



"Because Mr. Wodehouse peddles laughter, boundaries are unknown; and only those who find laughter difficult or undignified pass by on the other side." ... William Trevor

FOR SALE:

Readers who scan the classified ads in The New York Times will have noticed this:

Remsenburg - Town of Southampton - Lovely waterfront estate, approximately 9 acres - \$1,500,000. Large country home offering navigable anchorage. This site also lends itself to subdivision and development as buildable plots. Showing by appointment, (212) 325-1522. Principals only.....

And at Christie's Auction Gallery East, 219 East 67th St., New York, NY, (212) 570-4141, from 20 to 30 items of furniture from the Wodehouse home will be sold at auction on June 12th.

Unfortunately estates must be settled, and many shrines disappear...

OF AUTHORS AND BOOKS: David A. Jasen, TWS, who has written one of the best PGW biographies (*P. G. Wodehouse - A Portrait of a Master*), one of the finest bibliographies (*Bibliography and Readers' Guide to the First Editions of P. G. Wodehouse*), and an excellent exposition of Plum's theatrical career (*The Theatre of P. G. Wodehouse*), has also edited *P. G. Wodehouse - Four Plays*, Methuen, London, 1983. Pprbk @ £2.95, hardbk @ £7.95. Order from Methuen, Ltd., 11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE OR from Barrie Phelps, 5c Shepherd St., London W1Y 7LD, UK.

Info about *Four Plays* should've reached you years ago, sheer oversight on the part of our editorial staff, all of whom have been threatened with dismissal without severance pay.

Mr. Daniel H. Garrison, of Northwestern University, Evanston, Il 60201, is compiling an encyclopedic volume about the many and varied fictional characters brought to life by Plum. This should become an essential item in every Wodehouse collection. We wish him well, and would he were a Plummy...

AND John Duffie, TWS, is preparing a book of "nifties," which he hopes to have in print before long. John also believes that he has stimulated interest in a Victoria (BC) TWS chapter. Bravissimo! # # # # #

IF you happen to hear of anyone not receiving PLUM LINES recently, chances are that he (or she, as the case may be) was a former member who neglected to pay dues. Smile kindly and assure her (or him) that all will be forgiven and membership (with all privileges and entitlements) will be restored if current and past dues are paid. Our Society exists solely on its membership dues.... And what do we get for our dues? One of the finest newsletters imaginable, the fellowship of kindred minds, answers to even the most complex questions, essays by great thinkers! "Let me count the ways," as a nice lady once said.

Last February 8th, OM received the "Valentine's Day List" of PGW books (etc.) from Charles E. Gould, Jr., TWS. In the midst of collating, folding, stuffing, sealing, stamping the Feb PLUM LINES, OM overlooked a juicy tip that two Wodehouse-Bolton-Kern musical comedies (Oh, Boy! and Oh, Lady! Lady!) were to be shown at the Carnegie Concert Hall in New York City. They ran for three days each as part of the Jerome Kern Centenary Celebration, and received excellent reviews. The song from "Show Boat," Bill, originally written for Oh, Lady! Lady! was restored to its original place for the occasion. Charles has since issued his "Spring Fever" List, having a good assortment of PGW first editions, reprints, reading copies in all price ranges. He will send his booklists to any Plummies who ask for them. # # # # # #

"Cheerfulness is always good, and can never be excessive." ... Spinoza

Upward and Onward! Jonathan Hopson, TWS, will soon be savoring some of the civilizing influence which gave Bertie Wooster such a grasp on Life's Major Problems and World Affairs when, in October, he will be attending Bertie's alma mater, Magdalen College, Oxford. He has volunteered to send us vivid, first-hand accounts of his experiences there. We wish him well, and eagerly await his accounts. # # # # # #

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The Oldest Member

An American Discusses English Culinary Eccentricities
By Dr. William E. Welmers, TWS *

I have some problems with English cuisine as portrayed in the works of P. G. Wodehouse. To begin with, the Drones Club members are identified by what they prefer with tea: Eggs, Beans, and Crumpets. But yes, it's a fact; in London you can be served hardboiled eggs or baked beans with tea!

When I read about someone digging into steak and kidney pie, which I presume is a sort of meat pie - but to me a piece of beef ceases to be a steak if it is cut into smallish pieces, and kidneys are what friends of mine back in the '30's used to pay 5¢ per pound to feed the cat; they weren't fit for human consumption. Actually, we were served kidneys, along with liver and bacon and fish and fried tomatoes and eggs, once in a British boarding house in the then Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, 1950, and I guess even the kidneys were good -- we were both starved and exhausted! But when Plum depicts, as he does in one novel, an American movie mogul pitching into his steak and kidney pie in a restaurant in Beverly Hills, Calif., I have to doubt his knowledge of our eating places. And, in another book, cold steak and kidney pie, presumably a delicacy?

