special!

IT IS A GIVEN that on any August weekend in the 21st century, the insular city of the Manhattos empties out as the natives head for oceans, lakes, and rivers far from the metropolis. But the Broadway Special is happy to remain in situ, visiting the watery part of the world contained in Central Park, navigating past the racing bicyclists and the more sedate horse-drawn carriages out for a sunny saunter. On August 18 we met at the Conservatory Pond and cheered on the model yachts as they skimmed along in a miniature regatta maneuvered by wireless—evidently you can make waves by wireless.

At one o'clock we made our way to the Boat House by the Lake, still anticipating the arrival of our tardy colleague, Mark Anthony, but Anthony came there none, and the gondola would not be stayed. So we divided into gondoliers and scullers, venturing out into serene waters. Amy, Molly, Sally, and Adnan, Sally's spouse, lounged in the Venetian vessel while a rowing trio embarked in a dinghy captained by Dave, coxswained by Philip, and ballasted by M. E. We floated in tranquility, keeping an eye out for local fauna in the form of turtles on rocks, trilling songbirds above, and fat squirrels by the Fountain. Not a swan was to be seen; there was not a thing to distract us from Dave's smooth feathering of the oars or the melodious warbling of Andres the Gondolier.

Our allotted time slowly waned and we had reluctantly set a course back to the dock when what to our wondering eyes should appear but a jaunty gent in blue blazer and yachting cap piloting his own newly acquired rowboat, which he had festooned with the Union Jack and the Star-Spangled Banner abaft the beam. It was the Missing Mark, who glided toward us accompanied by 1920s tunes issuing from a cunning stereo system! The Broadway Special octette was complete for a few moments as Mark circled around and cajoled soubrettes Amy and Molly to go messing about—in a little boat, that is—and off they sailed. The afternoon was complete in all aspects but one: no properly outfitted constable could be found on whom we might practice the delicate art of swiping helmets. Helmets there were aplenty, atop a steady stream of cyclists, but said items were deemed aesthetically offensive, not to mention the obvious fact that those cyclists are pretty damn quick.

OCTOBER 12 found The Broadway Special comfortably ensconced in our old haunt on Gramercy Park, The Players, where we celebrated a very merry Plum Birthday. Our first choice for the evening's reading was *The Purloined Paperweight*, but it has yet to be reprinted by Overlook Press, so *A Man of Means* was substituted. The book du jour was an early Wodehouse

collaboration with fellow *Globe* scribe C. H. Bovill, originally six short stories in the *Strand*, featuring the unprepossessing clerk Roland Bleke, sweepstakes winner and all-around sap. It was generally agreed, as expressed by John Baesch, that these chapters were “a sort of batting practice, a journeyman writer banging out stories.” Each plot was “much of a muchness” with the protagonist not behaving in a very proactive fashion throughout, passively falling into the clutches of a series of opportunists, schemers, and determined females. Evy Herzog wished for a more sympathetic character, and Mickey Fromkin pointed out that “the possibility of refusal did not seem to occur to him.”

The conversation veered to various subjects including Amy's hope for charitable giving to Remsenburg's Community Church, Kiki's and Matthew's report that Norman Murphy had squired them on his walking tour of London this summer, and Laurie's stream-of-consciousness proposal that when we do get around to reading *The Purloined Paperweight* she hopes we'll discuss the merits of snow globes vs. paperweights. The evening was ideal in all aspects but one: When Philip queried a story's reference to the attempted royal assassination by bomb, the room was immediately flooded by the glow of myriad “Egad!”s. Oh, and speaking of stream of consciousness, does anyone else notice that among our Broadway Special roster we could easily field a substantial chorus line, a bevy of beauties named Amy, Molly, Laurie, Evy, Sally, Mickey, and Kiki? Get out your tap shoes, kids!

Capital! Capital!

(Washington, D.C., and vicinity)

Contact: Jeff Peterson

Phone:

E-mail:



ON OCTOBER 28 members of Capital! Capital!, braving vehicular traffic disruptions caused by the Marine Corps Marathon and the growing winds and rains of Hurricane Sandy, met at a downtown D.C. hotel restaurant for lunch and camaraderie, and to participate in a Wodehouse knowledge competition. This was, specifically, a friendly quiz related mostly to Bertram Wilberforce Wooster, his aunts, former fiancées, and pals at the Drones. The quiz, consisting of 27 questions, was not designed to challenge veteran Wodehouse scholars, but rather to provide enjoyment to everyday PGW readers and aficionados. While ingesting soup and salad, for example, members considered who was the daughter of an American millionaire who fled her

father's yacht and spent the night in Bertie's cottage wearing Bertie's heliotrope pajamas. While savoring pork tenderloins and/or turkey lasagna, members sought to remember which Drone had a head that Bertie variously described as looking like a pumpkin or the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral. Cakes and coffee brought wonderment as to which of Bertie's aunts considered Bertie to be primarily responsible for all the sin and sadness in the world. After the quiz the correct answers were shouted out by acclamation. The team of Ed and Sharon Powell won first place, and Ann Stone came in a close second, both taking home bottles of premium wine for their efforts. But, from the reaction of the CapCap members, everybody was a winner.

Chapter One
 (Greater Philadelphia area)
 Contact: Herb Moskowitz
 Phone:
 E-mail:



*Oily and Sweetie
 Carlisle as depicted by
 Hilary Paynter*

THE CHAPS of Chapter One met at the Dark Horse Tavern in Philadelphia's Head House Square in Society Hill on July 22. We never have had a summer meeting before, perhaps fearing that not many members could attend, but fifteen stalwart Chaps, including new members Toni Bowers and Tom McClean, were in attendance.

