

## BOOKS BRIEFLY

### ■ "Little Follies: The Personal History, Adventures, Experiences & Observations of Peter Leroy (so far)"

by Eric Kraft  
Crown, \$22



While journalist and novelist Armistead Maupin was busily serializing the hip life in San Francisco in the 1970s and '80s, the less well-known Eric Kraft was memorializing the mythic "Clam Capital of America" of Bolotomy Bay, at Babbington, Long Island.

"Little Follies" is a collection of one new and eight previously published novellas of the childhood and young adulthood of one Peter Leroy, as told by Peter Leroy. Although all of Leroy's delicious, often hilarious tales of a boy so naive that he identifies with the happy, doomed clams of "The Fox and the Clam" slide down as smoothly as an oyster, Kraft is out for bigger bait than a coming-of-age story.

Kraft's main concern is with the craft of writing, with how and why autobiographical detail becomes fiction. The most interesting part of each tale is its preface, in which Kraft's alter ego, Peter Leroy, explains such things as why his grandfather, really the foreman in a clam-packing plant, became a Studebaker salesman, or why someone he had really met at age 13 is presented as having been his best friend since age 5.

Bordering on cuteness, the tales themselves are ultimately redeemed by Kraft's playful seriousness — and perhaps the pure nostalgia one can't help but feel for a boy whose most pressing problem is "Do Clams Bite?"

**Michelle Bisson**

Seattle Times / 3/29/92