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Herb 'n' Lorna. Eric Kraft. Crown. \$17.95. 1505

Think of your grandparents. Think cuddly laps, twinkly eyes, hugs and kisses . . . erotic jewelry. Erotic jewelry? What's wrong with this picture?

The narrator of "Herb 'n' Lorna" was handed just such a surprise before his grandmother's funeral, when her best friend gave him a box, inscribed to him, Peter Leroy, in his grandmother's hand. Inside were 22 pieces of erotic jewelry and sculpture. In this way, he learned that his beloved "Gumma" and "Guppa" had lived an astonishing double life: homemaker and Studebaker salesman publicly; craftsmen of erotica privately.

"I determined that if my grandparents' story was to be told, I wasn't going to leave it to the tabloids," Leroy says. He set about re-creating, through interviews, memories, documents, supposition and imagination, his grandparents' lives. "The facts may be wrong. I think the spirit is right."

This whimsical novel celebrates that spirit. The author's use of the omniscient narrator device enables him to tell us the characters' thoughts and actions, as well as voice an occasional personal opinion. He often "quotes" from experts he invents. My favorite was the mentor of Herb's sales career, Bob Mintner, and his videocassette series, "You Could Make a Million If You Would Stop Acting Like a Jerk."

Herb and Lorna are characters to root for because they are decent, loving people who treat each other and everyone else with respect. They lead full lives, of which active sexuality remains a part right into old age. After they retire to a senior citizens' community in Florida, they turn the whole town on to erotic arts and crafts: "Many a student of Herb and Lorna's rediscovered giggling."

You may rediscover giggling, too, as well as a consciousness-raising realization that there is no expiration date on human sexuality. Even for grandmas and grandpas.

Reviewed by Doris Reidy, a Georgia writer whose essays have been published in Redbook.