The day's theme was "Wodehouse—The French Connections," and the discussion segued from Aunt Dahlia's Anatole to how to properly make a Pimm's Cup to where to get the best Philly steak sandwich. John Baesch (Mike Jackson) gave a very learned and interesting talk on Plum's decision (to avoid double taxation in the U.K. and U.S.A.) to move to Le Touquet on the coast of northern France. Plum stayed there with

his wife and dogs (with a hiatus in Hollywood) until World War II came to him. John said that Le Touquet is very British.

Janet Nickerson (Nobby Hopwood) served cake in honor of various birthdays and anniversaries, and in celebration of Anatole's brilliant cuisine. She read a few references to his recipes in the stories, and even distributed copies of some of the recipes which she had carefully researched. Janet noted that there is no description of Anatole anywhere in the Canon, but her take on his looks, from a '90s show she saw, resembles Chef Boyardee, as he appears on the cans.

The meeting concluded with a lively discussion, led by Diane Hain, of the possibilities of sites for future conventions.



*Chapter One members proudly display their concepts
 of what "The Coming of Summer" would look like.*

CHAPTER ONE met at The Dark Horse Pub in Philadelphia on September 23. Attending were John Baesch and Evelyn Herzog, Larry and Deborah Dugan, Jim Karcher, Fran LaRosa, Herb Moskowitz, Janet Nickerson and Art Malestein, Bob Nissenbaum and Norma Frank, Bob Rains and Andrea Jacobsen, and Richard Weishaupt.

A discussion ensued on who took the picture at the Zoo of Herb, John, Evelyn, and Gussie the Newt? It was decided that Gussie took it, being happy about our sponsorship and his wonderful diet!

Bob Rains displayed a fabulous bookplate showing him and Andrea depicted by the artist as their noms, Oily and Sweetie Carlisle. It is based on the scene in chapter 6 of *Cocktail Time* in which Sweetie conks Oily on the back of his head with a vase of gladioli on their honeymoon. The bookplate was designed and engraved by the great Hilary Paynter.

Then we discussed plans to attend *Leave It to Jane* in New York City on April 20 and sup with members of the Broadway Special.

Fran LaRosa noted that Merriam Webster's Word of the Day website ("mercurial," 9/16/12) featured a quote from The Master, to wit, "Uncle Chris felt a touch of embarrassment. It occurred to him that he had been

betrayed by his mercurial temperament into an attitude which, considering the circumstances, was perhaps a trifle too jubilant. He gave his mustache a pull, and reverted to the minor key.” The quote is from *Jill the Reckless*, which impelled Fran to choose Jill the Reckless as her nom.

Norma Frank (the Bishop of Bongo Bongo [ret.]) mentioned that there was also a quote from Plum in the latest issue of *The Week* magazine, but the Bishop didn’t remember the quote and failed to bring a copy of the magazine to the meeting. However, another of Chapter One’s Chaps did have a copy of the magazine and passed it around.

After our usual wonderful meal, we talked about the day’s story, “Concealed Art,” featuring Bertie’s predecessor, Reggie Pepper. Our leader then tied the story in to the move of the art collection of the famous Barnes Foundation to Philadelphia, with a thorough description of the layout of both the old building in Merion, and the new one on the Ben Franklin Parkway. We capped the fiesta with everyone submitting their versions of artist Archie Ferguson’s “The Coming of Summer,” from the story. Some of the drawings were pretty well done.

The next Chapter One meeting was to have been on November 18 at the Dark Horse.

The Chicago Accident Syndicate

(Chicago and thereabouts)

Contact: Daniel & Tina Garrison

Phone:

E-mail:



The Clients of Adrian Mulliner

(For enthusiasts of both PGW and Sherlock Holmes)

Contact: Elaine Coppola

Phone:

E-mail:



A JUNIOR BLOODSTAIN will be held at The Roosevelt Hotel, New York City, on Saturday, January 12, 2013, from 11:30 A.M. to 12:30 P.M. It will feature the premiere performance of *The Riddle of the Starving Swine* by Gayle Lange Puhl with hand puppets by Ken Vogel. All are welcome to attend!

The Drone Rangers

(Houston and vicinity)

Contact: Carey Tynan

Phone:

E-mail:



THE DRONE RANGERS selected “Jeeves Takes Charge” as their subject of discussion for the September meeting.

The story first appeared in the November 18, 1916, issue of the *Saturday Evening Post*. It was a good time to examine Madame Eulalie’s Pelham Eulogy (www.madameulalie.org), a website dedicated to early works of P. G. Wodehouse. This site contains the whole of the text, and, to our delight, the original illustrations from the *Saturday Evening Post*.

In pen and ink, or perhaps charcoal, Florence Craye is portrayed as an attractive young woman, the despicable Edwin is wearing a Norfolk jacket, and Bertie appears to be well into middle age, far too old to be fooling around with Florence Craye. He has a moustache and a monocle. The illustrator Henry Raleigh does show Bertie wearing a “sprightly young check” suit. Jeeves has short, dark hair and a high forehead, but his age is hard to determine.

But we are not yet through with the *Saturday Evening Post*, for it turns out they reprinted the story in 1980. Through the Houston Public Library digital archives, we see a new set of illustrations, this time in color. Florence, alas, does not appear. Uncle Willoughby is fat, with a walrus moustache.

