

"The Wodehouse novels, though in most respects like those jolly things he writes to go with the music of Jerome Kern, have now and then a page that dips far below the surface of 'fun' into something very deep and true to the inwardness of human nature....and yet Mr. Wodehouse brings his story up again quickly like a diver clutching a pearl and rising through the clear water to sparkling sunlit air. It is the prettiest talent imaginable, and I can think of no contemporary writer who has the same dexterity." ...Grant Overton (1887-1930)

PROGRESS! PROGRESS!! PROGRESS!!! Nancie Burkett, TWS, is gorging her personal computer (or PC as we say in the electronics field) with bits and bytes of our membership files, enabling us to obtain mailing labels, membership lists and all sorts of * useful information with much less effort than with our MLA (manual labor administration). A sincere THANK YOU to Nancie.

AS WE GO TO PRESS, fully 81% of our members have paid dues for 1986. We are reminding those who haven't that "Your payment of 1986 dues will help our Society GROW and become more useful to all who love the Wonderful World of Wodehouse." Draconian measures must occasionally be used in these matters. Our dues have not been raised in the seven years of our societyship, although our costs of operation are rising. With luck and membership coöperation, they may not need to be raised for another year or two...

The most lost day of all is the day on which we do not laugh. ..Nicolas Chamfort.

CHARLES E. Gould, JR., has issued his April 1986 PGW booklist and plans to offer a 105th Birthday Catalogue containing "...a nearly complete selection from my large inventory..." of Plum's books and ephemera. If you are not on his mailing list, then wheedle and coax him to add your name. Between 15 June and 31 August he can be reached at P. O. Box 1501, Kennebunkport, ME 04046.

DAVID A. JASEN'S A Bibliography and Reader's Guide to the First Editions of P. G. Wodehouse is available in a revised and enlarged second edition. Send £20. plus liberal postage to Lionel Leventhal, Ltd., 2 - 4 Hampstead High St., London NW3 1QQ, U.K. A handy book for your PGW shelf.

AND Jimmy Heineman has a bibliography in production which will be an amplified and much more comprehensive version of that compiled by Eileen McIlvaine for P. G. Wodehouse - A Centenary Celebration, 1881-1981. No firm date of publ. is available. We'll keep you posted.

AND A Wodehouse Bestiary, edited by D. R. Benson, foreword by Howard Phipps, Jr., TWS, Ticknor and Fields, New Haven/New York, can be your very own for \$15.95. Ask your favorite bookseller...

News reaches us that a two-part TV-special is in

PLUM LINES - Continued...

its initial stages of production in Sweden, but with no firm date of completion. Jimmy Heineman is being videotaped at his Manhattan apartment for an introductory discussion of Wodehouse and his works. We herewith alert our two Swedish members to this production-in-process; and ask that they let us know whenever they learn of its progress. * * * * *

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AT OUR URGENT REQUEST Katherine Gottschalk provided PLUM LINES with a copy of her Welcoming Address to the Plummiess assembled at Cornell University last October for our 1985 convention. No doubt influenced by the scholarly appearance of our little group, Kate joined us, which pleases us mightily. # # # THE END # # #


The Oldest Member

Opening Remarks for
"The Wodehouse Society" Convention

at
Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, 20 October 1985

made by
Katherine K. Gottschalk

Assistant Director, Freshman Seminar Program, and
Senior Lecturer, Department of English, Cornell University

The last time I welcomed a group to Cornell, I was introducing an expert on style, Professor Richard Lanham, who has written a marvelous book, *Analyzing Prose*, on the subject. Not surprisingly, he decries the passive timidities with which we so often find ourselves afflicted—the "officialese" we encounter in legal documents or office memos, for example. On that occasion I had the fun of introducing Professor Lanham with a parody of all he finds stylistically worst—noting, for instance that "there is a need and desire for the establishment of information, knowledge, and proper tone in a lecture-type situation, which it is requisite for me to achieve." Such is the style—if one can so abuse the word—with which far too often we find ourselves belabored.

