

The quarterly journal of The Wodehouse Society

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TWS Convention 2013: The Empress Strikes Back

BLUSTERY CHICAGO was the scene of the 2013 biennial convention of The Wodehouse Society. Despite the legendary status of the 1997 convention, also held in the Windy City, the local constabulary did not immediately transport us to the Cook County Jail. We assume that the right money changed hands.

The Chicago Accident Syndicate left nothing to chance except the spontaneity. The Union League Club of Chicago was the perfect and luxurious downtown venue. New friends were made, old acquaintances were renewed, and a fair amount of spirits and comestibles were put away by the throng of conventioners.

Thanks once again to the CAS, the Convention Steering Committee, the raffle and rummage sale contributors, and all the others who made this a delightful success!

What Would an Architect Do?

BY SCOTT DANIELS

WODEHOUSIANS WANT to know! How does the plot twist? How will the fictional heavy get his comeuppance? How did downtown Chicago's architecture become so interesting and diverse? Susan G. Osborn, a Northwestern University School of Music lecturer and a Chicago Architecture Foundation guide, answered the last question for us in sterling style.

We trooped off from the Union League Club, a score or more, on a cool morning under the expert tutelage of our volunteer guide. She began by showing us the Monadnock Building just next door. It seemed



*The Union League Club of Chicago, our host hotel
(photo by Barbara Combs)*

there was a fascinating bit of architectural history and Chicago lore in every block. I will not—okay, I can not—recite the details of each building, the leading architect, and their “school,” but suffice to say that it all came together in a massive and exciting cityscape in a very short stroll around the Loop. The Auditorium Building, now home to Roosevelt University (among other things), was a personal favorite. Doing our bit to improve its already impressive renovation efforts, TWS tourists promptly corrected the setup of its mezzanine-level, large-scale chessboard overlooking Michigan Avenue. The Harold Washington Library Building, with its four distinctive acroteria featuring owls, the classical symbol of knowledge, made for a nice Plum link.

Susan was even willing to extend the tour time to be sure we saw the beautiful mosaics and bas-relief

figures in the Marquette Building lobby. But whether it was the internal or exterior magnificence, it may truly be said that Chicago's downtown architecture makes a fitting and appropriate setting for the enjoyment of Wodehouse's own great cultural creations.



*In addition to the architecture tour, some Wodehouseans were treated to an art walk.
(Photo by Barbara Combs)*

Sluicing Time with City Lit

BY JILL COOPER-ROBINSON

IT CAN BE risky for theatrical players to lift a beloved author off the printed page. It is downright dangerous when every single word of said author's work is engraved on the hearts of each member of the audience to whom you are playing. Each of us comes to the familiar stories with our own voice, each has our own ideas about casting. Woe betide the players if what is in our head does not match what we see and hear.

Brave indeed, then, are the thespians who voluntarily agree to perform Wodehouse for a throng of obsessed Wodehousophiles! Yet that is exactly what Chicago's City Lit Theatre Company did for the opening night of the 2013 Wodehouse convention. Under the artistic direction of Terry McCabe, the company was highly successful by all accounts.

Actors Jerry Bloom, Cameron Feagin, Charles Schoeher, and George Seegebrecht brought to life two of PGW's beloved short stories, "The Man Upstairs" and "Ahead of Schedule." What a perfect way to launch the weekend, with just that right note of insider camaraderie and unifying laughter!

They couldn't have chosen better readings, with all sorts of lovable Wodehousean characters and twisted Plummy plot lines: impoverished artists, egotistical bounders, rich old uncles, hopeful heirs, reserved butlers, and couples who end up with the mate they deserve.

All of the above were brought to life by people who really knew what they were doing. Bring 'em on again, I say! I'm sure that Wodehouse would have applauded heartily. I did, too, and then toddled off to bed, well satisfied with such a propitious opening to what turned out to be a terrific weekend. The city pleased us (in spades!), the convention proceedings seemed without a hitch, the venue couldn't have been more comfortable, the browsing was delicious, and the sluicing relaxing. I returned home with an armful of newly acquired and highly desired books. Congratulations to City Lit and the Chicago Accident Syndicate! And special thanks, of course to P. G. Wodehouse for providing the excuse to gather with new and old friends.

Sublime Speakers and Dreaded Business

BY GARY HALL

THE CONVENTIONS of The Wodehouse Society are often remembered for two or three of the Saturday talks. There's usually a standout or two that attendees remember years later as especially illuminating, or hilarious, or all that and more. All the talks at the 2013 convention would grade in the superior category. We were enlightened and entertained throughout the second official day of the event. We hope to print many of the presentations in upcoming issues.

After the obligatory welcome and house rules by Mistress of Ceremonies Susan Diamond, Chris Dueker got us off to a humorously academic start when he spoke of the shock he received a few years ago at the Providence convention in 2009. At that event, Chris was listening to Margaret Slythe describe Wodehouse's Dulwich years. According to Chris, Margaret stated that Wodehouse had the mumps twice before he turned twenty.

Chris proceeded to examine this assertion and subsequently wrote his treatise on the subject "Of Mumps and Men." He pointed out that a recurrence of mumps is exceedingly rare, and he exposed the myths that are told about the effects that the illness would have at that time of adolescence. His conclusion was sufficiently uplifting to launch the day in style.

Dan Garrison, who helped put together both Chicago conventions, spoke of "Romantic Plots in Wodehouse: The Greek Comedy Formula." Dan's easygoing professorial style makes you wish you'd been in a few of his college courses. He was able to draw some rather remarkable comparisons between the

structure of Greek comedy and some Wodehouse plots. We expect to be able to publish a version of his talk in a future issue of this journal.

Tony Ring spoke on “The Frustrations of a Proven Successful Playwright.” Tony gave us tremendous insight into Wodehouse’s career in the “straight” theatre.

That career was bumpy in the extreme, with many peaks and troughs. You can read much more about this and related topics in Tony’s new work, *Second Row, Grand Circle*, almost certainly the finest book on the subject, if only because there is no other. If you are interested in acquiring a copy, please e-mail Tony Ring for details.

“A Tale of Two Knights: Sidney and Wodehouse” was the offering from Peter Nieuwenhuizen, the president of the P. G. Wodehouse Society (Netherlands). Peter referenced the quote from Sir Philip Sidney, who, though gravely wounded when offered water, chose to give it to a foot soldier, saying that “his need is greater than mine.” Wodehouse’s variations of that phrase took on hilarious variations throughout the canon. We’ll let you read it for yourself soon.

We were then given a true delight. The convention planners had tracked down Nina Botting Herbst, who now lives in Chicago and who had the distinction of being the first Bobbie Wickham in the *Jeeves and Wooster* series. Nina told us great anecdotes and provided illuminating insight in her talk on “Wodehouse on TV: Working with Animals, Children, Stephen Fry, and Hugh Laurie.”

The conventioners breezed off happily to lunch. We eagerly returned, however, to be present for the Dreaded Business Meeting. The big news: Susan Collicott and Tom Smith of the Anglers’ Rest chapter presented their plans for the 2015 convention to be held in Seattle. We’re extremely pleased to have a convention in that northwestern spot. After three consecutive (and wonderful) conventions in the upper Midwest, it’ll be good to head west to the Psmith in Pseattle convention from October 29 to November 1, 2015, at the Fairmont Olympic Hotel. Susan plans to revive the cricket game that used to grace conventions. Plan now to be there!

Of course, the business meeting is also where new officers are elected and current long-serving officers

are coerced into giving yet another two-year term. Ian Michaud will continue his stellar work as membership secretary and board-meeting minutes taker. We give Ian a chunk of credit for the rebounding membership, which has returned to pre-2008 levels in the last couple of years. Kris Fowler will handle the treasurer’s duties for another term (hurrah!), and, while technically not an officer, your humble editor promises to continue living in his own private heaven as *PL* editor in chief.

The silver bell and commemorative coin, symbols of the TWS presidency, were passed from Ken Clevenger to Karen Shotting, who also leads the Perfecto-Zizzbaum Motion Picture Corporation chapter. There were no other candidates nominated. Ken’s legacy has multiple praiseworthy layers. He has done terrific work cultivating new chapters and creating interaction between those chapters. Under his watch, the new website has finally come to fruition (more on that in a bit), and the Remsenburg memorial concept became a reality. Thanks to Ken for all his hard work! And now, back to the business at hand.

Bob Rains (who, with his wife, Andrea Jacobsen, originated and shepherded the Remsenburg memorial idea) was elected to the office of vice president. There were no other nominees. Barring abdications or alien abductions, Bob will ascend to the throne of the glorious presidency at the Seattle—pardon me, Pseattle—convention in 2015.