Bertie is a younger man in this version, with a black moustache and—okay, what’s with the monocle? Ian Carmichael, in the TV series, also portrayed Bertie with a monocle. Did Bertie ever wear a monocle in any of the stories? Anyway, Bertie is shown wearing a driving outfit, a smoking jacket, and a beige linen suit, but there is no sign of the notorious check suit.

And Jeeves? He is considerably older than Bertie, bald, with a fringe of white hair. It’s not the way we might imagine Jeeves, but you can appreciate the artist’s attempt to show him as someone who would look down at Bertie “like a father gazing tenderly at the wayward child.”

The Flying Pigs

(Cincinnati area and elsewhere)

Contact: Susan Brokaw

Phone:

E-mail:



Friends of the Fifth Earl of Ickenham

(Buffalo, New York, and vicinity)

Contact: Laura Loehr

Phone:

E-mail:



The Mottled Oyster Club / Jellied Eels

(San Antonio and South Texas)

Contact: Lynette Poss

Phone:

E-mail:



The New England Wodehouse Thingummy Society (NEWTS)

(Boston and New England)

Contact: David Landman

Phone:

E-mail:



The Northwodes

(St. Paul, Minneapolis, and vicinity)

Contact: Kristine Fowler

Phone:

E-mail:



WHAT WE DID over summer vacation: (1) Lost our shirts on the June 9 Belmont Stakes. We sampled the Belmont Breeze, which Mary McDonald had discovered was the race's official drink. She summarized it as "basically whiskey, lemonade, and pomegranate juice." (2a and b) Followed Our Hero to America, discussing *Psmith, Journalist* at W. A. Frost on June 26, then shifted to *Carry On, Jeeves* on August 28—also a big shift in location, to the Barnes and Noble near Southdale. A little more convenient for organizer Angie Meyer's commute from Rochester, and a nice adventure for the east metro types. (3) Went to the movies: *A Night at the Opera* at the vintage Heights Theater—one showing only on August 9—and the first time popcorn has fulfilled the Northwodes' browsing bylaw. The warm-up performance on the Mighty Wurlitzer was just the stuff. Hat tip to Maria Jette and a fellow soprano for getting the Heights back on the Northwodes' radar, to celebrate the summer in style.

Back to school: The October 15 lesson plan featured the Northwodes' annual Birthday Toast to the Master. Merlins Rest Pub was treated to a rousing chorus ending "But if, P. G., I'm the bottom you're the top!" (thanks to Joan Rabe for pioneering this), several pints and some fish and chips were consumed, and there might even have been a little talk about "Ukridge," aka "He Rather Enjoyed It." We did, too.

The Perfecto-Zizzbaum Motion Picture Corporation

(Los Angeles and vicinity)

Contact: Karen Shotting

Phone:

E-mail:



IN OCTOBER, PZMPCo welcomed Ken and Joan Clevenger, TWS President and First Lady, for browsing, sluicing, and Wodehouse readings. Seated on the patio of Chado Tea Room amid teapots, scones, and tea sandwiches, Ken gave a short talk on Wodehouse as a gastronome. Bill and Karen, in character as Bertie and Aunt Dahlia, did sequential readings of the telegrams that they exchanged near the beginning of *Right Ho, Jeeves*.

One of many highlights was a pitch-perfect rendition by our own golden-voice-of-the-airwaves Doug, in an impeccable French accent, of a fulminating Anatole's hilarious objections to the unfortunate Gussie Fink-Nottle's peering at him through the skylight. ("If such rannygazoo is to arrive, I do not remain any longer in this house no more. I buzz off and do not stay planted.")

For November we'll be diving into some early Wodehouse: "The Secret Pleasures of Reginald" (which can be found in either *The Uncollected Wodehouse* or *A Wodehouse Miscellany*) and "Rallying Round Old George" (which can be found in *My Man Jeeves*).

Both stories can also be found at <http://www.madameulalie.org/index.html> and on Project Gutenberg (<http://www.gutenberg.org>). If you haven't yet wandered about these sites, now may be the time to give them a look-see.

In December we will stick with tradition and read "Jeeves and the Yule-Tide Spirit." We are also considering locations for our traditional holiday tea.

January's reading is *Three Men and a Maid* aka *The Girl on the Boat*. This story features, among other things, an orchestrion—a machine that plays music and is designed to sound like an orchestra or band. If you've never seen or heard one, check out the Nethercutt Collection in Sylmar, California. It also has a wonderful collection of vintage cars, including a Hispano-Suiza (the automobile driven by Voules, the Blandings Castle chauffeur). And it's free.

We generally meet the second Sunday of each month at 12:30 p.m. (May is the exception, when we meet the first Sunday.) You will usually find us at Book Alley, 1252 East Colorado Blvd, Pasadena, California (<http://www.bookalley.com/shop/bookalley/index.html>).

Please contact Karen Shotting or join our Yahoo or Facebook Group at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/PZMPCo/> and <https://www.facebook.com/groups/373160529399825/>, respectively (either can be found by searching for "PZMPCo") for more information and occasional changes of schedule and venue.

The Pickering Motor Company

(Detroit and vicinity)

Contact: Elliott Milstein

Phone:

E-mail:



THE PICKERINGS gathered at Robert Walter's house at noon on October 8. We had lunch and discussed *The Code of the Woosters*, the book chosen for that meeting. Rob's sister Margaret attended her first meeting of the chapter. In accordance with chapter tradition, she was nominated for president of the chapter. She declined the honor.

The Code of the Woosters is about Bertie getting involved in the theft of a silver cow creamer from Sir Watkyn Bassett at Totleigh Towers. Ted asked if anyone else had noticed that the castle that played the part of Totleigh Towers in *Jeeves and Wooster* is now one of the stars of *Downton Abbey*. He is right. It is Highclere Castle in Hampshire. The winner of the Emmy for best performance by a stately home is Highclere Castle.