Plum also, repeatedly, refers to an inexpensive dinner as featuring a chop. A pork chop, a lamb chop, or some other chop? To me, a chop generally means pork. In England, I have some suspicion that it more often means lamb, or even mutton. Is that edible? (Another English writer, about a century ago, compared the finest antelope meat he had tasted with good Welsh mutton; that would, for me, rate it as 1-minus on a scale of ten.) I confess my illiteracy when it comes to "chump chop." Even my New World dictionary defines 'chump' as a thick or butt end; I could only associate it with a blockhead or fool.

And a "suet pudding?" Suet is something you feed to woodpeckers or racoons in our charming rural area, or get a little fat fried out of in preparing some other dish. A pudding is sweet, with corn starch and usually eggs, plus chocolate, tapioca, butterscotch, etc. To me, the words 'suet' and 'pudding' are

mutually exclusive. But then, British puddings are American cakes.

Plum says (in something I read recently) that 'biscuits' are what Americans call 'crackers;' but our cookies are also British biscuits, and I have no idea what they call our baking-powder biscuits. And is 'roly-poly pudding' actually a jelly roll?

A further comment on what I would call a pudding: a blancmange. In Ice in the Bedroom, there is an allusion to a blancmange tasting like 'jellied blotting paper.' We know what he means! In Ghana, in 1948-49, we asked our cook if he could make a blancmange, and he assured us he could. It was awful. Very gently, Bee asked him: "Kwame, how many eggs did you put in this blancmange?" As if grievously offended, he assured her, "Oh no, ma, I did not use any eggs." So Bee went on, "How much milk did you use?" As much offended, he protested, "Oh no, ma, I did not use any milk." So Bee asked, "Well, what did you use?" Defensively, he answered, "Oh ma, I only used corn flour and vanilla and sugar and water!" (Darned little sugar at that!) We later told that one to an English woman who had lived in Burma for many years. She knew the product, and explained, "Ah yes; we call it 'shape.' It doesn't have any flavor, any food value, or any other merit. All it has is shape!"

I don't in any way mean to be snide, or even culture-bound. Above all, I cherish tolerance. You can have your jellied eels, as long as you'll let me enjoy my fried squid!

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* William (Bill) Welmers, Ph.D., Th.M., Professor-Emeritus, UCLA, also taught at Univ. of PA and Cornell Univ. Ordained minister and former missionary. He and Beatrice (Bee) are enjoying retirement in the Arkansas (Ar-kan saw, Suh!) Ozarks.

COMMENT: In his In Defense of British Cooking, Brattleboro, VT, 1960, Audrey Gordon said, "I am willing to concede that there are quite a few people in England who are content to ring the changes on a limited variety of foods and who are lacking in culinary daring; many have had neither the opportunity to learn the secrets of foreign cooking nor the money to experiment with the untried. Moreover, the years of depression and war effectively curtailed the traditional fare for long periods of time." Then being a fair-minded Yank, he poses a question: "But how may our own cherished eating habits look to a foreign and unconvinced palate?"

Possibly one of our oversea members might care to tackle Mr. Gordon's question?

Mr. Peter Schwed, TWS, Editor-Emeritus, Simon & Schuster, Plum's close friend and editor for more than 20 years, wrote the following letter to the editor of The New York Times. It was published on 23 March, 1975. With the permission of Mr. Schwed and The New York Times, it is reproduced here:

To the Editor:

It was typical of my 25-year relationship with P. G. Wodehouse as his American editor and publisher that, on the sad day of his funeral, a notice in the obituary column made me smile. The notice was inserted by the Bide-A-Wee Home Association, an organization for the shelter and care of animals. Plum had befriended it generously through the years, and in that sense the ad was quite fitting. What amused me was its final sentence, in quotes: "To hold opinion with Pythagoras that souls of animals infuse themselves into the trunks of men."

I have never before had the temerity to try to imitate the flavor and style of this greatest of humorists. But the entire concept is so reminiscent of Wodehouse gems in the past that I cannot resist:

"Jeeves," I said, "can you make head or tails out of this? This writer fellow has bunged the following down on the printed page, 'To hold opinion with Pythagoras that souls of animals infuse themselves into the trunks of men.' Who the deuce is Pythagoras?"

"Pythagoras, Sir, was the eminent Greek philosopher of the sixth century, B. C. who is best known for his establishing the fact that the sum of the squares of the two sides of a right-angle triangle are equal to the square of its hypotenuse. This is a highly esteemed thought among mathematicians, Sir."

"That well may be, but what's this drivel about animals infusing their souls into the trunks of men? Why do they do that? Extremely stuffy for their souls, I would think, and anyhow I haven't laid eyes on a trunk since I saw one in Aunt Agatha's stateroom when she crossed on the old Mauritania in the twenties."

"Pythagoras was more probably referring to the corporeal aspect of the human body, I would imagine, Sir."

(Cont'd on p. S-4)

PLUM LINES - Supplement

"Utter rot in any case, Jeeves. The man must have been pie-eyed when he wrote that. Pythagoras should have kept out of the sauce."

