

Rod Serlings  
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## More Books

Shortly after putting the world on notice, in the July/August TZ, that "the two best novels ever written about childhood" were undoubtedly Booth Tarkington's *Penrod* and Steven Millhauser's *Edwin Mullhouse*, I received an odd-looking package from Phil Zuckerman, president of Applewood Books (Box 2870, Cambridge, MA 02139), containing five slim brightly colored paperbacks, a brief note—"Please add these books to your list"—and an equally brief postscript: "They're a little like Jerome K. Jerome." The books were the first five installments of a "serial novel"—a breed you probably thought had died with Dickens—whose full title is *The Personal History, Adventures, Experiences & Observations of Peter Leroy*. The author, Eric Kraft, is a transplanted Long Islander now living in Newburyport, and *Peter Leroy* is

his fictionalized autobiography (his hometown of Babylon appears as "Babbington," Clam Capital of the Western World). As the full title suggests, Kraft's tale is whimsical, cozy, old-fashioned (despite, as Peter moves through boyhood, the growing presence of sex)—and, yes, it is a little like Jerome K. Jerome. It's also like a cross between James Thurber and that fat new book "... *And Ladies of the Club*," recounting family anecdotes and small-town gossip with humor and affection—though not without a sigh for times gone by. The *Peter Leroy* series, which comes out four times a year, began in 1982 with *My Mother Takes a Tumble* and is now up to book #8, *Call Me Larry*. Each title, at 96 pages, sells for \$4.95, but one can subscribe to four books for \$16 or to eight for \$30. Neat idea.