Now when Professor Robert Hall asked me to welcome you to Cornell and to the beginning of your discussions of P. G. Wodehouse, it clearly behooved me, in preparation for this event, to tuck away some time for fresh forays into Wodehouse country. I've been a mere dabbler in Wodehouse until now—bedtime reading, entertainment for the ill, and all that—and I have to confess I hadn't before put my mind in scholarly fashion to the subject. I still haven't put a scholarly mind there (Wodehouse seems to defeat that dusty attitude—sipping a bit of the old Oolong while quietly reflecting in bed seems a more appropriate response) but the thought did float up while I was rereading *Right Ho* and *The Inimitable Jeeves* that once again I would be addressing an

audience in which all, regardless of their individual professions, would be much concerned with, and in this case, even delighting in, style—and such style!

Bertram Wooster certainly dotes on it, although, of course, only under the severe guidance of Jeeves. Normally, as Jeeves puts it, Bertram is a fellow mentally "negligible... quite negligible." He's given, when startled, to responses such as "Oh, I don't know, you know, don't you know!" (Perhaps we need Professor Lanham's guide to rhetoric here, as several classical rhetorical terms seem barely to cover this masterfully inarticulate articulateness: antistrophe? conduplicatio? diacope?) And, normally, Bertram is willing to be guided through life by Jeeves, upon whose impeccable, and conservative, judgment and intellect he relies in matters of action, speech, and dress.

For as we've all observed, Bertram's taste can err. In matters sartorial, Bertie is apt to buy a pair of purple socks, a scarlet cummerbund, a mess jacket, Old Etonian spats rather than those of the proper quiet gray. Only when Jeeves once again proves the superiority of his intellect in dealing with the muddled world (and Bertie prefers, for his own comfort, that his world be simple), only then will he give up these stylistic forays: back to the simple style of life, the simple, genuinely elegant article of clothing. Jeeves must toddle him back to the conventional, the quiet stolid gray of the established, elderly, aristocratic Edwardian world.

Opening Remarks-2

Why will Bertie persist in these follies? Because, while Bertram loves his comforts, he is far too playful: he will get experimental—he heads for the novel style as for the proverbial rock in the middle of the road. Jeeves, on the other hand (like William Safire?), stands guard over the conventions and good taste. For Jeeves the weather is "exceptionally clement," and on world affairs he can comment that "Some slight friction is threatening in the Balkans." Bertie tends to forget, or test; he bounds through the language footloose and free of fancy (of course, on his way to tea). After a memorable bicycle ride, while pampering his "billowy portions," Bertie bitterly reflects on "these people carelessly revelling at a time when, for all they know, I was probably being dragged about the countryside by goats or chewed by elephants... ." When defeated by Jeeves, Bertie writes that "For a moment, I confess, that generous wrath of mine came bounding back, hitching up its muscles and snorting a bit through the nose, but, as we say on the Riviera, *a quoi sert-il?* There was nothing to be gained by g.w. now." He knows there are useful words at hand, but he can't quite find them—"What do you call it when two people of opposite sexes are bunged together in close association in a secluded spot, meeting each other every day and seeing a lot of each other?" "Is "propinquity" the word you wish, sir?" "It is. I stake everything on propinquity, Jeeves." When he gets a good word, whether "bunged together" or "propinquity," Bertram Wooster is not one to let it go.

No passive user of language, Bertram Wooster, and on the whole I imagine Professor Lanham must find his style more attractive than that of Jeeves, Jeeves, the immovable maintainer of the status quo, where Bertie is freshening things up a bit, looking for the novel, the verbal purple pair of socks, making the language move, getting into it a bit of the old active voice.

