

## AFA FOCUS

### We Learn It At Contests

**I**n recent years we've all heard that horseshoeing contests and forging contests do not apply to real life horseshoeing or farrier education. So the story goes, we don't have to fit the toe (needs break over) don't have to fit the quarters (the horse just breaks them out anyway), don't have to fit the heels (needs support). This all seems like an excuse for poor practical skills to me. Do farriers really believe this hogwash, or is this how they rationalize cheating? When an experienced farrier like Mr. Lewis is directing where a shoe should be fullered, is he also talking about where the nails should enter the white line? I think so!!!

At the Georgia Professional Farriers Contest recently, I ob-



served the essence of why I think contests are so valuable to a farrier's education. Day in and day out, good practical skills applied correctly (notice I said correctly) have served the horse well for hundreds of years. Where did you learn to fuller a shoe so the nails are in the correct place or how to shape a shoe to fit a foot correctly? I learned at certifications, clinics and contests. I bet if you have these skills, you did too. This all may sound negative,

but, I perceive these pictures to be very positive and encouraging.

People like Mr. Billy Lewis that are willing to share and young men like Kyle Schmidt (14 years old) that are eager to learn give us all encouragement that our industry is alive and well.

*Steve Stephenson CJF*