Of the other items discussed the prior day in TWS’s board meeting, the most important for all members to know (and to share with others) is the advent of the new website. The old site has served us well, and we must thank Shamim Mohamed (aka Pongo Twistleton), Jean Tillson, Amy Plofker, and Neil Midkiff for their tireless work over the years keeping that site up. New webmaster Noel Merrill has done a fine job creating TWS website v2.0. There’s been a lot of sparkle and interactivity added, and we hope that this helps stimulate membership from the young and old aficionados. If you haven’t seen it yet, check it out at www.wodehouse.org.

The business meeting concluded, and we were able to move on to a staged reading of “The Riddle of



Hugh Laurie and Nina Botting Herbst during their time together on *Jeeves and Wooster*

the Starving Swine,” written by Gayle Lange Puhl and dramatized by William Hyder. With a cast drawn from society chapters across the country (see page 23), and puppets to represent the characters, this playlet was a delightful way to keep the afternoon zipping along.

We heard about “Plum, Her Majesty, and Me” from Michael Pointon, the accomplished film publicist/writer/broadcaster/musician. Michael was responsible for the first long-playing record of Wodehouse interviews and adaptations of several stories for the BBC. He corresponded with Plum for years, eventually getting the great writer to agree to allow a commemorative plaque on Wodehouse’s between-the-wars London home. Michael spoke of these and other events, including the Queen Mother’s affectionate speech at the plaque’s commemoration.

Norman Murphy, a legend of our society and the Wodehouse world, confessed that he had notes in his script to “pause” and “speak slowly” (those who know Norman will understand) and told us of “Wodehouse and the Girl Friends.” These friends encompassed children such as the Bowes-Lyon girls (the Queen Mother’s cousins), his cousins the Deane sisters, women with whom he enjoyed platonic relationships, and those for whom he entertained feelings warmer than those of ordinary friendship. A revelation at the end of his speech had the room buzzing. You’ll be able to read about it in a later issue of *Plum Lines*, so keep your membership up to date!

Finally, Ian Michaud gave a talk (prepared by the scheduled-but-absent Anita Avery) about the exciting PGW *Globe* Reclamation Project. This project, conceived by John Dawson, has already resulted in the discovery of several hundred of the estimated 1,400 “By The Way” columns printed during Wodehouse’s tenure at the *Globe*. (See the Autumn 2013 *Plum Lines* for details.) With John, the team consists of Anita, Ian, Karen Shotting, Ananth Kaitharam, Neil Midkiff, Arthur Robinson, and Raja Srinivasan.

The talks concluded and the participants adjourned to their corners to apply makeup, put on costumes, and generally prep for the Saturday night bash.



Janet Nickerson joins Edward and Diane Hain. There were over 170 at the convention and hundreds of stories of good cheer. (photo by Barbara Combs)

Baubles and Banquets

BY SCOTT DANIELS

THE HIGHLIGHT of past TWS conventions has always been the costume competition and the attendant musical revelries. Our fête Saturday night in the opulent ballroom of the Chicago’s Union League Club was no exception.

Costume awards were handed out by our esteemed judges Amy Plofker, Tom Smith, Andrea Jacobsen, and Dan Garrison. Ed and Barbara Jacobitti won the always-coveted “Best Ill-Matched Couple” award portraying Constable Oates and Stiffy Byng. Leslie Nielsen drew deafening applause as the Dog Bartholomew, winning the prize for “Best Dumb Chum.” The “Best Impostor” award went to Ian Michaud as Honest Patch Perkins, aka Bill Towcester. And Christine Hewitt and Lucy Merritt tied as Cleopatterer and received the “Best Song Title” award. Other equally desirable awards:

- Best Waitress in a Supporting Role: Susan Collicott as the Waitress Mabel
- Best Nocturnal Character: George Vanderburgh as Lord Emsworth at bedtime
- Best Novel Title Character: Diane Madlon-Kay as Doctor Sally
- Best Small Game Hunter: Sam Paris as Sir Alexander Bassinger of Bludleigh Court
- What the Ill-Dressed Man is Wearing: Maria Jette as the Magic Plus Fours
- Best Juvenile and Best Facial Hair: Katherine Jordan as Ukridge as a boy

There were four winners of the suitably dubbed Fiendish Quiz. Lynn Vesley-Gross and Tony Ring were first and second in the Master Class category; fan medals went to David McGrann (first place) and James Hockley (second place). Also-rans did not resort to violence and were content with mutterings such as “wait until Pseattle.”

Winners of the raffle were announced, and outgoing president Ken Clevenger presented Hilary Bruce, chairman of The PG Wodehouse Society (UK), with a gift from TWS: a lovely silver plate suspended on a ribbon, to be used as the chairman’s regalia.

Maria Jette, the vivacious chanteuse from Minneapolis, graced the evening with an enchanting rendition of Plum’s songs. She delivered six of the Master’s best, reminding us of his artistic versatility. Two CDs of those songs are for sale and likely to go fast. (See page 21 for details.)

The evening of celebration and comradeship came to an end, as all things must, but not before spirited

dancing by the indefatigable members to the music provided by Katherine Lewis and Michael Pointon. The Charleston, Quick Step, and Fox Trot have rarely been rendered with such grace and enthusiasm.

Only those trying to get some sleep in their rooms in the floors below could complain.



*What ho! Revelers display Wodehousean cheer.
(photo by Barbara Combs)*

A Brunch in the Loop

BY BOB RAINS

HAVING RETURNED to our room at the Union League Club after brunch on the last morning of the Chicago Convention, and feeling not unlike the Empress after a most satisfactory feeding at a trough filled with succulent mash, potato peels, and acorns, I hastened to dash off this report on the morning's proceedings before yielding to indulgence-induced indolence.

It was at the hour of nine that we foregathered in the Crystal Room, scene of the previous night's banquet. One might have thought that after that gourmet gala, we Wodehouseans would have hesitated to put on the feedbag so soon again, yet, without even a "Pig-hoo-o-o-ey," there we were, queuing up for the next round. This morning's Anatole, Chef Nick Fulgencio, did not scrimp. He did us proud, and we returned the favor. Out of deference to the Empress's delicate sensibilities, I will not list all the delectables. Suffice it to say that appropriate side dishes were available with the scrambled e.

Our little table included such luminaries as the Rings of Great Missenden, Buckinghamshire; Major and the (P)Smiths of Olympia, Washington; the York Haven Hookers; Janet Nickerson, the scribe of Chapter One; and the irrepressible Tamaki Morimura, who unbelievably translates the Master into Japanese.

After the slurping noises subsided, our Russian comrade, Masha Lebedeva, aided by a long black beard and Tad Boehmer (still possibly the youngest member), reprised her role as Vladimir Brusiloff from

"The Clicking of Cuthbert." All other Brusiloffs except Masha no good!

Co-host Susan Diamond took the podium and announced the winners of the silent auction. Those lucky souls paid up and took their loot, it appearing to this observer that there were no welschers.

We proceeded to the main entertainment, provided by two great talents. Representing the female of the species was the inimitable Nina Botting Herbst, known to us all as the original Bobbie Wickham playing opposite Hugh Laurie and Stephen Fry in the first season of the *Jeeves and Wooster* TV series. She was joined onstage by fellow Brit Michael Pointon, whose many credits include having helped adapt several of the Oldest Member's golf stories for BBC Radio. Nina & Michael regaled the assembled m. with readings from you-know-who, as only professionals can deliver them.

At the bittersweet end, our bodies and souls satiated, but still, of course, wanting more, we were forced to bid our fond farewells to friends and fellows from far and near, with these words on everyone's lips: "Psee you in Pseattle in 2015."

P.S. On the following day, with free time on our hands before heading to O'Hare International, Sweetie and I decided to improve ourselves with a visit to the Art Institute of Chicago. Imagine my surprise and pleasure on discovering that American artist Jasper Johns has visually depicted Ralston McTodd's famous phrase "the pale parabola of Joy," and that the Art Institute proudly displays that masterpiece, albeit curiously mislabeled as "Near the Lagoon." I must write a strongly worded letter to The Committee about this error of identification.



"Near the Lagoon" by American artist Jasper Johns. A visual depiction, perhaps, of "the pale parabola of Joy"?

(photo by Bob Rains)

The *Chicago Tribune* Came to Play

BY BARBARA BROTMAN

We were delighted to find Barbara Brotman at the Saturday banquet at the Chicago convention. Barbara is the Tribune columnist who had written about our convention when it was still pending. Barbara met and interviewed many of the convention attendees. She undoubtedly got a good sense of the pervasive humor when TWS member Kaumil Parghi began to describe his new occupation as an asparagus adjuster.