But of course Bertie isn't genuinely interested in changing the language—or his socks. In a moment of rebellion he tries to reprove Jeeves: "To be quite candid, Jeeves, I have frequently noticed before now a tendency of disposition on your part to become—what's the word?" "I could not say, sir." [No appropriate piece of attire at hand from Jeeves for Bertie this time!] "Eloquent? No, it's not eloquent. Elusive? No, it's not elusive. It's on the tip of my tongue. Begins with an "e" and means being a jolly sight too clever." "Elaborate, sir?" "That is the exact word I was after." Bertie does not admire elaborateness in action, and he can't be consistently eloquent; words, and the precise control of style, as of his own life, elude him. When he does take control, he tries to use Jeeves' own elaborate and conventional language ("a tendency of disposition on your part"), but style is elusive ("What's the word?"). Eventually he must let Jeeves take control ("That is the exact word I was after") and regain what he considers to be the simple comforts of his life. Bertie recognizes and appreciates the "proper" linguistic conventions. It will take a long time, despite the efforts of Professor Lanham and others like him, actually to convince the aristocrats, the politicians and the physicians, to change the language that signs, creates, and maintains an admired and safe way of life, however quiet or dull.

Nevertheless, as a teacher and student of writing and thus of style, I could wish for many more Bertram Woosters in our classrooms and in our business offices (as long as we can persuade them not to stay in bed as late as he). For I see the job of teaching writing often to be exactly to encourage just that playfulness with style that Bertie demonstrates so admirably. As Professor Lanham argues, far too many of us in my profession—and in business—insist that we believe in the CBS analysis and production of prose: clarity, brevity, and sincerity. Teachers, and employers,

insist that writing be "clear," although, to quote Lanham, "Clarity... seems to be contradicted by what we now know about human perception. We perceive the world actively and recreatively; we don't just register naturally a world already 'out there.' To perceive the world is to compose it, to make sense of it." (Bertie, watching Jeeves depart sees him "shimmer off.") And "brevity"—well, few of us can manage all that Jeeves makes of "Very good, Sir," especially in writing. Most situations demand far more of us. Sincere? Just what *is* the right style of sincerity? Which of our many selves are we going to display sincerely? And on what occasion, and to whom? No one knows better than do Jeeves and Bertie the problems of sincerity. After all, just how much sincerity can Aunt Agatha take?

Only the most pragmatic and dull view of prose can limit itself to the CBS view. Lanham notes (and I quote) that "we need to communicate information efficiently, for certain. But if this is all we try to do, we won't do even this. If we simplify human motive into naive purpose, if we ignore game and play, they will come back to haunt us. If, like Henry Ford, we offer any color so long as it is black, we'll find our customers fleeing to General Motors in the foreseeable fuchsia." Bertie habitually flees his gray spats; he longs for purple socks.

Like Bertie, our Cornell writing students, most often young freshmen, hate to think they have to settle down quite yet, and so they can respond best, and learn most, when we teachers recognize their need for play and for choice. Instead of exclaiming "Diction!" when they haplessly grope for the right word and get the wrong one (or none at all), instead of crying out in alarm at the sight of slang, we can help our students themselves recognize the proper or possible occasions for that admirable new phrase "accessing data" rather than for "research"; we can turn the enthusiasm

that fastens on to slang into an enthusiasm for vivid and active language, and for noticing how others use style and why. What can we learn about the politician who says, "At this point in time that statement is inoperable" compared to the one who says, "I'm sorry; I made a mistake"? Or compared to the one who says, "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country"?

Writers of all ages may well be happiest when we help them learn to experiment with styles in order to know themselves and to know others, to look, as Lanham puts it, not through but at language, to enjoy complexities and appreciate the meanings they create. Bertie can read Jeeves' "simplest" statements—"very good" may mean ten different things; he understands Aunt Dahlia's telegrams, although he may pretend not to; and in his heart he recognizes when his beloved purple socks really look better on the elevator man than they did on him: "I don't know when I've seen anything as dressy." He heartily blames Jeeves for his "elaborate" style in plots, for, he says, "the simple, direct method never fails"—but over and over, Bertie discovers that in fact the simple, direct method never succeeds. It doesn't exist, as Jeeves' and Bertie's readers well know. Bertie loves the CBS style, but he doesn't actually live in it. When he tries to do so, he gets into trouble. So will any writer.