As is our custom, we took nominations for the funniest passage in the book. Elliott nominated the scene where Bertie tells Sir Watkyn Bassett that he wants to marry his niece, Stiffy Byng. The description of Sir Watkyn's agonies on hearing this news is hilarious. Elliott thought it was brilliant of Wodehouse to leave to the imagination of Bertie and the reader a description of Sir Watkyn's suffering when, a few pages later, Madeline Bassett says that she is going to tell Sir Watkyn that she is going to marry Bertie and make him Sir Watkyn's son-in-law. Learning that Bertie was to marry his daughter had to be worse than learning that Bertie was to marry his niece.

We then discussed the menu of the dinner Bertie composes for Anatole to prepare for him after he serves his jail sentence for stealing the cow creamer. There were some amusing attempts to translate the names of the French dishes into English. We compared it to another famous literary menu, the one that Mark Twain composed in *A Tramp Abroad*. Both menus had their partisans, but since Twain did not have Anatole to prepare his feast, the consensus was that Bertie would have the better dinner.

The next meeting is December 30.

The Pittsburgh Millionaires Club

(Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania)

E-mail:



WHAT IS PITTSBURGH best known for producing? No, not steel, nor the Steelers, but Pittsburgh millionaires! Taking a brief respite from leaping from blond(e) to blond(e) like the chamois on the craggy Alps, the Pittsburgh Millionaires Club assembled for the second time on October 20. Chair Abigail Thompson led us (with a PowerPoint presentation, no less!) in a discussion of whether Jeeves puts the kibosh on Bertie Wooster's romances in order to keep his job and his control over Bertie. Our chair attempted to prove that Jeeves does not do this out of self-interest, but the "smoking gun" (the short story "Bertie Changes His Mind") put an end to that! However, after reading descriptions of the impulsive and reckless girls, the bossy and imperious girls, and the squashy, sentimental, and drippy girls, we decided that Jeeves's self-interest and Bertie's best interests are in harmony and it is right for Jeeves to extricate his master from the seething soup that so often swirls and sloshes around his silk-sock-clad ankles. We'll meet again after the New Year, perhaps at the Emsworth Arms or in Plum Borough (both real places!).

The Portland Greater Wodehouse Society (PGWs)

(Portland, Oregon, and vicinity)

Contact: Carol James

Phone:

E-mail:



The Right Honourable Knights of Sir Philip Sidney

(Amsterdam, The Netherlands)

Contact: Jelle Otten

Phone:

E-mail:

ON OCTOBER 20 the Knights met in Amsterdam, The Netherlands, in summery weather outside Mulliner's Wijnlokaal. It was a good opportunity to play outdoor sports, but first we had to commemorate the death of Theo Olof. Theo (1924–2012) was a world-famous violinist in the years after World War II. He was first violinist in the The Hague's Residentie Orchestra and later first violinist in Amsterdam's Concertgebouw Orchestra. He was also an author of "light" books about music and musical life. But above all, Theo was a lifelong lover of P. G. Wodehouse's books. In an introduction to the Dutch translation of Plum's *The Girl on the Boat* (in Dutch: *Drie om Een*), he wrote that he always had a Wodehouse book in his pocket when he left his house. Of course, we all hope that Theo is now in Eternal Blandings and that he has met his master Plum there.

After the minute's silence in honor of Theo, we came to a standing item on our agenda. Each meeting, we recite a favorite excerpt from a book of Wodehouse. This time it was a recitation by Dolf Weverink and Jan Jaap Omvlee. They chose an excerpt, with a wink to the weather outside, from "Indian Summer of an Uncle," a story from *Very Good, Jeeves*.

Wil Brouwer took the floor with the announcement that she was reaching her retirement in a few weeks. Because she was so glad about this milestone, she and Gerard Poot, who had reached the same age recently, offered all present a glass of champagne. A rousing toast to the birthday girl and boy shook the foundations of Mulliner's Wijnlokaal.

After that, the poetry lovers among us offered Wodehouse haikus. Jan Jelle van Hasselt won the prize for the best Wodehouse haiku.

We then went outside in the beautiful weather for a Swan Lake Contest. As we have learned from "Jeeves and the Impending Doom," you can cope with an angry swan by picking up a raincoat and shoving it over the bird's head. Having no raincoats or angry swans, Master of Ceremonies Tony Roodnat invented a different swan game. He put an inflatable ring-shaped swan in the Lijnbaansgracht (one of Amsterdam's canals). The game involved throwing as many ice cubes as you could get inside the swan ring, as it floated in the canal. In the case of a draw, the jury would judge which throw was the most elegant one. Well, after many fruitless attempts, only three people managed to land in the ring even once. It was determined that the most graceful ice-lump tosser was Josepha Olsthoorn.



Wil Brouwer raises a toast
(photo by Jelle Caro)

We then handed out copies of "Aldershot 1913" from *The Captain*. As a sports journalist for this publication, Wodehouse reported on the 1913 boxing competitions at the Queens Avenue Gymnasium.

The next meeting of the Right Honourable Knights is on Saturday, February 16, 2013, in Mulliner's Wijnlokaal, Lijnbaansgracht 266-267 Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

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



Maud Allan: An Unlikely Wodehouse Heroine

BY TONY RING

Right, then, just one more worthy item from the Remsenburg historical marker event last spring. Here's an excellent bit from Tony Ring, which includes one of Wodehouse's poems. Several other poems were read by different travelers on the bus; here's Tony's offering.