A TALL MAN walked through the crowd wearing a British constable's uniform, carrying a bicycle tire. A woman in a long dress strummed a banjolele. A man in a floor-length royal-blue velvet cape stopped to chat.

"Isn't this wild?" said Tina Garrison of Evanston, looking around at the long cigarette holders and golf togs at the Union League Club of Chicago Saturday night. "Some people were doing egg and spoon races in there."

The banquet of the 17th International Convention of The Wodehouse Society was on.

Every two years, somewhere in the U.S., the tribe gathers—people besotted with P. G. Wodehouse's tales of Bertie Wooster and his manservant Jeeves, and given to phrases like "toodle-pip."

Over the weekend it was Chicago's turn in the Wodehousian sun. The Chicago chapter of The Wodehouse Society—called The Chicago Accident Syndicate after a Wodehouse story about an insurance scam and Chicago's history of organized crime—hosted the group's 2013 convention at the Union League Club, a worthy stand-in for Wodehouse's fictional Senior Conservative Club.

Members of the society, known as "Plummies" (based on Wodehouse's nickname, Plum), came from across the U.S., England, Canada, Russia, Japan, Mexico, Ireland, and The Netherlands. By Saturday night, the cash bar was doing brisk business and people were happily connecting costumes with the Wodehouse stories they were taken from.

"These are normally staid, sane people," said Katherine Lewis, president of the Chicago chapter, glancing at a man wearing shorts and knee socks. "Some are leaders in their country. They all let loose in here."

Not that it was all browsing and sluicing, to use the Wodehousian phrase for eating and drinking. The banquet ended a day of presentations about the prolific

English author, playwright, and lyricist. Programs compared Wodehouse's romantic plots to classical Greek comedies and tackled the question of whether Wodehouse had ever had the mumps.

I hung on every word.

I discovered The Wodehouse Society last year. Suffering from *Downton Abbey* withdrawal during a break in the show, I was comforting myself by rereading Wodehouse (pronounced "Woodhouse"), whose work I loved, if not to the point of egg and spoon races.

His wit and world of upper-class British oddballs and twits were balm for my Anglophilic soul. Thinking I would write about other *Downton Abbey* fans who were doing the same, I wound up talking to members of the Chicago chapter—and marking my calendar with the dates of the convention.

It was a year and a half in the planning, down to details like removing from the menu a Union League Club special of Berkshire pork in deference to sensitivities about the Empress of Blandings, a prize pig owned by Lord Emsworth in the Blandings Castle stories.

Specifically, "she's a Berkshire sow," said Dan Garrison.

During breaks, Plummies explained Wodehouse's appeal.

"He's very funny," said Francis Taunton, of Hertfordshire, England. "And I suppose for many people it's escapism."

Then there are his masterful literary style and wordplay.

"The plots are really silly," said John Fahey, of Medford, Mass. "If you describe it to someone they'll look at you like you're from another planet and say, 'Why do you think that's funny?' His plots are just an excuse for the words."

Even when the words aren't in English. Peter Nieuwenhuizen, president of the Dutch P. G. Wodehouse Society, said Wodehouse is beloved in The Netherlands, where many of his novels have been translated into Dutch.

Tamaki Morimura—she was playing the banjolele at the reception before the banquet—has translated nineteen Wodehouse books into Japanese, and made Wodehouse translations for three comic books.

Most of the convention-goers are regulars, and fondly recall highlights from previous meetings.

"Several conventions ago, somebody gave a talk on what they thought Jeeves used in his morning-after concoction," Fahey said. "Another was on how to make a cocktail. The Green Swizzle was prominent."

Chris Dueker, a California doctor who on Saturday

addressed the question of Wodehouse and the mumps, at another convention gave a talk on Wodehouse and fish—specifically, whether the writer considered fish to be brain food.

“It was hilarious,” Fahey said. “You would have to have heard it.”

At the Chicago convention, you could hear Nina Botting Herbst, an English actor now living in Chicago, recall her experience portraying Bobbie Wickham in the first season of the British TV series *Jeeves and Wooster*, starring Stephen Fry and Hugh Laurie.

You could attempt the traditional “Fiendish Quiz,” which asked trivia questions like “What was Plum’s pet name for Leonora Wodehouse?” (Leonora was his wife’s daughter. The answer: Snorkles or Snorklet.)

You had to be a Wodehousian to delve this far into the canon but you didn’t have to be a Wodehousian to be an admirer. The shared enthusiasm, the depth of knowledge, the love of language, the intricacies of the relationship between Wodehousians and Sherlockians—it was a sight to warm a bookish heart.

And inspire a parting “toodle-pip.”



*Tamaki Morimura and Jean Tillson were splashed across the page in the Chicago Tribune.
(photo by Barbara Brotman)*

Tony Ring’s *What Goes Around Comes Around*

THE SEPTEMBER ISSUE of *Wooster Sauce* reported that a new book of Wodehouse’s verse would be published in 2014. Arrangements for the collection’s publication, entitled *What Goes Around Comes Around: A Celebration of Wodehouse Verse* (edited by Tony Ring), have been completed. It will be available in March 2014 at a price of £12 plus postage. It is being published privately by Harebrain Publishing, which recently produced Tony’s book on Wodehouse’s plays, and will not be available through Amazon or other distributors.

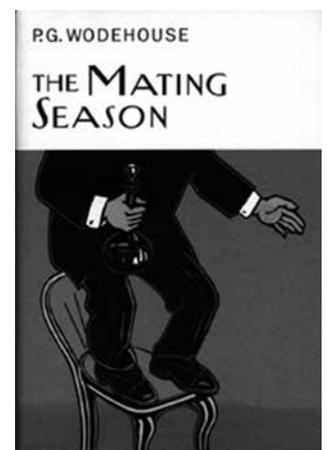
The book’s hundred verses have been selected by Tony as a fair representation of the breadth of subject matter about which Wodehouse wrote—including sport, entertainment, politics, crime, food, and romance. By far the majority date back over a century, and very few are to be found in general anthologies. A few verses of later origin have been included to ensure that this work is fully representative. Eric Midwinter and Tony have provided appropriate notes where they might assist the reader in understanding the context in which the verse was written. *Times* diarist and U.K. Society member Patrick Kidd has written a foreword.

Members who wish to order a copy or copies are invited to contact Tony Ring. Payment should be made with the order or no later than February 28, 2014, and may be made by check, denominated in pounds, payable to “A J Ring”; in cash (again, in pounds) at the U.K. Society’s meeting in London in February; or by sterling credit. Postage costs will be £3 in the U.K., £5 to Europe, and £8 to the rest of the world. Arrangements can probably be made to accommodate overseas purchasers who cannot access one of these methods—please ask when placing the order. Unfortunately, card payments are not acceptable.

Those members lucky enough to have attended the recent Chicago convention will have received an order form for the new book in their convention package.

Overlook Press Holiday Offering to TWS Members

THE OVERLOOK PRESS is pleased to offer a special discount to The Wodehouse Society members! The discount is good from December 1, 2013, to January 31, 2014, for any or all books in the Collector’s Wodehouse series. For each book, you’ll get a 40% discount off the list price. There is a shipping charge of a mere \$0.47 per book. Please visit www.overlookpress.com for a list of the books in the series, and call or email Ross Gerstenblatt at 212-673-2453 or sales@overlookny.com for discount information.



Blandings in Berlin

BY MARTIN BREIT

IN THE SUMMER days of 1943, some weeks after (and before) Berlin experienced heavy air raids by the Allied forces, an odd scene took place in the southern outskirts of the city: Herr Bruch, an awkward private investigator, stopped his shabby car in front of an impressive manor house. He had been hired by the man of the house, Theobald von Langendorff, to look after his precious sow, Prinzessin Anastasia, and to protect her from Langendorff's neighbor and rival, Eberhard Matthesius. Meanwhile, Theobald's sister Julia was busy preventing her brother Hans-Heinz from publishing his shocking memoirs. Hans-Heinz finally gave in under the condition that Julia would give permission for her young nephew, Helmut, to marry ballet dancer Ilse.

Of course, these happenings were not reality but the filming of the German movie *Der Meisterdetektiv* (*The Master Detective*). This was to be the first film version of P. G. Wodehouse's *Heavy Weather*—a production that was not supposed to happen at that time and of which the author was unaware.

Wodehouse had been released from the internment at Ilag Tost in Upper Silesia but was not allowed to leave Germany. He had no access to his accounts in England and America and thus had to look for other sources to finance his and Ethel's involuntary stay.