And so in welcoming you to Cornell, I welcome those who, regardless of profession, join together in the love of language, who relish the play of style and recognize its necessity. We may forget the plots, but we don't forget the conversations in Wodehouse's stories. As Bertie says on another occasion, they "burnish the brain a bit."

[Ed. Note: WE ARE PROUD that Dr. Gottschalk is now a Plummy]

WODEHOUSE AND OXFORD

by

Jonathan Hopson, TWS

Having gained admission to Oxford it did not take me long to realise the splendid opportunities it provided. I have always, like most "Plummies" I imagine, nurtured the ambition to contribute an article to "Plum Lines." What I lacked was a suitable subject: one which I could treat with, if not authority, then at least the advantage of personal experience, and now I was presented with a chance to portray Bertie's old college as it is today. Before doing so, however, a short preamble concerning the position Oxford occupies in the Wodehouse opus may perhaps be appropriate.

The ancient universities of Oxford and Cambridge formed part of the fabric of the leisured upper-class world that Wodehouse depicted, or rather recreated, to such marvellous effect. Yet this role is certainly not as prominent as that of those other English institutions such as the public schools, the Anglican Church, London clubland or the aristocracy and their country houses. An obvious reason for this is that Wodehouse was largely unfamiliar with university life. It is well-known how, having obtained a scholarship to Oxford, he was forced to go instead into the world of banking due to straitened family circumstances.

Wodehouse fulfilled his promise as a writer because of his commitment rather than his longevity. Thus his readers need not sigh ruefully and ponder "What might have been?" Although Oxbridge [Oxford and/or Cambridge] is seen as the culmination of a young Englishman's formal education Wodehouse (as far as we can tell) recovered from his disappointment and he found that his public school background was sufficient grounding for him as a writer. As he himself said of his school experience: "The average parent chose the Classical, where they learned Latin and Greek, presumably with the vague idea that if all went well they would go to Oxford or Cambridge. In my day, to the ordinary parent, education meant Classics. I went automatically on the Classical side and, as it turned out, it was the best form of education I could have had as a writer." In the same way, I think we need not heave a sigh of relief: Wodehouse discovered his vocation at an early age and I doubt very much whether the secluded cloisters would have tempted him away from his chosen path.

The position of the university in Wodehouse's work is to fulfill substantially the same role as that of the public school - the role of 'alma mater.' It not only engenders a sense of 'camaraderie' with the strict duty never to let a boyhood chum down: it encourages observance of the code of gentlemanly behaviour, i.e., as a 'preux chevalier,' and it tends to instil that partisan loyalty expressed at its most extreme by the Duke of Dunstable 'who had been at Eton and Cambridge,' namely, 'All Harovians are the scum of the earth, and Oxonians are even worse.' However the emphasis is firmly placed on the public school and the boyhood experience Wodehouse had known.

Mike Jackson's friendship with Psmith is forged at Sedleigh; al-

though their time at Cambridge possessed great comic potential, there is very little reference to any adventures there. Similarly, almost all of Bertie's pals date back to his school days, either at Eton or at Aubrey Upjohn's fearsome establishment, often both. The one notable exception that I can think of is Harold 'Stinker' Pinker, probably because of his prowess at rugby, Oxbridge at that time being the breeding-ground for most international players. Another Oxford acquaintance is referred to - Orlo Porter - but, as Bertie says, he "was in no sense a buddy of mine."

