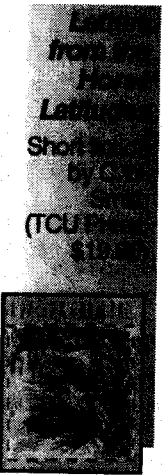


# THE LATEST WORD CAPSULE REVIEWS



This is a collection of gems. The horse latitudes are a symbol for human weakness, our failures and faults.

The first three stories might be subtitled "Lessons of Youth" since they are told from the first-person viewpoint of boys passing into manhood, each with a distinctly different character. Smith writes masterfully from this point of view, with intensity, intimacy and immediacy.

The third story, from which the collection gets its name, is at first mildly unsettling, then increasingly disturbing. A young man who has misunderstood the lesson of his father's heroism becomes the antithesis of what he is struggling to be. We see the creation of a Nazi soldier in progress and live the process so completely as to recognize a vile potential in our own idealism.

The stories are set in rural southern New Mexico and in the mountains of Mexico. Those who know these regions will recognize the characters who, in these cases, leave stereotype behind to become real.

Two pieces in the collection seem out of place: "The Man With Unusual Luck," the tale of a man whose good fortune always leads to ill for his loved ones, and "Witnesses," a tale of sudden death. They deal with society instead of with the individual. As good as they are, they do not stand up to the power of the more intimate stories.

This book is highly recommended.

— Patricia Wynn Ricks

Ricks has published several romance novels and is the author of a historical novel.