Wodehouse disclosed to Major Cussen (the MI5 investigator who cleared Wodehouse of Nazi collaboration) all his sources of money, including the sale of movie rights of *Heavy Weather* to Berlin-Film GmbH. The arrangement included conditions that the film would not be produced before the end of the war, that all persons and settings would be developed into German characters and places, and that the movie would not contain any kind of propaganda.

The air raids of March 1943 destroyed the film company's premises and files. Apparently the contract and conditions were lost as well, which probably explains the reason that filming began in 1943. A report on the production from the German Federal Archive sheds some light on the wartime filming.

Shooting began in May 1943 under the working titles *Ein X für ein U* (*An X for a U*, which was basically meaningless) and *Eine reizende Familie* (*A Charming Family*). No one informed Wodehouse, who then lived at some remote spot in Silesia, about the ongoing adaptation of his work. He was probably unaware of the movie's premiere at Berlin's Kurfürstendamm one year later, since he had been moved to Paris by then.

The outdoor filmings took place on a manor in Teltow, about 12 miles south of the center of Berlin. Nine days were scheduled but, due to bad weather conditions and the illness of actress Dorit Kreysler, 28 days were needed, increasing the cost of the production. The highly prominent cast included Georg Alexander, Grethe Weiser, and Erich Ponto (the mentor of "Goldfinger" Gert Fröbe), who each received 900 Reichsmark per day.

Because the film company's property in Berlin had been destroyed, the indoor shootings had to be filmed in Holland. Work was further delayed due to air raid warnings and strikes. Still, director Hubert Marischka was able to save some days in the studios and reduced the project's total cost. Different sources suggest that Wodehouse was paid between 30,000 and 52,000 Reichsmark for his manuscript rights. This was a bargain for Berlin-Film GmbH as other writers of the time were receiving up to 90,000 Reichsmark.

Plum's name was omitted from the credits and advertisements. This was surprising because the Foreign Office expected propagandistic benefits from the publication of a Wodehouse movie abroad. The film itself does not contain any kind of direct propaganda, either in style or in content. Its purpose for the Reich, as with the many other entertainment films of those days, was distraction. War-torn Germans could watch the film and imagine being in the peaceful, Eden-like grounds of the German Blandings. "Wer lacht, hat mehr vom Leben" ("those who laugh get more out of life") was the advertising tagline.

Still, many people were irritated by the different movie the title promised—a film featuring a smart detective and a compelling crime plot. A contemporary critic mentioned her disappointment, as she expected a film of "Sherlock-Holmesian style." The best part of the movie, she wrote, was the "lovely credit sequence, while the story sinks in buffoonery and antique humor." She stated that "only the brilliant actors are able to give some life to the film."

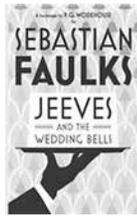
In fact, the movie hardly shows any trace of the wit and spirit of a Wodehouse tale. Calling the German version of Sir Gregory Parsloe-Parsloe "Eberhard" is one of the better jokes, as *Eber* is the German word for boar (though this porcine pun was probably not intentional). The interest of this stuffy comedy is the history behind it. Note that *Der Meisterdetektiv* has been released in Germany on DVD and VHS.

The Sound of a Distant Clam

TIM KEARLEY sent this along: “Having been at the Chicago convention last weekend, I noticed a Wodehouse quote in the review of the new biography of Norman Mailer in last Sunday’s *New York Times Book Review*. In recounting an incident in which Mailer was inadvertently insulted at a social gathering by a local television news anchor, the reviewer says: ‘Mailer didn’t say a word, but gave him a look that, as Wodehouse would say, could have opened a clam across a crowded room.’”



First Takes on *Jeeves and the Wedding Bells*



THE REVIEWS are in (or at least some of them), and Sebastian Faulks’s “homage” to Wodehouse, *Jeeves and the Wedding Bells*, is holding up reasonably well.

Sophie Ratcliffe, who members of TWS know well from her recent *Wodehouse: A Life in Letters*, said in the November 6 *Guardian* that “[Faulks’s novel] is a wonderfully happy book.” She describes the complex plot with switcheroos and imposters, a crumbling country estate, staged break-ins, people wearing togas, cricket matches, romance aplenty, and (of course) Bertie getting himself in the soup. She says:

The best comic turn comes from the novel’s own double texture. . . . Throughout the book we get a sense of what Faulks hears in Wodehouse’s style. There’s zeugma (“Georgiana wore a plain satin dress and a distant look”), etymological daftness (“If Hoad could best be described as inert, Beeching, P. was about as ert as they come”), addresses to camera (“New readers, as they say, start here”) and abundant literary allusions. . . . Even the pace pays tribute to Wodehouse’s impeccable timing.

Sophie does believe that, despite some jarring notes, Faulks’s work ultimately helps the Wodehouse cause by bringing us “that little bit closer to understanding why Wodehouse himself was so out of this world.” It may

be Faulks’s own humility about the project that helped him achieve this balance. In the press, he noted his hesitation about taking on the “inimitable.” He worries, in his prefatory note, whether the book may fall “too lamentably short of the mark.” Sophie continues:

It isn’t quite as sharp as a Wodehouse novel. The minor characters aren’t always as well delineated. The similes are good, but they don’t have the same extraordinary magic. And the major players seem uncharacteristically (but endearingly) in touch with their feelings. . . . But the difference doesn’t matter. In fact, the difference is the point. This is a gentle, funny, knowing act of tribute—and one can sense Faulks’s enjoyment throughout.

Elizabeth Lowry, author of *The Bellini Madonna*, reviewed the novel in the November 8 *Wall Street Journal*. In regard to Faulks’s statement that this is a work of homage, she quotes Robert McCrum as saying this is “a bit like asking a devout Christian to come up with a fifth Gospel.”

Lowry says that “[Faulks’s] plot is both slicker and more self-conscious than anything Wodehouse would have invented.” According to Ms. Lowry, while the general setting and plot are authentic enough to the originals, Faulks “gives a further, mischievous tweak to the ironic inversion between dull-witted master and brilliant manservant” by having Jeeves pass himself off as a nobleman, thereby requiring Bertie to act as Jeeves’s personal gentleman. Lowry says that the reversal, while funny and fitting, highlights “precisely those prickly issues of class and inequality which never disturb the equanimity of Wodehouse’s fiction.”

Still, she feels that Faulks has largely succeeded in what he set out to do. “Rather than attempting a simple pastiche, he has pulled off some knowing variations on the canon. He does an excellent job rendering Bertie’s distinctive voice,” and she provides other examples of such on-target writing. While Lowry makes the error of saying that “Wodehouse was content with a flatter surface” (we can’t agree less with that comment) where Faulks rounds out his characters, we do understand when she complains that Faulks “occasionally complicates his Wodehousean idiom with incongruous refinements,” since Plum was such an exceedingly masterful editor of his own works and avoided such distractions.

Overall, it sounds like the work is not unworthy of a gander by Wodehouse aficionados, and we’re interested to hear others’ views, which we’ll gladly print in the Spring *Plum Lines* issue.

Jeeves, the Ham's Helper

BY JANET LEVY AND BILL SCONCE

The writers of this article are ham radio operators (KA1JDG and N1BFK respectively) and members of The Wodehouse Society in Milford, New Hampshire. They hold Gil Gildersleeve's Jeeves cartoons close to their hearts. Here is their essay, with sample cartoons, and they ask whether any Wodehouseans have any knowledge of Wodehouse in the vein of amateur radio. If you have opinions or information on such, you may send it along to Janet and Bill.



WODEHOUSE NEVER seemed to have much luck with the radio, and if we assume correctly that he knew nothing of Gil Gildersleeve's appropriation of Jeeves for his cartoon, then the hoodoo lasted well into the 1980s.

Phil "Gil" Gildersleeve (ham call letters W1CJD) was an amateur radio operator and a cartoonist. He drew over 1,500 cartoons of a pudgy, balding "Jeeves," the long-suffering assistant to an imperious ham radio operator, for the amateur radio magazine *QST* (*QST* = Calling All Radio Amateurs).

The American Radio Relay League published Gil's cartoons in *QST* beginning around June 1927, developing the "gutty gang at the Podunk Hollow Radio Club." In the February 1940 issue of *QST*, Gil introduced Jeeves, who became his best-known character.

The ARRL would send Gil a punchline about radio, and Gil would return a cartoon, often inspired by Gil's reading of Wodehouse. He wore Jeeves out solving every problem a radio operator encounters. Jeeves was the perfect assistant any ham could wish for. Shedding beads of sweat, he shinned up a radio tower, clinging for life, stringing antenna line. Jeeves carried heavy rigs, driving to great DX (radio or television signal) locations. He saved Field Day, the annual test of emergency preparedness among hams. Oddly, the master himself is never depicted—his disembodied orders come from offstage.