It must also be remembered that, as an extension of public school, university with its broader social outlook, also diluted its spirit. It offered escape from the confines of the dormitory, providing privacy and encouraging a certain amount of self-reliance rather than emphasising 'team spirit.' After all, it is a place where boys become men and the friendships of Bertie and other Drones are essentially puerile.

Now, I turn my attention on my own college, Magdalen (pronounced Măd`lin), and contemporary Oxford in general. Magdalen is, of course, notable in Woodehouse's works as Bertie's alma mater; some doubt has been cast on this point due to an intriguing reference to a drunken escapade involving a college fountain, strongly suggestive of Christ Church. In answer to this I refer to that invaluable guide, 'Thank You, Wodehouse,' written by two Magdalen dons (one of whom is my tutor), which resolves the question satisfactorily. *

Why did Wodehouse choose Magdalen for Bertie? It may have been a purely random selection. Perhaps, because the college's Great Tower is one of the most celebrated buildings in Oxford and it is the first landmark visible on the approach to the city from London, Magdalen was the college Wodehouse most readily associated with Oxford. He may have chosen Magdalen, one of the larger and more 'glamorous' colleges with a traditionally high public school intake, rather than his brother Armine's Corpus Christi - the smallest college in Oxford - for the same reasons that he preferred Eton to Dulwich/Wrykyn for Bertie, who was not only of the gentry but was related to the Earl of Yaxley. Whatever the reason, with its expansive grounds, including a deer park and river walks, as well as its celebrated architecture, Magdalen was the perfect place for Bertie to 'exist beautifully.'

How would Bertie find life at Oxford today? Most striking is how unlikely it would be for him to be there at all. Schools and family connections do not gain automatic admission for 'chumps' (if they ever did) although they certainly do no harm to a candidate's chances of admission. Even if Bertie were accepted he would find the strict regime hard-going. The college president, an American economist, follows an exacting academic policy. Last term two students were sent down [flunked out] for failing to come up to expectations.

Despite this there is little doubt that Bertie would fit in well, socially. A sense of tradition exists among the students as well as the dons. Clothes-conscious Bertie would surely welcome the distinct aesthetic tendency that exists, influenced no doubt by 'Brideshead Revisited.' Stylish cravates and bow-ties are very much the fashion and even amongst the less flamboyant tweed suits,

waistcoats, brogues and hats are commonplace. I have yet to see a pair of spats but I feel sure that this is merely a matter of time. The foppishness even extends into the Examination Schools where white carnations are sported alongside the compulsory academic dress on these occasions known as 'sub fusc,' that is (for men) a sober suit, white shirt and bow-tie, gown and accompanying mortar-board. Jeeves would also certainly approve of the observance of 'form' at society dinners where men gather together in evening dress to pass the port. Wing-collars, stiff-fronted shirts and vintage dinner jackets proliferate and of course proper bow-ties, as opposed to the abhorrent ready-tied variety, are the order of the day.

Rowing is still 'a deuce of a sweat' as Bertie put it and he would definitely not find the 'get up at six on a frosty morning' regime to his liking, nor would rugby be any more attractive. I have still to see Oxford in summer but it is then I feel that Bertie would flourish, punting on the Cherwell basking in the sun and perhaps indulging in a spot of croquet.

As to other pursuits, Bertie would find cocktail bars readily available and he might even care to exercise his voice in the popular Gilbert and Sullivan society. What would surely strike him most as being different is the amount of girls at Oxford. They are still outnumbered but with the last of the all-male colleges going mixed this year, the number of girls is increasing all the time. Bertie may goggle momentarily but, knowing his expert eye for a pretty face, this must be another reason why Oxford can still be an enjoyable experience for a 'knut' like Bertie. END

* Thank You, Wodehouse, J.H.C Morris and A.D. Macintyre, Weidenfield and Nicolson Ltd., London, 1981; p. 21.

