



"Wodehouse has said that what he is really writing are musical comedies without the music, and foreigners read his books in translation mainly for the ingenuity of the plots. But for us the chief joy must be the words themselves....the inimitable phrasing of almost every sentence."  
 ....Anthony Lejeune

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!!! May 22d, 1984, marks the 99th birthday of our only honorary member, Ethel, Lady Wodehouse. It seems appropriate to republish something from PLUM LINES, 15 Mar 1982:

"The wives of famous men seldom share the praise given their husbands. Lady Wodehouse has been mentioned rarely in the many articles and books written about Plum. Yet she shared his life completely, hoisting many of his responsibilities onto her own shoulders to free him for his literary work. She shared his literary aspirations and successes, the anxious waiting to learn of the success or failure of a new musical comedy, and the dismal uncertainties of internment during World War II. One plummy, Phil Ayres, wrote this:

"I am amazed how such love and deep trust could have lasted over such a long time. If he had never written a book or a lyric, the Wodehouses would deserve our respect and admiration for their example of a working marriage. No couple united at the end of a Wodehouse novel could have done better at the marriage game than they."  
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"BAILS, YOU BOUNDER, NOT BALLS!" The entire editorial staff of PLUM LINES writhed ignominiously before this furious blast of indignation. "Sorry, a horrible goof in PLUM LINES," from another irate, but more restrained, reader. "The umpires don't pick the balls off. The word is bails." These readers, and others whose finer feelings were ruffled by the umpire in question, will be pleased to learn that the Federation of Cricket Umpires, in a formal ceremony, ripped off his gold buttons and expelled him in disgrace.

Richard Osborne's excellent explanation of the game was well-received, judging by our mail. John Duffie: "...Exceptionally well done. There is much of value in cricket. Absolute sportsmanship prevails, there is no criticism of umpires, no complaining, full credit is given to opponents for fine play, etc. Society is worse for having lost many of the values which cricket exemplifies." Jeremy Thompson sent a much less involved explanation of cricket snatched from The Cricketer, Nov., 1977:

"You have 2 sides, 1 out in the field and 1 in. Each man that's in goes out to go in, and when he's out he comes in and the next man goes in until he's out. When they are all out the side that's out comes in and the side that's been in goes out and tries to get those coming in out. Sometimes you get men still in and not out. When both sides have been in and out including the not outs, that's the end of the game.  
 HOWZAT!"  
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R.S.V.P. Please return the President's Questionnaire with your ideas for the improvement of TWS and for making our 1985 Convention Program a success. Only by hearing from you can we hope to inject new vigor and creative thinking into our Society. If spaces provided are not adequate, attach a sheet. "None is so perfect," wrote Baltasar Gracian (1601-1668), "that he may not at times need a monitor, for he is clearly the fool who will not listen."  
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PLUM PUDDING - a Wodehouse Alphabet is the title of a Little Book created by Margaret and Douglas Stow, TWS, on their own press. It is an abecedary, having a quatrain for each letter of the alphabet, based on Wodehousean characters, places, incidents, contributed by members of our Society. Barry Phelps, for example, accounted for K, U, and W. These books are now at the binders and will be ready in July. Only fifty numbered and signed hardbound books (\$20) and one hundred paperbound books (\$10) will be published. Add \$1.50 for postage.

PGW BOOKMART is alive, but not well. That publication came about because of our need for a swap/sell/find medium for members. We have booksellers

In our membership who will be happy to quote prices on PGW books and ephemera for purchase or sale. They are listed below. No swapping facility, however, exists outside the PGW BOOKMART. So why not contact Dr. Jeremy Thompson, its initiator and editor? Keep it alive!! #

Our Roving Reporter, Jimmy Heineman, TWS, spotted this item in The Times, London, 28 February, 1984:

BY JOVES - Television presenters are used to being accused of all sorts of outlandish things, but Magnus Magnusson, the stony-faced inquisitor of Mastermind, was completely thrown by a charge of blasphemy by an irate viewer. How dare he, the latter fumed, suggest that Jesus' first name was Reginald? After careful and repeated viewings of the Mastermind tapes, Magnusson finally discovered what had happened. He had reminded a contestant specializing in the works of P. G. Wodehouse that "Jeeves' first name was Reginald." # # #

29 of our members have not sent in their dues for 1984! Please check your records. Dues are calculated on an annual basis from 1 January through 31 December. Those joining after 30 June are assessed half the annual rate for the rest of that year. Those joining after 30 October pay the full rate which is applied to the following year. Bona fide students pay half rate. We consider these rates (\$10 basic, \$12.50 overseas) to be reasonable, as our Society is supported entirely by your dues and occasional contributions. Our newsletter accepts no paid advertising. We have no paid employees or staff, and our elected officers are unsalaried. Our financial records, kept by our Financial Secretary (Mary Blood) are available for your inspection at any time you may visit Fine Fettle, and for that of the U. S. Internal Revenue Service since we are a tax-exempt association.

Eleven members who paid no dues in 1983 are being summarily dropped from the rolls, black marks being drawn through their beautifully inscribed names in The Tome, a fate resulting in the gnashing of teeth and banshee-like wailing. But OM (a.k.a. Curmudgeon) will not relent. We have a nice little Society, full of nice people, and dedicated to a wonderful human being. To keep it, we must pay our fair share. End of lecture. # # #

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Barry Phelps and Charles Gould are our PGW book and ephemera dealers, David Jasen sells first editions only, and Edward Lehwald will order PGW books for you. Addresses in Membership List.