Gil was such an avid ham that he would listen to Morse Code while drawing his cartoons. He built his own radios and spent many happy hours in his shack. He won awards for high-speed radio reception, transmitting as fast as sixty words per minute. Coming from a family of well-known shipbuilders, the young Gil went to work on United Fruit Company vessels as a commercial radio operator. Ashore, having received his license in 1929, he built his own rig (transmitters, receivers, and antennas) and began talking to the world from his own shack, as hams are wont to do.

Gil designed QSL (radio contact confirmations) for other hams. ("QSL?" means "Do you confirm receipt of my transmission?" while "QSL" means "I confirm receipt of your transmission.") They, and his Jeeves cartoons, are popular at flea markets today. Jeeves appeared almost every month for forty years in *QST* magazine. Did one of them ever find a place on a Wodehouse shelf before now?



The Empress Strikes Back in Glorious Color Photographs

All photos by Barbara Combs, except where noted.

EW = Elin Woodger



President Ken Clevenger and PGWS(UK) Chairman Hilary Bruce share a presidential moment. (EW)



Richard Nielsen looking regal (EW)



Wodehouseans reflected in Chicago's Millennium Park's Cloud Gate sculpture (EW)



Bill Franklin and Karen Shotting work it for the camera.



Chicago Accident Syndicate President Katherine Lewis and David Hartmann (EW)



Michael Smith mans the Sherlock puppet while Elliott Milstein reads the part of Holmes.



Susanna Smart



Barbara Jacobitti (Stiffy Byng) accosts helmeted husband Ed (Constable Oates).



Diane Madlon-Kay as Dr. Sally



Gary Hall and Jean Tillson demonstrate to David Smeltzer that the threat of bread-throwing is always present.



Ian Michaud entertains Chicago Tribune writer Barbara Brotman.



Bobbie Wickham (Nina Botting Herbst) shares Fry/Laurie stories.



George Vanderburgh as Lord Emsworth at bedtime



Christine Hewitt Cleopatters in.



Sam Paris and Bonnie Jones in their Saturday regalia



John and Elise Fahey and Susan "Waitress Mabel" Collicott at the banquet



Tom Smith and Susan Collicott announce our next convention, which will be held in Seattle, October 29–November 1xx, 2015



Gayle Lange Puhl, playwright of "The Case of the Starving Swine"



Wendell Verrill, Lynn Vesley-Gross, Eileen Jones, and Elaine Ring



Thomas Langdon and David Hartmann: decidedly debonair



Indu and J. Ravi, multi-conventioners



Tamaki Morimura shows off her banjolele skills to Masha Lebedeva.



Costume winner Eileen Nielsen as the Dog Mackintosh



Puppet and puppeteer from "The Case of the Starving Swine"



You can't throw a brick without hitting a past president: Gary Hall and Linda Adam-Hall on the town



The Shottling Clan: Karen and sisters Sarah, Patty, and MJ



Immediate past president Ken Clevenger and wife Joan



The puppets take a bow



Dorothy Louise, Susan Brokaw, and Kate Andrew liven up the party.



Elin Woodger and Jean Tillson raise a toast.



Ninad Wagle admires Maria's Magic Plus-Fours



Amy Plofker and Andrea Jacobsen in the midst of the revelry



Tracy Galligher and artist Thomas Young beautify the room.



Netherlanders Marjanne and Jelle Otten grace another TWS convention.

Style and class from Corine Gibson, Albert Guditis, and Barbara Proal





A bit of Chevalier



Noel Merrill, webmaster for TWS's new website



Animal puppetry from "The Case of the Starving Swine" (EW)



Raffle items abounded.



Carol Cavaluzzi and Joe and Elaine Coppola add to the festive mood.



Nova Scotia and Texas: Jill Cooper-Robinson and Susan Garrett



Kaumil Parghi



Norman shocks Amy Plofker and Elise Fahey, while Bill Scrivener and John Fahey remain sedate.



Linda and Todd Morning



Katherine and David McGrann



The rummage sale proceeds in the capable hands of John Coats



Past-Prez and current treasurer Kris Fowler, and Alekh "Gussie" Burke



Yes, we are having fun yet!



The long and the short of it: Tom Hooker and Bob Rains (EW)



As handsome as can be: Tim Kearley and Peter Nieuwenhuizen (EW)



Elizabeth Pheasant and unofficial official photographer of the convention, Barbara Combs



Tom Psmith, or rather Smith, in his finery



The City Lit players beam.



South from Alaska: James Muller



I say! Janet Nickerson sips her tea.



Jim Hill and Alice Gunnison looking absolutely smashing



MC Susan Diamond and Allan Devitt bring good cheer.

Sir Roderick Spode and friends: Mike Eckman in black shorts, surrounded by Bill Scrivener, Tim Kearley, and Susan Pace



Beautiful Bellew: Debbie from Chapter One



Professor Dan Garrison gives us our Greek lesson.



Tina Woelke, one of the prime movers and planners of the Chicago convention (EW)



Tony Ring and past president Jean Tillson



The City Lit players in full swing on Friday night



Katherine Jordan, Andrea Jacobsen, and Bonnie Jones: Note the Drones tie under the shrubbery. (EW)



NEWTS Max Pokrivchak and Cindy McKeown brighten the room.



Leonard and Sandra Goldstein: Let the talks begin!



Susan Pace and Tim Kearley with glassy still life



Will Saddler and Cathy Lewis expertly manage the registration.



Robert Bruce pauses and reflects.



Maria Jette and Dan Chouinard's latest musical effort (see page 21)



Barbara Sullivan



Bill Franklin dressed to the nines, if not more



Christine Hewitt, Chris and Joyce Dueker, and Amy Plofker help keep the ULCC bartender in the green. (EW)



Obviously pleased: convention co-conspirator Tina Garrison with Shana Singerman



Tamaki looks on innocently while Norman incites Tad Boehmer to misbehavior with a pipe. (EW)



The revelry rages on, even in the elevators.

Letter from England

BY ELIN WOODGER

IT HAS BEEN quite a year for Plum fans everywhere (I allude in particular to the recent convention in Chicago), but England seems to be undergoing some sort of Wodehouse renaissance. On television we have had the comedy series *Blandings* (a second series has been ordered) as well as an outstanding drama, *Wodehouse in Exile*, which sympathetically portrayed the events surrounding the Berlin broadcasts. Meanwhile, Everyman's Library has continued its quest to publish a complete collectors' edition (being produced by Overlook Press in the U.S.), and Sebastian Faulks has just published *Jeeves and the Wedding Bells*. Along with other members of the U.K. Society, Norman and I attended the book's official launch on November 4, and it was quite a glittering occasion.

But perhaps the most exciting event has been the debut of *Perfect Nonsense*, a hilarious play based on *The Code of Woosters*. Reaction to *Jeeves and the Wedding Bells* has been mixed, but there has been almost unanimous praise for *Perfect Nonsense*, which Norman and I saw on November 6.

The plot is presented as a play-within-a-play. Bertie, believing that acting is easy, has hired a theatre to tell us about the disastrous events at Totleigh Towers. He begins on a near-bare stage but soon realizes he will need assistance. Enter Jeeves, who not only aids the storytelling but also plays some of the parts—while, apparently simultaneously, slowly building the set. But Jeeves can't do it all, and so a tottering Seppings (Aunt Dahlia's butler) lends a hand as well.

The result is hilarity on a grand scale that borders on slapstick but remains true to the spirit of Wodehouse. The play was written by brothers Robert and David Goodale, who have wisely retained a great deal of Bertie's narration and Wodehouse's original dialogue. Director Sean Foley has staged the production well, with a quick pace and so much energy I'm sure the actors must go home each night totally exhausted.

Most of the praise, though, rightly goes to Stephen Mangan, who plays Bertie; Matthew Macfadyen, playing Jeeves, who in turn portrays Sir Watkyn Bassett, Gussie Fink-Nottle, Madeline Bassett, and Stiffy Byng; and Mark Hadfield as Seppings, who takes on the roles of Aunt Dahlia and Roderick Spode. Seppings is a short man, and his efforts to "be" the towering Spode as Bertie describes him leads to his standing on chairs and, ultimately, a moving ladder, draped by an eight-foot coat. Hadfield is wonderful, but Macfadyen perhaps

deserves the most applause for his dual portrayal of Sir Watkyn and Stiffy as they argue with each other. It has to be seen to be believed.