MAUD ALLAN was born in Toronto in 1873 and raised in San Francisco, but came to the public's—and Wodehouse's—attention in England.

While she was studying piano in Germany in the early 1900s, her brother was hanged for the murder of two young women. She responded to the situation immediately by abandoning the instrument and taking up a completely different form of artistic expression—a presentation of movement and dance conducted in a very personal style.

After a few years in which she concentrated on interpretations of classical pieces of music, she became a sensation with her "Vision of Salome" in 1906, touring Europe with the dance. Rumour held that she even performed the dance naked before England's King Edward VII at a private audience at Marienbad, and then started having an affair with him.

In 1908 she brought the dance to the Palace Theatre in London, where she reputedly earned £250 per week, and although she was at least partially clothed during performances, there seem to have been occasions when she perhaps revealed more than the management officially expected. Would it be merely cynical to suggest that this occurred only occasionally, specifically to encourage a proportion of the audience to pay return visits in the hope of having better luck next time?

P. G. Wodehouse was only 26 in that year, unmarried, and no doubt with something of the curiosity of the relatively inexperienced. Whether he saw the show once, a dozen times, or not at all, he realized when she was banned from appearing in a city in the North of England that he could earn a few guineas from writing about her skills.

This is the result, published in *Books of Today and Books of Tomorrow* in July 1908:

Maud

There's a girl who can dance in a way
That astonishes people, they say.
They see her Salome,
And gasp out, "Well, blow me!
That's pretty remarkable, eh?"

The name of this damsel is Maud,
 She's succeeded at home and abroad:
 But the hawk-eyed committee
 Of Manchester City
 Are not among those who applaud.
 Maud. Maud. Maud.
 You may be all right for abroad:
 But every one knows
 That in districts like those
 Morality's apt to get flawed.
 Should Manchester grin at what pleases Berlin
 Our hearts with distress would be gnawed.
 We don't bear you malice,
 But stay at the Palace,
 Dear Maud. Maud. Maud.
 When she dances a dance to the King,
 He exclaims "Bis! Encore! Just the thing!"
 If she were improper
 He surely would stop her
 And not take her under his wing.
 When his friends are invited to munch
 In the Premier's home circle a lunch
 You'll find that the lady
 Mancunians deem shady
 Is frequently one of the bunch.
 Maud. Maud. Maud.
 We beg you, don't be overawed,
 Let's hope that the hearts
 In those faraway parts
 May shortly be softened and thawed.
 If they saw you, like us, there would be no more
 fuss:
 They'd be sorry they cavilled and pshaw'd.
 And they'd all say your dancing
 Was simply entrancing,
 Dear Maud. Maud. Maud.

But the complex course of Maud's life, though not having lacked interest so far, was destined to explore new territory. The 1908 Olympics (held in London at short notice when Rome, the appointed host city, withdrew in 1906) were on a far less grand scale than the 2012 London games. Tickets, with no internet to reach a broad market, were harder to sell, until the organizers had the idea of organizing an event in their new 90,000-seat stadium at which the king and queen and a clutch of stage personalities, including Maud Allan, agreed to appear.

It seems that, while the entrance of the king and queen was applauded with reasonable enthusiasm, the crowds cheered loudest when Maud arrived and entered the royal box alongside the prime minister's wife as

though the stadium had been built for her. The prime minister's wife was Margot Asquith, and soon rumors abounded that Maud was having a lesbian affair with her, one American reporter even claiming she'd had a ménage-à-trois with Margot and her husband.

And if that were not enough, the defining scandal in her life did not raise its head for a further ten years. In 1918, Maud was named by an M.P., Noel Pemberton Billing ("P.B." as he liked to be called), as a lesbian whose dance studies in Berlin had branded her as part of a widespread German spy circle operating in the highest echelons of British public life. Her rumored affairs with the late king and the former prime minister's wife were only part of the "disclosures," which recalled her earlier family tragedy and suggested that her supposed sexual tendencies were part of a hereditary family disposition to instability, immorality, and other forms of unacceptable behavior.

P.B.'s motivation was thoroughly selfish and disreputable—he was seeking publicity for a new journal he was publishing, and had hit on the idea of causing a libel suit to be brought on a topic which would be sure to catch the public imagination. He claimed that he meant to expose perceived sins and acts of treachery amongst the most powerful in the country. But because of the tense political situation which existed during the last months of the war, and belief of a possible internal coup by military interests against his government, Prime Minister Lloyd George wanted to minimize the publicity generated by the lawsuit, which was being widely reported. He realized the proceedings would have a detrimental effect on those in authority, so he pressed for the case to be completed as soon as possible.

With some unreliable witnesses ranged against Maud (including two supposed agents of the secret service, a ranting preacher, and the notorious Lord Alfred Douglas), coupled with the appointment of an erratic judge to hear the case, the trial became a travesty of justice.

The *Times* declared that every well-proved canon of British fair play was frankly disregarded, and Maud Allan became the victim, losing the case and the remaining vestiges of her career.

And she couldn't blame Manchester for that.

It was pleasant to go warily into deep lanes where forbidden love lurked. She cast a swift side-glance at her father—the unconscious ogre in her fairy-story. What would he say if he knew? But Mr. Bennett did not know, and consequently continued to meditate peacefully on ham.