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BEST WISHES.....

THE OLDEST MEMBER



In Lieu of a Supplement,  
none having been submitted....  
(OM claims credit for all typos)

MINI-ESSAY - REPERUSAL

"The art of reperusal," Kit Morley called it, "the exquisite and re-freshing renewal of old enthusiasms." Others have spoken well of reperusal; Sam'l McChord Crothers said that "The test of real literature is that it will bear repetition." And the late Oscar Wilde clinched the argument with "If one cannot enjoy reading a book over and over again, there is no use reading it at all."

Plum wrote that both W. Shakespeare and A. Pope emphasized the tediousness of a twice-told tale; however, these worthies lacked our access to the vast current assortment of tale-tellers. Neither could have known that a future writer would sweep across the firmament like a brilliant comet to set their dicta awry, a writer whose tales could be read, reread, and read again with increasing enjoyment; for, like one of Plum's characters, "Few could equal him at telling the tale and telling it well."

The rewarding reperusal of any story depends on whether the reader, in his initial reading, found that he and the writer shared a compatibility of several factors; among them being attitudes, points of view, and of course a receptive imagination. Though this may be a malicious canard, it has been said that some unfortunate souls have never read Plum's stories; if this is, indeed, true, then these - I repeat - unfortunate souls cannot have established communion with our favorite writer, and the joy of reperusing Plum can never be theirs. Each of us may have experienced a certain spiritual relationship with any of several authors, and the rereading of their stories has brought us pleasure. Was it with Shakespeare, Cather, Chaucer, Repplier? Few of us are one-author readers, nor should we be.

Of all these, Plum stands apart as one of the most rereadable. Take any FGW novel or short story that you haven't read in the last two years. You may recall the plot as you get into the first chapter or two, but you'll have forgotten many of the sub-plots and their twists and turns. Of course you remember the characters, for they are old friends. Yet, somehow, in your first reading you missed some of the little quirks and foibles which set them apart from their fellows; for now you are reading more analytically. Your appreciation of the Wodehousean phraseology, the pungency of description, becomes heightened. You perceive more, you are taking time to get acquainted with these people and their predicaments. Though you know that Lady Constance will ultimately be outflanked by Gally, you will chortle as heartily at its brilliance as when you first became privy to these misadventures.

We have suggested two years as a point at which reperusal may be undertaken. Your own experience will dictate a longer or shorter period. Whatever that period may be, don't deprive yourself of this rich experience. # # OM #

THUMB NAIL BIOS -

If you attended our Second Annual Convention last October, you met Mrs. Florence Cunningham, and found her a very delightful person, deeply steeped in Wodehouse, and a devoted Plummy. She wrote:

"Like P. G. Wodehouse, I was born into a family full of aunts, uncles and cousins. Like my mother, they could quote poem after poem from Longfellow, Wordsworth, Tennyson, and the classic authors from memory. So my love of books was inbred. My happiest memories when I was small are of sitting on a comfortable lap and being read to. My education prepared me to teach elementary school, but during World War II I taught at a high school in my home town, Colfax, Washington.

THUMB NAIL BIOS - Continued

"I became a liberated woman, however, when I married. I was free of the teaching schedule and routine, and free to create a home. My husband was an educator, and served four terms in the Washington State Legislature. With his death four years ago, I had to replace old paths with new directions. I took classes in oil painting, volunteered in creative dramatics, then went back to school. Good fortune led me to a jewel of a teacher in creative writing. With her encouragement I wrote an article on my trip to the P. G. Wodehouse Centenary (at The Pierpont Morgan Library), sent it to a Seattle magazine and, wonder of wonders, they accepted it. I am presently working on a biography of a New York City-born grandfather who came west in 1862 at the age of seventeen.

"The sparkle in my life comes from my two darling grandchildren. When they come to visit we pretend all sorts of things. We paint, sing and dance, and the best time comes when I have one on my lap and the other with my arm around her reading stories. I consider that I am a fortunate woman. I have two wonderful sons, a daughter-in-law who is like a daughter, my cousins, a host of friends, a yard, a garden, a pleasant home, and bookshelves of books who are like true friends of whom you never tire.

" I love the books of P. G. Wodehouse best of all. He brought so many laughs into table conversation at dinner time when our family was home. It seemed that all the characters he described we had known somewhere at some time or other. He was wonderful fun to read aloud winter nights before a fire, and he was a gentle comforter in time of difficulty. He had experienced all that life had to offer and was able to write about life and people exactly as they are...with a humorous affection. I have never read any author with such an understanding of human nature, unless it was Shakespeare." # # #

AND Charles Fletcher, one of our Swedish members, tells us:

"I am a Swedish subject of English descent, 77 years old. I am married, have three daughters and seven grandchildren. I have been working in the shipping business during all my active life, most of the time as managing director of an international shipping line. I have had to travel extensively in Europe, North and South America, Africa, and the Far East. I retired in 1976 at the age of 70 and have studied English, German, and Swedish at Stockholm University for three years, and got my B.A. degree.

"I have played golf for 65 years, and mostly read English literature. I have read and reread P. G. Wodehouse's books since I was about 18 years old and I have a fairly complete collection of his works.

"However, if someone could offer me a copy of The By the Way Book (1908) and The Swoop (1909) not only would my collection be complete but my gratefulness as a collector as well. I am now studying various aspects of P. G. Wodehouse's literary work, and one day I may be able to present one or two essays on the subject." # # #

We have a backlog of other Brief Bios, and we run them when we have space. So why don't YOU write about YOU?