Mangan, meanwhile, brings a wonderful wide-eyed innocence and joy to his role as Bertie. There is a scene where he is in a bathtub playing with a rubber duck, which had us howling with laughter. All in all, *Perfect Nonsense* is good, glorious, goofy fun, and it deserves all the rave reviews it has been receiving. Will it cross the Atlantic? I don't know, but if anybody else should ever attempt to take on these roles, they would have to possess the ingenuity, energy, and chemistry of Mangan, Macfadyen, and Hadfield. And these three have created an act that will perhaps be too hard to follow.



Stephen Mangan and Matthew Macfadyen
in *Perfect Nonsense*

Maria Jette, *A Prairie Home Companion*, and the Broadway Special

PLANS ARE shaping up for another exciting event in New York City on Saturday, April 12, 2014. Maria Jette, who has regaled ecstatic audiences with Wodehouse songs at the last three conventions, will be singing Wodehouse at the live taping of Garrison Keillor's *A Prairie Home Companion* at The Town Hall, from 5:45 to 8 PM (Eastern Time, of course). Maria will be warbling a few of the PGW songs from her new CD with Dan Chouinard, *Siren's Song* (see page 21). Tickets for the live taping go on sale (Internet-only presale), on February 11 at noon. See <http://prairiehome.publicradio.org/tickets/> for updates.

Our gracious hosts from the Broadway Special will be arranging an opportunity to restore your tissues after the theatre soirée. So purchase your tickets as soon as they go on presale, get your tax returns filed early (or get an extension), and let Amy Plofker know well in advance if you wish to join the Broadway Special for some browsing and sluicing on April 12.

Chapters Corner

WHAT IS YOUR chapter up to these days? 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). If you're not a member of a local chapter but would like to attend a meeting or become a member, please get in touch with the contact person listed.

New and forming chapters: For anyone interested in joining an Atlanta chapter, please contact **Michael Thompson**. For anyone interested in joining a South Carolina chapter, please contact **Jennifer Rust** at.

Anglers' Rest

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



Birmingham Banjolele Band

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



The Banjolelers and a Russian guest

THE BIRMINGHAM BANJOLELE BAND met in Knoxville, Tennessee, on October 26, in the warm afterglow of TWS's successful Chicago convention. We enjoyed the luncheon hospitality of Liz and Allan Lee in their Sequoyah Hills home and the special treat of a visit from a prominent Russian novelist, Vladimir Brusiloff, as read by Masha Lebedeva. Our other dramatic readers included our host, Alan Lee; Linda and Ralph Norman as Adeline Smethurst and Cuthbert "Cootaboot" Banks; and Joyce Dalton as Aunt Emily, reading "The Clicking of Cuthbert." We were joined by two new Plum fans,

and all eighteen celebrants marveled at Wodehouse's facility with a golf/love story and the delicious irony of suburban literary societies.

Blandings Castle Chapter

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



The Broadway Special

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



Capital! Capital!

(Washington, D.C., and vicinity)
Contact:
E-mail:



Chapter One

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



THE CHAPS of Chapter One met, as usual, at Cavanaugh's in Head House Square for the September 22 meeting. After the usual introductions of members and their noms de Plum, Herb Moskowitz reported that John Graham was recently married, and Bob Nissenbaum delivered a short eulogy about the late Lou Glanzman (the Duke of Dunstable), a longtime Chap and well-known artist.

Larry Dugan (Alpine Joe) led a literary discussion of the Mulliner story "Came the Dawn." Larry called for volunteers to help him read sections of the story, and members Debbie Bellew (the Girl in Blue), Karen Ruef (Daphne Dolores Morehead), Bob Rains (Oily Carlisle), and Herb Moskowitz (Vladimir Brusiloff) either volunteered or were volunteered by Larry. The selections illustrated the different techniques of humor which Wodehouse employed.

In attendance were Debbie Bellew, Carole Covert, Deb Dugan, Larry Dugan, Norma Frank, Diane Hain, Dotty Hoffman, Divya Khurana, Jasvir Khurana, Bill McMenamin, Herb Moskowitz, Bob Nissenbaum, Elizabeth Palwick-Goebel, Lloyd Palwick-Goebel,

Laura-Jean Prestage, Robin Prestage, Bob Rains, Mark Reber, and Karen Ruef.

CHAPTER ONE met again on November 17 at our usual spot: Cavanaugh's. Bob Rains received a rousing round of applause when he entered the room, as the members congratulated him for his recent election to the position of vice president of The Wodehouse Society.

Bob Rains, Andrea Jacobsen (Sweetie Carlisle), and Jim Hawking (who will be the Duke of Dunstable, once his mustache has grown long enough) gave glowing reports on the Chicago convention.

Bob Nissenbaum (Anthony, Fifth Earl of Droitwich) discussed the rules for the Best Quote Contest to be held at the January meeting, and Herb Moskovitz said that the March 2014 meeting would include a discussion comparing the book *A Damsel in Distress* with the movie version.

Sweetie gave a report on the recent publication by Sebastian Faulks, *Jeeves and the Wedding Bells*. She said that if you read it with an open mind—i.e., not being totally put off by the fan fiction—there is plenty in it to amuse. She made a point of not giving away too much of the plot. Oily said that the back cover might mislead the uninitiated by featuring quotes on how great a writer Wodehouse is, whereas this book is written by Faulks.

Diane Hain took orders for jars of Plum jam that were donated to us by society member Harold Piety to be used as a fundraiser.

Diane then did a thorough report on *Author!, Author!*, Plum's autobiographical collection of letters that he wrote to his friend Bill Townend from 1920 to 1961. The book is organized chronologically with more than seventy letters, over half of them written before 1940. The foreword is written by Townend, who provides an overview of the beginnings of their friendship as schoolboys at Dulwich.

Both Wodehouse and Townend later became writers, and their correspondence spans the arc of their respective literary careers as well as a friendship that lasted until Townend's death in the early 1960s. The letters include some of Wodehouse's observations about life, as well as self-analysis of his writing style. And, as Townend explains, the letters are "full of sound advice on the writing of fiction; and to the beginner, who is learning his trade by the laborious process of trial and error, advice from a craftsman of Plum's caliber should be of considerable value."

The next meeting will be on January 26, 2014, at Cavanaugh's. Start collecting your favorite Wodehouse quotes for the contest.

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 Senior Bloodstain was held on Friday, October 18, at the 2013 Chicago Convention. Sixteen enthusiastic attendees shared their favorite Wodehouse quotes and Wodehouse connections to Sherlock Holmes. The Clients also sponsored "The Riddle of the Starving Swine" performance on Saturday, October 19.

A Junior Bloodstain will be held on Saturday, January 18, 2014, at 11:15 AM in the Roosevelt Hotel's Park Suite in New York City. It will feature the premiere performance of "The Case of the Hunted Hound."

The Denver of the Secret Nine

(Denver and vicinity)

Contact: Jennifer Petkus

E-mail:

The Drone Rangers

(Houston and vicinity)

Contact: Carey Tynan

Phone:

E-mail:



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:



AN APPLE PIE September day with just a hint of the snappy cider to come was the NEWTS' reward for having had the pluck to schedule an al fresco meeting. Marion Maxwell, of Acton, Massachusetts, was our hostess, and so effervescent was the conversation, so enlivening the food, so sparkling the champagne that the bocce equipment and other playthings of a late summer's day that Marion had available lay unused in the cellar.

As a tribute to the late Alan Coren, the British humorist and social critic who was, in the writer's opinion, the superstar of the comic generation after Wodehouse, the NEWTS read one of his wittiest newspaper columns, round-robin. The response to the man the *Sunday Times* once called "the funniest writer in Britain today" was general whooping and thigh-slapping (one's own, of course), and those NEWTS previously unfamiliar with Coren's comic genius, brilliant prose, and spot-on command of dialect were seen jotting his name on their cuffs for future library requests.

The Northwodes

(St. Paul, Minneapolis, and vicinity)

Contact: Kristine Fowler

Phone:

E-mail:



The Orange Plums

(Orange County, California)

Contact: Diana Van Horn

E-mail:



The inaugural gathering of the Orange Plums

SEVEN PEOPLE came to the first meeting of the Orange Plums, which was held at Marie Callender's on October 5. We chatted and generally got to know one another. Karen Shotting (still vice president of The Wodehouse Society at that time) kindly came to help us get started. She suggested several resources that would help us better appreciate Wodehouse and his work. One of our members (we'll call him Jeff) brought along a "silver" cow creamer to lend an air of authenticity to our gathering. Our next meeting was to have been held at Mimi's Cafe in Yorba Linda on November 2. We planned to discuss "The Metropolitan Touch."



