

Greg Lilly's 'Fingering the Family Jewels' introduces gay detective

By **ROCHELLE BRENER**
Special to Kudos

This is a novel whose time has come.

As a lover of good fiction, I have seen all sorts of great genre novels. And in the mystery department, I have seen a progression that has followed the interest of the times – from macho male detectives, to tough-talking women who solve crimes and/or prosecute them. Author Greg Lilly brings us to the next level – that of the gay detective.

I use the word “detective” in a loose sense here, because most of the investigation carried on in Lilly’s novel “Fingering the Family Jewels,” has more to do with family history-mystery than with bad guy shoot-‘em-ups, but the fact that this novel is self-billed as “a Derek Mason mystery” implies that there will be more. And what stance Lilly’s protagonist will take in the future remains to be seen.

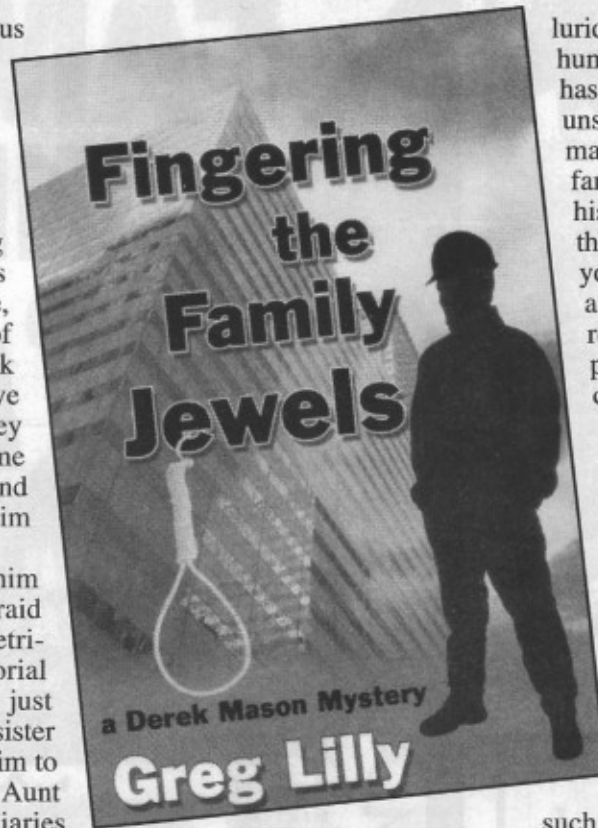
For those of us who love

family secrets, mysterious goings-on and assorted slices of life, this novel, by a local short story author/novelist and teacher, needs to be on your must-read list. This is the story of a young man who returns to his native city of Charlotte, N.C., for the funeral of a beloved aunt. Derek Mason has no great love for his birth family; they had always kept some distance from him, and had finally banished him because he was gay.

His uncle wants him gone because he’s afraid Derek would be a detriment to his senatorial campaign. His mother just wants him gone. His sister and another aunt want him to stay. Derek’s deceased Aunt Walterene had left diaries – journals that lead Derek to go on a search into the family past. What he uncovers will

make your hair stand on end.

This is not a story that speaks graphically of horror crimes in



lurid detail. It is a story told humanely. And although it has elements of a long-ago unsolved murder, Lilly’s main focus is on the family mystery – a long history of lies and secrets that are enough to make your flesh crawl before, as the reader, you get really angry with the participating cast of characters.

Lilly tells this story with grace and sensitivity. From start to finish, this reader was thoroughly engrossed – engrossed to the exclusion of all else, as this story moved inexorably to its conclusion. If this is typical of Lilly’s novels, I’d suggest that authors

such as Patricia Cornwall, Lawrence Block and Joy Fielding just move over and make room. Greg Lilly is

If You Go...

What: Champagne Celebration/Book Signing of Greg Lilly’s novel, “Fingering the Family Jewels.”

When: May 13, 6-8 p.m.

Where: Write Here, located behind Sedona Books & Music in Bashas’ Center, Sedona

going to be one of the greats.

There will be a champagne celebration/booksigning at Write Here, A Sanctuary for Writers, located behind Sedona Books & Music in Bashas’ Center, West Sedona, on Thursday, May 13, from 6 to 8 p.m.

Books will be available May 1 through all quality bookstores, and on Amazon.com, and of course, at the celebration.

Rochelle Brener is an editor and the founder/president of Write Here, A Sanctuary for Writers, a nonprofit writer’s center located in West Sedona behind Sedona Books & Music.