

Interview with Jeeves

Q: What is your full name, Jeeves?

A: My gentlemen always call me Jeeves. I was named after a famous cricketer, Percy Jeeves, who unfortunately was killed in the Battle of the Somme in the First World War. As my friend chronicler Plum Wodehouse was always an avid follower of sports in general and cricket in particular, he chose to adopt the name for me. However my Christian name is not Percy; it is in fact Reginald.

Q: How did you get into your current occupation?

A: I always did enjoy helping out people and being a gentleman's personal gentleman is one of the better ways to do so. I get my room and board, meet a lot of quite interesting people and fortunately have a stimulating work environment. Of course it helps to develop a cordial relationship with one's employer, too.

My first gainful employment was as a page boy in a girls school, followed by a stint with Lord Worplesdon, and a number of other members of the aristocracy. Mr. Wooster was my fifth employer.

Q: What does a gentleman's gentleman do? Does it differ from being a butler?

A: Oh, yes, being a gentleman's personal gentleman, sometimes called a valet, is very different from butlering, although on occasion I have done and can do butlering too. A gentleman's gentleman is in charge of the wardrobe of his employer, and must keep it in order, clean and pressed and ready to wear, and on occasion give advice on the proper attire or decorum. We run the gentleman's bath and provide the daily shave. We travel with our employer and pack or unpack his luggage in hotels and private homes. In my current position, I also do the shopping and the preparation of meals for when my gentleman is in for meals, such as breakfast and when guests drop in. I must be able to provide both food and drink on such occasions with almost no notice. I generally do the light housekeeping and maintenance on the flat in town and occasionally serve as chauffeur as needed. My gentleman depends on me to keep things in proper condition and to be discreet about his activities. I serve as a factotum and occasionally go beyond those duties to assist my gentleman when he becomes overly engaged in certain delicate matters of his class. The role with Mr. Wooster requires discretion and diplomacy on my part.

Q: And Butlering?

A: Butlering involves waiting on table for meals, making sure that all the household affairs and staff are kept up and in place. It usually implies a larger establishment, with staff underneath.

Q: What do you do for pleasure when not required to be on duty as a valet?

A: While valeting is indeed a full time job and one is required to be on call 24 hours a day, I do have a number of other interests. My spare time is spent in improving my mind. I quite enjoy reading Shakespearean drama and other classical authors. Philosophy has always been of interest and I find

Spinoza to be congenial to my way of thinking, while Nietzsche is not one with whom I am agreeable – he is fundamentally unsound. I have made some slight study of the fields of science, poetry, history, psychology, geography, politics, and literature, much of which has proved useful to Mr. Wooster on various and sundry odd occasions. My employer claims that my rather handy powers of recall are to be explained by the fact that I consume a reasonably large quantity of fish.

I also enjoy maintaining cordial communications with members of my immediate family. I am fortunate in having three aunts who are very placid in nature, in contrast to the Wooster aunts. I also have an uncle, Charles Silverthorn, who is a butler at the Deverill Hall in Hampshire and I have assisted him when necessary. My cousin Queenie and my niece Mabel, the daughter of Mr. Silverthorn, are sometimes in need of my assistance as well.

I am a member of the Junior Ganymede Club, a London club for butlers and valets, in whose club book all members must record the exploits of their employers to forewarn other butlers and valets. The section with which I have labored for several years is labeled "WOOSTER, BERTRAM" and is the largest in the book.

Q: Have you always worked for Mr. Wooster?

A: No, as mentioned previously, I have not. I have upon occasion been employed by others, including a period where I worked for one of Mr. Wooster's friends. In that particular case, Mr. Wooster, having been requested by his landlord to vacate his flat in town due to the complaints of others concerning his practicing the banjolele instrument for several hours a day, took a small country cottage from his friend Marmaduke "Chuffy" Chuffnell for his temporary domicile, which I felt would be too jarring to the nervous system with the banjolele noise constantly reverberating about and so I resigned his employment and was Mr. Chuffnell's valet for a week. This however merely proved a temporary situation. When Mr. Wooster made the decision to return to the city (following many escapades in said country cottage and its subsequent conflagration by his new valet), he took me once again in his employ and abandoned the study of the banjolele.

Q: Are there any times where your adventures were totally independent of Mr. Wooster?

A: My first appearance in print was in 1915. My last appearance was in 1974. During the one period in which I was on loan to the 9th Earl of Rowcester while Mr. Wooster attended a school where the idle rich learn self-sufficiency in case of social upheaval, the interval has been captured in print by Mr. Wodehouse under the title *Ring for Jeeves*. I may modestly call attention to one story, *Bertie Changes His Mind*, in which I narrate the events.

Q: Who would you like to see as a movie version of yourself?

A: I do not feel free to choose a favorite portrayer, as it would show undue prejudice on my part, but Arthur Treacher has done so in several films. Stephen Fry has also done so. There have been portrayals on radio, television and comic strips as well.

Q: Do you have any plans in the works for your eventual retirement?

A: Are you indeed entirely unfamiliar with the AskJeeves.com website?

Q: Thank you, Jeeves.

THE END