Peter Schwed
New York
City

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Miss H. P. (Pat) Hooker, TWS, our only Australian member, who writes for TV and stage in London, lives (as you already know if you read your Membership List carefully) at 26 Primrose Mansions, Prince of Wales Drive. Of this address, she writes:

"I hope, by the way, that you are suitably impressed by my address. I've noticed that most of the Master's impecunious young heroes in the non-saga books lived round here (those, that is, who didn't live in Halsey Court, Mayfair). The Drive itself is quite beautiful, as one side of it is a (very lovely) park; it is a series of old (turn-of-the-century) blocks of mansion flats, and has been in a frankly seedy area until the last few years, when something of a property boom hit it. In the Master's day, of course, it would have been inhabited by impecunious young artists; in fact, Noel Coward is reported as remarking that everybody in show business lived in Prince of Wales Drive at one time or another (though I never actually heard him say it).

"It's perhaps worth remarking that there is no such address as 'Prince of Wales Mansions, Battersea Park Road,' which is credited as the address of one of those heroes - but Battersea Park Road runs just behind the blocks of flats, so maybe he wrote that one when the memory was getting a bit dim.

"Members visiting London might like to add the Drive to their pilgrimage list."

(Ed. Note: While they are there, stop and have a chat with Pat.)

WE'LL SEE YOU OCTOBER 19TH AT ITHACA FOR THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE WODEHOUSE SOCIETY!!!!

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

"What? No questionnaire?" you may ask. No, I'm not sending you a questionnaire this time. With the next issue of *Plum Lines*, I'll be sending a registration-blank for our October 19 meeting. This letter is simply to give you an up-date on our current planning.

We are definitely expecting to hold our biennial meeting here at Ithaca, New York, at Cornell University, on Saturday, October 19. As I believe I explained in a previous "President's letter," we try to hold our meeting every two years, always on a Saturday, and as close as possible to Plum's birth-day, October 15. This year we have chosen the 19th rather than the 12th, because the 19th is the beginning of Cornell's "fall break," and there will be no foot-ball-game here. This situation should make it easier to obtain accomodations, and also to arrange our meetings, noon-day lunch, and evening banquet.

As matters stand, we shall probably have a schedule something like this:

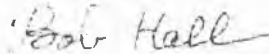
- 9.30 a.m. - 12 noon Morning session, with coffee-break from approximately 10.30 to 11.
- 12 noon - 1.30 p.m. Lunch, at one of the campus cafeterias.
- 1.30 - 4 p.m. Afternoon session, with coffee-break from approximately 2.30 to 3 p.m.
- 6 - 7 p.m. Cash-bar, with both alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks.
- 7 - 9.30 p.m. Banquet, followed by brief "Presidential allocution."

There will have to be a brief business-meeting, perhaps at the beginning of the afternoon session, for the election of new officers and for other matters. Aside from this, we are hoping to offer you a variety of presentations, including a slide-show on "Wodehouse's London," a communication from our member Father James Carruth of Zimbabwe, and one or more musical tapes and/or video-presentations, whose nature has not yet been specifically determined. If any of you wish to offer a talk of up to half-an-hour on one topic or another connected with Wodehouse's work, please let me know, giving me the title and a 100-word abstract. (It doesn't have to be absolutely dead-pan serious or ultra-scholarly, either.)

Let me again urge you to plan to attend. Upstate New York is at its very best, scenically, in mid-October, and the trip to and from Ithaca can be an added source of pleasure. (Incidentally, we have reserved a block of rooms at the Sheraton Inn, Ithaca, N.Y. 14850; if you have already decided definitely to come, I suggest that you write them to be sure of a reservation for Friday and/or Saturday nights, October 18/19.)

Looking forward to having you with us in October,

Sincerely,



Robert A. Hall, Jr.

Part Two

- 13. Who has the eloquence of Demosthenes?
 - a. Roderick Spode, 7th Earl of Sidcup...
 - b. Looney Coote...
 - c. Lord Basham...
 - d. Veronica Wedge...
- 14. Who has final possession of Gally's memoirs?
 - a. Percy Pilbeam, the little twister (or is it blister?)...
 - b. Empress of Blandings (A girl must get her calories)...
 - c. Ronnie Fish...
 - d. Lord Tilbury...
- 15. Which item has never appeared in the Wooster bed?
 - a. A fretful porpentine...
 - b. A hedgehog...
 - c. An unforeseen lizard, up the left pyjama leg...
 - d. A beautiful American heiress...
- 16. How many times has Ivor Llewellyn been married?
 - a. Three...
 - b. Four...
 - c. Five...
 - d. As often as Artie Shaw...
- 17. What color are Bertie's eyes?
 - a. Brown...
 - b. Blue...
 - c. A sort of fishy green...
 - d. None of the above...
- 18. In giving B. Wooster the old oil, Stiffy Byng compared him to what noble person?
 - a. Jacques Cartier...
 - b. Carter Paterson...
 - c. Nick Carter...
 - d. Sidney Carton...

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13. a... 14. b... 15. a...
 16. c... (See p. 1, Bachelors Anonymous.)
 17. b... (See Thank You, Jeeves! Chapter 21. Chuffy, speaking of the boy Wooster, recalls: "You would see him face a furious headmaster with a sort of dauntless look in those big blue eyes of his...")
 18. d...