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2014 JAFFFS Scholarship Recipient

“It’s more than just metal on feet,” Rich said, “Anybody can go out and put metal on feet but what we do goes beyond that.” I have to admit I didn’t really understand what he meant when he said this last fall. I called Rich earlier that week and asked if I could start riding with him. I’d been toying with the idea of shoeing horses for about a year now. I had recently moved to California from Idaho and the horsing community was a different breed from back home.

Rich was what I considered to be a very successful journeyman farrier. His willingness to take me on and let me ride with him was an incredible opportunity. I started riding with him on his busy days while working part time for a local farmer. Finally after a month of rasp nicked hands, and hammer blisters I called Rich to see what days he’d have me work that week. “Do you wanna do this or not?” He asked. I hadn’t really considered this question I thought I *was* doing it. I was riding with him when he could use me. At the time I didn’t realize how my spotty clinching and finishing skills were hindering more than helping him. “Yea I wanna do it I just don’t wanna take advantage of you is all,” I explained. “If you’re going to shoe horses then you have to understand that its more than just metal on feet, it goes beyond that you gotta be here every day you need to pay attention and focus on what’s going on, the slow days are the days I can teach you. If you’re going to shoe horses then you need to quit your job and come shoe horses.” Oddly this sounded more like a challenge than an invitation. I called the farmer I was working part time for and explained my situation. I started riding with Rich every day after that.

New challenges are presented to a farrier every day. You don’t just wake up one day and become a farrier it takes years of focus to master. It’s a discipline that isn’t given to those that aren’t passionate about horses or the challenges shoeing horses will present. For me wanting to become a farrier has to be a continuing state of mind, you have to have a desire to be better every day and watch out for growing complacency. You don’t just attend an eight-week school and start shaping metal to perfectly match a horse’s foot. You don’t just ride with a farrier for a while and dig into the sole of a foot with a razor sharp knife.

I don’t want to just put metal on feet. I’m interested in becoming a farrier because it’s a new challenge every day. It’s a sense of daily gratification as your skills get better, your work looks nicer, and the horse moves easier. It’s a skill that you’ll never be fully satisfied with. You can shoe horses for years and never be satisfied. I like staying hungry, I like staying hungry for knowledge, hungry for skill, hungry for a better person than I was yesterday.

My objectives as a new student to the trade are to become certified soon after graduating from Cornell, and to pass the journeymen farrier certification soon after that. I ask myself regularly if I’m living up to my full potential. Every time I work on a horse I go through the same dialogue in my head. “Could my nails be a little

straighter? Could I have nailed the toe nail a little higher? Are my clinches aesthetically pleasing to the eye? Do they fit flush with the wall of the hoof? Could I remove any rasp marks? Would I personally pay for this shoeing job?"

Secondly I want to stay humble. I've been blessed to apprentice with two humble farriers that are open with their knowledge because they want to see the next generation of farriers do great things. Riding with Rich Bumpus and working with Mark Payne has been an invaluable opportunity for me to learn and work as a farrier. The future of the equine industry depends on farriers of this caliber. I believe that when talented farriers are willing to share what they know, it puts the practice of shoeing horses further ahead, and promotes growth of the trade. I intend to contribute to the future of the equine industry the same way, by not withholding what I've learned and sharing it with all those that ask. Taking on apprentices and sharing what I know, and always standing as an advocate for the horse.

I intend to use the scholarship to help pay part of my tuition. I've worked hard and saved money to invest in quality tools and I made sure that I didn't just pick a farrier school that was nearby. I wanted to go to the best farrier school. I called instructors and I asked questions. I wanted a lot of time with my instructor and I wanted to be under horses as much as possible, which is why I chose Cornell on the other side of the country.

I don't want to just put metal on feet, shoeing horses is more than that. It's about making a better horse, leaving a horse sounder than when you found it. Anybody can put metal on feet but it takes a true craftsman to pick up a foot and sculpt it to its proper shape, it takes a vast knowledge of the anatomy of a horse to shoe a horse right. I have to travel through the same land of learning that many great farriers have traveled before me and it's been a challenge but it's a challenge that I'm grateful to have the opportunity of taking.