The Girl on the Boat (1922)

Wodehouse On Stage

MUSICALS TONIGHT! is doing another Wodehouse-Bolton-Kern musical, *Leave It to Jane*, from April 16 to 28, 2013. The company's record of entertaining Wodehouse musicals in the last ten years is pretty extensive: *Oh, Boy!* (2003), *Have a Heart* (2004), *The Beauty Prize* (2005), *Oh, Lady! Lady!!* (2006), *The Cabaret Girl* (2009), and *Sitting Pretty* (2012). The Broadway Special chapter of The Wodehouse Society will be attending en masse at the 2:00 P.M. performance on Saturday, April 20, 2013, with a dinner afterwards arranged by the ever-helpful M.E. Rich.

You could also attend the 7:30 P.M. performance on April 20, if that is better for you; the timing of the dinner will work for either performance. If neither show works for you, well, there's the whole rest of the run to choose from—all and sundry may attend the dinner, whether or not they're going to the show that day.

We would advise acquiring a ticket immediately as it is such a small theatre and the weekend performances tend to sell out fast, as we found last April. To buy a ticket, call Telecharge at 212-239-6200 or 800-432-7250, or go online at <http://www.telecharge.com/homepage.aspx>. Online, there's a box in the top left corner called "Online Box Office": from the drop-down menus, select City=NYC Off-Broadway and Show=Leave It to Jane. The total cost is \$29. The venue is the Lion Theatre at 410 W. 42nd Street (between 9th & 10th Avenues).

We'll provide more details about the dinner in the March issue of *Plum Lines*. Most likely, the cost will be around \$40-\$45. If you're interested in the dinner, it doesn't hurt to let Amy Plofker know now, so she may put you on her e-mail list and not accidentally leave you out of any important communiqués. We expect to get a certain number of visitors in town for the show and dinner, but probably not as many as last April when there was also the historical marker unveiling at Remsenburg on Long Island.

TWS President Ken Clevenger may also be able to provide any further information you are seeking.

I suppose the fact of the matter is that in Hollywood you get to learn to take the rough with the smooth, and after you've lived there a time nothing rattles you—not even waking up and finding yourself in someone else's body. You simply say: "Ah, someone else's body, eh? Well, well!" and carry on.

Laughing Gas (1936)

The Psychology of the Individual Child

BY PAUL ABRINKO, M.D.

This is the last of the talks that we'll publish from the 2011 Dearborn convention of The Wodehouse Society. Dr. Paul Abrinko studied the impact of Plum's childhood on the author's later behavior and creativity, and here are the results of that study.



*Paul Abrinko and Monika Eckfield
with their very happy children Adam and P. J.)
(Photo by Elin Woodger)*

WITH VERY FEW EXCEPTIONS, children are portrayed by Wodehouse as loathsome, incorrigible, odious brats. They taunt butlers (Jeeves included); force the Empress to run so that she might lose weight; cause Bertie no end of trouble; lie, cheat, and thwart brilliantly conceived plans; among other things. Wodehouse often uses villainous, deviant, supercilious, impulsive, and cunning children as a device to drive many of his lively and zany plots.

But why does Wodehouse cast children in such a uniformly bad light? I propose that it has something to do with the psychology of the individual child—in this case, the psychology of Plum as a child.

Let's start with some psychological theory that pertains to why we are driven to acquire beliefs, how what we believe shapes our psychologies, and how children think and acquire beliefs.

Control-Mastery Theory is a psychological theory that proposes a person has control over his mental life and unconscious mind—i.e., one may unconsciously think, make inferences, test reality, solve problems, and carry out decisions and plans. In addition, people are highly motivated to master traumatic experiences that have inhibited their development by disconfirming painful and crippling beliefs (pathogenic beliefs) inferred from the trauma.

Why focus on beliefs? Because our beliefs are central to our conscious and unconscious mental life.

They are central because they guide our perception of the world. Note that they do not necessarily need to be accurate, true, and rational to do so. Beliefs are important in regulating a person's behavior, mood, thoughts, feelings of safety, and strivings for autonomy and other goals. We form beliefs because they help us to adapt to the reality of our relationships, our family, ourselves, and the world. When a child acquires a belief, it will be maintained through repeated experiences and/or biases, especially if the belief helps him to survive, maintain connections with others, feel safe (for example, ward off unsettling, overwhelming, or sad feelings), and function in his world.

The human brain has often been called a "belief machine," and belief acquisition begins at a very early age. By one year of age, babies know that they will see something by looking where other people point, know what they should do to something by watching other people do it, and know how they should feel about something by seeing how other people feel. Children use adults to figure out how the world works. By observing others, children develop working models of how people relate to one another.

Beliefs are subject to bias, which sounds like a bad thing, but often actually isn't. Our biases help us adapt to our world, even though they may not be scientifically sound. Picture a caveman out hunting with his brother. He hears a rustling in the bushes, and out jumps a saber-toothed cat, who kills his brother and drags him away. The next time the caveman hears the bushes rustling, he will react as though it's a saber-toothed cat, and this reaction may well save his life on the rare occasions that it is, even though most of the time it's far more likely to be the wind, or perhaps his best friend playing another practical joke.

Many biases have been elucidated by psychologists, but those most germane to our understanding of how children think include **illusion of control**, **confirmation**, **authority**, and what I like to call the "**feeling safe**" bias.

The **illusion of control bias** refers to the tendency for people to believe that they can control or at least influence outcomes that most people cannot control or influence.

Children in particular tend to feel responsible for anything that happens to them because they are egocentric. They don't yet fully comprehend the relationship between cause and effect. Lack of cognitive development also makes children more likely to draw a correlation between events that are actually unrelated (illusory correlation).