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Jonathan P. Hopson, TWS, has entered Magdalen College, Oxford, as a student, this being his first year. He had promised to tell us how Bertie's old alma mater is doing without Bertie these days, and to speculate on how B. might fit into things if he were there today. OM knows a good PLUM LINES correspondent when he hears from one, and is happy as all get out with this article. He has promised to 'fill us in' from time to time, and we shall hold him to his promise. Jonathan's address from 19 Jan-15 Mar/27 Apr-21 Jun/12 Oct-6 Dec is: Magdalen College, Oxford OX1 4AV, UK when he is not at his mailing list address.

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NOTE THAT WE ARE ENCLOSING TWO TWS INFORMATION SHEETS WITH THIS ISSUE OF PLUM LINES. MAKE UNLIMITED QUANTITIES OF PHOTOCOPIES (XEROX, ETC.,) OF THEM AND SEE IF YOUR FAVORITE LIBRARY, BOOK STORE, BANK, CLUB, CHURCH WILL LET YOU PUT THEM ON THEIR BULLETIN BOARDS...OR SEND THEM TO FRIENDS WHO SEEM TO BE THELIKELIEST PROSPECTS

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A WORD FROM OUR PRESIDENT.....

Dear Members of The Wodehouse Society:

In late December, 1985, I wrote to Mr. Richard Usborne to inquire how the Wodehouse Society could initiate a memorial for Sir Pelham Grenville Wodehouse to be placed in Westminster Abbey. Mr. Usborne wrote to Westminster Abbey. This was the reply:

Dear Mr. Usborne:

Thank you for your letter of 5 January with the enclosure from Mrs. Cunningham, President of the Wodehouse Society.

A movement for the memorialisation of any literary figure in Westminster Abbey has to be sanctioned by the Dean. As, at the moment, there is no Dean, and one has not yet been appointed, I am afraid there is nothing that can be done about this matter during the present year. I therefore suggest that you hold the matter in abeyance and write again on the subject to the Dean in a year's time.

Yours sincerely,

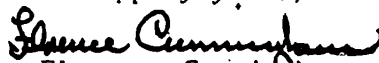
The Rt Revd E. G. Knapp-Fisher

On this reply from the Deanery, Westminster Abbey, Mr. Usborne penned a note to say that he has made a note in his new diary to write to the new Dean next year.

The new Dean should be appointed well before our convention in August, 1987. PLUM LINES will keep us informed on the steps we need to take to place a memorial in Poets' Corner, Westminster Abbey, honoring P. G. Wodehouse.

Let's make our membership grow by telling our libraries, book stores and our local newspapers about our Society. Wodehouse readers everywhere deserve to know about us and to enjoy the quarterly PLUM LINES that brightens our lives.

Happily yours,


Florence Cunningham

President

Ed. Note: Referring to the last paragraph of this article, OM can not properly claim that his captivity was held in the U. S. Navy. As a small child, he was kidnapped by gypsies and sold to the U. S. Army, later becoming a ward of the U. S. Air Force. Neither his grade nor his retirement pay are equal to those of a naval captain. So there!

Wodehouse welcome in her home

Kent woman leads faithful fans of author

By JIM KERSHNER
Staff Reporter

Here, in a part of the world where crumpets are scarce and butlers even scarcer, Florence Cunningham of Kent has dedicated herself to furthering the appreciation of Jeeves.

Not only, Jeeves, mind you, although the high-minded butler is the best-known of P.G. Wodehouse's fictional characters. Mrs. Cunningham also wants to further the appreciation of Bertie Wooster, Freddie Widgeon, Aunt Agatha, Reginald (Pongo) Twistleton-Twistleton, Catsmeat Potter-Pirbright, Lord Emsworth, and all the rest of Wodehouse's creations, including a pig named the Empress of Blandings.

Mrs. Cunningham, 67, is the president of The Wodehouse Society, an international association of Wodehouse fanatics. She presides over about 200 members in the U.S.A., Canada, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, the Netherlands, and Denmark. Isaac Asimov and columnist George Will are among the members.