A silver-ish creamer, good enough to launch a new chapter

The Pale Parabolites

(Toronto and vicinity)

Contact: George Vanderburgh

E-mail:



The Perfecto-Zizzbaum Motion Picture Corporation

(Los Angeles and vicinity)

Contact: Karen Shotting

Phone:

E-mail:



PZMPCo MET IN August to discuss *Indiscretions of Archie*. The group was split in their opinions of Archibald. Whether clad in a yellow bathing costume, cozily chatting with his wife, Lucille, or sprinting away from the oversized fist of Looney Biddle, Archie just was not everybody's money. We decided that it's no surprise that this is not one of Plum's most popular novels.

September's reading of *Love Among the Chickens* gave some of our members their first taste of the thought processes of that master of high finance, Stanley Featherstonehaugh Ukridge: "No expenses, large profits, quick returns. Chickens, eggs, and no work. By Jove, old man, it's the idea of a lifetime." After studying Ukridge's methods and, more importantly, his results, the PZMPCo Board has decided that, on balance, it would be best to stick with filmmaking.

More rannygazoo was in store in October when we were captivated by the chronicle of “The Crime Wave at Blandings” and the spectacle of Lord Emsworth (Old Sure-Shot), Lady Constance, and Beach reliving their childhoods under the mesmerizing of George Threepwood’s airgun. We were pleased when Old Sure-Shot, after not putting finger to trigger for 47 years, was able to pick off a medium-sized secretary.

In other important news, the PZMPCo Noddors and Yes Men learned that a movement was afoot to start an Orange County Chapter of The Wodehouse Society. The Noddors nodded vigorously and cries of “Yes! Yes!” resounded as we considered the happy news that our southern neighbors were planning this momentous step. You will read elsewhere of the formation of the Orange Plums, and we will be raising a Zizzbaum or two to celebrate the advent of another southern California Wodehouse group.

We meet the second Sunday of each month at 12:30 PM. For our November meeting we returned to Karen’s house. Beginning in January 2014 you will find us once again at the 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 on “PZMPCo”) for more information on upcoming readings and occasional changes of schedule and venue.

The Pickering Motor Company (Detroit and vicinity)

Contact: Elliott Milstein

Phone:

E-mail:



The Pittsburgh Millionaires Club (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania)

E-mail:



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:

The meeting on October 12 in Amsterdam started with the official announcement that HRH Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall, is again willing to be patroness of the (Dutch) P. G. Wodehouse Society through 2018. The announcement was greeted with loud applause, of course.

No fewer than two presentations were on the program: the launch of a new Wodehouse book in Dutch translation and the introduction of a tie and a scarf with the signature of P. G. Wodehouse.

Willem Desmense, owner of the independent Dutch publishing house IJzer (“Iron” in English), presented the translator Leonard Beuger with the new Wodehouse translation *Golf is geluk* (*Golf is Luck*). Actually, the original book title is *The Clicking of Cuthbert and Other Stories*. For marketing reasons in The Netherlands, *Golf is geluk* seems a better title nowadays, because everyone understands that golf is luck. Dolf Wevering, Jan-Jaap Omvlee, and Wil Brouwer read the excerpt in which Vladimir Brusiloff gave his opinion: “No novelists anywhere any good except me. P. G. Wodehouse and Tolstoi not bad. Not good, but not bad.”

The Knights then played in the First Open P. G. Wodehouse Golf Tournament on Lijnbaansgracht in downtown Amsterdam. We created a splendid one-hole golf course on the paving bricks. The golf club in use was a mashie niblick. Lucas Viruly won after a rousing competition. Marianne de Vreij, Marcel Gijbels, and Peter Nieuwenhuizen finished tied for second.

We then discussed some planned presentations for the Chicago convention. We had a new Plum-colored necktie and scarf with P. G. Wodehouse’s autograph woven in silver. The Knights agreed that Jeeves certainly would have approved wearing this stylish garment. Everyone agreed to give outgoing TWS president Ken Clevenger the necktie as a present, and to give the scarf to the new TWS president Karen Shotting.

At the end of the meeting everyone received a copy of “Doelverdediger en Plutocraat,” a translation in Dutch of P. G. Wodehouse’s story “The Goal-Keeper and the Plutocrat.” The translation was published in *De Revue der Sporten*, a quarterly newsletter of the Dutch Olympic Committee, on January 6, 1915.

The next meeting of The Knights will be on Saturday, February 15, 2014, in Mulliner’s Wijnlokaal, Lijnbaansgracht 266-267 Amsterdam, The Netherlands.



Leonard Beuger receives the new Dutch translation of *The Clicking of Cuthbert and Other Stories*.

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



The Inimitable Jeeves as a Ballet

BY PETER NIEUWENHUIZEN

We all know about the Wodehouse books, magazine articles, movie and television adaptations, plays, and audio recordings. There are even Wodehouse comic books by Cecil Orr (USA), Georges Mazure (The Netherlands), and Bun Katsuta (Japan). But what about a ballet based on Wodehouse? Well, it does exist! It was performed many years ago in the U.S. by a Dutch dance company. Peter Nieuwenhuizen, chairman of the Dutch P. G. Wodehouse Society, gives us the whole story.

IN 1964 the Dutch Dance Theater Company (Nederlands Danstheater) was asked to perform a ballet at the gala night of the annual Dutch Book Week. Choreographer Hans van Manen took the challenge and wrote the short ballet *Omnibus*. It consisted of five pieces with the following names: *Voorwoord (Prologue)*, *Bestseller*, *Zondag (Sunday)*, *De Onnavolgbare Jeeves (The Inimitable Jeeves)*, and *Nawoord (Epilogue)*.

The premiere took place on February 28, 1964, in the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam. Half of the Dutch government's Marijnen administration were present at the first performance of this ballet based on Wodehouse. Also present were many famous Dutch

writers, including Harry Mulisch (*The Discovery of Heaven*, *The Assault*).

In the premiere of *The Inimitable Jeeves*, the roles were danced by Anne Hyde, Gérard Lemaitre, and Marten Molema (as Jeeves). The music of the ballet was jazz by Eddie Sauter and Stan Getz. The costumes and sets were designed by Nicolaas Wijnberg.

The performance was well-received by the audience in the Concertgebouw. The dance critics wrote in newspapers that it was "an entertaining performance with overwhelming speed and spirit" and a "semi-abstract comic-book ballet." One reviewer wrote that in *The Inimitable Jeeves*, "the satiric element came first and showed that the art of dance doesn't always have to be serious and heavy, but that it also can function as a distorting mirror."

After the premiere in Amsterdam, the dance company performed this dance in several cities in The Netherlands (Rotterdam, The Hague, Groningen, Leiden, Maastricht, and Eindhoven) from 1964 to 1967. They went abroad to Luxembourg and to the Spanish islands Las Palmas and Tenerife for the annual spring festival.

In 1965 the Dutch Dance Theater Company was invited to come over to the USA to perform at the famous Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival in Becket, Massachusetts. This festival was started by Ted Shawn in 1931 and is the oldest dance festival for modern dance in the USA. It was a great honor for the Dutch dance company to participate and show their skill. (The Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival was the recipient of the 2010 National Medal of Arts from President Barack Obama.)

The performance of *The Inimitable Jeeves* on July 23, 1965, at the festival was reviewed by Allan Hughes of the *New York Times* and by Walter Terry of the *New York Herald Tribune*. After the Becket show, the company gave more performances in Burlington, Vermont; Albany and Flushing, New York; and Stamford, Connecticut.

The Dutch premiere of *The Inimitable Jeeves* was recorded for television by Joes Odufre and broadcast on May 16, 1965, on Dutch television and in Germany on June 20, 1967. I am trying to recover that recording. Hopefully it is preserved by our national institute for movies and sound in The Netherlands.

If we can copy the broadcast, those of you in the USA who missed *The Inimitable Jeeves* in the 1960s will have a chance to make up for your loss!



A Few Newts at Downton

LUCY MERRILL found this in an issue of the *Word Detective* in reply to a question about anachronistic phrases cropping up in *Downton Abbey*:

[*Downton Abbey* is] jolly good fun, even when Mr. Fellowes and Co. deploy the hoariest soap-opera tropes in the book (“I can feel my legs . . . and other bits!”), as long as one doesn’t take it seriously. As a chronicle of early twentieth-century life among Britain’s wealthy, I suspect that P. G. Wodehouse’s Bertie Wooster and Jeeves are actually closer to the mark. What this show needs is more newts in the bathtub.