Confirmation bias is the tendency to seek and find evidence in support of already existing beliefs and to

ignore or reinterpret disconfirming evidence. People are particularly prone to developing this type of bias when they see many examples confirming their beliefs but rarely or never see examples disconfirming them. Children are more prone to this bias than adults because their experience of the world is so limited.

Authority bias causes us to value the opinions of an authority, especially in the evaluations of something we know little about. Children are especially prone to authority bias, because they know little about anything compared to adults.

I remember learning of the German philosopher Schopenhauer by reading about him in *Piccadilly Jim*. How I laughed when I read that the fearsome Miss Trimble, posing as a parlor maid, "was sitting in a hard chair, reading Schopenhauer." Deferring to Wodehouse's authority on this matter, I certainly wasn't going to seek out Schopenhauer! Imagine my smug bemusement as I recently leafed through a copy of *Philosophy Now* and happened upon an article about Schopenhauer. In it, I learned that Schopenhauer regarded optimism as "not merely absurd, but also as a really wicked way of thinking, and as a bitter mockery of the unspeakable suffering of humanity . . . Life is a wretched business." Not exactly a Wodehousean's cup of tea.

Now, back to biases. The **safety bias** describes children's tendency to form beliefs that help them feel that their caregivers are good and reliable people. This is because adults are so crucial to a child's survival and development. Thus, when a child is treated badly by adults who are important to him, it is mentally more stabilizing for him to believe he is bad and deserves to be treated badly than to believe that people he is dependent upon are bad or unreliable.

Even though a child forms his beliefs when he is cognitively and emotionally immature, the effects of those beliefs reach far into adulthood. This is because all beliefs color our perceptions of new experiences once we form them.

Beliefs vary in their importance and power. Since parents/caregivers are so crucial to a child's survival and well-being, he will invest them with a tremendous amount of authority. By extension, the beliefs a child acquires from his parents/caregivers will carry a very significant weight. Beliefs formed through traumatic experiences will also tend to be very powerful.

Let us look at Plum's childhood in order to shed some light on what he might have believed about



Plum at age five

himself and his world. His childhood was characterized by long separations from his parents and major changes in care situations.

Plum was raised by a nursemaid in Hong Kong during infancy. At age two, his family returned to England. Plum and his two older brothers were placed in the care of Miss Roper, a stickler for order and cleanliness (Nanny Wilks in "Portrait of a Disciplinarian"). His parents visited three years later when Plum was five, and he was transferred from Miss Roper's care to a boarding school run by two spinster sisters. Food there was scarce, and the quarters were cramped and ugly. Long boarding school terms were interrupted by school holidays spent in the company of aunts. (One, Mary, was referred to by Plum as the "scourge of my childhood.") Even while visiting aunts and uncles, he was asked to spend time away from them, in the servants' quarters.

At the age of eight, Plum was sent, along with his brothers, to another boarding school, Elizabeth College, in the Channel Islands. At age ten he was moved to the harsh Malvern Naval Preparatory School. By the fall of 1894 (when he was almost thirteen), he became a boarder at Dulwich. Plum's parents, Eleanor and Ernest, returned to England when he was fourteen, and he began living with them. Upon the family's reunification, Eleanor was cold, forbidding, harsh, and judgmental, and Ernest was undemonstrative.

To summarize, Plum experienced changes of placement/caregivers at ages two, five, eight, ten, and twelve. Living situations were characterized by lack of affection, harsh discipline, and sometimes even food shortages. When Plum was five, he saw his parents for a few weeks. He did not see them again for five years.

It is impossible to be sure how well Plum was cared for by the multitude of adults who were responsible for him during his childhood, but they probably kept themselves at an emotional distance from him, in order to spare themselves the pain of separation when the inevitable moves occurred. I am reminded of a scene from *Mary Poppins*, when Mary Poppins is taking her leave of the Banks children. Jane begs her to stay, asking, "Mary Poppins, don't you love us?" To which Mary replies, "And what would happen to me, may I ask, if I loved all the children I said goodbye to?" Eleanor Wodehouse, by all reports not a warm person to begin with, probably distanced herself from her boys once plans were underway to have them stay away from her and Ernest, to spare herself the same pain.

Plum was as a semi-orphan/foster child, who, along with his brothers, was moved from placement to placement frequently, and probably learned to be

detached from his caregivers as a survival mechanism to protect himself from the repeated shocks of bereavement he experienced in his childhood.

The pain of these attachment disruptions aside, what did Plum miss out on as a child? The amount and quality of nurturing he received almost certainly varied from placement to placement. I doubt anyone rejoiced over his first words or steps, celebrated his birthdays, or gave him presents. It's unlikely anyone was very physically affectionate with him. His caretakers probably didn't talk within his hearing about how much they loved him, demonstrate how adorable they thought he was, marvel at his talents (his parents didn't even do that once they returned to England), or have much of a chance to spend long periods of time playing with him. I don't think anyone was consistently available to give him much attention and sympathy when he was upset about something. To do all these things for a child requires that adults give of themselves and emotionally attach to the child, continuously, over a long period. Who could have fulfilled this role for Plum when he was a child? I can think of no one.

There is an array of beliefs that Plum might have developed from the experiences of his childhood, but probably the most germane to his portrayal of children is that he was bad, was unwanted, and deserved to be rejected. We know from studies of children in foster care that most of them feel this way. Recall that children are egocentric and need to see their caregivers in a favorable light. Therefore, they may take responsibility for anything bad a parent or other important caregiver does. It bears repeating that it is safer for a child to believe he is bad than to take the opposite position and believe that the people he is dependent upon for his very survival are bad or unreliable.