Cunningham became a member, and now president, because she gets such joy from his writings, and because "it's fun to know people who like Wodehouse as much as I do."

"The first Wodehouse book I read was in 1972, *Uncle Fred in Springtime*," said Cunningham, a widow and former Kent schoolteacher. "I thought Wodehouse was the funniest man I'd ever read. I wrote him and told him how much I enjoyed his writing, and he wrote back. He always answered everyone's letters.

"An awful lot of life has its ups and downs, and reading his humor can give you a perspective on things. I don't like to read about all kinds of . . . trouble. There's too much of that every day. Too many authors look at only the dark side of life. There's more to life than that."

For those unfamiliar with Wodehouse's humor, here's an example from *The Code of the Woosters*:

"He spoke with a certain what-is-it in his voice, and I could see that, if not actually disgruntled, he was far from being grunted."

Or this, from *Goodbye to All Cats*:

"I'll bet that if all the girls Freddie Widgeon has loved and lost were placed end to end — not that I suppose one could do it — they would reach halfway down Piccadilly."

"Further than that," said the Egg. "Some of them were pretty tall."

Or this, from the *Code of the Woosters*:



Staff photo by JIM KERSHNER

Florence Cunningham

"(She had) the most extraordinary views on such things as stars and rabbits. I remember her telling me once that rabbits were gnomes in attendance on the Fairy Queen and the stars were God's daisy chain. Perfect rot, of course. They're nothing of the sort."

Wodehouse churned out an incredible number of works in a career which began at the beginning of the century and ended with his death in 1975. He published 90 novels, more than 300 short stories, and had a hand in more than 20 musical comedies (including *Anything Goes* and *Showboat*). He was a regular contributor to the *Saturday Evening Post* for most of the century.

Wodehouse is not always taken seriously by the literary establishment. His books, while written in unfailingly funny language, generally had a thin plot. Most of them took place in English manor houses and involved a rather dim-

witted member of the English upper classes attempting to wriggle out of a romantic entanglement.

Yet critics and even historians have noted that Wodehouse had a keen eye for satirizing the British class structure.

"He saw the class structure, and poked fun at it in a very gentle manner," said Mrs. Cunningham. "He wrote about people just like us, that was the charm. I think in time, people will recognize him for the genius he was."

Although she didn't discover Wodehouse until late in life, Mrs. Cunningham has always loved reading. She was an English and speech graduate at Eastern Washington University and she attended Stanford University for a short time. She came to Kent in 1949 to teach. She married Norwood Cunningham, who went on to become a state legislator, and they had two boys, Joel and Brian. The family used to read Wodehouse books aloud to each other. Mrs. Cunningham was widowed in 1979.

Mrs. Cunningham published an article on P.G. Wodehouse in the summer 1982 issue of the magazine *Puget Soundings*. She has given "book talks" (oral book reviews) at libraries all of her life. Besides Wodehouse, her favorite authors are Willa Cather, Gladys Taber, Agatha Christie, and a British author who writes under the name of Miss Read.

Mrs. Cunningham will give one of her book talks Tuesday, Feb. 25, at noon at the Kent Library. She will discuss a variety of books for springtime reading. She will definitely sneak a few Wodehouse books into the talk.

As president of The Wodehouse Society, she believes in proselytizing for the cause. On the other hand, the society has never really put on a membership drive. Most people find out about the society the way Mrs. Cunningham did, by chance.

The society was started in 1979 by a retired Navy captain named Bill Blood (yes, Captain Blood, just like in the Errol Flynn movie) from New Britain, Pa. The society began in Captain Blood's living room, and has grown from there. The society puts out a newsletter called *Plum Lines*, so named because Wodehouse's nickname was Plum. It publishes articles about Wodehouse, and gives tips on where to find some of his more obscure books. (The University Book Store in Seattle has the best stock in this area, said Mrs. Cunningham).