A Blandings Rebuttal

BY BRIAN TAVES

I ENJOYED Murray Hedgcock’s and Michael Pointon’s contradictory readings of my “American’s Take” on the new *Blandings* TV series. Michael faults me for not mentioning the unrelated *The World of Wooster*. I did, however, mention the related *Blandings* series of the same time and by the same creators, *The World of Wodehouse*, with Ralph Richardson. And I also mentioned the fact that it is lost (wiped by the BBC).

Michael says Emsworth was “definitively portrayed” by Richardson. Since the show was broadcast more than 45 years ago, and all copies lost, I kept my comments in the article to adaptations that readers could still see and judge for themselves.

The six half-hour Richardson shows are far from the only inaccessible instances of *Blandings* on screen. The earliest is the 1933 British movie *Summer Lightning*, a story also filmed five years later as *Blixt Och Dunder* in Sweden. *Blandings* appeared on the German television screen in 1974 as *Blut Floss auf Blandings Castle* and three years later with a presentation of the play *Oh Clarence* as *Der Lord und Seine K Nigin*. *Leave It to Psmith* was a ten-part film in India in 1988, entitled *Isi Bahane*. None of these are presently available, but you can read more on all of them in my book *P. G. Wodehouse and Hollywood* (which, contrary to the title, has a worldwide focus).

Siren Songs for Sale!

FOLLOWING THE 2011 release of *In Our Little Paradise: Songs of P. G. Wodehouse*, the cry went ’round for Maria and Dan to get larynx and digits back to the musical grindstone. Bending to the iron will of the Plum-starved populace, M. & D. have coughed up another volume of PGW’s delectable lyrics. This time, all settings are by Jerome Kern from the “Princess shows” era, when Bolton and Wodehouse and Kern were re-jiggering the American musical theater. Many of these great numbers are recorded for the first time on this new collection, *The Siren’s Song: Wodehouse & Kern on Broadway*.

Fresh, piping-hot CDs should be ready to ship by the time you see this advertisement. Why not pop for a dozen or so? And if you’ve worn out the previous one (or if some efficient Baxter has managed to mislay it), throw in a handful of those, too!

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	Bill (the original version)
<i>Sally</i> (1920)	Joan of Arc
	The Church Round the Corner
<i>Sitting Pretty</i> (1924)	Days Gone By

Is Capitalism Fair?

BY SRIKUMAR S. RAO

Thanks to Srikumar for this tangential use of Wodehouse style for teaching the ups and downs of capitalism. We'll call it another homage of sorts.

WHEN I WAS teaching at Columbia Business School, I had many students from the School of International and Public Affairs in my classes, and we had passionate arguments on the nature of our economic systems. Business students were not used to being challenged about the very desirability of capitalism. Debates were most heated when centered on the question of how to share the value created by successful enterprises.

To further such discussion, I presented a fictional case, excerpted below. I am indebted to P. G. Wodehouse for the style.

Arbuckle Confectioners

Phelps, the valet, knocks on Lord Throckmorton's bedroom door.

Sleepily: "Whozat?"

"Your morning tea, m'lord, and an urgent communication from Sir Roger."

"Who?"

"Sir Roger Pennington-Fossadyke, m'lord, your solicitor."

"I have such a headache, Phelps. Did I drink too much last night?"

"Your lordship did imbibe with exuberance."

"Was I sozzled?"

"Your lordship's state of inebriation was indeed somewhat advanced."

"So I was plastered."

"Yes, m'lord."

"Yes, yes, quite. What does Roger want?"

"He confirms that you are the sole owner of Arbuckle Confectioners, m'lord, and requests your permission to shut it down."

"Eh?"

"It happened ten years ago, m'lord. You were visiting the local school and wished to teach students the virtues of capitalism. So you loaned one hundred pounds to one of the students on the condition that he start a business which would be solely owned by you. It now employs nine hundred and is known for its desserts. The queen is considering giving it the status of Royal Supplier."

"Jolly good, what?"

"Not entirely, m'lord. Only one company in each category may be a Royal Supplier. If Arbuckle Confectioners receives such a designation, your company—Throckmorton Sweets—would lose it. This would very adversely affect your financial wellbeing."

"But I own Arbuckle, right? So that should become more valuable and I should be OK."

"Not quite, m'lord. Throckmorton Sweets is a much larger enterprise and the losses there would be much more than the gains on Arbuckle Confectioners."

"Quite, quite. So what does Roger want me to do?"

"Shut down Arbuckle Confectioners, m'lord. This would leave Throckmorton Sweets secure in its position as Royal Supplier."

"Can I do that?"

"Yes, indeed, m'lord. You own it."

"Bit thick, what? How would this affect the chappie who started it and the peasants who work there?"

"Creative destruction is vital in the capitalist system, m'lord. It is true that they would be temporarily discombobulated, but they would soon procure gainful employment at some other enterprise."

"Yes, they would, wouldn't they? Never thought of that. Still, I don't really need the money. Should I go ahead?"

"The neo-libertarian philosopher Gordon Gekko had much to say about the salutary results produced by avarice, m'lord."

"Eh?"

"He expounded the thesis that 'greed is good,' m'lord. It is not your responsibility to consider the wellbeing of Arbuckle employees as you legitimately protect your interests."

"Right. Right. Quite true. Absolutely. I seem to recall that there was some bright feller, quite a well-known chap too, who said something about hard times being good."

"Possibly your Lordship is referring to Shakespeare, m'lord."

"Shakespeare?"

"Yes, m'lord. He held that 'Sweet are the uses of adversity, Which like the toad, ugly and venomous, Wears yet a precious jewel in his head.'"

"What does jewelry have to do with this, Phelps? Stick to the point, will you?"

"Doubtless the hard times will be good for their souls. Tell Roger to fire the blighters and shut Arbuckle down. And Phelps . . ."

"M'lord?"

"I want my eggs hard-boiled. Last time the yolk was still watery. Get it right, will you?"

"Very good, m'lord."

And More on *Wedding Bells*

WE'VE SEEN yet more reviews of Sebastian Faulks's homage novel, *Jeeves and the Wedding Bells*. The most entertaining was Christopher Buckley's take (much of it written in Wodehousean style) in the November 29 *New York Times*. Startled at first ("Dash it, isn't this *anno dom* 2013, and didn't 'the Master' . . . shove off across the old Rio Styx back in 1975?"), he does admit that Faulks comes off "as a likable cove," and that "this Faulks certainly knows his stuff when it comes to homaging." Buckley also enjoys the inside jokes, but only recommends the book "on the condition . . . that it is not to be repeated."

Reviewer Isaac Chotiner (November 3 *New Republic*) is less forgiving. He compares some of Faulks's bits to Wodehouse's and finds the former's efforts often not snappy and sometimes not even funny.

The most scathing thus far is Alexandra Petri's review in the November 5 *Washington Post*. After a lengthy discussion of fan fiction, concludes with: "If I were being glib and cruel I would say something like, 'This is the most uncomfortable I've ever been for several hours on end without the end result being a live baby.'" Prospective homagers, take note.

What Would Wodehouse Say?

PLUM DID occasionally weigh in on what it takes to make a successful writer, so perhaps his words are apropos in the discussion of fan fiction. We quote from the Master about how one becomes a novelist:

Every author really wants to have letters printed in the papers. Unable to make the grade, he drops down a rung of the ladder and writes novels.

Or perhaps this advice from Wodehouse would help those who struggle to make the grade:

I just sit at a typewriter and curse a bit.

But there is hope. Here's PGW with a perhaps more encouraging front for aspiring writers:

Success comes to a writer, as a rule, so gradually that it is always something of a shock to him to look back and realize the heights to which he has climbed.

Programme from the Convention's Premiere

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Part of the all-star cast of *The Riddle of the Starving Swine*:
Allan Devitt, Elliott Milstein, Michael Smith, Bonnie Jones,
Tina Woelke, Ken Clevenger, James Albert Danforth
(photo by Elin Woodger)

Psmith in Pseattle

AS REPORTED on page 3, after three conventions in the Midwest, we will move westward to Seattle in 2015—or, as it will be known to us, Pseattle. Our hosts will be the Pseattle chapter, the Anglers' Rest; the place will be the beautiful Fairmont Olympic Hotel (see <http://bit.ly/1dEgY0m>); and the dates will be October 29–November 1, 2015. (Yes, we know that is Halloween weekend, but due to a concatenation of circumstances, it was the only weekend we could secure at a reasonable price.) Convention planners Susan Collicott and Tom Smith are already conspiring with other members of the Anglers' Rest to put together a whale of a good time for pilgrims to Pseattle. They have a dedicated email address for queries and a Facebook page where convention updates will post. In due course there will be a dedicated website. So, mark the dates on your calendar now, and we'll Psee you in Pseattle!

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