Other pertinent pathogenic beliefs that Plum could have developed include the following: children are bad in general; he could never do anything right; adults are burdened by children; children and adults are not supposed to enjoy each other's company and be close; one can never expect to feel too comfortable or safe; if you let down your guard and become too relaxed and happy, something terrible may happen to you.

To return to the ideas of Control-Mastery Theory, Plum wrote about children the way he did in an effort to master his trauma (change his beliefs about himself). By repeatedly making bad children into absurd caricatures, he was also telling himself that children, and by extension himself, really are not intrinsically and categorically bad. To put it another way, he disconfirmed the painful beliefs he harbored about himself as a child by turning his trauma into a farce. Secondarily, he used his writing

to shield himself from the sadness of his childhood. Finally, the way he wrote about children may in part come from an identification with the adults who cared for him as a child, i.e., on some level Plum consciously came to believe that, in general, children are bad.

There is one very important exception to how Wodehouse depicted a child and his/her relationship to an adult. The exception is Gladys, from the story "Lord Emsworth and the Girl Friend." In it, we see Plum taking a major departure from his usual portrayal of children. Gladys is a sweet but plucky Londoner come up to Blandings Parva to partake in the early August Bank Holiday festivities. Lord Emsworth first meets Gladys when she saves him from her dog as he is judging the cottage gardens. He immediately observes that she has a "wizened, motherly face," and learns that she was caught picking flowers at Blandings Castle by McAllister and managed to avoid being caught by throwing a rock at his shin. He begins to identify with her, and his fondness for her prompts a feeling of protectiveness. He warns Constance not to give her and her brother too stern a lecture about how to behave at the Blandings fête. That afternoon, leaving the party when the atmosphere becomes unbearable because the children are getting out of hand, Lord Emsworth runs into Gladys in the cow shed. She had been sent there for stealing food from the treat for her brother Ern, who was forbidden to attend by Lady Constance for biting her like a dog. Lord Emsworth takes Gladys under her wing, has Beach feed her and provide additional food for Ern, and then permits Gladys to pick flowers from the garden, knowing full well if McAllister finds out, he will be infuriated. Lord Emsworth finds the courage to stand up to McAllister and, later, Lady Constance, after Gladys takes refuge behind him and holds his hand for reassurance.

"Lord Emsworth and the Girl Friend" is notable because it depicts a close, loving relationship between an adult and a child. It portrays an adult sympathizing with a child's predicament, an adult helping and protecting a child, and, last but not least, a weak-willed Lord Emsworth learning to stand up for himself through the example of a child. In short, Gladys changed what Lord Emsworth believed about himself, and this allowed him to master his fears.

How was it possible for Plum to write so differently about children, if his depiction of them as demons helped him cope with the trauma of his own childhood? Why would he write about a good child, and then go back to writing about children as bad? Plum must have found use for both beliefs (children are bad, children are good) in his mental life. Quite likely, his relationship

with his stepdaughter Leonora had much to do with his shift in attitude towards children and the ability to see them (and by extension, himself) in a more sympathetic light. Feeling love for and loved by Leonora, having the experience of being her father, and forging a deep connection with her allowed him to feel safe and shift his beliefs about himself, even though there was a risk that by doing so, he could be overwhelmed by the trauma of his childhood and the realization that when he was a child, he wasn't loved, cared for, and protected as a child should be. When he was writing "Lord Emsworth and the Girl Friend," I believe Plum was one step closer to being consciously aware of the deprivations of his own childhood. This allowed him to portray a child with more sympathy and emotional depth, instead of making a child into a caricature.

Through his writing and genius, Plum accomplished something absolutely amazing: he worked at mastering the trauma of his childhood, making a safe world for himself, and ultimately creating art of the highest order. An unloved child grew up to give us Blandings, the Empress, Bertie and Jeeves, Psmith, the golf stories, and yes, Edwin Craye, Seabury Chuffnell, Dwight Stoker, Thos Gregson, Bonzo Travers, Huxley Winkworth, and Oswald Glossop. And we are all the richer for his efforts to adapt to his rocky start in this world.

Happy Birthday, dear Plum!

Dr. Paul and Monika's son P. J. Abrinko, winner of The Wodehouse Society's 2009 Bonnie Baby Award, extend birthday salutations to Plum in this YouTube video: <http://tinyurl.com/bk2fh2a>.

A Bonus Quick One or Two

In a June 5 article in the *Daily Telegraph*, Bertie Wooster is listed in the same sentence with Scarlett O'Hara, Madame Bovary, Holly Golightly, Daisy Buchanan, Dorian Gray, and Edith Wharton's Lily Bart. All are said to be "literary fashionistas" by writer Lisa Armstrong. (We'll guess that most of the others did not have a Jeeves to set them right when their fashion sense went amiss.)

The May 6 *Sunday Telegraph* had, in its Lifestyle section, an article entitled "A Roadster for the Wooster," about the new Mini Roadster. Neil Lyndon writes that "Bertie might have been a perfect customer . . . [It is] certain to put a smile on the kind of girl who, as Bertie put it, 'paralyses the vocal cords and reduces the contents of the brain to cauliflower.'"



The Art Institute of Chicago's Modern Wing, designed by architect Renzo Piano, is just one of the many sights you might see when you attend the 2013 TWS Convention in the Windy City. See pages 1–2 for details, and be sure to get your reservations at the Union League Club soon.

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We appreciate your articles, research, Quick Ones, My First Time tales, and other observations. Send them to Gary Hall via e-mail or snail mail at the addresses above. Deadlines are February 1, May 1, August 1, November 1. If you have something that might miss the deadline, let me know and we'll work something out.

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